

Governor's Office of Disability Affairs

Report to the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council

March 31, 2019

[Click here for the 2018 Governor's Office of Disability Affairs Annual Report](#)
or find the report located on the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs webpage.

Employment First Grant

Through the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs, Louisiana has received an [Employment First Technical Assistance Grant from the US Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy](#) . One component of the grant is Capacity Building with two regions of the state and is aligned with the recommendation in our [Employment First Report](#) on page 19-20. One of the main criteria for selection of a region is the current level of cross-agency collaboration within the region. Since this is a limited TA grant, the selected two regions have already established cross agency collaboration and the goal is that the regions further develop collaboration in order to sustain and provide model practices for other regions of our state as well as other states.

The two regions that were selected are:

Region 3 –

Assumption, Lafourche, St. Charles, St. James, St. John, St. Mary, Terrebonne

Region 4 –

Acadia, Evangeline, Iberia, Lafayette, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, Vermilion.

The regions are a combination of LA Department of Health and LA Workforce Commission regions.

If you're interested in joining the collaboration, please complete this very short survey: [Employment First Regional Collaboration Membership](#) .

Membership is open to anyone interested in participating.

The collaborative regional teams should include but not limited to the following:

- Individuals and Families (including those with mental health diagnoses)
- Service Providers
- Business, Industry, and Labor
- Education
- Regional Government Offices

On those same pages (19-20) in the Employment First Report is a recommendation of a “Development of multi-agency guide.” The Guide can be found [here](#).

Also, the State As a Model Employer (SAME) initiative will be intertwined with the work of the regional collaboration. Here is the link to the [SAME Report](#).

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Statewide Independent Living Council

The Statewide Independent Living Council is currently recruiting applicants from Region 6 and 8 to fill 2 immediate vacancies. Region 6 includes 8 parishes in the central part of the state: Avoyelles, Catahoula, Concordia, Grant, LaSalle, Rapides, Vernon, and Winn. Region 8 includes 12 parishes in the northeast part of the state: Caldwell, East Carroll, Franklin, Jackson, Lincoln, Madison, Morehouse, Ouachita, Richland, Tensas, Union, and West Carroll.

Applicants must be one of the following:

- An individual with a disability; or
- An youth between the ages of 18 to 25 with a disability; or
- A parent or guardian of a child with a disability; or
- Must not work at a Center for Independent Living

Deadline for applications to be considered for this position is May 1, 2019.

Council members are appointed by the Governor and serve three-year terms. Interested persons should contact Jessica Lewis at 225-219-7552 or Jessica.lewis@la.gov to complete an application for membership prior to the deadline. More information about the Council can be found on <http://www.gov.louisiana.gov/page/silc>.

Governor's Advisory Council on Disability Affairs

GACDA has released its legislative recommendations for the 2019 Louisiana Legislative Regular Session, which will convene on Monday, April 8th. With this year's session being an odd-numbered year, the 2019 Louisiana Legislative Regular Session is generally limited to fiscal matters- although each legislator may file up to five non-fiscal bills.

GACDA has voted to support the following by making these recommendations:

- To fully fund Louisiana Rehabilitation Services: approximately an additional \$5.5 Million is needed to draw down the remaining \$20 Million of [Federal allocation](#).
- To increase the EPSTD PCS rate to the Children Choice IFS Rate of \$14/hr.
- To restore all supports and services for individuals with disabilities by restoring the provider rates to the rates in effect in 2008.
- To support using all but \$1 Million of the funds currently in the New Opportunities Waiver Fund to restore waiver provider and support coordination rates to 2008 levels for this fiscal year.
- To provide funding of \$600,000 to expand the [State Personal Assistance Services \(SPAS\)](#) program to serve individuals on the waiting list.

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- To discontinue family cost participation in EarlySteps for Fiscal Year 2020 without changing eligibility criteria for the program.
- To support the prohibition of discrimination against potential organ transplant recipients based on disability.
- To support a rate methodology for disability service providers.

Click [here](#) to visit the Louisiana legislative website.

Updates from the GACDA Committees are as follows:

Transportation Committee: Louisiana Rehabilitation Services discussed the idea of developing a non-emergency transportation model that will serve a wider population and working jointly with labor transit to enhance the availability of the transportation resources tied to the 5310 and 5311 vehicles. The Executive Counsel of DOTD agreed to require the participation of their department heads in future GACDA meetings and Emergency Management Disability and Aging Coalition (EMDAC) meetings to plan for transportation in times of emergency and improvement of infrastructure. Transportation committee would like to facilitate a unified plan between the local, state, and federal governmental entities.

Housing Committee: GACDA established the Housing Sub-Committee in an effort to increase housing opportunities for individuals with disabilities. At the first sub-committee meeting, The Executive Director of the Louisiana Housing Corporation (LHC), Keith Cunningham, provided a presentation of the progress and services offered from LHC. Mr. Cunningham invited committee members to participate in the First Annual Inclusive Housing Conference in April, and expressed LHC's commitment to participate in future GACDA meetings.

Accessibility Committee: Lighthouse Louisiana provided a presentation to the committee and members of the Louisiana legislature regarding the accessibility of the Legislative website. The presentation included an audit performed in real time using the JAWS system which revealed over 250 unique error codes on the website. Lighthouse Louisiana and the ADA Coordinator for the Louisiana Legislature will meet to discuss and resolve the various accessibility concerns in the near future. The members of the Accessibility Committee will meet with Mark Moses to discuss the various accessibility concerns of the Louisiana State Capitol. The Accessibility drafted a letter to advise media of the importance of having an ASL interpreter available and on screen during emergency broadcast.