

Council Meeting Summary

October 19, 2023, 8:30 A.M. – 3:30 P.M.
5615 Corporate Blvd. Ste. 500B B.R., LA 70808
LIVE Streamed Via YouTube

You can watch the meeting here: <https://www.youtube.com/@LADDCouncil/streams>

View meeting transcript [here](#).

MEMBERS PRESENT

Nicole Banks
Patti Barovechio, OPH/CSHS
Melissa Bayham, LRS
Cheri Crain, GOEA
Christi Gonzales
Julie Foster Hagan, OCDD
Jill Hano
Angela Harmon
Meredith Jordan, LDOE
Melinda Richard, OAAS
Tory Rocca, DRLA
Brooke Stewart
Mary Tarver
Renoda Washington
Vivienne Webb
Phil Wilson, LSU-HDC
Lauren Womack

MEMBERS ABSENT

Kim Basile
Hyacinth McKee
Roslyn Hymel
Tony Piontek
Erick Taylor

GUESTS PRESENT

Tangela Womack, Medicaid
April Hampton
Nicole Flores
Kelly Monroe
Bambi Polotzola, GODA
Dr. Marilyn Thornton
Sandra Trammell
Jim Sprinkle
Lynsey Hebert, Transcriptionist
Nicole Learson, Parliamentarian

STAFF PRESENT

Brenton Andrus
Rekeesha Branch
Lauren Brown
Ebony Haven
Hannah Jenkins
Bridgette Talley

Christi Gonzales called the meeting to order at 8:37 a.m. with a quorum present.

The [July 2023 Meeting Summary](#) was approved as distributed, by unanimous consent.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT – Christi Gonzales**Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee discussed the new Building Advocacy Capacity in Education and Employment contract for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Action Plan. During the July 2023 quarterly Council meeting, the Council accepted the Arc of Louisiana's proposal with the stipulation they subcontract with Bayou Land Families Helping Families at a

minimum amount of \$5,638.68. However, Bayou Land has decided not to subcontract due to a lack of responses for participation in focus groups by Special Education Directors and community employers.

The Executive Committee developed a recommendation to hire a new Executive Director. Rather than an expensive and time consuming search, the committee decided to promote the current Interim Executive Director, Ebony Haven. Some Council members felt the process should be more transparent and competitive and wanted to post the position to seek other applicants before making a decision.

MOTION PASSED: The Executive Committee recommends the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council hire the Interim Executive Director, Ebony Haven, as the Executive Director of the Council **passed 6 yays to 4 nays with 5 abstentions.**

The Executive Committee recommended the Executive Director's salary be set at \$160,000 based on salary data from other Developmental Disabilities Councils with similar federal allotments to Louisiana. This information was provided by the Information and Technical Assistance Center for Councils on Developmental Disabilities (ITACC).

MOTION: The Executive Committee recommends a salary of \$160,000 for the Executive Director.

The Council requested more information on Executive Director's salaries within the state and across the nation, especially southern neighboring states, before voting on the Executive Director's salary.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION PASSED: Postpone discussion of the Executive Director's salary until the January 2024 Council meeting and provide data for salaries and budget, with the sources, to Council members for purposes of transparency, prior to the January meeting made by Phil Wilson, seconded by Lauren Womack passed without objections or abstention.

Following a review of the recommendations made by our LaCAN leaders and Families Helping Families directors, who solicited input from their regional LaCAN members, the Executive Committee developed a recommendation for the Council's 2024 Legislative Advocacy Agenda.

MOTION PASSED: The Executive Committee recommends the Council accept the Legislative Kickoff recommendations and for the 2024 Advocacy Agenda to include:

- Recurring Funding for Families Helping Families Centers
- Funding Increase for Direct Support Workers Pay Raises
- Eliminate Family Flexible Fund Waitlist

passed 8 yays to 0 nays with 7 abstentions.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT - Ebony Haven

Ms. Haven informed the Council the Federal Fiscal Year 2024 (FFY24) was submitted electronically to the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD) before the August 15th deadline, and the Council received approval of the FFY24 Action Plan on September 28, 2023. Additionally, the Program Performance Report for the FY23 Action Plan will be due in December 2023.

Ms. Haven also informed the Council, a No Cost Extension (NCE) was requested and granted for the expiring FFY2022 grant due to having a significant amount of funding left on the grant. This NCE extends the project period for FY2022 for 12 months through September 30, 2024 and allows additional time to ensure that activities listed in the FFY23 Action Plan are completed.

Lastly, Ms. Haven welcomed and introduced new Council staff member, Bridgette Talley as the Council's new Executive Secretary/Administrative Assistant.

Council members expressed concern over the Advocacy Activities within the report on [Act 392](#) of the 2023 Legislative Session.

MOTION PASSED: For the LaDDC to draft a letter to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) about Act 392 of the 2023 Legislative Session expressing concerns about the language included which would allow convicted felons in the classrooms with students, especially students with disabilities made by Mary Tarver, seconded by Jill Hano passed without objections or abstentions.

BUDGET REPORT - Ebony Haven

Ms. Haven shared details from the [SFY24 Budget Report through September](#). Ms. Haven highlighted:

- The previous Executive Director, the current Chair, Christi Gonzales and Vice Chair, Jill Hano attended the NACDD (National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities) Annual Conference and TA (Technical Assistance) Institute July 24th-27th. Those expenditures are seen in the Staff and Council member Out of State travel and conference registration fees.
- The expenditure included in Council meeting fees was the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Training the Council and Council staff completed in July and September.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

[Membership Committee](#) – Jill Hano

The Membership Committee consisting of Nicole Banks, Jill Hano (Chair), Christi Gonzales, Tory Rocca, Brooke Stewart, Erick Taylor and Lauren Womack met on October 6th. The committee considered fourteen applicants to fill 7 available positions.

MOTION PASSED: The Membership Committee recommends Cherie Aduli to fill the Non-profit representative seat on the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council passed without objections or abstentions.

MOTION PASSED: The Membership Committee recommends Christinna Beckett to fill the institutional/facility seat on the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council passed without objections or abstentions.

MOTION PASSED: The Membership Committee's recommends Pasqueal Nguyen, Missey Moore, Samantha Singletary, Melinda Perrodin and Michael Billings to fill the parents/immediate relatives' seats on the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council passed without objections or abstentions.

ACT 378 SUB-COMMITTEE - Bambi Polotzola

The committee did not have any recommendations for full Council consideration. The committee discussed year-end data for State Fiscal Year 2023 (SFY23) and SFY24 first quarter data for the Individual and Family Support (IFS) and Flexible Family Fund (FFF) programs for the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD). They also discussed SFY23 year-end data and SFY24 first quarter data for the Consumer Care Resources and FFF programs for the Office of Behavioral Health (OBH). The Arc of La provided an update on the State Personal Assistance (SPAs) program under the Office of Aging and Adult Services (OAAS).

The committee also discussed the SFY23 IFS Priority Requests and Expenditures report. 34% of all funding was spent on Personal Care Attendant/Respite services and 17% was spent on Vocational/Employment supports. OCDD will follow up with all LGEs that have spent at least ten percentage points above or below these averages to discuss why they may be spending more or less than their peers. The Developmental Disability Directors from each LGE will also be invited to attend the January 2024 meeting.

SELF DETERMINATION/COMMUNITY INCLUSION COMMITTEE – Brooke Stewart

The committee did not have any recommendations for full Council consideration. The Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) shared updates which included OCDD completing another round of Roadshows in October and November to discuss the post public health emergency exceptions and flexibilities along with new initiatives. Committee members provided suggestions for topics to be covered at the Roadshows along with scheduling evening or weekend times to accommodate working families as well.

OCDD also provided updates on how the department is using American Rescue Plan Act funds which include the bonus payments for the Direct Support workforce and Support Coordination. They are also looking to partner with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to help support families fostering children with disabilities.

Lastly, the committee received an update on Families Helping Families of New Orleans (FHF NOLA). Per the Council's request, FHF NOLA leadership is to provide the committee with an update quarterly on the Center's progress to address and mitigate concerns from their Fiscal Year 2022 legislative audit.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE – Renoda Washington

The committee had a very robust discussion and requested updates from state agencies but did not have any recommendations for full Council consideration. The committee requested an official copy of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between LRS and the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), but LRS' legal department has to be contacted to determine if the MOU can be shared. The committee requested an update from LRS at the next meeting.

The committee also discussed information regarding Third Party Cooperative Arrangements (TPCAs) at high schools including the assignments and contacts. The committee asked LRS to follow up on sharing counselors' contact information.

The committee also received information from LDOE on the Special Education Directors meeting held on October 17th. LRS was also in attendance to speak about transition services and ensure the Directors were aware of TPCAs. LDOE also informed the committee that school districts have spent just over \$1M of the \$8M that was allocated for cameras in Special Education classrooms. That amount may increase as more parent requests are received.

As a follow up to the last meeting, LDOE provided a report on student discipline from 2019 -2022. Dr. Phil Wilson informed the committee there are a lot of students being misdiagnosed due to evaluators' inability to pinpoint the correct diagnosis, and this could be contributing to the behaviors. He has observed this with children who have Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). Dr. Wilson shared more information about FASD and the Human Development Center's commitment to bring awareness to FASD over the next five years.

The committee further discussed the State Ombudsman LDOE is in the process of hiring and expressed its concern about having only one ombudsman for the entire state. The committee is concerned with LDOE hiring the Ombudsman within the department rather than a third party hire.

MOTION FAILED: The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) State Ombudsman be hired from an outside source other than LDOE and add this item to the Council's 2024 Legislative Advocacy Agenda under Education made by Vivienne Webb, seconded by Nicole Banks failed by a vote of **6 nays to 2 yays, with 7 abstentions**.

MOTION PASSED: Add the LDOE State Ombudsman to the agenda for the January 2024 Education and Employment committee meeting made by Lauren Womack, seconded by Vivienne Webb passed without objections or abstentions.

The Council recessed for lunch at 12:03 p.m. by unanimous consent.

The Council reconvened the meeting at 1:12 p.m.

STANDING COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS:

[Office of Aging and Adult Services](#) – Melinda Richard

[Families Helping Families Centers](#) – James Sprinkle

[LSU Human Development Center](#) – Phil Wilson

[Louisiana Rehabilitation Services](#) – Melissa Bayham

[Office of Public Health: Children's Special Health Services](#) – Patti Barvechio

[Bureau of Health Services Financing](#) – Tangela Womack

[Department of Education](#) – Meredith Jordan

[Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs](#) – Cheri Crain

[Governor's Office of Disability Affairs](#) – Bambi Polotzola

[Disability Rights of Louisiana](#) – Tory Rocca

[Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities](#) – Julie Foster Hagan

The DD Council October Quarterly meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m by unanimous consent.