

**Waiver Request for
FHF Director not meeting the
DD Council Contract Standards of Operation**

The board of Families Helping Families of GBR has identified Dr. Marilyn Thornton as the candidate to serve as its executive director. This board recognizes the benefit of having this family-oriented Center led by an individual with direct experience with the diverse challenges faced by families and individuals with developmental disabilities.

However, this board has found that Dr. Thornton has extensive personal knowledge and experience in disability issues and believes she is the best candidate for the position of executive director. We request for the DD Council to consider granting a waiver of the requirement in the DD Council contract standards of operation for the FHF executive director being a family member of or an individual with developmental disabilities¹.

The candidate identified for the position of executive director is a:

- family member of a person with a disability²
- an individual with a disability

I, Kate Balfour McLean, AIA, NCARB, as the FHFGBR Chairman of the Board verify that the above statement is true and have on file copies of the following documentation to verify this as true: (Check all that apply)

- Educational Multi-disciplinary Evaluation indicating eligibility for special education services
 - Medical evaluation and diagnosis of a disability
 - Social Security eligibility for a disability
 - Medicaid eligibility for a disability
 - Louisiana Rehabilitation Services eligibility for a disability
 - Other: The family member listed above is deceased but our ED was his direct caregiver for
years.
- The board would like to offer the attached justification for the decision to select the candidate. Included in the justification are the unique and exceptional qualifications of this individual; the availability of persons meeting the DD Council contract qualifications and the reason(s) for selecting the proposed candidate.

This request is submitted to the Executive Committee of the DD Council for consideration of a waiver to this FHF Center.

Kate B. McLean
Kate Balfour McLean, AIA, NCARB
Chairman of the Board, FHFGBR

02 July 2021

Date

¹ Developmental Disability as defined by Louisiana R.S. 28:751 (2).

² Disability as defined by Louisiana R.S. 51:2232 (11).



It's who we are. It's what we do.

"Access Inclusion. Empower Life"

Our Executive Director

Please allow this notice to inform the Executive Committee of the La Developmental Disabilities Council of our recent hiring of Dr. Marilyn Thornton as the Executive Director of Families Helping Families Greater Baton Rouge. (Attached is a copy of the Press Release). Please be aware, the FHFGGBR Board of Directors went through a very long and careful process in selecting and hiring the best candidate for the position of Executive Director of this Center after a nation-wide search. Dr. Thornton was indeed a strategic choice for our Center. The wealth of knowledge, skills, diversity of expertise, along with her maturity, and compassion for the families we serve is what we need at Families Helping Families Greater Baton Rouge. We are very pleased with the qualifications and capability of Dr. Thornton to lead our Center into the future. We are extremely fortunate that Dr. Thornton surfaced as the strongest candidate for this position.

We have absolute confidence in Dr. Thornton's ability to fulfill the Executive Directors' Legislative Advocacy responsibilities and participation required as a part of our contract with the LA Developmental Disabilities Council. She has a long history with the community of individuals with disabilities. For many years Dr. Thornton was the direct caregiver of an immediate family member (brother) who was physically disabled. During law school she studied the rights of people with disabilities as a foundation to pursue legal advocacy on behalf of this population. Little did she know she would become such an advocate for her very own family member. We are confident of her sincere compassion for the families we serve. Keep in mind, at Families Helping Families of Greater Baton Rouge, we serve people with ALL disabilities, not just developmental disabilities. Dr. Thornton's direct experience as a caregiver of a family member with MS and other disabilities lends her a world of experience that, along with her other qualifications, lead her to stand out heads and shoulders above the other candidates for the ED position.

Although we have several staff members, including Kara Shupe, who are parents of individuals with developmental disabilities and are qualified, experienced and proven to be capable of fulfilling the peer-to-peer support responsibilities, we would like to continue the designation of Kara Shupe at this position. Kara has very capably fulfilled the peer-to-peer support responsibility on behalf of FHFGGBR over the past year and shall therefore continue to provide this support under the supervision of Dr. Thornton. We have operated under this waiver agreement for the past year. We request the extension of this agreement and consideration for Dr. Thornton as our Executive Director.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me. We thank you in advance for your favorable response to this request.

 FHFGGBR Board of Directors, Chairperson 02 July 2021

Kate Balfour McLean

Title

Date

Enclosure: Press Release

Press Release for Immediate Release

Families Helping Families Greater Baton Rouge Welcomes New Executive Director



The Board of Directors of Families Helping Families Greater Baton Rouge (FHFGBR) is pleased to announce Dr. Marilyn W. Thornton as its new Executive Director. The Board selected Dr. Marilyn after an extensive, nation-wide search. She started her role as Executive Director on 17 May 2021.

A native of Louisiana with deep roots in this community, Dr. Marilyn returned to Louisiana after spending many years on the East Coast. She acquired degrees from Howard University (BS), University of North Carolina (MA), and Georgetown University Law Center (JD). Dr. Marilyn brings decades of leadership experience in which she has demonstrated a record of success, vision, collaboration, and development of strong teams both in the non-profit and governmental sectors. She has traveled extensively to third world countries in Africa, South America, and the Caribbean for ministry and humanitarian work.

“We are exceptionally pleased that Dr. Marilyn has taken on this leadership role. Her passion and commitment to our cause coupled with her knowledge of our work will enable her to plan more effectively for the future, expand our programs, and introduce innovative approaches to the services we offer. We are greatly confident her diverse background, knowledge and years of experience working with non-profit organizations focused on human service issues makes her well positioned to lead us going forward.” Kate McLean, Board Chair.

Dr. Marilyn expresses her sincere gratitude for this opportunity to work with FHFGBR’s Staff Specialists in partnership with the dedicated Board, Volunteers, Families served, Donors and State Program/Contract Officers.

Finally, the Board extends its deep appreciation to the Staff for their continued dedication and hard work during this transition. Thank you to the executive search firm and Board Members for their participation in this process and decision making. We look forward to many more years serving all parishes within Region II Families Helping Families Greater Baton Rouge. Let us all welcome Dr. Marilyn Thornton as the Executive Director of FHFGBR.