

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

OCT 2022 - SEPT 2023



Louisiana Developmental
Disabilities Council

A MESSAGE FROM 2023 **LEADERSHIP**

In 2023, the Council made great progress towards their goals including the significant focus of the Council's work in supporting advocacy and leadership development, along with goals targeting community supports, inclusive education, and competitive integrated individual employment for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Partners in Policymaking held the first in-person class since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, and the Council witnessed the return of the Louisiana Youth Leadership Forum (LAYLF) for the first time since Hurricane Katrina.



EBONY HAVEN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



NICOLE BANKS
CHAIRPERSON

There were also key legislative wins that were impacted by Council advocacy including additional funding for the Regional Families Helping Families Resource Centers and the Postsecondary Inclusive Education Fund which funds programs for students with I/DD at Louisiana postsecondary institutions. Additionally, the "Fully Included" video series wrapped up the last six videos in the series on the importance of inclusion of the disability community in aspects of everyday life. The Council should be very proud of all the great work accomplished in 2023 and look forward to LaDDC continuing to be a trailblazer in community inclusion and disability rights for all people with I/DD in Louisiana during 2024.

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ABOUT US

WHO WE ARE

The Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council was established in 1971 as a result of the passage of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. The Council is made up of twenty-eight Governor-appointed individuals from across the state who are persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), parents, advocates and representatives from public and private agencies. The Council members are tasked with the development and implementation of a five-year plan to address needed changes in the service delivery system for persons with I/DD.

WHAT WE DO

The Council engages in advocacy, capacity building, and systems change activities that contribute to a coordinated, person-centered and directed system of community services and supports.

OUR MISSION

The Council's mission is to increase independence, self-determination, productivity, integration, and inclusion for Louisianans with developmental disabilities by engaging in advocacy, capacity building, and systems change.

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

RASHAD BRISTO

CHAIRPERSON

10.01.2022 - 04.13.2023

NICOLE BANKS

CHAIRPERSON

04.13.2023 - 09.30.2023

SELF-ADVOCATES

Mary Francis Avera
Jill Egle
Chaney Guidry
Jill Hano
Roslyn Hymel
Tony Piontek
Erick Taylor
Vivienne Webb
Lauren Womack

PARENTS/FAMILY

Nicole Banks
Kim Basile
Brenda Cosse
Christi Gonzales
Angela Harmon
Hyacinth McKee, PhD
Brooke Stewart
Mary Tarver
Renoda Washington

AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES

Libby Airhart
Patti Barovechio, PhD
Melissa Bayham
Cheri Crain
Julie Foster Hagan
Meredith Jordan
Bambi Polotzola
Melinda Richard
Tory Rocca
Phil Wilson, PhD

Non-Profit Representative
Office of Public Health
Louisiana Rehabilitation Services
Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs
Office of Citizens with Developmental Disabilities
Louisiana Department of Education
Governor's Office of Disability Affairs
Office of Aging and Adult Services
Disability Rights of Louisiana
LSU Human Development Center

LACAN

LOUISIANA COUNCIL'S
ADVOCACY NETWORK



LaCAN advocates with Reps. White and Newell, and Sen. Hewitt

LaCAN furthers the Council's mission by advocating for policies and systems that support inclusion everywhere people learn, work, live, and play.



LaCAN provides information and support to individuals wishing to effectively advocate for systems change in the areas of home and community-based services, education, and employment.

LACAN

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

Legislative Roundtables

Roundtables provide an opportunity to meet with legislators in your area, get current information on state Issues, increase your ability to be an effective advocate, and learn techniques for sharing your personal story to encourage positive changes.

Legislative Visits

LaCAN Leaders support their regional members in making personal visits with their legislators by providing speaking points and helping members with their personal story and message.

Yellow Shirt Days

LaCAN members show up at key committee meetings when critical decisions are being made. We find it crucial to let policymakers know the possible effects of these bills and policies on individuals with intellectual & developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families.

Information & Action Alert

Alerts inform LaCAN members of proposed changes to policy that may affect individuals with disabilities and the services they receive as well as what specific action they can take to advocate regarding these changes.



LACAN

LEGISLATIVE WINS

1

An additional \$500,000 was added to the Council's state general fund for Families Helping Families Regional Resource Centers.

2

Incontinence supplies was added as a covered benefit for adults enrolled in the New Opportunities, Residential Options and Supports Waivers.

3

Open Meetings Law was amended to allow members of the public an Americans with Disabilities Act accommodation to participate in meetings electronically.

4

\$1 million was appropriated to the Postsecondary Inclusive Education Fund to fund programs for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

PARTNERS IN POLICYMAKING



Partners in Policymaking is a national leadership training program for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and parents of young children with I/DD.



It provides the most current knowledge about disability issues and develops the skills necessary for effective advocacy to influence public policy at all levels of government.

PARTNERS GRADUATES

CLASS OF 2023

The class of 2023 ended with 12 graduates of the program. The graduates were active in systems change, with 10 participants being active in advocacy and self-advocacy training events such as Legislative Roundtables, Yellow Shirt Days, Legislative Visits, and Action Alerts



ALUMNI

As of 2023:

5 graduates serve on the DD Council.

4 graduates serve as LaCAN Leaders.

2 graduates serve as FHF Directors.

32 graduates sit on other Boards and Committees.



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more info:



PARTNERS

TESTIMONY

“Making the commitment to be a part of Partners in Policymaking was a difficult decision for me. My husband, and I have withdrawn ourselves into isolation so badly that the shutdown of the pandemic didn’t faze us at all. Therefore, attending PIP sessions in Baton Rouge was the beginning of me coming out of my isolation. Being a part of this program has been one of the best decisions I have ever made...”



ALICIA MAYEAUX
2023 GRADUATE

“...Over the years my anxieties have taken over and I lost the person I once was... Partners in Policymaking gave me back my sense of self. I want to live again!”

FULLY INCLUDED

“HOW TO” VIDEO SERIES

23 East Group filmed videos for the “Fully Included” learning series. They worked with The Arc of La, the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD), the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), and Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) to complete the six videos on various topics.

VIDEO TOPICS

- Supported Decision Making
- EarlySteps
- Individualized Education Plan
- TEFRA
- Waiver Services
- LRS

Scan to view videos:



YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM

The Louisiana Youth Leadership Forum (LAYLF) is a four-day residential leadership program focused on empowering youths with disabilities while promoting an environment of disability culture and pride. This program gives delegates the skills needed to become future leaders!

100% of delegates and guest speakers and 50% of staff at LAYLF are persons with disabilities.



TOPICS INCLUDE

- Disability History
- Self-Advocacy
- Leadership
- Your Good Life
- Legislative Process
- Legislative Advocacy
- Dating & Relationships
- Mock Bill Prep
- Mock Debate

YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM



12 LAYLF participants developed the skills to become empowered community leaders, prepared for future employment and independent living, and were able to describe the history and culture of the disability community.

2023 DELEGATE

"My experience at YLF truly changed my life. Before that weekend, I had never thought much about leadership and advocating for myself, but the talks and activities I took part in there really opened my eyes to the possibilities and opportunities for my future."

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FIRST RESPONDER TACTICS TRAINING

Interaction Advisory Group (IAG) produced skill-building training activities for first responders and self-advocates to raise awareness and understanding of appropriate tactics for encounters with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) that promote safety and fair treatment. These activities are intended for first responder agencies to utilize information from these trainings to establish and implement policies and protocols to reduce arrests and physical escalations.



In 2022 IAG trained 156 participants. In 2023 that number increased to 502. A majority of those trained were first responders, exceeding our goal.

TRAINING ATTENDEE

"I feel the training hit on all aspects of the behavioral spectrum and other disabilities. I say this coming from my 22 years, thus far serving in law enforcement, division of corrections, and being a mother of a special needs child... I believe your class should be taught to all law enforcement; especially patrol and any school resource officer. Everyone could benefit from your perspective and others in the class."

LAPIE

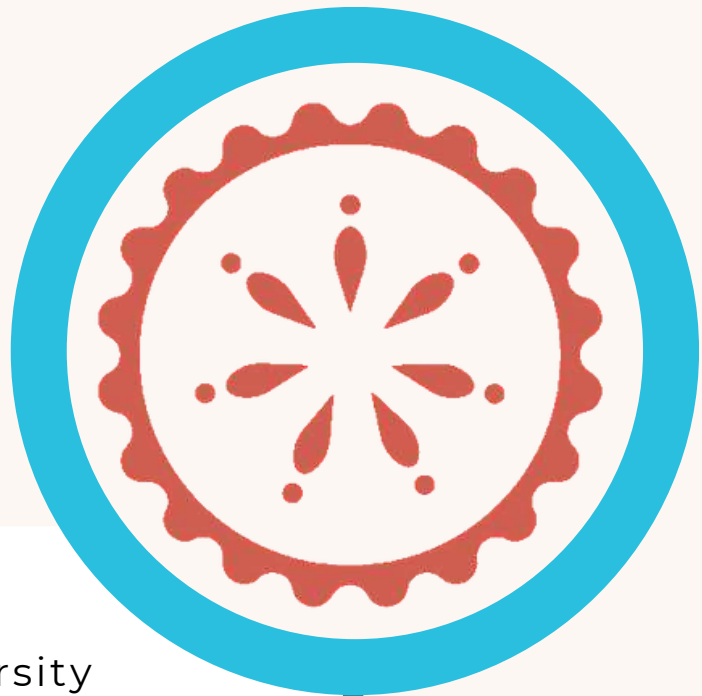
LOUISIANA ALLIANCE OF POST-SECONDARY INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Louisiana Alliance of Post-Secondary Inclusive Education (LAPIE) was formed with grant funding by the Council with the goal to increase post-secondary inclusive education opportunities for students with intellectual & developmental disabilities (I/DD).

LAPIE had 6 programs at the start of 2023, but increased to 9 programs by the end of the year.

PROGRAMS AS OF 2023

- Nicholls State University
- Southeastern Louisiana University
- University of Louisiana at Lafayette
- Baton Rouge Community College
- Bossier Parish Community College
- Louisiana State University of Alexandria
- Louisiana State University and A&M College
- Southern University at New Orleans
- University of Louisiana at Monroe



LAPIE TESTIMONY

"My name is Hunter Reno. I am 22 years old and a freshman at Southeastern University in the LIONS Connected program. In my first semester I took CPR and Public Speaking and am currently enrolled in Kinesiology and CPR. The LIONS Connected Program will help me with life, social, and employment skills."

"People with intellectual disabilities deserve this opportunity after high school just as typical students have, and I'm excited to see where this journey will bring me."



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YOUR NEXT BEST HIRE!

WEBINAR SERIES

23 East Group conducted employment seminars on what employers need to know on how to include people with disabilities in their hiring process. The webinar series, "Your Next Best Hire!", takes a deeper dive into topics and implements a "story-telling" format. They partnered with Louisiana Rehabilitation Services to create a step-by-step of what employers need to know and do to make disability a part of their diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) hiring process.



WEBINAR TOPICS

- Building DEI in the Workplace
- The Impact for Employers
- Benefits for Employers
- Recruiting Employees with Disabilities

Scan to view videos:



MEET THE **COUNCIL STAFF**



EBONY HAVEN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



BRENTON ANDRUS
PROGRAM MANAGER



STEPHANIE CARMONA
PROGRAM MANAGER



REKEESHA BRANCH
PROGRAM MONITOR



HANNAH JENKINS
PROGRAM MONITOR



LAUREN BROWN
CONTRACT/GRANT REVIEWER



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