

Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council
Self-Determination and Community Inclusion Committee Meeting Summary
Wednesday, July 19, 2023
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

You can watch the meeting here: <https://www.youtube.com/user/LADDCouncil/videos>

View [meeting transcript](#).

Members Present: Cheri Crain, Julie F. Hagan, Jill Hano, Angela Harmon, Tory Rocca, Brooked Stewart

Members Absent: Libby Airhart, Patti Barovechio, Kim Basile, Roslyn Hymel

Staff: Brenton Andrus, Rekeesha Branch, Stephanie Carmona, Amy Deaville, Ebony Haven

Others Present: Nicole Flores, Aisha Johnson, Bambi Polotzola, Lenora Robinson (proxy for Patti Barovechio), Erik Taylor, Renoda Washington, Lauren Womack

Brooke Stewart called the meeting to order at 1:02 PM. A quorum was established.

Approval of the [January Meeting Summary](#) passed by unanimous consent.

Families Helping Families New Orleans

The committee received an update on the recent [audit](#) that was completed on Families Helping Families of New Orleans (FHF NOLA) which found multiple concerns spanning the past two fiscal years:

- Bank account reconciliations not being completed regularly and accurately
- Operating on lines of credit at or near the limit for much of the year
- Overdraft fees being charged, many due to payroll being drafted from an account with insufficient funds
- Lack of supporting documentation on hand (i.e. invoices and grant documentation)
- Receivables not being tracked which led to invoices going unpaid
- Insufficient methods for tracking and recording employee receivables (i.e. loans, pay advances, etc.)
- Payroll taxes for an employee went unpaid for a year
- Failure to submit an annual financial report to the legislative auditor within six months of year-end

When Council staff received the audit, Executive Director Amy Deaville reached out to the Board President by phone and followed up with a letter requesting specific plans of action to address the concerns noted in the audit. The letter and corrective action can be found [here](#).

FHF NOLA Executive Director Aisha Johnson attended the meeting to discuss with members the audit and what steps the Center has and will take to address concerns. She also provided the members with additional handouts which can be found [here](#). Actions taken include, but are not limited to:

- Financial reconciliations will be handled by a newly hired bookkeeping firm
- Plan to pay off lines of credit by December 2023
- Employee advances policy has been eliminated
- Dedicated board committee to review and analyze ongoing financial stability of Center
- Employee will be responsible for paying back all unpaid payroll taxes
- Hiring of a fiscal auditor familiar with non-profit auditing procedure
- Succession planning with the Assistant Director to ensure all Executive Director responsibilities are covered during absences

Ms. Johnson stated these issues over the past two years were related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Center not adjusting its operations to accommodate for a fully virtual working environment effectively. She anticipates the 2023 audit, which she is already preparing for, will have significantly improved results. She also cited personal reasons which prevent her from being fully present in her duties.

With regard to the email from 20 concerned parents (included in corrective action plan), Ms. Johnson stated she has never had an issue like this arise in her 13 years at the Center and felt this complaint may have stemmed from a former disgruntled employee. She indicated she and the board have responded to the 20 concerned parents via email to address the concerns but have not received a response. She also stated the Center's complaint procedure has been added to the Center's website.

While Ms. Johnson did discuss changes being implemented to address concerns, the committee still expressed concerns about the audit and management.

A motion by Julie Hagan, second by Cheri Crain for the committee to recommend the Council continue its contract with Families Helping Families of New Orleans at its current funding level but require the following be provided:

- Quarterly report submitted to the Self-Determination and Community Inclusion Committee and Council staff detailing the concerns noted in their Fiscal Year 2021 and 2022 audit and actions taken to address and mitigate those concerns. Data to support those changes should also be included such as copies of updated policies and procedures, findings when completing updated analyses as recommended in the audit, any trends identified, etc.
- Leadership assessment to determine current needs within management, including all directors, assistant directors and supervisors, and a detailed and specific plan of the actions that are being taken to address all identified needs.

and will offer this recommendation to the full Council for consideration. No objections or abstentions.

Non-Contractual Activities

Julie Hagan shared multiple updates on behalf of the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) and the Bureau of Health Services and Financing (Medicaid). Additional information can be found in Ms. Hagan's [SD/CI report](#).

Ms. Hagan shared a detailed update on the implementation of [Act 421 Children's Medicaid Option or TEFRA](#). As of 5/26/23, over 2,665 applications received with 43% approved. Over 1,000 applications have been denied, a majority of which were due to applicants failing to respond to requests from the department.

A few other topics shared include:

- No reductions to OCDD budget for the upcoming fiscal year
- Multiple pieces of legislation that impact the department
- Training is occurring for Support Coordinators, Direct Service Providers and Self-Direction Employers to ensure knowledge of post public health emergency exceptions and flexibilities
- Training for family members as paid caregivers should be available in November
- Updates on how the department is using American Rescue Plan Act funds which need to be spent by March 2025.

Contractual Activities

The committee received multiple updates on contractual activities including Partners in Policymaking (PiP), LaCAN, Families Helping Families Resource Centers (FHF) and other initiatives of the Council that began with the [Fiscal Year 2023 Action Plan](#). Additional information about these activities can be found in the Council's quarterly Status of Planned Activities Report under goals one and two in addition to reports linked in the committee's agenda.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:01 PM by unanimous consent.