

Office of Public Health (OPH) Quarterly Report to the Developmental Disabilities Council
Bureau of Family Health (BFH)
October 4, 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.
- 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 BFH 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 July 2024-September 2024	
Stipends issued: 7	Stipend expenditures: \$1246.28

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 Activity Report July – Sept 2024	
New Referrals	401
Total number of families engaged	316
Total number of outreach efforts (contact attempts to reach referred families)	326
Count of Total Resource Needs Identified	660

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.

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. Social workers and nurses can receive contact hours for attendance. The centers are beginning to plan and schedule SFY25 workshop events. Upcoming workshops be advertised when 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. Hearing screenings of all newborns no later than 1 month of age, preferably prior to hospital discharge; for those newborns who need further testing, audiologic 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, Louisiana School for the Deaf Outreach (Guidance, Outreach, and Language Development) 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.
 - *Upcoming* 10/29/2024 Region 5 Christus Ochsner Lake Area Hospital
 - 10/30/2024 Region 6 Rapides Regional Medical Center
- **Newborn Screening Awareness Month:** September was Awareness month for newborn screening. The EHDI program aligned with the Heel Stick program, which led to a newly developed family flyer to be share prenatally. The flyer was distributed to all obstetricians, birth classes, birthing facilities and centers throughout the state. It was also promoted on the Partners for Family Health facebook page each Friday.
- **Advisory Council for the Early Identification of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Infants:**
Open to the public: Friday, October 25, 2024, 12:00-2:30pm
1450 Poydras Street, Benson Tower Room 2024, New Orleans, LA 70112
Requests for accommodations must be submitted to laehdi@la.gov by 10/14/2024.

- More information, visit us at <https://ldh.la.gov/page/LouisianaEHDI> 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.

- Four parents, of LA Hands and Voices attended the annual leadership conference held in Spokane, Washington in late September and brought new ideas back to Louisiana.
- H&V Guide By Your Side program is currently looking for additional adults who are deaf or hard of hearing and interested in become Deaf Guides. This is a part-time position. Contact jill.guidry@la.gov.
- H&V is hosting a free, family-focused Lunch & Learn on Saturday, October 19, 2024 from 9-1 at the library in Metairie. Content is focused on understanding Part B and Part C with regard to: parental rights, Individual Family Service Plans and Individual Educational Plans, and transition from Part B (early intervention) to Part C (school system). Limited stipends for childcare/transportation are available. The address is 201 Pasadena Avenue, Metairie 70001. Contact Nicole.deleon@la.gov with questions.

Monthly virtual parent chats on the 1st Thursday of each month from 8-9 pm.
<https://zoom.us/j/4770761691>.

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 3,224 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, October 18, 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

A recent MIECHV data analysis revealed that teenage clients are twice as likely to discontinue services before program completion compared to adult clients. A follow-up survey showed teens value the MIECHV program's informational and emotional support, but suggested areas for improvement to increase engagement. Recommendations included increasing visit frequency, facilitating peer connections, and adopting a teen-centered approach that considers their developmental stage. The MIECHV program will continue to explore opportunities based on this valuable feedback to improve retention and engagement. 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/>.

Adolescent School Health Program (ASHP) provides technical assistance and resources for School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) in 25 parishes across Louisiana. Currently there are 57 Office of Public Health affiliated (SBHCs) across the state. A SBHC is a healthcare center placed within a school or on school grounds in both urban and rural communities of greatest need. All SBHC services are provided by trained Louisiana state licensed medical and behavioral health staff; which includes a medical provider, behavioral health provider, administrator, and office assistant. SBHCs allow students to manage their own health needs, receive health education, and participate in behavioral health sessions while still at school.

SBHC services are available to students who attend the school where the SBHC is located, and may include students who attend schools near the SBHC. Prior to receiving services, a parent or legal guardian must sign a consent form unless the student is of legal age to consent for services.

SBHC services include:

- Check-ups
- Physicals to play sports
- Illness and injury care
- Vaccines/shots
- Blood test
- Individual mental health counseling
- Help finding doctors and specialists outside of a SBHC and more

Recently the Adolescent School Health Program:

- **Launched the School-Based Health Center Registry.** The 2023 regular legislative session requires SBHCs to register with the Office of Public Health. Thus far, 120 SBHCs have registered with the Office of Public Health.
- **Revised the Principles, Standards and Guidelines for SBHC Operation in Louisiana.** This document serves as a resource for SBHC operation.

To learn more about the Adolescent School Health Program and to obtain a list of OPH-affiliated SBHC, visit the website, which can be found [here](#). A listing of SBHCs who have registered with the Office of Public Health 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 be 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 pediatric clinicians with integration of universal developmental screening services into their day-to-day practice. The initiative hosts a web-based provider toolkit that assists clinicians with expanding universal developmental and

perinatal depression screening services within well child visits. The toolkit contains step-by-step guides, instructional videos, and downloadable quality improvement worksheets. It is a one-stop-shop for everything needed to implement or strengthen clinic based screening services all in one convenient spot. Please contact DevScreen@la.gov for further information.

The Early Childhood Developmental Screening Provider Survey remains open to allow providers the opportunity to submit their recommendations. 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 the Title V developmental screening initiative work plan as well as strategies to strengthen the early childhood developmental health system in our state. Please share this opportunity with any pediatric/family medicine health providers in your network. Health providers, your input on this 10-minute survey will guide future work and policy, please consider participating. **Provider survey link:** 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.

The Title V Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Block Grant is the cornerstone of policy and programming for all mothers and children. Significant funding is directed toward the state's systems of care for children with disabilities and children and youth special healthcare needs (CYSHCN), to evolve and meet their unique and complex needs. The MCH Block Grant supports vital programs and services to enhance the health outcomes and quality of life for CYSHCN. Some of these efforts include:

- Improving access to family-centered care coordination
- Engaging with families and individuals with special health care needs
- Strengthening public health infrastructure
- Implementing national standards and guidelines
- Building community capacity to deliver enabling services such as American Sign Language translation services

We are pleased to announce that the Block Grant for the Federal Fiscal Year 2025 (October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025) has been submitted and approved by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB). Grant details and other Title V efforts for the CYSHCN population are available on Bureau of Family Health's [website](#). For feedback or questions regarding Louisiana's MCH Block Grant, please reach out to us at TitleVMCH@la.gov.

Young Child Wellness Collaborative (YCWC) is a cross-agency advisory council that provides leadership and informs priorities 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 on the second Tuesday of even numbered months; the next convening is October 8, 2024.

In addition to family and health providers, the collaborative includes representation from BFH program leads, the Office of Behavioral Health (OBH), Medicaid, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), the Louisiana Department of Child/Family Services (DCFS), LSU Human Development Center, Head Start, EarlySteps, the Louisiana Partnership for Children/Families, the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children, and the Louisiana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

For more information about the YCWC contact Kaylee.Hall@la.gov.