

Governor's Office of Disability Affairs

Report to the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council

April 2021

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or find newsletters located on the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs webpage.

Governor's Advisory Council on Disability Affairs (GACDA)

The Governor's Advisory Council on Disability Affairs (GACDA) hosted its quarterly meetings on March 16th and 17th. During the quarterly council meeting, GACDA unanimously voted to support the presented proposals, which include:

- Changing governance of the Special School District to an independent board
- Creation of a Community Choices Waiver fund
- Ending solitary confinement of inmates with serious mental illness
- Remove exemption for unemployment insurance for people with disabilities
- Dental services for adults with developmental disabilities
- Autism screening requirements
- Medicinal Cannabis
- Increase funding for Families Helping Families
- State ADA Coordinator
- Virtual Participation in open meetings

The GACDA Legislative Committee also met on April 15th and discussed legislation that could potentially impact the disability community. It was decided that GODA will create a [Google spreadsheet for tracking disability-related legislative instruments](#). Since Google docs and sheets reside in the cloud, community members would have immediate access to updates.

Jim Mitchell, Ph.D was appointed to GACDA. Dr. Mitchell is an IT Statewide Project Officer with the Louisiana Office of Technology Services. He has been appointed as Co-Chair of GACDA's Accessibility Committee.

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)

The Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) held its quarterly meeting via Zoom on February 5th. The SILC is in the process of becoming a fully independent council operating outside of the Governor's Office.

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State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) for EarlySteps

The State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) held its quarterly meeting on April 8th via Zoom. The SICC has two EarlySteps provider seats to be filled. Officer elections took place at the April Meeting. The presented slate— Angela Lorio for Vice Chairperson, Bambi Polotzola for Secretary, Kahree Wahid for Parliamentarian, and Mike Billings for Parent-at-Large— was approved. Shanida Mathieu will remain as the appointed Chairperson.

State As a Model Employer (SAME) Taskforce

The State As a Model Employer (SAME) Taskforce meets on the second Friday of every month. The Taskforce has been reviewing the SAME Report recommendations at each meeting. For more details go to the Disability Employment webpage at <https://gov.louisiana.gov/page/disability-employment-initiative>.

Initiative to Improve Supports and Services for Children with Disabilities In Foster Care

The Governor's Office of Disability Affairs is proud to announce our partnership with the Louisiana First Foundation! This initiative will increase collaboration across agencies that provide support and services for foster children with disabilities. Additionally, this initiative will create an advisory group of foster and adoptive families who have experience with disabilities.

Governor Edwards Proclaims March as Brain Injury Awareness Month

Governor John Bel Edwards has proclaimed the month of March as Brain Injury Awareness Month in the State of Louisiana. Brain Injury Awareness Month, recognized each March, provides an important opportunity to bring attention to the prevention of traumatic brain injury (TBI) and to promote strategies to improve the quality of life for persons living with TBI and their families.

Governor Edwards Proclaims April as Autism Acceptance Month

Governor John Bel Edwards has proclaimed April as Autism Acceptance Month! The shift in verbiage from "Autism Awareness Month" to "Autism Acceptance Month" represents a shift in focus from awareness to acceptance of autism as a natural part of human diversity. Join us as we celebrate autistic people/people with autism for who they are and the value they bring to our community.