



Executive Director's Report January 29-30, 2025 Council Meeting

Budget

- The budget report with expenditures through December 2024 is included in the packet.
 - The Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Budget Request was submitted to the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) on October 25th.

Program Performance Report (PPR)

- Due to a change in reporting software, the PPR for FY24 (October 2023 – September 2024) has been delayed and will now will be due by March 28, 2025. The Council will receive feedback on the PPR in the Summer 2025.

Appropriations

- Congress has not yet passed a budget for FFY25 which began October 1st to provide funding for Councils and the rest of the federal government. Congress passed a second Continuing Resolution (CR) on December 20th that will keep Councils at FFY24 funding with hopes a budget will pass before the CR expires on March 14, 2025.

Membership Update

- Nominees selected as recommendations for appointment at the October 2024 quarterly Council meeting were submitted to the Governor's Office of Boards and Commissions on October 22nd. Nominees include:
 - Institutional /facility seat: Zheng "Karen" Xu
 - Individual with Developmental Disability Seats: Ayden Blunsch, Jude Boynton and Frank Macaluso with alternate Gwendolyn Hilliard
 - Parent/Immediate Relative Seats: Latoya Citizen, Lamartine Meda and Danielle Poret with alternates Alaina Chachere and Robert Smith
- Pasqueal Nguyen's reappointment by the Governor is still pending.
- Due to the passing of Council Member, Lauren Womack, the Governor's Office of Boards and Commissions will choose someone to fill the vacancy from the applicants submitted in October 2024.

Staff Changes

- The Program Monitor position left vacant after Rekeesha Branch was promoted to the Program Manager has been filled and the new monitor will start on February 3rd.

LaCAN

- LaCAN leaders participated in a 2-day retreat December 13th and 14th in Lake Charles to discuss advocacy strategies, ways to improve as a leader, and team building.



- The LaCAN agenda item “Addressing the impending fiscal cliff and potential cuts to the Louisiana Department of Health” changed to “Protect Disability Services From Cuts” after the Special Session after the legislature met in November to address tax reform.
- Factsheets have been developed for both agenda items and will be posted on the [Council’s website](#) and distributed to Council members, LaCAN Leaders, and FHF Centers/Directors to be used during legislative visits and member meetings prior to the start of the 2025 legislative session.
- Our LaCAN Leaders are in the process of scheduling legislative visits and planning the 2025 Legislative Roundtables. The schedule of Roundtables that will take place in February and March has been posted on the [website with registration links](#). Please mark your calendars and plan to attend.

Advocacy Activities and Provision of Information

Community Supports

- Advocated along with previous Council Chair, Randall Brown for the “Transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment Act” (TCIEA, S. 533 / H.R. 1263) which would phase out the payment of subminimum wages under Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act; met with senior policy advisor to Louisiana U.S. Senator Cassidy and other policy advisors for Senators who sit on the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) on December 10th.

General

- The Council approved a website overhaul and rebranding for the FY2025 Action Plan. Council staff have met with the contractor, Gatorworks, this quarter to kickoff off the website design and discuss the layout and overall look of the new website.

Additional Meetings Attended by Council Staff

Time Period: October – December 2024

Brenton Andrus:

LaCAN Leader Call	October 3, 2024
LaDDC Membership Committee	October 11, 2024
LaDDC October Quarterly Meeting	October 16 – 17, 2024
DD Network Meeting	October 22, 2024
HCBS Rate Methodology Kickoff Presentation	October 28, 2024
FHF of Greater New Orleans Contract Meeting	October 29, 2024
OCDD Roadshow	November 6, 2024
LaCAN Leader Call	November 7, 2024
LaCAN Leader Call	December 5, 2024
GACDA Quarterly Meeting	December 11, 2024
LaCAN Leader Retreat	December 13 – 14, 2024
Gatorworks Meeting	December 18, 2024

OCDD Roadshow

Attended the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) virtual roadshow on November 6, 2024. The purpose of this roadshow was to share the department’s current and upcoming initiatives and solicit feedback. Initiatives discussed included, but were not limited to:

- Trainings for providers and direct support workers
- Value Based Payment Model and development of focus groups
- Updating and reengaging the Self-Direction Advisory Group



- University and Community College partnerships to help incentivize students at professional and direct support level
- Vocational Services redesign

LaCAN Monthly Leader Call

Participated in the monthly LaCAN Leader call on November 7, 2024 with regional LaCAN Leaders and Families Helping Families directors. This call centered on further development of the Council’s advocacy agenda item: increased wages for Direct Support Workers. Guest presenter was Julie Foster Hagan with OCDD who shared background and historical information related to similar advocacy efforts around this issue.

LaCAN Monthly Leader Call

Participated in the monthly LaCAN Leader call on December 5, 2024 with regional LaCAN Leaders and Families Helping Families directors. This call centered on discussing the Council’s advocacy agenda fact sheets. Also discussed upcoming legislative visit and roundtable guidelines.

GACDA Quarterly Meeting

Attended the Governor’s Advisory Council on Disability Affairs meeting on December 11, 2024. Shared the Council’s legislative agenda for 2025, update on the Council’s contract with Families Helping Families of Greater New Orleans and updates to the Council’s quarterly meeting schedule.

LaCAN Leader Retreat

Participated in a LaCAN Leader Retreat in Lake Charles December 13 – 14, 2024. National speaker Deborah Whitfield was brought in to engage leaders on topics such as mind mapping, designing and delivering testimony, how to negotiate and influence policymakers, and team/relationship building.

Gatorworks Website Design Meeting

Met with representatives from Gatorworks on December 18, 2024 to discuss wireframes for the updated Council website.

Stephanie Carmona:

Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) Special Meeting	October 25, 2024
Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP)	November 13, 2024

BESE Special Meeting

BESE discussed the approval of a contract for the administration and management of an Education Savings Account (ESA) program. Overall, the meeting emphasizes the urgency of finalizing and approving the ESA contract to secure educational options for students and ensure smooth program implementation.

SEAP Meeting

SEAP was focused on reviewing and updating two key initiatives: the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) and Bulletin 1508. The SSIP, aimed at improving literacy outcomes for students with disabilities in grades 3-5, is being expanded to include all students with disabilities in grades K-5 across all schools. The Bulletin 1508 revisions, based on stakeholder



feedback, aim to improve guidelines for dyslexia and specific learning disabilities assessments, expand mental health services, and increase flexibility in qualified examiners due to the shortage of school psychologists.

Additional Meetings Attended by Executive Director

- Post-secondary Inclusive Education Advisory Council (PIEAC) October 1, 2024
- Technology Support Focus Group: Phase 1 October 3, 2024
- Meeting with Julie F. Hagan (OCDD) October 3, 2024
- Meeting with MODDC – Budget Presentation October 7, 2024
- Gatorworks Website Kickoff Meeting October 9, 2024
- Partners in Policymaking Selection Committee October 10, 2024
- Council Membership Ad Hoc Committee October 11, 2024
- Council Committee Meetings October 16, 2024
- Full Council Meeting October 17, 2024
- DD Network Meeting October 22, 2024
- LaDDC/LDH Federal Grant Meeting October 23, 2024
- Technology Support Focus Group: Phase 1 November 7, 2024
- Council Retreat Planning: Deborah Whitfield November 26, 2024
- Meeting with HELP Committee Senior Policy Advisor: Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act December 10, 2024
- DD Network Meeting December 11, 2024
- Council Retreat Planning: Sheryl Matney December 12, 2024

Technology Support Focus Group: Phase 1 Communication

LDH and providers, support coordination agencies, advocates and other stakeholder groups participate in this LDH focus group on technology supports within the waiver services. The group provided input and guidance on the materials and information to support Phase I implementation including timelines for implementation, flowcharts and training materials for Support Coordination, Provider and individuals and families.

