



**STATE COUNCIL ON
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**

**Regional Centers, School
Districts, and More:
How to Give Testimony &
Influence Public Policy**

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**Thanks to South Bay Down
Syndrome Association and
Mychal's Learning Place!**

Thank you for hosting us and
arranging for this presentation!

What Is This Presentation?

- How to influence decision makers and participate in the improvement of services
- How to frame your message
- How to organize and create a movement
- Where you can go for help





How Meetings Work

What laws apply and how to access information about governing or advisory bodies



Meeting Basics

- Who must take public testimony
 - Governing bodies
 - Advisory committees
- Know where to check
 - Bagley-Keene Act
 - Brown Act
 - Lanterman Act
 - Parliamentary Procedure
- Meetings must be open



Meeting Basics

- Public, advanced notice of meeting and agenda required
 - Emergency meetings permitted
- Must take comments from public before action may be taken on any agenda item
 - No requirement to respond
- Public input must be taken for any item NOT on the agenda
 - No requirement to respond

Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act



- State agencies, committees, governing bodies
- Meetings must be open
- 10 days advanced notice required
- Members may not discuss business outside of meetings
- Materials provided to members must be provided to the public

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Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act



- Minutes required
- Roll call votes and minutes must report such
- Closed sessions permitted, must be noticed, and outcomes must be reported when regular meeting reconvenes
- Violations complaints are made to the Office of the Attorney General

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Brown Act



- Local agencies – municipalities, school districts, SELPAs
- Meetings must be open
- 3 days advanced notice required
- Members may not discuss business outside of meetings
- Materials provided to members must be provided to the public

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Brown Act



- Minutes required
- Roll call votes and minutes must report such
- Closed sessions permitted, must be noticed, and outcomes must be reported when regular meeting reconvenes

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Lanterman Act



- Welfare and Institutions Code §§4660-4669
- Mail notice and agenda 7 days in advance of the meeting
- Written testimony and recordings must be kept for 2 years and must be available to the public upon request
- Emergency meetings permitted

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Lanterman Act



- Closed meetings permitted
 - Must state why closed session will be held
 - Real estate negotiations
 - The appointment, employment, evaluation of performance, or dismissal of a regional center employee
 - Employee salaries and benefits
 - Labor contract negotiations
 - Pending litigation
- Materials that go to the board must be available to the public at the board meeting

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Requests for Information



- Public Records Act requests
- Freedom of Information Act requests
- Lanterman Act requests
 - DDS
 - Fair hearing and WIC §4731 data
 - Communications between DDS and regional centers

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Framing Your Message

How to maximize the probability
your message is heard and acted
upon



The Formula for Framing Your Message

There is a systemic problem
Give an example
Give a proposed solution



The Basics of Framing Your Message



- Be sure to make your message in terms of the body's purview and role
- Pick your battles
- Know what you're talking about
- Educate your audience
- Use examples always and data when you can

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Timing – from Introduction to Action



- There are frequently better times to introduce some issues than others, so choose wisely
- It may take months from raising an issue to action
- A tactic that takes too long becomes old news and is forgotten!

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Tips for Framing Your Message



- Advocate for **EVERYONE**
 - The only exception is if an issue hits some people disparately – in which case get everyone on board!
- Stick to the issues – make problems about the issues and those it affects, not the people in charge
- Strategies versus tactics
- Talk to board members as individuals

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Exercise

It's time to put what you've learned into action



Organizing Communities

How to be heard and create a movement



Making Change A Reality

- Where does change come from?
 - NO ONE will do the work for you
- Join the group you wish to change
- Create a critical mass
- Keep the pressure on
- Join self-advocacy or support groups
 - Tag team!

Making Change A Reality



- Link up with other groups
 - Talk to each other
 - Develop relationships
 - Jointly strategize
 - Stay on point
- Go to meetings together and raise the same issues

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Policy Help

Places where you can go for help
to learn more about policies



State Council on Developmental Disabilities



- Advocacy from a systemic perspective; systemic change and improvement; legislative work; technical assistance; training; publications; provides grants; referrals; State Plan
- Regional center; early, special, and higher education; self-advocacy and support groups; health care; IHSS; social security
 - Quality assurance surveys; clients' rights advocacy/volunteer advocacy services at state developmental centers
 - Employment First Committee, Statewide Self-Determination Advisory Committee
- www.sccd.ca.gov; 818-543-4631

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Disability Rights California



- Advocacy from the perspective of the individual; legislative work; technical assistance; training; publications; referrals
- Regional center; early, special, and higher education; self-advocacy and support groups; health care; IHSS; social security; fair employment and housing
 - Includes OCRA – contract to provide clients' rights advocacy at regional centers; other contracts and grants
- disabilityrightsca.org; 800-776-5746 or 213-213-8000

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University Centers for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities



- Academic institutions affiliated with universities and, as such, address the training of future leaders; develop, field-test, and/or evaluate innovative community services and policies, conduct research and evaluation to inform evidence-based practices and policies, and disseminate information to inform policy and practice
- Three UCEDDs in CA – UCLA, USC, UC Davis MIND Institute
- Often acquire grants to do additional work and further their mission
- Regional center; early, special, and higher education, and self-advocacy and support groups

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CDCAN.US



- California Disability Community Action Network
 - Free information service via email
- "Advocacy Without Borders: connecting thousands of people with disabilities, mental health needs, seniors, families, workers, low income families to disability rights, senior rights, civil rights and unified action"
- Legislative Advocacy

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Learning Rights Law Center



- A nonprofit law firm that provides legal and technical assistance regarding special education to underserved and low income families; direct representation; training; policy/systemic work
 - Training Individuals for Grassroots Educational Reform (TIGER)
- www.learningrightslawcenter.org; 213-489-4030

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Service Providers



- Such as UCP, ARC, ESSC and many others
- Typically nonprofits who are providing direct services to individuals and their families; typically will provide technical assistance and referrals
- Often acquire grants to do additional work and further their missions
- National ARC's Newsletter: <http://cgrcengage.com/thearc/app/register?0&m=10985>

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Questions?

Thank you for attending!!!


