



# COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES COMMISSION FOR PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

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<https://dpss.lacounty.gov/en/about/pss.html>



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**Executive Director**  
LA FRANCE TOLIVER

**Commission Secretary**  
TINA PHAN

## MEETING MINUTES

**Thursday, April 20, 2023**  
**12851 Crossroads Parkway South**  
**City of Industry, CA 91746**

Please note this is a summary of the meeting not a “verbatim” transcription.

### 1.0 CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL / ESTABLISH A QUORUM

Adele Andrade-Stadler, Chairperson

Meeting was called to order at 10:41 a.m. The Chair opened the meeting stating the following, we acknowledge the First peoples upon whose land the County of Los Angeles now sits at public meetings is a first but meaningful step that we, as a County family, can take to build positive relationships and advance truth, healing, and transformation with the County’s local Tribes and American Indian and Alaska Native community.

A quorum was established at 10:45 a.m. Pursuant to AB 2449, I am required to state when a commissioner is participating via teleconference. Today, the following commissioners (Pollyanna Lee; Sue ElHessen and Booker Pearson) have met the requirements of AB 2449 under “special circumstances” and will be participating via teleconference under that exception: (1)(2)(3). Does anyone object? There were no objections.

### Roll Call/Commissioners Present:

Adele Andrade-Stadler (Chair)	Summer McBride
Veronica Lewis (Vice-Chair)	Booker Pearson (V)
Joe Brown	Andrew Yam
Yvonne Chan	Sue ElHessen (V)
Mary Galvan Rosas	Dynasty Taylor
Pollyanna Lee (V)	

### Commissioners Excused / Unexcused:

Michael Flood (E)	Mihran Kalaydjian (E)
Paige Pelonis (U)	

### Commission Staff:

La France Toliver  
Tina Phan

### **Introduction of Guests**

Jackie Contreras, Ph.D., DPSS  
Shawn Amiel, DPSS  
Julia Almanzan, County Counsel

## **2.0 REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 16, 2023 MEETING AND FEBRUARY 28, 2023 SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

Adele Andrade-Stadler, Chairperson

The Chairperson opened the floor for corrections and approval of the February 16, 2023, minutes. Commissioner ElHessen requested her name to be added to page 7 as she was excluded from the list of commissioners that voted. The Chair called for the minutes to be amended as stated and called for a motion to approve the February 16, 2023, minutes. Commissioner Chan approved and Commissioner Brown seconded the motion. The Chair called for the vote and the minutes were approved by majority vote with two abstentions as follows:

Adele Andrade-Stadler - Aye	Summer McBride - Aye
Veronica Lewis - Aye	Booker Pearson - Aye
Joe Brown - Aye	Andrew Yam - Abstained
Yvonne Chan - Aye	Sue ElHessen - Aye
Mary Galvan Rosas - Abstained	Dynasty Taylor - Aye
Pollyanna Lee - Aye	

The Chairperson opened the floor to approve the February 28, 2023, Special Meeting minutes. Commissioner Galvan Rosas approved, and Commissioner Chan seconded. Chairperson called for the vote and the minutes were approved by majority vote with two abstentions and no corrections as follows:

Adele Andrade-Stadler - Aye	Summer McBride - Aye
Veronica Lewis - Abstained	Booker Pearson - Aye
Joe Brown - Aye	Andrew Yam - Abstained
Yvonne Chan - Aye	Sue ElHessen - Aye
Mary Galvan Rosas - Aye	Dynasty Taylor - Aye
Pollyanna Lee - Aye	

## **3.0 PUBLIC COMMENT (Non-Agenda Items) / (Agenda Items)**

Adele Andrade-Stadler, Chairperson

None.

## **4.0 DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Jackie Contreras, Ph.D., Director

Dr. Contreras provided the following updates:

There is a slight change to my departmental report - you'll receive an update in writing and then I will emphasize a few areas for discussion. Please know, this does not take away from the importance of any of these items. I think this is more responsive to your requests to see things in writing, and a better opportunity for us to engage on some of the most critical issues the department is facing. I am very open to feedback on this change, as I want these updates to work for all of us. I also want to highlight that there is some concern about providing information in writing. I'm choosing to weather that concern, as I don't know how to be transparent without being transparent and I don't know how to build trust without being trusting.

### Board Updates

- The Board is dedicating Grand Park in Honor of former Los Angeles County Supervisor, Gloria Molina. March 27 was celebrated as César Chávez Day throughout the County. In addition, the Board has proclaimed the month of April as Autism Awareness and Acceptance; Arts Month, Support for Arts Education Awareness of Veterans with Parkinson's Month, Fair Housing Month, and National Volunteer Month. You can go to <https://volunteer.lacounty.gov> to get more information. April has also been proclaimed as National Arab American Heritage Month, Armenian History Month, and April 10 through 14 is National Community Development Week.

### Federal/State Updates

- As previously stated, the last Emergency Allotments (EA) for February 2023 were issued on March 26. A total of 960,574 CalFresh households received \$166,764,557 of EA benefits in March 2023.
- The California Fruit and Vegetable Pilot started on February 10 of this year and will end in December 2023. It aims to increase the purchase and consumption of California (CA) grown fresh fruits and vegetables. CalFresh recipients will receive a supplemental 1:1 match up to \$60.00 per calendar month. The supplemental benefits can be accrued through purchasing CA grown fresh fruits and vegetables from authorized retailers (including Farmer's Markets). LA County is one of 11 counties participating in this pilot program. As this is a new pilot, we are getting more information and will share this broadly with our CalFresh customers and stakeholders.

### DPSS Updates

- I'm going to rearrange these DPSS updates slightly and start with DPSS Vita Services. For the 2022 tax season, our DPSS VITA Program had two sites GAIN Region III and GAIN Region IV. The VITA call line was activated on February 12 and had two customer service representatives that attended to the line. The sites were opened on five (5) specific Saturdays, in March and April with appointments scheduled from 8:00am – 5:00pm.

The chart provides a summary of the weekly appointments and volunteers that were scheduled along with the show count. There was a slight decrease from last year's 66% show rate in scheduled appointments and overall, we are pleased with the number of volunteers and the support we were able to provide.

- The next two topics are two critical issues I want to highlight. On April 4, 2023, I informed the Board of Supervisors the Continuous Coverage Unwinding began April 1, 2023, which includes the return to "normal" business operations and full processing of Medi-Cal renewals, including the discontinuance of ineligible beneficiaries. Medi-Cal beneficiaries have been asked to provide their most updated contact information: including names, addresses, telephone numbers, and email address. We do this at every point of contact with a customer. Beneficiaries who receive a Medi-Cal RE packet are asked to complete and return the packet in the pre-paid return envelope provided, by the due date. The packet can also be submitted online, in-person or by phone: (866) 613-3777. Counties have 12 months to process annual Medi-Cal renewals (June 2023 – May 2024).
- Unfortunately, DPSS has received reports of a telephone scam targeting customers. According to reports, the caller is altering the caller ID to make it look like the call is coming from an official County of Los Angeles phone line. The caller claims to be a representative from Medi-Cal Program and requests personal or medical information. The department is reminding customers to never provide personal information in response to calls, text, or emails. DPSS does not use robocalls, automated response systems, or unexpected calls about benefits. If you believe you were a victim and provided any information about your Medi-Cal benefits, please report the scam to the Medi-Cal Fraud Hotline at (800) 822-6222.
- You also have a chart on the Quarterly CSC data. As you may have heard me say at the April 4 Board of Supervisors meeting, we have seen an increase in our wait times. To date, we are seeing a decrease in April. I will also highlight the increase in dropped calls. We have also seen an increase in new applications from February, while our disposition rate and percentage of applications processed have remained steady.

Follow up questions: (Commissioner Lewis) In reference to the Call Wait time, she believes people would prefer to wait to get through rather than not get through. She was wondering if the department was looking at the balance of the implication of people having to wait longer, in comparison to people not getting through. Secondly, is the department working towards trying to increase the percentage of same day dispositions or applications being processed? It looks to be steady around 40-50%.

Dr. Contreras stated what the department calls First Contact Resolution is one of our goals. When a call comes into the CSC our goal is to make sure that we can resolve the call upon first contact. We have expanded through our CSCs the capacity to serve our customers directly. If the CSC is not able to resolve, they send it to the district office. We have been trying to do this in a thoughtful manner. But yes, ideally, we don't want the customer to have to go into an office or call and go into an office. We want to be able to resolve it, whenever, whatever way they are entering our system.

Commissioner Lewis would also like an update (in the future) related to CalAIM and its impacts. She sees the notifications on social media, but she feels it would be helpful if you can tell the commission because we are attached to social services agencies and a network of providers, how can we help to spread the word. She would love to hear at some point this year what DPSS does. There's a lot of community violence, particularly some of the communities that are most impacted are participants for DPSS.

Follow up question: (Commissioner El Hessen) In reference to a new fraud situation, if a person is calling in to report it, the concern then is that their benefits will be suspended. Dr. Contreras stated she certainly hopes that there is not a link between reporting the fraud and benefits being suspended. That said, I will make sure and verify with my internal experts. There should be no link between the two.

Follow up question: (Commissioner Taylor) asked if DPSS is sharing digital literacy on fraud with the participants/community both English, Spanish, and other languages.

(Commissioner Yam) asked regarding the scams and fraud, if there was any consideration for implementing a short script for CSCs to inform the participants as they wait or in their farewell before ending the call with representatives.

(Commissioner McBride) asked if there is a message participants listen to while they wait on the phone or is it music. Ms. Amiel stated the department utilizes this time to communicate important messages to participants. The department tries to use this time wisely. At the same time, we don't want to overwhelm them with so many messages. (Commissioner Lewis) suggested a message related to the Medi-Cal Renewals be placed on the loop. Dr. Contreras stated she would look into it.

## 5.0 **CONTINUED BUSINESS**

**Presentation: General Relief Opportunities for Work (GROW) Program Supportive Services:** Discuss supportive services for the General Relief /Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) population; Discuss the impact of Career Assessment Tools and Identify Key Collaborations  
Shawn Amiel, Human Services Administrator III

Ms. Amiel provided the following updates:

The General Relief Opportunities for Work (GROW) Program is General Relief's (GR) Welfare-to-Work program. GROW was implemented in 1999 and focused on job readiness for employable GR customers. Since the focus was job readiness, some GROW participants did obtain short term employment that paid minimum wage which is not considered a living wage in Los Angeles County.

To achieve success, we needed to change our program goal. Our GROW Program's Goal is to rapidly transition participants into the labor market. The new program's goal is to develop job skills and knowledge for employment in high-demand fields by creating individualized career pathways and allowing for flexibility in what constitutes a "career".

Various elements contributed to developing the GROW Redesign. We hired a consultant to identify areas of improvement using a human-centered design approach; researched labor market statistics and emerging industries; obtained input from other County departments; workforce development boards; educational organizations; business/employer related agencies; conducted Focus Groups with GROW staff; and deployed surveys to GROW participants.

The new GROW Program is called “START” Skills and Training to Achieve Readiness for Tomorrow. Under the redesign GROW staff are receiving new working titles. GROW Case Managers are now Career Pathfinders; GROW Services Supervisors are now Career Coaches; and Job Developers are now Career Designers.

The new redesigned START program focuses on New Career Assessments; Individualized Career Pathways; Business/Employer Engagement; Job Retention Services; Technology; and Case Management.

A new assessment tool was developed to assist in determining career pathways for participants. The tool was vetted with internal and external stakeholders. The new Career Assessment has questions and dialogue to: Identify barriers to participation and employment, as well as educational and employment history; Determine special needs that should be met (i.e. TAY, Fair Chance, etc.) Assess for soft skills, hobbies, and career interests; Develop short, mid, and long-term goals for the participant’s specific career pathway; and Obtain buy-in from the customer on career goals.

The new Career Assessment was piloted in two district offices for three months. The pilots’ goal was to determine how effective were the questions in obtaining information from our customers; what changes if any are needed to the Career Assessment; and how long does it take to administer the Career Assessment? The same tool was used in both offices; however, one was instructed to administer the assessment over three appointments and the other over one appointment.

Overall, the pilots’ results indicated that the new Career Assessment was effective in creating a dialogue that generated good career conversations; minimal revisions were needed to the 70 questions (added two soft skills questions, revised three questions, and eliminated five questions); and administering the tool during one appointment led to more Career Assessment completions. The new Career Assessment was implemented in all 14 START District Offices.

Individualized career pathways are being developed based on the participant’s individual characteristics, circumstances, educational level, work experience and barriers to employment. Career pathways include Entrepreneurship, Paid and Unpaid Work Experience, Education, and Training START Connect. Based on a customer’s assessment, some or all of the activities can be part of the customer’s career pathway.

A Business Engagement unit was created within the START Program Section. Career Designers will be trained to assist in this process. The new unit will: Monitor the job market to develop training opportunities in emerging and growing job fields to better prepare our participants and to be competitive candidates.

Engage employers to determine the employer's hiring needs and which skill sets are desired for job openings and collaborate with the Department of Economic Opportunity to leverage new and existing partnerships for training and employment opportunities.

Job Retention Services will be redesigned to better support participants in retaining employment and/or continuing their career goals; provide Job Retention Services to participants who no longer receive GR benefits due to excess earned income for up to 90 days from GR discontinuance; assist participants in maintaining employment and continuing their education goals to increase economic mobility. Job Retention Services will include services, such as personalized case management, ancillaries for transportation and employment related expenses, career pathway planning and much more.

START Program is exploring new ways to communicate with the participants using technology. Assisting participants with obtaining cellphones, laptops, and internet access, to leverage technology and resources that are available to us to improve the way in which we provide services to our clients. CalSAWS will be modified to include features to assist in case management and add new activities and ancillaries.

Our case management methodology was redesigned to enhance engagement with participants. Guiding our participants to identify their own specific goals and developing an action plan to achieve those goals. Incorporating different coaching techniques to empower and motivate them. Developing career pathways based on participant's goals, chosen field, circumstances and employment history.

Phase I of the redesign was completed in December 2021. The following was implemented: GROW/START Connect Activity; Virtual/Telephonic Orientation; Telephonic CMAs; Technology Resource Guide; TAYportunity Program; Cell-Ed Work Ready Activity Pilot; Partners and Contracts Review; Trainings (Cell-Ed Work Ready and Redesign Overview).

Phase II of the redesign was completed in December 2022. The following was completed: Career Assessment Pilot; Career Pathways Pilot 1; Video CMAs Pilot; Laptop Lending Program with LACOE Pilot; New Activity Needs Assessment and Foundation Training.

Phase III began in January 2023. The following is in progress and/or has been completed: Library Laptop Loan Program; Small Business/Entrepreneurship Classes; Career Assessment Implementation; Expansion of Skill Up L.A. Expansion; Ready, Set, START! and Career Exploration Activities Pilots; Career Pathways Pilot 2; Transition Aged Youth Trauma-Informed Care Training; START Name Change; and START Program implementation is a multi-year effort.

Follow up: (Commissioners Galvan Rosas and Brown) emphasized the importance of a job being available for participants once they complete the program. Commissioner Rosas stated she would like to work with START program to offer Starbucks as a possible resource for participants.

(Commissioner Lewis) is excited for the entrepreneurial piece to the program. She understands the focus on the TAY Population but hopes that there is a focus to include populations above 24 years old as well. Job retention is a critical piece and having an employer that understands the lived experience of the employee due to not having a job for a very long time or that it is their first job ever; being in a group setting and talking about experiences you are having at work and having someone to talk you down and provide guidance in making decisions. They need more like professional development that involves an emotional intelligence curriculum. I am hoping that you implement the retention piece by expanding beyond the case manager. There is a lot of hand holding needed. What would be good is to offer employment (careers) that offer apprenticeships with stipends.

Ms. Amiel responded that they are allowed to now provide job retention services up to 90 days and that is what we want to pilot. We really wanted to see if there's anybody that will take us up on this. We are limited to Net County Costs (NCC) because that's about as much as we can get reimbursed. We do have limitations concerning our funding. The focus is on the TAY population as it is the Board's focus. This does not mean we are not looking for opportunities for the rest of the population. Youth are 11% of our population and we cannot ignore the majority, which is predominantly African American and Hispanic. I appreciate all the comments because that's exactly some of the things that we're looking for and that we're trying to change in our program. One of the challenges with job retention services is finding a partner (through contracting services) who will be able to give this once they get a job. Their income is going to make them ineligible for GR. This means they are no longer in the GROW program, which means we are no longer handling their case. That is why we are looking for a partner to provide these services through 90 days. Unfortunately, it is a financial situation. Anything longer than 90 days, we will need more money for that. However, it does not mean we can't explore other alternative resources.

(Commissioner Taylor) commented the importance of businesses to incorporate executive functioning skills valuing emotional intelligence, compassion, and patience for workers that have not been in the workplace or not had a job for an extended amount of time. They bring with them a host of emotional issues, lacking communication, life skills, and self-care practices that are important to the workplace.

Dr. Contreras added that this START program sits in the larger General Relief population of services. There is definitely a larger effort that we are undertaking to redesign this program. We recognize that it is not sufficient. We also continue to advocate for changes in some of the requirements.

(Commissioner Mc Bride) commented on the importance of a financial literacy component, offering a warm handoff and retention. Ms. Amiel responded that concerning financial literacy, we are currently looking for a partner that offers full financial literacy and life skills together. Regarding 90-day retention, it will not be handled by our program. It will be a provider because we cannot handle the case if they are not receiving benefits. But we will be looking at this, as this topic came up, as we were exploring what kind of providers are out there, so we can really develop our ask.



(Commissioner El Hessen) emphasized the importance of an assessment process that assesses values. She believes it brings a vested interest in retention and the program, once a person's values are connected to the mission and their goal, regarding to the job search and career paths for those who are 18-24 who have limited experience.

## **6.0 BROWN ACT REQUIREMENTS UPDATE**

Julia Almanzan, Principal Deputy County Counsel

Ms. Almanzan provided a high-level summary of the Brown Act Teleconference rules. As of March 1, 2023, the Commission is required to meet in person and comply with the Brown Act under traditional teleconferencing requirements or comply with the Brown Act new teleconferencing requirements pursuant to AB 2449. Ms. Almanzan explained the difference between the two.

Traditional Teleconference – requires at least a quorum of the commission (in-person) to participate from within Los Angeles County. The agenda must be posted from each location and each location must be listed on the agenda. Each location must be fully accessible to the public. The public has a right to testify at each location. Each location must be ADA compliant.

There are now new alternate meeting locations at Los Angeles County Public Libraries that align with traditional teleconference rules, thanks to a partnership between Los Angeles County Library and the Executive Office, as an option if you or any commissioners wanted to pursue. You will need to immediately work with and contact the Director of your Commission. Because it involves having to communicate, there are several things with setting that up for yourself and the members of the public.

AB 2449 Teleconference – allows members of the Commission to participate remotely and does not require members to identify the location where they are teleconferencing as long as narrow conditions are met first. (1) A quorum of the Commission must be present in person from a single location. (2) The member who is remote must state whether a person over 18 years old is present and their relationship. There must be a two-way audio visual or a two-way telephonic service with live broadcasting available and (3) the agenda must notify the public of ways to access the meeting and offer public comment.

Under AB 2449, members may only teleconference for “Just Cause” or “Emergency Circumstances.” Just cause maybe childcare, or caregiving of a child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, sibling, spouse, domestic partner that requires a member to participate remotely, a contagious illness that prevents a member from attending in person; a need related to a physical or mental disability; traveling while doing business of the legislative body, which means this commission or another state or local agency. Emergency circumstances mean physical or family medical emergency that prevents a commissioner from attending in-person.

AB 2449 only permits a commissioner to teleconference for no more than three consecutive months or 20% of the meetings for the year, or no more than two meetings. This commission meets 10 times a year, but this does not account for special meetings, so it may be more than two times that you can use any exception under AB 2449.

Just cause can only be used for two meetings. Furthermore, commissioners must make the request to participate remotely at the earliest opportunity and get the commission's approval for emergency circumstances. The commission must place it on the agenda and take a vote on it. There are nuances to the teleconference rules which require careful tracking by the Director and her staff.

If any member of the Commission is looking to try and qualify to participate via AB 2449, there must be at least eight of the commissioners present in-person in the room where most of you are today.

Because of the all the nuances, some of which I mentioned today, County Counsel will continue to work with the Commission and is available for trainings, to meet individually as required, and as the Director and the Chair request, regarding these new rules.

## **7.0 ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting ended at 12:30 p.m.