

Office of Public Health (OPH) Quarterly Report to the Developmental Disabilities Council
Bureau of Family Health (BFH)
July 3, 2024

Children's Special Health Services (CSHS) works to ensure that children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN) in Louisiana have access to health care services designed to minimize their disabilities and maximize their probabilities of enjoying independent and self-sufficient lives.

- **Children's Special Healthcare Services (CSHS)** - Clinical Services offers direct care clinics for CYSHCNs in all regions, except 1 and 7, to meet specialty care needs in provider shortage areas. CSHS-Clinical Services (Genetics, Sickle Cell, and subspecialty clinics) transitioned to a hybrid appointment schedule. Decisions regarding in-person vs telehealth appointment visits are now being made at the Regional level depending upon staffing capacity, the infection positivity rate, and the ability to provide services safely.
- CSHS-Clinical Services Social Workers continue to provide behavioral health assessments to determine if families are in need of outpatient behavioral health referrals, as well as providing care coordination, youth health transition, support and resources.
- CSHS-Clinical Services also provides nutritional services in Regions 2 and 6 and hopes to expand to other Regions as the need dictates.
- Any family of a child/youth with a special health need that requires peer support, system navigation, or resource linkage is referred to Families Helping Families network in their respective region or the Family Resource Center. CSHS-Clinical services also refers to other community-based organizations as appropriate.

CSHS Transportation Assistance Program provides needed transportation assistance for eligible families to attend medical appointments/procedures. Families must seek transportation assistance through their MCO before requesting assistance through CSHS. Families may contact the Family Resource Center (BFH-FamilyResourceCenter@la.gov) or their local Families Helping Families Center for more information.

Transportation Assistance Program March 2024-June 2024	
7 stipend issued	Stipend expenditures \$2,319.32

BFH-Family Resource Center (FRC) is a statewide virtual center designed to ensure CYSHCN and their families in Louisiana have access to resource and referral services. The BFH-Family Resource Center provides community referrals, health/education transition supports, and system navigation services. Additionally, the FRC provides outreach to families of children identified through the Louisiana Birth Defects Monitoring Network to assist in linking to appropriate medical, educational, public health and peer support resources available in their region. For resource and referral services contact the FRC team via phone (504) 896-1340 or email BFH-FamilyResourceCenter@la.gov. Staff are available Monday-Friday 8 am-4pm. Non-English-speaking families can text their name, preferred language, and date/time that they are available between 8am-4:00pm to (504) 214-1785 or (504) 407-4601. Someone will respond in his or her preferred language.

Family Resource Center	
April – June 2024	
New Referrals	337
Total number of families engaged	242
Total number of outreach efforts (contact attempts to reach referred families)	336
Count of Total Resource Needs Identified	624

Families Helping Families (FHF) – BFH Project aims to build a coordinated and family-centric statewide CYSCHN resource and referral service system utilizing the collaborative partnership between BFH-Family Resource Center and FHF Networks. FHF networks are Louisiana's statewide parent-to-parent support organization serving individuals with disabilities and children/youth with special health care needs and their families.

In August, Families Helping Families (FHF) will distribute their fourth annual family survey to gather information on the priorities, needs, and preferences of children and youth with special health care needs and their families in each region. Additionally, as part of this collaboration, FHF offers annual pediatric provider trainings to strengthen the healthcare workforce capacity to care for children and youth with special health needs. The centers are beginning to plan and schedule SFY25 workshop events. Upcoming workshops will be posted as scheduled.

Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) supports coordinated systems of care that ensure families of babies and children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing (DHH) receive appropriate and timely services. The EHDI 1-3-6 goals are three-pronged.

- 1) Hearing screenings of all newborns no later than 1 month of age, preferably prior to hospital discharge; for those newborns who need further testing, audiology diagnosis should be completed by 3 months of age; and if an infant is identified as DHH, enrollment in intervention no later than 6 months of age, inclusive of opportunities for family-to-family support. The goal of the program is to ensure that children who are deaf or hard of hearing receive appropriate early intervention to optimize language, literacy, cognitive, social, and emotional development.
- **EHDI Regional Collaboratives**: inclusive of parents of children who are DHH, hospital newborn hearing screening personnel, pediatric audiologists, EarlySteps (Part C) providers, Parent Pupil Education Program (PPEP) DHH teachers, and Hands & Voices/Guide By Your Side Parent and Deaf Guides, to discuss regional progress on EHDI's 1-3-6 goals and strategize improvements.
 - *Complete* 5/9/24 Region 7 Willis Knighton Innovation Center – Bossier
5/10/24 Region 8 St. Francis Community Health Center – Monroe
 - *Upcoming* 9/2024 Region 5 TBD
9/2024 Region 6 TBD
- **Part C Hearing Screenings**: LA EHDI continues partnership with EarlySteps to support hearing screening upon intake into Louisiana's Part C system. EHDI program staff met in May and June 2024 with Intake Coordinators in Regions 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10. Intake Coordinator meetings in Regions 4 and 5 are scheduled for July 2024.
- **Unite Learning Community**: LA EHDI collaborated with the Heel Stick (dried bloodspot) newborn screening program to host family focus groups aimed at creating an

informational flyer for expectant parents in Louisiana. The flyer has been finalized, in English and Spanish, and is available at no charge to obstetricians, pediatricians, doulas, midwives, etc. – anyone providing prenatal education to LA families. Initial packets are being made and distributed between now and September – highlighting Newborn Screening Awareness Month.

- Advisory Council for the Early Identification of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Infants: Open to the public: Friday, July 26, 2024, 12:00-2:30pm Bienville Building – 628 North 4th Street, Room 118, Baton Rouge Requests for accommodations must be submitted to laehdi@la.gov by 7/12/2024.
- More information, visit us at <https://ldh.la.gov/page/LouisianaEHD> or email us at laehdi@la.gov.

Louisiana Hands & Voices provides to families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing family-to-family support. Specially trained parents, “Parent Guides,” are paired directly with families who have just learned of their child’s hearing condition, and provide the unique support that comes from sharing direct experience and wisdom. With support and timely resources, families can make informed decisions for their child. Another valuable resource available to families are Deaf Guides that provide families with a positive and hopeful perspective from their day-to-day, real-life experiences as a Deaf or hard of hearing person living in a predominantly hearing world. Opportunities to meet with Parent Guides and Deaf Guides are available through individual meetups, group parent chats virtually or through face-to-face group social activities held regionally throughout the state. Given the low incidence of hearing differences, parents welcome the opportunities to visit with other families of children traveling the same journey of raising deaf or hard of hearing children. More information? Facebook at “Louisiana Hands and Voices” or on the web at <https://www.lahandsandvoices.org/>.

H&V knows that families use many different ways to communicate with their children who are D/HH. It doesn't matter which mode of communication a family uses, H&V believes that what works for a child and their family is what makes the choice right.

Genetic Diseases Program operates a comprehensive statewide newborn heel stick screening (NBS) program meeting national standards as well as ensuring access to genetic evaluation and counseling to residents of Louisiana. The Genetics Program also operates the Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) Program, which provides resources and information on how individuals diagnosed with sickle cell can receive assistance and care through the Sickle Cell Foundations and Clinics around the state.

Louisiana Birth Defects Monitoring Network (LBDMN) tracks the occurrence of over 70 structural, functional, and genetic birth defects in Louisiana residents. This work helps to identify environmental conditions, pharmaceutical side effects, or behavioral risk factors threatening Louisiana's newborns. By case definition, we include children diagnosed prior to their third birthday. Overall prevalence of birth defects per 10,000 live births in Louisiana is 2.6%. LBDMN staff conduct active surveillance of birth defects in children born in Louisiana. According to the CDC, the US average is about 3% of all babies born each year. Among Louisiana children with birth defects, cardiovascular system defects (about 64%) were the most

common. Complete findings are in the [Louisiana Birth Defects Monitoring Network 2023 Annual Report](#) to the legislature.

Since 2020, LBDMN identified 3,089 children born in 2020 – 2024 who may benefit from a referral needs assessment. Currently, we are referring children under 2 years old for needs assessment/resource services.

Louisiana Commission for the Deaf (LCD) functions as the principal state program that provides information and services to and for individuals who are Deaf, DeafBlind, or hard of hearing on behalf of the State of Louisiana.

LCD Programs include:

- Hearing aids for qualifying individuals based on age and income
- Assistive technology for qualifying individuals, free of charge
- Support Service Providers for individuals who are deaf and blind (DeafBlind) to live and participate in their communities with independence.
- Interpreter standards, services, oversight and support for communication accessibility for individuals who use American Sign Language (ASL) and the ASL interpreter workforce

LCD has developed a Statewide Mentorship Program to elevate the quality and number of qualified American Sign Language Interpreters (ASL) in Louisiana through several key objectives:

- Providing resources and support for the ongoing professional development of ASL interpreters in Louisiana.
- Supporting the development of essential skills necessary for ASL interpreters to become highly qualified and certified professionals.
- Ensuring all Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing ASL users have access to high-quality ASL interpreting services to promote equitable communication access.

Training Opportunities: If your organization is interested in trainings, professional development, or resources related to Deaf sensitivity, culture, or services including ASL Interpreting for d/Deaf, DeafBlind or hard of hearing people, please contact LCD. More information on the LCD please click [here](#) or contact us at LCD@la.gov. Next LCD public meeting is Friday, July 12, 2024 from 9:00AM – 1:00PM.

BFH Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) is a no-cost, voluntary program that provides family support and coaching to improve the health and well-being of pregnant women and parenting families with young children. Families are paired with registered nurses or certified parent educators who provide personalized education, guidance, and referrals to services to empower families to reach their goals. Nurses and Parent Educators work with families in their homes or the family's preferred location. MIECHV implements two evidenced-based, home visiting models- Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) and Parents as Teachers (PAT).

Services provided to participating families include:

- Health education and coaching
- Support in building positive parenting skills and caregiving confidence
- Help setting and reaching personal goals, such as returning to school or work
- Connection and referrals to services and community resources

Benefits of program participation include:

- Improved economic self-sufficiency
- Early identification of developmental delays
- Improved child health and development

The MIECHV Program is in the initial phase of a multi-year project working toward engaging Regional Parent Leaders to represent family voices and perspectives. Parent Leaders advocate for families' needs, provide peer support and mentorship, engage with communities and policymakers, contribute to program planning and evaluation, undergo training for leadership development, and advocate for policy changes. MIECHV is working on resource evaluation and readiness assessment in this initial phase of the Parent Leader Project. We will continue to provide updates as this work continues. For more information about Louisiana MIECHV's NFP and PAT services, including how to get in touch with a home visitor near you, or refer a family for services, you can reach out to Susannah.Boudreaux@la.gov or visit <https://partnersforfamilyhealth.org/family-support-coaching-services/>.

BFH Adolescent School Health Program (ASHP) has 57 ASHP-certified School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) across the state. These health centers are located in public and charter schools and offer comprehensive, primary, and preventive physical and mental health services for students enrolled in the school that houses the SBHC and surrounding schools. Information on the LDH Adolescent School Health Program website can be found [here](#).

Louisiana Provider to Provider Consultation Line (PPCL) is a no-cost provider-to-provider telephone consultation and education program to help pediatric and perinatal health care providers address their patients' behavioral and mental health needs. The program aims to increase the capacity to screen, diagnose, treat, and refer patients to supportive services by integrating behavioral health into the pediatric primary care setting and connecting providers to mental health consultants and psychiatrists.

How PPCL Works:

Any pediatric and/or perinatal provider who has behavioral health related question can call PPCL at (833) 721-2881 or request a consult by going to <https://ldh.la.gov/page/ppcl>. PPCL's mental health team, which includes licensed mental health professionals and psychiatrists, can provide education and support on questions regarding mental health diagnoses, medications, and psychotherapy interventions for a wide range of behavioral health needs (e.g. mental health care guides, screening forms). PPCL also provides information about mental health and other community resources that may beneficial to the patients you serve. PPCL offers training and information on pediatric and perinatal behavioral health topics and issues through its TeleECHO series, webinars, in-person training events, and website. **While not required to use PPCL services**, providers are strongly encouraged to register for PPCL. For more info on the Provider-to-Provider Consultation Line, go to <https://ldh.la.gov/page/ppcl>.

Developmental Screening Initiative works to support medical providers with integration of universal developmental screening services into their day-to-day practice. The initiative is hosting the 2024 [Developmental Screening Summer Webinar Series](#). The webinar series consists of 7-weekly webinar sessions presented by content experts on various developmental and perinatal depression screening topics. Webinar participants can receive no cost CE/CME credit (physicians, nurses and social workers only) for attending the webinars. Please contact DevScreen@la.gov for further information.

The Bureau of Family Health launched the **Early Childhood Developmental Screening Provider Survey** in June. The goal of the provider survey is to gain knowledge and insight about current screening practices, challenges/barriers experienced by pediatric providers, and provider recommendations for improving the current system of care. The input elicited from the provider survey will inform a strategic plan aimed toward strengthening the early childhood developmental health system in our state. The survey will be open from June 24 to July 26, 2024. Please share this opportunity with any pediatric/family medicine health providers in your network. Health providers, your input on this 10-minute survey is greatly appreciated. **Provider survey:** bit.ly/4cc6zZ5.

PartnersForFamilyHealth.org Data Center disseminates products for public health practitioners, community organizations, policy makers, and researchers to guide programs and inform policy decisions. BFH has a dedicated Data to Action Team that collects, analyzes, interprets, and prepares data dissemination products. [Here](#) you can find reports and fact sheets on birth outcomes, mortality and injury indicators analyzed at a state, regional and parish level as well as links to websites with additional, relevant data.

Young Child Wellness Collaborative (YCWC) is a cross-agency advisory council that provides leadership and informs priorities/strategic planning across the continuum of supports/services within Louisiana's Early Childhood System. The YCWC serves as the State-Level advisory team for the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant, Project SOAR (Screen Often and Accurately Refer). The YCWC meets every other month on the second Tuesday; the next convening is August 13, 2024. In addition to family and health providers, the collaborative includes representation from BFH, EarlySteps, the Office of Behavioral Health (OBH), Medicaid, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), the Louisiana Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS), LSU Human Development Center, Head Start, EarlySteps, the Louisiana Partnership for Children and Families, the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children, and the Louisiana chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. The YCWC is currently recruiting pediatric/perinatal health care providers and pregnant/parenting family leaders interested in participating and informing early childhood (prenatal to 3) systems improvement efforts that are focused on the development of a strategic plan. If you or someone you know may be interested in joining the collaborative or participating in planning, please contact Patti.Barovechio@la.gov or Iman.Johnson@la.gov for more information.