

**Governor's Office of Disability Affairs**  
Report to the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council  
January 2023

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**2022 GOLD Awards & Inclusive Art Contest**

The 2022 GOLD Awards and Inclusive Arts Ceremony took place on December 7, 2021 at the Old State Capitol. We were proud to honor the following artists and disability advocates for their work. You can watch the recording of the 2022 GOLD Awards Ceremony [here](#).

**2022 GOLD Awards Recipients**

<b>Distinguished Merit Award</b>	Kathy Dwyer, Metairie
<b>Patsy Barrett Memorial Award</b>	Lynn Stevens, Shreveport
<b>Ken Vince Memorial Award</b>	David Green, New Orleans
<b>Educator of the Year Award</b>	Charles Michel, EdD, Gray
<b>April Dunn Youth of the Year Award</b>	Garrison St. Martin, Calhoun
<b>Family of the Year Award</b>	The Billings-Roger Family, Baton Rouge
<b>Volunteer of the Year Award</b>	Kathleen Cannino, Covington
<b>Direct Support Person of Year Award</b>	Rodricka Winn, Shreveport
<b>Elected Official of the Year Award</b>	Rep. Rodney Lyons, Harvey
<b>Public Servant of the Year Award</b>	John Schweitzer, PhD, Baton Rouge
<b>Service Provider of the Year Award</b>	Family & Youth Counseling, Lake Charles
<b>Veteran of the Year Award</b>	SGT Billy Robbins, Gonzales
<b>Employer of the Year Award</b>	Susan Riehn Families Helping Families, SWLA

**2022 Inclusive Art Contest Award Recipients**

**K-4<sup>th</sup> Grade Division**

First Place- Jordan McGee

Second Place- Mia Hunter

Third Place- Julian Brady

**5<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Division**

First Place- Fischer Ahrens

Second Place- Bailey Ann Bumbilis

Third Place- Nyla Reynolds

**9<sup>th</sup>- 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Division**

First Place- Amy Do

Second Place- Madelyn McKearon

Third Place- Kaitlyn Meche

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**11<sup>th</sup>- 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Division**

First Place- Teagan Griffin  
Second Place- Amelie Wilson  
Third Place- Tia Evans

**Adult Division**

First Place- Bonnie Dempster  
Second Place- Hailey Enamorado  
Third Place- Xavier Johnson

**Fischer Ahrens was selected as the overall winner and the recipient of the Lynette Fontenot Excellence in Inclusion Award.**

***Governor's Advisory Council on Disability Affairs (GACDA)***

The Governor's Advisory Council on Disability Affairs held their quarterly meetings via Zoom on December 12<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The committee meetings took place via Zoom and the full council meeting was held in a hybrid format. They approved of the following recommendations:

- Support the expanding sustained funding for the LAPIE initiative.
- Write a letter to the technology committee about accessibility issues at the Capitol for the deaf.
- Study resolution to identify all agencies that spend program dollars on transportation that are not transportation agencies.
- Support Disability Rights Louisiana's legislative goal of acquiring \$262,500 in state general funds for the expansion of their Statewide Independent Advocacy Services Program (SILAP.). This funding would go to hiring a full-time staff person for each region, to aid in the prevention of abuse, neglect, and exploitation for waiver recipients and individuals living in ICF/DDs.
- Support Louisiana Public Health Institute's legislative proposal for a Paid Family Leave system. Paid Family Leave is for individuals that need to leave work to care for themselves, or a family member, due to illness for an extended period of time. The funding for Paid Family Leave would originate from payroll contribution from both the employee and employer.

# Governor's Office of Disability Affairs

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### January 2023

#### **Statewide Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) for EarlySteps**

The State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) held its quarterly meeting on January 12, in the Thomas Jefferson Room in the Claiborne Building. The SICC are seeking parents to fill vacant seats on the council. Officer elections took place at the January Meeting. The presented slate— Kathryn Smitherman for Vice Chairperson, Tracy Barker for Secretary, and Ursula Oustalet Meaux for Parliamentarian— was approved. Kahree Wahid is serving as the interim chairperson pending Governor's appointment. Parent, Merisa Fruge gave an update on son Grayson's life-changing experience with EarlySteps. The next committee meeting will take place on March 9th at 10AM in the Claiborne Building.

#### **Voting Accessibility (HCR14 Task Force)**

The last HCR14 Task Force meeting was held on October 18th, 2022. The HCR14 Task Force has encountered two main issues: a lack of meaningful discussion about voting accessibility, and physical inaccessibility of the actual meetings themselves. GODA staff and task force member Lillian DeJean met with the Secretary of State to discuss these issues and his office seemed receptive. The GACDA Legislative Committee concurred that the disability community needs to show up for public testimony to speak up about voting accessibility issues and potential solutions. The next task force meeting will take place on January 24th at 1PM in the Thomas Jefferson Room in the Claiborne Building.

#### **Virtual Participation in Public Meetings (SR147 Task Force)**

The last SR147 was held November 27th, 2022. At that meeting, it was agreed that a future agenda item would be virtual participation as an ADA accommodation. The next meeting has not been scheduled yet.

#### **Louisiana Commission for the Deaf**

Louisiana Commission for the Deaf meets quarterly to help guide program efforts and activities. Commission members include d/Deaf and hard of hearing representatives, parents of d/Deaf children, and representatives from related state organizations. Upcoming Meeting for year of 2023 are on the following Fridays from 9:00am - 1:00 pm: January 20, April 21, July 21, and October 20.

Minutes from previous meetings can be found [here](#).  
Live Meeting Captioning can be found [here](#).

#### **Special School District**

The Special School District will be interviewing candidates and selecting a new superintendent on January 24. The meeting will be open to the public and take place at the campus of the Special School District at 2888 Brightside Drive in Baton Rouge.