

Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council  
Education and Employment  
July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025

ANGELA HARMON: Good afternoon everyone. It is now 4:17 and I would like to call the meeting to order. Stephanie would you mind doing a roll call.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Melissa Bayham.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Here.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Jude Boynton.

JUDE BOYNTON: Here.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Jamar Ennis. Christi Gonzales.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Here.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Meredith Jordan.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Here

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Lamartine Meda. Tony Piontek.  
Erick Taylor.

ERICK TAYLOR: Here.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Renoda Washington.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Here.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Vivienne Webb.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Here

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Phil Wilson.

PHIL WILSON: Hello. Here.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: And you have a quorum.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Thank you Stephanie. Before we get started I just want to remind you all of a few rules. For committee members and members of the public attending in person please raise your hand to speak and wait to be recognized by the chair before speaking. To help the meeting run smoothly please keep side conversations to a minimum and comments related to the topic we are discussing. For those committee members who are attending virtually remember you must be on camera and have your first and last name showing to be counted toward our quorum. Please keep microphones muted unless called upon by the chair. Electronically raise your hand to request to speak and wait to be called on by the chair. Once recognized by the chair your microphone will be turned on. After speaking the microphone will be returned to mute.

Also the Q and A is only to be used by those needing an ADA accommodation to participate in the meeting. Public comment will not be accepted via the Q and A except

for those individuals requesting the accommodation. As per order committee members in person and virtually will be allowed to speak first. Public members in person will then be called on followed by public participating virtually who have their hands raised. As with all hybrid meetings it can be difficult to keep track of all those wanting to speak in person and virtually. Please be patient. All comments and questions from committee members and the public may be limited should we run into time constraints. So please keep that in mind. Also comments about a person's character will not be allowed. Finally, members of the public will have an opportunity to provide public comment before each vote and during designated public comment periods. Public members will be given one opportunity to speak per each agenda item and will be limited to two numbers. The chair may also use their discretion to determine if comments will be accepted outside of those times.

The April meeting summary. Everyone should have reviewed the April meeting summary which is linked in the agenda you received via email. There's also a copy in your committee packet. I need a motion to accept the minutes.

ERICK TAYLOR: Motion.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Second.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Thank you. Due to the new regulations on open meetings law we will need to do a roll call vote. Stephanie can you please take the roll call vote.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: A vote for yes is to accept the April meeting minutes. And a vote for no is not to accept those meeting minutes. So Ms. Bayham.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Yes.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Ms. Bayham, yes. Mr. Boynton.

JUDE BOYNTON: Yes.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Mr. Boynton, yes. Mr. Ennis. Ms. Gonzales.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Yes.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Ms. Gonzales, yes. Ms. Jordan.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yes.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Ms. Jordan, yes. Dr. Meda. Mr. Piontek. Mr. Taylor.

ERICK TAYLOR: Yes.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Mr. Taylor, yes. Ms. Webb.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Yes.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Ms. Webb, yes. Dr. Wilson.

PHIL WILSON: Yes.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Dr. Wilson, yes. We have seven yeses so the motion passes.

RENODA WASHINGTON: The motion has passed with unanimous consent. First on the agenda is an update on LRS. We will now have Melissa Bayham from Louisiana Rehabilitation Services get us started.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Hi. Good afternoon everyone. I will start my update with preemployment transition services or some know it as preETS. I met with the preemployment transition services vendors about a month or so ago just to let them know that we might have a potential reduction in units for the 26/27 school year. We've had an uptick in expenditures year over year and so unless we get additional funds next state fiscal year we will be at the point we will need to reduce those units. But I wanted to make sure that I notified them ahead of time so they can prepare. And some of these vendors have quite a bit of participation in school districts and so they need to know that so they will know how often they will be attending those classes or having those classes.

We are in the process of trying to procure four preETS staffing contracts. So I know we've talked in this committee and in this meeting and any meeting that I'm in about the staffing at LRS. We are still significantly understaffed. We have about 23 vacancies in terms of official vacancies that are funded at this point. And so one mechanism that we want to try to explore to assist us with this is some staffing contracts. And these contractors will exclusively be assigned to preemployment transition services. In other words, the activities that my counselors and my counselor associates are doing now will be done by those contractors. So that's going out to the school districts, taking the applications, authorizing services, attending IEP meetings. The rehab counselors that are staffed on those contracts would be performing those duties. So right now I have we're actively in the process of contracting with Easterseals for region seven. So that's the Shreveport region. And Families Helping Families of Greater New Orleans for region one. So we are in the process. We are getting the contracts ready to go to legal and all the things that it has to do with the hopes that we can start those contracts on October the 1st.

We're also still trying to identify contractors for Baton Rouge and Monroe. If these contracts go well we could potentially do this throughout the state. But the need is more in certain regions than others depending on the size of the region, staffing in that particular region. But those are the four regions that we're starting with is regions one, two and seven. So that's my update for preemployment transition services.

For career services we have increased provider rates for many of our career services. The details of that you'll see tomorrow in my full report. But one example, job search assistance to increase from 20 units to 46. Because we know that the time it takes for job development is sometimes a lot longer than 20 hours so we wanted to make sure that we compensated our vendors for that. And there's a lot of blind services vendor rates that have been increased. But that is detailed in the report that I have tomorrow.

One thing that we did add was a high-quality indicator payment for placing individuals in rural communities. That has been a need for some time. It's something that our vendors have expressed a need for some extra compensation because the difficulty in finding those employment opportunities. So we did add a rate for that so they can get compensated for that.

I also conducted vendor focus group meetings. A couple of weeks ago I had four. I had asked for basically volunteers who wanted to participate. And I had so many vendors who wanted to participate that in order for them I felt to be able to actively participate I wanted to make sure those groups weren't too large. So I did have four of those. Depending on which region you were in is which session you were in. It was very productive. We are hoping to have better communication with our providers and improve our collaboration to improve the quality of our employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. And so I wanted to make sure that we open the lines of communication.

There was nothing that was expressed to me that was surprising. However, I want to make sure that I'm able to hear directly from the providers and make sure that we are addressing their needs. And one thing that consistently comes up, no matter which venue I'm in, is consistency. And so we have been making strides to try to improve

consistency within LRS. We've done some statewide trainings. We're doing more statewide communications instead of relying on our regional managers to make sure that information gets pushed down. As well as my state office community rehab program staff are doing more of the training for the providers in lieu of the regional offices. And that also helps them because that takes that off of their plate.

The last thing that I will mention there was a little bit of a lull in our hiring because of the state hiring freeze but we are actively recruiting for a couple of state office positions but primarily for rehabilitation counselor positions. We have 11 vacancies that are funded at this point and so those are posted or have been posted. A couple of those postings have expired. That's not the right word. They've ended so we are in the process of getting the list from those from civil service and then there are some still up there on the civil service website. And as we get vacancies we will continue to post those. Now that the state hiring freeze is over it's easier for us to turn those over a little bit quicker. I have also scheduled to meet again with our human resources department to continue to pursue a special entrance rate for our rehab counselors to help with that. Those are all of my updates but happy to take any questions.

CHRISTI GONZALES: In regards to LRS I have some parents contacting me about the LRS (inaudible) were asking that the students get a psychological evaluation.

MELISSA BAYHAM: So are you talking about preETS students?

CHRISTI GONZALES: Like going to college they're out of high school and they were requesting they get a psychological evaluation.

MELISSA BAYHAM: I would have to know some specifics on it but if we don't have medical for someone we will send them for an assessment to get the medical that we need to determine eligibility.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Okay.

MELISSA BAYHAM: We also do vocational evaluations and one of our evaluations is a psychologist so that could be a reason as well because it could be a vocational evaluation.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Got you. Thank you.

RENODA WASHINGTON: I have a question. I just wanted

to know like what training or accountability systems you guys have in place to ensure the LRS staff is still following through with their role and expectations.

MELISSA BAYHAM: We have several things. Probably a couple years ago we procured a learning management software called Yes LMS. And so what that has allowed us to do is we have on-demand training. So this training could be from the contractor which is vocational rehabilitation training. However, we also can train on that platform. When we have a new counselor on board we have trainings already in that system. They go and they are in those systems.

We also, especially for new counselors, they have district supervisors who are supposed to be working closely with them to learn their positions. Now the district supervisor position is also one that we don't have as many as we should. So one thing that we are actively putting in place is called independent approval status. So right now any case movement, eligibilities, plans they will require a supervisor's approval. So we're allowing our master counselors and our rehab counselors and entry (inaudible) counselors to be able to do those things independently to free up some of that time for the district supervisors to be able to spend more time with the entry level counselors to learn their positions.

The rehab counselor position is very complicated and it's even more complicated when you're short staffed because you don't have any specialties. So for example when I was a rehab counselor the first couple years I was what we call a general counselor. Which pretty much all of our counselors are general counselors now. But after that I was in a developmental disabilities caseload so that was my specialty. All my clients had a developmental disability. So I was able to specialize in that. And I was able to learn about way more. All this social security, all these things. Whereas all of our counselors now have to work with all individuals with disabilities which can be complicated. I keep saying the word complicated. But as a rehab counselor I never did a vehicle modification because I wasn't in the traumatic brain injury caseload. But now my counselors have to learn how to do everything. Vehicle modification, home modification, supported employment, time-limited job coaching, short-term job supports now, assistive

technology, prosthetics, orthotics. They have to know all of these things. And we're not getting a lot of applicants that are coming from a rehab counselor background so they may be in criminal justice or social work or some of these similar disciplines. But it takes some time to learn vocational rehabilitation. It's not something that in a month you're going to be proficient in everything if that makes sense.

RENODA WASHINGTON: So how does staff impact service delivery and timeliness to families?

MELISSA BAYHAM: It impacts it greatly. So my counselors are doing the best that they possibly can but it does take us longer to do things. One thing that I know I expressed to you is that one mechanism that we can put in place because of our staffing shortages is we can go on order of selection which means that we would have a waiting list. But that's not something that I want to do. So families, individuals and families are having to wait longer for services but they have access to the services. Whereas if we go on order of selection then they will go on a waiting list until our staffing gets to the point where we are able to work with people more.

RENODA WASHINGTON: So in your opinion what is the pros and cons of this? I'm sure families are disgruntled when this happens even though they may not have an awareness that you are short staffed. So how do you guys maneuver through those times if you're short staffed and your customers they're not receiving their services. How do you guys deal with that? Is that top management or is the staff dealing with that on their level?

MELISSA BAYHAM: It's everybody. From me to rehab counselors to the counselor associates. It impacts everybody.

RENODA WASHINGTON: So what do you guys have in place to really address that? Like what do you guys have in place to address this specifically?

MELISSA BAYHAM: I mentioned that we're putting in independent approval status. We're starting to take applications for my office. I'm going to train somebody on taking applications because that's where we are. I'm going out and taking VR applications. We continue to provide training as I said. We provide, I mean we're trying everything that we possibly can. As we can streamline things in our procedure manual we have been

doing that. There's pros and cons to streamlining because then you end up with services that are not as (inaudible). So I'm trying to make things as easy as I possibly can for our counselors without taking the value out of vocational rehabilitation.

EBONY HAVEN: I was just going to follow up with Melissa. I know that the Arc and some other organizations, Families Helping Families, did advocate for LRS to get additional funding and you guys got that 4 million. Is any of that funding going to go to like advertising or marketing or some type of recruitment for your voc rehab counselors?

MELISSA BAYHAM: To fill the positions?

EBONY HAVEN: Yeah. To fill whatever vacant positions you guys have.

MELISSA BAYHAM: So I have a new HR liaison and so she's been trying to spice up my job postings because we get applicants but we don't get a lot of applicants and the quality of our applicants. It's not like we have this large pool of great applicants that we're pulling from. Generally it's who's applying and who's showing up to the interview. Because I don't know if y'all have experienced this but you schedule interviews with people and they don't show up. Like some of the workforce titles for whatever reason like they will get 50 applications. I don't get 50 applications for my rehab counselors. I'm lucky if I get ten. And then they might want 90,000-dollars and we can't do that. There's a lot of factors in why.

CHRISTI GONZALES: So you're able to hire. It's 23 positions y'all have?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Total.

RENODA WASHINGTON: What do you think is the breakdown? Why aren't you guys able to obtain counselors?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Because the pay is low. Our counselors start at 17.80.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Dollars an hour?

ERICK TAYLOR: (Inaudible).

MELISSA BAYHAM: It ranges depending on the region but it's definitely over 100. But also that doesn't include preemployment transition services. Counselors can have more than one caseload. They can have a VR caseload and a preETS caseload. PreETS is wonderful but it's taken a toll, which is why we're doing these contracts. Because in addition to the work that we already had where you go (inaudible) now we have to arrange services with every



school district in Louisiana. They're all different. The vendors are different. Some we have contracts with. Some we have vendors with. It's a lot of administrative work that we're having to do just for preemployment transition services on top of vocational rehab services.

ERICK TAYLOR: Y'all wait list?

MELISSA BAYHAM: We don't have a wait list. I could make a wait list but I haven't.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Even with the 4 million?

EBONY HAVEN: It's 4 million in state general funds.

MELISSA BAYHAM: We greatly appreciate-- I don't want anybody to think, we greatly appreciate the 4 million-dollars. But that 4 million-dollars, like we were about to go on a waiting list because of our funding so that 4 million-dollars, which actually when you pull down the federal funds is 18.4-million I believe. It was a Band-Aid. In order for us to be fully funded we would have needed 19 million-dollars and we got a little under 12. It's great but we're still (inaudible). And not to get too deep in the weeds. I can if y'all want me to. But your state fiscal year and your federal fiscal year are two different fiscal years. The state fiscal year just started but the federal fiscal year ends September 30th. So we're still, this federal fiscal year that's ending September 30th we're still relinquishing or sending back 30 million-dollars because you have to spread that state general fund over the state fiscal year, not the federal fiscal year. And you have to be able to spend the state funds to draw down the federal funds. So we're still going to relinquish 30 million-dollars this federal fiscal year which ends September 30th. Or approximately 30 million.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Okay. Anybody else have anything? In regards to post-secondary education could you explain like what we talked about as far as room and board because there is just a lot of miscommunication when it comes to that and I just want clarity on that. That way if you ever come into someone that wants to know this because it's just a lot of hearsay and things like that. Could you please give that the same clarity.

MELISSA BAYHAM: The issue with room and board-- first of all you have to remember that all VR services are individualized so I can't tell you everybody will attend this program and get this, this and this because all services are individualized. So room and board, this is

a federal regulation, we can't pay for, I don't want to get too technical, if you are in commuting distance of your university or college we don't pay for room and board. So we have made some additional provisions for the conference and transition programs. That is an individual needs, the residential component. Then we can pay for the residential component if that's needed for that particular individual. But I can't tell you what service every student's going to get because it's individualized.

RENODA WASHINGTON: I didn't ask that. I asked about room and board.

MELISSA BAYHAM: The general rule, unless you have an exception, is that if you live within commuting distance to a college or university that meets your needs. Meaning if you want to go into accounting if you live within 20 miles of a school that offers accounting but you choose to go to a school 100 miles away we're still not paying for room and board because that was your choice to go a school (inaudible).

RENODA WASHINGTON: Let me interject. If you recall our communication as far as single, shared. That's what I'm talking about.

MELISSA BAYHAM: I'm sorry. So that's the double occupancy. So things have changed in dorm rooms since when I was in college. And it's been very confusing as to what double occupancy means and so that has been clarified. In these dorm rooms now there could be rooms with doors on them but it still has a shared space and that's considered double occupancy. It's only single occupancy if there's one door, one room and only you're in that room. But a lot of these dorms there were so many different configurations it was confusing to staff.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Any other questions for Melissa? All right. Thanks Melissa. Before we go on to the next-- hi Mr. Phil. I haven't seen you in a while. Good to see you. Next on the agenda is an update from-- I'm sorry.

EBONY HAVEN: If it's okay with the chair and the committee and Meredith I would like to go before Meredith's update because I don't want her to steal my thunder. So I don't know who was here for the self-determination and community inclusion committee but Brenton did bring up LaCAN and the council's advocacy agenda and we were very successful in all three of our agenda items. The third

item that we added probably in March or so was the education bill that focused specifically on seclusion and restraint in response to the legislative audit that came out in December. So the council and LaCAN have to write a new law. It is now Act 479. And that new law makes sure that seclusion and restraint in schools is issued safely and only when needed. Act 479 does some amazing things and I kind of wanted to highlight some of those things. This is a huge one. This is something that the council worked on for I know since I started so that's been seven years. Schools have to put the cameras in special education classrooms now even if a parent doesn't request it. They have the funding and they are required to put those cameras in the self-contained special education classrooms.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Is there a time limit?

EBONY HAVEN: So for everyone online Ms.

Gonzales-Landry just asked if there was a time limit or timeframe when the cameras had to be installed and it's February 1st, 2026. But it also, the bill also clearly explains seclusion, and that means putting a student alone in a room, and physical restraint, holding the student still and it defines when they can be used. Teachers will have to be trained on how to handle those tough situations and behaviors called crisis intervention. That's part of becoming a teacher. Only trained staff can use physical restraint unless there's an emergency. If a student is secluded or restrained they have to be checked out by either a school nurse or another health staff person on the same day that the seclusion or restraint happens. Parents have to be told during IEP meetings that they can say no to seclusion and restraint. So this was one that was already in law but I don't think anybody knew about it. So it is clearly stated in there that during the IEP meetings parents have to be notified that they can say no to their child being restrained and secluded.

If there is a video of a restraint it will be watched to make sure that the rules and the bill are being followed or were followed. Parents must be told the same day if their child was secluded or restrained. And if a child is secluded or restrained, this is a good one, more than twice a year their behavior plan has to be updated. That used to be five times and so we reduced that number to two. Two times in a year their behavior plan has to be updated. If a student is held for more than three minutes in one hour

it can be called physical restraint. I don't have the specifics or what that was before, Meredith.

MEREDITH JORDAN: There wasn't a time limit before. This kind of clarified if there's any (inaudible) touch or anything that's less than three minutes that's not considered a restraint. That was just clarification that was just added.

EBONY HAVEN: Thanks for the clarification. Schools must include clear rules about recording once seclusion and restraint happens and in all their policies. And specifically they have to include the timeframes for reporting and what specifically has to be included in that report. And if you go read the bill there are very specific things in the bill about what they have to include in those reports. Schools have to share their rules every year with the Special Education Advisory Councils and they have to give a policy to the parents.

So I just want to give a huge thank you to Representative Mack, Senator Mizell who's on the senate side who carried the bill and all the authors for helping us get this revised and improved law updated. I also want to give a really special thank you to all the advocates in LaCAN who wrote their legislators or made phone calls and came to our yellow shirt days. And I specifically want to shoutout our very own council member Ms. Vivienne Webb and her brother Cayden Webb. They were very instrumental in giving like very compelling testimony during the committees that the bill was heard in.

I also want to thank, and I don't know who's on right now, but I do want to thank our LaCAN leaders who worked very hard this session in getting their LaCAN members to come out to our yellow shirt days when the bill was being heard in committees. But overall for their great work this entire legislative session. I don't know who was present in the self-determination committee earlier but we had a 20 percent increase in participation on our action alerts and our yellow shirt days from last year. So I just wanted to give LaCAN a huge shoutout for all of their hard work because that increase can directly be attributed to their hard work. So I just wanted to shout them out as well. And of course lastly I just want to thank all the partners that worked with the DD Council on this bill. The Arc of Louisiana, Disability Rights Louisiana, the Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools, our very own

Meredith Jordan from the Louisiana Department of Education and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. I thank all of them for partnering with us on this bill. It made some great changes. And I just wanted to make sure I shared that before Meredith.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Any questions, concerns?  
Vivienne.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Welcome back Dr. Phil. We missed you.

RENODA WASHINGTON: All right. Anybody else?

BRENTON ANDRUS: There is a question online from Ms. Brenda Cosse. She should be able to unmute.

BRENDA COSSE: Good afternoon.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Good afternoon.

BRENDA COSSE: Yes, regarding seclusion and restraint information did the bill increase training, change training or anything like that? Or who can speak to who does the training for the schools? Is Meredith Jordan there?

MEREDITH JORDAN: You know it.

BRENDA COSSE: Hi. Okay. I'll hold.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Perfect timing. So yes, there are two trainings. So the bill doesn't require it. So the bill said the department may offer. What we've done is committed to our stakeholders, to everybody who came together that we're going to offer that training. The reason that all of our stakeholders wrote it in that way is so that it wouldn't get hung up with a fiscal note in session. We committed to that. We are already in conversation with our vendors. So we are going to offer statewide two levels of training. So one is going to be general, which is going to help all educators honestly. General behavior de-escalation, setting up your classroom structures to support student behavior. That will be offered to all educators.

The other set of restraint training is what we call the smaller set of training which is really geared towards your crisis intervention teams. So those people who one, encounter students with these types of struggles where you may use those types of techniques. And two, the administrators or other people on those crisis teams who are called in such emergencies, right, to help in those situations. So we're going to offer a set of seats to ensure that every school system has-- and we kind of have a formula for this. We kind of looked at our larger school

systems obviously need more people trained. And we're going to employ what we call a train-the-trainer model where we get folks who are trained as CPI instructors they can then go out and train additional people. So this could get really costly over time with turnover if we don't deploy it correctly. And so those are the two levels of training, Ms. Brenda. And I am hoping to deploy those this fall as soon as possible because I know that it's going to be helpful. Even behavior de-escalation for all educators, all school leaders will be able to have access. We're even going to, I've been working with our early childhood team, even offering it to our lead agencies in our early childhood networks. So getting those folks trained as well, even with our younger students who may have some similar challenges and offering them to be able to participate as well. So absolutely the training is coming.

On top of that the bill does now require that any teachers coming out of any educator preparation program also has built into their teacher course work that same sort of behavior de-escalation type training. So we're going to open that up to our preparation program providers so that new teachers and teachers who are in college can get that support and get that training. Which is important to support the people who are our next generation of educators to make sure that we prevent some of all of this, right, and we make sure they come out with the skills to support behavior in the classroom. I hope that answers your question.

BRENDA COSSE: Thank you. And a quick comment. Yes, for preschool early intervention programs like when they're three-years old and go into the school systems while they age out of Early Steps and Head Start and all of that. I do know from all the grade levels, especially the preschool ones, those educators want training. They want to know how to help our children. So they definitely need training even in the younger category. Thank you.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Thank you Ms. Brenda. Do I have anybody else? All right. Ms. Meredith.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Okay. So I'm going to expound just a tad bit just to go to policy and implementation. Ebony did a phenomenal job. And just to add on to what you said Ebony. Like this was the perfect example of everybody coming together with this mission and with this vision and getting us across the finish line. Like this was just

really incredible, even at the department, to be a part of working with you all, working with the advocates and the folks who came and spoke. Just a real testament for what can happen when we work together.

We have already brought and got SEAP endorsement on the policy language. So this particular House Bill 684, now Act 479 will impact two major policies for special education. The first one is bulletin 1706 which is where all of the seclusion and restraint language lives. So we brought that policy update in alignment with the law to SEAP and got endorsement on that language. We also brought 741 is our handle for school administrators. That is where the SEAP requirements lie so we had to put in pieces about what's now reported to SEAP that Ebony mentioned. How many seclusion rooms are there. They have to report that to SEAP and to us. And the policies that now have to go to SEAP. So we put all of that in Bulletin 741. And the SPED camera stuff went into 741. We changed all of that language now that says special education cameras that provide audio and video. All that language went into 741. Without parent request. So all of that changed. Both of those bulletins are going to August BESE. So really, really fast in terms of getting this in place. To Christi's point with all of the different timelines that are in that bulletin. And the faster we got language to BESE and the faster our school systems will move to update their local policy and procedure because they now have to change both their seclusion and restraint policy and they're going to have to change their special education camera or policy and procedure, right.

CHRISTI GONZALES: For example, we had to put a sign on the outside of our doors. Cameras in my classroom. I don't even notice them anymore to be honest. First I was like oh, my gosh. If you're doing what you're supposed to do. If I have a new parent I just tell them we do have cameras in the classroom. You forget about it. I don't have any qualms with it or anything like that. As a teacher I was kind of nervous at first because it was like having eyes on you. But really they're just there to protect us too because there's audio as well.

JILL HANO: So like if you have a camera in your classroom and you don't have the parent's consent I would assume is the student blurred out?

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yeah. So there's a lot of privacy

too that goes in place with audio and video for students. We have to clarify this a lot of times. So the cameras are not like live feed. Like there's no one sitting there sitting behind watching. And most of them have policies in place where you can request to see the video when something has happened or you suspect something has happened. But in order to protect other students' privacy they do have to have, you can only show them their child, right. So the school system has to have software that blurs out images of other students, right, to protect. And in law and policy does say how school systems define the signage. Hey, there's a video that's recording audio and visual because law and state policy says you have to notify all the other parents--

CHRISTI GONZALES: Letters were sent home. Parents signed.

MEREDITH JORDAN: You do have to notify them.

JILL HANO: Because I still do see both sides because I'm a big privacy person. But also like y'all have phenomenal points.

MEREDITH JORDAN: But your point is not a bad one. A school system would have to work with a parent. If a parent said absolutely not, I do not want my child recorded they have to work to find a setting where their child is not recorded. Your point is important. There could be instances where school systems are going to have to work with parents if there is a parent that says I don't want my child recorded. And we may have to work with that or provide any guidance to school systems.

And so a couple of next steps for us. So we have the policy that's going to BESE. We are also in the process of updating our seclusion and restraint guidance document for school systems, which is also going to help them update their policy. So we're trying to get that document out as fast as possible. So I want to make sure that they have the guidance necessary to create policies that are in alignment with and what are all the requirements to be there.

I'm also collecting data right now on the camera purchases from this past year. How much money school systems still have. Because that conversation is going to start happening where school systems are going to say wait a minute, what if I run out of money. I've had that with a couple of schools systems. And kind of give them some



other options. And also I need to know that information and collect that data so that if we need to go back to the legislature and say hey, so and so school system may need a little more money. Here's what we're short. We can think about that. But also remembering that every year in our state budget Dr. Brumley has committed an additional 800,000 a year that it's split up, all of our school systems that receive that additional funding for maintenance costs. If a camera breaks, if their software isn't working, they need additional software or something or the wiring. All of those upkeep issues around technology.

CHRISTI GONZALES: They have to come in and rewire some things.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yes. So we have also committed some of our state general funds to supporting the maintenance of the cameras. So I wanted y'all to know kind of proactively what data we're looking at right now that we're collecting that might help us if we start hearing well, wait a minute. I don't have enough to get in all the classrooms. Because remember that original application was based on numbers from 2023. Populations can change. Number of classrooms can change. That kind of thing.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: What you just said triggered a thought in my head and I was just curious. Is it based on those 2023 numbers? Is it split evenly? You get what I'm saying?

MEREDITH JORDAN: No. It's not even. It's what you said first. So however much they got based on how many classrooms. Because a small school system doesn't need as much money. So it's a percentage of that original.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: At the end I was typing something. But so the districts can go in and say like we need more because we have a higher influx this year or is it they have to submit--

MEREDITH JORDAN: So right now-- that's a good question Stephanie. Right now I'm kind of taking hearsay and I have about three districts that are saying hey, I might run out of money. But I think if we get through this data collection and they start planning for that February 1 of here's how many classrooms that don't have them and how much is coming I have to buy I'm going to know a little bit more over the coming month. And to your point I may have to release some sort of official (inaudible) that says how many rooms do you still have that you have left that you've

expended everything. That you don't have enough money for every classroom. How many. And then we start thinking about how much more money. I might end up having to do an official gauge of it. Right now it's like two or three so I'm just kind of making notes. Let me keep this in the back of my mind so we can kind of keep track.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Okay. One last question. Let's say, because there's still maintenance money, so would that be, I know it's for maintenance of the cameras but let's say that this year I only have two self-contained classes but next year I now need three. Could I get that maintenance fund to buy that additional or is it what I currently have?

MEREDITH JORDAN: I'm going to ask you to let me get you that information. Because school systems are asking the same thing. Can I use my maintenance money to also buy additional cameras. And I'm like well, are you maintaining something. So I have that question to our finance team to see like what are the restrictions on the maintenance for the state general fund if they needed to tap into that. I know that they can tap into their IDEA money. I don't want them to have to if that makes sense. Yes, they could but I don't want them to have to, right. If there's another way that we can help support them with it we would rather do that and not have them take additional money from their IDEA dollars.

RENODA WASHINGTON: What happens if the districts are not meeting that February date? Do you guys have any pushback? Or what happens when they don't comply?

MEREDITH JORDAN: We have not heard anything negative. I'll be honest, I think sometimes they want us to tell them or the state legislature to tell them because if you have the option, right. If it's only four parent requests that's what we're going to do, right. Now some of our districts, to Christi's point, we had several that, and like several of them have told me like I don't need, now these are some of our smaller districts, I don't need the maintenance money. We already have cameras. And I'm like are you sure you don't need maintenance money. Because like okay, you already have cameras in every class, are you sure. Like I can take that and we can reallocate that to some of these others who might need it. We're just going to kind of have to gauge that over the next couple of months when we see the requests come in.

RENODA WASHINGTON: And then y'all extend the date or something?

MEREDITH JORDAN: What happens if they don't. If they don't we're going to start hearing from the parents. We would start asking questions to school systems. We do communicate, like send them reminders hey, this was the deadline. Obviously we can't make them. But I haven't had any pushback or any questions. It's in state law at this point. I think the questions are going to start coming (inaudible). But usually because it's in law. And the good thing is we have the money, right. Doesn't mean they may not have enough if they have a population change so that could be pushback. So what happens if February 1 gets here and I've used all my money and I put in in every classroom that I can but I have three that I can't because I don't have enough money. But they're going to point back to the law and say that little piece from the original that said when funding is available. Right now they have funding but what happens if they run out we would have to figure out how to support them, how to get them some additional money.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Getting back to the cameras. Were they given one person to go through, I'm just asking, for costs or were they given a choice?

MEREDITH JORDAN: No. So they can use anyone on state contract. We didn't limit any sort of vendor. The reason that we didn't is that would have taken and put a lot of undue burden on school systems. So I got to wait and get all these applications from vendors when we have a state vendor list. Most of our school systems have tech people because most of them have cameras in hallways, in lunchrooms, in various other places in the school. They already have contracts. And usually get decent pricing when they do that. So we didn't want to limit their vendors.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Getting back to the question you asked about all the cameras. I know like in my classroom I only needed three but next door she needed four because she was three feet wider. So not every classroom is going to be the same amount. So they did have to come in and measure. So where they might have one camera left for the sensory room to manage that. So it is dependent on how big the classrooms were as well.

JILL HANO: A classroom has a sensory room?

CHRISTI GONZALES: It's across the hall.

ERICK TAYLOR: I have a question that might not make no sense but I'm going to ask it anyway. Where they can say okay (inaudible).

MEREDITH JORDAN: So we are tracking, they have to report to us. They have to give us their receipts for the cameras and all their expenditures. So there is a bit of monitoring, Erick. I will say this, in order for speed of getting that money out initially that money, and because that money can't be, so once you draw away a state general fund from the legislature, I'm not using the right terms here, you can't roll that money over. So because this was about parent requests we knew that school systems probably weren't going to spend that 8 million-dollars in year one. So we had to get that money to school systems fast. So they already have it. To your point it is earmarked. Our finance teams or the finance manager in every school system is hanging on to that money. And every year they're telling us how much did you spend, upload your receipts. And then we calculate what's left.

And I kind of know so when I'm collecting their data, right now I'm collecting on numbers, but I'm also collecting on tell me how much you've spent. But it's also calculating for me year to year what they have left. So there is some monitoring in place for it in terms of having to upload those receipts and matching receipts to their budget. Which wasn't necessary but it was something we put in place for your exact question. What are you monitoring. What is the accountability. We could have gave them that money and said you track it, you spend it on what it's supposed to be spent on. Instead we made them submit a budget to us and they're uploading receipts. Even though it's not on a reimbursement basis, they already have the money, but we wanted that accountability. We wanted them to know we're looking at it. We know what the money is meant for and we want to see your receipts so we can match it.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Any other?

MEREDITH JORDAN: That's mostly what I wanted to talk about. I did want to add, because it came as a shock to me, but we also had interestingly a line item added to House Bill 1 for another dyslexia pilot. So that is something that we have to roll out this fall as well so we would be letting our school systems know. It's part of our legislative update. I just wanted to let y'all know

because it was something that wasn't on any of our trackers. It was one of those things that got slipped in somewhere. We will be rolling out another dyslexia pilot which will offer some additional funds to school systems to support dyslexia students.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Any other questions for Ms. Jordan? No one? Mr. Phil, where you at?

PHIL WILSON: I'm at home right now. I'm zoomed in because I was confused. I didn't catch that the committee meetings had changed their time. Anyhow, I'm here and listening intently and very happy to hear about the Act 479. And I know that the council has worked on that, like Ebony said, for years now with our partners and Department of Ed and all the advocacy that's gone on. Sounds like we really can feel like we have our hands around this issue.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Thank you Mr. Phil. Anybody else? All right. Thank you Ms. Jordan. Next on the agenda is an update on the contractual activities.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Yes. So this is activity 3.1.5 the transition to adulthood. If you look in your packet or on the screen I have this little chart. This is up to date. They do have a training tomorrow in the New Orleans area and one additional one in Ruston. They have trainings (inaudible) 18 people. But I do just want to make sure that y'all see that there are less trainings for this. It's still statewide. So they travel all over the state. But a lot of our statewide initiatives are in every single region. This one was only in six regions. And that was based on a survey that was sent out about what things people wanted to see. How many people answered the survey. It took a lot of things in consideration when they collected these. I just wanted to make sure that we saw that.

And the other thing I wanted to mention. This initiative is going to be on the 2026 action plan and there was more funds allocated to it. The committee talked about that because they wanted to add additional trainings and additional training sessions. So additional topics and additional sessions. But that's my update unless you have any questions about this one.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Thank you Stephanie. Any questions for Stephanie before we move on?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Don't see any online.

RENODA WASHINGTON: All right. Hearing no additional questions we're going to move onto public comment and

announcements. There were two public comments that are included in your packet and linked in the agenda. I will ask Stephanie to read them aloud.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: If you are online they are not linked in the agenda. I am so sorry. I did not link it. I forgot. But I can read them if you would like me to read them aloud. The first one is from Tony Piontek. He says how can we make better changes to receive better resources for education and employment such as interns to earn their degree in this area. When and where can they get the assistance from a professional in their area of study. And are the any online study courses that are available for anyone to have resources to start (inaudible) for a person with disabilities, teachers, fitness instructors, librarians and unrelated topics in this area. That was his comment.

And then there was another comment from Claire Hebert that said the UL Lafayette life program will begin accepting applications for its 2026/2027 freshman cohort from August 1st, 2025, to December 3rd, 2025, with interviews to take place in the spring of 2026. For more information visit and she gave the link. So I will have this posted so that if anybody does want that link you are able to click on that. I will try to get that online as soon as I get back to the office. But I did include it in all of the printed packets. If you have a printed one you have it with you. If you are online I will get that online.

RENODA WASHINGTON: All right. Tomorrow is the full council meeting which will begin at 10:00 a.m. in this room. Please note the adjusted schedule of the council meetings due to location. Does anyone on the committee have any announcements to make? All right. Hearing none. If there are no objections we can adjourn by unanimous consent. Any objections? No objections. I hereby adjourn this meeting at 5:27. Thanks everyone.