

Elder and Disability Justice Coordinating Council (EDJCC)

Committee Membership 2023

Stakeholder Committee Membership

Tony Anderson, Valley Mountain Regional Center

Tony Anderson is Executive Director of the Valley Mountain Regional Center. Tony has worked for more than 30-year career in the field of developmental services spanned across all levels of the regional center service delivery system starting as a direct support professional, then a case manager at North Bay Regional Center and executive director of Bayberry, Inc. a service provider in Napa, California. He served executive director of The Arc of California from 2004-2016, a statewide advocacy organization representing the interests of people with developmental disabilities, their families and program providers.

Tony later received a Governor's appointment to the State Council on Developmental Disabilities as deputy director of policy, planning and governmental relations where he worked on several major statewide initiatives including a major realignment of the State Council and then-Area Boards to come into federal compliance under the Developmental Disabilities Act.

Diana Boyer, County Welfare Director's Association (CWDA)

Diana Boyer serves as the Director of Policy for Child Welfare and Older Adult Services for CWDA. Diana specializes in the program areas of In-Home Supportive Services, Adult Protective Services, Child Welfare, and Foster Care.

Previously, she served as a program planner/specialist for Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services, and as legislative analyst and director of governmental relations for Santa Clara County Social Services Agency. Diana earned her bachelor's degree from the University of California, Davis, and a master's degree in Public Administration from the University of Southern California.

Leza Coleman, California Commission on Aging

Leza Coleman, the Executive Director for California Long-Term Care Ombudsman Association (CLTCOA), was introduced to the world of elder justice and self-determination as a volunteer Long-Term Care Ombudsman, where she honed her advocacy skills supporting residents and their families in achieving the highest levels of care. Inspired to ensure dignity and respect for all residents, Leza obtained her administrator's license and joined the leadership team to open an assisted living facility committed to person-

centered models of care. Not satisfied to serve seniors in a single community Leza took on the leadership of CLTCOA in 2012, where she supports, resources, and magnifies the work of the thirty-five local LTC Ombudsman programs in California. She now serves as a board member for the California Elder Justice Coalition, the Village Movement California, California Health Advocates, as well as on the policy committee for the California Association for Long-Term Care Medicine and the California Aging and Disability Alliance. Leza has been active in multiple statewide legislative efforts and is passionate about working on statewide efforts to promote "aging well" in California.

AkilesCeron, San Francisco Adult Protective Services

Akiles Ceron is the Adult Protective Services (APS) Program Director for the City and County of San Francisco. He has been a public servant for nearly 20 years, working in various capacities within the APS program for Santa Barbara and San Francisco counties. He has been an instructor for three APS Regional Training Academies, training on working with the self-neglecting client and elder and dependent adult financial abuse. He has participated in the California Welfare Directors Association's Protective Services Operations Committee and its Consistency Workgroup since 2010. This group develops and maintains the CWDA's APS guidelines to supplement regulations.

Eric Dowdy, Alzheimer's Association

Eric Dowdy is the Vice President, Public Policy (CA & NV) for the Alzheimer's Association. In this role, he leads and supports Nevada and the five California chapters (California Southland, Central, Northern California/Northern Nevada, Orange County and San Diego/Imperial) in their year-round advocacy program to achieve positive legislative, budgetary and regulatory changes on behalf of individuals and families affected by Alzheimer's and related dementias. Eric is the statewide representative of the Alzheimer's Association at the capitol in CA and serves as primary point person to the Governor's Administration, State Legislature, key departments and the broad health, aging and disability stakeholder community.

Prior to the Alzheimer's Association, Eric worked for LeadingAge California serving as their Chief Government Affairs Officer, responsible for the oversight of the association's public relations, policy development and advocacy efforts.

Eric is the current Board Chair of the California Collaborative for Long-Term Services and Supports. He also serves on the Boards of a nonprofit retirement community in Woodland, CA and a start-up nonprofit which develops employment opportunities for disabled adults.

Eric is a founding member of the University of California, Sacramento Center's capitol scholar program where he interned in the California State Senate. He holds a bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of California, Davis and a Master's Degree in Public Policy & Administration from the California State University, Sacramento.

Gloria Echevarria, Family Voices of CA

Gloria Echevarria has served with Family Voices of California, a statewide collaborative of parent-run centers working to ensure quality health care for children and youth with special health care needs. Gloria lives with her son who has an intellectual disability and serves as his caregiver.

Gloria identifies herself as a caregiver because she provides love, care and fulfills her son's needs. She served as her mother's caregiver and advocate for many years as well. Through these experiences, she has become a fierce advocate who has learned how to face school district and healthcare bureaucracy. She is motivated to serve on this committee because of her awareness of the many emotional and physical challenges that people with a disability and their caregivers often have to face- and to apply her practical experience to an issue that is close to her heart.

Gloria attended Cal State University, San Bernardino, where she received a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and holds an Associate of Arts in Liberal Studies and Sciences from Chaffey College. Gloria and her son live in Chino, California.

Jo Ann Gines, Advocate

JoAnn Gines is on the Board of Directors of the School of Adaptive Arts in Saratoga, CA.

Andrea Higgins, San Mateo County District Attorney's Office

Andrea Higgins is a criminal elder abuse investigator with the San Mateo County District Attorney's Office in Northern California. Andrea works with a multi-disciplinary team of social workers, public guardians, civil attorneys, other law enforcement officers and prosecutors to protect elders and dependent adults and hold abusers responsible for their actions. Andrea provides training to law enforcement officers and detectives, firefighters, EMTs/paramedics, dispatchers, deputy coroners, social workers, and financial service providers in recognizing and responding to elder and dependent adult abuse. Andrea also teaches a POST-certified elder abuse investigation class through Third Degree Communications, a law enforcement training and consultation company. Prior to coming to the District Attorney's Office 10 years ago, Andrea was a police officer and detective with the Redwood City Police Department.

Sherry Johnson, Parent Advocate

Sherry Johnson is a mother of a young adult with Autism. She has been in public service for more than 15- years, working specifically in the social services field. Her journey with having a child with a developmental disability has led her to advocate for underserved individuals that lack access to necessary services.

Liz Logsdon, Disability Rights California

Elizabeth (Liz) Logsdon is the Managing Attorney of the Investigations Unit at Disability Rights California (DRC). DRC's Investigations Unit addresses the abuse and neglect of people with disabilities in all settings, including long term care facilities, state hospitals, developmental centers, community-based settings, jails, and immigration detention facilities. The Investigations Unit pursues non-litigation systemic advocacy solutions with a focus on public policy. Liz joined DRC in July 2018 after working for Disability Rights Tennessee, the Tennessee P&A, for over five years.

Liz obtained her law degree from Vanderbilt University Law School in 2011 and holds a Bachelor's degree from the University of Central Florida. Liz lives in Los Angeles.

Lisa Nerenberg, California Elder Justice Coalition

Lisa Nerenberg has been a leader in the field of elder abuse prevention for over 35 years. She is currently the Executive Director of the California Elder Justice Coalition and an instructor at City College of San Francisco, where she teaches classes in gerontology, elder abuse, and ageism. She was the founding director of the San Francisco Consortium for Elder Abuse Prevention, which piloted the nation's first elder abuse multidisciplinary team and other widely replicated services. She has presented at hundreds of professional forums, testified before Congressional committees, served on governmental advisory boards, and written extensively about elder abuse, undue influence, elder justice, public health approaches to combating elder abuse and health disparities, and related topics. Her recent book "Elder Justice, Ageism and Elder Abuse" offers a framework for promoting individual rights and social justice in aging policy and programs. Her earlier work "Elder Abuse Prevention: Emerging Trends and Promising Strategies" describes what the public, government, agencies, and advocates can do to prevent abuse, treat its effects, and ensure justice.

Lisa received Masters' degrees in social work and public health from the University of Minnesota.

Howard McBroom, Advocate

Howard McBroom is an activist, advocate, and motivational speaker living in Los Angeles, California, who has devoted many years to supporting others through his experience with autism, disability advocacy, emotional intelligence and violence prevention.

Howard is originally from Jeffersonville, Indiana where he graduated from Indiana University with a Bachelor's degree in History.

Vivianne Mbaku, Justice in Aging

Vivianne is currently Senior Staff Attorney at Justice in Aging working on Elder Abuse issues. Before joining Justice in Aging, Vivianne was a Staff Attorney for the Utah State Courts Self Help Center and practiced consumer and public benefits law with Utah Legal Services. Vivianne was also a member of the Utah State Bar Modest Means Committee which aimed to make affordable legal representation more widely available. Vivianne also completed an appellate clerkship with the Honorable Senior Justice Petra Jimenez-Maes of the New Mexico Supreme Court. After her clerkship, Vivianne moved to Los Angeles to practice public benefits law at Inner City Law Center in Los Angeles.

Vivianne is a 2012 graduate of the University of Utah's S.J. Quinney College of Law and earned a B.A. in Politics and Latin American Studies from Scripps College.

Marty Omoto, CA Disability Action Network

Marty's goal is to improve the quality of life by protecting and strengthening services and supports for people, including those who are developmentally disabled, have mental health needs (with traumatic brain and other injuries), veterans with disabilities, seniors, physically disabled individuals, family members, workers, community organizations including the Asian-Pacific Islander, Latino and African-American communities, and others across California.

Marty's publication, California Disability Community Action Network (CDCAN) Disability Rights News, initiated in 1987, is now distributed electronically to over 65,000 people, as often as several times a day during the fast-moving legislative budget phase, with announcements and reports on hearings and legislative sessions.

Marty's life and passion for social justice have been deeply influenced by his family, his Japanese-American ethnicity, and providing care for his developmentally disabled sister for over twenty years. Growing up during the internment of Japanese Americans during the war and, later, amidst the California farm workers' movement in the grape fields of Salinas, Marty experienced, first-hand, the importance of issues for which he advocates: fairness, justice, access and the opportunity to improve one's quality of life.

Carla Perissinotto, University of California, San Francisco

Dr. Carla Perissinotto is an Associate Professor in the Division of Geriatrics, Department of Medicine at University of California San Francisco School of Medicine. She is Board Certified in Internal Medicine, Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine. Carla is dedicated to working in both community and academic settings. Her main work is in UCSF Care at Home--which provides medical care to home bound older adults, and in embedded Geriatrics consult practices. From 2008-2017, Carla served as a primary care and consulting Geriatrician at the Over60 Health Center in Berkeley.

In 2017, Dr. Perissinotto was appointed as the first Associate Chief for Geriatrics Clinical Programs at UCSF. Given the growth of clinical programs, the associate chief oversees and manages our both our inpatient and outpatient clinical programs which include Care at Home, Geriatrics consultation in the outpatient setting, and the new Acute Care for the Elderly (ACE) unit at Moffitt-Long Hospital, Orthopedic CO-Management programs and programs which are in development.

Dr. Perissinotto graduated from the Tufts University School of Medicine in 2006. She works in San Francisco, CA and 3 other locations and specializes in Geriatrician, Internal Medicine and Hospice and Palliative Medicine. Dr. Perissinotto is affiliated with UCSF Medical Center Mount Zion, Alta Bates Summit Medical Center and UCSF Medical Center Parnassus.

Scott Pirrello, San Diego District Attorney's Office

Scott Pirrello is the Head of Elder Abuse Prosecutions for the San Diego District Attorney's Office and has been a prosecutor for 15 years. Since 2009, Scott has been assigned to the Family Protection Division prosecuting a variety of Family Violence cases including Elder Abuse, Domestic Violence, and Child Abuse cases. Scott now focuses exclusively on prosecuting all varieties of Elder Abuse including physical, financial, sexual, and neglect cases and the vulnerable victims that come with them. Scott has more than 40 jury trials to his credit and is an expert in Elder Fraud, Elder Abuse enforcement, prosecution, and on the multi-disciplinary team approach to Elder Abuse prevention evidenced by his involvement with the San Diego Elder Protection Council; Elder and Dependent Adult Death Review Team; and El Cajon Elder Abuse Council. Scott also was instrumental in 2021 in creating the first of its kind San Diego Elder Justice Task Force in collaboration with the FBI, US Dept. of Justice, and San Diego local law enforcement to combat, investigate, and prosecute Elder Abuse Scams.

Ellen Schmeding, CA Commission on Aging

Ms. Schmeding currently serves as the Chief Operating Officer for St. Paul's Senior Services. In this role, she has oversight of the residential facilities including St. Paul's Manor, John A. McColl Health Center, St. Paul's Plaza and St. Paul's Villa as well as the Chaplaincy Program, Dining Services, Facilities, Human Resources and Marketing.

Prior to joining St. Paul's in 2017, Ms. Schmeding worked with the County of San Diego for 30 years, most recently as the Director of Aging & Independence Services (the Area Agency on Aging for San Diego County) as well as serving as the Public Administrator, Public Guardian and Public Conservator for San Diego County.

Ms. Schmeding is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and a certified Residential Facility for the Elderly (RCFE) Administrator.

Tom Scott, CA State Association of Public Administrators, Public Guardians and Public Conservators (CA PA|PG|PC)

Tom Scott is the Deputy Director for Policy and Administration for the California Community Action Partnership Association (CalCAPA). CalCAPA exists to support Community Action Agencies and CSBG Entities to strengthen communities and enforce a unified Community Action presence in California. Prior to CalCAPA, he served as Regional Administrator, Region 9, Pacific Rim for the U.S. General Services Administration. Key responsibilities included oversight of programs and functions that reside in the region; provided leadership and advice on regional policy development; support and promotion of the Administrator and Administration's goals and objectives in the region and oversight of emergency response operations and activities in the region. He has served the State Executive Director for the National Federation of Independent Business in California and prior to that was the State Executive Director of California Citizens Against Lawsuit Abuse for approximately 20 years.

Tom has an extensive background in both the private and public sectors. He has worked at all levels of government including positions in Los Angeles County, the California State Senate, and multiple positions in the federal government.

Tom earned a B.A. in Political Science from California State University, Long Beach and a M.P.A. in Intergovernmental Management from the University of Southern California.

Edwin W. Smith, Department of Rehabilitation (Retired)

Mr. Smith enjoyed two successful careers. He had a 21-year career as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, Certified Vocational Evaluator, Certified Disability Management Specialist, and Vocational Expert Witness. He worked for the California Dept. of Rehabilitation and operated his own rehabilitation consulting firm for 17 years. Thereafter, he enjoyed a successful 23-year career as an IT Project Manager in the K-20 Research & Education space. After retiring from full-time work, Mr. Smith became a Certified Life Coach and is known to his clients as Coach Win. He describes himself as a Retirement Transition Coach, Life Purpose Coach, and Elderhood Evangelist. Mr. Smith leads online webinars and in-person workshops on the topics of Elderhood, Happiness, and on the non-financial aspects of retirement.

Mr. Smith is a California veteran with tours of duty in South Vietnam and West Germany, and currently serves as a member of AARP California's Veterans, Military & their Families Advisory Committee.

Valerie Smith, Santa Clara Department of Aging and Adult Services, Adult Protective Services

Valerie Smith, LCSW, is a Program Manager in the Adult Protective Services (APS) program for the County of Santa Clara, Department of Aging and Adult Services. Valerie has worked in aging and adult services for over 20 years, and previously worked with adults experiencing mental health conditions. She has a master's degree in Social Work (MSW), is a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) and is part time faculty at the San Jose State University School of Social Work. She has a deep knowledge and respect for elder and vulnerable adult populations and has spent her career advocating for social justice. Valerie has participated in the California Welfare Directors Association's Protective Services Operations Committee, serving as co-chair and chair from 2017-2019 and participates in various sub-committees. She has been a presenter at various conferences and trainings and has written and implemented various program improvements and enhancements to the APS program.

Janie Whiteford, California IHSS Consumer Alliance (CICA)

Janie Whiteford is a long-term advocate for issues affecting seniors and persons with disabilities where she had the opportunity to work with these populations at both Silicon Valley Independent Living Center, Valley Medical Center and a small private practice. After retirement, she became very involved with CICA, a statewide organization she was instrumental in developing and where she is currently the President of the Executive Committee. She also represents CICA in many other non-profit organizations and State Committees addressing the needs of seniors and persons with disabilities.

Having acquired a significant disability 35 years ago has given her an intimate perspective on the issues affecting many people with disabilities. Janie has three children, seven grandchildren and currently lives with her husband in the Bay Area.

Astrid Zuniga, United Domestic Workers/AFSCME 3930

Astrid Zuniga currently serves as Executive Vice President of United Domestic Workers of America (UDW/AFSCME 3930). Her union journey began nearly thirteen years ago when she became an In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) provider to her disabled child and stepfather. During her six-year tenure as UDW Executive Vice President, Zuniga has championed policies that seek to protect individuals with mental illness, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and cognitive disabilities when they interact with law enforcement.

Zuniga's advocacy has been the driving force behind passage of SB 11 and SB 29 (2015 Beall), SB 1330 (2016 Galgiani), SCR 64 (2017 Galgiani), as well as a public hearing in

2018 before the Assembly Select Committee on Community and Law Enforcement Relations and Responsibilities to discuss and assess interactions between law enforcement and people with disabilities. In 2019, Astrid and UDW sponsored AB 911, "The Manny Alert Act" (Rodriguez), named after Zuniga's son, Manuel. She is currently pursuing full implementation of The Manny Alert Act and exploring many other legislative initiatives to protect the safety of individuals with disabilities.

Zuniga's own experiences raising a child with severe cognitive disabilities made her aware of the lack of safety nets for those like her son when it came to interactions with law enforcement. She focuses on finding support from legislators and organizations that shared her vision of creating change in local, state and national systems, trainings and tools that could help save lives. With Manny as her inspiration, Zuniga is forging new and exciting pathways to a safer future for people with disabilities.