



## Action Alert #23: BESE needs to hear from you!

June 16, 2017

### **FHF Center funding is being slashed by LDE!**

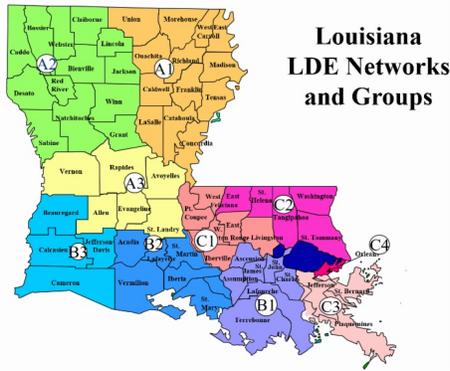
The Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) meets next Tuesday and Wednesday (June 20th and 21st). What is concerning is what is **NOT** on the BESE agenda - funding for Families Helping Families Regional Resource Centers (FHF Centers).

FHF Centers are one stop hubs of information and support for people with disabilities and their families. For years BESE and the La. Department of Education (LDE) have collaborated with other state agencies in supporting FHF Centers. LDE funds FHF Centers with IDEA (federal special education) funding to provide parents information, support and training on special education issues from a peer.

Typically, BESE votes on FHF funding in June of each year, just like they did last year: [June 2016 BESE contracts to FHF Centers](#). But this year LDE made a number of changes affecting FHF Centers, starting with making funding competitive through a [Response For Applications \(RFA\)](#) which:

- Reduces the amount of IDEA funding for FHF Centers by 37 percent, a reduction of \$305,000 statewide
  - Each FHF Center awarded a contract through the competitive process will have a reduction in funding from \$80,500 to \$50,000 per year.
- Changes the parishes served by each FHF Center for special education.
  - Up until now all state agencies have worked together to support FHF Centers as the one stop shop to people the same sets of parshes. By LDE requiring FHF Centers to cover different parishes than their other state agency contracts will cause FHF Centers to:
    - Duplicate work/coverage by other FHF Centers.
    - Stretch staff and resources to cover more parishes overall.

For  
years



advocates have requested LDE to provide a breakdown on how it plans to use IDEA (federal special education) funds. Although LDE provided a couple of presentations and sought stakeholder input via an online survey, at no time did LDE staff indicate a plan to reduce funding for parental support activities.

**LDE funding reductions to FHF Centers will result in reduced FHF staff devoted to education issues.**

In addition to severe funding reductions and expansion of most FHF Center's geographic coverage areas, the RFA requires FHF Centers to focus on these new priorities and goals:

- Engage at least 20 new families of students with disabilities each quarter.
- Maintain contact with at least 50% of the families of students with disabilities in their region.
- Ensure at least 10 families of students with disabilities attend regional community meetings hosted by LDE Network teams and LDE staff.
- Identify specific goals and actions for each school system in their region.

While FHF Centers have expressed a continued commitment to serve family members of students with disabilities there are many questions advocates have raised regarding these new goals. It is not clear how FHF Centers will connect with 50% of families of students with disabilities, and to achieve or attempt to achieve this goal FHF Centers would have to shift outreach to focus more on children with less significant disabilities. Since students with speech language impairment and specific learning disabilities make up more than 50% of all students with disabilities in the vast majority (2/3) of the traditional public school systems FHF Centers will have to devote significantly more time locating parents of children with these types of disabilities.

**SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS**

**Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) Committee Meetings**

- June 20, 2017
- Claiborne Bldg. (room 1-100), 1201 N. Third St., Baton Rouge
- 9:00 a.m. Educator Effectiveness Committee
- 9:30 a.m. Administration and Finance Committee
- 10:30 a.m. School Innovation and Turnaround Committee
- 12:00 p.m. Academic Goals and Instructional Improvement Committee

**Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) Meeting**

- June 21, 2017, 10:00 a.m.
- Claiborne Bldg. (room 1-100), 1201 N. Third St., Baton Rouge

# How to Take Action

## If you are concerned about:

BESE reducing funding to FHF Centers:

- Contact your [BESE Member and the At-Large BESE Members](#).
- Put on your Yellow Shirt and attend the BESE meeting at 9:30 a.m. on June 20th or 10:00 a.m. on June 21st.

## Confirm Your Action

**Don't forget to let us know that you took action!** Reply to this email or notify your [LaCAN Leader](#) to confirm your action.

Why confirm your action? This helps the Council know how important these issues are to you and allows us to better work together in advocating for educational policies and practices that improve services and outcomes of students with disabilities.

## Contact Us

LaCAN is an initiative of the LA Developmental Disabilities Council. If there are any questions about the information in this email, contact the Council by replying to this email, or calling the toll free number listed below:

phone: 1-800-450-8108

email: [info@laddc.org](mailto:info@laddc.org)

website: [www.lacanadvocates.org](http://www.lacanadvocates.org)

facebook: [www.facebook.com/lacanadvocates](http://www.facebook.com/lacanadvocates)



Louisiana Developmental  
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