

**Office of Public Health (OPH) Quarterly Report to the Developmental Disabilities Council**  
 Bureau of Family Health (BFH)  
 October 6, 2023

**Children’s Special Health Services (CSHS)** works to ensure that children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN) in Louisiana have access to health care services designed to minimize their disabilities and maximize their probabilities of enjoying independent and self-sufficient lives.

- [Children’s Special Healthcare Services](#) (CSHS) - Clinical Services offers direct care clinics for CYSHCNs in all regions, except 1 and 7, to meet specialty care needs in provider shortage areas. CSHS-Clinical Services (Genetics, Sickle Cell, and subspecialty clinics) transitioned to a hybrid appointment schedule. Decisions regarding in-person vs telehealth appointment visits are now being made at the Regional level depending upon staffing capacity, the infection positivity rate, and the ability to provide services safely.
- CSHS-Clinical Services Social Workers continue to provide behavioral health assessments to determine if families are in need of outpatient behavioral health referrals, as well as providing care coordination, youth health transition, support and resources.
- CSHS-Clinical Services also provides nutritional services in Regions 2 and 6 and hopes to expand to other Regions as the need dictates.
- Any family of a child/youth with a special health need that requires peer support, system navigation, or resource linkage is referred to Families Helping Families network in their respective region or the Family Resource Center. CSHS-Clinical services also refers to other community-based organizations as appropriate.

**The Family Resource Center (FRC)** is a statewide virtual center designed to ensure CYSHCN, their families, and health care providers in Louisiana have access to resource and referral services. The [BFH-Family Resource Center](#) provides community referrals, health/education transition supports, and system navigation services. FRC also provides outreach to families of children identified through the Louisiana Birth Defects Monitoring Network to assist in linking to appropriate medical, educational, public health and peer support resources available in their region. For resource and referral services contact the FRC team via phone (504) 896-1340 or email [BFH-FamilyResourceCenter@la.gov](mailto:BFH-FamilyResourceCenter@la.gov), Monday-Friday 8 am-4pm. Non-English-speaking families can text their name, preferred language, and date/time that they are available between 8am-4:00pm to (504) 214-1785 or (504) 407-4601. Someone will respond in their preferred language.

<b>Family Resource Center July-September 2023</b>	
New Referrals	286
Total number of families engaged	168
Total number of outreach efforts (contact attempts to reach referred families)	629
Count of Total Resource Needs Identified	650

**Families Helping Families (FHF) – BFH Project** aims to build a coordinated and family-centric statewide CYSCHN resource and referral service system utilizing the collaborative partnership between BFH-Family Resource Center and FHF Networks. FHF networks are Louisiana’s statewide parent-to-parent support organization serving individuals with disabilities and children/youth with special health care needs and their families. As part of this collaboration, FHF offers annual pediatric provider trainings to strengthen the healthcare workforce to care for children and youth disabilities and/or special health needs.

**CSHS Transportation Assistance Program** provides needed transportation assistance for eligible families to attend medical appointments/procedures. Families must seek transportation assistance through their MCO before requesting assistance through CSHS. Families may contact the Family Resource Center ([BFH-FamilyResourceCenter@la.gov](mailto:BFH-FamilyResourceCenter@la.gov)) or their local [Families Helping Families](#) Center for more information.

<b>Transportation Assistance Program</b> July 2023-September 2023	
2 stipend issued	Stipend expenditures \$759.80

**Louisiana Birth Defects Monitoring Network (LBDMN)** tracks the occurrence of over 70 structural, functional, and genetic birth defects in Louisiana residents. This work helps to identify environmental conditions, pharmaceutical side effects, or behavioral risk factors threatening Louisiana's newborns. By case definition, we include children diagnosed prior to their third birthday. Overall prevalence of birth defects per 10,000 live births in Louisiana is 2.6%. LBDMN staff conduct active surveillance of birth defects in children born in Louisiana. According to the CDC, the US average is about 3% of all babies born each year. Among Louisiana children with birth defects, cardiovascular system defects (about 63%) were the most common. Complete findings are in the [LBDMN 2022 Annual Report](#) to the legislature.

**Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI)** The Louisiana Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (LA EHDI) program supports coordinated systems of care that ensure families of babies and children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing (D/HH) receive appropriate and timely services. All newborns should be screened no later than 1 month of age, preferably prior to hospital discharge; for those who do not pass screening, audiologic diagnosis should be completed by 3 months of age; if hearing loss is confirmed, appropriate intervention services should be received no later than 6 months of age, inclusive of opportunities for family-to-family support.

- EHDI Regional Stakeholder Collaboratives: Meeting of stakeholders (including parents of children who are DHH, hospital newborn hearing screening personnel, pediatric audiologists, Early Steps (Part C) providers, Parent Pupil Education Program (PPEP) DHH teachers, and Hands & Voices/Guide By Your Side Parent and Deaf Guides) to discuss regional progress on EHDI’s 1-3-6 goals and strategize improvements.
  - Upcoming: Region 2 – November 3 at Woman’s Wellness Center, Baton Rouge
- LA EHDI and Heelstick newborn screening (NBS): programs are collaborating to identify opportunities for improvement/alignment between hearing screening and dried bloodspot screening.
  - Benefits babies by detecting life threatening or life altering conditions

- Allows for early treatment to improve outcomes and reduce the cost of treating conditions over a lifetime
- Presently looking at improving prenatal education
- Health Resources Services Administration Competitive Supplement: recently awarded to LA EHDI to augment existing funding to help ensure that families receive the services they need to address language acquisition and other developmental milestones through capacity building, partnership development, and data analysis.
- Advisory Council for the Early Identification of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Infants:
  - Friday, October 27, 2023
  - 12:00-2:30pm
  - Ochsner Main Campus – 1514 Jefferson Hwy, New Orleans, 70121

**Louisiana Hands & Voices** is the lead family based organization for the LA EHDI program. Guide by Your Side (GBYS) is a program from LA H&V that provides support and unbiased information from trained Parent Guides to families of newly identified children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Support is also available in the form of Deaf or Hard of Hearing (D/HH) Guides who have also received training. H&V advocates for families, shares information, and creates space and time for people to come together and help one another. *H&V knows that families use many different ways to communicate with their children who are D/HH. It doesn't matter which mode of communication a family uses, H&V believes that what works for a child and their family is what makes the choice right.*

- Family event: Miko's Playhouse – Lafayette
- Community: sponsored a table at the LA Academy of Audiology conference
- Noteworthy: 3 Parent Guides and 1 Deaf Guide represented LA at the National H&V conference. A member of LA H&V, Rana Otallah, was elected to the National Board
- Parent Chats: hosted the first Thursday of every month for parents whose children are identified as deaf or hard of hearing (via Zoom)

**The Louisiana Commission for the Deaf (LCD)** functions as the principal state program that provides information and services to and for individuals who are Deaf, DeafBlind, or hard of hearing on behalf of the State of Louisiana.

#### Board News:

- LCD Board has voted to create a DeafBlind advisory council. If you know anyone who may be interested in joining, please have them contact [LCD@la.gov](mailto:LCD@la.gov)
- LCD is seeking alternate funding sources for DeafBlind individuals seeking employment via La Workforce Commission
- LCD has established a Health Equity collaboration with the La Dept of Health and Bureau of Media and Communications to address equitable healthcare for DDBHH individuals
- LCD is seeking to building capacity within Department of Children and Family Services Foster Care program for children who are DDBHH and use American Sign Language
- LCD has increased its support for deaf children in K-12 Education and is working closely with the Special School District which oversees the La School for the Deaf

### **Other news:**

- If your organization is in need of trainings, professional development, etc. related to Deaf sensitivity, culture, or services for d/Deaf, DeafBlind or hard of hearing people (DDBHH), please reach out to [LCD@la.gov](mailto:LCD@la.gov)
- LCD will be co-hosting Community Emergency Response Trainings (CERT) in the next few months around the state for DDBHH communities, please see LCD website and or Facebook page for more information
- LCD is charged, per Act 128 of the 2022 Regular Legislative Session, to establish minimum standards for American Sign Language Interpreters working in Louisiana. LCD's first area of focus is interpreters working in educational settings. Bi-weekly adhoc meetings are in progress. To learn more or engage with this work, please see meeting schedules on the [LCD board website](#).

Next LCD public meeting Friday, October 20th from 9am-1pm at the La State Capitol. More information on the LCD please click [here](#)

**BFH Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)** is a no-cost, voluntary program that provides family support and coaching to improve the health and well-being of pregnant women and parenting families with young children. Families are paired with registered nurses or certified parent educators who provide personalized education, guidance, and referrals to services to empower families to reach their goals. Nurses and Parent Educators work with families in their homes or the family's preferred location. MIECHV implements two evidenced-based, home visiting models- Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) and Parents as Teachers (PAT).

Services provided to participating families include:

- Health education and coaching
- Support in building positive parenting skills and caregiving confidence
- Help setting and reaching personal goals, such as returning to school or work
- Connection and referrals to services and community resources

Benefits of program participation include:

- Improved economic self-sufficiency
- Early identification of developmental delays
- Improved child health and development

In SFY 2023, MIECHV served 2,953 families. The data from this year's Annual Client Satisfaction results showed that 98.6% of families participating in MIECHV were satisfied with the services they were receiving. Survey data indicated that families learned important information about pregnancy, parenting, and personal health during home visits. Survey data also showed that families felt home visits supported their child's health, development, and behavior.

For more information about Louisiana MIECHV's NFP and PAT services, including how to get in touch with a home visitor near you, you can reach out to [Susannah.Boudreaux@la.gov](mailto:Susannah.Boudreaux@la.gov) or visit <https://partnersforfamilyhealth.org/family-support-coaching-services/>.

**Genetic Diseases Program** operates a comprehensive statewide newborn heel stick screening (NBS) program meeting national standards as well as ensuring access to genetic evaluation and counseling to residents of Louisiana. Currently the heel stick program screens for 28 genetic conditions. The [Genetics Program](#) also operates the [Sickle Cell Disease \(SCD\) Program](#), which provides resources and information on how individuals diagnosed with sickle cell can receive assistance and care through the Sickle Cell Foundations and Clinics around the state. During the 2023 legislative session, HB 200 (ACT 17) passed, which improves the process for adding new conditions to the Louisiana Newborn Screening Panel.

**Louisiana Early Childhood Risk & Reach: 2021 Report.** The Early Childhood Risk and Reach in Louisiana report is a tool designed to be used by all early childhood stakeholders, governmental and nongovernmental, to better inform policy and funding decisions that impact the distribution of critical resources. The [2021 Early Childhood Risk and Reach report](#) describes five categories of health challenges facing Louisiana kids and families: Economic Stability; Healthcare Access & Quality; Social & Family Context; Education Access & Quality; and Neighborhood & Built Environment. The report also describes the reach of key publicly-funded programs that address these risks and challenges. Data on program reach are overlaid onto maps of overall risk, which helps to illustrate which parishes may require additional services and investments to support children's health and well-being.

**Statewide Young Child Wellness Collaborative (YCWC)** is a cross-agency advisory council, the purpose of which is to provide leadership and inform priorities/strategic planning across the continuum of supports/services within Louisiana's Early Childhood System. The YCWC serves as the State-Level advisory team for the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant, Project SOAR (Screen Often and Accurately Refer). The YCWC meets every other month on the second Tuesday of, the next convening is August 8, 2023. The collaborative includes representation from BFH, EarlySteps, the Office of Behavioral Health (OBH), Medicaid, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), the Louisiana Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS), LSU Human Development Center, the Louisiana Partnership for Children and Families, the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children, and the Louisiana chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. The YCWC is currently recruiting pediatric/perinatal health care providers and pregnant/parenting family leaders interested in participating and informing early childhood systems improvement. If you or someone you know may be interested in joining the collaborative, contact [Patti.Barovechio@la.gov](mailto:Patti.Barovechio@la.gov) for more information.

**Bureau of Family Health's Developmental Screening Initiative** hosts an evidence-based [Developmental Screening Toolkit](#) to help medical providers integrate developmental screening services into their day-to-day practice. The virtual toolkit uses a quality improvement framework, which allows providers to systematically improve the way health care is delivered to the families they serve. It contains systematic information contained in webpages, instructional videos, and downloadable worksheets. [Customized training and technical assistance](#) for implementation of developmental screening services is available at no cost to health provider practices through the Title V initiative. In August, the Bureau of Family Health began the process of updating the Louisiana Developmental Screening Guidelines. The review committee is comprised of Louisiana content experts in a vast array of fields. The experts convened to discuss potential modifications to the guidelines to insure recommended screening instruments

and periodicity continues to align with state legislation, state and national policies statements as well as guidance from national organization such as the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. The review cycle will conclude at the end of October at which time the recommendations will be submitted for approval and publication. For information on the Developmental Screening Initiative and provider training requests, contact Dr. Tresa Northington at [Tresa.Northington@la.gov](mailto:Tresa.Northington@la.gov).

BFH recently published a complementary toolkit to support providers with building effective/efficient referral processes to ensure high quality referrals when risk is identified through screening services. The [Care Coordination Toolkit](#) follows the same quality improvement framework as the Developmental Screening Toolkit. For support with care coordination service implementation, contact [Kaylee.Hall@la.gov](mailto:Kaylee.Hall@la.gov).

**BFH Adolescent School Health Program (ASHP)** has 57 ASHP-certified School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) across the state. These health centers are located in public and charter schools and offer comprehensive, primary, and preventive physical and mental health services for students enrolled in the school that houses the SBHC and surrounding schools. Information on the LDH Adolescent School Health Program website can be found [here](#).