

Education and Employment Committee Summary

October 18, 2023, 3:00 PM
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, Christi Gonzales, Meredith Jordan, Hyacinth McKee, Mary Tarver, Renoda Washington (Chair), Vivienne Webb, Phil Wilson

Members Absent: Melissa Bayham, Erick Taylor

Staff: Brenton Andrus, Rekeesha Branch, Ebony Haven, Hannah Jenkins

Others Present: Nicole Flores, Jill Hano, Angela Harmon, Stacey Marbs (LRS), Sandra Trammell, Brooke Stewart, Mimi Webb

Renoda Washington called the meeting to order at 3:09 pm. A quorum was established.

Approval of the [July 2023 E/E Committee Summary](#) passed by unanimous consent.

Education and Employment Updates

Stacey Marbs with Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) attended the meeting to provide updates on behalf of Melissa Bayham. During the July 2023 meeting, the committee requested an official copy of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between LRS and the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE). Ms. Marbs stated LRS' legal department needed to be contacted to determine if the MOU could be shared. The committee requested an update from Ms. Bayham at the next meeting.

Ms. Marbs also provided the committee with information regarding Third Party Cooperative Arrangements (TPCAs) at high schools including the assignments and contacts. A summary list from each region was provided. The committee expressed concern over some schools not having TPCAs or fee for service vendors. Ms. Marbs stated there was still a LRS counselor assigned to the schools who can provide the transition services. The committee asked if the LRS counselors' contact information could be shared, but Ms. Marbs would have to check with Ms. Bayham.

The committee also received an update from Meredith Jordan on behalf on the LDOE. Ms. Jordan spoke about the Special Education Directors meeting on October 17th. LRS was also in attendance to speak about transition services and ensuring the Directors were aware of TPCAs. They also discussed how to share this information with schools so they are aware of services available after high school including the PayCheck Program. Ms. Jordan felt the information was very well received.

Ms. Jordan 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. The committee will continue to monitor this issue quarterly.

As a follow up to the last meeting, Ms. Jordan provided a [report on student discipline](#) from 2019 -2022. Each school system in the state was included. Data from the 2022-2023 school year will be provided when available. Data showed an increase in reported behaviors since the pandemic, so the department is looking at ways to support schools with positive behavior support plans. Ms. Jordan stated they are also working with Directors to ensure “passive removals” are not occurring. The committee provided suggestions and strategies on how the department could combat those removals.

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.

Contractual Activities

The committee also received updates on contractual activities in Goal 3 of the Council’s FY23 action plan, including the La Alliance of Postsecondary Inclusive Education (LAPIE) and the Employment Seminars. Additional information about these activities can be found in the Council’s quarterly [Status of Planned Activities Report](#) under goal three.

More Discussion

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 also discussed their concerns with LDOE hiring the Ombudsman within the department rather than a third party hire. Members cited a lack of trust between parents and the department which has only intensified since the [legislative audit](#) was published in September 2023.

The committee also asked Ms. Jordan to discuss the Special Education Advisory Councils (SEACs) annual reports at the next committee meeting in January 2024.

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 4:54pm.