



Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council Annual Report for FFY 2017

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A Message from the Chairperson and the Executive Director

In 2017 the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council (Council) initiated activities targeting goals in the [2017-2021 Five-Year Plan](#). This new plan recognizes the significant focus of the Council's work in supporting advocacy and leadership development, along with goals targeting community supports, inclusive education, and competitive integrated individual employment for individuals with developmental disabilities. Key policies and practices impacted by the Council include restoration of funds in the state budget for Individual and Family Support, Flexible Family Fund, and State Personal Assistance Services programs; appropriation of new funding for 627 waiver slots for those in emergent need; requirements for each Human Services District/Authority to allocate an amount equal to at least nine percent of its state funds to two programs for people with developmental disabilities; increased representation of family members and people with developmental disabilities on the Special Education Advisory Panel and Boards of the Human Services Districts/Authorities; prohibition of corporal punishment to students with disabilities; and increased value of students with disabilities in the school accountability system.

The Council stands poised to capitalize on partnerships with stakeholders, other organizations, and policymakers to ensure continued progress is made in developing and implementing a coordinated, consumer- and family-centered, and consumer and family-directed comprehensive system of community services, individualized supports, and other forms of assistance that enable individuals with developmental disabilities to exercise self-determination, be independent, productive, and fully included in all facets of community life.



April Dunn, Council Chairperson



Sandee Winchell, Executive Director

[Community Support](#)

The Council advocated for a variety of policy changes designed to expand access to individual and family supports, shift state effort from segregated residential facilities, and to increase the community's capacity to serve those with the most challenging and complex needs. Successful advocacy efforts resulted in a requirement for the Human Services Districts/Authorities to allocate an amount equal to at least nine percent of its state funds to two programs for people with developmental disabilities (Flexible Family Fund and Individual and Family Support), increased representation of people with developmental disabilities, parents, and advocates on the Human Services Districts/Authorities boards, and the initiation of a state pilot program allowing 50 people with developmental disabilities living in residential facilities to move into their own homes with waiver services.

One self-advocate and four parents who are enrolled in the self-direction waiver option served as **Self-Direction Mentors** to other individuals with disabilities and parents new to or considering enrolling in self-direction. The mentors held forty-four workshops across the state in which they shared their experiences with self-direction to 254 participants. Sixty-two percent of the participants indicated they "agreed or strongly agreed" that the workshop convinced them to pursue self-direction.



Self-direction Mentor, Karen Conley, with workshop participants.

The **Complex Needs Training and Technical Assistance Partnership** with the Louisiana Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities worked with home- and community-based providers to increase capacity and improve outcomes for the people they support through in-class training and provider- and individual-specific ongoing technical support. In 2017, this multi-year program worked with four providers serving individuals with complex medical and/or behavioral health support needs from different regions of the state. Results of the project revealed valuable outcomes such as decreases in emergency room visits and critical incidents, and increases in personal outcomes (e.g., independence, community involvement, connections to family and friends, and support toward competitive employment).

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Education

The Council advocated for students with disabilities to have access to quality, individualized programs in inclusive environments and to be considered from the initial phases to the completion of planning and development of educational policies and initiatives.

- Act 266 prohibits administration of corporal punishment to students with disabilities.
- As a result of Act 522 of 2016 and the Advisory Council on Student Behavior and Discipline, stakeholders were provided data on the use of discipline practices across school systems.
- Council staff served on the Governor’s Advisory Council on the Every Student Succeeds Act and successfully advocated to increase the value of students with disabilities in the school accountability system.
- The Council successfully advocated for increased representation of individuals with disabilities and their family members on advisory panels related to special education policy and practice.
- The Council expressed concerns over the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) reducing the role of parental involvement in special education monitoring.
- The Council’s Committee on Education and Employment defined “[opportunities for meaningful and authentic stakeholder input.](#)”

Employment

The Council advocated for policy encouraging competitive employment.

- Information regarding funding for the Louisiana Rehabilitation Services’ (LRS) vocational rehabilitation program was provided to legislators. Due to state budget cuts, only people qualifying under LRS’ highest level of priority (most support need) may begin getting services.
- Council staff advocated throughout the year for the following:
 - Certification of employment support professionals;
 - Practices facilitating employment first principles;
 - Transitioning sheltered workshops to competitive inclusive individual employment; and
 - Implementation of the use of a report card for supported employment providers.

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[Advocacy and Leadership Development](#)

LaCAN (Louisiana Council's Advocacy Network) furthered the Council's mission by advocating for policies and systems that support inclusion in home and community-based services, education, and employment. Nearly 1,600 LaCAN advocates across the state took more than 4,300 actions including participation in Legislative Roundtables, legislative visits, calls/emails to legislators, legislative committee or educational board meetings, and Disability Rights Day at the Capitol.

Disability Rights Day was attended by 410 individuals including 149 self-advocates and 134 family members. Advocates visited legislators sharing the message "Fund Community Services." A rally featured State Representative Barbara Carpenter; State Senators Sharon Hewitt, Wesley Bishop, and Troy Carter; Steve Spires of the Governor's Office, Council Executive Director Sandee Winchell, and event emcees Jeff Arseneaux and Doris Heckert.



LaCAN advocates create a "sea of yellow" on the Capitol steps on Disability Rights Day.

The Council provided information on issues important to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families through **LaDDC News** and its **Facebook® page** and supported nine **Families Helping Families (FHF) Regional Resource Centers** in providing support and information to self-advocates, families, and professionals.

- More than 32,000 people supported
- 300 outreaches to hospitals, health care providers, and schools

The Council's **Partners in Policymaking** program for people with developmental disabilities and parents of young children with developmental disabilities had another successful year.

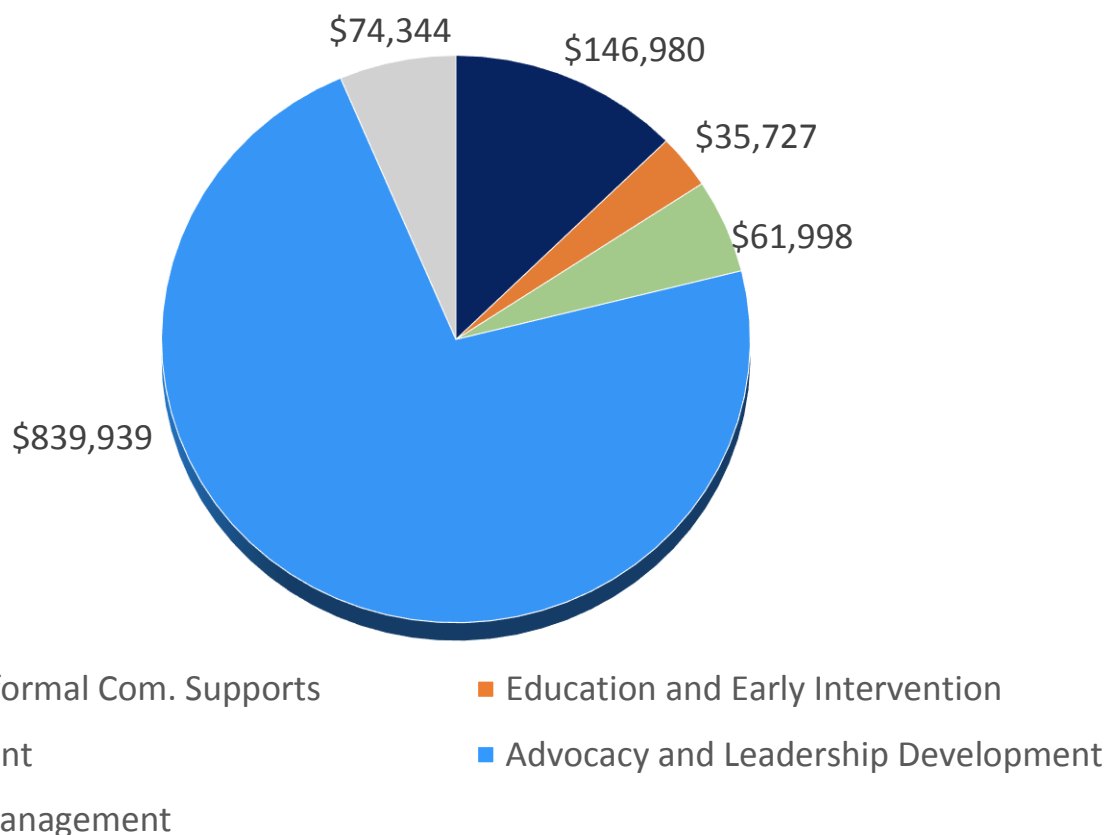
- 23 graduates, including five self-advocates and three dads.
- Participants were active in systems change advocacy.
- Partners' graduates serve as LaCAN Leaders, FHF Directors, members of the DD Council, and other policy and advisory bodies, and are active advocates testifying before critical legislative committees and the state board of education.

Financial Report

The Council received \$1.4 million in federal funds through the [Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act](#). Each [Developmental Disabilities Council](#) is required to spend a minimum of 70% of its funds on advocacy, systems change, and capacity building activities that promote the independence, self-determination, productivity, integration and inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities.

- 93.6% of the Council's funds went to programmatic activities in 2017.
- Program funds were expended in the areas of [Community Support](#), [Education](#), [Employment](#), and [Advocacy and Leadership Development](#).

In addition to federal funds, the Council also receives state funds for the operation and administration of a network of nine Families Helping Families Regional Resource Centers that provide information and referral, education and training, and peer support to individuals with disabilities and their families from people who have been there.



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