

Office of Public Health (OPH) Quarterly Report to the Developmental Disabilities Council
Bureau of Family Health (BFH)
April 11, 2025

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) offers a hybrid appointment schedule.
- 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 BFH 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) or their local Families Helping Families Center for more information.

Transportation Assistance Program January – March 2025	
Stipend issued: 44	Stipend expenditures: \$8,765.14

BFH Pediatric Medical Home Initiative works to support pediatric clinicians with integration of best practices for compassionate, coordinated, comprehensive, family centered primary care. Pediatric medical home web-based toolkits are available for developmental screening, care coordination and youth health transition. Each toolkit includes options for customized technical assistance to support clinic and health system level quality improvement projects.

The Developmental Screening Toolkit assists clinicians with expanding universal developmental and perinatal depression screening services within well child visits. The toolkit contains step-by-step guides, instructional videos, and downloadable quality improvement worksheets. It is a one-stop-shop for everything needed to implement or strengthen clinic based screening services all in one convenient spot.

Please contact FamilyHealth@La.Gov for further information on any of the Pediatric Medical Home resources.

BFH-Family Resource Center (FRC) is a statewide virtual center designed to ensure CYSHCN and their families in Louisiana have access to resource and referral services. The [BFH-Family Resource Center](#) provides community referrals, transition supports, and health/education 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. 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. Someone will respond in your preferred language.

Family Resource Center January – March 2025	
New Referrals	360
Total number of families engaged	226
Count of Total Resource Needs Identified	526

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 FHF Networks and BFH Family Resource Center. 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 capacity to care for children and youth with special health needs. Social workers and nurses can receive contact hours for attendance. The centers are busy planning spring SFY25 workshop events. Look for information on upcoming workshops posted on FHF websites, social media accounts, and email blasts.

Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Program goals are to ensure that children who are deaf or hard of hearing (D/HH) are:

- Identified through hearing screening by one month of age;
- Diagnosed by three months of age; and
- Enrolled in early intervention by six months of age to optimize language, literacy, cognitive, social and emotional development.

Some primary functions of the EHDI program are to:

- Provide oversight of newborn hearing screening;
- Track audiological follow-up and diagnosis;
- Refer and track enrollment in early intervention services;
- Evaluate newborn hearing screening performance at each birthing facility; and
- Provide [Newborn Hearing Screening Guidelines](#), [Physician Rescreening Guidelines](#) and [Pediatric Audiology Guidelines](#) for providers who perform hearing screenings and tests.
- Health Resources Services Administration EHDI Innovation Project
 - Language assessment of children 0-3 years in LA who are D/HH

- Completed 147 from 10/2023-3/2024, and 100 from 10/2024-3/2025
- 55% participation rate for both rounds of assessments
- Analysis of first round will be shared at April 2025 Advisory Council meeting
- Advisory Council for the Early Identification of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Infants
 - Friday, April 25, 2025, 12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.
 - Benson Tower, Suite 2024
 - 1450 Poydras Street – New Orleans – 70112
 - Meeting link for members of the public:
<https://zoom.us/j/96482897136?pwd=bFw9Rm1wmiBohnYDqF7kabcABiRSzx.1>
Phone: 305.224.1968 Passcode: 3siimq
- Learn More!
 - Email us at laehdi@la.gov
 - Louisiana Department of Health
<https://ldh.la.gov/bureau-of-family-health/Louisiana-EHDI>
 - Bureau of Family Health: Partner for Family Health
<https://partnersforfamilyhealth.org/louisiana-early-hearing-detection-and-intervention-program-la-ehdi-2/>
 - Joint Committee on Infant Hearing
infanthearing.org/nhstc/docs/Year%202019%20JCIH%20Position%20Statement.pdf

Louisiana Hands & Voices

The vision of Louisiana Hands & Voices (LA H&V) is for all children who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing (D/HH), or DeafBlind (DHHDB) to achieve their full potential. LA H&V is a parent-led organization striving to ensure no family feels alone, regardless of the language or communication mode they choose for their child. Through the LA H&V Guide By Your Side program, both trained Parent Guides and D/HH Guides connect with parents providing compassion and support.

- Pass a Good Time in New Orleans – April 26, 2025 from 12:00-2:00 p.m.
 - **No cost event** for children who are D/HH, their siblings, and 2 adults per family
 - **LIMITED SPOTS! Register here:** <http://www.lahandsandvoices.org/register>
 - **NOLA Kidsground** – 5700 Citrus Blvd, Ste D – New Orleans 70123
 - Questions? Text:
English: Nicole Deleon (504) 388-5712
Spanish: Marbely Barahona (504) 473-2479
- Monthly VIRTUAL Parent Chats
 - Allow families to connect from a comfortable space.
 - Provide the opportunity to learn about resources available for families with children who are D/HH.
 - Drawings for gift cards are held at each Parent Chat.
 - ZOOM meeting ID 883 3258 1799
 - Upcoming dates
 - May 1, 2025 “An Exceptional Life” featuring Jada Babcock, Parent Guide and published author. Jada will share her inspiring story about raising a deaf child.

- June 5, 2025 “It Takes a Village” featuring Rana Otallah, Parent and Advocate. Rana will share a message of hope, determination, and advocacy.
- Learn more about LA H&V
 - Visit www.lahandsandvoices.org
 - <https://www.lahandsandvoices.org/guide-by-your-side>
 - Email contactus@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.

- **In-house testing for Lysosomal Storage Disorders**
As of December 11, 2024, the LDH-Office of Public Health Laboratory began screening for Mucopolysaccharidosis type I (MPS I) and Glycogen storage disease type II (Pompe). Although OPH added these conditions to the Louisiana newborn screening panel in January 2022, samples were outsourced to partner laboratories as the Newborn Screening lab implemented new instrumentation and hired new staff. Follow-up procedures for abnormal results of these conditions will remain the same.

Louisiana Birth Defects Monitoring Network (LBDMN) tracks the occurrence of over 70 structural, functional, and genetic birth defects in Louisiana residents. LBDMN staff conduct active surveillance of birth defects in children born in Louisiana. 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 2.75%. 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 65%) were the most common. Complete findings are in the [Louisiana Birth Defects Monitoring Network 2024 Annual Report](#) to the legislature.

Since 2022, LBDMN identified 4,428 children born in 2020 – 2024 who may benefit from a referral needs assessment, including:

- 4,124 with qualifying birth defects,
- 100 children born in 2024-25 excluded from LBDMN case definition, but who may benefit from referral needs assessment, and
- 204 children born prematurely in 2024 (pilot study)

Currently, we are identifying 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.

LCD Programs include:

- Hearing aids for qualifying individuals based on age and income
- Assistive technology for qualifying individuals, free of charge
- Support Service Providers for individuals who are deaf and blind (DeafBlind) to live and participate in their communities with independence.
- Interpreter standards, services, oversight and support for communication accessibility for individuals who use American Sign Language (ASL) and the ASL interpreter workforce

LCD has developed a Statewide Mentorship Program to elevate the quality and number of qualified American Sign Language Interpreters (ASL) in Louisiana through several key objectives:

- Providing resources and support for the ongoing professional development of ASL interpreters in Louisiana.
- Supporting the development of essential skills necessary for ASL interpreters to become highly qualified and certified professionals.
- Ensuring all Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing ASL users have access to high-quality ASL interpreting services to promote equitable communication access.

Training Opportunities: If your organization is interested in trainings, professional development, or resources related to Deaf sensitivity, culture, or services including ASL Interpreting for d/Deaf, DeafBlind or hard of hearing people, please contact LCD. More information on the LCD please click [here](#) or contact us at LCD@la.gov.

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

Families enrolled in Louisiana’s MIECHV home visiting services continue to experience strong and improving outcomes across a range of key performance indicators—many of which exceed national averages. Our commitment to evidence-based practices, family-centered care, and continuous quality improvement is reflected in the following successes:

Depression Screening: 91.7% of primary caregivers were screened for depression using validated tools, with completion rates exceeding national averages. Early identification and connection to support remain a core focus of our model.

Postpartum Care: 92% of families in MIECHV demonstrate greater follow-through with timely postpartum visits, ensuring better health outcomes for birthing parents during a critical period.

Tobacco Cessation Referrals: Our teams are identifying tobacco use and making referrals to cessation services at rates above the national average, supporting healthier home environments for children.

Child Injury and Maltreatment Prevention: Rates of reported child injuries and substantiated cases of maltreatment are lower than national benchmarks, reflecting effective prevention, education, and safety planning embedded in home visits.

Early Language and Literacy Promotion: Caregivers are receiving consistent support in promoting early language and literacy development, with outcomes showing higher engagement in literacy-rich activities than national counterparts.

Behavioral Concern Inquiries: Our home visitors routinely inquire about and respond to behavioral concerns in children, ensuring early intervention and support—another area in which we outperform national peers.

Primary Caregiver Education: More of our enrolled primary caregivers have achieved at least a high school diploma or GED compared to national MIECHV data, underscoring our program’s support for long-term family stability.

Continuity of Insurance Coverage: Families enrolled in Louisiana MIECHV are maintaining consistent health insurance coverage for both children and caregivers at rates above national averages.

Completed Developmental Referrals: When developmental concerns are identified, our home visiting teams are successfully connecting families to needed services. Referral completion rates continue to rise and remain higher than the national average.

These outcomes highlight the dedication of our home visiting professionals and the strength of our partnerships with families. They also reflect Louisiana’s strategic focus on workforce development, data-informed practice, and community collaboration. Together, we are creating lasting impact for children and caregivers across the state.

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

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 by going to <https://ldh.la.gov/page/ppcl>. 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). PPCL also provides information about mental health and other community resources that may be beneficial to the patients you serve. PPCL offers 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. For more info on the Provider-to-Provider Consultation Line, go to <https://ldh.la.gov/page/ppcl>.

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.

The Title V Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Block Grant is the cornerstone of policy and programming for all mothers and children. Significant funding is directed toward the state's systems of care for children with disabilities and children and youth special healthcare needs (CYSHCN), to evolve and meet their unique and complex needs. The MCH Block Grant supports vital programs and services to enhance the health outcomes and quality of life for CYSHCN. Some of these efforts include:

- Improving access to family-centered care coordination
- Engaging with families and individuals with special health care needs
- Strengthening public health infrastructure
- Implementing national standards and guidelines

- Building community capacity to deliver enabling services such as American Sign Language translation services

Grant details and other Title V efforts for the CYSHCN population are available on Bureau of Family Health's website. The Louisiana application for annual funding is submitted on July 15. For feedback or questions regarding Louisiana's MCH Block Grant, please reach out to us at TitleVMCH@la.gov.

Project SOAR (Screen Often and Accurately Refer), Project SOAR (Screen Often and Accurately Refer) is in year 4 of a five-year, federally funded initiative aimed at enhancing Louisiana's developmental health system for young children, focusing on universal screenings and timely follow-up care for developmental needs, including perinatal depression, in children from prenatal to age 3 (P-3). This project partners with primary caregivers (e.g., parents, guardians, adult siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.), healthcare providers (e.g., Pediatricians, family doctors, Obstetricians, nurses, etc.), and community organizations to discuss experiences with child developmental screening, caregiver depression screening, and follow-up during check-up visits.

To strengthen collaboration and alignment, regular convening of partners, collaborators, and families are held. These gatherings foster meaningful connections, facilitate the exchange of information, and provide dedicated workspace for SOAR to advance system strengthening strategies.

Young Child Wellness Collaborative (YCWC) is a cross-agency advisory council that provides leadership and informs priorities 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 on the second Tuesday of even numbered months; the next convening is June 10, 2025.

In addition to family and health providers, the collaborative includes representation from BFH program leads, the Office of Behavioral Health (OBH), Medicaid, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), the Louisiana Department of Child/Family Services (DCFS), LSU Human Development Center, Head Start, EarlySteps, the Louisiana Partnership for Children/Families, the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children, and the Louisiana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.