



State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Advisory Group

Meeting Notes

August 19, 2026



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ATTENDANCE

DDS AND FEDERAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDER

- DDS: Reyna Ambriz, Latonya Harris, Shannen Cheng, Janelle Fong, Anne De Medeiros, Kahea Rucker, Kayla Hung, Lisa Gonzales, Lauren Libero, Jane Lee, Cathy Schulze, Jasmine Suo
- SRI International: Sally Shepherd (Facilitator), Christen Park, Jenna Nguyen, Kathleen Hebbeler
- ASL Interpreter: Rick Haffner

ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS

- Yvette Baptiste, Chair, Family Resource Centers Network of California; Executive Director, Eastern Los Angeles Family Resource Center
- Jennifer Castle, Regional Center of Orange County
- Silvia Costichi, South Central Los Angeles Regional Center
- Sarah Franco, San Diego Regional Center
- Denise Godfrey-Pinn, Mental Health Consultant
- Samantha Hebermehl, Parent Representative
- Griselda Hernandez, South Central Los Angeles Regional Center
- Yuuko Johnson, PhD Student/Community Representative
- Laurie Jordan, Rainbow Connection Family Resource and Empowerment Center
- Angela McGuire, WestEd
- Anna Nguyen, California Department of Social Services
- Michelle Oliver, Part C Consultant/Provider
- Gigi Ostrowsky, Education Programs Consultant, California Department of Education
- Maria Rivas, Harbor Regional Center
- Isela Solorzano, San Andreas Regional Center
- Melanie Hertig, California Early Childhood Special Education Network (CalECSE)
- Jean Gonsier-Gedin, California State University, Sacramento
- Dana Kalek, Child Development Institute (CDI)
- Robert Rochin, FRCNCA
- Daniel Hernandez, Matrix Parent Network and Resource Center
- Birgit Switenki, Matrix Parent Network and Resource Center
- Robin Ryan, Sacramento County Office of Education
- Arushie Nugapitiya, San Andreas Regional Center

MEETING NOTES

MEETING LOCATION

- Online via Zoom

AGENDA: WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

- Shannen Cheng welcomed the group and introduced the DDS Early Start team, including Sally Shepherd, SRI International, a presenter throughout the meeting.
- Jasmine Sou provided housekeeping information for participating via Zoom and after the meeting.
- Shannen Cheng reviewed the agenda for the meeting, including updates and recent activities, Family-Directed Assessments (FDA) and pilot sites, a group discussion, and Family Outcomes Survey (FOS) update

SSIP REVIEW AND RECENT ACTIVITIES

- Shannen reviewed the SSIP Theory of Change developed as part of the updated SSIP and SiMR, highlighting the plan to implement uniformly conducted Family-Directed Assessments consistently, develop high-quality IFSPs, implement family coaching, and monitor progress.
- Shannen presented the ongoing activities related to the public engagement plan which consisted of holding the first Regional Centers (RC) and Family Resource Centers (FRC) collaboration meetings, providing updates at Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC), FRCNCA, and RC Early Start supervisor meetings.
- Shannen shared that the team is working on the Family-Directed Assessment tool and guidance, which was discussed in future detail in a later slide.
- Shannen also shared that DDS is planning upcoming partner meetings which includes developing a plan for LEA engagement and other potential groups.

REGIONAL CENTERS & FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS COLLABORATION MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

- Shannen shared takeaways from the first RCs and FRCs collaboration meeting held in July 2026. All RCs and FRCs were invited to participate, with attendance limited to two representatives per center to allow for time for discussion. This meeting series which will be quarterly moving forward. The key takeaways were the Regional Centers generally follow similar processes for collecting resources, priorities, and concerns, which typically begin at intake or at the initial IFSP process and this included the FDA. The way the information is collected and shared varies throughout each center.

FAMILY-DIRECTED ASSESSMENTS

- Sally reviewed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) federal statute that requires the content the FDA should address.
- Sally shared the high-level guidance that was developed as a base for the final recommendations for the FDA implementation. The topics included: timing, personnel, approach, content, and documentation.
- The group discussed the level of standardization the FDAs should have and provided valuable feedback.
 - Michelle Oliver emphasized that it is important to have open-ended questions, and to be mindful and intentional of the language and phrasing. She also mentioned there should be a clear distinction on how this is done at an initial intake versus for a child with an ongoing IFSP, so families don't feel like they are starting over.
 - Yvette Baptiste mentioned it is essential to have data sharing among Regional Centers, Family Resource Centers, and providers to avoid repetition of families answering the same questions. She also encourages motivational interviewing training for Service Coordinators to improve the user's experience.
- Sally shared a sample of questions that may be asked, that was separated by questions that should be asked at intake and questions that could be included later in the IFSP process.
- The group discussed their feedback and suggestions on the types of questions that should be asked, emphasizing that the questions should be family centered.
 - Birgit Switneski and Michelle Oliver shared that the questions should use strengths-based language to provide families with the opportunity to share concerns without negatively framing the situation.
 - Yuuko Johnson, Samantha Hebermehl, and Anna Nguyen shared that it is important to ask the parent to share their understanding of their child's diagnosis and what they have learned at intake to gauge the strengths/hopes/worries/concerns they may have.

PILOT SITE SELECTION

- Shannen reviewed the timeline and expectations for the pilot sites. DDS expects to select 2-3 Regional Centers as pilot sites by Fall of 2026. The selected pilot sites will be implementing selected Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs), including standardized FDAs, high-quality IFSPs, and family coaching, over a 3-year period.
- Shannen shared a high-level overview of how the Department is evaluating potential Regional Center pilot sites on a variety of criteria, including various data factors and local program processes.

FAMILY OUTCOMES SURVEY UPDATE

- Shannen provided an update on the Family Outcomes Survey since it was discussed during the last advisory group meeting. She broke it out by current year and future distribution.
 - Current year: The FY25-26 surveys were distributed to a sample of families on August 7. RCs and FRCs were formally notified at the end of July. DDS created a dedicated FOS webpage which includes an FAQs page.
 - Future Distribution: DDS is in the process of transitioning the platform the survey is currently hosted on to a different platform. The online survey validation process and sequence is being reviewed to improve the user experience when completing the survey. DDS is also re-examining the current distribution process, sampling methodology, and identifying any potential changes to the plan.
- Shannen opened the floor for questions.
- Shannen wrapped up the meeting with her contact information below.

Questions?

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