



LSUHSC Human Development Center Activities Report, 1st Quarter for January - March 2024

The Human Development Center (HDC) is part of a nationwide network of University Centers of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) and serves as a resource for Louisiana in the areas of education, research, and service relative to the needs of people with developmental disabilities. During this period, HDC reorganized its programs to the following four initiative areas: Early Childhood; Education Transition, Community; Community Health; and Long-Term Training. See the organization chart on the HDC website www.hdc.lsuhs.edu. Each of HDC's initiative areas is described below including the highlights of their activities that took place last quarter (January – March 2024) according to three main goals: Enhance Collaboration, Increase Access to Quality Services, and Promote Use of Evidence Based Practice.

Early Childhood Initiatives

Early Childhood Initiatives target children between the ages of 1 and 5 years and include the **Early Head Start Childcare Partnership (EHS-CCP)**, **Inclusive Practices in Early Childhood (IPEC)**, and the **LSU Health Sciences Early Learning Center**. These programs provide training, technical assistance, and resources to increase access and equity to quality inclusive early learning environments.

○ Enhance Collaboration

- HDC continued collaboration with the New Orleans Early Education Network (NOEEN) and NOLA PS to increase the capacity of the City Seats program to effectively serve children with disabilities in inclusive childcare settings.
- HDC is collaborating with Early Head Start and Early Steps to develop a pilot for improving referral, evaluation, and access to services.
- HDC is working with the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) to develop the next five-year plan for the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) grant.

○ Increase Access to Quality Services

- HDC's Early Head Start program added 2 new childcare center partners in New Orleans.
- HDC is exploring partnership with childcare centers in Jefferson Parish.

○ Promote Use of Evidence Based Practice

- HDC hosts a bi-monthly mini-conference for 80 early childhood educators and administrators. January's focus was early literacy and March focus was creating safe environments for children.
- HDC was invited to provide support to new Head Start Directors across Region VI by participating in the annual Director Mentorship Program.

Education, Transition, Community Initiatives

HDC's Education, Transition, and Community Initiatives provides continuing education and technical assistance to families, educators, administrators, and policymakers regarding best practices for evidence-based and inclusive education. Additionally, this initiative area initiatives supports agencies, programs, service providers, and job seekers with disabilities to obtain and maintain community employment outcomes that are competitive and integrated by building knowledge and capacity of secondary and post-secondary educators, community providers, employers, and self-advocates/advocates. These programs include **Louisiana Autism Spectrum and Related Disabilities project (LASARD)**, **Louisiana Deafblind Project for Children and Youth (LADBP)**, **West South-Central Work Incentives Planning Assistance (WSC-WIPA)**, **Computing for Youth with Autism (CYA) with FHF NOLA**, **Employment First Core Training**, **Customized Employment Training and Postsecondary Apprenticeship for Youth (PAY Check)**.

○ Enhance Collaboration

- HDC LASARD, Paycheck, WSC WIPA, and LADBP projects are pursuing ongoing collaborative efforts such as:
 - LADBP and PAY Check presented topics for the LASARD Lunch + Learn webinar series.
 - Staff from LADBP and LASARD provided coaching sessions together.
- HDC LADBP presented to the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention board meeting.
- HDC LASARD facilitator worked collaboratively with district and school staff in St. James Parish to use best practices to schedule their students with disabilities for the 24-25 school year.
- HDC LASARD facilitators fostered collaboration between SLPs and special/general education teaching teams around communication in Concordia Parish
- Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS), Jefferson Parish Public School System (JPPSS), Metropolitan Human Services District (MHSD) and Kenner Discovery Health Sciences Academy continue to collaborate with HDC to implement the Postsecondary Apprenticeship for Youth (PAY Check) program. Other school systems can contract with HDC or can refer exiting students for PAY Check services through their LRS counselor.
- As part of Families Helping Families (FHF) Computing for Youth with Autism (CYA), HDC recently moderated one of the panels for Employers Convening for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Human Resources professionals titled, "Positioning Ourselves for a Neurodivergent Workforce."
- HDC is currently working with Tennessee IDD (DDS Workforce Training and Certification) and the District of Columbia (State as Model Employer) as part of the Office for Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) NEON (National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network).
- HDC is working with various Louisiana schools interested in establishing employment transition services and supports similar to the PAY Check program in their parish through the LDOE Vendor Guide.
- HDC is engaged in an initial collaboration meeting with Junior Achievement Greater New Orleans.

○ Increase Access to Quality Services

- HDC LASARD staff presented an overview of essential support strategies and LASARD to the St. Charles Parish Schools Special Education Advisory Council.
- HDC LASARD staff presented an overview of executive functioning to the Belle Chasse Academy Special Education Advisory Council.
- HDC LASARD has increased its disciplinary scope by adding a Licensed Professional Counselor - Supervisor which will increase access to quality services to school districts throughout the state.
- HDC LASARD send a monthly newsletter to highlight practices and distribute new free resources. From Jan to March, the monthly newsletter had over 1600 views.
- HDC presented at the January and February Families Helping Families Capacity Building Webinar.
- HDC LASARD Staff presented on Behavior Supports for the Greater New Orleans and Bayou Land Families Helping Families.
- HDC LASARD Staff presented on Communication Supports for Greater New Orleans Families Helping Families.

- HDC LADBP launched two new newsletters, including one for families and one for professionals.
 - HDC LADBP provided a hands-on day of training and activities for OT students related to working with patients who are Blind or have low vision.
 - HDC LADBP staff presented information and resources to parents of children who are Deaf/hard of hearing at the Bright School.
 - For 2024-2025, thirty (30) students are being considered for enrollment in HDC's PAY Check program. Enrollment activities for these 2024-2025 students are underway and contracts with Jefferson Parish Human Services Authority, Metropolitan Human Services District and Kenner Discovery Health Sciences Academy are being developed. These contracts ensure students can enter PAY Check on an IEP with their school or, if exiting the school system, can access PAY Check with LRS and Human Service District funding.
 - HDC's PAY Check program continues to focus on providing participants with in-person, one-on-one pre-ETS units/sessions, two paid internships, Job Shadowing (3) and Work Site Visits (3), and Job Placement as the individual progresses along their 12-month career pathway.
 - HDC West South-Central Work Incentives Planning Assistance (WSC-WIPA) continues to receive 40+ referrals each month. Louisiana Lighthouse provides WIPA services for the other half of the state. HDC WSC-WIPA's service area includes SSA beneficiaries who live in twenty-one Texas counties and thirty-three Louisiana parishes.
- **Promote Use of Evidence Based Practice**
- HDC LASARD staff updated or developed new visual supports and other free resources for their website to support educators or families.
 - HDC LASARD staff presented a professional learning session, "Structured Teaching" for East Baton Rouge Parish special education teachers.
 - HDC LASARD staff created a video model of a Core standards-aligned lesson that also incorporated evidence-based practices for students with significant cognitive disabilities (visual supports, communication supports, positive reinforcement) for high school teachers in St. Charles Parish Public Schools
 - HDC LASARD staff provided the paraprofessional training Community of Practice series in St. Charles Parish and St. Bernard Parish where paraprofessionals are learning about evidence-based practices so they can better support students and have deeper collaboration time with their classroom teachers.
 - HDC LASARD hosted monthly "Lunch and Learn" webinar, open to families and educators on topics related to evidence-based practices for individuals with disabilities. Topics this quarter included:
 - January 2024: Tips from Deafblind Specialists
 - February 2024: Tips from an SLP: Communication Supports for Diverse Learners
 - March 2024: Secondary Transition Supports
 - HDC LASARD facilitators presented to over 140 general and special educators in East Baton Rouge Parish on strategies to support instruction for diverse learners.
 - HDC LASARD facilitator presented to over 90 staff at Benjamin Franklin Elementary/Middle Mathematics & Science Schools on inclusive practices.
 - HDC LADBP hosted a webinar "All about interveners" to promote the use of Deafblind interveners.
 - HDC LADBP presented a training to Early Steps Region 9's Regional Interagency Coordinating Committee regarding early identification of children who are Deafblind.
 - HDC LADBP guest lectured to special education students at Nicholls State University
 - HDC LABDP hosted a series of three workshops for early intervention providers on working with children who have Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) at three locations across the state, with one to come in the next quarter.
 - HDC provided Supported Employment CORE Training in January and March to over sixty (60) LRS and OCDD Employment Providers.

Community Health Initiatives

HDC's newly formed initiative area partners with community members and organizations to address their health-related priorities to improve ALL community members' well-being and quality-of-life. These initiatives target root causes of disparities not only in health, but in education access & quality, economic stability, and neighborhood & social circumstances. Listed below are current partners and a brief description of their programs.

- American Muslims for Accessibility Advocacy, Nurturing and Acceptance (AMAANA)
The AMANNA organization is a non-profit agency located in Gretna, LA that provides supports to the growing Muslim community in the greater New Orleans area. The supported families include second and third generation Arab Americans and relatively newly immigrated families from the Middle East and North Africa. HDC's Community Health Initiatives has contracted with the agency to assist in the development of a Health & Community Access Navigator training program.
- National Science Foundation (NSF) GeneBIORETS: Genetics, Genomics, and Biology Research Experiences for Teachers in the Sciences
This program provides high school teachers across Louisiana with research experiences and professional development to impact how they impart science education in their classrooms, ultimately inspiring students of diverse backgrounds (including those with disabilities) to pursue and excel in STEM professions. The NSP-BIORETS is funded by a three-year grant from the National Science Foundation and includes teacher preparation in providing science education to students with disabilities. The HDC Community Health Initiatives will offer information for enrolled teachers regarding adapting science curriculum for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, sensory disabilities and/or motor disabilities as part of the four-week summer teacher training opportunity. The program is currently recruiting high school teachers across the state for the first cohort beginning June 2024. More information and application are here: <https://www.medschool.lsuhs.edu/genetics/genebiorets.aspx>
- The Life Club (TLC)
The Life Club is a community support organization originating with the LSU Human Development Center designed to offer information, support, and activities to young adults with disabilities. Currently TLC meets monthly and has initiated life planning activities with the membership along with offering information regarding community resources for these young adults. Upcoming plans include offering a Friendship and Dating Program course to provide the membership information and guidance regarding interpersonal intimacy and the opportunity for self-determination in friendship, dating, love, and intimacy.
- Split Second Foundation Cares - Public Health Workforce initiative
The SSF is a non-profit agency located in the Gentilly neighborhood of NOLA rounded by Mark Raymond. Mr. Raymond survives a spinal cord injury and has developed the foundation to improve and extend services in the greater New Orleans area to individuals with disabilities. The HDC Community Health Initiative has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the SSF and currently house several of their Split Second Cares program options within the HDC. Those programs include adapted yoga, music therapy, art therapy, mental health counseling, and caregiver support. See <https://www.splitsecondfoundation.org/>.

Long-Term Training Initiatives

HDC's Long-Term Training Initiatives provides training opportunities to graduate students, professionals, families, and self-advocates. HDC's Interdisciplinary Training programs include **Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities (Louisiana LEND)** (funded by US Department of Health and Human Services- Maternal Child Health Bureau) and **Interprofessional Preparation for Related Services Personnel Serving Children with Disabilities Who Have High Intensity Needs (known as IPP)** (funded by US Office of Special Education Programs) grants.

The HDC LEND program is designed to prepare students for future roles as leaders in supporting families and individuals with developmental delays/disabilities and special health care needs. HDC LEND promotes principles of family and person-centered care (and thinking) as well as interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaboration. The IPP program is designed to foster collaboration between the related services professionals and special education educators in providing comprehensive services to students receiving special education services as mandated by IDEA.

Both programs provide over 300 hours of training as well as clinical and field experiences to graduate students and professionals working in a variety of disciplines, as well as self-advocates and family members. HDC's Interdisciplinary Training Initiatives also include the Autism Spectrum Disorder Interdisciplinary Diagnostic Clinic (ASDID) which provides opportunities for interdisciplinary experiential learning.

○ **Promote Use of Evidence Based Practice**

- HDC's Interdisciplinary Training programs, **Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities (LEND)** and **Interprofessional Preparation for Related Services Personnel Serving Children with Disabilities Who Have High Intensity Needs**, continue to provide training as well as clinical and field experiences to 23 graduate students, self-advocates, parents, family members and working professionals. Graduate students and professionals in the program this year represent the following disciplines: applied behavior analysis, audiology, deaf education, dentistry, nutrition, occupational therapy, physical therapy, psychology, social work, and speech-language pathology. This cohort also includes a Self-Advocate and a family member.