

Concept Paper for DD Council Grant Application

Issue to be Addressed: Families and self-advocates with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) often find it challenging to navigate information about transition planning, benefits counseling, Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver, benefits planning, and Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) services. Most educators lack a strong understanding of the vital roles these programs have in facilitating a smooth transition from high school to full participation in the community as adults for their students with developmental disabilities and thus fail to communicate effectively with families about these services. In Louisiana, there is a noticeable lack of outreach from Human Service Districts and Authorities to inform school systems about available services or to build a collaborative relationship with them. Consequently, individuals with I/DD and families may miss out on crucial supports that can enhance educational and competitive integrated employment outcomes for youth with developmental disabilities. Additionally, a significant number of high school students are not enrolled in adult services programs upon graduation, putting them at risk of not being able to participate fully in community life.

Expected Outcomes: As described below (see Plan), educators in participating high schools will be trained and supported to provide information about the services for which families and youth with developmental disabilities may be eligible for from their local Human Services Districts/Authority, regional LRS office, as well as from a Certified Benefits Counselor, and how to enroll in each. The project aims to achieve several key outcomes. First, there will be at least a 50% increase in awareness of available services

based on survey data from participating families, educators, and students with developmental disabilities. We expect that at least 80% of educators and at least 50% of family members in high schools who complete the training on HCBS waivers, LRS services as well as Benefits Counseling and Transition Planning will demonstrate enhanced knowledge about what these programs/services provide, who is eligible to receive them, and how to enroll. Educator and family member knowledge will be measured via pre- and post-training assessments, aiming for an average score increase of at least 50%. Additionally, we anticipate an increase in the number of families/youth who are enrolled in HCBS waiver, LRS and benefits counseling services during the first year.

Plan: The plan involves recruiting two high schools, one urban/suburban and one rural, to participate in the project. Project staff will make presentations about HCBS waiver, LRS, and Benefits Counseling services to the Special Education Advisory Councils of the participating high schools. Transition Planning 101 professional development sessions will be provided for both families and educators. Teacher training on Individualized Education Program (IEP) development will be offered in collaboration with regional LRS and Human Service Districts/Authority staff to align service capabilities with post-secondary goals. Supported decision-making, healthcare transition planning, and benefits planning will be implemented, potentially in partnership with Disability Rights Louisiana (DRLA) and the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH)- Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities, with separate professional development content for educators and families. Technical assistance will be provided for facilitated Person-Centered Planning sessions and IEP writing and transition plans in collaboration

with the local HSD/A and regional LRS staffs. All created materials, including presentations, checklists, infographics, and YouTube videos, will be consolidated into a website for replication of the project in other districts across the state.

Estimated Costs: The estimated costs include salaries for Constance (10%), Tracy (15% total - 10% program; 5% mentoring LEND trainees to produce videos), and Jolie (10%). Additional costs will cover travel, materials/graphic design, and websites/videos