

1 DRAFT MINUTES

2  
3 **California Connect**  
4 **Joint Advisory Committee Meeting**

5  
6 May 15, 2026  
7

8 California Connect’s Telecommunications Access for the Deaf and Disabled  
9 Administrative Committee (TADDAC) and Equipment Program Advisory  
10 Committee (EPAC) held a joint hybrid public Committee Meeting on Webex  
11 and at the Oakland City Center, 500 12th Street, Suite 105, Oakland, CA  
12 94607.

13  
14 **TADDAC Members Present**

15 Jesse Acosta, At Large Seat, Veterans Community (in-person)  
16 Katie Wright, Late-Deafened Community Seat, Chair (in-person)  
17 Darren Blackburn, CPUC Public Advocates Office Rep (in-person)  
18 Kevin Siemens, Disability Seat II, Speech-to-Speech User Rep (WebEx)  
19 Louie Herrera, Disability Seat III, Blind/Low Vision Community Seat, Vice Chair (in-  
20 person)  
21 Eve Reiland, Disability Seat IV Seat (WebEx)  
22 Robert Sidansky, Deaf Community Seat II (in-person)  
23

24 **EPAC Members Present**

25 Antoinette Warren, Senior Citizen Community Seat, Vice Chair (in-person)  
26 Monique Harris, Disability Seat I, Mobility Impaired Rep (in-person)  
27 Danyelle Cerillo, Disability Seat II, Blind/Low Vision Rep (in-person)  
28 Janice Armigo Brown, Hard of Hearing Community Seat (in-person)  
29 Steve Longo, Deaf Community Representative, Chair (in-person)  
30

31 **EPAC & TADDAC Members Absent**

32 Kenneth Rothschild, Deaf Community Seat  
33

34 **Non-Voting Liaisons Present:**

35 Brent Jolley, Communications Division, CPUC  
36 Mark Bella, Communications Division, CPUC  
37

38 **CPUC Staff Present:**

39 Gelareh Safavi, Communications Division, CPUC (in-person)  
40 Matthew Reinig, Committee Coordinator, Communications Division (in-person)  
41 Tyrone Chin, Communications Division (in-person)  
42 Karen Luong, Communications Division (in-person)

1 Charles Abeghe, Communications Division (in-person)  
2 Kaycea Campbell, Communications Division (in-person)

3

4 **In-person Participants Present:**

5 Amanda Whyrick, California Connect Division President

6 Kyle Miers, California Connect Division Vice President

7 Chong Vang, Equipment Processing Center Operations Director, CSD

8 Jennifer Minore, Field Operations Program Director, CSD

9 Joshua Josha, Testing & Training Director, CSD

10 Genelle Sanders, Testing Manager, CSD

11 Molly Miller, Marketing Director, CSD

12 Aida S. Cerda, Outreach Director, CSD

13 Melody Lujano, Field Operations Admin. Director, CSD

14 Abby Magtoto, California Relay Account Manager

15 Rick DiLollo, Executive Oversight, Maximus

16 Tamara Paul-Reeff, Senior Director, Maximus

17 Riva Usher, Contract Director, Maximus

18 Julie Green, Oversight and Compliance Director, Maximus

19 Theresa Emig, QA Manager, Maximus

20 Tammy Shubert, Project Manager, Maximus

21 Jeremy Towlouse, Senior Director, Maximus

22 Matt Bitter, CSD

23 LaCandice Ochoa, DOR

24 Jason Rivera, Program Director, CRIL

25 Felix Gonzalez

26 Jim Skjeveland, NFG

27 Trina Schooley, NFG

28 Eddie Lopez, ILRSCC, AT Specialist

29

30 **WebEx Participants**

31 [Interpreter] Samuel

32 5102\*\*\*\*00

33 6463\*\*\*\*15

34 Alexandria Park

35 Amit Chhabra

36 Angelia Davis

37 Antonio Serna

38 Arianna Anaya-Calderon

39 AS

40 ASL Interpreter - Lisa

41 Captioner-Brenda Perin

42 Dan Mabashov

- 1 Heidi
- 2 Kerrie D
- 3 Kevin
- 4 Leigh Ann Hubbard
- 5 Loulia Miller
- 6 Michael Abramowitz
- 7 Roberten
- 8 Roger Pflieger
- 9 Ryan Gallagher
- 10 Sara Starr
- 11 Shaunee
- 12 Yazmine McNair-Turner

13  
14 TADDAC Chair Katie Wright called the meeting to order at 10:06 AM.

15  
16 **I. Administrative Business**

17 **A. Roll Call of TADDAC & EPAC Members**

18 EPAC Chair Stephen Longo performed roll call for EPAC while TADDAC  
19 Chair Katie Wright performed a roll call for TADDAC. Kenneth Rothschild was  
20 absent. Robert Sidansky was not available during the roll call but arrived later.

21  
22 **B. Agenda Review and Approval**

23 Moved by [name not listed in transcript], seconded by [name not listed in  
24 transcript], and with no opposition, the Agenda was approved, as stated.

25  
26 **C. Review and Approval of April 10, 2026 EPAC Meeting Minutes**

27 Moved by Monique Harris, seconded by Antoinette Warren, with no  
28 opposition, meeting minutes were approved.

29  
30 **D. Review and Approval of April 24, 2026 TADDAC Meeting Minutes**

31 Meeting minutes were not ready by the time of the May 15 joint meeting  
32 and will be approved at the June 26, 2026 TADDAC meeting.

33  
34 **E. EPAC Action Items from April 10, 2026**

35  
36 **I. Action Item #34: Evaluate and complete surveys for member's  
37 selected equipment (Wave Two).**

38 Comments: The surveys are complete. This action item is closed.

39  
40 **F. TADDAC Action items from April 24, 2026**

41  
42

- 1  
2 **1. Action Item #68: Committee members to assist CTAP and CRS**  
3 **Vendor outreach efforts by emailing information or reporting on**  
4 **community events to the DDTP Committee Coordinator.**  
5 Comments: Katie Wright: Walk 4 Hearing events: May 30 in Bay area  
6 and May 31 in Long Beach. This action item remains open.  
7
- 8 **2. Action Item #99: TADDAC will make an effort to recruit new**  
9 **Members for its seven (7) open seats. TADDAC is seeking a Hard-**  
10 **of-Hearing, Disability I (Mobility), Disability II (Speech-to-Speech),**  
11 **Disability III (Blind/Low Vision), Disability Representative V, Late**  
12 **Deafened, At-Large**  
13 Comments: No updates. This action item remains open.  
14
- 15 **3. Action Item #119: Committee members will provide suggestions**  
16 **and recommendations for updating the current TADDAC Charter.**  
17 Comments: TADDAC is providing suggestions and recommendations  
18 for updating the charter. This action item remains open.  
19
- 20 **4. Action Item #118: Committee members will discuss the**  
21 **processes concerning 9-1-1 calls made through Augmentative**  
22 **and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices and Speech-To-**  
23 **Speech (STS) calls through California Relay Service.**  
24 Comments: Kevin Siemens was satisfied with the presentation and  
25 outcome of the action item. This action item is closed.  
26
- 27 **5. Action Item #117: Committee members will provide CPUC with a**  
28 **list of CBOs to enter a collaborative partnership serving Deaf and**  
29 **Disabled Californians during emergencies.**  
30 Comments: Discussion is ongoing. This action item remains open.  
31
- 32 **6. Action Item #116: Read the book, “Out of My Dreams” featuring a**  
33 **character with a speech disability.**  
34 Comments: No additional comments. This action item remains open.  
35

## 36 **II. California Connect & CPUC Update**

37 Tyrone Chin from the communications division provided committee  
38 members with an update. The first topic concerned Assembly Bill 2680  
39 (AB2680), previously discussed by Brent at the last meeting. AB2680 aimed to  
40 modify language in PE code 2881 to address barriers identified in the needs  
41 assessment report—specifically, the requirement for a medical professional’s  
42 certification to qualify for the California Connect program. The bill would have

1 removed the need for medical certification, making the program more  
2 accessible. However, the bill was withdrawn without explanation. Despite this,  
3 directives remain to modernize California Connect and reduce barriers,  
4 including exploring qualified entities to assist with the enrollment and  
5 application process. This involves identifying organizations, such as the  
6 California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), that could help verify an  
7 applicant's disability status for the program. The DMV requires applicants for a  
8 disability placard to be certified by a medical professional, which aligns with  
9 California Connect's current requirements. The idea is that if an individual  
10 possesses a DMV placard, they have already undergone medical certification  
11 and should not need to be certified again to receive equipment and services  
12 from California Connect. This is presented as a potential approach under  
13 consideration.

14 The next and final update involved the CTS R6 Request for Proposal  
15 (RFP), which remains in the evaluation phase with no new developments at  
16 this time.

17 Katie Wright asked whether the communications division could  
18 implement the medical certification change without legislative approval.  
19 Tyrone Chin responded that the change cannot be implemented without  
20 legislation, as the requirement is embedded in Public Utilities Code 281. Katie  
21 Wright expressed support for the DMV approach.

22 Jesse Acosta asked how the authenticity of a placard is verified. Tyrone  
23 Chin responded that their team is in the early stages of researching  
24 verification processes, including reviewing other government assistance  
25 programs. Chin explained that they have not yet established a method for  
26 verifying placards, but potential options include requesting the placard for  
27 review or arranging with the DMV to cross-reference their database. These  
28 ideas remain under consideration and no details have been finalized. Acosta  
29 shared a personal experience in which a police officer questioned his use of a  
30 handicap parking spot. After Acosta explained his disability and presented his  
31 ID, the officer examined the placard's numbers, scanned or called in the  
32 information, and confirmed its legitimacy. Acosta then demonstrated his visual  
33 impairment to the officer. Acosta noted that law enforcement has methods to  
34 verify placard legitimacy, but expressed uncertainty about other ways to  
35 ensure validity and left the question open for discussion. Chin acknowledged  
36 Acosta's point and referenced the California Lifeline program, which  
37 collaborates with Cal Fresh to verify applicant eligibility through database  
38 access. Chin suggested that similar arrangements with the DMV could help  
39 verify placard validity and ownership.

40 Louis Herrera agreed with Acosta, describing how police officers  
41 routinely verify placard holders. He explained that officers can cross-reference  
42 placard numbers with DMV databases to confirm validity and expiration dates.

1 Herrera expressed concern about excessive information sharing but  
2 acknowledged the process is preferable to delays in seeing a medical  
3 professional. Herrera stated that using the DMV as a verification method is a  
4 valid and well-considered solution.

5 Steve Longo inquired about the duration police have had access to car  
6 registration systems, and whether a similar verification process exists for blue  
7 placards. He questioned if placards are connected to databases to prevent  
8 loopholes and confirm disability status. Herrera clarified that placards are not  
9 linked to vehicle license plates, allowing legitimate placard holders to use  
10 them in any car as passengers. He confirmed police can validate placards  
11 independently of license plates. Herrera added that the placard's status can  
12 be verified immediately by police, but reiterated that placards cannot be tied to  
13 license plates, citing practical reasons for flexibility.

14 Darren Blackburn asked whether the recently withdrawn bill would be  
15 reintroduced and sought clarification on the reasons behind its withdrawal.  
16 Chin replied that he was not given an explanation for the bill's withdrawal and  
17 is unsure if it will be reintroduced. Summary:

18 During the meeting, Katie Wright asked about the authors of a report,  
19 and Tyrone Chin identified Aaron Beulah as the lead author, offering to  
20 provide further details. The group discussed the use of DMV-issued placards  
21 as proof of disability for program eligibility. Wright noted a mismatch between  
22 the type of disability a placard represents and the eligibility criteria for  
23 California Connect. Tyrone Chin emphasized that receiving a placard requires  
24 medical certification and suggested that, once verified, basic information might  
25 suffice for applicants.

26 Kevin Siemens raised concerns about the use of the word  
27 "handicapped," recommending "ADA" or "disabled" instead, a point  
28 acknowledged by others, including Monique Harris and Danyelle Cerillo.  
29 Cerillo also suggested considering documentation from the Department of  
30 Rehabilitation. Janice Armigo Brown discussed the Bay Area's Clipper card  
31 program, which also requires medical documentation for special IDs and  
32 proposed that transportation agencies could serve as qualified entities for  
33 disability verification. Tyrone Chin welcomed further suggestions for relevant  
34 programs from board members. The conversation shifted to concerns about  
35 privacy and the number of government entities with access to disability  
36 information. Kevin Siemens questioned how to prevent individuals who are not  
37 part of the ADA community from accessing benefits, emphasizing the need for  
38 medical certification, which Wright summarized as the main point of  
39 controversy.

1 **III. Wave Two Discussion & Recommendation**

2 Matthew Reinig clarified that this was a placeholder in case additional  
3 discussion was warranted. Wave Two recommendations were made and  
4 approved by EPAC and TADDAC, therefore no discussion is needed.

5  
6 **IV. TADDAC & EPAC Charter Discission**

7 Katie Wright began the discussion by reviewing changes to the  
8 committee charter, specifically highlighting the removal of limits on  
9 consecutive terms for committee members. She explained that this  
10 modification was prompted by difficulties in recruiting new members and  
11 clarified that, under the new policy, members may remain on the committee  
12 until a replacement is found.

13 Matthew Reinig clarified that both the TADDAC and EPAC charters are  
14 under review and suggested that both committees consider each other's  
15 proposed changes for the sake of consistency. Jesse Acosta supported this  
16 unified approach, stating that both committees should review their charters  
17 together.

18 Kevin Siemens shared his experience of being required to leave the  
19 committee after his term ended and having to wait two years before  
20 reapplying, which caused the committee to lose his input. Katie Wright  
21 responded that the new policy is intended to prevent such situations. Danyelle  
22 Cerillo agreed with extending consecutive terms, especially given the difficulty  
23 in finding replacements for committee members.

24 The conversation then shifted to the topic of vendor contractor reports.  
25 Katie Wright questioned whether all the detailed data included in these reports  
26 was necessary for committee members and suggested that only the most  
27 relevant information be shared aloud during meetings. She also inquired if  
28 Maximus, the overseeing entity, required all the details currently being  
29 provided. Danyelle Cerillo expressed her appreciation for the data but  
30 emphasized her interest in hearing about current actions and improvements.  
31 Kevin Siemens stated that they value having access to the data, with Kevin  
32 specifically mentioning the importance of Relay usage statistics. However,  
33 Kevin noted that accessing data in the binder can be difficult for some  
34 members and agreed with reading key data aloud during meetings. Antoinette  
35 Warren concurred with Danyelle, saying that understanding current activities  
36 is more important than focusing solely on the data.

37 Monique Harris requested to submit her comments on 3.10 via email  
38 which was approved. Darren Blackburn proposed adjusting the cadence of  
39 vendor reports by grouping them and alternating the reporting schedule to  
40 foster more discussion and address current activities. He agreed with the  
41 recommendation to set the schedule at the year's start. Katie Wright and  
42 Danyelle Cerillo emphasized the importance of presenting current data rather

1 than just past information. The team was reminded that charter changes are a  
2 gradual process. Matthew Reinig stressed that all charter revisions must be  
3 finished and approved by the November joint meeting, and the timeline of  
4 meetings leading up to that deadline was reviewed. Steve Longo confirmed  
5 that EPAC is reviewing the charter and would coordinate with Matt regarding  
6 necessary updates. Wright designated the completion of charter revisions by  
7 November as an action item.

## 8 9 **V. Program Vendor Reports**

### 10 **A. Maximus Report**

11 Julie Green, Oversight and Compliance Director, presented, and the  
12 presentation is on pages 45 to 53.

### 13 14 **B. Marketing Report**

15 Molly Miller, Marketing Director, presented, and the presentation is on  
16 pages 54 to 64.

17 Katie Wright noted that veterans were mentioned multiple times and  
18 suggested leveraging Jesse Acosta's foundation to help promote the initiative.  
19 Molly Miller shared that work had just begun on veteran campaigns and  
20 expressed interest in working with Jesse. Jesse agreed to continue the  
21 conversation.

22 Monique Harris inquired about campaigns for individuals with speech  
23 disabilities. Molly confirmed that upcoming videos would feature actors with  
24 speech disabilities. Monique requested to be contacted to view the videos,  
25 and Molly agreed. Kevin Siemens also expressed interest in the videos and  
26 contributed to the discussion. Molly confirmed that the videos would be shared  
27 with both Monique and Kevin.

28 Danyelle Cerillo asked if Molly needed a list of Independent Living  
29 Centers in California. Molly replied that she works closely with her outreach  
30 team and already has access to some organization lists but would appreciate  
31 receiving more information. Danyelle offered to send the list to Matt, who  
32 could then forward it to Molly.

33 Antoinette Warren inquired whether the brand ambassadors program  
34 would include short videos covering emergency demonstrations. Molly  
35 explained that each ambassador is required to create five pieces of content,  
36 which could include written stories or other formats. While the program is not  
37 strictly focused on emergencies, topics such as Mental Health Awareness  
38 Month or emergencies related to the devices provided by the organization (like  
39 NOAA radios for wildfires or weather events and charging stations for power  
40 outages) can be included. She clarified that the discussion of emergencies  
41 refers to the community at large, not just individual homes.

1  
2 **C. Testing and Training Report**

3 Joshua Josa, Testing & Training Director, presented and the  
4 presentation is on pages 65 to 75.

5 The conversation centers on the introduction and feedback process for a  
6 community platform designed to enhance communication and service  
7 awareness. Robert Sidansky highlighted the transformative impact of VRI  
8 technology, especially in medical and legal situations. Joshua encouraged  
9 participants to share their experiences on the forum and recommended joining  
10 the pilot program to foster community development. Katie Wright sought  
11 clarification on how to provide feedback and noted accessibility needs, asking  
12 about deadlines. Joshua detailed that instructions and survey links would be  
13 sent by email, inviting members to contribute suggestions and help address  
14 platform issues. Katie proposed making community platform review an action  
15 item for follow-up at subsequent meetings.

16 Robert Sidansky begins by reflecting on his childhood in a hearing family  
17 and the early days of captioned films for the Deaf, noting that such services  
18 were historically separate from those offered to people with other disabilities.  
19 He asks whether the trend toward devices that serve multiple disability  
20 categories—rather than single-purpose tools—is now reducing the need for  
21 separate devices. He points out that mass-produced products, like captioned  
22 films, now benefit a wider audience, including those who may not have  
23 previously realized their need for accessibility features. He believes that as  
24 accessible technology becomes more mainstream, more people will benefit,  
25 and nothing seems impossible.

26 Josh Josa confirms that their evaluation process rewards devices (such  
27 as the iPhone) that serve multiple disabilities with extra points. He says this  
28 approach will continue in forthcoming product waves, and that their  
29 assessment matrix identifies both the strengths and gaps in their offerings.  
30 Steve Longo supports the shift toward all-in-one, mass-market devices and  
31 asks if feedback gathered from the group is passed along to manufacturers.  
32 Josh explains that while this process is not yet formalized, it is an important  
33 next step they intend to develop further.

34 Katie Wright asks about the status and accessibility of the Community  
35 Platform. Josh explains that the platform is in beta, accessible since March but  
36 not yet publicly launched or easily found on the website. Recruitment focuses  
37 on beta testers through operational outreach, service centers, phone calls,  
38 community-based organizations, flyers, and word of mouth. Katie offers to  
39 help recruit testers through her network, suggesting webinars and newsletter  
40 outreach to reach their goal of 2,500 pilot testers. Josh welcomes this  
41 collaboration, emphasizing the impact of user participation in shaping the  
42 platform's future.

1 Katie also brings up past delays in device testing and asks if  
2 committee/user input will remain part of the process for Waves 3 and 4. Josh  
3 describes a new multi-stage approach: devices will first go through internal  
4 testing to identify the most promising candidates, then be provided to  
5 committee members and users for real-world feedback. This is intended to  
6 make the process more efficient and ensure that feedback is meaningfully  
7 incorporated before public release.

8 Janice Armigo Brown suggested the creation of a YouTube video to  
9 recruit 2,500 pilot testers by June 30th. Janice emphasized that such a video,  
10 which could be shared with organizations and networks, would help explain  
11 the project's background and reach the ambitious recruitment goal in a short  
12 timeframe. Josh Josa responded by acknowledging the importance of Janice's  
13 idea, noting that while a video does not yet exist, flyers have been distributed  
14 and he would coordinate with Matt and Mark from the CPUC to explore  
15 developing a video.

16 Katie Wright and Antoinette Warren further expanded on outreach  
17 strategies, recommending that the video be shared on Jesse's foundation  
18 website, HLAA California website, and sent to local chapters and LISTSERVs.  
19 Antoinette also suggested distributing flyers to Service Centers and leveraging  
20 phone calls to spread the word. Josh confirmed that these centers already  
21 have the flyers and are informing people during visits and calls but noted the  
22 challenge of encouraging people to volunteer.

23 Robert Sidansky raised concerns about the clarity of device testing  
24 instructions, describing his own struggles and recommending a simplified  
25 instructional video available in English and ASL. Josh explained that  
26 participants were intentionally given the actual consumer experience to  
27 identify difficulties, and that feedback is being used to improve instructions,  
28 including adding Braille versions when needed. He noted that field operations  
29 staff would be able to assist customers in the future.

30 Louis Herrera highlighted the need for accessible documentation,  
31 suggesting QR codes as a modern solution for distributing information,  
32 especially for those who are not Braille readers. He stressed the importance of  
33 consistency in QR code placement and marking for blind users. Robert  
34 agreed, and Louis also proposed audio chips as an additional accessibility tool  
35 for those less familiar with technology. Josh acknowledged this feedback and  
36 mentioned that QR code integration is being considered, with plans to  
37 collaborate on optimal placement.

38 Steve Longo added that printed instructions often use font sizes that are  
39 too small, recommending larger print and online access to instructions in  
40 accessible formats. Danyelle Cerillo echoed the importance of adaptable  
41 instructions and described the use of tactile markings for QR code locations,

1 further supporting the need for multiple formats including Braille and digital  
2 options.

3 Eve Reiland inquired about outreach efforts for testers, questioning  
4 whether platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and podcasts—especially popular  
5 within the disabled community and among Gen Z—were being considered in  
6 addition to YouTube and traditional options like Facebook. She thanked the  
7 group for considering her question. Josh Josa appreciated her comment and  
8 stated that the suggestion could be brought to the CPUC for further  
9 discussion. Katie Wright introduced Eve as a new member and social media  
10 expert, mentioning that her expertise would be valuable to the group, and  
11 thanked her for the input.

#### 12 **D. Field Operations Report**

13 Jennifer Minore, Field Operations Director, presented and the  
14 presentation is on page 76 to 86.

15 Steve Longo inquired about a pie chart on page 83 labeled "unknown,"  
16 seeking clarification on its meaning. Jennifer Minore explained that the  
17 "unknown" category refers to cases where individuals do not specify their  
18 preferred language, and since it is not mandatory information, it goes  
19 undocumented unless obvious.

20 Janice Armigo Brown suggested providing flyers to customers during in-  
21 home or Service Center visits to recruit participants for a pilot program.  
22 Jennifer Minore responded that flyers had recently been approved and  
23 distributed to all Service Centers and field staff, including those conducting in-  
24 home visits. Janice also asked about the status of the Service Center in the  
25 Bay Area, specifically the East Bay. Jennifer stated that Mark was not  
26 available to provide details but mentioned ongoing discussions and hopes for  
27 a partnership launch in the fall. In the meantime, pop-up events are planned to  
28 serve waiting individuals.

29 Antoinette Warren asked for clarification regarding charts on pages 79  
30 and 80, specifically about the distinction between new and existing California  
31 Connect customers. Jennifer explained that orange bars represent first-time  
32 contacts or equipment recipients, while blue bars denote returning program  
33 participants seeking assistance or exchanges.

34 Katie Wright commented on the increasing number of new customers  
35 and emphasized the benefits of face-to-face Service Center interactions. She  
36 asked if feedback from Wave 2 testing and training was shared to anticipate  
37 common issues. Jennifer confirmed that some feedback comes from field  
38 operations specialists and is shared with the team, allowing for tailored  
39 assistance during in-person meetings.

40 Darren Blackburn inquired about the equipment and materials planned  
41 for the mobile unit and whether it would be used solely for pop-up events or  
42

1 other purposes. Jennifer described the unit as a means to transport program  
2 equipment, with the ability to set up outdoors or join existing events. The unit  
3 will provide program equipment, internet access, and information about  
4 applications.

5 Danyelle Cerillo, surprised by the presence of participants under age 45,  
6 asked about outreach strategies for younger demographics. Jennifer clarified  
7 that there is no age or income requirement for the program and that outreach  
8 extends beyond senior centers, with efforts to engage younger audiences  
9 through collaborations and presentations. Danyelle suggested targeting youth  
10 programs at Independent Living Centers, and Jennifer agreed, citing previous  
11 outreach to college students.

12 Antoinette Warren asked how interest would be gauged and promoted  
13 for pop-up events in the Berkeley area. Jennifer replied that partnerships with  
14 community organizations and general promotion would be used, and she  
15 committed to sharing information with the Committee.

16 Katie Wright recalled past issues with unclear device instructions and  
17 suggested providing clearer, custom directions. Jennifer confirmed that  
18 simplified instructions are sometimes provided for commonly used features.  
19 Katie also questioned whether high numbers of in-home visits were due to  
20 unclear directions, but Jennifer indicated that most visits result from people  
21 needing physical assistance with setup. Katie and Robert Sidansky discussed  
22 age distribution trends, predicting shifts as user demographics change.

23

## 24 **E. Outreach Report**

25 Aida Cerda, Community & Outreach Director, reported on Outreach  
26 updates, and the presentation is on page 87 to 98.

27 Antoinette Warren inquired about the determination of locations for  
28 educational workshops, referencing Page 96 of a report. Aida Cerda  
29 responded that the initial in-person workshops were intentionally held at  
30 Service Centers to increase their visibility and offer tours. However, after  
31 gaining experience, Aida explained that holding workshops at partner  
32 organizations proved more impactful. The approach has since shifted toward  
33 partner-hosted workshops, targeting new agencies, with an emphasis on  
34 engaging organizations that can invite other stakeholders and prominent  
35 community leaders to broaden outreach.

36 Antoinette further asked about outreach metrics in the San Francisco  
37 Bay Area (Page 92), specifically questioning the meaning of the cumulative  
38 lead count of eighty-three. Aida clarified that this figure represented eighty-  
39 three new leads generated from October to March, with thirty-five of those  
40 becoming active partners. Antoinette expressed interest in knowing which  
41 agencies were involved, and Aida agreed to provide that data, noting it could  
42 be included in future materials.

1 Steve Longo raised a question regarding the high outreach numbers for  
2 the Inland Empire region, asking which counties were included. Aida  
3 confirmed Riverside and San Bernardino counties, highlighting the challenges  
4 of outreach in resource-poor and rural areas, such as Indio and Coachella,  
5 and the potential benefit of leveraging trusted local contacts, like clinics or  
6 physicians, to facilitate recognition and engagement.

7 Jesse Acosta asked about the process for initiating a workshop, including  
8 criteria and participant requirements. Aida described a selective process,  
9 given their small team, where decisions are based on the potential to generate  
10 new leads, alignment with key geographic or sector interests, and the  
11 likelihood of positive outcomes. The team collectively assesses which  
12 opportunities will be most impactful.

13 Jesse also questioned outreach to the two Blind Resource Centers  
14 (BRCs) in California, located in Palo Alto and Long Beach, expressing  
15 concern about reaching veterans, who often have brief stays. Aida explained  
16 that referrals from contacts like Jesse are highly valuable and that the team  
17 uses both referrals and cold calls to reach organizations. She acknowledged a  
18 backlog of over 1,900 referrals but clarified that new leads are generated  
19 daily, and outreach is ongoing. Aida emphasized that any veteran residing in  
20 California during their stay is eligible for the program's services.

21 During the meeting, Katie Wright called on Eve Reiland, who inquired  
22 about outreach efforts and data specific to Fresno and the rural areas  
23 between Bakersfield and Sacramento. Aida Cerda responded that Juan  
24 Dorado, the regional manager for Central California, is active in Fresno and  
25 Bakersfield and that outreach in those areas is ongoing and expanding.

26 Janice Armigo Brown raised concerns about the outreach process,  
27 specifically regarding pop-up events and the challenges customers face in  
28 obtaining medical clearance to access products. She questioned what  
29 provisions exist for those without regular medical care. Aida Cerda deferred to  
30 Jennifer Minore, who explained that the team is aware of the issue and is  
31 seeking alternative certification methods. Minore added that after pop-up  
32 events, customers are followed up with, and staff can arrange for home  
33 installation or shipping of equipment, ensuring continued support.

34 Katie Wright then asked how many staff members are involved in  
35 outreach. Aida Cerda clarified that there are three outreach staff plus herself,  
36 covering all of California. The team is small but active, focusing on webinars,  
37 workshops, and planning potential pop-up events based on demand. Cerda  
38 acknowledged the need for more staff and expressed hope to eventually  
39 double the team size, but budget constraints currently prevent expansion.

40 Wright emphasized that outreach is critical to the program's success and  
41 noted that current staffing is insufficient. Cerda responded that collaboration  
42 with the marketing team has improved outreach, especially through social

1 media campaigns, and that the team is now better aligned and strategic with  
2 their efforts. The program has exceeded outreach expectations despite the  
3 small team size.

4 Further discussion highlighted the interconnectedness of the  
5 departments, as observed by Wright, who noted improved collaboration  
6 compared to the early days of the program. Cerda explained the distinction  
7 between her team, which focuses on partnerships and organizational  
8 outreach, and the field operations (FO) team, which handles direct consumer  
9 services such as home visits. Antoinette Warren got clarification that house  
10 calls are managed by the FO team, not the outreach staff.

11 Jesse Acosta questioned Cerda about the team's size and the lack of  
12 hiring, suggesting that veterans could be excellent additions due to their field  
13 experience and dedication. Cerda agreed that lived experience is valuable but  
14 reiterated that staffing is limited by budget. Acosta offered to advocate for  
15 increased staffing and veteran hiring by raising awareness at higher levels,  
16 such as the state capitol, and Katei Wright referenced the organization's  
17 charter, which calls for budget reviews.

18 Janice Armigo Brown expressed concern that the outreach goals were  
19 unrealistic due to budget constraints, suggesting that expectations should be  
20 tempered.

21 Danyelle commended the team for their efforts and emphasized the  
22 importance of peer support, particularly within Independent Living Centers.  
23 She inquired how committee members could assist with outreach beyond  
24 providing resources. Aida Cerda responded, expressing interest in having a  
25 separate conversation with Danyelle to brainstorm creative partnership  
26 opportunities, particularly involving people with lived experiences. Danyelle  
27 agreed to continue the dialogue.

28 Katie Wright supported Jesse's earlier comments about veterans,  
29 highlighting the challenges veterans face when returning home, especially  
30 those with hearing loss. She quoted Helen Keller to underscore the isolating  
31 effects of deafness and suggested that the committee focus efforts on  
32 supporting veterans, working closely with Jesse.

33 Aida Cerda voiced her agreement with Katie's proposal. Katie then invited  
34 further comments, prompting Janice Armigo Brown to add that peer support is  
35 crucial. Janice suggested that training veterans to become peer supporters  
36 themselves would be mutually beneficial.

37 Aida Cerda thanked everyone for their contributions. Kevin Siemens  
38 noted that while there is interest in hiring veterans, hiring practices must  
39 remain non-discriminatory.

## 40 41 **F. California Relay Service (CRS) Report**

1 Abby Magtoto, Relay Account Manager, reported on CRS updates, and  
2 the presentation is on page 99 to 112.

3 Kevin Siemens inquired about how calls that involve two operators—  
4 English STS relay and Spanish Relay—are tracked. Abby Magtoto replied that  
5 she will investigate it.  
6

### 7 **G. Equipment Processing Center (EPC) Customer Contact Report**

8 Chong Vang, EPC Operations Director, presented and the presentation  
9 is on page 113 to 127.

10 Antoinette Warren asked about the period covered by the inactive  
11 customer reengagement referenced on Page 119. Chong Vang clarified that  
12 this initiative began on February 17 and covered almost three months  
13 (February, March, and April). Antoinette then inquired about equipment listed  
14 for new customers on Pages 122, 123, 124, and 125. Chong confirmed that  
15 the equipment listed corresponded with the customers identified on those  
16 pages. Antoinette specifically asked about the Panasonic KX device on Page  
17 122 and whether it was for individuals who are hard of hearing. Chong  
18 explained that the Panasonic device could be used for hard of hearing,  
19 mobility, or other disabilities, emphasizing that a single customer could be  
20 counted multiple times if they have multiple disabilities, as the certifications  
21 are broken down by disability type.

22 Katie Wright asked whether applicants could only select one disability on  
23 the application. Chong responded that applicants could mark all disabilities  
24 that apply. Chong noted that although the application is online, applicants  
25 must still obtain a medical certification, which involves printing the form and  
26 having a medical professional complete it. Katie Wright questioned whether  
27 this process should be considered an online or mail-in application. Chong  
28 explained that while applicants can upload supporting documents online, if an  
29 applicant completes their portion at home without documentation, the  
30 department will follow up to help complete the process, potentially by fax or  
31 email. Katie Wright asked whether an audiologist could be emailed the  
32 application, fill it out, and return it. Chong confirmed that this is possible and  
33 that the department can receive medical certifications by email. Antoinette  
34 clarified that Chong's department would receive information directly from the  
35 doctor via email, and Chong confirmed.  
36

### 37 **H. DOR Voice Options Program Report**

38 LaCandice Ochoa, Deputy Director, presented and the presentation is  
39 on pages 128 to 138.

40 Katie Wright began by highlighting the importance of language  
41 development in young children, specifically referring to the statistic that 77  
42 percent of participants are between zero and six years old. She emphasized

1 that these early years are crucial for language acquisition. Katie also noted the  
2 significance of enabling older children, aged 7 to 17, to communicate with their  
3 peers and teachers, and inquired whether the students are allowed to take  
4 their communication devices home. LaCandice Ochoa confirmed that students  
5 are now permitted to take their devices home, unlike in the past when they  
6 were only used at school. LaCandice also mentioned that children can use the  
7 devices over the summer because communication needs continue outside of  
8 school. Katie expressed her enthusiasm for this development, stating that, as  
9 a teacher, she is very pleased with the change.

10 Kevin Siemens asked if individuals with both developmental disabilities and  
11 speech impairments are counted in both categories. LaCandice clarified that  
12 during the intake process, all applicable disabilities are identified for each  
13 individual, so overlap is accounted for.

14 Monique Harris added that she is familiar with the program, as it is  
15 implemented weekly at her own organization and serves many people there.  
16 She affirmed the program's effectiveness and value.

17 LaCandice acknowledged the presence of representatives from various  
18 Independent Living Centers, specifically mentioning Jason from the local  
19 center in Hayward.

## 21 **VI. Public Input – PM Session**

22 There was no public input at this time.

## 24 **VII. New Business**

### 25 **A. Future Meetings and Agendas**

### 27 **B. Report from the Chairs**

28 Steve Longo noted that the test pilot for a VRI mobile device had been  
29 approved and forwarded. He suggested that EPAC members should follow up  
30 on this equipment to ensure its progress. Steve also attempted to recall two  
31 action items. Matthew Reinig stated that the CPUC would provide an update  
32 on the VRI pilot at the June meeting and confirmed that the second action  
33 item pertained to the charter.

### 35 **C. Member Reports**

36 Monique Harris indicated she heard Kevin Siemens attempting to speak.  
37 Kevin Siemens explained that Paratransit was acquiring new equipment  
38 designed to carry heavier mobility devices but emphasized that the equipment  
39 did not meet the ADA-required length of 48 inches. He reiterated his concerns  
40 and invited further discussion. Katie Wright acknowledged his frustration and  
41 thanked him for sharing.

1 **VIII. Meeting Wrap up and Adjournment**

2 The meeting was adjourned at 3:18 PM.

3

4 Matthew Reinig prepared the minutes.