

ROUGHLY EDITED COPY

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>> SHARON: Welcome, everybody. We met in January, but honestly, to me it feels like it was six months ago. I have just completely lost track of time. It was four weeks. Had a nice rap session. Really, really excited today to have a presentation that I know will be of interest to all of us.

My name is Sharon. I'm the president of the Los Angeles chapter of HLAA. (Muted.)

Was I muted?

>> Yes.

>> SHARON: I'm sorry. I see some of it was, I introduced myself, yes? You heard my introduction?

Welcome, everybody. I was saying there was a lot of technical glitches with Zoom, as many of us know. We are plotting through and getting through, committed to meeting every month and keeping our chapter going.

We are grateful for our leadership at the state level and we are able to now, as a result of that, coordinate and have other chapters and other chapter leaders and other members join us who wouldn't be able to if we were physically in person.

So that is one of the advantages of this new world that we are living with.

I want to just, before I turn it over, Georgia is going to be introducing our presenter, but before we get started with that, I just have a couple of housekeeping notes.

One of which is I want to make sure that everybody has a CC, closed caption button somewhere on your screen. On mine, it is on the bottom.

I know we have different devices that we use.

Is everybody, does everybody see the closed caption button? If you push it, magically, captions will appear.

I don't see any nods, no, so unless anyone has an issue, speak up. If you do. Otherwise we are very grateful to have

Linda here to caption our meeting. So that we can all follow at a rapid pace and understand the content.

Another thing is in order to get the, this information out to those of us who couldn't make it today or to people outside of this group, we would like to record the meeting so that we can have it on our website and you can go back and refer to it or refer other people to it who might find this presentation of interest.

I think it's going to benefit a lot of people. I just want to put that out there before we get started that this meeting will be recorded once the presentation begins and make sure everybody is okay with that.

Okay. We have today Ruben Valido from the Department of Rehabilitation coming to speak with us. I will let Georgia, who worked tirelessly to bring him onboard, do the introductions.

Go ahead, Georgia.

>> GEORGIA: (Muted.)

>> SHARON: Georgia, you're now muted. You have to unmute yourself. Georgia?

>> SANDY BLAKE: Georgia.

>> SHARON: I will unmute everybody. Hold on.

I'm asking all to unmute. Georgia, you're muted. You're muted. You have to unmute yourself.

>> GEORGIA: I will start over. Good morning, everyone. We are thrilled to have Roberto Cabrera and Ruben Valido from the Department of Rehabilitation here to present to us today.

Unfortunately Roberto is ill and he will not be able to join us. We are very sorry to hear that.

Ruben is staff services manager at the Department of Rehabilitation. (Can't hear because of dogs barking).

Degrees in psychology and counseling with a focus on vocational rehabilitation. He has been with the California Department of Rehabilitation since 2007.

Welcome, Ruben.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Thank you, thank you, everybody. Whose dog is there? I hear a dog in the background.

>> TIM BROWNING: Can people mute themselves? Hang on a second.

>> The meeting administrator... (multiple people speaking.)

>> SHARON: Is the barking coming from this meeting? It was a little dog, I couldn't imagine -- okay. She muted. Got it. Sorry. I thought it was my next door's neighbor's dog. I heard -- I couldn't imagine he would have made that much noise.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Jacqueline is coming. Okay, Jacqueline, come on in.

Okay. Here we go. Good morning, everybody. I'm Ruben Valido. I'm with the Department of Rehabilitation.

I have worked for the department, I have been working since 2007. I was a rehabilitation counselor for five or six years, and then they promoted me to manager.

Unfortunately, Roberto Cabrera was supposed to be here with me, but he's gotten sick. He texted me Friday evening, he says, I'm really sick, and I don't think I will be able to attend the meeting on Saturday.

So here we are. But I will try to convey as much information as I can. I really wanted Roberto here, because he knows more about assistive technology, but if you have questions and I cannot answer them, you can e-mail me, yeah, basically e-mail is the best way of communication, actually.

Because we are all working remotely. I'm at home today.

So the Department of Rehabilitation's mission is to help people with disabilities to obtain and to attain and to retain employment.

We help them with training and we help them with job placement.

In order to obtain a job, some people need to be retrained or be trained. Roberto has many students from Martin High School, which is a school for the deaf. Those children, many decide to go to college or many decide to obtain work.

Others, they need a little more help learning life skills, like how to, you know, conduct themselves in the world.

And we have people who can work one on one with those children. We call them independent living skills.

I think the title is very descriptive of what they do. Once the child or the person, I mean, we also have adults in our caseload, once they are ready for employment, we help them with résumés, with job leads.

We have job fairs. Sometimes we have job fairs with other entities like Los Angeles Trade Tech, with GLAD. I think it's Greater Los Angeles Association of the Deaf, GLAD.

We teach them how to conduct themselves during interviews, mock interviews. With what they are called soft skills.

For those who don't know what to do or need training, we also provide training, anything from adult training like, for instance, trade schools, like Freeman Occupational Center, West LA Adult School. Any kind of trade that the person would like to continue if the person wants to be an electrician or if the person wants to be a plumber.

I mean, a barber, any trade you might think of, we can help them attain. While they are going to school, we provide transportation for the students so they can use the public system, MDA.

We also provide the books and the supplies. We provide the tuition. We pay for their classes.

Some of them need tools, like, for instance, mechanics, or plumbers or welders, barbers. They need lots of tools.

We also provide that. That's, you know, basically what we do with when they decide to go to an adult education center for a trade.

Some students prefer a college degree, college career. We also provide support, financial support for them.

We provide, again, transportation. We provide books and supplies. The only thing is that we require from the student to apply for FAFSA, the federal loans. Not loans. We don't ask them to take loans. We ask them to apply for FAFSA. They usually get a Pell Grant.

Any monies received from the federal government, such as Pell Grants, have to be applied to the tuition and the books and the supplies first. Pell Grant is not to help you pay for your rent or to help you pay for your electric bill. It's exclusively for school.

We need documentation, we need a copy of the letter that they receive from FAFSA, from the federal government. Then we will work with the college, with the payment of the rest of the tuition if there is any balances.

Sometimes FAFSA doesn't cover everything.

We also have students attending private schools, because they like it or because it's more convenient for them or whatever reason.

Now, as we know, private schools are much, much more expensive than public schools. So when they decide to go to a private school, we will pay the California state rates.

If they want to attend the first two years of college at the university, which will be the junior years, we will only pay the community college rate because they can get the same education from a community college.

Once they finish their junior year, sophomore, and freshman, and they move on to the upper division, again, if they decide to attend a private university, we will pay the California state university rate. Okay?

We have other people also that are, you know, attending schools out-of-state. We do the same thing. We only cover the California state university rate.

The only exception is when the training that they want to pursue is not available from the public system. For instance, somebody who wants to be a heavy machinery operator or a truck driver, those are not available through the public system. Therefore, we have to pay a private school. And we cover the full tuition.

Once the student graduates, we help them with job placement. Résumés, job leads, et cetera.

One more thing, I don't know if you're familiar with Gallaudet University in New York. That's where our students go when they want to be teachers, for instance. When they want to become teachers, they go to Gallaudet.

You know, I'm not going to deny it. It's very expensive. We pay for most of it. I wish Roberto were here so he could explain the coverage, how much we cover from Gallaudet, for instance.

>> Would you like me to pull in the slides? I had a little trouble doing that. Would that be helpful or do you prefer to just continue as you are?

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Were you able to do it? To pull it up?

>> SHARON: Yes, I can open it. I can share the screen and you can decide, I will scroll through if you wish to.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Okay. Okay.

So we prepare this PowerPoint presentation, it's not very detailed, but it gives you an idea what we do.

The bottom line is that the person who joins us, who signs up for our program has to have a job in mind.

If you are not interested in going to work, this is not your program, because the bottom line is for you to get a job. That's why the title says "Employment, Independence, and

Equality," right? Employment, independence, we always require that the person obtains a job which is gainful, okay?

It means that they are going to be making more money than the money that they will be spending, right? We don't accept anything less than \$15 an hour, \$14.75 an hour. That's independence. And equality, equality because we want people to work with hearing people, not just with deaf people.

We want them to obtain employment in what we call competitive integrative employment. Competitive integrative employment. That means the deaf person will be working side by side with their hearing peers, right?

The California Department of Rehabilitation, DOR, works in partnership works in partnership with consumers and other stakeholders to provide services and advocacy in pursuit of employment, independent living, and equality for Californians with disabilities.

At DOR, it's our belief that individuals with disabilities can be fully integrated and highly productive community members, employees, and colleagues.

Eligibility. To be eligible for services, an individual must have a physical or mental impairment and require vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment.

Let me explain this a little bit. I saw a question a few minutes ago that said what is significance of disability or something in that line.

Okay. So when the person comes to us, we have to determine that in fact it's a person with a disability. For that purpose, we will send a person, if they don't have medical records from their physicians, we will send them for an evaluation.

An evaluation will determine the severeness of their disability. Some people have disabilities but they don't require DOR services. For instance, wearing a pair of glasses, it's a disability, right? I couldn't see without them. But I don't need DOR services to keep my job.

Some people need more help. For instance, some people need certain computer softwares that will read the screen or softwares that will help them type on the computer. Or they need something as simple as a dry board where they can write notes and show them to their peers.

That's an assistive technology, right? So in order for be eligible for services, the person has to have a physical or a mental impairment, and that impairment should be substantial enough that they require DOR services, yeah?

I'm going to backtrack a little bit. The significance of disability, that is determined by the counselor, and it pertains

to the severity of the disability. For instance, there are three categories.

No. 1, disabled. No. 2, mostly disabled. No. 3, most severely disabled.

If the person is in category one, and there is a shortage of funds, say, for instance, the governor didn't sign the budget, right? Those people will be placed on a waiting list.

If the person qualifies for category two, which is mostly severely disabled, they will be helped right away. If they fall in category three, which is most severely disabled, they will be also helped.

So category one usually those are individuals they fall on a waiting list. Once the government releases the funds, then we can attend to those people.

Our program is funded with state funds, state budget. But a large portion of it, about 40%, comes also from the federal government. It's a conjoined effort, yes? Our fiscal year goes from July 1st until June 30th of the following year.

So around June 15th we are told not to expend any more money, okay? Not to send out any promissory notes, because we need to wait until July 1st to find out if the governor has signed the budget. Yes?

At that moment is when we might put some of those people on the waiting list. I hope that answered the question.

That is the significance of the disability, yeah?

Okay. Program participants are expected to be available, responsible, active, and dedicated contributors to their own success.

This means that we can only help the consumer about 30% of the work, okay? The consumer has to be involved, that they have to come up with the other 70%.

I don't need to tell you how many clients we have. We have thousands of clients. So the counselor is there to support all these people, right? But the consumer has the obligation to actively participate.

If the consumer doesn't participate, if the consumer doesn't communicate, if the counselor sends a letter and that letter doesn't get to the destination because it's a bad address, if we call the number and the number is disconnected, we have to close the case.

It's the consumer's responsibility to keep us updated with their contact information.

By the same token, they are responsible for passing the classes, okay, if they are going to school, they have to have a GPA that will allow them to continue studying. We don't pay for classes twice. We only pay for the class, same class, once.

If the person withdraws from the class, or if the person fails a class, we will not pay for that class again.

Like the slide says, the purpose is to have a higher standard of living. Many people are on Social Security, collecting Social Security benefits. But as you know, Social Security is not enough, correct?

SSI usually pays between \$970 to \$1,100. Living in Los Angeles with that kind of money is not enough. So they come to us and we can help them find a part-time that will, you know, help them with that check, with that Social Security check.

Some people are able to obtain jobs that where they make more than \$2,000 a month, where they get their own health insurance, so in that case, as you know, Social Security will no longer give them subsidies, right?

But some people are afraid of getting a full-time job because they don't want to lose their Social Security benefits.

Well, in that case, I would recommend that they get it a part-time, yeah?

Customized service delivery. We tailor our services to each person individually to ensure a greater chance for success.

This is a one-on-one service. We don't do group services. The consumer will come to us, and they will meet with the counselor or with a service coordinator if there is one available.

The services that we provide are going to be tailored to that person. They are going to be necessary for that particular person.

For instance, if the person wants to attend college and they want to take some unrelated subjects, some unrelated class, we will not pay for that. We can only pay for classes that are included in their program that are necessary to pass or to obtain their degree, right?

Nowadays, we are basically working via telephone or Zoom or Microsoft Teams, video phones, correct?

So we get very, very few people in the office. But we are still open. We are open from 8:00 to 5:00, Monday through Friday, and people can come to our office and they can leave messages and they can pick up stuff, pick up books, pick up tools, et cetera, et cetera.

So the offices are still open. However, the communication these days is done mainly through this electronic, these electronic devices, correct?

Services. Benefits planning, career assessment and counseling. Job search and interview skills. Independent living skills. Career education and training. Assistive technology.

So I think I already spoke about all those. Benefits planning, we have a person on staff, and his name is Larry, who specializes in Social Security.

As you know, at least for me, it's very cumbersome. Social Security is huge. And I don't know everything about it, and if you make a mistake with Social Security, you may lose your benefits.

So we have this employee who is specialized in Social Security. He can discuss with the consumer about, you know, their benefits, okay?

Career assessment and counseling, sometimes the person doesn't know what they want to do. We can send them to an evaluation. The evaluation will include also a vocational test, and that vocational test will help the consumer define what profession they would like to follow.

Job search and interview skills, we have job specialists who will work with the consumer writing résumés. Also giving them job leads and teaching them independent living skills, which is how to dress appropriately, how to present themselves.

Anything from a haircut to taking a shower to dressing appropriately. That's what this person is going to discuss with them.

Also, at this point, we will give them a clothing voucher, okay?

The clothing voucher is good at Ross Dress For Less or At Burlington Coat Factory. They will be able to purchase interview clothes, business casual clothes. We don't allow jeans, sneakers. They have to purchase slacks, shoes, anything that it's appropriate for a job interview.

We don't buy also jewelry or perfume or cologne. Sometimes a person will say, may I buy a pocketbook? Because I don't have a decent purse to carry my stuff. So we will allow that.

But some people have gone as far as buying a floor lamp or a rug. And we will require that those people pay the department back, because that is not interview attire, right?

Then career education and training, as I explained, we go anywhere from the trade schools, barbering, culinary arts, diesel, mechanic, electrician, plumbing, cosmetology, all the way to become a teacher or a psychologist.

Lastly, assistive technology. In assistive technology, many people require hearing aids, and we will send them to an evaluation. They will be recommended some sort of hearing aids that we will pay for that.

However, if the person has medical, we have to figure out or medical has to tell us how much they are going to cover. Medical doesn't cover the entire cost of hearing aids.

So in that case, we will work with medical and they will pay part of it and we will pay the balance.

So that's why we talk about retaining employment.

Sometimes we can close a case successfully, which means that the person has been working for 90 days or more. A month or two or three months later the person comes back and says, you know, my hearing aid is broke. I need a new pair.

We will reopen the case and send the person to a new evaluation and get them hearing aids.

So basically, whatever the person needs to retain the job, we are most likely to provide them, okay? If they need uniforms, if they need tools, sometimes they come back to us and they say, my employer is asking me to purchase a certain uniform or my employer is asking me to purchase steel-toed boots.

Or any kind of tools they might need for the job, and some people need to purchase them out of pocket. So we will do that. We will purchase that for them.

I think that is the last slide. Oh, no. Okay.

Hiring people with disabilities. Businesses can benefit from programs that encourage recruitment and hiring of people with disabilities. Employees with disabilities bring unique experiences. Several incentives are available, including tax incentives.

That's what our job developers will do. They will explain the employer the benefits that they can obtain by hiring somebody with a disability. Of course the CPA, the accountant,

that they may have working for them, are more familiarized with those things, you know, with the laws.

But there are incentives that the employer can enjoy if they hire somebody with a disability.

By hiring people with disabilities, employers are the key to DOR's mission. DOR provides education and information to businesses and can help with integration when needed.

We believe in the talent and potential of individuals with disabilities.

So here the word is "integration," we are talking about competitive, integrated employment. That means putting the person with disabilities at the same level as their hearing colleagues.

And that's what we help them with. So the person feels equal, correct?

This slide has our contact information, our new address is 888 south Figueroa, suite 900. You can contact us through the e-mail or you can call the main office, which is -213.736.3904. You can leave a message with the receptionist, and we will get back with you.

If you call the direct line, we might not be there. I go to the office every other day, and Roberto goes in probably once a month. But he will see all the e-mails, okay?

If there is a message, we will relay it to him.

And that's it, right? I think that is the last slide.

>> SHARON: It is the last slide. Thank you, Ruben.

I neglected to note, you should have a reaction line on the bar, and if you wish to -- that would be the place to raise your hand is to be in participants.

It doesn't show up on mine, but if you have that and wish to ask a question, please do it that way. You can enter your question in the Chatbox, and we also, you can also do the old fashioned way of simply raising your hand and we will call on you.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Okay. I'm looking at the questions. Let's see.

Okay. There is my e-mail and Roberto's e-mail.

Can you explain order of selection? I think I did it, and I hope you understood. Don't get worried about order of selection. We rarely, rarely put anybody on a waiting list.

And also, if the person is on Social Security benefits, that makes the person eligible for services, okay?

Then, after that, we will have to determine if the person can benefit from our services. Some people have severe, severe disability that they cannot hold a job.

In that case, we will not be able to help them. But as long as the person can hold a job, even if it's a part-time job, we are able to help them.

So don't worry about the significance of disability or the order of selection.

Okay. My question for Ruben is different than what he is currently speaking of. My school district has finally agreed to provide me with... hearing impairment and my vision impairment. Okay.

Okay. I'm reading the question. I'm a public school teacher. Okay. Good question.

Yes, it's true. Sometimes your employer will provide a reasonable accommodation. We don't have to do it, right?

I wish every employer would provide reasonable accommodations. DOR is famous for that. We have people with all kinds of disabilities, and we provide all kinds of assistive technology for them, right?

We go as far as providing a reader, providing an assistant, and of course those assistive technologies, reasonable accommodations, are only within the work environment. It's not to help the person outside the office. Correct?

Now we're talking about, say, for instance, an assistant, correct, the assistant will be just in the office.

Now, if you're talking about hearing aids, of course the person will have that with them all the time, right? But many employers provide reasonable accommodations, so we don't have to worry about that.

The same as many colleges provide ASL interpreters, they provide note takers, they provide more time to take exams. So they have more time to, you know, if they are slow writing or and understanding, we have people with developmental disabilities, intellectual disabilities. So they provide also more time for the exams.

So, yes, employers and colleges and universities, they provide also reasonable accommodations.

Like I said, if anything is provided by a different source, we welcome that, okay? If the federal government pays for some part of the hearing aids, welcome, okay?

Let's see what else is here. It says a person is 100% deaf, one ear. 40% in the other. Well, if that person needs hearing aids in the other ear where they can hear 40%, or 60%, we will help them with that, definitely.

We also had a while ago, we had a girl coming from a different country. She didn't sign. She didn't know American Sign Language.

She didn't know her own sign language. She was communicating through gestures that she had learned from her parents. She came from a very small village in Central America.

It was really difficult for them, for her. So what I did, myself, actually, I started contacting churches. I found a church that has a group of deaf and hard of hearing.

So I referred this girl to this church, and they were teaching her -- this was many years ago, about six or more, eight, probably -- they were teaching her American Sign Language. So she would go to church and she would mingle with people, which is what she needs, right? Socializing. She needs to socialize.

And she was learning American Sign Language. Then when she was done with that, I think Roberto was sending her to school, if I'm not mistaken.

Okay. When I talk about helping people with disabilities, it says here, I can understand how your work helps people who are young or just starting work. What about people in their 40s?

We help people from all ages, okay? From 16, 17, all the way to, you know, as long as they need it, we are here.

And as long as the main reason is to obtain employment. Yeah?

So age is not a reason to be disqualified by the Department.

For example, it says here, does DOR subsidize employment by paying companies a portion of a salary for a limited trial period?

Good question. That is what we call on-the-job training, OJT, on-the-job training. What it is, it's a little contract between the department and the employer.

We will give the employer certain amount of money, which is not a lot, it's not a lot of money, and the employer will have the person working for approximately three months, okay?

Now, is not, we are not paying the full amount of the salary. We are only paying one portion of the salary.

But the person can work for that company and learn the job. Then after three months, we expect that the company will hire that person. If the person was able to be there for three months, that means that the person can handle the job, right?

So, yes, we will pay one portion of the salary. Not the entire salary. It's called OJT. On-the-job training.

>> SANDY BLAKE: Terry B has a question. She says, has the pandemic affected the current DOR cases? And will the deadline be extended?

>> RUBEN VALIDO: I have to -- I actually have a question to the second question. What is the deadline? What do you mean by deadline?

>> Hi. Yeah, I have been working with DOR since, I got to spend a year and a half, I think my deadline is June, and I was actually, I was involved with the LEAP program to qualify to apply for government job.

That was wrapping up, like, in December and then we had a delay with our last class in the program, and then the pandemic hit.

That kind of went poof, and nothing has really been done. It's hard to be looking for a job when everything is shut down.

So I'm just wondering what -- and I have my own business, and it was kind of limping along for many years. Actually, now it's, since January, it's, I have a lot of clients coming in. It looks like I might be focusing more on my own business, but I don't know how that would affect my agreement with DOR to find a job in my field, which is marketing

>> RUBEN VALIDO: I assume you're talking about the expiration date on your plan?

>> The expiration date, yeah, like June 20, 2021, June-something.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: No, no, that is no problem. As long as you're fully participating, actively participating, the counselor is able to extend that plan, okay?

What they will do, they will clone the plan and they will add a new end date. Say, for instance, if your plan ends on June 30, 2021, 15 days, two weeks prior to that, they can extend it to, say, December 31 or June 30, 2022. However time they need or they hope that you will be able to get a job.

>> Okay. Does my outcome have to end up being hired by another company in order to fulfill the requirement? So if I'm self-employed...

>> RUBEN VALIDO: That's a totally different plan. That will be a totally different plan. Self-employment is not easy, because -- maybe it's easy for you because you already have a business, but usually people who come to us looking for a self-employment plan, they have to come up with -- first of all, they have to have a good credit record, have to come up with a business plan.

It's a whole bunch of things that have to be done. Also, if the person is on Social Security, Social Security has a problem called the PASS. A program. What they do, it's a little bit, I believe, like a 401(k) where they take part of your income and they put it aside on an account, and you don't pay taxes for that.

Then once you have the amount of money that you need, say, if you need to purchase a vehicle for your job, for your business, or if you need to pay the first, last, and security for your location, you can use that money to pay for those expenses.

But like I said, Social Security is so complicated that it's better if you discuss that with them, if the client discusses... yeah.

In your case, obviously you are on a plan to obtain employment. Yes, you will have to be hired by somebody, yes.

>> Okay. I should probably just talk to my counselor then?

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Yes, absolutely. Always talk to your counselor.

What else is here? Thank you, by the way, on the compliment of my voice. I appreciate that. That was cute. Thank you.

Okay. Somebody was here, says here that person was a homemaker. You know, there has been talking about homemaker plans lately. We don't have any of those plans anymore.

I believe they are no longer available. But, yes, if the person requires more DOR assistance, they will have to fill out an application unless the case is still open, but if the case is closed, they will have to fill out a new application.

I believe homemaker is no longer one of the options.

How does the job search work? Do you help with effectively... oops. I just lost it.

Yes, absolutely. The job developers will help the person navigate the websites, how to fill out applications on the Internet. Indeed. Monster. Attaching résumés. Yes.

Do you help create résumés? Yes, we do that. Our job developers do that. That's one of the things they do.

And also, the job developers are more familiarized with companies that are hiring people who are deaf and hard of hearing. Roberto recently placed a person who is blind and deaf working for Amazon. Maybe it's not blinddeaf. Maybe it's just deaf. I'm not completely sure.

Yes, absolutely. And the person was requesting hearing aids to continue working. No, actually, no, there was another -- we have so many cases. There was another person who was deaf and blind working for Amazon. Yes, yes.

It says here accommodations and placement for deaf and hard of hearing, communities, likely very different... what percentage, hard of hearing versus deaf.

Roberto has about 130 clients who are deaf, okay? They only communicate via sign language.

If the person is hard of hearing, we can refer that particular person to any client, any counselor as long as they can communicate orally they can work with any counselor. Only when the person is exclusively deaf and communicate through American Sign Language, that's when we refer them to Roberto.

We have people who are hard of hearing, and they are working with other counselors who are hearing. If the counselor has a question, we have Roberto, okay? Roberto is not the only deaf counselor in the department. In our district we have three deaf counselors in our district.

We have one counselor in Commerce and we have one counselor in Westchester. Roberto is in downtown.

(Reading question.) Yes. I have a Master's degree in vocational rehabilitation counselor. I have a CRC, certified rehabilitation counselor. Okay.

>> SHARON: Ruben, there were a couple that were higher up in the Chatbox. One was I was a DOR client several years ago in the homemaker category. If I need more assistance now do I need to go through the application process again?

>> SANDY BLAKE: He answered that already.

>> SHARON: You did? I'm sorry. Just trying to navigate at the same time.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Yeah, definitely the person will have to fill out the application again, will have to open a new case, but I believe that homemaker is no longer an option.

But don't take my word for it. I would have to research it.

>> SHARON: Okay.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: That's all the questions that I see.

>> SHARON: I see one more, but I think it came to me. I apologize if you already spoke to it. I'm trying to do three things at once. Will DOR evaluate and provide recommendations for someone with a hearing disability who is currently employed?

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Yes. Yes. I would like to know more about that, what kind of accommodations they need, but like, for instance, if it's hearing aids, yes. We will help them with that, yes.

>> SHARON: I see Mina has her hand up. Did you want to unmute and ask your question?

>> Yes. So, Ruben, I am the one that you answered the question about. First, I have new technology. Can people hear me through this microphone? Okay.

I'm the one that asked the question about what services DOR pays for when it is the public school employee, does getting the reasonable accommodation paid for by DOR. So I heard you say about reader, assistance, assistive technology. And then the rest spoke more towards a student. I'm not a student. I'm a teacher.

What are the other kinds of things DOR would pay for for a teacher that's getting the reasonable accommodation? Reader, assistant, what else?

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Well, my question would be, and you don't need to answer it, you don't need to answer it, but my question to you would be, what do you need? And then when you tell me what you need, I would be able to say, yeah, we can do that for you or not.

>> Okay. I got you. Rather than take up people's time, why don't I send an e-mail. Would that be okay? I send an e-mail to you and Roberto?

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Yes, absolutely.

>> Thank you.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Yes, yes.

Any other questions?

>> SHARON: It was a very long chat, Chatbox, so if you had something further up and it didn't get... if it didn't get addressed, go ahead and ask out loud or put it back in there if you like.

>> I have a question. What about the provision of CART for if the person wants to get the training that requires college or other classes that are provided by a teacher or a professor that have to communicate audio, by voice?

Is there any kind of assistance with that?

>> RUBEN VALIDO: I don't know if I understand the question. You said CART? Correct? Hello? Did you mute yourself?

>> I think CART means captioning.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Um, captioning?

>> So if you need somebody to type in caption for your job, I forget, real time captioning is basically what CART means.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: This is for something that is done online?

>> This is if the person is getting, has to attend classes, and there is a teacher or a professor that is speaking, or there is group discussions or something like that, they need to have -- CART is kind of like captioning but in real life, in situations where you have the person transcribes what's being said to them.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Hmm. You know, that is one of those questions that I'm going to have to take with me, and I will have to answer them.

Would you mind sending me an e-mail about that?

>> I had DOR help me pay for college, and CART is actually covered by the individual disabilities office at the --

>> RUBEN VALIDO: At the college? Right?

>> So you have to go through the disabilities office at the college if you're talking about CART.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Yeah, because I don't see how else we could provide for that if the person is attending college, like I said, we have software that can read the screens. If it's a document. We have software that you can talk to the computer and the computer will type for you.

But I'm not familiar with this closed captioning software. It sounds like something that should be provided by the

disability offices at the college. Sorry I cannot be more specific about that.

But if you send me an e-mail, I can find out more about it.

>> SHARON: Any other questions, anyone?

Georgia has one.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Okay. You're muted, Georgia.

>> SHARON: You need to unmute.

>> GEORGIA: What is the percentage of hard of hearing people versus deaf people who are DOR clients?

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Hmm. It's hard to tell the percentage as a number. Like I said, if the person is deaf, they will go to Roberto and Roberto has 134 clients. If the person is hard of hearing -- if I had to guess, I would say 90% deaf; 10% hard of hearing.

In my experience, we don't have a lot of people coming just for hearing aids. Hmm. Maybe I should rephrase that.

Because a lot of people who require hearing aids, they also prefer to communicate through sign language. But with hearing aids, they have a better option to understand what the other person is saying.

Some people are profoundly deaf but not completely deaf. But because they prefer to communicate with American Sign Language, they go to Roberto.

But if you're asking me how many people who are hard of hearing are referred to the other counselors? I would say 10% out of the whole group of deaf and hard of hearing. Yeah.

>> GEORGIA: Not very many hard of hearing people want to be a client of DOR? Or they are not aware of DOR services?

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Well, like I said, many people who are on Roberto's caseload and communicate with American Sign Language, they require hearing aids too.

So they prefer to work with Roberto because they communicate through the sign language, you know.

But my other counselors, like I said, so far my experience has been very few people who require hearing aids. Yeah.

So it's hard to determine the percentage of hard of hearing, because also, being deaf and being hard of hearing, it's a degree, a percentage, the percentage.

So it's hard to determine, you know, without looking at the actual audiogram, it's hard to determine if you would consider that person deaf or if you would consider that person hard of hearing.

But I can say that a majority, majority of our clients, they are working with Roberto because they communicate with American Sign Language.

>> GEORGIA: Okay. Because many years ago when I first got my job with the City of Los Angeles as a temp-type thing, I went

to DOR for hearing aids because I was deaf but hard of hearing deaf. I didn't use ASL. I was just -- I was able to hold a job because I had work experience.

But I needed new hearing aids. And I couldn't afford them. A counselor at the City of Los Angeles told me I should go to DOR to get new hearing aids, and I got them free, and it was amazing.

So I'm just wondering if maybe hard of hearing people who don't use ASL who are not able to find a job if they are aware of DOR to help them find work. Maybe the word needs to get out more for the hard of hearing population. It seems that people that are hard of hearing have a hard time finding a job.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Yes, and they should come to us. They should come to us.

And I think I was joking with Sharon and Tim the other day that if, that we are the best-kept secret. If everybody knew about us, we would be swamped with work.

So if somebody in your position would come to my office, I would say this person is hard of hearing. Right?

So you could be working with one of our counselors who are not deaf. You don't need to communicate with American Sign Language.

So I would say, okay, Ms. Fleisher can communicate with any counselor, and, yeah, we will provide that for you, you know,

the hearing aids, definitely. Yeah. But some people are totally, exclusively American Sign Language users, yeah.

>> TIM BROWNING: I had a question along with that. Your best-kept secret.

We had talked previously with Sharon. How can a chapter, California, better connect with DOR and get the message out and work in collaboration with each other to benefit the population of people we serve? Do you have any ideas?

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Well, we can promote. You know, we can tell them about your services, your chapter, your website.

I understand that this is nation-wide association, and you have a chapter in Los Angeles, and I imagine you have chapters all over California, right?

>> TIM BROWNING: Uh-huh.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Yeah, we can actually put the word out basically. I don't know if you -- where did you go? I lost you. Sometimes the pictures move.

Yeah, I mean, unless you have something that you want us to distribute, you know, we can do that.

But Roberto can help with talking to our consumers about your association, definitely.

>> TIM BROWNING: We could probably e-mail you and learn more about maybe finding out how to promote this?

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Yes. And I have to be honest, I had to take yesterday off because I had appointments, personal appointments, and I opened my e-mail today and I had 120 e-mails. So I haven't been able to look at your website, you know, in detail, but I'm going to make a point of that after we finish today.

I'm going to look at the website and, you know, get more familiarized with your services, definitely.

>> TIM BROWNING: I think Ann Thomas had a question.

>> Ann: Actually, I have a comment. So I think it was 2012, Pat Widman from the LA chapter made contact with the Department of Rehabilitation, and at that time she was on the HLAA California board. The DOR agreed to distribute HLAA California brochures in all the offices.

Between Pat and I, Pat handled Southern California, and I handled Northern California. Then you have to ask Pat what happened, I think Pat left the California board and nobody continued the process.

So that might, Tim and Sharon, that might be a place for you to follow up to contact Pat and see what happened about that.

>> TIM BROWNING: That's a good idea. I'm in touch with Pat periodically, so I will reach out to her.

>> Ann: They went to every single DOR office in California.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Yeah, I don't think there will be a problem if you guys leave brochures or fliers.

However, I have to tell you, since March last year, beginning of the pandemic, the foot traffic in the office is, like, zero. Very few people every day. Like maybe between four and six people every day.

We used to have the lobby filled with people every day before the pandemic, but now it's like everybody is communicating -- you know, because everybody is afraid, right? Everybody is afraid of getting sick. So they don't want to leave home, don't want to take public transportation.

I take the train every day, I have no problem. I have been lucky I have never gotten sick. But a lot of people are afraid.

We don't have a whole lot of people coming to the office these days. But definitely, if you have something, we'll take it.

>> SHARON: I just wanted to say something. I think -- Georgia, your question was excellent, I had it and didn't ask it about the percentage of ASL deaf clients versus non. I think everybody here or almost everybody here has some form of hearing loss or is living or related to somebody with some form of hearing loss an a continuum.

But for all of us, well, I'm going to say for most, if not all of us, it can and has affected us in the workplace. Many people who want to come back into the workplace who have since they were last there have lost hearing or find it very challenging.

So I think the challenges are very different for people who are hard of hearing than deaf people. Because ASL is not a cure but it's -- you know, it's a solution that works. But for us, there are all kinds of different accommodations and technologies that may be needed to be employed to help the rest of us.

I think it's good that that came up, because we'd love to have a reciprocal relationship and, you know, explain some of the needs that our community has and see how you guys might be able to address those.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Ann has a question.

>> SHARON: It was a comment. Now I see Ann raising her hand. Ann, you're muted.

>> Ann: Ruben, on the DOR website, there are no other resources for people with disabilities like listing organizations that could be helpful to them. Might you consider adding something like that?

So your office can't really provide all the support that a person with disabilities needs. We certainly know for the hard

of hearing community, the emotional support and all of the other things come from our organization.

So if you had a resource list of organizations that could help a wide variety of people with disabilities, it could be really helpful to people.

And I don't see that on the website.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: I see. Yeah. I never thought of that. I have to be honest.

Thank you for bringing it up. The website is managed from Sacramento, from Central Office. We cannot modify anything. We cannot touch anything on the website.

I'm sure if they haven't added that page, like I said, I'm not aware if there are any resources listed on the website. But if they haven't done it, there might be a reason for that.

I am not privy to that information. So --

>> Ann: Who should I contact in Sacramento? I will do that.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Well, I can try to find the way to contact them. I can ask my IT department, you know, information technology department. They should be able to -- they should know who is handling the website.

>> Ann: Like there are also nine agencies that handle deaf and hard of hearing in California. One of them is GLAD. But

they are not listed on the website either. Everything is disconnected.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Hmm. You make a very good point. Would you send me an e-mail?

>> Ann: I would. Just so you know, I'm Ann Thomas.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: I can see your name but if you can send me an e-mail and I have that information, then I will ask. I will ask.

Any other questions?

>> SHARON: Okay, then. Let's give Ruben a round of applause for a very interesting presentation.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Thank you.

>> SHARON: I'm really glad that we sort of opened the lines of communication as to how we can get the word out, you know, for you and how some of our members can benefit by some of your services.

I saw that Mina had posted a link to CART which might be interesting to take a look at, a video that explains how CART is provided at the University of Washington. That might be an interesting link for you and others.

Look forward to getting to know each other better. Hopefully we will have the opportunity to meet Roberto next time, and we wish him well.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Thank you.

>> SHARON: Thank you for joining us. Thank you, Georgia, thank you for persevering and arranging this meeting.

Okay.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: Thank you. It's been a pleasure to talk to you guys today. I love to do presentations, because I like to get the word out and what we can do for people with disabilities.

You know, that's what we're here for, basically. So I'm glad to be here today. Thank you for having me.

>> SHARON: You're welcome. The phone will be ringing and we'll add to your 120 e-mails. Be on the lookout.

Okay.

>> SANDY BLAKE: I think you may need an assistant if he gets a lot of e-mails. You may need an assistant.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: That involves me working on Saturdays and Sundays sometimes. Every time I go on vacation, the day before I go to the office, I have to open the computer and clear my inbox because otherwise the next day it's a nightmare. Yeah.

>> SHARON: I know that. I can relate.

Okay, everybody, we're running close to an hour and a half, and so I want to thank Linda, our captioner, for staying with us this whole time. I know I tend to speak a little too quickly. My apology. And thank you for keeping up with all of us.

Just make a quick save-the-date. Our next meeting will be as usual on the fourth Saturday of the month, so that will be March 27th. We are going to have Dr. Nancy Tye-Murray, a professor of otolaryngology at Washington University in St. Louis. She will be talking about hearing loss challenges that don't stop with the ears, covering social isolation, loneliness, depression, many of the side effects of this malady we have to live with. I think it will be very interesting and informative. So be on the lookout for invites to that.

I thank everybody for joining us today. Wishing everyone continued good health and safety. Hope we can all be vaccinated sometime within a few months, God willing, actually meet in person sometime before too long.

Have a great day, everybody, a great weekend.

Ruben, thanks again. Enjoy the rest of I don't you are weekend.

>> RUBEN VALIDO: You're welcome. Bye-bye.

>> TIM BROWNING: Thanks, everyone. Have a good weekend.