

Governor's Office of Disability Affairs

Report to the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council

September 30, 2020

[Click here for Governor's Office of Disability Affairs Monthly Newsletters](#)
or find newsletters located on the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs webpage.

Governor's Office of Disability Affairs Conference

The Governor's Office of Disability Affairs (GODA) hosted its Annual Conference on July 23 and 24. The theme of the 2020 GODA Conference was "The 30th Year Anniversary of the ADA, in the Midst of a Pandemic". The participants of the conference were greeted with opening remarks by Governor John Bel Edwards.

In keeping with its tradition, GODA scheduled its Annual Conference in proximity to July 26, to celebrate the Anniversary of signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Due to social distancing measures, GODA decided not to cancel or postpone the conference, but instead, chose to host it virtually, and expand to a two-day format. Over 600 attendees participated in the interactive 2020 GODA Conference in real-time via Zoom and YouTube.

The two-day interactive GODA conference can be viewed on our YouTube channel by clicking [here](#).

Emergency Management Disability & Aging Coalition (EMDAC)

Since March, the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs has been leading the meetings of state agencies and disability stakeholders to address the needs of the disability community during the pandemic. EMDAC met weekly through August and September and was incredibly active in statewide Hurricane Laura response.

As Louisiana recovers from the impact of Hurricane Laura, in the midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic, The Emergency Management Disability & Aging Coalition (EMDAC) has created a [resource guide](#) for the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and their families in the event that assistance is needed.

Governor's Advisory Council on Disability Affairs (GACDA)

Lynette Fontenot will continue to serve as the Chairperson and Kathy Allen will serve as Vice-Chair. Five committees have been established within GACDA. The following individuals were appointed as GACDA Committee Co-Chairs:

- [Accessibility Committee](#): Andrew Kuyoro and Andrea Lowe
- [Education Committee](#): Amber Boykin and Robert Garcia
- [Housing Committee](#): Tarj Hamilton and Sharon Hennessey
- [Legislative Committee](#): Kelly Monroe and Chris Rodriguez
- [Transportation Committee](#): Beau Ellerbee and Mark Raymond, Jr.

GACDA also held its quarterly meetings via Zoom on September 15th and 16th.

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Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)

SILC held its quarterly meetings via Zoom on August 6th and 7th. Its three year plan was discussed, among other important topics.

SILC also welcomed the following appointees to the council:

- Shaely Cheramie of New Orleans
- Ester Marshall Jett of Alexandria
- Stephen Whitlow of Baton Rouge
- Jarrod Bottley of Waterproof
- Juon R. Wilson of Clinton
- Welma Jackson of Baton Rouge

These members will be involved in the execution of the new State Plan on Independent Living for FY 2020-2023.

State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) for EarlySteps

The State Interagency Coordinating Council hosted its quarterly meeting via Zoom on October 8th.

SICC also held a two-part, virtual orientation training for its members on September 16th & 17th, 2020. The training was conducted by [the Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education Center \(TAESE\)](#).

The first part of the training was designated for the SICC Executive Officers. A few of the topics included skills in agenda development, effective strategies to facilitate successful meetings, and Roberts Rules of Order. The second day of training was designated for all Council members. This part of the training focused on understanding the roles of the ICC regarding the Early Intervention Annual Performance Report, distinguishing between advisory, advocacy, and assistance, strategies for becoming a working council, and developing and refining a strategic plan.

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2020 Inclusive Art Contest and Governor's Outstanding Leadership in Disabilities (GOLD) Awards

The Governor's Office of Disability Affairs is proud to continue the tradition of hosting both the Governor's Outstanding Leadership in Disabilities (GOLD) Awards and the Inclusive Art Contest.

GODA will accept art entries that illustrate or describe ideas related to this year's theme: "Better Together: 30th Anniversary of the ADA." GODA is also accepting

written entries, such as poems, essays, speeches, etc. These will be limited to 300 words. All contestants are encouraged to conduct research and educate themselves on the importance of the Americans with Disabilities Act of (1990) while participating in this important contest.

Winners of this year's Art Contest will be celebrated before the GOLD Awards Ceremony, which will be held on December 8th at the Old State Capitol. The link for GOLD Award applications can be found [here](#) and the art submission application can be found [here](#). The deadline for both is November 2nd!

GODA Partners with Disability Organizations Across State to Provide Masks

The Governor's Office of Disability Affairs has partnered with Families Helping Families Centers and Independent Living Centers across the state to distribute face masks to their communities. If you need masks, contact the center nearest you. Click these links for a listing and contact information of [Families Helping Families Centers](#) and [Independent Living Centers](#).

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month

In recognition of the ongoing efforts to increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in our state, and to support the efforts nationwide, Governor John Bel Edwards has issued a Proclamation declaring October as Disability Employment Awareness Month in the State of Louisiana.

Read more about the Disability Employment Initiatives in Louisiana at [this link](#).