



## ***Executive Director's Report April 2025 Council Meeting***

### **Budget**

- The budget report with expenditures through March 2025 is included in the packet.

### **Program Performance Report (PPR)**

- The PPR for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2024 (October 2023 – September 2024) was electronically submitted to the Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (OIDD) by the March 28<sup>th</sup> deadline. The Council will receive feedback on the PPR in the Summer 2025.

### **Appropriations**

- Congress passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) on March 14<sup>th</sup> for FFY25 which will fund the federal government through fiscal year 2025 (September 30, 2025) at level funding.

### **Membership Update**

- Gearry Williams was appointed on behalf of the Office of Adult and Aging Services on January 17<sup>th</sup>. Robert (Robby) Smith, Karen Xu and Ayden Blunschli were also appointed by the Governor on January 17<sup>th</sup>. Jude Boynton and Frank Malcaluso were appointed by the Governor on January 31<sup>st</sup>, Lamartine Meda was appointed February 21<sup>st</sup> and Alaina Chachere was appointed on March 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Pasqueal Nguyen was reappointed on February 21<sup>st</sup>.

### **Staff Changes**

- The Program Monitor position left vacant after Rekeesha Branch was promoted to the Program Manager remains vacant.

### **Ad Hoc Committees**

- The FY2026 Planning Committee is scheduled to meet on April 1<sup>st</sup> to develop recommendations for the Council's FY26 Action Plan. These recommendations for plan initiatives/activities will be considered by the full Council at the April meeting and are linked on the agenda.

### **Staff Professional Development**

- Staff attended webinars held by Information and Technical Assistance Center for Council on Developmental Disabilities (ITACC) on research and development of Council's Five-Year Plans including:
  - Five-Year Plan Public Input – surveys and other ways to collect public input
  - Comprehensive Review Analysis (CRA) – Parts A, B and C

### **LaCAN**

- Nine Regional Roundtables were held across the state with a total of participants including 13 legislators, legislative assistants and/or Board of Elementary and



Secondary Education (BESE) members participating. Eight Council members attended as well. Council staff presented information on the Council's advocacy agenda.

- An education item was added to the Council's advocacy agenda in response to the [Seclusion, Restraint and Abuse Legislative Audit](#) released December 11, 2024. This item was added to the Council and LaCAN's advocacy agenda and a factsheet was developed, posted on the [Council's website](#) and distributed to LaCAN Leaders and FHF Centers/Directors to be used during legislative visits and member meetings prior to the start of the 2025 legislative session.
- LaCAN Leaders are making legislative visits with LaCAN members throughout the middle of legislative session which begins April 14<sup>th</sup> and is scheduled to end on June 12<sup>th</sup>. Leaders will also be supporting members in providing testimony during key committee meetings.

## **Advocacy Activities and Provision of Information**

### Community Supports

- In conjunction with the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) and other State DD Councils, the Council shared information and encouraged advocates to get involved by sharing their personal story regarding Medicaid (which was later shared on Congressional visits).
- The Council collaborated with the Louisiana Statewide Independent Living Council, Arc of Louisiana, People First of Louisiana, Deaf Focus, Families Helping Families Regional Resource Centers and other disability organizations to create joint factsheets on potential cuts to Medicaid and Louisiana Medicaid. All factsheets can be found on the [Council's website](#).
- NACDD is now conducting daily briefings which started February 4<sup>th</sup> to provide information about the rapid changes occurring at the federal level and what impacts, if any, these changes will have at the state level. These briefings also allow Councils to network and share advocacy information and ideas.
- Council staff successfully advocated with Representative Pat Moore regarding language included in [HB76](#) which would have increased penalties against offenders with intellectual disabilities for intentional exposure to a sexually transmitted disease.

### Education

- The Council collaborated with Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), the Arc of Louisiana, and Disability Rights of Louisiana to address improvements to seclusion and restraint practices in Louisiana and address issues found in the recent legislative audit (see above). This partnership resulted in the filing of [HB237](#) by Representative Shane Mack.
- [Action Alerts](#) were shared encouraging advocates to contact Attorney General Liz Murrill regarding the Section 504 Lawsuit. A joint factsheet was also created and can be found on the [Council's website](#).

### General

- The Information and Technical Assistance for Councils on Developmental Disabilities (ITACC) continued their series of Leadership Labs to help support Council leadership and information was shared with the Executive Committee.
- Provided information through Facebook and Twitter on various issues of interest to people with developmental disabilities and their families.



- Most notably: The Council participated in NACDD's 2025 Developmental Disability Awareness Month Campaign: "**We're Here All Year: Meet Us. Know Us. Involve Us.**" The campaign ran throughout March, and stakeholders were asked to share photos and stories to show everyday life of individuals with lived disability experiences all year long.
- Council staff met several times with Gatorworks to discuss changes and various edits to the website, which is almost complete. Once the new website launches, the Council will promote heavily on social media and with LaDDC News articles. The Council staff is also actively working with the plain language contractor to convert documents on the website. Staff will replace and further update as materials become available.

### **Additional Meetings Attended by Council Staff**

**Time Period: January – March 2025**

#### **Brenton Andrus:**

|   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| NACDD Daily Updates                       | Daily / As Needed     |
| LaCAN Leader Call                         | January 2, 2025       |
| State Advisory Committee                  | January 8, 2025       |
| BESE Yellow Shirt Day                     | January 9, 2025       |
| Gatorworks Meeting                        | January 24, 2025      |
| Advocacy Partner Meeting                  | January 27, 2025      |
| LaDDC Quarterly Meetings & Retreat        | January 28 – 30, 2025 |
| LaCAN Leader Call                         | February 6, 2025      |
| Section 504 Disability Community Briefing | February 12, 2025     |
| Medicaid & Section 504 Meeting            | February 14, 2025     |
| Seclusion & Restraint Meeting             | February 17, 2025     |
| Region 5 Legislative Roundtables          | February 18, 2025     |
| PAR Constitutional Amendment Webinar      | February 25, 2025     |
| Seclusion & Restraint Bill Meeting        | March 5, 2025         |
| LaCAN Leader Call                         | March 6, 2025         |
| Region 9 Legislative Roundtable           | March 10, 2025        |
| Seclusion & Restraint Bill Meeting        | March 11, 2025        |
| Region 4 Legislative Roundtable           | March 11, 2025        |
| Region 3 Legislative Roundtable           | March 11, 2025        |
| Region 6 Legislative Roundtable           | March 19, 2025        |
| Regions 1/10 Legislative Roundtable       | March 19, 2025        |
| GCDD State Plan Town Hall                 | March 20, 2025        |
| Region 8 Legislative Roundtable           | March 21, 2025        |
| Region 7 Legislative Roundtable           | March 21, 2025        |

#### **NACDD Daily Updates**

This daily update call is hosted by NACDD Executive Director Jill Jacobs and staff to update Council staff on issues impacting the I/DD community at a federal level. Approaches to federal advocacy are often discussed.

#### **LaCAN Monthly Leader Call**

These calls centered on Roundtable planning and discussing advocacy efforts during the upcoming 2025 Legislative Session.



### **OCDD State Advisory Committee (SAC)**

Multiple updates were shared by the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities and Regional Advisory Committees.

### **BESE Yellow Shirt Day**

Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Academic Goals and Instructional Improvement Committee discussed the Special Education Audit revealing concerns about the Department of Education's oversight of restraint and seclusion usage in schools as well as abuse and neglect of students.

### **Gatorworks Website Design Meeting**

Met with representatives from Gatorworks to review ongoing work being completed as the Council constructs its new website.

### **Advocacy Partner Meeting**

Met with Arc of Louisiana, Community Provider Association and Supported Living Network to discuss advocacy agenda of each organization during the 2025 Legislative Session. Shared ideas about agendas, approaches to advocacy and partnerships on agenda items.

### **Section 504 Disability Community Briefing**

Hosted by Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund where information was shared about the lawsuit filed by 17 states, including Louisiana, which declares Section 504 unconstitutional. Use information learned to draft alerts and fact sheets related to this issue for advocacy.

### **Medicaid & Section 504 Advocacy Partner Meeting**

Hosted by Supported Independent Living Council and attended by various disability stakeholder groups to discuss the need for advocacy around Medicaid and Section 504. Facts sheets created and action alerts sent by the Council on these issues.

### **Seclusion & Restraint Meetings**

Multiple collaborative meetings held throughout February and March with Department of Education, Arc of La, Disability Rights La and the Council to discuss concerns in the Seclusion & Restraint Audit released in December. Drafted language for legislation to improve Seclusion & Restraint policies.

### **Legislative Roundtables**

Presented the Council and LaCAN's 2025 Legislative Advocacy Agenda at roundtables statewide throughout February and March.

### **PAR Constitutional Amendment Webinar**

Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana hosted a virtual meeting to discuss constitutional amendments on the March 29<sup>th</sup> ballot. Experts from around the state shared perspectives on each amendment as well as the benefits and consequences of each amendment.

### **GCDD State Plan Town Hall**

Virtual town hall meeting to receive stakeholder input for the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities 5 year plan. Participated to see how other states host feedback session regarding 5 year planning.



**Stephanie Carmona:**

ITACC TA Office Hours  
LDOE Collaboration Meeting  
ITACC TA Office Hours  
5-Year State Plan Development

February 4 & 18, 2025  
February 17, 2025  
March 4 & 18, 2025  
March 13, 2025

**ITACC TA Office Hours**

Office hours for technical support with the program performance report (PPR).

**Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) Collaboration Meeting**

Collaboration meeting with LDOE, the Arc of Louisiana, Disability Rights of Louisiana, and Governor's Office of Disabilities to address issues in public schools with seclusion, restraint and abuse.

**5-Year State Plan Development – CRA Part C**

ITACC conducted a webinar that reviewed the 5-year plan section on Analysis of State Issues and Challenges. Discussions and guidance was given on items in part C, including eligibility criteria, barriers to full participation of people with I/DD who are unserved and underserved, waiting list information, assistive technology, and adequacy of resources, adequacy of services in ICF/DD facilities and HCBS services.

**Additional Meetings Attended by Executive Director**

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|--|--------------------------|
| • Partners in Policymaking Session 1                             | January 9, 2025          |
| • Meeting with Julie F. Hagan (OCDD)                             | January 15, 2025         |
| • ITACC Program Performance Report (PPR) Webinar                 | January 21, 2025         |
| • ITACC Peer 2 Peer: 5 Year Plan Public Input                    | January 23, 2025         |
| • NACDD All Council Daily Update                                 | (2/4/25) Daily/As Needed |
| • LA DSW Peer Learning Collaborative: Conclusion                 | February 4, 2025         |
| • Meeting with LDH Budget (Federal Draws)                        | February 4, 2025         |
| • State DD Council ED Strategy Call                              | February 7, 2025         |
| • Disability Community Briefing:<br>Stop Attack on Section 504   | February 12, 2025        |
| • LA Disability Coalition Meeting: Medicaid/Section 504          | February 14, 2025        |
| • Internal PPR Meeting   | February 26, 2025        |
| • LA DSW Peer Learning Collaborative: Conclusion 2               | February 27, 2025        |
| • ITACC 5-Year Planning: CRA Parts A & B                         | February 27, 2025        |
| • ITACC: The Firsts – Transforming Systems Webinar               | March 3, 2025            |
| • Internal PPR Meeting   | March 12, 17, & 24 2025  |
| • Post-secondary Inclusive Education Advisory<br>Council (PIEAC) | March 18, 2025           |
| • Seclusion & Restraint Bill Meeting                             | March 24, 2025           |
| • Yellow Shirt Day: LDH Budget heard in Senate Finance           | March 25, 2025           |
| • Office of Fiscal Operations: Council Grant Funding             | March 27, 2025           |

**ITACC Peer 2 Peer: 5-Year Planning Public Input**

ITACC conducted a webinar to assist State DD Councils with strategies that may be helpful in gathering input for the 5 Year Plan development including public forums and surveys.



**LA Direct Support Worker (DSW) – Peer Learning Collaborative**

Louisiana was selected to participate in the first cohort of the DCW Strategies Center State Peer-Learning Collaborative. Medicaid, OCDD, OAAS and the Council participated in the collaborative to gather information from subject matter experts on how to recruit and retain DCWs based on work done in other states. The meetings this quarter were the conclusion meetings.

**State DD Council ED Strategy Call**

All State DD Council EDs were invited to help strategize a streamlined response to possible cuts to Medicaid.

**ITACC: The Firsts – Transforming Systems Webinar**

ITACC conducted a webinar on: Transforming Systems by Coordinating Person First, Employment First, and Technology First Initiatives. The speakers focused on aligning systems change efforts that prioritize employment and technology as a pathway to independence.

**Office of Fiscal Operations (OFO): Council Grant Funding**

Council Staff and staff from LDH Budget (Designated State Agency) met with leadership and staff from the Administration for Community Living (ACL) and the OFO who shared information and updates about grant financial management and cost allowability requirements as well as current reporting requirements and guidance.

