



Santa Cruz County Commission on Disabilities

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Santa Cruz County Commission on Disabilities 2019 - 2020 Biennial Report

1. The Role of the Commission

The Commission on Disabilities is an advisory body to the Board of Supervisors on issues affecting persons with disabilities in Santa Cruz County. The Commission was established to:

- a. Review existing County policies that affect persons with disabilities and make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors regarding proposed changes;
- b. Review Sections 503 and 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and its implementing regulations and advise the Board of Supervisors on any actions necessary to bring the County into compliance with the Federal requirements and to eliminate discrimination against persons with disabilities;
- c. Review the provision of access for persons with disabilities to public places within the County and recommend improvements where needed;
- d. Review the County's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Plan and policies and recommend to the Board of Supervisors and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission any revisions which may be necessary to eliminate employment discrimination against persons with disabilities;
- e. Review the County's Personnel rules and job descriptions and make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors and to the Civil Service Commission, as necessary, to assure that any unnecessary barriers to the employment of persons with disabilities are removed;
- f. Advise the Board of Supervisors on any other appropriate programs and actions which would increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities;
- g. Evaluate services provided to persons with disabilities in the County and make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors based on their conclusions;
- h. Review requests by persons with disabilities or organizations for County assistance and advise the Board of Supervisors on appropriate actions;
- i. Investigate citizen complaints related to concerns of persons with disabilities and recommend appropriate actions to the Board of Supervisors;
- j. Review Federal and State legislation of interest to persons with disabilities and advise the Board of Supervisors of their recommendations; and
- k. Exercise other responsibilities related to the needs and concerns of persons with disabilities in the County.

2. Meetings Dates, Time, and Location

Commission on Disabilities meetings are scheduled for the second Thursday of every month except July and December, from 12:30 until 2:00 PM at County Government Center (701 Ocean Street, Fifth Floor Redwoods Conference Room, Santa Cruz) or held remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2019, three regularly scheduled meetings were canceled as follows: the February meeting was canceled for lack of a quorum, the May meeting was canceled to accommodate a Commission

retreat held jointly with the Seniors Commission and the IHSS Commission, and the September meeting was canceled for lack of a quorum.

In 2020, two regularly schedule meetings were canceled as follows: The February meeting was canceled for lack of quorum and the April meeting was canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic. All subsequent meetings were held remotely.

3. Commission Structure

The Commission on Disabilities is composed of ten voting members; two appointed by each of the five County Supervisors. Commission officers are elected each year during the April regular meeting. However, because the April meeting was canceled in 2020, new officers were elected during the May meeting instead. On December 31, 2020, Commission on Disabilities membership was as follows:

District	Commissioners
1 st District	John Daugherty, Nancy Yellin
2 nd District	Stacie Grijalva, Janet Crosse
3 rd District	Becky Taylor, Richard Gubash
4 th District	Brenda Gutierrez Baeza (<i>Vice Chair</i>), Vacancy
5 th District	Lynn Stipes, Dr. David Molina (<i>Chair</i>)

New Commissioners appointed during the reporting period were Nancy Yellin, Stacie Grijalva, Richard Gubash, and John Lechtenberg. Commissioners who completed their terms, resigned, or were replaced during the reporting period were Felipa De Leon and John Lechtenberg.

Commissioner De Leon, who served on the Commission since 2015 and served as Commission Vice Chair during her last term, resigned her seat for health reasons and sadly passed away due to her illness in 2019. It is impossible to count the many ways Commissioner De Leon contributed to the Santa Cruz County disability community and promoted equal access and inclusivity. It is even harder to quantify the tremendous positive impact she had on the Commission, both professionally and personally. Throughout many challenges and potentially difficult circumstances, her tireless optimism and advocacy were an inspiration to us all and she will be dearly missed.

4. Commission Staff

Commissions Coordinator Kaite McGrew staffed the Commission for the entirety of the reporting period.

5. Attendance

Please see attached *Commission on Disabilities 2019-2020 Attendance Report*

6. Goals, Activities and Accomplishments

The Commission’s activities and priorities are determined by the Commission’s mandate, mission statement, and emerging needs as expressed by the community and identified by the Commissioners.

Mission Statement

The Santa Cruz County Commission on Disabilities is a proactive advisory board that serves to ensure that children and adults with disabilities have opportunities to reach their maximum potential in independence, human development, productivity, and self-sufficiency, as well as to insure equity and access within the community.

Commission Objectives

Objective 1:

To monitor, assess and advocate for the eradication of barriers and inequities impacting Santa Cruz County persons with disabilities.

During the reporting period, Commissioners heard reports from the following community agencies, County programs, and other interested entities:

- Commissioner Daugherty on SCMTD Bus and Paracruz Transportation updates
- Britt Harmssen (*Former County EEO Officer*) on extensive County law enforcement training on serving and interacting with people with disabilities, including specialized training in working with people with mental and developmental disabilities and those on the autism spectrum.
- Britt Harmssen on the County's Operational Plan, particularly initiatives related to ensuring greater accessibility to public spaces.
- Mitsuno Baurmeister (County EEO Officer) on the development and status of the County Equal Employment Opportunity and Cultural Competence Plan
- Juan Magaña (IHSS Public Authority Manager) and Jessica Cirksena (IHSS Program Manager) on IHSS response to COVID-19 and its impact on people with disabilities
- Tory Del Favero (*Census Bureau Partnership Specialist*) and Joseph Watkins (*Community Action Board 2020 Census Board Assistant Project Director*) on the impact of accurate representation on diversity, funding and districting.
- Rosemary Anderson (County Emergency Services Manager) on the County's emergency response plans, including accessible communications, development of community resilience, and resources for DME and tech-reliant residents in the event of a power outage.
- Stephanie French (Santa Cruz Regional 9-1-1 Operations Division Manager) on 9-1-1 services in Santa Cruz County including computer-aided dispatch which can flag specific addresses with special circumstances and the option to text 9-1-1 if the caller is unable to call.
- Kathleen Conley (County Public Health Sr. Analyst) on County Public Health emergency preparedness priorities focusing on trauma-informed services for individuals requiring additional assistance (IRAA) with special access and functional needs (behavioral, physical and financial) during community emergencies.
- Individual Commissioners attended a presentation by John Walsh (PG&E Senior Public Safety Specialist) on PG&E planned outage and emergency protocols
- Individual Commissioners attended a presentation by Steve Hammack (Project Specialist, Land Trust of Santa Cruz County) on a proposed ADA compliant, all-access trail at Antonelli Pond.

During the reporting period, the Commission engaged with and/or impacted public policy in the following ways:

- Commission acknowledged the Board of Supervisors' support of Census participation and committed to promoting 2020 Census participation in the disability community.
- Commission advocated in support of Assembly Bill 2739 which increases the Medi-Cal Monthly Personal and Incidental Needs Allowance (PNA) for residents in skilled nursing facilities to align with the Consumer Price Index (CPI).
- Commission advocated for the SCMTD's Accessibility Services Office to remain centrally located at the Pacific Garden Mall Depot.
- Commission advocated for prioritizing representation on the SCMTD Board of Directors for persons with disabilities whose primary transportation is public transportation.

- Commission monitored legislation impacting Medicare/Medicaid beneficiaries, including changes to HSD long-term care requirements related to arbitration agreements.
- Commission monitored Santa Cruz County voter accessibility efforts
- Commission monitored proposed PG&E planned blackouts and emergency protocols
- Individual Commissioners reviewed and provided feedback on the SCMTD’s proposed fare waiver for community members living with legal blindness.
- Individual Commissioners advocated with the California Coastal Conservancy Board in support of the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County’s proposed ADA-Accessible Trail at Antonelli Pond.
- Commission monitored County emergency response to the CZU Lightning Complex wildfires and their impact on the disability community in affected areas both during and in the aftermath.

Objective 2:

To promote the interests of Santa Cruz County persons with disabilities through community outreach and the provision of resources.

All Commission meetings during the reporting period were accessible, open to the public, and publicly noticed in accordance with Brown Act requirements to ensure that meetings were an open forum to both receive and provide information about matters impacting the local disabilities community.

During the reporting period, the Commission heard public comment from the following community members and organizations:

- Maria Magaña (*Central Coast Center for Independent Living*) on State funding for Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) services
- Sylvia Caras (mental health disability rights advocate), Second Story Respite funding, accessibility of new medical facility via transportation, accessibility of portable restrooms at Santa Cruz County homeless camps,
- Lynne Simpson (*Seniors Commission*) on sidewalk safety and emergency preparedness
- Richard Gallo (*ACCESS California Ambassador*) on Access Santa Cruz’s Annual Client and Leadership Survey
- Satya Orion (*EMF Aware representative*) on electromagnetic sensitivity awareness
- Felipa De Leon (*Former Commission on Disabilities Vice Chair*) on CalFresh program updates and CERT earthquake preparedness resources for people with disabilities
- Sonia Plageman (*Special Parents Information Network*) on the availability of respite care for parents of students with disabilities.
- Community member on barriers created by the UCSC graduate student strike that disproportionately impact students with physical and mental disabilities.

During the reporting period, Commissioners participated in the following community meetings and events related to issues impacting persons with disabilities:

- Santa Cruz Metro Transit District (SCMTD) Board meetings
- Costanoa Family Farms Fundraiser
- Watsonville City Council Meeting (during which Commissioner Gutierrez Baeza received recognition for her work representing people with disabilities in District 4)
- Twin Lakes Church Adaptive Egg Hunts
- LEO’s Haven Inclusive Playground Grand Opening

During the reporting period, Commissioners served as members and/or liaisons to the following commissions or organizations:

- RTC - Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee (E&D TAC) - Daugherty
- E&D TAC Pedestrian Safety Work Group - Daugherty
- In Home Support Services Advisory Commission – Taylor
- Santa Cruz County Seniors Commission - Daugherty
- LEO’s Haven Core Volunteer Team - Crosse, Gutierrez Baeza, Taylor
- Metro Advisory Committee (MAC) - Taylor
- Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee – Crosse, Stipes
- Santa Cruz County Park Friends – Gutierrez Baeza
- Shared Adventures - Gutierrez Baeza
- UCSC Disability Resource Center – Gubash
- Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired – Grijalva
- Santa Cruz County Community Emergency Response Team - Yellin

The Commission also maintains a Facebook page and an online resource directory page which are consistently updated with relevant resources. During the reporting period, relevant resources included those related to census participation, voter accessibility, COVID-19 public health information, PG&E PSPS power outages, the CZU Lightning Complex wildfires, and predicted debris flow mapping.

Between Commissions meetings, County Staff was available by phone, email, or in person for information and referrals. The County Commissions Office is located in the County Government Center (701 Ocean Street, Room 510, Santa Cruz).

Objective 3:

To monitor and promote equal opportunity employment for persons with disabilities in Santa Cruz County.

During the reporting period the Commission:

- Reviewed all new County postings for open positions and position descriptions.
- Received regular updates on the development and status of the County Equal Employment Opportunity and Cultural Competence Plan with a view to reviewing and offering feedback before it is finalized.

Objective 4:

To develop and implement special projects to advance the interests of persons with disabilities in Santa Cruz County.

During the reporting period, the Commission participated in the following special projects:

• **2019 Kudos Awards**

The Commission hosted the 2019 KUDOs Awards with Tricia Webber, Assistant County Clerk, serving as Master of Ceremonies. Awardees included: Ernestina Saldaña (*Former Chair, Commission on Disabilities*), Tom Blaich (*Volunteer, Shared Adventures*), Cece Pinheiro (*Executive Director, Special Parents Information Network*), Masood Madani (*Business Owner, Masood’s Liquor & Deli*), Kevin McClish (*Former Fire Chief, Boulder Creek Fire District*) and Lifetime Achievement Awardees Angelica Victoria (*Former Intern, Commission on Disabilities*) and Felipa De Leon (*Former Commissioner, Commission on Disabilities*).

- **Story Time**

Commissioners participated in Story Time with local children at the Watsonville public library to challenge youth preconceptions of persons with disabilities.

- **Adaptive Swim**

The Commission initiated development of a Simpkins Swim Center Adaptive Swim Program collaborating with County Parks in consultation with the Josephine Kern Adaptive Aquatics Program. Proposed elements of the program include group classes, one-on-one lessons, adaptive family swim lessons, basic water safety seminars, instructional videos, train-the-trainer classes, regular equipment safety checks by an outside vendor, and low stimulus swim hours. Despite great progress in 2019, the project was postponed during the COVID-19 pandemic as the Swim Center facility served as emergency housing for Santa Cruz County residents experiencing homelessness. To date the project has not resumed.

- **Joint Retreat with the Seniors Commission and the IHSS Commission**

The Commission participated in an unprecedented joint retreat with the Seniors Commission and the IHSS Commission to workshop strategies to address three key priorities impacting the constituencies of all three Commissions:

1. Affordable, Accessible Transportation for People with Disabilities
2. Emergency Preparedness for People with Disabilities
3. Availability of IHSS Providers

Following the retreat, each of the Commissions took on one focus and invited representation from each of the other two Commissions in their post-retreat efforts. The Commission on Disabilities chose Emergency Preparedness, with Seniors Commissioner Lynne Simpson attending meetings to liaise on behalf of the Seniors Commission and Commissioner Becky Taylor liaising on behalf of the IHSS Commission.

- **Personal Emergency and Evacuation Plan (PEEP) Project**

Commissioner Yellin collaborated with the Commission to initiate a process helping people with disabilities to prepare for potential emergencies. Commission participated in the development of an evaluation tool and beta testing of the facilitated process.

- **Accessibility for Students with Disabilities During the COVID-19 Pandemic Project**

In 2020, the Commission initiated an intern research project to learn about support for students with disabilities during distance learning. The project goals are to:

- Provide a snapshot of SELPA guidelines implementation, barriers/gaps for students with disabilities and best-practice strategies being adopted by the schools to address them
- Provide a resource to the Commission, key academic stakeholders, policy makers, parents and students who are navigating this unprecedented terrain
- Inform any subsequent advocacy the Commission may do in support of schools and students, either by advocating for the allocation of County funds to relevant programs or by providing/promoting access to resources that support students/parents/schools

In consultation with Commission liaisons, SELPA leadership, key academic stakeholders and County staff, intern Juliet Hayes is collecting data from school districts and parents of students with disabilities for presentation to the Commission. The project is ongoing.

- **Commissioner Recruitment**

In 2019, the Commission initiated a proactive Commissioner recruitment campaign to generate community awareness of the Commission and promote applications. Fliers in both Spanish and

English were posted throughout the districts with vacancies and Commissioners conducted outreach to key stakeholders in the disability community to publicize the need for applicants.

Partly due to recruitment efforts, all vacant seats were filled during the reporting period, though one new Commissioner had to resign his seat before he could attend. With all but one seat filled, previous difficulties achieving quorum were all but eradicated. Additionally, new Commissioners brought relationships with key organizations including the *UCSC Disability Resource Center*, *Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired* and the *Santa Cruz County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)*

During the reporting period, the Commission created or modified the following subcommittees:

- **Ad Hoc Media Subcommittee:** The Social Media Subcommittee became the Media Subcommittee, expanding its scope and purpose to include outreach via traditional media as well as social media. Commissioners Gubash, Daugherty and Molina were featured in a Good Times article celebrating the 30th anniversary of the ADA.
- **Ad Hoc Emergency Preparedness and Pandemic Response Subcommittee:** The Emergency Preparedness Subcommittee was renamed to incorporate the Commission’s pandemic-specific efforts related to the disability community.

7. Previous Goals

During the reporting period, the Commission met their previously stated goals as follows:

Goal	Status
Make recommendations as necessary on public policy regarding the needs of persons with disabilities in Santa Cruz County	Achieved
Continue education efforts and outreach to the community through hosting and attending events and sharing resources	Achieved
Host the Semi-Annual Kudos Awards to recognize local individuals and organizations that improve access for persons with disabilities in Santa Cruz County	Achieved
Explore and share emergency preparedness solutions and resources for persons with disabilities	Achieved
Advocate for the development of a swimming program for children with disabilities	Achieved Project is ongoing
Participate in a half-day joint retreat with the Seniors Commission and the IHSS Advisory Commission to share resources and coordinate efforts on issues that affect all three constituencies	Achieved
Collaborate with the UCSC Disability Resource Center to host a Commission meeting on the UCSC campus for Global Accessibility Day	Project postponed
Review the <i>2009 Report on Services to County Residents with Disabilities</i> to identify potential future updates	Project postponed
Review intern Angelica Victoria’s report, <i>Ven, Vamos a Platicar</i> , to identify potential actionable items and make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors as appropriate	Achieved. No actionable items were identified
Review Commission goals for appropriate internship projects	Achieved

8. Future Goals and Recommendations

In the coming year, the Commission on Disabilities hopes to accomplish the following:

- Make recommendations as necessary on public policy impacting the disability community in Santa Cruz County
- Continue education efforts and outreach to the community through hosting and attending events and sharing resources
- Host the Semi-Annual Kudos Awards to recognize local individuals and organizations that advance the interests of persons with disabilities in Santa Cruz County
- Continue promoting personal emergency preparedness solutions and resources for persons with disabilities including the PEEP process
- Publish key findings from the *Accessibility for Students with Disabilities During the COVID-19 Pandemic* intern research project
- Collaborate with County Parks (in consultation with the Josephine Kern Adaptive Aquatics Program) to initiate a Simpkins Swim Center Adaptive Swim Program.
- Investigate advocacy opportunities for greater disability community inclusion and representation in public health policy.
- Develop and publish a comprehensive Commission history
- Engage in active collaboration with relevant County Commissions on matters of common interest to the communities we serve.

Approved by the Commission on Disabilities on January 14, 2021 at their regularly scheduled meeting.


Respectfully Submitted,



David Molina, PhD
Chair, Commission on Disabilities

January 14, 2021

Date



Brenda Gutierrez Baeza
Vice Chair, Commission on Disabilities

January 14, 2021

Date

**Santa Cruz County Commission on Disabilities
2019 - 2020 Attendance Report**

District/ Supervisor	Name	2019 ATTENDANCE REPORT														
		Jan 2019	Feb 2019	Mar 2019	April 2019	May 2019	June 2019	July 2019	Aug 2019	Sep 2019	Oct 2019	Nov 2019	Dec 2019			
1 st District Supervisor Leopold	John Daugherty	P	Meeting Canceled for Lack of Quorum	P	P	Joint Retreat	P	No Meeting Scheduled	P	Meeting Canceled	P	P	No Meeting Scheduled			
	Felipa De Leon	P		-	-		-		-		-	-				
	Nancy Yellin	-		-	-		-		P		P					
2 nd District Supervisor Friend	Janet Crosse	P		P	P		P		P		P	P		P	P	P
	Stacie Grijalva	-		P	P		E		E		E	E				
3 rd District Supervisor Coonerty	Becky Taylor	P		P	P		P		P		P	P		P	P	P
	Richard Gubash	-		-	-		-		-		-	-		P	E	
4 th District Supervisor Caput	Brenda Gutierrez Baeza	P		E	P		P		P		P	A		E	P	
	John Lechtenberg	-		-	-		-		-		-	-		E	E	
5 th District Supervisor McPherson	Lynn Stipes	P		P	P		P		P		P	P		P	P	P
	David Molina	P		P	P		P		P		P	P		P	P	

LEGEND: P=Present A=Absent E=Excused (-) = Not Seated

District/ Supervisor	Name	2020 ATTENDANCE REPORT													
		Jan 2020	Feb 2020	Mar 2020	April 2020	May 2020	June 2020	July 2020	Aug 2020	Sep 2020	Oct 2020	Nov 2020	Dec 2020		
1 st District Supervisor Leopold	John Daugherty	P	Meeting Canceled - No Quorum	P	Meeting Canceled for COVID-19	P	P	No Meeting Scheduled	P	P	P	P	No Meeting Scheduled		
	Nancy Yellin	P		P		P	P		P	P					
2 nd District Supervisor Friend	Janet Crosse	E		P		E	P		P	P	P	E		P	
	Stacie Grijalva	P		P		P	P		P	P	E	P		P	
3 rd District Supervisor Coonerty	Becky Taylor	P		P		P	P		P	P	P	P		P	
	Richard Gubash	P		P		P	P		P	P	E	P		E	
4 th District Supervisor Caput	Brenda Gutierrez Baeza	P		P		P	P		P	P	P	P		P	
	Vacancy	-		-		-	-		-	-	-	-		-	
5 th District Supervisor McPherson	Lynn Stipes	E		P		P	P		P	P	P	P		E	P
	David Molina	P		E		P	P		P	P	P	P		P	

Submitted:



Kaite McGrew
Commissions Coordinator

December 31, 2020

Date