

Statements from Master Plan Members

Following the release of the Master Plan for Developmental Services: A Community-Driven Vision, Master Plan committee and workgroup members were given the opportunity to submit a statement on the Master Plan report and Master Plan process. Statements that were submitted are below.

Elizabeth Hassler (Self advocate)

I am so grateful to have been part of the Master Plan for Developmental Services, especially because it represents new territory in "nothing about us without us" by genuinely engaging people who use services in equal and equitable discussion about the future of those systems. I so admire my self Advocate peers who worked tirelessly to be heard in this process, often under challenging conditions, and to support other self-advocates to participate and share what their life is like, good and bad. The format of the Master Plan reflects the deep engagement of self-advocate leaders, especially the emphasis on plain language. The more people who can participate, in the different ways that make sense for them, the brighter and more real the future becomes. When you know you belong and are valuable, can't you touch it? We live in unprecedented times, in terms of both challenges and opportunities, and the Master Plan is a plan for the long haul. I'm excited to see what the next 10 years bring and how we navigate that together. Especially, I take seriously what the Department of Health and Human Services has said about the plan being a "living document," because that's what people who use services do in these systems, is live. As my colleague Sascha Bittner has told me, people aren't principles. A policy might be a good idea 99% of the time, and still not be able to be implemented across the board because every person has different needs across the scope of our full life as a person who uses supports. The Lanterman Act is a lifelong promise that every Californian will have their needs met and have a right to a normal life that maximizes independence and self-direction regardless of disability. I know that when systems standardization and the needs of real people conflict, real living people need to prevail, because these are human systems. And I am so glad to be part of these human systems together with you all. To throw my whole life into it, together with my community, because that's how important and instrumental these services are. My rights to live a full life as a California are everything, and are rightfully a deep point of state pride. The MPDS represents a coming together across many perspectives all committed to a full life for people with disabilities, and the work we will continue to do in the implementation phase needs to reflect that as well. Social change is the art of the possible, policy implementation is the art of the possible, and when we all work together to do that good work we prove that people with developmental disabilities are always the art of the possible as well. We need to keep collaborating, because collaboration is how our system lives and how people stay alive in it. The MPDS exists because we listen to each other and will continue to do so, taking big swings and sometimes splitting hairs to create the best future for every person with developmental disabilities and our families and communities that live and thrive together.

Amy Westling (Regional center representative)

The Master Plan for Developmental Services provided stakeholders in our system an important opportunity to weigh-in on what the future of services should look like. The tireless dedication of the Committee and workgroup members along with active participation from the community allowed for robust discussion about what is working well and in what ways people want and need to be supported differently going forward.

The element that worked best in the process was the support provided and time taken to hear the authentic voices of self-advocates and promote their leadership. Too often historically, others have talked over them or asserted they were speaking for them, so it was incredibly important this dynamic was avoided in this process.

Initially the community assumed the Master Plan for Developmental Services would, like earlier state-led master plans in other issue areas, be the Administration's plan for the future of developmental services shaped by stakeholder input. The inclusion of only stakeholder voices in the process shifts the focus of the resulting report and means its recommendations will shape and inform future initiatives but will not necessarily serve as a roadmap for the future. This is a worthwhile use of the final product and still an important use of time, but it deviates from the expectations many stakeholders had at the outset.

The other impact of the more limited role of state staff was that many recommendations were developed that are reflective of work or initiatives already underway. It would have been helpful in the process to have someone providing that context along the way as a consistent member of various workgroups. Especially helpful would have been the inclusion of representatives from departments other than DDS to discuss in greater depth how to make generic services easier to access and integrate into people's lives.

The ambitious timeline for completion of the Master Plan report led to instances where it felt there was insufficient opportunity to discuss or come to agreement on all the recommendations. The workgroup process was good and enabled more active participants, but with nearly 170 recommendations, some of which two or more workgroups contributed to, there was insufficient time to talk through each recommendation as a full Committee and come to important consensus. More time would have allowed for robust conversation on those recommendations that elicited the greatest differences of opinion and the opportunity to establish agreement on them without needing a small subset of people to make the final determinations at the conclusion of the process.

In short, engaging the community in the development of a Master Plan for Developmental Services was critical, but with the benefit of additional time and active participation of state officials could have been a stronger document that lays a path for the future of services to those with developmental disabilities and their families.

Mark Klaus (Regional center representative)

I greatly appreciate that the time was taken to ensure that the voices of self-advocates was a focus and that they were in leadership positions – all workgroups had a self-advocate as a Co-Chair. Unfortunately, there were workgroup and committee members who continuously attempted to quiet their voices and their comments what they were saying didn't align with their personal vision and thoughts. The same is also true for other committee members who weren't in agreement with a few very vocal members. I recall too many statements such as “who do you work for”, “why would you agree with them”, “is that what you really think or is that what they are telling you so say”.

It would have been a good use of time and energy to spend more time on foundational issues and provide some history / background. The lack of a foundational understanding led to many recommendations being presented / discussed based on what I consider to be “one off” or “I heard about this” as being factual statements.

The lack of time to thoroughly vet and discuss the recommendations is quite troubling. Many of the recommendations were added without review and discussion amongst all committee members. The Co-Chairs were the ones that decided on what was to be included. The Equity Leads as well as other workgroup / committee members were not afforded the opportunity to provide input.

Joyce McNair (Parent or family member)

This statement addresses concerns regarding the recommendation for DDS to set up a low interest loan program ...to build Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU). Loan approvals involving housing historically is an area where inequity, discrimination, non- approvals, etc. prevails to this day. It is problematical for DDS to engage in loan approvals to build ADUs. Instead focus on working with existing programs with good track records around equity to help build more housing in communities.

Viri Salgado (Self advocate)

Thank you for creating the Comment Form and providing us with an opportunity to share feedback on the final Master Plan recommendations. I think the document is very well put together and easy to follow. I love the photos and quotes that were included.

Erendida Gonzalez (Parent or family member)

I had the privilege of contributing to the development of the DDS master plan. Through this process, I had the opportunity to share my ideas and gain valuable insights from others. As a member of the master plan, I had the chance to connect with other families and individuals, which provided me with a sense of support and understanding during this journey.

Dr. Tiffany Swan (Regional center representative)

Working in this group was great but at times it felt too large of a group. It was great to hear all the input but some people monopolized the conversation making it difficult for others voices to be heard. I appreciate the mixed group as we need to have all voices and points of view heard. Perhaps the moderator could use different communication techniques to gather input from the people who are not speaking but thinking. Thank you so much for allowing me to be involved.

Lisa Cooley (Self advocate)

The master plan should include follow up on all of the recommendations after a couple of years to ensure that the recommendations are followed up on.

Lety Garcia (Parent or family member)

There are many challenges to improving systems and creating equitable, fair, transparent, and service delivery for all. The sooner we begin, the more progress we'll make. It's not a one size fits all approach to success. Accountability in closing the gap on disparities for Latinos who make up over 40% of the special needs community at regional centers statewide and creating an equitable system is paramount. How will the Chief of Equity at DDS be part of identifying solutions?