



COMMISSION FOR PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

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



[PSS Commission Webpage](#)

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, October 16, 2025

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

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

Location #3: Manhattan Beach Library
1320 Highland Avenue, Room B,
Manhattan Beach, CA 90266

COMMISSIONERS

Chairperson

SUMMER MCBRIDE

Vice Chairperson

SUE ELHESSEN, Ed.D.

ADELE ANDRADE-STADLER

ANDREW YAM

BOOKER PEARSON

DYNASTY TAYLOR

GENEVIEVE RUITORT

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JUAN P. LEAÑOS

MICHAEL FLOOD

MIHRAN KALAYDJIAN

POLLYANNA LEE

SAM JOO

VERONICA LEWIS

YVONNE CHAN, Ed.D.

COMMISSION STAFF

Executive Director

LA FRANCE TOLIVER

Commission Secretary

MICHELLE NGO UNG

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 11:07 a.m. A quorum was established. The Chair read the countywide land acknowledgement.

Roll Call/Commissioners Present:

Summer McBride (Chair)

Sue ElHessen, Ed.D. (Vice Chair)

Booker Pearson

Dynasty Taylor

Genevieve Riutort

Joni Byun

Juan Leaños

Michael Flood

Mihran Kalaydjian

Pollyanna Lee

Veronica Lewis

Yvonne Chan, Ed. D.

Commissioners Absent:

Adele Andrade-Stadler

Andrew Yam
Sam Joo

Commission Staff:

La France Toliver
Michelle Ung

Introduction of Guests

Michael J. Sylvester, Chief Deputy Director, Dept. of Public Social Services (DPSS)
Shawn Amiel, DPSS
Kristina Meza, CEO – Poverty Alleviation Initiative (PAI)
Julia Almanzan, County Counsel
Shawn Luna, County Counsel

2.0 REVIEW AND APPROVE SEPTEMBER 18, 2025, MEETING MINUTES

Summer McBride, Chairperson

The Chair called for the vote by roll call, and the minutes were approved by majority vote.

Summer McBride (Chair) – Aye
Sue ElHessen, Ed.D. (Vice Chair) – Aye
Booker Pearson – Aye
Genevieve Riutort – Aye
Joni Byun – Aye
Juan Leaños – Aye
Michael Flood – Aye
Mihran Kalaydjian – Aye
Pollyanna Lee – Aye
Veronica Lewis – Aye
Yvone Chan, Ed. D. – Aye

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

Summer McBride, Chairperson

None.

4.0 DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Dr. Jackie Contreras, Ph. D, Director, DPSS

Mr. Sylvester provided the following update on behalf of Dr. Jackie Contreras:

The Board Made the following Proclamations for the month of October 2025:
"Domestic Violence Awareness Month and Strengthening Countywide Strategies to Support Survivors" - uplifting the work the County does to address Domestic

Violence and intimate partner violence to all residents and County staff, and raise awareness about the Signal for Help, which is a nonverbal hand signal that provides a way to discretely ask for help.

“Disability Employment Awareness Month” - recognizing the importance of integrating the principles of the Good Jobs Initiative led by the Department of Labor by ensuring the creation of equitable, sustainable, and resilient job opportunities for all, including individuals with disabilities.

“Filipino American History Month” - recognizing the rich history of Filipino Americans and their many contributions to our local economy, education system, healthcare system, and society that have made our County and Country stronger.

“Italian American Heritage Month” - honoring the achievements and contributions of Italian Americans and recognizing their ongoing role in shaping the social, economic, and cultural life of our County, and celebrating the rich history, cultural traditions, and extraordinary contributions of Italian Americans to the fabric of our nation.

“Hindu Heritage Month” - recognizing the importance of the contributions made by Hindu American residents in the County. Major holidays celebrated by Hindus take place during the month, including Navaratri and Diwali.

“Faith Leader Appreciation Month” - encouraging staff in County Departments to recognize and express gratitude to faith leaders, often referred to as clergy, pastors, rabbis, imams, ministers, lay leaders, and ministry support staff.

“National Fire Prevention Month” recognizing Fire Prevention Month is especially critical this year, as Los Angeles (L.A.) County experienced two of the most devastating wildfires in County history (the Eaton Fire and the Palisades Fire), and spreading awareness about fire safety and prevention.

In addition, the Board has also proclaimed October 5 through October 11 as “Banned Books Week,” celebrating the freedom to read and raising awareness about the harms caused by censorship.

October 6 is “Moon Festival” in observance of the long-standing traditions and celebrations that originated in China more than 3,000 years ago. October 13 is “Indigenous Peoples Day,” encouraging all residents to engage in activities and education that support and celebrate Indigenous cultures.

October 14, as “Rock en Español” in celebration of National Hispanic Heritage Month and in recognition of the music’s rich history, honoring the contributions of Latino artists and celebrating L.A. County as a global hub for artistic innovation, while strengthening intergenerational and cross-cultural connections within our communities.

October 15 is "L.A. Found Day," reinforcing the County's commitment to compassionate care and support for individuals and families affected by conditions such as Alzheimer's, dementia, autism, and cognitive impairments.

October 18 through 25, as "Flood Preparedness Week," encouraging residents to prepare for the upcoming storm season and find information on the availability of flood insurance by visiting the Ready LA County website at www.ready.lacounty.gov

October 23 through 31, as "Red Ribbon Week," encourages all residents to participate in drug prevention education activities, making a visible statement that we are strongly committed to a drug-free lifestyle and inspiring a culture of resilience, where young people feel supported in making positive choices for their future by reinforcing the values of respect, responsibility, and self-care.

The "Roots and Rhythm" of the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) reverberated throughout Whittier Narrows Park during the 31st annual FunMania main event on Saturday, September 27, in South El Monte. Department staff joined colleagues, family, and friends for a celebration of "roots" by wearing traditional clothes, offering food samples, and displaying booths highlighting their culture. The "rhythm" portion of this year's program kicked off with a therapeutic morning drum circle and culminated with a line dancing session.

FunMania is the L.A. County's largest annual department-sponsored fundraising event to support community-based agencies serving economically disadvantaged residents. A report of DPSS's overall contributions will be provided at a future meeting.

The longer into October the shutdown goes, the more concerns grow about the availability of cash aid and food assistance for our customers. Medi-Cal is considered an entitlement program, and it is not dependent on an appropriation by Congress, so we anticipate the shutdown will have no impact on it, including In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS).

Currently, our most immediate challenges with the shutdown are in both CalFresh (CF), food assistance to individuals and families, and CalWORKs (CW), cash aid to families. While these programs are also entitlements, they are dependent on an appropriation by Congress. Both benefits are issued between the 1st and the 10th of each month.

Since we have not been able to confirm that benefits will be available in November, our customers will be informed so they can plan. We will, of course, update them if anything changes. It is our understanding that the State will also be sending out notifications at some point prior to November.

We are reaching out to 140 food banks – which include a number of faith-based organizations that conduct food distribution - to coordinate on messaging and outreach to our customers. We are doing everything we can to lessen the impact on our customers should the federal government not be reopened soon.

5.0 NEW BUSINESS

Presentations:

GR Redesign Update by Shawn Amiel, DPSS – General Relief & CalFresh Division

GR Reform Working Group Data by Kristina Meza, CEO – PAI

Ms. Amiel provided the following update:

General Assistance, known as General Relief (GR) in L.A. County, is a County-funded program that provides financial assistance to single persons or married couples without dependents, with no income or resources, who are ineligible for federal or State cash aid programs.

L.A. County has the largest number of General Assistance recipients in California. As of August 2025, 120,852 individuals are receiving GR benefits in L.A. County. The maximum GR grant is \$221 per month for individuals and \$375 for couples. GR is funded by Net County Cost.

To align the GR Program with the 21st century conditions, DPSS, in collaboration with the CEO's Poverty Alleviation Initiative, has:

Collected input from various stakeholders including GR participants, Community-Based Organizations, Program Advocates, County Departments, and other counties' GR/General Assistance Program administrators and conducted a legal review of program policies to ensure alignment with Welfare and Institutions Code and County Code of Ordinances evaluating current policies and procedures in the following program areas: grant levels, time limits, mandatory Skills and Training to Achieve Readiness for Tomorrow (START) Program participation, property limits, income thresholds and exemptions, housing subsidies, mental health assessments, mandatory substance use disorder recovery program, application process, and annual agreements.

Some examples of current interdependent GR policies being reviewed are Grant levels (\$221 per person / \$375 per couple); START participation (Mandatory); and GR Time-Limits (9 months in a year for employable participants). Completed policy and supportive program assessments and developed recommended proposals, which were presented to the DPSS Executive Team.

We launched the GR Redesign Workgroup Table Kickoff on June 24, 2025, with approximately 100 stakeholders in attendance. The kickoff welcomed

stakeholders, provided an overview of the GR Redesign Project, and outlined the approach with the workgroups.

As of September 30, 2025, completed a series of introductory meetings that provided an overview of the GR Program and caseload, the START Program, the START noncompliance and sanction process, and an overview of longitudinal demographic data of the GR program, which was conducted by the CEO Poverty Alleviation Initiative.

We conducted an electronic survey of all workgroup invitees to assess their interest in supporting the GR Redesign Project, gauging their knowledge of the GR program, and willingness to participate in the project's Steering Committee, or as a Subject Matter Expert (SME). The survey canvassed about 180 stakeholders, with 61 responses received. The various roles required for the Table Sessions were assigned based on preferences provided by stakeholders in the survey responses, as follows: Steering Committee, SMEs, and GR Redesign Table.

Next Steps:

Finalize the Consensus-Based Table Group Agreement form to guide the approval process of the various proposals to be discussed in upcoming meetings. By November 2025, host introductory meetings with the Steering Committee members and SMEs to discuss their roles, responsibilities, the Table Group Agreement, and the proposal topics' meeting structure and flow.

In December 2025, the monthly deep-dive workgroup sessions will begin to discuss proposals and develop recommendations, beginning with the interdependent proposals that include the GR Grant, GR Time Limits, and Mandatory START Participation. In October 2025, initiate a marketing campaign to inform the public, stakeholders, and staff about the launch of the GR Redesign Project. By June 2026, submit proposals developed within the workgroup sessions for review and clearance on a flow basis.

Ms. Meza provided the following update:

I am Christina Meza, and with the CEO's Poverty Alleviation Initiative. I've got one staffer on my team, and we are a board-directed initiative. There are several initiatives that live within the county, including anti racism, diversity, and inclusion. We also have formerly the Women's and Girls Initiative, and then Poverty Alleviation was one that was adopted back in 2022, and we have been working in close partnership with folks over at DPSS around GR reform.

As you just heard from Shawn, we also sit with the Chief Information Officer. They're part of the team that I'm amongst in the CEO's office, and what that allows us to do is leverage data in unique in different ways. The Chief Information Officer team has developed something called Info Hub. What it allows us to do is look at

administrative data across multiple county departments in a way to better inform decision making, having true data, informed decision making, and help identify opportunities for growth or program improvement based on how our customers interact with different services. The analysis that we were able to do to help drive some change that is a part of this broader GR reform work, PAI just released a couple of months ago, the State of Poverty Dashboard. And what this does is to look at high concentration rates of poverty all the way down to the neighborhood level. We were able to work with a local demographer to drive this data, along with census data, to get hyperlocal and specific information.

Looking from 2018 to 2024, early next year, we'll be able to integrate 2025 data, but the reason why this dashboard will be helpful is we'll also be including a benefit access index, so that folks will be able to see of those who are eligible for benefits in your neighborhood who is accessing those benefits. It's a critical time to start looking at that data right now. You could look at folks that are insured, who's on Medi-Cal, who is not, and there's also a toggle tool in there called the California Poverty Measure which was developed by some partners over at Stanford and PPIC and it allows you to look at more specific economic factors in statewide access to critical safety net benefits, including how many of our folks access tax credits. It's a great tool, and I wanted to share that with you all.

The analysis that we were able to conduct in partnership with DPSS and the CIO team, one of the things that we wanted to look into was identifying more details around who is a part of our GR caseload. There's some helpful demographic data on the GR reform webpage. There is a website where all the reform presentations, slides, and data analysis and I encourage folks to visit that website. But in addition to that, what we did initially was we were able to identify that of the 120,000 plus folks that are part. Of our GR caseload in any given month, more than 68% of those individuals are actively experiencing homelessness, which is a staggering number. When you consider that means in any given moment, we're looking at 79,000 to 84,000 individuals on our caseload actively experiencing homelessness.

We also want to clarify this definition slightly from the HUD definition. This includes individuals who don't have a stable residence because they're likely couch surfing, which is the terminology we usually hear, and there are a couple of flags in the data systems that allow us to identify who amongst our populations are actively experiencing homelessness. There's a homelessness flag in our DPSS data system that allows us to identify someone experiencing homelessness, and then the other is if they don't have an address, a home address, and they're using the DPSS office location as their home address. One of the things that came from this was a question as to whether this is driving the rise in caseload. Earlier, Shawn mentioned that we are at about 121,000 folks on our caseload. When we ran this analysis a few months back, we were at 125,000, and we've been sitting at that number and

slowly rising month over month. The chart on the left here looks at month-over-month caseload numbers going all the way back to January of 2018. These are pre-pandemic numbers we saw steady at around 79,000 to 80,000 folks that were on our caseload.

During the pandemic, we had spikes well over 110,000, and we had some recovery in our caseload, bringing us back to our pre-pandemic numbers in late 2021. In late 2022, is when we started to see steady increases in our caseload again, and that has not ceased for the last several years, bringing us all the way up to well over 120,000, with projections saying that we might get to 130,000 next year. The chart on the right shows the correlation between the homelessness point and time count and the rise in our group. There are two outliers. The outlier on the top, a little bubble on the top, that's the point in time count that was conducted in 2021, which we didn't do because of the pandemic. There was a number data, it was very rough estimates, so that's why you see that spike in that outlier. In 2015, we also did a point-in-time count. So, the little bubble towards the bottom of the chart, that's 2015 data. In every other year, there is almost a direct correlation in our rising caseload goes hand in hand. What you can see, going back to the chart on the left, those are the folks on our caseload that are actively experiencing homelessness. I think we were able to make the assumption that the rise in caseload is attributed to the rise in homelessness that we're experiencing here in the county. One of the things that stemmed from this analysis, we went back to our friends over at the Homelessness Initiative that oversee Measure H funding historically and Measure A funding now and identified that we have a significant portion of our GR recipients that are actively experiencing homelessness and what we were also able to do is to match folks amongst our GR caseload with those that were other than that, in totality. If you consider the Housing Subsidy Program that DPSS administers, we're looking at less than 3% of our total group population getting access to any type of direct housing voucher or housing support. So, we took this data to Measure A to advocate for additional funding to support these folks, and part of the proposal was to give folks direct cash. A guaranteed income-like program for folks who are part of our GR program who are actively experiencing homelessness, using data, using research, amongst other guaranteed income pilots that have proven to be successful, especially for those who are housing vulnerable, as the model to frame the pilot. In the pilot, we proposed \$500 a month for a two-year period, and that folks did not have to maintain their GR eligibility in order to receive these payments. They came back and said yes, we'll give you the money, \$8.3 million to pilot. But we want you to focus on older adults in the transitional age to youth, of which each represents about 20 to 26% of the caseload, depending on which population you're looking at. With that, we are working very closely with our friends over at DPSS to administer that pilot next year.

We're also working in partnership with folks over at the California Policy Lab, and we have some data analysis to help us identify higher need individuals that may be suitable to be referred to for this pilot and that brings us into the last couple of slides where you get a snapshot of a longitudinal study that we conducted to look at how many of our GR caseloads are actually caseloads, right?

How many of our folks are on GR for a long period of time, and what attributes do those folks hold that we can help support through this prevention lens? What we did was we looked at two different cohorts of group recipients. We looked at folks who enrolled in the program in 2010 and 2013, and we followed their GR journey for 11 to 14 years, depending on which cohort you look at.

The breakdown on the chart in the table shows you, amongst those two cohorts, what our new entrants into GR are and how many are carryovers. That way, you get a sense of what our group looks like, and it varies depending on the year. Back in 2010, just shy of 40% of our caseload were new entrants, meaning that was the first time that they were coming into the group. And then, looking at the 2013 cohort that we followed, just shy of 30% were new to the group. Following those two cohorts, what we were able to do was develop three GR tenure categories. So, we looked at folks who were short-term GR recipients. So, this equates to folks who were on the program for less than two years. Then we created a mid-range category. These are folks who are on the program anywhere from two to four years, and then if folks are on the program for five years or longer, we consider those folks to be long-term group recipients. What we discovered across those two cohorts is in the middle of Table 2B on the right. What we found was that a vast majority of our GR cases are in our program for two years or less. That equated to about 68% of the case load for the 2010 cohort and over 75% of the case load when we were looking at 2013.

Amongst those two cohorts, less than 10% were long-term, meaning that they were on the program for more than five years. For that 2010 cohort, and less than 7%, we're long-term recipients. Looking at the 2013 cohort. In totality, looking back at those two cohorts and how many of those folks are still on GR today. Like, how many folks are long-term GR recipients? We had 83 for the 2010 cohort, 83 individuals represent 0.013% of our broader group, and 52 were a part of our 2013 case, of which again 0.01% of our caseload. A very small margin of folks are on our caseload for their life essentially. There were three characteristics or attributes that we identified amongst your recipients that we knew were strong contributors to long-term GR dependency, and our analysis concluded that you've got some data here to back up two of the three. There's on the slide deck version of this that lives on the GR redesign. You'll see the third data to support the 3rd, but the first category is folks who had mixed determinations during their GR tenure. These are folks that come into the program, you heard Shawn talk about employability and

unemployability assessment, right? There's an underlying health and mental health condition that deems you as somebody who is unemployable. What's fascinating is for folks that folks who were solely unemployable throughout their entire GR life are recipients of benefits. They were not likely to be a long-term GR recipient for those who were solely employable. They were also not likely to be a long-term GR recipient. But for those who had mixed status, meaning they shifted from employable to unemployable or vice versa throughout their GR tenure, that was one strong contributor to somebody becoming a long-term GR recipient.

The second was, of course, actively experiencing homelessness, so you'll see data on the prevalence of homelessness and activity of homelessness month over month, and how it's increased over those who are long-term recipients, and then the third was a recipient of the Department of Mental Health Services two years prior to entering the GR program. Those were the three big factors that likely contributed to long-term GR dependency, and this could be data that we use to do some predictive modeling to support the guaranteed income pilot that we launched to really get and support the folks that are most vulnerable, when it comes to long-term poverty and poverty experiences. It's really exciting to move this project forward and use this data, and hopefully, one way that you guys can see it being used to inform some reform in the long run.

Follow-up Item: Commissioner Taylor suggested changing the language of self-sufficiency to fit a more realistic outcome for participants who participate in the GR Redesign/START Program. The grant amount of \$221 does not lead to self-sufficiency.

Commissioner Lewis stated with all the revisions and remodeling of how we think about mental health, substances, and dual diagnosis, I don't know if this is a legislative or regulatory thing, but I would encourage the Department to revisit that whole thing as a part of your puzzle piece.

Chairperson McBride thanked the presenters for their very informative presentation.

6.0 COMMISSION BUSINESS

PSS Commission Annual Report Draft: Ms. Toliver discussed the draft Commission's Annual Report. She asked for commissioners to review the draft, as well as review the prospective bio and provide any updates by the end of October.

Follow-up Item: Commission Lewis stated I hope we can place on the agenda our plan to develop a new annual or multi-year plan, as this one expires this year. Vice-Chairperson ElHessen suggested that a committee be established to work on the commission's work goals. Last time we had 3 members, including the Chairperson. The Chair suggested that it be agendized for the November meeting.

Adopt-a-Family program – Last year, you adopted 5 families. One family per supervisorial district. Do we want to continue with this? If you look at the pictures in the annual report, you will see the families that you helped. These families were very appreciative of the commission's help. Chairperson McBride stated she would love to hear from commissioners. Last year, we had a friendly competition among commissioners by supervisorial district. Competition is good.

7.0 CHAIR'S REPORT

Chairperson McBride thanked Dr. ElHessen for presiding over the meeting last month in her absence and appreciated everybody who attended. She read through the minutes and took note of some of the requests for future topics or follow-up information. I will talk to LaFrance about getting some of those things on the agenda or follow up offline with the individual Commissioners who requested them.

Follow-up Item: I want to give you an opportunity ahead of time to review the agenda. Send in your questions that you want with the information you want included in the presentation, just to make sure that we're optimizing the time that we're together and the presenters are prepared to share information and not be caught off guard if there's information that is important to you. If you can do that when you review the agenda, send your questions to La France, and of course, we'll always have the discourse here, but just to make sure that we're always able to get those questions in advance that can be asked.

Commissioner Lewis also suggested that getting a general outline of what will be discussed will be helpful.

8.0 ADJOURNMENT

Summer McBride, Chairperson

The meeting was adjourned by the Chairperson at 12:55 p.m.