HUMAN SERVICES GRANTS PROGRAM (HSGP)

FY 2023-24 PROGRAM STATUS REPORT

**Agency:** Disability Community Resource Center

**Program:** Independent Living Services and Home Access Program (HAP)

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**FY 2023-24 SUBMISSION CALENDAR**

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| **REPORTS** | **REPORT PERIOD** | **REPORT DEADLINE** |
| Mid-Year Program and  | 7/1/2023 - 12/31/2023 | Monday, February 5, 2024 |
| Fiscal Status Reports |
| Year-End Program and  | 7/1/2023 - 6/30/2024 | Monday, August 5, 2024 |
| Fiscal Status Reports |

**Instructions:**

* All reports submitted to the City are considered public record. Please note that staff will use the information provided in the mid-year and year-end reports to provide Council and the public with summary reports of agency performance highlighting key outcomes, successes, findings, and concerns.
* Please be concise. For example, do NOT copy and paste repetitive content from your Mid-Year to your Year-End. In most cases, a complete program status report will be no more than 8-10 pages in length.
* When preparing your report, please be sure to refer to your current Program Plan (Exhibit A) Program Budget (Exhibit B) and Special Funding Conditions (Exhibit C), of your executed Grant Agreement with the City.
* To submit your completed report to the City, upload the file to your agency’s SharePoint folder **as a Word document** and notify your grant analyst once you have done so.
* Please contact your grants analyst or humanservices@santamonica.gov for any issue with accessing your agency’s SharePoint folder.

**SECTION I: PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS, CHALLENGES, AND CHANGES**

Provide a brief summary of your program accomplishments, challenges, and changes that occurred during the reporting period. Please also provide information or observations related to population or service trends.

The Disability Community Resource Center (DCRC) serves intersectional, cross-disability Santa Monica residents and residents of Los Angeles County across their lifespan to achieve the goals of independent Living, equal opportunity, full participation and economic self-sufficiency embedded in the Americans with Disability Act, through advocacy and non-residential peer support services and training programs. Our programs are built on evidence-based research, crisis intervention, Trauma Informed Care, peer support and advocacy to help members maintain economic self-sufficiency and stable community living.

**Accomplishments**

During the reporting period, DCRC provided intensive case management services to 112 Santa Monica participants and 210 total program participants. Members served during this time continued to experience greater multiple basic needs, such as food insecurity, emergency financial assistance, transportation, food assistance, advocacy and mental health services for which they received corresponding intensive case management. For example, DCRC helped members at risk of homelessness and eviction pursue stable housing through housing voucher programs (Section 8, HOME, Project Based Vouchers), as well as the Below Market Housing (BMH) program; provided emergency financial assistance through the Emergency Assistance Program (EAP) to maintain economic stability; and successfully members to the programs; provided assistance to enroll in disability benefits such as SSI, Medi-Ca/ and Ca/Fresh, helped locate affordable transportation and connected members to mental health services and peer led support groups.

Through the City’s Senior & Disability Housing Taskforce, DCRC coordinated our case management with the City of Santa Monica Housing and Human Services Division, City Attorney's Office, Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, City staff and other partners to prevent people with disabilities from experiencing eviction and homelessness, remain independent and maintain stability in the community.

The DCRC's Emergency Assistance Program (EAP) provided financial assistance to 17 members. This program provides financial assistance to low-income Santa Monica residents with disabilities and older adults experiencing financial hardship. Eligible members received assistance for rent, move-in expenses, utilities, medication, car repairs, assistive technology, gas and grocery cards as well as medical equipment not covered by insurance.

The DCRC's Home Access Program (HAP) provided home modifications to 21 members. The HAP serves low-income Santa Monica residents with disabilities and older adults requiring home modifications including equipment to reduce the risk of falls and provide mobility access. Modifications include but are not limited to stair lifts, grab bars, ramps, chairlifts, assistive technology, fixed bathroom safety equipment and handrails.

DCRC distributes a Community Programs Participant Survey to each of our active Santa Monica members each year.  Out of the38 total responses received, over 63% of our members indicated that they achieved overall independence in our service delivery areas including maintaining stable housing, increased knowledge of obtaining resources within the community, increased ability to develop and achieve strategic goals as a recipient of our Emergency Assistance Program (EAP) and feeling safer in their home as a result of our Home Access Program (HAP).

DCRC had several successful events during the reporting period aimed at fostering community spirit and awareness and reflecting increased interest in building a strong community. Some accomplishments during this reporting period include:

* We partnered with several community organizations to celebrate Disability Pride Month on July 25th and 43 community members across the lifespan attended.
* On October 31st, our Halloween Costume Party was successful as 62 community members attended which promotes socialization and reduces isolation.
* On November 21st, we partnered with our local farmer's market to host our annual Friendsgiving luncheon event attended by 135 community members as we celebrated the achievements of the year.
* On December 19th, DCRC held a Holiday celebration for both our members and the general public with over 80 attendees
* On April 23rd, we taught different ways to combat stress by doing various activities and boosting mental health at our Stress Awareness event attended by 18 community members.
* On May 28th, we celebrated Mental Health Awareness Month providing self-empowerment activities, live performances, and resources attracting 69 attendees.
* On June 25th, we hosted our annual DCRC Pride event to celebrate Pride month by providing resources and fun activities attended by 21 community members
* Our Employment Services Program hosted DCRC's first ever Job and Resource Fair with several partners including DOR and the Department of Mental Health. Employers such as the Department of Water & Power, Painted Brain, Amazon, and the Theatre for the Blind attended. DCRC provided resume revision, mock interviewing, Dress for Success wardrobe, LinkedIn photography, and networking opportunities to 73 attendees to achieve their employment goals.
* Several hundred members attended DCRC's ongoing bi-weekly fresh fruit and vegetable distribution sponsored by a local farmer's market during FY 2023-2024, providing access to health and emergency relief.

## **Challenges**

Unprecedented inflation continues to pose challenges, with rising costs of living contributing to housing and food instability. Affordable housing is a never-ending challenge for our members in Santa Monica. Finding, affording and keeping affordable housing is a constant struggle. Many of our members are in greater need of housing and are experiencing food insecurity as well. We have seen a major increase in members enrolling in our DCRC Food and Nutrition Program, DCRC's ongoing bi-weekly fresh fruit and vegetable distribution sponsored by a local farmer's market during FY 2023-2024, providing access to health and emergency relief.

The intersection of aging and disability is a strong current in our work as we see people with disabilities live longer, thereby encountering the challenges of aging coupled with older adult members who encounter increased challenges of disability. DCRC approaches each member with a member centric approach, thereby bringing together resources and services for all ages and all disabilities. DCRC co-locates at WISE & Healthy Aging which helps in serving older adults with disabilities.

During the year, we experienced some staffing challenges. Community Programs was understaffed for over 3-months making timely services delivery challenging and reducing our outreach activities. We’re happy to report that we’ve recently recruited a new staff person for Community Programs who will be starting work in August.

**Changes**

DCRC has had a change in some of its services and programs. Our Employment Services Department for example, has seen significant growth in the last year and as a result, the amount of staff has steadily increased. Our Disability Disaster Access & Resources (DDAR) services has also expanded due to the increased relationships with CalOES (Office of Emergency Services) and other emergency preparedness organizations. DCRC is a participant with 5 other Independent Living Centers and the County Department of Aging and Disability in the Emerging Aging and Disability Resource Center project, which has grown in the last year. DCRC is now a subcontractor for Veterans Direct Contract Services by providing case management as a subcontractor with Independent Living Resources of Solano and Contra Costa Counties**.**

###### **SECTION II: COLLABORATION EFFORTS**

Please highlight any new efforts to collaborate with other service providers and/or leverage services, if applicable. Please include the agency name(s) and service(s) provided.

* DCRC was notified by the County Department of Aging & Disabilities that the agency was selected as a recipient of the Senior Grant Program which will provide financial assistance to help low-income seniors remain in their homes and age in place.
* DCRC continued our partnership as an Affiliated Field Education Community Agency with UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, Department of Social Welfare, to provide first and second year MSW students the opportunity to complete internship hours weekly at DCRC. MSW interns implement trauma informed care through case management, community outreach, advocacy and education. DCRC had a summer intern who was a second year MSW working exclusively with Community Programs to contribute her knowledge to solve multiple acute issues brought by members. Her internship ended in August 2023.
* In 2023, DCRC was awarded a major grant of $350K through Together Towards Health, an initiative of the Public Health Institute and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, to inform and deliver ongoing strategies to increase equity and access to mental healthcare and COVID outreach. During this time, national and local COVID response shifted from emergency to recovery, and many DCRC members experienced mental health challenges such as anxiety, social isolation, job loss, housing instability, death of a loved one, and other trauma. As part of this grant program, DCRC partnered with the online mental health platform Cerebral to provide 2 free months of therapy with a licensed therapist to DCRC members requesting support. A total of 53 DCRC members participated in our Cerebral Mental Health initiative. Through our outreach, the LACDPH Together Toward Health grant served over 2,400 people across the region.
* In September, 2023, DCRC was awarded the Voice Options grant through Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) to provide short term and long-term loans for Voice Options Program Speech Generating Devices (SGDs) to eligible people, including Santa Monica residents, with verified speech or language disabilities with the goal of increasing independent communication. Two members benefitted from this program this fiscal year.
* DCRC and the Community Programs Department have been long-time members of the Westside Coalition. Through this successful partnership, we have received on-going referrals of new program participants as well as valuable resources from coalition members. On June 20, 2024, both the Community Programs Manager and Community Programs Independent Living Specialist presented a PowerPoint presentation of DCRC’s services and programs. A total of 16 Westside Coalition members attended this successful outreach event.
* DCRC is part of a collaborative working to help launch the Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) model in LA County. When implemented, ADRCs will serve as single points of entry into the long-term services and supports (LTSS) system for older adults, people with disabilities, caregivers, veterans, and families. The ADRC will also be a very useful resource for DCRC staff recruitment since they also provide a comprehensive list of open positions for organizations that are understaffed.

###### **SECTION III: STAFFING PATTERN**

If applicable, please describe how staffing changes during the report period have impacted service delivery, caseload, and redistribution of work among other staff to ensure service levels are maintained. please also describe recruitment efforts and an anticipated hire date.

* DCRC hired a full time Community Programs Independent Living Specialist (ILS) in December 2023 to provide intensive case management to assist residents to live effectively and independently in the community and avoid homelessness. The ILS position was vacated again in the late spring 2024, but has since been filled. This allows to serve more community members and increase our outreach efforts in the community to continue building this vital program for Santa Monica residents with disabilities across the life-span.
* DCRC hired a Disability Disaster Access & Resource Coordinator (DDARC) in mid-December 2023. In this role, the DDARC is responsible for assisting the agency in the planning of Center emergency response and crisis management activities and provide disaster preparedness training to members, including emergency plans and procedures for natural, wartime, or technological emergencies or hazards.
* DCRC hired an Administration and Compliance Officer on April 16, 2024. Reporting to the Executive Director, the Administration & Compliance Officer provides leadership and oversight to ensure compliance and operational efficiency for the organization and provides analysis, post award services, and oversight to ensure compliance/QA guidance and grant specific requirements.  This position also serves as a resource for staff of grant funded programs for fiscal and programmatic compliance/quality matters.  The Administration & Compliance Officer is responsible for supervising the Administrative Office Manager and maintaining a strong internal control structure to ensure daily operations of the DCRC offices. Note: this position is not included as match in this year’s budget.
* To enhance our important work in System’s Change in the disabled community, DCRC hired a new Systems Change Advocate in March 2024. They are responsible for identifying systemic issues of significance to intersectional cross- disability residents across the lifespan and developing systems change planning. This position provides leadership in the community to enact systemic changes benefiting intersectional, cross-disability residents across the lifespan on a local, state, and national level.
* DCRC hired a Systems Youth Advocate in May 2024. This position focuses specifically on the youth population with disabilities from age 1 through 25 years old and equips the parents of children with disabilities with advocacy resources. The Systems Change Youth Advocate also provides future planning and mentoring, assists with the creation of transitioning plans for individuals exiting the school system, and assists parents with understanding their Individual Education Plan (IEP) processes. Note: this position is not included as match in this year’s budget.

Please indicate how volunteers or interns were used during the reporting period. Provide the total number of volunteers or interns. If interns were used, please indicate their program level (e.g., undergraduate, masters).

Volunteers are critical to increasing staff capacity and focus on service delivery. DCRC executes an ongoing successful Employment Services Program with an internship component-trained and supervised by Employment Services staff. The Peer Support Training Class utilizes interns to assist the Peer Support Training over the course of the class. The organization as a whole often uses volunteers and interns to shadow independent living specialists to develop Independent Living Plans to establish and achieve member goals. Volunteers assist the Administrative Office Manager with various clerical tasks throughout the office. During the 2023-2024 reporting period, a total of 19 volunteers contributed 554 hours to the work of DCRC.

**SECTION IV: GRIEVANCES & GOOD NEIGHBOR AGREEMENT (GNA)**

*Please provide the total number of grievances recorded by your program during the reporting period. Discuss trends in the number and types of grievances and any action taken to address common or recurring issues.*

During the reporting period, one member filed a formal grievance. The issue was regarding continuity of services and setting clear Independent Living Plan goals and expectations. The DCRC Community Program Manager and Executive Director carefully reviewed the grievance and had follow-up conversations with the member to discuss possible future services.

*Please detail any additional changes or issues regarding your agency’s GNA (if applicable).*

N/A

**SECTION V: SPECIAL FUNDING CONDITIONS**

*Provide a status report on how the agency is meeting its funding conditions listed in Exhibit C of your Grant Agreement for the current fiscal year, clearly addressing each individual funding condition in bullet point format.*

Community Programs staff continue to support eligible participants in submitting applications for applicable City of Santa Monica and other regional housing and rental assistance programs. including but not limited to: Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) and Below Market Housing (BMH) Waitlists, Preserving Our Diversity (POD), Continuum of Care (CoC), and HOME voucher programs.

###### **SECTION VI: BOARD INVOLVEMENT (COMPLETE AT YEAR-END ONLY)**

Please indicate:

* *Number of Board meetings conducted during the reporting period –* 12
* *Board vacancies and plans to fill those vacancies, if applicable –* Currently have 14 Directors, plan to recruit 2 additional members this year.
* *Significant policy directions or actions taken by the Board during the reporting period –*Approved Executive Director Succession Plan, Approved Workplace Violence Prevention Plan

**SECTION VII: PROGRAM PARTICIPANT INVOLVEMENT**

*Share examples of how feedback from program participants was incorporated into program design during the program year.*

DCRC distributes a Community Programs Participant Survey to each of our Santa Monica members and an exit interview upon program completion to measure independent living goals outcomes and satisfaction with the program overall. Additionally, participants can provide feedback at any time via a suggestion box at reception desk, or can provide feedback directly to the Administration & Compliance Officer or Executive Director. There is also a Community Advisory Council with a seat on DCRC’s Board of Directors. There was not any substantive participant feedback this fiscal year requiring changes to program design.

**SECTION VIII: SUCCESS STORIES (COMPLETE AT YEAR-END ONLY)**

*Please include no more than three success stories that illustrate the impact of your program on individual participants or households. When doing so, please take care to avoid any personally identifiable information that could compromise the privacy of any program participants. Please also note that staff will use the information provided to update Council and the public on agency performance.*

**Success Story #1**

A 54-year-old male member, who has multiple physical and emotional disabilities, including back and neck injuries, severe anxiety and depression, PTSD, and ADHD, expressed their sincere gratitude for the invaluable support and assistance they received as a member of DCRC’s Community Programs department over the past year. Due to the assistance of their DCRC SM IL-Specialist, the member became a recipient of a Project-Based Housing Voucher with the City of Santa Monica, a significant achievement that has substantially reduced their rental burden by an impressive 70%. The SM IL-Specialist assisted the member through the application process, identified and accessed various resources to assist him with his housing goal. In addition, the member received rental assistance through DCRC’s Emergency Assistance Program (EAP), vital food resources through DCRC’s bi-weekly food and nutrition program, and the opportunity to participate in DCRC’s many community events, which have significantly contributed to the improvement of their social skills. These have been lifelines for the member who in addition to their physical and emotional disabilities, has experienced some very challenging and difficult obstacles in his life including severe financial hardship and estrangement from his family. This would not have been possible without the on-going support and guidance of our dedicated staff. DCRC has proven to be more than just a service provider; it has become a supportive community for all of its members and continually provides a sense of belonging to a nurturing and caring community.

**Success Story #2**

A 59-year-old female member was referred to DCRC by WISE & Healthy Aging in the aftermath of a life-altering accident that left her with complete loss of her hand function. Shortly after enrolling with DCRC, the member suffered a stroke, which negatively affected her speech. The member found herselffacing numerous challenges and obstacles on a daily basis. Her DCRC Santa Monica IL-Specialist assisted her in completing both Social Security and Project-Based Voucher applications as well as making crucial phone calls on her behalf. One of the most remarkable outcomes of her support was teaching her how to navigate the complexities of obtaining social security benefits as well as the successful acquisition of a Project Based Voucher (PBV). The PBV has been instrumental in alleviating the financial burden associated with housing and rental expenses. The members SM IL-Specialist’s prompt action prevented an imminent eviction from her apartment where she has lived for 15 years. By receiving this voucher, the member was provided with a sense of stability and security. She has also received rental assistance through DCRC’s Emergency Rental Assistance program (EAP) as well as through the Santa Monica Housing Authority to pay back rental fees. During this period, the member was also connected to a court-appointed attorney, provided access to various resources, and received gas and food gift cards. DCRC has not only helped her overcome immediate challenges, but also played a pivotal role in changing the trajectory of her life. The member has expressed her gratitude and appreciation to the DCRC Community Programs team for their continuous support, compassion, and on-going commitment to providing exceptional services. The member is grateful for the lifeline that was provided to her in order to become more independent and self-sufficient.

**By submitting this report to the Human Services Division, I certify that this report is true, complete, and accurate to the best of my knowledge and that all disbursements have been made in compliance with the conditions of the Grantee Agreement and for the purposes indicated.**