



# COMMISSION FOR PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

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[PSS Commission Webpage](#)



## COMMISSIONERS

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SUMMER MCBRIDE

### Vice Chairperson

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MIHRAN KALAYDJIAN

POLLYANNA LEE

SAM JOO

VERONICA LEWIS

YVONNE CHAN, Ed.D.

## COMMISSION STAFF

### Interim Executive Director

MIGUEL BARRIOS

### Commission Secretary

MICHELLE NGO UNG

## MEETING MINUTES

**Thursday, May 21, 2026**

**Location #1:** Exposition Park District

3833 South Vermont Avenue, 3rd Floor, Conference Room B,

Los Angeles, CA 90037

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

### 1.0 **CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL/ ESTABLISH A QUORUM/COUNTYWIDE LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

Summer McBride, Chairperson

The meeting was called to order at 11:13 a.m. due to technical issues. A quorum was established. The Chair read the countywide land acknowledgement.

#### **Roll Call/Commissioners Present:**

Summer McBride (Chair)

Sue ElHessen, Ed.D. (Vice Chair)

Adele Andrade-Stadler

Andrew Yam\*

Booker Pearson

Genevieve Riutort

Joni Byun

Juan Leaños

Mihran Kalaydjian

Sam Joo

Veronica Lewis

Yvonne Chan, Ed. D.

\*Attended via teleconference under the Just Cause due to travel.

#### **Commissioners Absent:**

Christine Salazar

Dynasty Taylor  
Pollyanna Lee

**Commission Staff:**

Miguel Barrios  
Michelle Ung

**2.0 PUBLIC COMMENT (Non-Agenda Items) / (Agenda Items)**

Summer McBride, Chairperson

Miguel Barrios, Interim Executive Director, acknowledged that there was no one present in the room to make a public comment on a non-agenda or agenda item. He asked if anyone attending the meeting virtually had any public comment to make on non-agenda items or agenda items. There was none.

**3.0 REVIEW AND APPROVE APRIL 16, 2026, MEETING MINUTES**

Summer McBride, Chairperson

Chairperson McBride opened the floor for comments on the minutes, and there were no corrections. Commissioner Andrade-Stadler moved to approve and Commissioner Kalaydjian seconded the motion. The Chair called for the roll call. The May 2026 minutes were approved by majority vote (9 -Ayes) with 2 abstentions as follows:

Summer McBride (Chair) – Aye  
Sue ElHessen, Ed.D. (Vice Chair) – Aye  
Adele Andrade-Stadler – Aye  
Andrew Yam – Aye  
Booker Pearson – Aye  
Joni Byun – Abstain  
Juan Leños – Aye  
Mihran Kalaydjian – Aye  
Sam Joo – Abstain  
Veronica Lewis – Aye  
Yvonne Chan, Ed. D. - Aye

**4.0 DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Jackie Contreras, Ph. D, Director of the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS)

Director Contreras provided the following State of California updates:

Governor Gavin Newsom announced that California parents of newborns will leave the hospital with a supply of 400 free diapers as part of the new Golden State Start Program this summer. The Department of Health Care and Human Services and the Department of Health Care Access and Information will partner with Los

Angeles (L.A.) non-profit Baby2Baby to offer free diapers to patients in 65 hospitals statewide that primarily serve low-income patients on Medi-Cal (MC), though parents don't need to be on MC to receive the diapers.

Director Contreras provided the following L.A. County updates:

The L.A. County Department of Homeless Services and Housing (HSH) is excited to announce its new [Centering Equity in Homelessness Solutions](#) webpage. Homelessness in L.A. County does not affect all communities equally. To effectively prevent and end homelessness requires an understanding of the barriers different populations face and designing programs that respond to those conditions. Recognizing these disparities underscores the need for tools that help partners across the county design more equitable, data-informed strategies. The new page brings together data, context, and tools designed to advance more equitable outcomes across the homelessness response system. For more information, visit: [homeless.lacounty.gov/equity](https://homeless.lacounty.gov/equity).

A new DPSS Toy Loan Center opened on May 13, 2026, at the East Rancho Dominguez Community Center and Park in Compton. Families were invited to the grand opening to meet the Toy Loan team and learn about the Toy Loan Program.

The L.A. County Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) has opened 20 splash pads around L.A. County on May 1 and runs through September 30, offering a way to stay fresh and cool all summer long. Splash pads are free and available at locations throughout the County. They are available 7 days a week from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm.

Kick It In The Park, a partnership between the L.A. County DPR, the Office of Mayor Karen Bass, and L.A. Council Districts, ensures the World Cup reaches every corner of the city by hosting free family-friendly events for everyone to watch matches on large LED screens, surrounded by soccer clinics, neighborhood programming, and community resources. No ticket, no cost, no barriers! The games start on June 11, 2026. For more information and locations, visit the [Kickit.LaCity.gov](https://Kickit.LaCity.gov).

Director Contreras provided the following Board of Supervisors (BOS) updates:

On May 19, 2026, the BOS approved the appointment of Joseph M. Nicchitta to serve as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Mr. Nicchitta served as the Interim CEO and successfully acted in the role for six months. He also previously served as the Director for the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA). His responsibilities as the CEO will include leading Countywide labor relations efforts in collaboration with 63 bargaining units, providing executive direction to all CEO branches, and offering leadership and oversight for major Countywide initiatives. He will also oversee the County's crisis and strategic communications functions; direct the development and implementation of the Countywide Strategic Plan

and the County's enterprise technology strategic plan; manage Countywide emergency and homeland security functions through the Office of Emergency Management; oversee the development of the County's legislative priorities and policies for consideration by the Board through the Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations; and provide executive oversight of major capital planning and asset management functions, and Countywide Risk Management.

Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell announced the upcoming retirement of her Chief of Staff, Fredericka McGee, in June 2026. Supervisor Mitchell noted Ms. McGee has guided complex policy solutions, and her influence can be seen in countless initiatives and behind-the-scenes decisions that have expanded access, equity, and opportunity across our communities. In June 2026, the incoming Chief of Staff will be Dr. D'Artagnan Scorza, who is currently serving as the Executive Director for L.A. County Anti-Racism, Diversity and Inclusion Initiative (ARDI).

Supervisor Lindsey Horvath announced on May 11, 2026, that her Chief of Staff, Estevan Montemayor, would be transitioning from his role to relaunch his strategic communications firm, EJM Strategies. Supervisor Horvath noted Mr. Montemayor was integral in building the Third District team, leading governance reform, supporting coordinated wildfire response and recovery, and advancing a bold policy portfolio. Effective immediately, Julia Orozco, who is currently serving as the Assistant Chief of Staff, will assume the role of Chief of Staff.

The BOS made the following Proclamations for the month of May 2026:

CalFresh (CF) Awareness Month, Mental Health Awareness Month, Foster Care Month, Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, Rotary Epic Day of Service Month, Older Americans Month, Croatian American Heritage Month, 25th Anniversary of the Foster Youth Bill of Rights, Stroke Awareness Month, May 4 through 11, as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples Awareness Week, May 5 as Cinco de Mayo, May 7 as a County Day of Prayer, May 7 through 31 as Los Angeles County Fair Days, and May 10 as Asian American and Pacific Islander Mental Health Day.

Director Contreras provided the following DPSS updates:

As required by the California Constitution, Governor Newsom has released the May Revise to the proposed Fiscal Year (FY) 2026-27 State Budget. It provides a 1.8 percent increase to the CalWORKs (CW) grant, which means a \$21 increase for a family of three. It also provides a one-time CF Administrative funding increase of \$61.9 million statewide to support county administration of Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD) and a one-time MC funding of \$262 million statewide to support county implementation of H.R. 1 changes. The May Revise does not recall the proposed cuts to the In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS): the

cost shift to counties for growth in IHSS hours, elimination of the IHSS Backup provider System, and the termination of IHSS cases when MC is discontinued.

In other related policy areas, the May Revise includes a proposal for a state contract intended to have optional surge staffing to support counties, upon request, with application processing, call center workload, work requirement implementation, and other back-end support. The May Revise also provides a one-time increase of \$30 million for Cal-Food (for Food Banks). For MC, the asset limit will be lowered for seniors and disabled individuals effective January 1, 2027. It will be \$2,000 for an individual and \$3,000 for a couple. It will also increase the MC monthly premium from \$30 to \$50 for adults aged 19-59 with unsatisfactory immigration status. For Adult Protective Services (APS), the May Revise proposes changing the eligible age for Adult Protective Services from age 60 to 65. Director Contreras shared that the next steps are for the governor and legislature to engage in negotiations to pass the budget by June 30, 2026, and the legislature has indicated they intend to reject the proposed cuts to IHSS.

As promised at the February 2026 PSS Meeting, Director Contreras provided the PSS Commissioners with information on the five operations managed by the Bureau of Customer Service Centers (CSC). These include the CSC General Inquiry Line, CSC Intake Line, Renewal Line, IHSS Helpline, and IHSS Application Line. Director Contreras also provided the additional information requested by the Commissioners, including the number of abandoned calls and the number of unsuccessful callbacks. Director Contreras highlighted that DPSS has been on a hiring freeze since November 1, 2025. The County also has a hiring freeze in place, and they anticipate it could last another year and a half. DPSS has been fairly successful in aligning the budget with the hiring freeze. One factor that has slowed us a little, which is a good thing, is that our attrition rate has dropped. Usually, DPSS would lose anywhere from 60 to 70 staff a month, and currently, it's approximately 25 to 30 staff a month. It is unclear what the reason behind that is, but it is helping DPSS maintain staffing. However, not being able to hire across all of our services is having an impact, and the hope is that after we end this fiscal year, we'll be able to request emergency hiring for certain positions in order to begin to bring those numbers down. With the May revise and potential budget cuts, we have to anticipate all of that and all of the shifts. DPSS is examining several strategies relative to the call centers to make sure that we're utilizing our resources as effectively as possible. Director Contreras explained that the data provided will illustrate that the vast majority of customers calling the CSC are having their needs met and are able to resolve their issues online. For other customers, it may be because it's not a service we provide online. So, we will continue to think about how we can be more transparent with customers so that they know what options are available.

CSC General Inquiry (January 2026 – March 2026)

| Type of Interaction              | January | February | March   |
|----------------------------------|---------|----------|---------|
| Calls Received by EWs            | 415,244 | 382,565  | 419,385 |
| Calls Handled by EWs             | 218,307 | 195,017  | 231,454 |
| Calls Abandoned                  | 137,107 | 130,349  | 133,107 |
| Unsuccessful Courtesy Call Backs | 59,830  | 57,199   | 54,824  |
| Average Wait Time                | 1:02:57 | 1:08:28  | 0:58:15 |
| *Non-Service Calls               | 45,598  | 48,200   | 37,406  |

\*Please note that non-serviced calls represent customers who reached the call queues that are currently at max call capacity. Customers receive a high call volume message and are offered to return to the self-service portion of the IVR or end the call.

CSC Intake (January 2026 – March 2026)

| Type of Interaction                  | January | February | March   |
|--------------------------------------|---------|----------|---------|
| Calls Received by EWs                | 103,121 | 89,892   | 100,230 |
| Calls Handled by EWs                 | 63,781  | 60,806   | 69,313  |
| Calls Abandoned                      | 33,535  | 25,452   | 27,504  |
| Unsuccessful Courtesy Call Backs     | 5,805   | 3,634    | 3,413   |
| Average Wait Time                    | 0:30:47 | 0:24:32  | 0:20:45 |
| *Non-Service Calls                   | 5,878   | 5,387    | 4,756   |
| Same Day Disposition Rate by Program | 55%     | 56%      | 56%     |
| Applications Processed               | 38,364  | 35,077   | 38,837  |

Renewal Line (January 2026 – March 2026)

| Type of Interaction              | January | February | March   |
|----------------------------------|---------|----------|---------|
| Calls Received by EWs            | 55,273  | 54,177   | 66,547  |
| Calls Handled by EWs             | 30,040  | 28,888   | 39,858  |
| Calls Abandoned                  | 19,597  | 19,773   | 21,864  |
| Unsuccessful Courtesy Call Backs | 5,636   | 5,516    | 4,825   |
| Average Wait Time                | 1:11:19 | 1:08:47  | 0:56:17 |
| *Non-Service Calls               | 4,840   | 5,902    | 3,908   |
| Renewals Processed               | 28,133  | 26,869   | 27,476  |

IHSS Helpline (January 2026 – March 2026)

| Type of Interaction              | January | February | March   |
|----------------------------------|---------|----------|---------|
| Calls Received by EWs            | 118,788 | 109,825  | 122,598 |
| Calls Handled by EWs             | 70,269  | 65,640   | 68,425  |
| Calls Abandoned                  | 48,519  | 44,187   | 54,173  |
| Unsuccessful Courtesy Call Backs | **N/A   | **N/A    | **N/A   |

|                           |         |         |         |
|---------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Average Wait Time         | 0:13:46 | 0:16:24 | 0:21:10 |
| % Consumer Calls Received | 47%     | 47%     | 46%     |
| % Provider Calls Received | 40%     | 40%     | 40%     |
| % Other Calls Received    | 13%     | 13%     | 14%     |

IHSS Application Line ( January 2026 – March 2026)

| Type of Interaction              | January | February | March   |
|----------------------------------|---------|----------|---------|
| Calls Received by EWs            | 16,082  | 13,930   | 16,221  |
| Calls Handled by EWs             | 10,116  | 9,182    | 9,830   |
| Calls Abandoned                  | 5,966   | 4,748    | 6,456   |
| Unsuccessful Courtesy Call Backs | **N/A   | **N/A    | **N/A   |
| Average Wait Time                | 0:11:25 | 0:09:57  | 0:13:42 |
| Average Handle Time              | 0:10:02 | 0:10:19  | 0:10:34 |
| Applications Initiated           | 7,957   | 7,435    | 8,043   |

\*\*IHSS does not have a courtesy call-back feature.

Director Contreras also acknowledged that the Commissioners were interested in obtaining information on the Post Call Survey results from customers contacting the CSCs. She explained that an additional document was provided with those results and encouraged anyone with questions to contact the PSS Commission.

Director Contreras shared that if anyone missed the live MC and CF Webinars, you can watch the recordings anytime on the DPSS YouTube channel. The webinars highlight assets and property requirements, coverage updates for adults 19 and older with unsatisfactory immigration status, and CF policy changes that affect non-citizen eligibility and ABAWD work requirements.

Director Contreras highlighted that on Sunday, May 17, DPSS proudly supported LGBTQ+ staff and community by participating in the Long Beach City Pride Parade. DPSS marched in the parade celebrating diversity, equity, and inclusion. This was a great opportunity for our department to engage with the community, reflect on DPSS's CARE values of Collaboration, Accountability, Responsiveness, and Empathy, and show solidarity with coworkers and customers alike. Director Contreras shared that, similarly to attending last year's West Hollywood Pride Parade, the experience was incredible in the way the people received DPSS. People started chanting, "CalFresh!" when they saw DPSS and thanked us for their MC. Some parade attendees went as far as sending prayers for DPSS staff, and that was very invigorating to be able to engage customers in that role.

Director Contreras shared that she had the honor of welcoming a three-member delegation from the Daegu Metropolitan City Hall of the Republic of Korea, in collaboration with our own department's Intergovernmental Relations, Contract

Development, CF Program, and Civil Rights Section teams. Daegu is the third-largest urban area in South Korea and the fourth-largest metropolitan city in the nation. The delegation's visit is part of a global policy program focused on social welfare systems, particularly public social services, and integrated care. They were able to share each other's observations and exchange best practices.

Lastly, Director Contreras stated that she will be extending external invitations for the PSS Commission meetings in September, October, and November 2026 to have Maral Karaccusian, Director of the Department of Aging and Disabilities, Sarah Mahin, Director of the Department of Homeless Services and Housing, and the soon to be appointed executive director of the Office of Child, Youth, and Family Well-Being to have a conversation about our partnership and services they provide overall. Director Contreras asked if anyone had any questions.

Commissioner Lewis also asked about the cost shifts for IHSS in the May Revise. Director Contreras reiterated that the State of California is saying that there has been a consistent growth in IHSS hours. DPSS has been explaining to the state that the consistent growth in provider hours is the result of the rate per hour increasing and the growth in the age of the population. As the population continues to age, so do their needs. The State of California is attributing that increase to the County, and now the counties need to cover those increases. DPSS has researched and can demonstrate that 90% of the cost increase is attributable to those two factors.

Commissioner Lewis asked about the CSC data, specifically about customers receiving callbacks. Narinder Kumar, Senior Information Technology Manager, explained that a customer would have to request the callback to initiate that process. A callback is then attempted three times. If it is not successful, then that is counted as being unable to reach the customer. Even if it goes to voicemail, that is not considered a successful call and falls into the category of not successful.

Commissioner Pearson suggested a future topic the commission could discuss is how many people DPSS needs to service all our customers. His concern is from seeing that as people lose their eligibility due to the new requirements, DPSS will technically be servicing fewer people. Director Contreras acknowledges that she would like to discuss this topic at a future date because it certainly is the state and federal government's argument that caseloads are going to drop, so DPSS would need fewer allocations for staff. She highlighted that all the H.R. 1 requirements will take time and require more resources, and that's why we're getting the allocations that we're getting. For example, CF is likely to get a small allocation to help with administrative costs, but because caseloads are down, it's going to be a net negative in terms of the amount of money that we're actually getting. That is what makes this situation difficult. Most of the H.R. 1 regulations have not been implemented yet. For instance, June 1, 2026, is when the ABAWD is going to be

implemented. It won't be until January 1, 2026, that the MC work requirements will be implemented. There are a lot of theories about why caseloads are dropping, such as fear. DPSS is trying to help our team stay focused on doing everything we can to help people maintain their benefits and continue to work. Director Contreras also shared that Nick Ippolito, Chief of Staff, is working on a letter for DPSS to submit to advocate for more resources, given that we just learned about the cuts in the May Revise. The legislature has a goal of having the budget completed by June 15, 2026, so a lot of decisions are going to be made before then. Chair McBride added that it is her opinion that if caseloads do begin to drop, it will be because there is a sense of fear in the community and the belief that it will be too hard to access these benefits through the County, so they're not going to bother. Instead, those caseload drops will go to other nonprofits and agencies that can give them the resources without having to jump through what they see as hoops. The answer to that seems counterproductive to reduce the number of staffing just because the current staff is already overburdened, and that's why people are pulling away and finding other easier access points to services. We should definitely explore this topic in the future.

Commissioner Chan asked if there are any restrictions on how the \$320 million one-time money is being provided. Would there be public engagement in how that money is allocated? Director Contreras explained that the one-time dollars are likely to go to staffing resources, but that is going to be challenging because, generally, you need ongoing dollars. She stated that in her opinion, one of the reasons why it's one-time money is that the state may be waiting to see what happens with the caseloads. If they drop significantly, it's arguable that DPSS doesn't need the same amount of resources. DPSS will continue to argue that that's not the case because of the extended requirements, but that's part of the dynamic of this situation. Those one-time resources will enable us being able to help people maintain their benefits, do their renewals, and take new applications. We're also not stopping to reach out to communities. In the past, DPSS shared information about the take-up rate, about who is eligible, and who is actually accessing benefits. We're still working on understanding the why of those gaps so that we can reach out to different people.

## **5.0 NEW BUSINESS**

Presentation: DPSS Community Focused Information Technology (IT) Initiatives

Narinder Kumar, Senior Information Technology Manager

Del Benavides, Information Technology Manager III

Vivian Bui, Information Technology Manager II

Sergio Andrade, Information Technology Manager I

Mr. Narinder Kumar started by explaining that he and his Information Technology team were going to discuss three overarching topics: DPSS Public Website, DPSS IHSS Helpline Community Portal and Chatbot, and Lobby Management.

Mr. Kumar explained that DPSS has made enhancements to the navigation and design of our webpage. We have 4 million customers who visit our site to get information, and it's a very user-centered and optimized for mobile devices, laptops, tablets, etc. DPSS has also focused on enhanced compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards. DPSS also implemented a new search engine that really helps with searching within our website. The enhanced search will yield what users are looking for using relevant information. Also, we have improved our e-Policy, where we keep all our policies, procedures, and guidelines for our programs. We've been working with our partners to migrate this e-Policy from a legacy platform to our newer platform. The beauty of this new platform is that any new policy or guideline that is published for staff, also gets published for customers at the same time. The public has direct access to eligibility guidelines through published electronic policy. The IT team is actively working on incorporating a Geographic Information System (GIS) in the near future. GIS integrates location data with visual maps, so it can help customers get maps to our offices and get directions by using cities, zip codes, or locations. It makes access really easy, so that will be coming really soon.

Mr. Kumar explained that our DPSS website is the best place to get the latest on our services and programs, including the recent policy changes to MC and CF, and the changes made to work rules and asset limits that are affecting eligibility. DPSS sites are constantly updated. This is in addition to all the other communication and outreach we are doing to our customers, such as phone calls and texts. He added that DPSS's webpage content is available in 12 threshold languages to meet the diverse linguistic needs of DPSS customers. Our newer, modern cloud-based platform also has links to BenefitsCal, so they can begin to do their application online and be redirected there easily. Our webpages also have DPSS news, including outreach events in the community. Currently, the DPSS webpages get a little over 1.09 million monthly page views. On average, that's approximately 667,000 monthly visits, and we have 317,000 average monthly unique visitors, too. That's over 1 million monthly customer interactions, so this is a very well-visited webpage, and we are going to continue to use our data to see how else we can enhance it further. Mr. Kumar shared DPSS website statistics on how many people visit the CF, MC, and IHSS webpages from November 2025 through April 2026. This data helps DPSS determine any specific needs of our customers.

Commissioner Lewis asked for clarification on what is considered a webpage view versus a visit. Mr. Kumar explained that there are three factors. A customer can come to a webpage, and once they're on the webpage, it's counted as one visit.

If they click on multiple pages, and they go from A to B and then to C, DPSS measures that data. There is also another scenario where a customer can come to our DPSS webpage several times a month, several times a day, so we capture all of that data too.

Ms. Vivian Bui presented on the DPSS IHSS Helpline Community Portal and Chatbot. She explained it was created because IHSS serves a very diverse population of recipients and providers in L.A. County who require timely assistance with case information and general program guidance, rules, and eligibility. As a result, the IHSS Helpline receives a very high call volume. In order to improve the speed of support for IHSS customers, DPSS decided to modernize the service delivery model and accommodate the needs for 24-hour-a-day, 7 days a week access to information. DPSS's goal was to deliver a friendly, simple-to-use solution beyond the traditional customer service channel like phone calls and in-person visits. This is why the IHSS Helpline Community Portal and Chatbot were developed. It is a centralized, self-service resource for IHSS recipients and providers. It offers online chat with the chatbot, chat with a live DPSS agent, and has a helpline ticket system. It contains helpful information, articles, and links to various services. It provides the latest information on programs and eligibility requirements for applying for IHSS. It covers a lot of the commonly asked questions. The chatbot is a digital self-service tool for inquiries and issue resolution for users who visit the website, and it provides 24/7 support with no wait time. By embedding the chatbot into the existing IHSS portal, we ensure there is consistency in the user experience and also minimize the learning curve for the users who visit our website. As of today, we have approximately 56,000 providers and recipients registered to use the IHSS Portal and chatbot. The chatbot provides services in both English and Spanish and delivers responses based on knowledge that is regularly updated directly by IHSS while addressing the most frequently asked questions from recipients and providers. A customer can begin a chat session with the chatbot by entering their provider or recipient numbers, selecting a language, and selecting a reason from a list of available options. To name a few, topics include time sheets, payment questions, obtaining information for IHSS, requesting W-2s, terminating cases, request reassessment for additional hours.

Ms. Bui explained that the chatbot also allows users to submit routine forms to update contact information or other forms requested. By having the ability to submit forms online, it reduces the reliance on physical mail or manual processing in the office. Most recently, a new option allows providers to cancel or reschedule orientation appointments at the same locations or a different location from the original appointment. The chatbot is 100% automated, and it is able to retrieve the existing appointment the provider has and provide alternative options of locations, time, and rescheduling. This reduces the need for live DPSS agents for routine appointment changes. The information generated by the chatbot is easy for the

user to understand. There is also tracking and recordings of every customer service chatbot interaction. In case the chatbot is unable to handle a specific question, then the customer will be transferred to a live agent for assistance during business hours. At the end of every chatbot session, the customer will receive a survey to complete that takes a minute to complete, and the goal is to gain a better understanding and gather feedback on the experience with the digital assistants. Currently, the providers and recipients do have the ability to submit a request for a callback from a social worker through the webpage. There is a short form that includes the reason for the call, preferred call-back time, and the callback number. They will receive an email confirmation of the submission and when they can expect the callback from the social worker. That is why the portal and the chatbot are a solution to help answer many common or routine requests and enable staff to focus on providing support for more complex inquiries or other service needs during operational hours. It provides customers with access to services outside of business hours while maintaining the continuity of care.

Vice Chair ElHessen asked if the chatbot is Artificial Intelligence (AI) generated and if it is accessible to someone using it via voice activation. Ms. Bui answered that it is not AI and added that the voice activation function is not currently available, but DPSS is currently looking into how to incorporate it.

Commissioner Lewis asked if a chatbot ticket is created when it is not able to answer a customer's question outside the business hours, does that create a ticket the next day for an agent to look into and resolve the issue? Ms. Bui explained that the chatbot would record the ticket on the system, and the ticket would be available for an agent if it was not able to resolve the issue or answer a question. She added that once a ticket is created, it must be followed up on by an agent, and it is tracked to make sure all customers are taken care of.

Commissioner Leaños stated that the product seems very robust, but wanted to know if DPSS would see this as an application in the future and/or if AI would ever be used for IHSS purposes. Mr. Narinder explained that DPSS is strategically looking at AI and the resources that would be needed to address concerns regarding bias, hallucinations, and accuracy. DPSS is looking at a more holistic approach at this time, so we have not incorporated any AI. In the future, we will need to make sure, through validation, that we can use AI safely and can meet our business goals.

Commissioner Joo asked about the plans to incorporate more languages into the chatbot and if there was a time frame or if there was a cost-related issue. Ms. Bui answered that DPSS is researching how to incorporate the 12 threshold languages to align with what is available on our websites.

**Follow-up Item:** Commissioner Lewis asked to see data in the future regarding the outcomes of the chatbot to see what it was able to solve and not solve,

including callback data in terms of how much time it took the worker to call the customer to determine if it took days or a specific average time.

Mr. Sergio Andrade presented on Lobby Management. He stated that DPSS has made a continued effort to add additional innovations to try to figure out a solution for how to best manage lobby traffic. Some of the challenges have been experiencing inconsistent lobby flow from office to office, and even within offices with multiple lobbies, there are slight variations. Another challenge is customer privacy because some offices were calling individuals by their names, and we're trying to find solutions to protect the identity of the individual. The other challenge is full transparency to the public on what the waiting times are, how much traffic there is, and how many resources are available to handle that flow. DPSS's goal became to standardize this process. For example, if you consider the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) offices, you kind of have an idea of how that office works, regardless of which DMV office you visit. The public has a basic understanding of what to expect, and as a customer, I know that I'm looking for a sign that says to start here. I'm going to walk up to that navigator and tell them why I'm at the DMV, and I'll have to wait my turn to be helped. That is something that we wanted to establish at DPSS, but how do we get to that point where it's standardized across all the different DPSS offices? We know it's not going to be 100% the same because of the lobby makeup of our offices and the structures of the buildings, but we really wanted to address this. Another thing we wanted to do is find clear ways and procedures to navigate people from point A to point B, or address their concerns without them having to wait inside the lobby.

Mr. Andrade explained that DPSS began to address these challenges by issuing mobile devices, mobile printers, and laptops to allow staff not to be fixed to one specific location to help customers. ADA came up, too, so we know that if someone is coming into our offices and has an accommodation or is requesting one, we can approach that individual and try to help them with these devices. More importantly, it's a quick way to create a record in our California Statewide Automated Welfare System (CalSAWS) reception log with a time stamp of when that individual came to that DPSS office. As with the DMV, they'll be asked why they are there, staff will try to identify and authenticate them, and we'll give them a ticket. This ticket is very similar to the DMV, where it's an alphanumeric naming convention. This will enable staff to call them using their alphanumeric ticket instead of using their name. This system also allows us to create check-in records, so we know why they're there. CalSAWS has a feature that puts notifications to the work, and the worker has the ability to acknowledge that they know that the customer is waiting to see them. This is a key feature because in the past, the lobby staff would walk around the lobby to do a study to try to figure out why an individual was still waiting in the lobby to try to triage them. Then they would try to figure out why they're there and what's going on. That is why this acknowledgment

feature is so important, because it is designed to notify the worker that Mr. John Doe is in the lobby waiting. Should Mr. John Doe ask the staff what's going on, they can check the record and explain that their worker is aware they are in the lobby waiting to be helped. The next step would be for staff to call the individual, and they would do it via the monitor in the same fashion as the DMV. For example, the audio would state they are now helping customer G4 at window number one, and it would repeat the message in Spanish too. If we know that an individual's preferred language is Spanish, the English message would be bypassed and only the Spanish language would be used. Once staff meet with the customer, they are able to click that they started the meeting/interview, and that creates a new time stamp until the end of the session. This produces a visual report in real time. Lobby staff can use this report. A screenshot of what this report looks like was displayed in their presentation. Staff can see on the left-hand side all the customers and their current waiting time. For example, if a lobby supervisor notices that a customer has been waiting for over 80 minutes, then that is questionable, and this is where they can step in and try to figure out why this person still has not been serviced. We also acknowledge that DPSS lobby traffic changes hour by hour and day by day, depending on what time of the month we are on. But this type of visual report enables lobby staff to pivot and make adjustments to get more staff or resources on the lobby to try to handle those long wait times. The report also provides how long a customer has been waiting in the lobby versus how long the individual takes to be serviced, so service time and wait time are tracked separately. Mr. Andrade explained that from October 2025 to the current day, DPSS has implemented this system in 20 offices. Four additional offices should be implemented by the end of the fiscal year.

Commissioner Lewis asked about the standards of the waiting times and how they will allow DPSS to better understand the needs of the lobby. Mr. Andrade explained that the data is only as good as the input that's going into the system, so this is the stepping stone to getting to that next step and really understanding what the lobby trends are. DPSS is working to ensure staff are updating these fields correctly and on time.

Commissioner Pearson asked about how DPSS will measure goals and suggested that no matter how automated this process becomes, staff should still walk around to inspect the lobbies. Mr. Andrade explained that this system is going to provide more visibility for those customers who are waiting a very long time. This technology would enable staff to have the empathy to go out there and help those customers in a timely fashion. In the future, we hope to be able to look at the reason for the visit and determine if there is something DPSS could do to fix or adjust to not have to make that customer come into the office in the first place. This system is going to put us in a better position to handle these critical points that we know are there. Mr. Benavides added that these new systems will give DPSS a baseline to be able

to address problems. Trying to address a problem that is not well documented, where we don't have the data, is going to be much harder. This system is going to allow DPSS to be proactive on those long waiting times. It will give staff the ability to say, based on the volume of customers at a specific time in the lobby, do we have the right resources at this office? This data puts us in a good position to be able to address those issues. Also, the data entry system is important because we can look at an office and compare its data to another district office's data to see if they are different. For example, during implementations, we noticed already that some staff are queuing in a customer and closing their session out right away because the mentality is that they will get to you when they get to you, but that's not what we want. DPSS wants staff to queue a customer in and out when they actually finish servicing the customer. That will give us end-to-end time stamps of how long it took to service you. This creates transparency and awareness of how each office performs against the other offices. Mr. Benavides thanked the Commissioners for the thought-provoking questions and explained that hearing their perspective really helped his team better understand the needs of customers.

Commissioner Joo asked what business versus people is considered in the data. Mr. Andrade explained that there are many scenarios on a daily basis where an individual walks into a lobby to apply for benefits. Traditionally, what happens today in most instances is you walk in, you go see somebody, they register your application, and they tell you to go take a seat. That application goes through its process. They do the clearance of who the individual is, the case number, and the worker that's assigned to it. So, you have one person, and they've been seen by one person at this point. But when that eligibility comes, the eligibility worker comes down, it's a different person. So now there's a second interaction with a county individual. If everything goes well and if benefits are issued, there might be a third interaction where they have to go see the cashier. So that's the third interaction for the one person. So that's why those numbers, there's a variance in those numbers. One physical person can see three or four different workers in the office.

Commissioner Riutort asked if someone walks into a DPSS lobby and they may have autism or speak a different language, and they don't realize that they were supposed to check in at a specific spot. How does DPSS make sure that when they walk into the lobby, they don't just walk in and sit down and think someone is going to help them? Mr. Andrade explained that part of the recommendations made to the district offices is that staff with those mobile devices are expected to intercept any customer as soon as they have made it past security. That is the initial point of contact. The goal is to intercept anyone who makes it past that point. Commissioner Riutort asked if there is a sign to make people walking in stop. Mr. Andrade explained that most offices have a podium right after security where staff are working on a laptop or a mobile device to register that individual. This is person-to-person. Commissioner Riutort asked if there are plans to add additional

languages when a customer's number is being called through the speakers in the lobby. Mr. Benavides explained that when the solution was implemented by the CalSAWS Project to create a tool to be used to display text to sound, it was only supported in Spanish, and that is why it's limited right now. DPSS knows that different offices have different languages, so we're working with the CalSAWS Project to find other solutions in the lobbies. The solution has to be focused. We can't have every customer number read in 20 different languages, because we need to be able to cycle through and get the next customer assisted. Fortunately, we do display the customer's number on a very large screen in large letters on a 50-inch screen. DPSS is also aware of the need to include ADA customers in these solutions, so we're working on that as well.

Commissioner Leaños asked if a customer comes into the lobby, is there a way to calibrate to know they are blind or have dementia or a severe disability, so they're not waiting there 80 minutes? Is there someone who can address them in line or handle customers with special needs specifically? Mr. Benavides explained that the lobby check-in process includes adding a special indicator for those special circumstances. If we know someone requires an accommodation, then we mark them with that indicator that is visible in the reception log with a red exclamation mark to receive expedited services.

Chair McBride stated that the last time she had an enjoyable time at the DMV because she was able to get in line before arriving at the office. By the time she got into the parking lot, they were close to calling her number. Is that something DPSS thinks is possible at district offices in the future? Mr. Andrade explained that he has no reason to believe it can't happen. They would have to explore and research to understand how it works, but it could be a future alternative. Chair McBride thanked all the presenters for their efforts in the IT section that helped make a better customer experience.

## **6.0 COMMISSION BUSINESS**

Summer McBride, Chairperson

Chair McBride explained that due to time contractions this topic would begin this month, but would continue part two next month. Vice Chair El Hessen explained that before them was the latest version of the PSS Commission Work Plan Goals that was prepared by the Ad-Hoc Committee. She asked that each Commissioner make the time to review it further to have a great discussion next month. Commissioner Chan thanked Vice Chair El Hessen for the Work Plan and shared that she would be reviewing it to ensure it is relevant, and she feels that adding the topic of emergency preparedness is important. Also, this Work Plan must be understood by members of the public because we will have to follow this document once we implement it, and it's for the next three years. She also wants these goals to align with DPSS Strategic Goals since DPSS is setting new goals next

year. Chair McBride added that it's going to be important that all Commissioners share input because it will guide the agenda for the remainder of the year, and we want to be responsive to that work.

## **7.0 CHAIR'S REPORT**

Summer McBride, Chairperson

Chair McBride stated that starting in June, she would like to try something new. She would like to provide an opportunity for the Commissioners to share updates from their respective fields and what they're doing. Of course, during that time, we cannot have a discussion back and forth since those topics won't be on the agenda. She explained that it is important to allow other Commissioners to share volunteer opportunities or share resources. She reminded the Commissioners that there is no expectation that all have to share something.

## **8.0 ADJOURNMENT**

Summer McBride, Chairperson

The meeting was adjourned by Chair McBride at 1:00 p.m. and asked Mr. Barrios to share a final message. He stated that the meeting was adjourned to celebrate LaFrance Toliver on her retirement after 42 years of service. He explained that during this gathering of the Commissioners, there would be no discussion of anything within the subject matter jurisdiction of the PSS Commission.