

Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council
Education/Employment Committee
April 30, 2025

VIVIENNE WEBB: Hi. I would like to call the meeting to order. The time is 4:24. Good afternoon everyone. Stephanie, would you mind doing the roll call?

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Sure. Ms. Bayham.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Here.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Mr. Ennis. Ms. Gonzales. Ms. Jordan.

MERIDITH JORDAN: Here.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Dr. Meda.

LAMARTINE MEDA: Here.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Mr. Piontek.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Tony, can you unmute?

STEPHANIE CARMONA: I'm going to give him a moment. Mr. Taylor.

ERICK TAYLOR: Here.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Ms. Webb.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Here.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Dr. Wilson. Ms. Washington. And Mr. Piontek. Tony, we need your camera on. You have your mike unmuted.

HANNAH JENKINS: Tony, can you hear us?

TONY PIONTEK: Yes.

HANNAH JENKINS: Can you turn your camera on for us.

SPEAKER: There we go.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Thank you Stephanie. Before we get started I just want to remind you all of a few rules. For committee members and members of the public please raise your hand to speak and wait to be recognized by the chair. To help the meeting run smoothly please keep side conversations to a minimum and comments related to the topic at hand. For those committee members who are attending virtually remember you must be on camera and have your first and last name showing to be counted towards our quorum. Please keep microphones muted unless called upon by the chair. Electronically raise your hand to request to speak and wait to be called on by the chair. Once recognized by the chair your microphone will be turned on. After speaking your microphone will be returned to mute.

Also the Q and A is for those needing an ADA

accommodation to participate. Public comment will not be accepted via the Q and A except for those individuals who requested the accommodation. As for order committee members in person and virtually will be allowed to speak first. Public members in person will then be called on followed by public participating virtually who have their hands raised. As with all hybrid meetings it can be difficult to keep track of all those wanting to speak in person and virtually. Please be patient. All comments and questions from committee members and the public may be limited due to time constraints so please keep that in mind. Also comments about a person's character will not be allowed. Finally, members of the public will have the opportunity to provide public comment before each vote and during designated public comment periods. Public members will be given one opportunity to speak per each agenda item and will be limited to two minutes. The chair may also use their discretion to determine if comments will be accepted outside of those times.

So next is the approval of the meeting summary. Everyone should have reviewed the January meeting summary which is linked to the agenda you received via email. There is also a copy in your packet. I need a motion to accept the minutes.

ERICK TAYLOR: I motion to approve.

TONY PIONTEK: I'll second.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Cool. Thanks. Now it's time to do a roll call vote. Stephanie, would you like to do the honors?

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Sure. A vote for yes is to accept the meeting summary. A vote for no is to not accept it. Ms. Bayham.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Yes.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Ms. Bayham, yes. Mr. Ennis. Ms. Gonzales. Ms. Jordan.

MERIDITH JORDAN: Yes.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Ms. Jordan, yes. Dr. Meda.

LAMARTINE MEDA: Yes.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Dr. Meda, yes. Mr. Piontek.

TONY PIONTEK: Yes.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Mr. Piontek, yes. Mr. Taylor.

ERICK TAYLOR: Yes.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Mr. Taylor, yes. You have five yeses so the motion passes.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Okay. The January meeting summary is passed by unanimous consent. Melissa Bayham, would you like to give us an LRS update?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Sure. Good evening everyone. Just had a couple of updates on preemployment transition services and then I'll be happy to take any questions about that or any other topic concerning LRS. Last meeting I gave an update on third-party cooperative arrangements. I don't have any new updates on those other than we continue to work with the school districts that have expressed interest in contracting with us to provide preemployment transition services in their districts. We are working with at least three districts that have expressed interest in contracting with us.

We did have an application period for our fee for service vendors who provide preemployment transition services in the school districts that don't have third-party cooperative arrangements. We did application cross references to make sure that all of our vendors met certain requirements. And in particular we paid a lot of attention during this application period to their curriculums because we wanted to make sure that the curriculums and the information that our students were being taught in schools about preemployment transition services is comparable. So as part of the application period 27 vendors have been approved. Two are still pending and five vendors decided not to renew their applications. The majority of the vendors they either have to have their curriculum approved by their program manager, program coordinator or they had to select a nationally recognized curriculum. And the majority of our vendors did use a curriculum called Attainment. I'm glad it worked out that way just because I want to maintain consistency with the services that we are providing. That was a concern of mine that there was a lot of inconsistencies of what our students were seeing across the state.

And the last update I'll give on preemployment transition services is just we are waiting on our final budget for the next state fiscal year to determine what our funding is going to look like for these services for the next school year. We're getting to the point where we're exceeding the 15 percent. We're supposed to allot 15 percent of our federal allotment on these services and

we're starting to exceed that. So if we don't receive any additional state general funds we will have to scale back on the number of units that the students receive per school year just to make sure it's within that budget. If we exceed the 15 percent then we're going into the 85 percent which is really for vocational rehabilitation or services for our adults with disabilities. So those are my updates that I had but happy to take questions.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Thank you Melissa. Any questions for her before we move on?

EBONY HAVEN: So my question is going to be like federally related. Since there has been so many changes to the Department of Education just kind of talk to the committee about how those changes are going to affect services and if you guys have heard anything from I guess the federal government about how the funding is going to be structured, how your department is going to be structured and if there's any changes. Can you just talk to the committee about that.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Right. So unfortunately my response to that is they have not communicated with us. So just to kind of let people know where we are, we are under the Department of Education in the federal level under the Office of Special Education Rehabilitative Services. We're under the Rehabilitation Services Administration. We call it RSA. And so if they know things they're not saying. Now I can tell you we have a national organization, they're our lobbying organization, called CSAVR, which is the Council for State Administrators on Vocational Rehabilitation. So they called the VR directors to find out basically what our preference was. If we were to be moved out of the Department of Education it appears there's two places we could go. One document that we saw talked about certain programs going back to the department they were in prior. And so that would put us somewhere in Health and Human Services.

But what the preference was with the VR directors, and just looking at where we were in terms of our federal law, which we're under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the preference would be for us to go to the Department of Labor. Because a lot of VR agencies have already moved at the state level to the Department of Labor because if you look at the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act most of the programs other than

vocational rehabilitation and adult education are in the Department of Labor. And we're required to be mandated partners of the American Job Centers and so we're required to partner with the Department of Labor programs already. And so the consensus to that national lobbying group from the VR directors was to lobby for us to move to the Department of Labor. But in terms of messaging that we've actually received from Department of Education, that would be none.

I can tell you so the commissioner, I'm sorry, with the commissioner obviously the administration changed the commissioner. I don't know how that works. I don't know the official terminology for that. But then the deputy commissioner and the chief of vocational rehabilitation they did, from my understanding, take the retirement incentive and they both have left. And so now the acting commissioner is Christopher (inaudible) who was over the (inaudible). So there's definitely been some definite changes just because of losing staff due to the retirement incentive. And the only other thing that I do know that's kind of interesting is from what we know all of the attorneys that usually work with our programs are no longer with the Department of Education. But that's all the information that I have.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: I have a question about I know you said y'all were waiting on the information for your final budget and right now it's looking like the 15 percent, like y'all are receiving that 15 percent, is that correct, of the full amount? I just want to make sure I have that right.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Let me explain that a little bit better. I'm going to start somewhere and go there. It leads me to something I forgot to tell you. I know I spoke to y'all before about every state is allocated a certain amount of federal funds and you have to have the state general funds to draw those federal funds down. We did recently, I think last week, get our final grant award notification from the third continuing resolution where we actually finally got all the funds and VR actually got a cost-of-living adjustment. And so last federal fiscal year Louisiana was allocated 64 million-dollars and this federal fiscal year Louisiana was actually allocated 72 million-dollars. Now we usually return 40 to 50 percent of that because we don't have the state general funds to

match that.

So then I get to your question. So it goes by how much money you actually draw down. So last year we actually drew down about 35 million-dollars. Fifteen percent of that 35 million has to be set aside for preemployment transition services. You can exceed that it's just given our financial situation that takes funds away from what I call the full vocational rehabilitation program. So we try to keep our program within that 15 percent of that. So it's not like we overspent our budget. It's just that 15 percent must be set aside, must be spent on preemployment transition services. But you can exceed that and spend more than 15 percent.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: I do have a follow up just for my clarity. I know previously we talked about the third party...

MELISSA BAYHAM: Third-party cooperative arrangement.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Thank you. I know you say we're over, does that have any effect on that 15 percent or is that going more towards the other thing? I know you were saying that's a way they pull down the funds.

MELISSA BAYHAM: So the third-party cooperative arrangement provides additional match. In all those funds, because those contracts are specifically for preemployment transition services, they all go towards the 15 percent. So you are increasing your federal amount that you're drawing down but it's also increasing the bucket. But what we had to do recently we've had to be a little more mindful when we are renewing contracts that the school districts are not exceeding what we would think is reasonable in terms of that 15 percent.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: My last question. Sorry. Since there was this cost-of-living adjustment, and we know I guess over the years that Louisiana (inaudible) or about half. If 15 percent or about 15 percent (inaudible) preETS kind of thing, so the money going towards that, I'm just curious how do you get the other the 85 percent? Like how do you get that match for the voc rehab?

MELISSA BAYHAM: So the state general funds that we receive that 15 percent of preETS is just part of the whole VR pile. So we are constantly drawing down federal funds from our state general funds and then that all gets put in the vocational rehab budget. Rehab is just a portion of the VR budget. Basically when we do our financial

reporting we have to show that 15 percent of our expenditures were spent on pre-employment transition services.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: I guess what I'm trying to figure out is the reason that we're leaving half on the table is that we don't have the state general funds to match.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Correct. So we get approximately 8 million state general funds and for us to be fully funded with the 72 million we would need approximately \$19.5-million in matching funds.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: I was trying to work it all out.

MELISSA BAYHAM: It's complicated.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Jill.

JILL HANO: I didn't realize this while you were talking you mentioned that y'all fall under the Department of Ed. How does that correlate?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Correlate to? I don't know exactly what you're asking but let me explain something to you. So vocational rehab agencies are in different places in every state. So in a lot now they are with the Department of Labor. Like Texas, for example, they are with the Texas Workforce Commission. But then you go to other states and they might be under Department of Education, they might be under Department of Health and Human Services. And to make things more complicated every state has different departments. Like some have departments called Labor and Economic Opportunity. Like every state has their own kind of structure and VR can be placed in wherever the state government decides.

JILL HANO: So y'all fell under Department of Ed?

MELISSA BAYHAM: At the federal level we are under the Department of Ed. But at the state level the state decides where the VR program will be. Prior to 2010 we were with Department of Social Service and they moved us at the state level to the Department of Labor, the Louisiana Workforce Commission but our funds come from the federal Department of Education.

JILL HANO: Okay. All right. Thank you.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Thank you. Now it's time for the Louisiana Department of Education update, Meredith Jordan.

MERIDITH JORDAN: Thank you. So I'll go ahead and answer that same question. So just to kind of give everyone an update on sort of what we're hearing from the federal Department of Ed on the special education programs.

We're kind of in the same boat as Melissa answered. So we are still waiting for our next IDEA allocation. So remember last time I was here we talked about our budget, activities, proposed activities. We also talked with SEAP about that. We've done a lot of public engagement and getting input. So the current draft application that we have publicly posted for our public comment period is still in draft and it's based on last year's dollar amount. So that's kind of what they recommended to us. And we do that every year is to draft our application based on last year's dollar amount. We have no indication that our funding will be reduced. As of yet we have no indication that anything's going to happen to our funding. That there's going to be lesser IDEA allocation to states this year. So we're just kind of rolling with the flow as normal, prepping to get at least the same dollar amount as last year.

I will say the whole team that supports us in Louisiana, Mike (inaudible), he is still there. We got the same notification that like the legal team has shifted and changed a lot at the federal level but I still have the same Office of Special Education programs state lead. We are still in contact. We are acting as normal. We're still submitting all of the required federal reporting. All of those required activities that we have always done, we are doing them. In fact, we just had a meeting with our state lead just a couple weeks ago. We are in what's called our clarification period for our big federal reporting that we do every year in February. There's a two-week clarification period after they review everything. They can come back and ask questions. We submitted one of the best reports that we've ever submitted in the state. And we've talked a lot here about performance and things you see across our state for students with disabilities. We had very few clarification questions but it was nice to be able to get on, talk to our state lead, get any updates. Of course I asked them any update on our funding allocation and he didn't have one yet. But I suspect that we should get those very soon I hope. Unless they extend to give us additional time our IDEA application is due May 20th or May 21st. So coming up quickly. So hoping to get those dollar amounts soon. So that's kind of where we are. We are operating as normal. We have no indication that funding issues are going to happen for us. Nothing like that.

So with that I have just a couple of updates for y'all.

And I know the next item is a legislative one that might take some time if there's any interest in what's happening in the legislation around education and employment so I definitely want us to have time to do that. We are right now really busy gearing up for our big teacher leader summit. That's happening in June this year where we are have at least 4,000 superintendents, leaders, educators, special educators, professionals all gather in New Orleans. It's one of our biggest events to provide professional learning, capacity building, get everybody motivated and planning heading into the next school year. What are our priorities as a state. And so that's got us extremely busy right now prepping for that. We will have many, many sessions to support professionals that are supporting students with disabilities. We have a lot of behavior sessions. We have a lot of instructional best practice sessions. We have IEP sessions. Just lots and lots of topics so that anybody, any session there's a lot of opportunity to get professional development on supporting students with disabilities next year.

We are in the midst of a lot of end of the year collections for school systems. There's a lot of stuff that we do that requires school systems at the end of the year, it's not like they're not busy enough at this time, trying to close out schools. But y'all know this is the time that we're collecting those local SEAP reports that you all stay really attuned to. I'm collecting some gifted and talented literacy. Some gifted literacy screening data right now. So a lot of stuff happening to close out the school year. We are kicking off a lot of new cohorts of support that we do annually and I'll have those on my report to talk about tomorrow. So lots of stuff both ending out this school year and already planning and prepping for the summer and next school year. And what we will support moving into next school year.

I wanted to take a little bit of time to talk about two of our latest policy revisions. So we have finally touched every special education policy in Louisiana now with our 1508 update. It does not mean we are finished. It does not mean that if we get additional stakeholder input, even with session happening and some of the bills right now, there could be potential policy shifts that need to happen in early fall in response to any laws or legislation that happened. So we're not done but I think

it's a pretty big milestone for all of us. A lot of people around this table are parents, family, stakeholders have worked really hard on getting a lot of (inaudible) all our policies and really trying to make things better for our kids and for our families.

So in March BESE approved revisions to bulletin 1530. That is we call that bulletin our IEP handbook bulletin. It includes alternate assessment eligibility criteria. That is the piece that we updated there in March. We have worked with stakeholders, pupil appraisal since the fall talking about this update and what we needed to shift and move to in our state. We probably talked about this multiple times at SEAP, at least twice. SEAP endorsed those bulletin changes. We also talked with superintendents because it impacts our schools. It impacts our students taking LEAP Connect assessment. All of those groups endorsed the changes. BESE approved those revisions in March. That bulletin is on notice of intent right now. It will be off later this summer and those changes will impact starting next school year.

So just to kind of backup and sort of recap what is alternate assessment participation, who sets those requirements. So the federal law sets the expectation in ESSA that 1 percent of your student population can take an alternate assessment, statewide standard assessment. So the vast majority, 99 percent of our kids, are supposed to take regular-- we're supposed to have 1 percent taking LEAP Connect. So that's our assessment for kids with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Every year since 2017 Louisiana has submitted a waiver from that federal requirement. When we started, the requirement started in 2015, 2017, they give you a couple years to implement. In 2017 our state was at 1.5 percent participation. So still too high in the eyes of the feds and of the law. Our last waiver last year, which was denied because we're going in the wrong direction, we were at 1.8 percent participation in LEAP Connect. So what that indicated to us, and we had a lot of conversation with OSEP, it was not something we had a choice in, we had to make a policy shift and really revisit the criteria in how we were making decisions, what was the bar that we had set to make sure that we only have students with the most significant cognitive disabilities taking alternate assessment. Again, this criteria will go in effect next school year so we won't see the impact of

this in terms of our participation rate for another year. So it is likely I will submit another waiver this fall that will still show a participation rate too high because it takes time to get the policy shifts and then by the time we get it in place for next year these kids won't take LEAP Connect again until next spring. So we will see that impact happening in another year.

We are right now working with a lot of support for our school systems around the implementation, what does this mean, how do we prepare for any students who qualified previously under that criteria that aren't going to qualify anymore. And what supports are in place, how do we still make sure that these students are supported and have a successful journey. All of our high school students are grandfathered in. They can still get the LEAP Connect alternate diploma based on the old criteria. So we now know that we have plans in place that anybody going into high school that we have time to get them, now using April Dunn criteria, we can also get them a diploma. So making sure our school systems are thinking about this. Identifying students that we have a plan for. What do those supports look like in school next year for the students who don't qualify. So that will go into effect for next school year.

The next revision was April. That was our (inaudible) revision which is bulletin 1508. Those are our (inaudible) for our state. Those are our evaluation (inaudible) pupil appraisal handbook. We worked for the past year on these revisions. There was no need to rush those. They were not in response to legislation. It was just a bulletin that hadn't been updated in a long time, hadn't had a great review. So we worked across this school year to do this. Worked with a lot of stakeholders. SEAP endorsed, superintendents endorsed and then BESE approved those revisions in April. This was a comprehensive review. It accomplished some things, some things that I heard from this group as well so I'll kind of talk through some of this. And then it also has technical edits in it. A couple of main things that it did, we updated the definition of response to intervention and kind of aligned it to what we know about best instructional practice around intervention. We updated that definition. We also added clarity, a lot of clarity that except for those IDEA required exceptionalities where intervention is required

that intervention can't be used it to delay an evaluation. That's something that we heard a lot from parents in our state. We got that taken care of in this revision.

We also added two pupil appraisal teams. The addition of licensed psychologists with school specialty or a licensed specialist in school psychology. So there are lots of different titles sometimes for school psychologists. And so our previous bulletin really limited and said you had to be a certified school psychologist but there are these other licensed psychologists that can help in our school system, give assessments and do observations for students. Conduct assessments is a big one. And so it allows our pupil appraisal teams to expand their capacity to complete evaluations faster because they're going to have a bit more capacity to do that. We did the same thing with speech language pathologists. Those individuals are also licensed by the board. They can now help speech language pathologists with assessments, screenings. So again, the idea here is to expand the capacity of our pupil appraisal teams, which will then in turn help them function more efficiently and faster. Because we don't want delayed evaluations, right. Service providers now are some of the hardest people to find so I think that's going to help us in terms of evaluations running a lot more efficiently as well.

We updated the autism criteria, aligned that more to current (inaudible) manuals who (inaudible) school psychologists. A large number of those to get that criteria where we wanted it. We also changed some language, Ms. Webb, I think you will appreciate this around-- so prior to this update parents were only allowed to bring in doctors' notes, prescriptions that were right around the State of Louisiana. This update opened that up and said a parent coming in from California with diagnoses, prescriptions, medical information that our pupil appraisal teams will now accept that. And I think that's going to be huge and take that burden off. We had school systems having to tell parents who were coming in and saying no, I need you to go pay another copay and go to a local or closer doctor to get the information that we need as a school system to proceed. I think that will help, again, it will move evaluations faster. We're not waiting on additional medical information as well.

Those were some of the big ones in 1508. Again, if you go look for these updates it's not yet in the notice of intent but it will update on our website sometime this summer. And again, these additions will be in effect for next school year as well. And those are the biggest things that I wanted to update you on, policy changes that were happening. I don't have anything else coming on the horizon until we know what happens in legislative session. I'm going to stop there and answer any questions.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Thank you. May I ask specifically about the verbiage used in 1508. Because if it says doctor's note I would love that to be changed to a doctor's diagnosis because a doctor's note is what a kid gets from a doctor when they're sick. Doctor's diagnosis is far more formal and more important. It declares someone has this. It's very definite whereas a doctor's note it can be something like please let so and so use the elevator if they're on crutches.

MERIDITH JORDAN: Yeah, I'll let you know. And it covers prescriptions too. I'll get you the specifics.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Thank you. Does anyone else have any questions for Meredith? Mr. Meda.

LAMARTINE MEDA: (Inaudible).

MERIDITH JORDAN: So a parent can request an evaluation, a teacher. It can be part of a school building level committee process where concerns have been raised but they're not really sure which disability or what the concern is. It could be academic. It could be behavior. So really anybody can refer or request an evaluation. The most common way we see are teachers, school personnel and of course parents.

LAMARTINE MEDA: So once the request is made there is an official follow up or just like okay?

MERIDITH JORDAN: There is an official follow up. That is something that we put in policy last year. And IDEA just says that within a reasonable amount of time the school system has to respond to that request. But then our state went further and defined that time. And it's about two weeks they have. The school has to respond to that request with either yes, we're going to evaluate and by the way I need your consent and then there's some documents that happen that then help that process proceed. Or the school system could say no, I'm not going to evaluate but they have to give the parent a reason why and they have to offer them

due process to be able to go to the next level. But there has to be a definitive answer.

LAMARTINE MEDA: So those no, we are not going to test are there criteria defined to those-- well, not teachers but principals? Do we tell them if it is A, B and C in those tests?

MERIDITH JORDAN: So there are some required screenings but then for assessment for evaluation for special education that's where 1508 outlines all those criteria for all 13 disability categories they know exactly what they're looking for, what assessments have to be given.

LAMARTINE MEDA: And the addition of speech language pathologists (inaudible)?

MERIDITH JORDAN: The addition of speech language pathologist assistants is new and those assistants can now work with or under the supervision of a speech pathologist to give assessments, provide some interventions because they are also licensed. And it's just going to kind of open up the capacity. And frankly will likely see students get more speech minutes, right. The more we build the capacity and find more people who can help with the processes and open some of those provisions for our school systems to utilize these additional licensed people we'll get more students who can have better services.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Does anyone else have any questions? Thank you Meredith. Now it's Ebony with some legislative information.

EBONY HAVEN: I think that Meredith is going to give some information on a couple of bills as well. I'm going to discuss House Bill 237. It was included in your packets today. I'm just going to provide a little bit of background information and then I'll tell you guys about the bill. And if anybody has any questions Brenton will be able to answer. So back in December the legislative auditor released their third special education audit. This time the audit was specific to the seclusion, restraint and mistreatment of students with disabilities in public schools. Now for years we've been hearing from families and advocates about the issues in school systems and the audit kind of highlighted many of those concerns. And so some of them were there isn't (inaudible) as it relates to seclusion and restraint practices and policies. The use of seclusion and restraint is under recorded. And then there's no accountability for the school personnel

when it comes to improper use of seclusion and restraint. So the auditor in their report they shared some of those same concerns and observations as our advocates and listed many recommendations to help fix that system.

So one of the recommendations was to develop a practice to monitor school systems' use of restraint and seclusion. Currently the Louisiana Department of Education doesn't have the authority to monitor but the auditor sort of made it clear in the audit report. And the council tends to agree that the law doesn't prevent the Louisiana Department of Education (inaudible). The auditor also reviewed (inaudible) policies at random and found that 46 of those, about 92 percent, were not in compliance with the law. So some of the suggestions from the auditor's report were there needs to be improved processes to verify accuracy of the incidences of restraint. Seventy-two percent of the schools that they reviewed reported no incidents. Now we've heard from parents that they know their school has used restraint on their child but then the report showed zero restraints on their audit list. So we need to improve those processes but also ensure that school systems are aware of the mandated reporting laws. A large part of the school personnel that the auditor interviewed stated that they report directly to school administration and not law enforcement or protective services.

And then lastly one of the suggestions was reviewing camera policies to ensure the school districts are in compliance. In about 60 percent of the schools that have received the funding to install the cameras they have not installed the cameras. Now I think some of that has to do with the policies and parents may not know that they have a right to request a camera. And then some of the policies might not have the information or just maybe confusing about how you go about requesting the cameras to get them installed in the classroom. So the DD Council partnered with the Arc of Louisiana, Disability Rights of Louisiana and the Department of Education, thank you Meredith, and we had two other policy people from the Louisiana Department of Education that helped work with us on this particular bill. And we even brought in the Families Helping Families centers and LaCAN to help advocate for seclusion and restraint practices. (Inaudible) drafted the bill. It's HB 237, like I said, and we're going to watch it as it makes its way in the legislation process.

Now I'll just be honest with you guys, it's not a solve all the problems bill but it is like a start to help us address some of those concerns that not only the auditor had, but a lot of our advocates and our parents had with the use of seclusion and restraint in our schools.

So as the bill is written right now, and I'm going to kind of talk about some changes that we're kind of working with the charter schools and the Louisiana Department of Education, some amendments on later, but as the bill is written right now if it were to pass it will remove the use of seclusion in the law. So the use of seclusion would totally be eliminated. And we're using evidence-based practices that there's no evidence that shows that seclusion is an effective practice. But there's lots of evidence that shows seclusion can be harmful. The bill also defines physical restraint. What it is and specifically how physical restraint can only be done by a specialized teacher or school personnel unless it's an emergency. So it kind of specifies that and better defines physical restraint. It also clarifies that during and after the use of restraint the student has to be monitored at all times and the monitoring has to be documented in an incident report.

Additionally a school nurse or a school health designee must see the student who's been restrained as soon as possible or at least before the day is over, that school day is over. And this just helps get another set of eyes on that student to observe for any injuries that may have occurred during physical restraint. And those individuals are mandated reporters so if there was any misuse of the physical restraint they are mandated to report that.

Also in the bill the parents have to be notified the same day of the incident. They also expand what information has to be included in the report. And the more information you have just helps capture the event, what occurred, who is involved, what type of restraints and all of that. It's very specific information in the bill. Those specific things have to be captured in the incident report. It also requires video if it's available to be reviewed and just to ensure compliance with policy and procedures. The bill also reduces the amount of incidents in a year from five incidents to three incidents before the trigger of a behavior intervention plan. It requires

districts to post policies and procedures publicly at the start of the year. And it also requires the Louisiana Department of Education to review policies annually and provide compliance with the law.

Now like I said, there may be some amendments and I think that may be one of the things that might be amended is the LDOE (inaudible) policy. It may not be annually. Once they get feedback what we're hoping for, or Meredith you can speak to that once I'm done, just providing feedback to make sure they are in compliance with the law. It may be a one-time thing. But in its current posture right now the department would review those policies annually. Also it would require the department to post publicly data on restraints and update that data on the website quarterly. Just so advocates can make sure they're holding their districts accountable with the information that's being provided. We don't want to see zero incidents and parents have reported that their child has been restrained. It also gives the department permission to create a crisis intervention training program with those IDEA funds. In its current posture it will require first year employees to take the crisis intervention training and that specialized crisis team to pass and repeat that training annually.

And then lastly it requires the installation of cameras in all self-contained special education classrooms without the need for parental request. So all of the districts were allocated funding to install cameras. Unfortunately I want to say, like I said earlier, only about 40 percent have installed those cameras. So they have the funding. This bill in its current posture would require all self-contained special education classrooms to install those cameras without that parental request. Like I said, we have been working with the Charter School Association and the Louisiana Department of Education on amendments. We're looking at where we can agree and we're going to look at working where we can agree. We are scheduled to meet on Friday to discuss all the changes they would like to see. But we're going to negotiate where we can. I'll just kind of leave it at that. I know one of the things they want to see added back is seclusion and I'm not sure we're going to agree on that. Like I said, we will meet Friday and there will be probably be some amendments when this bill is heard. I think it may be heard on May 7th in the House

Education Committee. We will make sure to get you guys updated. I don't know if you want to add anything to that Meredith?

MERIDITH JORDAN: I'll just say I was really impressed with how you all came together with Disability Rights and the Arc and just how everybody really came together to try do the best to solve a problem, right. And I really appreciate that as the department. And I'm really hopeful for where it's going to go. And so just really impressed with you guys.

I'll just kind of if there is any specific information, questions around any of it or how any of this currently works right now. One of the challenges is understanding the definitions that are involved. And I think that's something that has been clarity tried to be brought as well to what is seclusion, what is seclusion rooms, restraint, what are they not. We already in the current law do not allow any mechanical restraints. So that was never, that's always been gone for several years, probably since the last update of 2017 a while back. We haven't had mechanical restraint in Louisiana in a long time. But just the complexities around the different definitions. What is seclusion. What are seclusion rooms. What are they not. And trying to figure out what needs to be included to clarify some of that around seclusion too. I'm anxious and of course we'll be there following as well. I know this was something that BESE's legislative agenda that they were interested in working towards a solution so I know we appreciate you guys for that.

EBONY HAVEN: Do you guys have any questions?

LAMARTINE MEDA: At these schools, asking a question, is there anything that speaks to accountability for the schools? Because they are responsible, they are the ones in charge of the schools on a daily basis.

EBONY HAVEN: So I think the increase of details of the reporting and making sure that we get the information quarterly, that the Department of Education post that information on their website quarterly that is going to increase the accountability of school systems. Like I said, if a parent knows that their child has been restrained and they see zero on that particular school system's report they need to hold that school system accountable. And we didn't put anything in the bill about like reporting that information to the Department of Education saying that hey,

I know they've reported zero but there was an incident. So I think just making sure that we put specifics about okay, if there is an incident the parent has to be notified in an incident report at least by the end of the school day I think. The parent has to be notified by the end of the school day and there has to be an incident report given to that parent within 24 hours. If a parent knows that they've been given an incident report and they look on the quarterly report that that school system is turning in and they have zero incidents then that is holding them accountable. Like you guys reported zero but I have an incident report that's saying that you restrained my child. So we tried to put accountability in there.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I didn't know if you were going to add that part but just something I was thinking of. So part of the whole issue that was talked about in the audit was the department itself may not have the resources for the monitoring that we would like to see whether that's staff, whoever it may be. So we did put-- again, this is kind of baby steps of addressing everything in that audit. We did put in there, I was trying to find it and I couldn't find it, but we wanted a lot of this information to go to the Special Education Advisory Council that each district has because they are the ones that can start having those discussions within their districts and start holding folks accountable based on whatever this data is. So if there are issues within a certain school system (inaudible). Getting it in the hands of those advisory councils or committees that can hold those districts accountable for questionable data or questionable practices. But no, there's nothing that specifically says the principal will do this. And then also making sure things are done correctly. We have that crisis intervention training with a specialized, like making sure that each school has specialized people that are going to respond to these situations as opposed to whoever's walking around the classroom is the person that's responding. Another level of in a way accountability because you know it is someone that has been trained on proper techniques and procedures would be the person addressing these particular situations. And so we thought that was a level of oversight.

And a lot of it was trying to figure out ways to make schools accountable within themselves. We have a

component in there about seeing the nurse or some sort of health designee so we get another set of eyes on the student that was involved in a restraint. Not just was there abuse but also you don't know what happens to someone during these situations. If you started improper procedures it might result in something we don't know. So getting another set of eyes that's a mandated reporter that has to see them. That's probably someone that is also going to contribute to some sort of reports so you as a parent if you're concerned about something that's happened may various processes or complaints have access or have other reports to look at to see what happened. So I think these things will maybe start moving in the right direction for that accountability that you're talking about but I don't know that it's going to address it completely. But I think it's setting things up to get to that point.

LAMARTINE MEDA: Most often the parents don't know. (Inaudible) whatever part also go to the families so they can see zero reporting but I have a restraint on my child so the parent can have the information in their hand right away so I guess they can ask questions.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yeah, that report is, I would imagine, a pretty hefty report. But I think we as advocacy groups need better communication with LDOE when that report goes out. It's not just on a website and we don't know about it. We can push it out. Make people aware. Hey, go look at this. All of that could (inaudible) to maybe work with the department on getting that heads up. Where it's at. Where to find it. Push information out to everyone so they can access it.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Any other questions?

BRENTON ANDRUS: It's not a question, just a statement. Because this is going out maybe next week. It was supposed to be this week. It's going out next week. There is an active action alert. So you can go on our website laddc.org. If you go under the LaCAN section our alerts are there. We also email it out. It's on Facebook as well. And I think X it's on there for the two people that actually look at it on X. But it has a lot of information in there. Just for our (inaudible) contact, we give you all the committee members on house education. Again, our alerts aren't going to tell you yea or nay on HB 237. It's just an opportunity for you to look at it. You may not agree with the draft that's there. Just share your

thoughts. Ebony talked to you about amendments that are going to happen. I'm sure there's going to be amendments throughout the whole process until it's signed by the governor. And hopefully it's signed in a manner that we are in support of. But it's going to constantly be updated because we're going to constantly hear from other people. We talked about the groups. Us, the Arc, Disability Rights Louisiana that kind of got to the table with DOE in the beginning to start this but now it's out publicly. Other groups are coming in hey, we don't like this. We do like this. We're trying to figure out where we can agree. But I will say we're pretty stern on what we want and we'll just see where it takes us. But even with some of the stuff that we were looking at there was some good that came from the groups like yeah, we need that in there. We're going to get some good out of any discussions. So look for those. You probably won't see any sort of amendments until it actually goes to committee. Those will be presented during the process that you're in.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Does anyone else have any questions or have anything to add? Cool. Now moving onto contractual updates. Stephanie, would you like to do that?

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Sure. I'm talking about the transition to adulthood, activity 1.1.5. We partnered with Team Dynamics to offer a series of trainings for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. So we sent an LADDC news that Team Dynamics created a survey, I want to say this was in January, to identify skills, knowledge and resources that can empower individuals. Team Dynamics then took those responses from all over the state to help determine which topics they were going to do the trainings on and at which locations. There are six statewide trainings. The topics that were selected were health and wellbeing, enhanced financial literacy, preparing for employment, civic engagement and navigating (inaudible). Each of those trainings have been scheduled. Every training consists of two different sessions. So two of those topics are being covered. And there are six locations that the trainings will be. But those were just the most prominent places that had survey results or like people had answered. So the first training was in Lake Charles on March 27th. It had 18 people registered to attend. I did include in your packet this little document. It includes the dates of the trainings,

what the sessions are going to be and then how many people actually attended. (Inaudible) people that had registered. They had six people that attended in the Lake Charles training. And I did get evaluations and survey results from those already. It was overall good.

They did have a training in Baton Rouge on April 24th. I'm going to talk about that more at the next meeting. But if you were interested in a training the next one is May 29th and that's in Lafayette. And there will be a couple more coming up. Those LADDC news reminders for those trainings will be going out soon. Are there any questions for me about this?

VIVIENNE WEBB: Thank you Stephanie. Hearing no additional questions we will move onto announcements. Tomorrow is the full council meeting which will begin at 10:00 a.m. in this room. Please note the adjusted schedule for the council meeting. Does anyone on the committee have any announcements to make? Ebony.

EBONY HAVEN: I'm not on the committee but I wanted to circle back just real quick since we have some extra time. Meredith, did you have any other legislative updates about what the department is sort of following?

MERIDITH JORDAN: The other one that I know this group might be interested in, Brenton, I don't remember the number off the top of my head, but it's the one that talks about legislative cohorts of the department.

BRENTON ANDRUS: House Bill 589.

MERIDITH JORDAN: And just to kind of clarify. We do a lot of legislative reporting in terms of generating reports and sending them across the street to the legislature. We also send anything that we send to the legislature to BESE as well. And I want to be really clear. So that bill in its current stance requires every two years the legislature to say whether or not they still want all of those reports. You all know they take a lot of time, a lot of staff energy and resources. But I want to be clear that we are still collecting-- so the big reports that I take care of, right, are the dyslexia reporting that's required. There's a SPED compliance report that I do and send across the street. There's one more. I'll think of it in a second. But all of that data we will still have and it's still public. So anything that you want that the legislature tells us no, I don't want that report anymore we still have it. I'm still collecting all federal

required data. We do a lot of reporting federally and state publicly that we're required to. But that particular bill is going to require the legislature every two years to make a decision about those legislative reports. What happens is it doesn't allow for a law to be created and require a legislative report that then we're just required to do. They're going to make the legislature tell every two years which reports, do you still want them or not. So they could sunset. They could say yes, we still want this one. But I want to just clarify because we've had a couple questions about that. We are still going to have the data. I'm still going to collect it. So if you're worried about, for example, I don't send the SEAP reports to the legislature. That's something the law says I have to send it to my state panel. So like I'm still collecting all of that. If there's anything you're worried about that you have a question about and you say Meredith, I want to make sure you're still collecting this and give it to us if we want to see it I can answer any questions about that.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: I just had a quick question. It requires every two years. So if they say no, we don't want this, I'm just pulling one out the air, this dyslexia report. If they happen to say one year no, we don't need this report.

MERIDITH JORDAN: Seclusion and restraint.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: The next time they have to make this decision, so I guess two years later, if they decide you know what, we want this report. We changed our mind. This is becoming an issue. We're seeing it now. I guess my question is if they say they no longer want this is it like okay, it's done. I know you're saying you're going to have that.

MERIDITH JORDAN: That's a great question that I have not thought about. I will find out. They would have to reinstate it. There would be a bill that would reinstate that report, I would think, and tell us and go back to a place where we would have to do it again. So next year there will be a bill following, if this goes through, there will be a bill next year that will indicate which ones they do and don't want. So we're going to do a whole other round of all of them just to make sure before next year. So like my reporting this year is staying the same in terms of legislative reports just because I don't want us to get to

next year and then say oh, we do want and we didn't do one or we don't have one. So everything is kind of staying the same for us this year. We'll do a whole other year and then next year it's my understanding there will be a follow-up bill to this point next year to say which ones they don't want next year.

But, for example, so the seclusion and restraint one if the legislature were to say I don't want the seclusion and restraint one anymore the law still requires us to collect all of that data, post it on our website so it's all still there. We just wouldn't turn it over to the legislature. I just wanted y'all to be clear that we're still collecting.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Well, part of my clarity was, and you kind of did it at the end there, so it's reports that the legislature said we want and now it's just up to them if they decide to keep it or not. The other question I had was so let's say this year a bill passes, we want this report about X, Y and Z. So we know it's going to sunset in two years since this law has passed. That's the way it is. What is that process, if you know, is it just going to automatically sunset or is there a trigger? Like the department goes to the legislature and says hey, this report, do you still want it. How do they know that it's about to end? Especially when you look at like new legislators coming in and they get it this year they may not be familiar. If that's the only year they're going to see it. Like what's that triggering process?

MERIDITH JORDAN: I suspect they're going to lean a lot-- so we have major tracking of legislative reports because we are not into not doing something or not turning them in on time to our state government and stakeholders so we have serious tracking of what's required, when it's due. And by the way, they all go at different times. It's not like we do all our reports and send them. They can all have different timelines on them so we have major tracking. I would assume they would also lean heavily on us each year to say okay, which ones do we need to address this year. Which ones are coming up to sunset in this year. I would suspect we're working very closely with them.

BRENTON ANDRUS: And does it impact any staffing? I know Dr. Brumley said there's six or seven people that that's their job to do all these reports for the legislature. Would it impact those positions or they just

going to be used to continue doing reports and data that y'all normally collect and make available publicly?

MERIDITH JORDAN: It's a great question. I do about three just on our team but I do know our policy team does a lot of those too. And once we finalize and complete them they do a lot of the review for us and then they actually, I don't communicate with any legislators, their team, probably because of all that tracking and making sure we're sending them over, so they all kind of funnel through our policy team and then they send them over to the legislature. But I'm not sure how that would impact staffing.

BRENTON ANDRUS: (Inaudible) the money is there for them to still work there. There's some monitoring (inaudible) we don't have the staffing for so we might have freed up some time for folks to move over to (inaudible).

VIVIENNE WEBB: I feel a little concerned because that means they can just go we don't want to hear any of this and for our population which isn't very (inaudible).

MERIDITH JORDAN: The only thing that I would say is a lot of this stuff, so even there's a legislative report that we do that's called a SPED compliance report. All of that data I already have. It's already public so it's always going to be somewhere else. And I can, depending on how this bill falls out, I can kind of crosswalk that with y'all and tell you any of those legislative reports if you're looking at them you want to see okay, Meredith, they said they don't want that one anymore but where would I still get that. I can kind of crosswalk that for y'all.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Can y'all still report it to them even if they say they don't want it because they still need to see it?

MERIDITH JORDAN: I mean, I know like Dr. Brumley when he goes every legislative session and does his presentations there's certainly information that he shares. But I don't know, Vivienne. That's a good question. I doubt if they tell us they don't want it I don't know that it would be submitted. But we certainly still have it and it would still be public information. We can share it. That was kind of the only other one that I wanted to just clarify and made sure people just kind of what our intentions, other requirements we still have to collect.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Thank you. Does anyone else have anything they want to say or ask?

EBONY HAVEN: I just want to make sure I announce in this committee as well that the Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser will be here tomorrow to address the council at 10:00 a.m. And so this is a great opportunity to present any issues or concerns that you all have within the disability community to someone that's higher up in our state government. I think he's shown that he cares. He's going to be presenting tomorrow on some of his initiatives that he's doing within the disability community and I think it's a great opportunity for our stakeholders and our council members just to address the concerns we're seeing federally and in our state that trickle down from the federal things that we're seeing because I think he's definitely willing to listen and potentially advocate on our behalf. Just wanted to kind of mention that again in this committee as well that he'll be here tomorrow.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Just want to ask again to be sure. Does anyone have anything they want to say? Any public comment at all? Hearing no additional questions.

REKEESHA BRANCH: Tony had his hand raised.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Tony.

TONY PIONTEK: If you were ending I was just raising my hand that we could.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Okay. I adjourn the meeting at 5:49.