

Governor's Office of Disability Affairs

Report to the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council

October 2022

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2022 GOLD Awards and Inclusive Arts Contest

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

The [GOLD Awards](#) recognizes extraordinary people and organizations who have contributed their time and talents to benefit the lives of people with disabilities in Louisiana. The award categories are:

- Distinguished Merit Award
- Patsy Barrett Memorial Award
- Ken Vince Memorial Award
- April Dunn Youth of the Year
- Educator of the Year
- Family of the Year
- Volunteer of the Year
- Employer of the Year
- Service Provider of the Year
- Direct Support Professional of the Year
- Veteran of the Year
- Service Animal of the Year
- Elected Official of the Year
- Public Servant of the Year



The [Inclusive Art Contest](#) enables participants to increase awareness of the importance of inclusion in today's society through artistic expression. Entries should illustrate or describe ideas related to this year's theme: "Show Your True Colors and Abilities" The Inclusive Art Contest is open to any resident of Louisiana, with and without disabilities of any age. A medal and special recognition from Governor John Bel Edwards will be presented to the winners.

The nomination form for the 2022 GOLD Awards can be found at <https://bit.ly/GOLDnomination>. The deadline for submissions for both the 2022 GOLD Awards and Inclusive Art Contest is October 31st!

Statewide Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC)

The SICC met on July 14, 2022. The council received a report from Andy Gromm pertaining to the Louisiana EarlySteps Child Find Project. Through this project, Louisiana was awarded a grant through Prizker Children's initiative with the goal of increasing the number of infants and toddlers receiving quality developmental services. In addition to Gromm's report, April Hearon provided updates on the Service Delivery Supports Family Priorities. They have met three times this quarter, finalizing all home visiting fidelity tools used for observation. Additionally, there has been training sessions with regional coordinators.

Emergency Management Disability and Aging Coalition (EMDAC)

[The Louisiana Emergency Management Disability and Aging Coalition](#) (EMDAC) has updated the Louisiana Guide to Supports & Services for Individuals with Disabilities, Elders and Their Families Affected by Disasters. This guide provides the description and contact information of state agencies, education services, communication, transportation, advocacy and support groups, and disability specific organizations. To view this guide, click this [link](#).

Voting Accessibility (HCR14 Task Force)

[HCR14 of the 2022 Legislative Session](#) created a task force on accessible voting for people with disabilities. The task force will be making recommendations to the Secretary of State on the most accessible type of voting machine, and how to make the entire voting experience more accessible to people with disabilities. The first meeting was held on 09/27/22 and the second meeting was held on 10/10/22. The next meeting is scheduled to be held 01/09/23.

Virtual Participation in Public Meetings (SR147 Task Force)

[SR147 of the 2022 Legislative Session](#) created a task force on virtual participation in hybrid meetings. SR147 required one task force member to be a member

of the disability community, as virtual participation greatly increases accessibility. This task force had its first meeting on 9/13/22. It was suggested that, at upcoming meetings, discussion should pertain best practices for hybrid meetings and virtual participation as a disability accommodation. The next meeting date is not yet scheduled, but we encourage the disability community to participate in these meetings. It was also mentioned that SR147 members may sit in on a Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council (LaDDC) meeting to observe how they successfully conduct hybrid meetings.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)

Gov. John Bel Edwards has proclaimed October as "Disability Employment Awareness Month" in Louisiana. Every October, [National Disability Employment Awareness Month](#) (NDEAM) celebrates the contributions of America's workers with disabilities past and present and showcases supportive, inclusive employment policies and practices. In recognition of the important role people with disabilities play in a diverse and inclusive American workforce, the theme for National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) 2022 will be "Disability: Part of the Equity Equation." ODEP also has a ["31 Days of NDEAM"](#) calendar with daily activity ideas as well as specific ideas for [disability-related organizations](#) and [employers](#).

Welcoming Ke'Andria Henry, Assistant Director!

Ke'Andria "K.J." Henry is now the Assistant Director of the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs. Previously serving as a Constituent Services Representative for the Governor's Office, she has been with this administration since January 2016. K.J. has served as an Associate Member on the John Bel Edwards, Governor-Elect Transition Team, the regional field director during Governor Edwards' 2015 campaign, and field organizer with the Louisiana Democratic Party. K.J. has great passion for advocating and serving as a liaison for the people of Louisiana in order to improve their overall quality of life.