



# Santa Cruz County Commission on Disabilities

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## Santa Cruz County Commission on Disabilities 2021 - 2022 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) unless held remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021, one regularly scheduled meeting was canceled for lack of a quorum. All meetings were held remotely.

In 2022, no regularly scheduled meetings were canceled. All 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 District Supervisors. Commission officers are elected each year during the April regular meeting. On December 31, 2022, Commission on Disabilities membership was as follows:

District	Commissioners
1 <sup>st</sup> District	John Daugherty, Rebecca Haifley
2 <sup>nd</sup> District	Stacie Grijalva, Fay Levinson
3 <sup>rd</sup> District	Becky Taylor, Richard Gubash
4 <sup>th</sup> District	Brenda Gutierrez Baeza ( <i>Vice Chair</i> ), Vacancy
5 <sup>th</sup> District	Dr. David Molina ( <i>Chair</i> ), Riley Hartmann

New Commissioners appointed during the reporting period were Michael Leimbach, Robert Schindler, Rebecca Haifley, Fay Levinson, and Riley Hartmann. Commissioners who were reappointed during the reporting period were John Daugherty, Stacie Grijalva, David Molina, and Lynn Stipes. Commissioners who completed their terms, resigned, or were replaced during the reporting period were Robert Schindler, Michael Leimbach, Nancy Yellin, Janet Crosse, and Lynn Stipes.

### 4. Commission Staff

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

### 5. Attendance

Please see attached *Commission on Disabilities 2021-2022 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 on the following community agencies, County programs, and other interested entities:

- FY 2021-23 Operational Plan Update, including specific information on equity principles and the County’s commitment to embedding equity into Operational plan objectives and goals
- Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) Vaccine Strike Team vaccination delivery to homebound residents.
- County Employee Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Survey Results
- Friends of Rail-Trail (FORT) and the RTC on the accessibility of the proposed Rail-Trail Project

- Greenways Trail Organization on the accessibility of the proposed Greenways Trail
- Accessibility Support Center Advisory Committee
- County Voting Center transition on voter accessibility improvements
- Santa Cruz County Climate Action and Adaptation Draft Plan
- FY 2023-2025 Operational Plan Progress and Objectives
- “A Santa Cruz County Like Me” Project to increase diversity on County Commissions
- Monitored the planned closure of the PAMF Urgent Care Clinic serving Scotts Valley and San Lorenzo Valley.

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

- Monitored the availability of COVID-19 vaccinations for high-risk members of the disabilities community and the development of pediatric vaccinations.
- Monitored County and supporting agencies’ efforts coordinating a complex evacuation during the CZU lightning complex wildfires, particularly as they related to evacuating people with disabilities.
- Advocated with the SCMTD Board of Directors for Metro to maintain a full-time coordinator position, prioritize recruitment to fill it, provide services in the interim, and publicize how community members can access them.
- Monitored the County’s vaccination rollout, County and State communications regarding identifying and prioritizing people with disabilities in the tier structure and identified a need for more clarity and better representation of people with disabilities in public health communications and policy related to vaccinations.
- Monitored and advised the County’s Voter Accessibility Committee activities (ensuring that vote centers are accessible, using ballot marking devices with accessibility supported technology, providing a remote accessible vote by mail option, and providing audio and large print versions of voting materials)
- Provided feedback on the County’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Employee Survey.
- Provided feedback on the County’s Equal Employment Opportunity and Cultural Competence Plan
- Provided feedback to the Greenways Trail organization on the accessibility of their proposed trail.
- Provided feedback to the RTC and Friends of Rail-Trail (FORT) on the accessibility of their proposed plan.
- Reviewed 2022 State and Federal bills that would impact the disabilities community as identified by the California Senior Legislature (CSL) and Disability Rights California (DRC) including: AB-1663 The Probate Conservatorship Reform and Supported Decision-Making Act, SB-1092: Equitable Access to Services, AB-2511 Skilled Nursing Facilities: Back-up Electrical Supply, AB-1900: Medi-Cal Income level Maintenance, AB-2077: Personal Needs Allowance ASM Calderon and H.R. 431/S. 212: Access Technology Affordability Act.
- Monitored the recent reduction/elimination of premiums for DHCS Disabled Program participants
- Considered opportunities for advocacy related to implementing accessibility screening standards for County electronic documents that were created using Microsoft Office programs and Adobe Acrobat. Staff met with leadership from the CAO’s office, Information Services, and

the Clerk of the Board's office to discuss implementation considerations. All three departments were supportive of implementing this ADA-required standard and indicated that a plan to phase it in across County agencies (as software improvements allow) would be possible.

- Consider opportunities for advocacy related to a recent judgement restricting public access to the only safe, accessible path of travel to Rio Del Mar Beach for people with mobility disabilities.
- Established a legislative advocacy plan for 2023 that included both legislative and budgetary timelines

## **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, Commissioners participated in the following community meetings and events related to issues impacting persons with disabilities:

- Watsonville City Council meeting adopting a proclamation honoring Vice Chair Gutierrez Baeza in celebration of International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The proclamation brought public awareness to both the Commission and the importance of disability inclusion.
- Community Town Halls during the pandemic, particularly those related to school re-openings which remained high-risk for children with disabilities before the development of a pediatric vaccine.
- Shared Adventures mural dedication event at Ramsey Park near the location of a proposed all-abilities inclusive playground. Vice Chair Gutierrez Baeza spoke at the event.
- Felt Street Park Community Festival (community outreach table)
- Camphill Communities CA meeting to promote awareness of the County's Adaptive Swim Program and participation in the community survey
- Rock and Roll Wheelchair Dance
- "Wheelin B-Ball" week-long basketball camp, kick-off demonstration, and barbeque
- Shared Adventures screening of the film "Crip Camp" during which Vice Chair Gutierrez Baeza and Commissioner Daugherty served as panelists
- Shared Adventures' Annual Day at the Beach
- Shared Adventures Board Meetings
- Special Parents Information Network (SPIN) Resource Fair
- Santa Cruz County Park Friends "Corazon de Mujer Halloween Festival" at LEO's Haven Park.
- RTC Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee (E&D/TAC) Meetings
- Cabrillo College Accessibility Support Center Advisory Committee Meetings

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

- Cabrillo College Accessibility Support Center - Gubash

- Cabrillo College Accessibility Support Center Advisory Committee – Gutierrez Baeza
- Capitola Coast Lions - Grijalva
- County Clerk's Voter Accessibility Committee - Levinson
- In Home Support Services Advisory Commission – Taylor
- Metro Advisory Committee (MAC) - Taylor
- Santa Cruz County Park Friends – Gutierrez Baeza
- Shared Adventures Board of Directors – Gutierrez Baeza
- Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired – Grijalva
- Santa Cruz chapter of the Citizens' Climate Lobby – Hartmann
- Capitola Coast Lions Club - Grijalva

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 related to voter accessibility, COVID-19 public health information, Grand Jury participation, available health care options after the PAMF clinic closure, information related to PG&E PSPS power outages, and information/resources related to potential debris flow evacuations.

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 new County postings for open positions and position descriptions.
- Provided feedback on the draft County Equal Employment Opportunity and Cultural Competence Plan and monitored its progress towards publication.
- Provided feedback and monitored the implementation of the County’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Employee Survey. Heard EEO Officer Mitsuno Baurmeister’s presentation on the survey results and next steps.
- Monitored self-reported County employee disability rates as compared to 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) data which indicated that 11.6% of Santa Cruz County residents reported having disabilities at the time of the survey. Of the 775 participants in the DE&I survey, 22% reported having disabilities which significantly exceeds the available workforce data.

**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:

- **Disability and Distance Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic Report**

During the reporting period, Commission concluded a research project about support available to students with disabilities in Santa Cruz County during distance learning. Project goals

included providing a snapshot of SELPA guidelines implementation; identify 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; and 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 collected data from school districts and parents of students with disabilities and presented key findings and potential recommendations to the Commission. The report and presentation are available as a resource to the community via the Commission website.

- **Adaptive Swim**

In 2019, the Commission collaborated with the Santa Cruz County Department of Parks, Open Space and Cultural Services to develop an adaptive swim program at Simpkins Family Swim Center. Although the project was temporarily delayed during the first year of the pandemic and subsequent renovations of the facility, the first phase of the program was implemented in Spring of 2022. The Commission developed a community survey to prioritize program elements, conducted community outreach to promote the survey and strategized with Parks staff to address potential barriers to implementation.

Currently, regular low stimulation swim hours are available and community members with disabilities can enroll in one-on-one adaptive swim instruction with specially trained instructors. It was clear that the demand for this instruction far exceeded supply, with adaptive swim instruction lessons being completely booked for the summer within hours of becoming available.

The Commission will continue to work with Simpkins staff to develop the program and increase the availability of adaptive swim instruction to fully meet the needs of the community. Future phases may include additional elements such as basic water safety classes for families of people with disabilities, group adaptive swim classes, development of educational materials to help familiarize the public with use of adaptive equipment and accessibility features available at Simpkins Family Swim Center.

- **2022 Kudos Award Presentation**

Although the ongoing pandemic precluded the Commission holding an in-person award ceremony, they did present a 2022 Kudos Award to the Santa Cruz County Parks Adaptive Swim Program. Santa Cruz County Department of Parks, Open Space and Cultural Services (POSC) staff went above and beyond ADA-mandated accommodation to implement low-stimulation swim hours and provide access to an instructor who specializes in working with students with adaptive swim needs. The Commission is deeply appreciative of the County POSC team and their longstanding commitment to inclusion and accessibility.

- **Commission History Project:**

The Commission is developing a comprehensive history report and display that will reflect the Commission's efforts and impact within the larger context of the disability rights movement to raise public awareness of the Commission and of disability rights overall. Eventually, the Commission hopes to create a mobile display (suitable for events) and a Community Art Wall exhibit in the County building at 701 Ocean Street. Although they recruit for the available internship, the Commission continues to assemble and review historical records.

**During the reporting period, the Commission established or continued the following subcommittees:**

- **Ad Hoc Public Awareness Subcommittee:** The Ad Hoc Media Subcommittee became the Public Awareness Subcommittee, tasked with promoting public awareness of the Commission and disability issues. At the time of this report, subcommittee members were Gutierrez Baeza, Taylor, Grijalva, and Daugherty.
- **Ad Hoc Kudos Subcommittee:** Established to recognize community members and organizations that significantly advance equal access and opportunities for persons with disabilities in Santa Cruz County. At the time of this report, subcommittee members were Gutierrez Baeza, Daugherty, and Taylor.
- **Ad Hoc Resource Directory Subcommittee:** Established to share community resources that support the interests of persons with disabilities in Santa Cruz County. At the time of this report, the only subcommittee member is Molina.
- **Ad Hoc Accessibility Awareness Subcommittee**  
The Ad Hoc Accessibility Awareness Subcommittee is tasked with monitoring accessibility issues and recommending accessibility advocacy priorities to the Commission. At the time of this report, subcommittee members Daugherty, Gutierrez Baeza, and Grijalva.
- **Ad Hoc Legislative Advocacy Subcommittee**  
Established to monitor policy, legislation and budget decisions that impact the Santa Cruz County disabilities community and recommending legislative, policy and budgetary advocacy opportunities. At the time of this report, subcommittee members were Molina, Grijalva, and Haifley.
- **Ad Hoc Housing Subcommittee:**  
The Ad Hoc Housing Subcommittee is tasked with monitoring the availability of ADA-accessible, affordable housing in Santa Cruz County and recommending housing advocacy opportunities. At the time of this report, the only subcommittee member was Taylor.
- **Ad Hoc Emergency Preparedness and Crisis Response Subcommittee:**  
The Ad Hoc Emergency Preparedness and Crisis Response Subcommittee is tasked with monitoring issues related to emergency preparedness and recommending resources and advocacy opportunities related to emergency preparedness and emergency response protocols. At the time of this report, subcommittee members were Taylor, Daugherty, & Molina.
- **Ad Hoc Voter Accessibility Subcommittee:**  
Established to monitor County voter accessibility efforts, liaise with the County’s Voter Accessibility Advisory Committee, and recommend advocacy opportunities. At the time of this report, subcommittee members were Gutierrez Baeza, Grijalva, and Levinson.
- **Ad Hoc Recreation Subcommittee:**  
Established to monitor and promote participation in local recreational opportunities for residents with disabilities and to recommend advocacy and collaborative opportunities. At the time of this report, subcommittee members were Gutierrez Baeza and Molina.
- **Ad Hoc Kudos Subcommittee:**  
Established to recognize community members and organizations that significantly advance equal access and opportunities for persons with disabilities in Santa Cruz County. At the time of this report, subcommittee members were Gutierrez Baeza, Daugherty, and Taylor.

- **Ad Hoc Commission History Subcommittee:**  
Established to develop a comprehensive Commission history exhibit and report described within the larger context of the disability rights movement to raise public awareness of the Commission’s efforts and impact in Santa Cruz County. At the time of this report, the only subcommittee member is Daugherty.

## 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
Continue promoting personal emergency preparedness solutions and resources for persons with disabilities	Achieved
Publish key findings from the <i>Accessibility for Students with Disabilities During the COVID-19 Pandemic</i> intern research project	Achieved
Collaborate with County Parks to initiate a Simpkins Swim Center Adaptive Swim Program.	Achieved
Investigate advocacy opportunities for greater disability community inclusion and representation in public health policy.	Achieved
Develop and publish a comprehensive Commission History	Project ongoing
Engage in active collaboration with relevant County Commissions on matters of common interest to the communities we serve.	No actionable opportunities identified

## 8. Future Goals and Recommendations

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

- Continue making recommendations as needed on public policy impacting the disability community in Santa Cruz County, particularly in the areas of health care; accessible housing; climate change adaptation and response; community resources; and digital accessibility and transparency;
- Continue to investigate advocacy opportunities for greater disability inclusion and representation in public policy impacting the disability community in Santa Cruz County, particularly in the areas of health care; ADA-accessible housing; climate change adaptation and response; community resources; the Master Plan for Aging; and digital accessibility and transparency;
- Continue education efforts and outreach to the community through hosting and attending events and sharing resources;
- Continue to host the Semi-Annual Kudos Awards recognizing local individuals and organizations that advance the interests of persons with disabilities in Santa Cruz County;
- Continue to collaborate with County Parks to further develop the Simpkins Swim Center Adaptive Swim Program;



- Continue to support County Parks and County Park Friends’ efforts to development of additional adaptive playgrounds
- Continue developing a comprehensive Commission history for presentation/publication;
- Engage in active collaboration opportunities with other relevant County Commissions as appropriate on matters of common interest to our communities; and
- Further develop and pursue a variety of opportunities to secure reliable financial support for Commission projects and efforts.

**In the coming year, the Commission on Disabilities makes the following recommendations:**


- Include ADA-accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities explicitly in all County efforts to embed equity in Operational Plan goals and objectives, going beyond minimal accessibility requirements to consider and include functional accessibility;
- Require that a significant percentage of all affordable housing units in each approved development be ADA-accessible to allow County residents with disabilities an equal opportunity to obtain affordable housing;
- Prioritize and support the expansion of accessible, affordable transportation options and maintain and improve existing options;
- Continue to prioritize accessible recreational opportunities for both adults and children with disabilities;
- Support and promote community participation in the vulnerable citizen registry for first responders and crisis response coordinators;
- Support implementation of emergency evacuation and cooling centers and promote awareness of community resources to support resident emergency preparedness and response; and
- Implement accessibility screening standards across all County departments for all public-facing electronic documents that were created using Microsoft Office and Adobe Acrobat programs.

Approved by the Commission on Disabilities on January 12, 2023 at their regularly scheduled meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

  
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 David Molina, PhD  
 Chair, Commission on Disabilities

January 12, 2023  
 Date

  
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 Brenda Gutierrez Baeza  
 Vice Chair, Commission on Disabilities

January 12, 2023  
 Date

## SANTA CRUZ COUNTY COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES

District/ Supervisor	Name	2021 ATTENDANCE REPORT											
		Jan 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021	April 2021	May 2021	June 2021	July 2021	Aug 2021	Sep 2021	Oct 2021	Nov 2021	Dec 2021
1 <sup>st</sup> District Supervisor Koenig	John Daugherty	P	P	P	Meeting Canceled - No Quorum	P	P	No Meeting Scheduled	P	P	P	P	No Meeting Scheduled
	Nancy Yellin	P	E	P		-	-		-	-	-	-	
	Robert Schindler	-	-	-		P	P		E	P	P	P	
2 <sup>nd</sup> District Supervisor Friend	Janet Crosse	P	P	P		-	-		-	-	-	-	
	Stacie Grijalva	P	P	P		P	P		P	P	P	P	
3 <sup>rd</sup> District Supervisor Coonerty	Becky Taylor	P	P	P		P	P		P	P	P	P	
	Richard Gubash	E	E	E		P	E		E	P	P	P	
4 <sup>th</sup> District Supervisor Caput	Brenda Gutierrez Baeza	P	P	P		P	P		P	P	P	P	
	Michael Leimbach	-	P	P		P	P		P	P	P	P	
5 <sup>th</sup> District Supervisor McPherson	Lynn Stipes	P	E	P		A	P		P	E	E	P	
	David Molina	P	P	P		P	P		P	P	P	P	

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

District/ Supervisor	Name	2022 ATTENDANCE REPORT											
		Jan 2022	Feb 2022	Mar 2022	April 2022	May 2022	June 2022	July 2022	Aug 2022	Sep 2022	Oct 2022	Nov 2022	Dec 2022
1 <sup>st</sup> District Supervisor Koenig	John Daugherty	P	E	P	E	P	P	No Meeting Scheduled	E	P	P	P	No Meeting Scheduled
	Robert Schindler	P	P	A	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	
	Rebecca Haifley	-	-	-	-	-	-		P	P	P	P	
2 <sup>nd</sup> District Supervisor Friend	Stacie Grijalva	P	P	E	P	P	P		P	P	P	E	
	Fay Levinson	-	P	P	P	P	P		E	P	P	P	
3 <sup>rd</sup> District Supervisor Coonerty	Becky Taylor	P	P	P	P	P	P		P	P	P	P	
	Richard Gubash	P	E	P	E	P	P		E	E	E	P	
4 <sup>th</sup> District Supervisor Caput	Brenda Gutierrez Baeza	P	P	P	P	P	P		P	P	P	P	
	Michael Leimbach	P	P	P	P	P	P		P	-	-	-	
5 <sup>th</sup> District Supervisor McPherson	David Molina	P	P	P	P	P	P		P	P	P	P	
	Lynn Stipes	P	P	P	P	E	P		-	-	-	-	
	Riley Hartmann	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	

Submitted:



Kaite McGrew  
Commissions Manager

December 31, 2022

Date