

Executive Director's Report April 17-18, 2023 Council Meeting

Budget

- The budget report with expenditures through March 2024 is included in the packet.

National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD)

- The Board of Directors of NACDD announced Jill Jacobs as NACDD's next Executive Director in a [March Press Release](#). Jacobs will leave her post as Commissioner of the Administration on Disabilities (AoD) under the US Administration for Community Living (ACL), a Presidential appointment that she has held since early 2022. Jacobs will step into her new role at NACDD on April 21, 2024.

Appropriations

- On March 23rd, President Biden signed the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act 2024, which provides funding through September 30, 2024 for projects and activities of departments and agencies of the federal government.
- NACDD also assisted Reps. Lisa Blunt-Rochester and Marcus Molinaro with circulating a [letter to the Appropriations Committee](#) to support our funding request for DD Act programs. They included a "dear colleague" letter to members of Congress for sign-ons in support of DD Councils and DD Act programs that impact our state and the nation.

Membership Update

- Reece Hoyt was selected to replace Christinna Beckett as the institutional/facility seat member. Her appointment to the Council by the Governor is still pending.
- Mike Billings was appointed on 10/7/2023 to fill a vacancy due to resignation. The term expired on 2/28/2024 and according to the Council's bylaws: "Vacancies shall be filled as they occur, from nominations obtained from the general public and Council members. Their terms shall be for the unexpired term of membership. If the unexpired term of membership is less than one-and-a-half years, the Council member is eligible to be reappointed for a consecutive term of membership." This reappointment by the Governor is pending.

Ad Hoc Committees

- The Planning Ad Hoc Committee met on March 11th to develop recommendations for FFY 2025 plan activities. These will be considered by the full Council at the April meeting and are linked on the agenda.

Staff Professional Development

- I attended NACDD New Executive Director (ED) orientation and training on March 6th. NACDD plans to host a series of trainings for new EDs and will announce dates for upcoming trainings in the near future. They will also host a new ED full training at the NACDD conference in July 2024.

LaCAN

- Nine Regional Legislative Roundtables were held across the state with a total of 389 participants including 9 legislators, legislative assistants and/or Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) members participating. Nine Council members attended as well. Council staff presented information on the Council's advocacy agenda.

- Our LaCAN Leaders are making legislative visits with LaCAN members throughout the middle of legislative session which began on March 11th and is scheduled to end on June 10th. Leaders are also supporting members in providing testimony during key committee meetings.

Advocacy Activities and Provision of Information

Community Supports

- Submitted FY 2025 Appropriations Survey to ACL January 10th to highlight the accomplishments of the FY2023 Action Plan and illustrate the impact of the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council (LaDDC). NACDD shared this information with Congress to advocate for continued funding.
- Advocated with NACDD and other State DD Councils for the Census Bureau to consider not making any modifications to the disability questions in its American Community Survey for 2025 because it would severely undercount the disability population and undermine the diligent efforts of disability rights activists and federal agencies who have worked collaboratively to address flawed data on disability prevalence in our country. Read the NACDD and State Councils comment [here](#), and read the full Census Bureau statement [here](#).
- Advocated and provided information to Rep. Lyons (House Appropriations) and LDH on the impact of additional funding the FHF Centers have received the last three years.
- Provided information on the DD Council and the History of Act 378, its guiding principles and the purpose of the program to the 2024 Partners in Policymaking Class.

Education

- The Council sent a [letter to the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education \(BESE\) and the State Superintendent](#) on January 10th to reconsider the language that is included in [Act 392 of the 2023 Legislative Session](#) which allows convicted felons inside of classrooms with students especially students with disabilities. Met with LDOE and advocated with the Chair. LDOE staff stated there are already policies to ensure that only teachers with certain felonies would be allowed to appeal and receive teaching certification, and there is a list of “Never-Evers” which would not allow a teacher to appeal. Additionally, starting January 2025, new educators have to have a cleared background check before getting a teaching certification.
- Advocated with LDOE that the intent of [Act 393 of the 2023 Legislative Session](#) was to allow parents/caregivers that sit on advisory councils within LDOE that primarily focus on issues dealing with disabilities, be allowed to attend meetings virtually despite the law not specifically including the language in the bill.
- Discussed the [Governor’s Executive Order](#) and [AA#4](#) to veto BESE’s new policy for a LEAP Appeals Process with Representative Pat Moore on January 12th. Advocated for students with disabilities outside of the April Dunn Act and shared data on the number/percentage of students who do not pass the End of Course (EOC) test in Louisiana for grades 3-8 and high school level with Rep. Moore to share during an upcoming meeting with Governor Landry and other legislators
- Advocated and provided information to House Education committee on [HB708](#) by Rep. Freiberg and the potential impact if the requirements that charter schools serve their fair share of students with disabilities and also those economically disadvantaged are removed
- Provided information to Rep. Knox on Education Savings Accounts/Scholarships (ESAs) and the potential impacts to students with disabilities and shared [AA#10](#).
- Advocated and provided information to the House Education committee on [HB143](#) by Rep. Bacala which would put in place monitoring and accountability measures to ensure

at a minimum 70% of the city, parish, or local public school system or other public school general fund expenditures are in the areas of instruction and school administration at the school building level. Also provided information on [HB153](#) by Rep. Bacala which includes training for school board members on special education, annual reporting by Superintendents and Heads of Charter Schools on specific Special Education data to local Special Education Advisory Councils (SEACs), increasing time for Due Process claims from 1 to 2 years and installing cameras in special education classrooms upon parental request within 90 days of the request.

General

- Shared information on the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) hosting a Self-Advocacy Committee (SAC) meeting inviting self-advocate Council members
- Provided information through LaDDC News on the following:
 - [Council's 2024 Legislative Agenda](#), January 4, 2024
 - [2024 Legislative Roundtables](#), January 25, 2024
 - [Bayou Land Families Helping Families: Hiring New Executive Director](#), February 2, 2024
 - [Upcoming Emergency Preparedness and Disability Awareness Training](#), March 6, 2024
 - [Making a Difference through Advocacy in Education and Employment Training Opportunity](#), March 14, 2024
 - [OCDD and START hosting Self-Advocate Meeting](#), March 27, 2024
- Provided information through Facebook and Twitter on various issues of interest to people with developmental disabilities and their families.
 - Most notably was the Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month campaign when we posted throughout March to raise awareness of people with developmental disabilities.

Meetings Attended by Council Staff

Brenton Andrus:

Time Period: January - March

Arc of LA Legislative Meeting	February 1, 2024
LaCAN Leader Call	February 1, 2024
Statewide Advisory Council Meeting	February 7, 2024
Region 2 Legislative Roundtable	February 8, 2024
Region 8 Legislative Roundtable	February 16, 2024
Meeting with CAAN	February 19, 2024
Regions 1/10 Legislative Roundtable	February 22, 2024
Region 3 Legislative Roundtable	February 23, 2024
Region 9 Legislative Roundtable	February 28, 2024
Region 4 Legislative Roundtable	February 29, 2024
Region 7 Legislative Roundtable	March 4, 2024
BESE Meeting	March 5, 2024
Region 6 Legislative Roundtable	March 7, 2024
LaDDC Planning Meeting	March 11, 2024
House Appropriations Committee Meeting	March 12, 2024
State Advisory Council Meeting	March 13, 2024
GACDA Education and Legislative Meetings	March 15, 2024
House Appropriations Public Testimony	March 20, 2024

Arc of LA Legislative Meeting

Attended a meeting with Arc of Louisiana on February 1, 2024 to receive a brief presentation and overview of the Arc's legislative agenda for the 2024 Regular Legislative Session. Others present included representatives from Supported Living, Community Provider Association, and the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs.

LaCAN Monthly Leader Call

Participated in the monthly LaCAN Leader call on February 1, 2024 with regional LaCAN Leaders and Families Helping Families directors. This call focused on preparations for upcoming advocacy activities such as roundtables and legislative visits.

OCDD State Advisory Committee (SAC)

Attended the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) State Advisory Committee meeting on February 7, 2024. Multiple updates were shared by the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities as well as the election of new officers.

Legislative Roundtables

Attended LaCAN Legislative Roundtables throughout February and March to present to the various regions of the state the Council and LaCAN's 2024 Legislative Advocacy Agenda.

Meeting with Capital Area Autism Network

Participated in a networking meeting along with other Council staff with the Capital Area Autism Network (CAAN) on February 19, 2024. CAAN Director, Drew Walker, reached out to Council staff asking to meet to discuss his non-profit. We discussed the formation of CAAN and previous Council staff's involvement as well as the organizations immediate goals. Staff also shared with Mr. Walker history of the Council and the current initiatives the Council has been working on in its current action plan.

Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Committee Meeting

Attended the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education's Academic Goals and Instructional Improvement Committee meeting to support LaCAN members during a Yellow Shirt Day on March 5, 2024. Committee discussed concerns issued in a recent LaCAN alert about the dismissal of Special Education Advisory Panel members and cancelation of the March 2024 meeting. As a result of statewide advocacy efforts, BESE reversed course and will have a SEAP meeting in March with its current membership.

LaDDC Planning Committee Meeting

Attended the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council's Planning Committee meeting on March 11, 2024. Members met to discuss initiatives for the Council to consider in its Fiscal Year 25 action plan which will begin October 1st. Recommendations will be submitted to the full Council at its April meeting.

House Appropriations Committee Meeting

Attended the House Appropriations Committee meeting to support LaCAN members during a Yellow Shirt Day on March 12, 2024. Committee discussed the Fiscal Year 2025 proposed budget for the Louisiana Department of Health which encompasses the Council's budget. LaCAN members met with legislators to discuss the Council's 2024 Legislative Advocacy Agenda.

OCDD State Advisory Committee (SAC)

Attended the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) State Advisory Committee meeting on March 13, 2024. Multiple updates were shared by the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities as well as the local Regional Advisory Councils.

GACDA Education and Legislative Committees

Attended the Governor's Advisory Council on Disability Affairs Education and Legislative Committee meetings on March 15, 2024. Members and other groups/organizations shared information about their legislative platforms for the 2024 Legislative Session and reviewed legislation that has been filed which may impact the disability community. Committees took positions on some issues they will monitor this session.

House Appropriations Public Testimony

Attended the House Appropriations Committee meeting to support LaCAN members during Public Testimony Day on March 20, 2024. Multiple members of LaCAN shared before committee their testimonies on the impacts of funding the Council's 2024 Legislative Advocacy Agenda.

Senate Finance Committee Meeting

Attended the Senate Finance Committee meeting to support LaCAN members during a Yellow Shirt Day on March 21, 2024. Committee discussed the Fiscal Year 2025 proposed budget for the Louisiana Department of Health which encompasses the Council's budget. LaCAN members met with legislators to discuss the Council's 2024 Legislative Advocacy Agenda.

Partners in Policymaking Session

Attended the Partners in Policymaking Legislative Session class on March 22, 2024. Presented to participants the Council's 2024 Legislative Advocacy agenda and answered related questions. Assisted with crafting testimonies and discussing expectations when providing public testimony.

Stephanie Carmona:

Time Period: January – March

Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP)	January 24, 2024
Delaware DD Council Staff Meeting	January 25, 2024
Peer-2-Peer: Data Collection Challenges Training	January 25, 2024
Collection of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Data	February 9, 2024
Louisiana Department of Education Meeting	February 20, 2024
BESE Meeting	March 5, 2024
Elevatus Meeting	March 5, 2024
Gatorworks Meeting	March 6, 2024
Plain Language Information	March 8, 2024
FY2025 Planning Committee	March 11, 2024
SEAP Meeting	March 20, 2024
Peer-2-Peer Data Management	March 21, 2024

Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) – 1/24/24

SEAP gave recommendations for the remote participation procedures, including a live transcriptionist. There was also discussion about Act 128- ASL interpreting qualification changes for K-12, and Louisiana Commission for the Deaf (LCD) created proposed rules.

SEAP also gave recommendations on Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) report templates. Bulletin 1706 was discussed, and SEAP recommended language changes before it progressed to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). Lastly, the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) grant application was discussed, specifically accessibility to curriculum and staff provided public comment on IDEA grant application ideas.

Phone Meeting with Delaware Council Staff

Participated in a phone call with Delaware DD Council Staff about their website overhaul. Discussed how the overhaul was done, which documents were converted to plain language, when it would go live, etc. Also discussed how it was written in the annual plan to make recommendations to the FY2025 Planning Committee.

Peer-2-Peer: data collection challenges

Attended an (Information and Technical Assistance Center) ITACC webinar series on data challenges and how to combat these challenges.

Collection of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Data

Attended webinar on the collection of SOGI data. The executive order was discussed and the reasoning for the wording of the questions. There were many experts on data. ITACC took guidance from them to write the SOGI questions that the councils use for SOGI data.

LDOE Zoom Meeting

Participated in a meeting with LDOE staff to discuss the Act 392 which allows convicted felons inside of classrooms with students after they received the letter the council sent. This was a major concern for the council and LDOE legal advised us of safe guards within their policy.

BESE Meeting

Virtually attended BESE, where the dismissal of SEAP was the main talking point of this meeting. BESE president expressed that this decision was done by unanimous consent, in order to open the panel up for constituents from the newly appointed BESE member's regions. DD Council sent out an action alert for a yellow shirt day where many people gave testimony during public comment. This resulted in SEAP being able to meet in March (during the legislative session).

Elevatus Zoom Meeting

Participated in a meeting with the founder of Elevatus (sexual education curriculum) to get more information on the curriculum to make recommendations to the FY2025 Planning Committee. Discussed barriers, work done in other states, best practices, different materials, and different curriculums. This information was shared with the planning committee.

Gatorworks Zoom Meeting

Participated in a meeting with founder of Gatorworks (website design) to get information about a website overhaul to make recommendations to the FY2025 Planning Committee. Gatorworks discussed options for the overhaul and the timeline of how long it would take. They also sent a proposal for us to share with the planning committee.

Plain Language Information Zoom Meeting

Participated in a meeting with a contractor who converts documents to plain language and EZ read. Was able to discuss pricing and timeline, as well as need. This information was shared with the planning committee.

SEAP – 3/20/24

Participated as a proxy in the SEAP meeting. The main discussion of SEAP was legislation that would affect students with disabilities. Shared the Council's stance on different legislation and reasoning to help with discussions. As a panel SEAP cannot have a stance on legislation, but BESE can, so SEAP members were encouraged to reach out to their local BESE members and Legislators to express their concerns and give testimony.

Peer-2-Peer: Data Management

Attended ITACC webinar on data collection. State Councils gave information and examples of how they organize and analyze data for Program Performance Reporting (PPR) and other reporting. Each council used different data management systems: Qualtrics, DD Suite, and Excel. Council staff was able to ask questions and get advice for different data collections and best practices.

Meetings Attended by Interim Executive Director (January 1 – March 31, 2024)

- Partners in Policymaking Session 1 January 4, 2024
- Meeting with Julie F. Hagan (OCDD) January 4, 2024
- New Member Orientation January 9, 2024
- Meeting with LaDDC Chair January 10, 2024
- Full Council Meeting January 18, 2024
- SCS Hiring Framework Training January 24, 2024
- Meeting with Meredith Jordan (LDOE) January 25, 2024
- GODA/GACDA Meeting January 25, 2024
- State of the State: Enhancing Data Literacy January 30, 2024
- Meeting with LaDDC Chair January 31, 2024
- ITACC State Plan Development Work Group February 1, 2024
- Arc of LA Legislative Meeting February 1, 2024
- LaCAN Leader Call February 1, 2024
- Meeting with Julie F. Hagan (OCDD) February 1, 2024
- Meeting with LaDDC Chair February 7, 2024
- Region 2 Legislative Roundtable February 8, 2024
- Region 8 Legislative Roundtable February 16, 2024
- Meeting with CAAN February 19, 2024
- LDOE Meeting (Act 392 of 2023) February 20, 2024
- Meeting with LaDDC Chair and Vice-Chair February 21, 2024
- Regions 1/10 Legislative Roundtable February 22, 2024
- Region 3 Legislative Roundtable February 23, 2024
- Region 9 Legislative Roundtable February 28, 2024
- Region 4 Legislative Roundtable February 29, 2024
- Region 7 Legislative Roundtable March 4, 2024
- Meeting with Meredith Jordan (LDOE) March 4, 2024
- BESE Yellow Shirt Day (YSD) March 5, 2024
- FEMA ODIC Director Meeting: Individual Assistance (IA) Reforms March 5, 2024
- ITACC New ED Training/Orientation March 6, 2024
- Gatorworks Website Meeting March 6, 2024
- Region 6 Legislative Roundtable March 7, 2024
- LaDDC Planning Meeting March 11, 2024
- House Appropriations Committee Meeting (YSD) March 12, 2024
- GACDA Education and Legislative Meetings March 15, 2024

- LDH Budget/Fiscal Meeting March 18, 2024
- FHF Executive Directors Meeting March 18, 2024
- House Appropriations Public Testimony (YSD) March 20, 2024
- Meeting with LaDDC Chair March 20, 2024
- Senate Finance Committee Meeting (YSD) March 21, 2024
- House Education Committee Meeting March 21, 2024
- Partners in Policymaking Session 3 March 22, 2024
- Meeting with DD Network: FASD Strategic Planning March 28, 2024

GODA/GACDA Meeting

Discussed the future of GACDA under the new Administration and current issues in the disability community that need continuous advocacy including Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) and LEAP appeals process. Shared the Council's 2024 Legislative Advocacy Agenda.

State of the State: Enhancing Data Literacy

Data training for Council Executive Directors to discuss data sources and resources available for the Comprehensive Review Analysis (CRA) needed for the 5 year plan.

ITACC State Plan Development Work Group

Met with ITACC and other Council EDs to discuss ways ITACC can assist with 5-year planning, barriers that make planning difficult and creating helpful resources.

FEMA Office of Disability Integration and Coordination (ODIC) Director Meeting: Individual Assistance (IA) Reforms:

Discussed reforms to FEMA's Individual Assistance Program to help survivors including individuals with disabilities recover faster. Reforms included established new benefits, cutting red tape and expanding eligibility and simplifying the application process. An example of one reform that will benefit individuals with disabilities is survivors with disabilities may now use FEMA funding to make certain accessibility improvements to homes damaged by a declared disaster.

ITACC New ED Training/Orientation

Discussed organization and structure of federal agencies including the Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (OIDD), the Administration on Disabilities (AoD) and the Administration for Community Living (ACL). EDs were also introduced to their federal assigned program staff. Also discussed federal funding, budgeting, match requirements for grantees, helpful resources and the Program Performance Report (PPR). Additional trainings will be held in the future.