

**Office of Public Health (OPH) Quarterly Report to the Developmental Disabilities Council**  
Bureau of Family Health (BFH)  
January 5, 2024

**Children’s Special Health Services (CSHS)** works to ensure that children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN) in Louisiana have access to health care services designed to minimize their disabilities and maximize their probabilities of enjoying independent and self-sufficient lives.

- [Children’s Special Healthcare Services](#) (CSHS) - Clinical Services offers direct care clinics for CYSHCNs in all regions, except 1 and 7, to meet specialty care needs in provider shortage areas. CSHS-Clinical Services (Genetics, Sickle Cell, and subspecialty clinics) transitioned to a hybrid appointment schedule. Decisions regarding in-person vs telehealth appointment visits are now being made at the Regional level depending upon staffing capacity, the infection positivity rate, and the ability to provide services safely.
- CSHS-Clinical Services Social Workers continue to provide behavioral health assessments to determine if families are in need of outpatient behavioral health referrals, as well as providing care coordination, youth health transition, support and resources.
- CSHS-Clinical Services also provides nutritional services in Regions 2 and 6 and hopes to expand to other Regions as the need dictates.
- Any family of a child/youth with a special health need that requires peer support, system navigation, or resource linkage is referred to Families Helping Families network in their respective region or the Family Resource Center. CSHS-Clinical services also refers to other community-based organizations as appropriate.

**CSHS Transportation Assistance Program** provides needed transportation assistance for eligible families to attend medical appointments/procedures. Families must seek transportation assistance through their MCO before requesting assistance through CSHS. Families may contact the Family Resource Center ([BFH-FamilyResourceCenter@la.gov](mailto:BFH-FamilyResourceCenter@la.gov) ) or their local [Families Helping Families](#) Center for more information.

<b>Transportation Assistance Program</b>	
October 2023-December 2023	
3 stipends issued	Stipend expenditures \$688.54

**BFH-Family Resource Center (FRC)** is a statewide virtual center designed to ensure CYSHCN, their families, and health care providers in Louisiana have access to resource and referral services. The [BFH-Family Resource Center](#) provides community referrals, health/education transition supports, and system navigation services. Additionally, the FRC provides outreach to families of children identified through the Louisiana Birth Defects Monitoring Network to assist in linking to appropriate medical, educational, public health and peer support resources available in their region. For resource and referral services contact the FRC team via phone (504) 896-1340 or email [BFH-FamilyResourceCenter@la.gov](mailto:BFH-FamilyResourceCenter@la.gov). Staff are available Monday-Friday 8 am-4pm. Non-English-speaking families can text their name, preferred language, and date/time that they are available between 8am-4:00pm to (504) 214-1785 or (504) 407-4601. Someone will respond in their preferred language.

<b>Family Resource Center</b> October-December 2023	
New Referrals	189
Total number of families engaged	101
Total number of outreach efforts (contact attempts to reach referred families)	417
Count of Total Resource Needs Identified	587

**Families Helping Families (FHF) – BFH Project** aims to build a coordinated and family-centric statewide CYSCHN resource and referral service system utilizing the collaborative partnership between BFH-Family Resource Center and FHF Networks. FHF networks are Louisiana’s statewide parent-to-parent support organization serving individuals with disabilities and children/youth with special health care needs and their families. As part of this collaboration, FHF offers annual pediatric provider trainings to strengthen the healthcare workforce to care for children and youth with special health needs. On February 5, 2024, Region 6 Families Helping Families will host a provider training on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and the Impact of Childhood Trauma. Nurse and Social Work continuing education credit will be provided, interested participants can register here for the event <https://bit.ly/3NA1r72>. For questions about the training, contact Melissa Harrison at [Mharrisonfhf6@gmail.com](mailto:Mharrisonfhf6@gmail.com).

**Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI)** The Louisiana Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (LA EHDI) program supports coordinated systems of care that ensure families of babies and children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing (DHH) receive appropriate and timely services. All newborns should be screened no later than 1 month of age, preferably prior to hospital discharge; for those who do not pass screening, audiologic diagnosis should be completed by 3 months of age; if hearing loss is confirmed, appropriate intervention services should be received no later than 6 months of age, inclusive of opportunities for family-to-family support.

- EHDI Regional Stakeholder Collaborative: includes parents of children who are DHH, hospital newborn hearing screening personnel, pediatric audiologists, EarlySteps (Part C) providers, Parent Pupil Education Program (PPEP) DHH teachers, and Hands & Voices/Guide By Your Side Parent and Deaf Guides, to discuss regional progress on EHDI’s 1-3-6 goals and strategize improvements.
- *Complete* - **Region 2** - November 3, 2023 at Baton Rouge General - Mid-City
- *Upcoming* - **Region 4** - February 16, 2024 at Our Lady of Lourdes - Lafayette
- Language Assessment project: LA EHDI applied for, and was awarded one of 20 supplemental awards to strengthen the capacity of the program to ensure that families receive the services they need to address language acquisition and other developmental milestones through planning, partnership development, and capacity improvements. LA EHDI developed a plan to build capacity to track and assess language acquisition and other developmental milestones beginning at age 2-3 years old, and working down, for all children identified as D/HH in the state. After the six month assessment period is complete, LA EHDI plans to further engage in strategic partnerships with stakeholders to improve language outcomes. Eventually, LA EHDI will begin analyzing data on

language acquisition and other developmental milestones among children based on relevant state populations, identify disparities, and proactively search for ways to address.

- Advisory Council for the Early Identification of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Infants:  
Open to the public: Friday, January 26, 2024, 12:00-2:30pm  
Bienville Building, Room 118  
628 North 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Baton Rouge
- More information, visit us on the [web](#) or email us at [laehdi@la.gov](mailto:laehdi@la.gov)

Louisiana Hands & Voices is the lead family based organization for the LA EHDI program. Guide by Your Side (GBYS) is a program from LA H&V that provides support and unbiased information from trained Parent Guides to families of newly identified children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Support is also available in the form of Deaf or Hard of Hearing (D/HH) Guides who have also received training. H&V advocates for families, shares information, and creates space and time for people to come together and help one another. *H&V knows that families use many different ways to communicate with their children who are D/HH. It doesn't matter which mode of communication a family uses, H&V believes that what works for a child and their family is what makes the choice right.*

- Family event: Winter Party on December 9, 2023. More than 85 attended!
- Community: Later, Gator Virtual 5K December 29, 2023-January 1, 2024
- Parent Connects: hosted the first Thursday of every month for parents whose children are identified as deaf or hard of hearing (via Zoom)
- More information? Facebook at “Louisiana Hands and Voices” or on the web at <https://www.lahandsandvoices.org/>

**Genetic Diseases Program** operates a comprehensive statewide newborn heel stick screening (NBS) program meeting national standards as well as ensuring access to genetic evaluation and counseling to residents of Louisiana. The [Genetics Program](#) also operates the [Sickle Cell Disease \(SCD\) Program](#), which provides resources and information on how individuals diagnosed with sickle cell can receive assistance and care through the Sickle Cell Foundations and Clinics around the state.

**Louisiana Birth Defects Monitoring Network (LBDMN)** tracks the occurrence of over 70 structural, functional, and genetic birth defects in Louisiana residents. This work helps to identify environmental conditions, pharmaceutical side effects, or behavioral risk factors threatening Louisiana's newborns. By case definition, we include children diagnosed prior to their third birthday. Overall prevalence of birth defects per 10,000 live births in Louisiana is 2.6%. LBDMN staff conduct active surveillance of birth defects in children born in Louisiana. According to the CDC, the US average is about 3% of all babies born each year. Among Louisiana children with birth defects, cardiovascular system defects (about 63%) were the most common. Complete findings are in the [LBDMN 2022 Annual Report](#) to the legislature. Since 2022, LBDMN identified 2,514 children born in 2020 – 2023 who may benefit from a referral needs assessment. Currently, we are referring children under 2 years old for needs assessment/resource services.

**Louisiana Commission for the Deaf (LCD)** functions as the principal state program that provides information and services to and for individuals who are Deaf, DeafBlind, or hard of hearing on behalf of the State of Louisiana.

Board News:

- LCD Board has voted to create a DeafBlind advisory council. If you know anyone who may be interested in joining, please have them contact [LCD@la.gov](mailto:LCD@la.gov)

Other News:

- If your organization is interested in trainings, professional development, etc. related to Deaf sensitivity, culture, or services for d/Deaf, DeafBlind or hard of hearing people (DDBHH), please reach out to [LCD@la.gov](mailto:LCD@la.gov)
- LCD is charged, per Act 128 of the 2022 Regular Legislative Session, to establish minimum standards for American Sign Language Interpreters working in Louisiana. LCD intends to submit a Notice of Intent in February 2024. To learn more or engage with this work, please see [LCD board website](#).

Next LCD public meeting Friday, January 19, 2024 from 9am-1pm at the Louisiana State Capitol. More information on the LCD please click [here](#).

**BFH Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)** is a no-cost, voluntary program that provides family support and coaching to improve the health and well-being of pregnant women and parenting families with young children. Families are paired with registered nurses or certified parent educators who provide personalized education, guidance, and referrals to services to empower families to reach their goals. Nurses and Parent Educators work with families in their homes or the family's preferred location. MIECHV implements two evidenced-based, home visiting models- Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) and Parents as Teachers (PAT).

Services provided to participating families include:

- Health education and coaching
- Support in building positive parenting skills and caregiving confidence
- Help setting and reaching personal goals, such as returning to school or work
- Connection and referrals to services and community resources

Benefits of program participation include:

- Improved economic self-sufficiency
- Early identification of developmental delays
- Improved child health and development

Every three years MIECHV awardees are required to provide information to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) demonstrating that our programs result in improvement for eligible families in at least four out of six benchmark areas. We are very proud to report that Louisiana MIECHV has demonstrated improvements in six out of six benchmark areas this year. Families enrolled in MIECHV services experienced reductions in the preterm birth rate, reductions in the child injury rate, and reductions in child maltreatment. Families

enrolled also experienced increases in the following; depression screening and referral, well child visits, tobacco cessation, safe sleep practices, intimate partner violence screenings, continuity of insurance coverage, primary caregiver education, developmental screenings and referrals, early language and literacy, and parent child interactions. We are excited about these results and honored to continue our work in supporting families in a way that allows us to realize these positive outcomes.

For more information about Louisiana MIECHV's NFP and PAT services, including how to get in touch with a home visitor near you, you can reach out to [Susannah.Boudreaux@la.gov](mailto:Susannah.Boudreaux@la.gov) or visit <https://partnersforfamilyhealth.org/family-support-coaching-services/>.

**BFH Adolescent School Health Program (ASHP)** has 57 ASHP-certified School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) across the state. These health centers are located in public and charter schools and offer comprehensive, primary, and preventive physical and mental health services for students enrolled in the school that houses the SBHC and surrounding schools. Information on the LDH Adolescent School Health Program website can be found [here](#).

**Louisiana Provider to Provider Consultation Line (PPCL)** is a no-cost provider-to-provider telephone consultation and education program to help pediatric and perinatal health care providers address their patients' behavioral and mental health needs. The program aims to increase the capacity to screen, diagnose, treat, and refer patients to supportive services by integrating behavioral health into the pediatric primary care setting and connecting providers to mental health consultants and psychiatrists.

How PPCL Works:

Any pediatric and/or perinatal provider who has behavioral health related question can call PPCL at (833) 721-2881 or request a consult using [this form](#). PPCL's mental health team, which includes licensed mental health professionals and psychiatrists, can provide education and support on questions regarding mental health diagnoses, medications, and psychotherapy interventions for a wide range of behavioral health needs (e.g. mental health care guides, screening forms) and also provide information about mental health and other community resources that may be of benefit to the patient. PPCL also provides training and information on pediatric and perinatal behavioral health topics and issues through its TeleECHO series, webinars, in-person training events, and [website](#). **While not required to use PPCL services, providers are strongly encouraged to register for PPCL [here](#).** For more info on the Provider-to-Provider Consultation Line click [here](#).

**Developmental Screening Initiative** hosts an evidence-based [Developmental Screening Toolkit](#) to help medical providers integrate developmental screening services into their day-to-day practice. The virtual toolkit uses a quality improvement framework, which allows providers to systematically improve the way health care is delivered to the families they serve. It contains systematic information contained in webpages, instructional videos, and downloadable worksheets. [Customized training and technical assistance](#) for implementation of developmental screening services is available at no cost to health provider practices through the Title V initiative. The Bureau of Family Health completed a biennial review of the Louisiana Developmental Screening Guidelines in Q2 and will publish outcomes of the review on the LDH

Developmental Screening webpages in February 2024. For information on the Developmental Screening Initiative and provider training requests, contact Dr. Tresa Northington at [Tresa.Northington@la.gov](mailto:Tresa.Northington@la.gov).

Additionally, BFH publishes a complementary **Care Coordination Toolkit** to support providers with building effective/efficient referral processes to ensure high quality referrals when risk is identified through screening services. The [Care Coordination Toolkit](#) follows the same quality improvement framework as the Developmental Screening Toolkit. For support with care coordination service implementation, contact [Kaylee.Hall@la.gov](mailto:Kaylee.Hall@la.gov) or [Tiffany.Williams@la.gov](mailto:Tiffany.Williams@la.gov).

**PartnersForFamilyHealth.org Data Center** disseminates products for public health practitioners, community organizations, policy makers, and researchers to guide programs and inform policy decisions. BFH has a dedicated Data to Action Team that collects, analyzes, interprets, and prepares data dissemination products. [Here](#) you can find reports and fact sheets on birth outcomes, mortality and injury indicators analyzed at a state, regional and parish level as well as links to websites with additional, relevant data.

**Young Child Wellness Collaborative (YCWC)** is a cross-agency advisory council that provides leadership and informs priorities/strategic planning across the continuum of supports/services within Louisiana's Early Childhood System. The YCWC serves as the State-Level advisory team for the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant, Project SOAR (Screen Often and Accurately Refer). The YCWC meets every other month on the second Tuesday, the next convening is February 13, 2024. The collaborative includes representation from BFH, EarlySteps, the Office of Behavioral Health (OBH), Medicaid, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), the Louisiana Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS), LSU Human Development Center, Head Start, EarlySteps, the Louisiana Partnership for Children and Families, the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children, and the Louisiana chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics as well as family and health providers. The YCWC is currently recruiting pediatric/perinatal health care providers and pregnant/parenting family leaders interested in participating and informing early childhood systems improvement. If you or someone you know may be interested in joining the collaborative, please contact [Patti.Barovechio@la.gov](mailto:Patti.Barovechio@la.gov) or [Iman.Johnson@la.gov](mailto:Iman.Johnson@la.gov) for more information.