

Community and Family Support System Task Force Final Report and Recommendations

Adopted October 10, 2016

[Act 378 of 1989](#) called for a system of community and family supports to be available for families of children and adults with disabilities in their own homes based on their individual needs in order to avoid out-of-home placement. The Act directed the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council (the Council) to develop a plan for this system based on guiding principles included in the law and directed the state to adhere to these principles in program planning, development, funding, and implementation. Act 378 called for the Council to monitor implementation of the Community and Family Support System Plan, which it continues to do today.

The Community and Family Support System¹ has been extremely successful in keeping people with disabilities in their own homes and communities through the provision of cost-effective, individualized, and flexible supports; and consumer satisfaction has remained high for those who receive services. However, the shift from a centralized community support system to one administered by the ten human services districts/authorities or local governing entities, has resulted in some unintended consequences. What Act 378 created as a statewide program with equal access, has, in some respects, become ten programs providing varying degrees of access depending on where one lives in the state.

Recognizing this inequity, the Council formed a Community and Family Support System Task Force to develop recommendations for Governor John Bel Edwards, LA Department of Health Secretary Dr. Rebekah Gee, legislators, and others to address funding and other issues preventing the system from meeting the needs of Louisiana's citizens with disabilities and their families.

The Council shared the following goals for the Community and Family Support System with the Task Force for it to use in developing its recommendations.

Goals

A Community and Family Support System that:

- is based on the guiding principles in Act 378;
- is person- and family-centered and person- and family-driven;
- provides access to the same level and quality of supports and services, regardless of where one lives in the state;
- is adequately and equitably funded to ensure the needs of all service populations in all regions can be met;
- utilizes consistent policies across the state;
- provides consistent high quality customer service across the state.

¹ [Click here](#) for information on the Community and Family Support System.

Recommendations Approved by Task Force

(To address funding inequities and inconsistent policy interpretation, customer service, outreach and access to information across the state.)

- **Advocate for an additional appropriation to bring all local governing entities (LGEs) to an equitable state general fund (SGF) level based on population and other factors such as poverty, rurality, and cost of living**
 - LA Department of Health (LDH), in collaboration with the Human Services Interagency Council (HSIC) and the DD Council, will determine appropriate formula
 - \$67 million would be needed to bring nine LGEs up to the per capita funding level of Metropolitan Human Services District (MHSD). Task Force agreed on an incremental advocacy plan. Advocate for \$20 million for FY18 and an additional \$20 million each fiscal year until total reached. (This amount will be adjusted after the formula is developed.)
 - Communicate the plan to advocate for additional SGF to the LGEs and recommend they request additional SGF in their FY18 budget requests.
 - Receipt of additional appropriations through this advocacy shall be contingent upon acceptance of the following recommendation by each LGE receiving additional funding.

- **Establish a mandatory minimum percentage of LGE state general funding to be dedicated to Act 378 programs. A minimum of 10% percent of SGF must be dedicated to Act 378 programs for people with developmental disabilities (DD). In addition, a minimum of 1.5% of SGF must be dedicated to Act 378 programs for children with behavioral health (BH) needs.** (Funding for the Act 378 adult behavioral health programs is not included in this dedication because it is only available in five areas of the state.)
 - Collaboration and buy-in from the HSIC will be sought. DD Council to discuss this and all other recommendations with LDH Deputy Secretary Michelle Alletto and request they be added to the HSIC meeting agenda for December 2016.
 - This language would be included in contracts between LDH and the LGEs. Legislative action may be sought should the LGEs not agree.

- **Educate State Advisory Council (SAC), Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) and LGE Boards on Act 378, history, programs, importance, and budget inequities.**
 - DD Council will present to SAC at one of their upcoming meetings and develop webinar to make available for RACs (DD and BH) and LGE Boards.
 - DD Council will send letter with information about Act 378 to each LGE Executive Director and request this information be forwarded to their Board. Letter shall include the link to the Act 378 webinar. Letter will also request time on the board agenda for a representative knowledgeable about Act 378 to speak briefly about Act 378 and answer any questions the Board may have.

- **Advocate for consistent board composition across all LGEs by recruiting strong DD advocates to apply for board membership through the appropriate appointing authority and encourage relationship building between advocates and LGE board members**
- **Provide annual top-down training for LGE staff on Act 378 and its guiding principles, core values, customer service, empathy, person centered planning, and sensitivity.**
 - Training on customer service, person centered services, and sensitivity is already included in LGE annual staff training required for accreditation.
 - DD Council will present on Act 378 and its guiding principles at an Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) quarterly meeting for LGE DD staff. OCDD will encourage LGEs to invite self-advocates and/or parents to share their perspective at a future LGE staff meeting.
 - A new DD eligibility process and form for system entry currently being finalized should help identify people's needs and link them to all services/programs to meet their needs.
 - OCDD's person-centered planning initiative will provide training to LGEs on person-centered planning and thinking
- **Recommend the RACs (DD and BH) host Parent/Self-Advocate Focus Group meetings at least annually to allow parents/self-advocates to provide feedback on their experiences with LGEs.**
 - Advertise/promote these meetings throughout the region. (DD Council and Families Helping Families (FHF) will assist with promotion.)
 - Outreach should be done to all parishes served within region and the meetings offered at various times/locations.
 - Use these meetings to also inform people about available Act 378 and other services/programs offered by the LGEs.
- **Change policy to allow Consumer Care Resources (CCR) to be accessed by those receiving behavioral health services through a private provider, rather than restricted to those receiving services through the LGE.**
- **Recommend that LGE Executive Directors continue to work toward implementation of No Wrong Door approach.**
- **To ensure individuals/families have access to information about services from a peer, DD Council shall compare the number of people applying for DD services by region to the number of referrals received by FHF from their LGE. If the percentage is low, advocate for adopting procedures used by LGEs with higher percentages.**
- **Encourage the RACs to communicate with the LGE and FHF to determine areas not being targeted for outreach and focus their efforts on those locations to improve the system of outreach**

- **To educate self-advocates and parents/families on Act 378 the DD Council will specify that at least one training included in the Council's contracts with FHF shall be focused on Act 378 services and guiding principles.**
- **Encourage LGEs to seek accreditation for their DD programs (include in letter to LGE Executive Directors)**
- **Encourage LGEs to recruit BH and/or social work staff with DD experience and to cross-train current BH and DD staff (include in letter to LGE Executive Directors)**
- **OCDD will send a memo to remind LGEs that Individual and Family Support policy provides for families to be invited to present their own requests to the Family Support Committee. OCDD will monitor this requirement and take necessary corrective action if not followed.**
- **Request LDH conduct a cost comparison to determine the amount of Act 378 funds spent on adult protective briefs and the estimated cost if adult protective briefs were covered by the state Medicaid plan.**
 - If adding this coverage to the state Medicaid plan is cost effective it would be the recommendation of the Task Force that adult protective briefs be added to the state plan.
 - DD Council will also discuss the need for dental care with the Medicaid Quality Committee

All task force recommendations will be sent to the Governor, LDH Secretary and Deputy Secretary, Assistant Secretaries, LGE Executive Directors, DD Council, Task Force members, and posted on the Council's website. They will also be shared with legislators where appropriate.

Many thanks to the following Task Force members who contributed their time, ideas, and experience to the work of the group:

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 Herman Bignar – Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities
 Wesley Cagle – LGE DD Director, South Central LA Human Services Authority
 Brenda Cosse' – Parent, Slidell
 Bill Bankston – LGE Behavioral Health, Central LA Human Services District
 April Dunn – Self-advocate, Baton Rouge, LA Developmental Disabilities Council
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 Rebecca Ellis – Parent, Northshore Families Helping Families
 Brad Farmer – LGE Executive Director, Acadiana Area Human Services District
 Rocky Fuselier – Self-advocate, SW LA Independence Center
 Liz Gary – Parent, Mandeville
 Laura Head – Parent, Shreveport
 Michelle Hurst – Parent, Zachary, LA Developmental Disabilities Council

Ashley McReynolds – Parent, Baton Rouge, LaCAN
Kelly Monroe – Advocate, Arc of Louisiana, State Personal Assistant Services Program
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Dr. Janice Peterson – Office of Behavioral Health
Bambi Polotzola – Parent, Governor’s Office of Disability Affairs
Mark Thomas – Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities
Mauricia Walters – Parent, Families Helping Families of Acadiana
Santee Winchell – Advocate, LA Developmental Disabilities Council

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