



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES COMMISSION FOR PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

12860 CROSSROADS PARKWAY SOUTH, CITY OF INDUSTRY, CA 91746
(562) 908-8669

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



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Executive Director
LA FRANCE TOLIVER
Commission Secretary
TINA PHAN

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, November 16, 2023

Location #1: Exposition Park District
3833 S. Vermont Avenue, 3rd Floor Conference Room B
Los Angeles, CA 90037

Location #2: ElHessen Home Office
9433 Ives Street
Bellflower, CA 90706

Location #3: Porter Ranch Library
11371 Tampa Ave
Porter Ranch, CA 91326

Location #4: Andrade-Stadler Home Office
2956 West Shorb Street
Alhambra, CA 91803

Location #5: Dr. Chan – LA County Board of Education
9300 Imperial Highway - Room EC-104
Downey, CA 90242

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 10:03 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.

Commissioners Andrade-Stadler, ElHessen, Chan, and Kalaydjian attended the meeting from an alternate location under the Brown Act Teleconferencing rules. A quorum was established at 10:06 a.m.

Roll Call/Commissioners Present:

Adele Andrade-Stadler (Chair)
Sue ElHessen, Ed.D. (Vice Chair)
Yvonne Chan, Ed.D.
Sam Joo
Michael Flood

Mihran Kalaydjian
Pollyanna Lee
Summer McBride
Booker Pearson
Andrew Yam

Commissioners Absent:

Joe Brown
Veronica Lewis

Mary Galvan Rosas
Dynasty Taylor

Commission Staff:

La France Toliver
Veronica Zamora

Introduction of Guests

Jackie Contreras, Ph.D., DPSS
Nick Ippolito, DPSS

Julia Almanzan, County Counsel

2.0 REVIEW AND APPROVE OCTOBER 16, 2023, MEETING MINUTES

The Chair called for a motion to approve the October 16, 2023, minutes. Commissioner Pearson approved, and Commissioner Kalaydjian seconded the motion. The Chair called for the vote by roll call and the minutes were approved by majority vote with one abstention as follows:

Adele Andrade-Stadler (Chair) - Aye
Sue ElHessen, Ed.D. (Vice Chair) - Aye
Michael Flood - Abstained
Sam Joo - Aye
Mihran Kalaydjian - Aye

Pollyanna Lee - Aye
Summer McBride - Aye
Booker Pearson - Aye
Andrew Yam - Aye

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

Adele Andrade-Stadler, Chairperson

No public comment from the public in person nor online on non-agenda and agenda items.

4.0 DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Jackie Contreras, Ph.D., Director

Dr. Contreras provided an update on the following topics:

The Board made the following Proclamations in the month of November:

Chinese American Film Festival and Chinese American Television Festival Month - commences with a remarkable opening and Golden Angel Awards ceremony, followed by a summit and showcase with various film and television screenings for viewers to enjoy throughout the month. The festival has attracted a total viewership of 1.7 million since its establishment.

Native American Heritage Month and Investing in American Indian and Alaska Native Communities - encouraging County Departments and residents to participate in Native American Heritage Month events and programming; and acknowledge and celebrate the 2023 Native American Heritage Month Honorees.

In addition, the Board has also proclaimed: November 7, as “Regional Park and Open Space District Day”, November 12 through 19, as “Diane E. Watson Week”, November 13 through 19, as “Transgender Awareness Week”, and November 20, as “Transgender Day of Remembrance”.

Veterans Day

The Board proclaimed November 11, as “Veterans Day” in Los Angeles County to express immense gratitude and support of our nation’s veterans and current service members. They also encouraged all residents to participate in special services, programs, and ceremonies in honor of our veterans and participation in the National Association of Counties’ (NACo) Operation Green Light public awareness campaign from November 6 through November 12.

On Wednesday, November 8, DPSS Headquarters went green and held a special lighting ceremony to support military veterans and their families in LA County. During the ceremony, we acknowledged and expressed our gratitude to our veterans that were present and abroad for their sacrifice and patriotic service. We were joined by the Director of Los Angeles County’s Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, James (Jim) Zenner; the East Los Angeles Color Guard who led the Pledge of Allegiance; and Rhonda Higgins, from the Department of Mental Health who shared information on the Veteran Peer Access Network (VPAN). VPAN is a program designed to connect veterans and their families with resources available to them to try and reduce homelessness, suicide, under-employment, and dramatically increase access to resources and services for the veteran and MilVet communities.

Also, on Saturday, November 11, our DPSS teams attended the resource fair at the Bob Hope Patriotic Hall: Medi-Cal Outreach – was there to sign up eligible veterans for public benefits and to offer resources. Human Resources – Offered employment opportunities to veterans, such as Eligibility Worker. Toy Loan – Distributed toys to the children and shared information about our Volunteer Services, Toy Loan, and Adopt-A-Family Program.

FEDERAL/STATE UPDATES

SNAP Benefit Issuance (Update)

Last month, I provided an update concerning CalWORKs and CalFresh benefits in the event of a federal shutdown. CalWORKs would be funded to the end of December 2023 and CalFresh benefits would be funded through November 2023.

The latest update is that on Tuesday, the House of Representatives passed a “clean” Continuing Resolution (CR) Bill (HR 6363), which basically keeps all current funding in place for a staggered period of time. It structures funding the federal government in two steps, which they are calling a “laddered” approach. For example, this CR extends the current Farm Bill (including SNAP) until September 30, 2024. On the other hand, TANF (or CalWORKs) funding would be extended only a few months to January 19, 2024. This CR will now go to the Senate, who must pass it by midnight this Friday in order to avoid a government shutdown.

CalSAWS Update

I am very pleased to announce that as of Monday, October 30, 2023, CalSAWS is officially statewide, with all 58 counties utilizing the case management system to administer public social services programs for the residents of California.

DPSS UPDATES

FunMania 2023 Results

Our DPSS FunMania Charitable Giving Campaign has concluded, and we were able to raise over \$20,000. The funds raised go into the year-end campaign pot and they will be distributed equally to seven Board approved fund distribution agencies.

5.0 NEW BUSINESS

Legislative Process for Bills of Interest to DPSS
Bureau of Special Operations
Nick Ippolito, Assistant Director

Mr. Ippolito provided the following update:

DPSS Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) works with the Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office (CEO) to advance County legislative policies relevant to DPSS. They review state and federal legislation and regulations and monitors state proposed legislation and provides subject matter recommendations.

LA County Legislative Agenda

The Board of Supervisors has legislative policies that are very specific to every department and serve as the basis for the development and advocacy of legislative positions at the state and federal level, administrative protocols, and budget issues.

Every year, county departments are asked to review the most current Board adopted Legislative Agenda and provide recommended updates. The Chief Executive Office presents the recommended changes/additions to the Board for approval.

Proposals submitted by the department are reviewed and must be approved by the CEO to ensure they are aligned with the Legislative and Budget Priorities in our State Legislative Agenda.

DPSS State Legislative Priorities are to: Increase CalFresh State Administration Funding– to help remove barriers to food benefit accessibility and prevent food insecurity. Increase CalWORKs Grants– to maintain grants at or above 50 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL); Mitigate Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Fraud– to support and advance solutions that protect and restore the benefits of individuals and families on public assistance; Increase In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) County Administration Funding– to support the IHSS community and assist vulnerable residents to stay in their home; Increase Medi-Cal County Administration Funding– to help protect and expand Medi-Cal funding, eligibility, and covered services; and Streamline Eligibility and Recertification– for CalWORKs, Medi-Cal, and CalFresh.

Follow Up Item: Commissioner Pearson stated when Holly Mitchell introduced SB 829, there was chart that DPSS developed that showed in 2006 the cause of homelessness with CalWORKs families up to date. I would love to see a re-do of this chart if possible and some type of analysis of where homelessness is in relation to inflation. Especially with house rents, food, and gasoline going up.

Mr. Ippolito stated one of the things that we really try to do in our legislative advocacy is to tell a story, and I think that it's to your point, Commissioner Pearson. We saw in the pandemic, there were more things that opened up which helped our families stay housed and help to feed their families. All of these waivers that came down from the State and federal government to be able to either add more resources, preserve housing, etcetera. The Advanced Child Tax Credit, which was transformative across the nation reduce child poverty by literally in half across the country. Unfortunately, all of those waivers and resources were time limited and ended with the Advanced Child Tax Credit that died in the Senate. All of the additional resources ended, and I put it in air quotes "when the pandemic ended."

We're starting to see the things that we don't want to see go up again and it kind of tells the story that public assistance could be at a much more robust level of support for people that really need it the most. By investing in more resources, we had better outcomes; when the resources went away, the outcomes went back or got even worse than what they were. The one advantage that we have is we have we have data, and we have evidence, if you will, to show and say that our department can be a very effective instrument against poverty if we resource it properly. Take away some of those protections, that this is what happens.

Follow up Item: Commissioner Joo asked when we talk about, I think families that are experiencing housing insecurity or homeless or in a house, is there a way to disaggregate data so we can look at those individuals and families and the benefits that DPSS offers? How many of them are receiving and applied those benefits? Is there way to capture that more intentionally?

Commissioner Yam stated the organization he works with works directly with the Union Rescue Mission. It's a lot of the young children who can't qualify for preschools, are not potty trained, but try to potty train a child when you're sharing a bathroom with 200 others. He believes there is an opportunity to look at this with critical eyes to see if there is any leverage or resources through a pilot to adjust this crisis we face in LA County.

Mr. Ippolito responded more economic benefits will lift people out of poverty. Another thin silver lining of the pandemic was renewed interest in guaranteed income programs, to be able to expand and test those out in LA County. LA County is testing out some of the largest guaranteed income programs in the nation.

Commissioner Yam asked if the department works with cities within your scope of duties or is your focus more on state and federal levels within the department. Mr. Ippolito responded we have in isolated instances, and we have not turned anyone's request away. However, we don't generally work with cities. To your point, we are outwardly focused to Sacramento and Washington. In the instance of skimming, we worked with cities on an ad hoc one-off basis since the actual skimming takes place in stores, and different places within stores and different places with POS devices. Cities can play a very important role in something as specific as that.

Follow up Item: Commissioner Yam also suggested using current MOU data with school districts to notify parents that their children are eligible for head start early, early childhood education, and in reverse, to help identify families that would count within the unduplicated student count that helps with school funding. Mr. Ippolito stated he would follow up on it.

State Budget Outlook

The State budget outlook is not great in terms of the amount of revenue expected this year. This is due to a number of different elements. Not a, not a windfall that they that they got last year in terms of in terms of state revenue. We're not certain what exactly that is yet, because they extended the deadline for people to file their taxes. I believe to this month they're still assessing what their revenue levels are. The Governor has made it clear that the budget outlook is not going to be great and he's cautioning the legislature that in any bills that they send to him, to not include budget amounts, not include budget asks, and instead referring any new budget asks into a broader sort of budget discussion. If any kind of funding, any kind of new funding, they would want to look at comprehensively.

There is a new speaker, Assembly Member, Rivas, whom we met with. He was in LA County, and we had the opportunity to meet with him and his staff at a reception. It will largely be up to him and the leadership in the State Senate to determine how they go about. We're all sort of bracing for a not a great state budget this year.

I would never dissuade our department or any other department from putting out what they think they need fiscally. Our priority might become the governor's priority, or the speaker's priority, or anybody else's priority; so, we want to make sure that our needs are known and that they're out there, and we can have discussions on that.

You may look at our legislative priorities and say why would you put that in if there's going to be a bleak budget outlook? I like to have us in a position where we have it out there so people understand it and they can have it in their heads for opportunities in the future. We will know more about it when the governor releases his budget in early January.

January kicks off a whole new process. By then, legislators will start to introduce specific bills. They look at the budget, and then the Governor does what's called the May Revise, to adjust either upwards or downwards based on the budget and the revenue outlook for that time. Then there's further discussions and deliberations on bills and budget. The Governor will have to approve a budget by the end of the state fiscal year, which is the end of June. Then the legislative session goes on from that point. But any budgetary decisions will have already occurred, that those decisions will be made and been signed by the Governor by June 30th of next year. We will keep a very close eye on it and we'll be able to keep you apprised on how the state budget is looking.

Dr. Contreras stated, I just want to highlight a lot of the priorities do involve additional resources, but if you go to that very last bullet, 'Streamline Eligibility and Recertification for CalWORKs, Medi-Cal and CalFresh,' this is a huge issue. This is a legislative priority that could result in cost savings, to streamline some of those requirements. During COVID, a lot of these requirements were expanded or lessened, and was sort of more accommodating to streamline our processes. That does not necessarily cost more money, I think that is something that could be a benefit and could be a cost saving.

Commissioner Flood asked if the department was familiar with SB 600 Menjivar, which is to increase CalFresh minimum benefit from \$23 up to \$50. This was in the tracker, and it's stuck in committee. This is something the Food Banks has supported. Obviously, we'd like to see an increase. The County was supporting it and then it kind of dropped off. Can you explain how the process works? Mr. Ippolito stated the life of a bill in the state legislature is largely impacted by the process that the Senate Pro Tem and Assembly Speaker create to keep it going. Two-year bills usually occur, meaning they keep it alive. It is not sent to the Governor and sometimes you must read in between the lines because they made it a two-year bill.

Philosophically we support this, but it needs more work; and they may be waiting for the budget outlook, and they may need to flush certain points out. If the bill is based on the new informational changes, that may change the whole level of support. Some bills that make total sense get sent to the suspense file. This is where sometimes bills get pulled out and sometimes get put to rest. This is all based on indications they might get from the Governor; maybe some resistance, questions, or concerns from colleagues.

With a two-year bill, it is encouraging that it's still active, and it will be up to the member to figure out the best way to move it forward based on the new information input or feedback. When it comes back, if it begins to move along again the legislative process, we'll be certain to keep an eye on it. Sometimes it will just be adopted in the Governor's budget, and we will see that in the outcome. Sometimes that process can get a little subjective based on what I've seen.

Follow up Item: Mr. Ippolito stated he would make certain that the commission sees what the departments legislative priorities look like in the overall county piece.

Federal legislative priorities are very general. We want to keep it general because if you thought the Sacramento legislative process is mysterious, the federal process is even more mysterious; because it's a much larger venue where Congress and the President are considering the needs of not only California, but the entire nation. It gets even more complicated. We try to keep our priorities as open as possible.

DPSS Federal Legislative Priorities are to: Reauthorize and increase funding for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant; Support the alignment of eligibility requirements between public assistance programs; Make it easier for college students to be eligible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits; Increase funding for vital federal housing programs that prevent housing instability and homelessness; Help states and counties address the surge in skimming/theft of TANF and SNAP benefits on electronic benefits transfer (EBT) cards; Make permanent the increases/changes to the Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit; Exclude cash payments from publicly funded guaranteed income programs from the income calculations of all public assistance programs. This is a sampling of some of them.

What is happening in DC? Dr. Contreras touched on it in her comments. I did want to underscore some of the things that she brought up and new information we expected last night. The Senate passed the Clean Resolution, the Clean Continuing Resolution that the House of Representatives put forward, and this morning, President Biden indicated he will sign it before the government shutdown on Friday. This is good news.

Draft Commission Annual Report 2022-23: (Discuss/Vote to Approve)

Adele Andrade Stadler, Chairperson

Chairperson Andrade-Stadler stated that in you packets you should have received the Draft Commission Annual Report for 2022-23. She asked if there were any questions about it. Commissioner Flood motioned to approved and Commissioner Pearson seconded the motion. The Chair called for the vote to approve the annual report.

Adele Andrade-Stadler (Chair) - Aye
Sue ElHessen, Ed.D. (Vice Chair) - Aye
Michael Flood - Aye
Sam Joo - Aye
Mihran Kalaydjian - Aye

Pollyanna Lee - Aye
Summer McBride - Aye
Booker Pearson - Aye
Andrew Yam - Aye

The motion to approve was passed unanimously.

6.0 CHAIR'S REPORT

Holiday Adopt-A-Family Program

The Chair stated most of you have received the email from Ms. Toliver regarding the families we're adopting. Ms. Toliver reminded commissioners that as agreed, this year we will be focusing on the families only and foregoing the luncheon. We're going to be focusing on five families, one family per supervisorial district, and we have submitted our application.

We will be looking for single parents with a child. Commissioner Lewis suggested single parent could be either female or male and we appreciate her input. We are still waiting on the families to come in, but in the meantime, we need to collect funds so that we can build up our resources to place into the PSS Commission Special Fund account. The Chair suggested if there were any Commissioners that would like to go with us, they are welcomed to do so. We will seek permission from the family to see if they are open to this.

Chairperson Andrade Stadler thanked Dr. Contreras and Mr. Ippolito for the Director's Update and Legislative presentation and wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Follow up Item: In January 2024, the agenda topics are CAPI/RCA and Medi-Cal Expansion.

7.0 ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.