

**HDC Report**  
**March 26, 2008**

This past quarter has been a busy time at HDC. We continue to make strides toward re-establishing the infrastructure that was lost after the failure of the Corps of Engineers levees that resulted in the destruction of the former site of HDC and subsequent loss of approximately half of the faculty and staff of the Center. During the quarter, we interviewed four candidates for vacant faculty positions and have extended offers to two of our current psychology interns to join our faculty, pending completion of their dissertations. We wrote and/or are in the process of writing four different grant applications, and are exploring several collaborative projects with different state partners. Just last week we received word that our proposal for five additional years of funding from the Administration on Developmental Disabilities was approved. This core funding will support part of the cost of the basic infrastructure we require to continue as a Center (business office, supplies, and other operating costs). This is a big accomplishment for an organization that still operates in borrowed space and we are thankful to our partners who supported our application.

HDC is currently focusing much of our efforts on improving educational practices and outcomes for students with disabilities. Some of our major activities in this area include the launch of a 5-year project funded by the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) which builds on and extends the work of the National Center on Special Education Accountability and Monitoring, directed by Dr. Alan Coulter. We also welcomed a new class of (10) School Psychology interns and have established a post-doctoral fellowship in school psychology. While finishing her dissertation at the University of New Orleans, Maria Blanco and her team continue to operate the Louisiana Autism Spectrum and Related Disabilities (LASARD) project (funded by LA DOE). In a few months, several additional school districts will be selected from the pool of applicants who wish to participate in LASARD next year. We are working in partnership with OCDD/EarlySteps and DOE to prepare a proposal to participate as a state in a national grant from OSEP that will provide training and TA to states that wish to establish model programs using research-based strategies to educate students with autism. We are also partnering with JPHSA and FHF to establish a model for providing young adults (age 17-25) opportunities to learn and practice social-interaction skills within age-appropriate community activities (e.g., dining out, sports, arts, and other entertainment venues). HDC is participating in a low-incidence (teacher training and professional development) coalition, in partnership with the LA-DOE, University of New Orleans and Louisiana Tech. We have developed and maintain the coalition's website and will host an electronic "repository". HDC faculty also are developing and delivering course work and professional development.

We have entered our eighth year operating our Work Incentives (formerly Benefits Planning and Assistance) project. This project is closely coordinated with the Advocacy Center's SELA-WIPA project and the Work Pays coalition. HDC also continues to collaborate with the Advocacy Center to implement a project funded by HUD- designed to provide information about housing and rights to people with disabilities.

We will conclude our 5-year Homeless Outreach and Evaluation (HOPE) project later this year. The HOPE project has assisted several hundred homeless individuals apply for and receive Social Security and other benefits to which they are entitled.

Finally, the Supported Employment Continuous Improvement Project (SECIP) funded by Louisiana Rehabilitation Services is coordinated by Patty Ghiossi. SECIP is now in full swing. The project is currently working with approximately 40 Supported Employment providers statewide. Patty has been invited to present with several nationally recognized leaders in Supported Employment at the upcoming Association for Persons in Supported Employment (APSE) conference. Project staff have received very high evaluations for the training and TA they provide and we look forward to expanding the scope and outcomes of the project in the coming year.

Finally HDC faculty/staff make many intangible contributions to advocacy and services for individuals with disabilities and families. These contributions are too numerous to list, but some of the ways the HDC community contribute to efforts of our partners include: teaching classes, providing community training and outreach on a variety of topics, and serving on numerous committees and boards.