

Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council
Education and Employment
October 29, 2025

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Hi everyone. We are going to hold off for a couple of minutes. We are trying to have a quorum. Once that quorum is established we will begin the meeting. If anything changes we will let you know.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Good afternoon everyone. The time is now 4:25. I now call the meeting to order. Stephanie, would you please do a roll call. Ms. Christi, can you turn your camera on please. Hi everyone. In order for us to establish a quorum we have to have all cameras on.

ERICK TAYLOR: I'm here.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Hey Erick. We're just trying to get a quorum so hang tight.

CHRISTI GONZALES: I'm here.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Okay. Let's try this again. Good afternoon everyone. It is now 4:30. I will now call the meeting to order. Stephanie, can you take the roll cause please?

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Yes. Ms. Bayham.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Here.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Ms. Bayham, here. Mr. Boynton. Mr. Ennis. Ms. Gonzales.

EBONY HAVEN: Christi, can you hear us?

CHRISTI GONZALES: Yes, I can.

EBONY HAVEN: Can you say here for the roll please.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Here.

EBONY HAVEN: Thank you.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Dr. Meda. Ms. Stewart. Mr. Taylor.

ERICK TAYLOR: Here.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Thank you, Erick. Ms. Webb.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Here.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: And Ms. Washington.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Here.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: You have five here. You have a quorum.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Thank you, Stephanie. Before we start here are the meeting rules for the people in the room. Raise your hand before you speak. Wait until I call on you before talking. Side conversations quiet. Stay on the

topic we are discussing. For people joining by Zoom must be on camera with your full name showing to count for a quorum. Keep your microphone off unless I call on you. Please raise your hand if you want to speak. Wait until I call on you before unmuting. For all attendees the Q and A box is only for people who asked for an ADA accommodation. It is not for public comment. Committee members in person and virtually speak first then in-person public members, then public members on Zoom. Please be patient. Hybrid meetings can be hard to manage. If we are short on time comments may be limited. Comments about a person's character are not allowed. Public members will have one chance to comment on each agenda item. Each person has two minutes. Public comment will also happen before a vote or at other times if I allow it. Please work together to keep the meeting respectful and on track.

Everyone should have reviewed the July summary meeting. A copy is in your packet and a link in the agenda sent by email. I need a motion to accept the minutes.

VIVIENNE WEBB: I make a motion to accept the minutes.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Thank you.

CHRISTI GONZALES: I'll second.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Thank you, Christi. Because of open meeting laws we must vote by roll call. Stephanie, please take the roll call vote.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: A vote for yes is to approve the meeting summary. A vote for no is to not approve the meeting summary. Ms. Bayham.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Yes.

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

CHRISTI GONZALES: Yes.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Ms. Gonzales, yes. Dr. Meda. Ms. Stewart. Mr. Taylor.

ERICK TAYLOR: Yes.

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

VIVIENNE WEBB: Yes.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Ms. Webb, yes. And you have four yeses, zero noes so motion passes.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Thank you, Stephanie. The July meeting summary passes by unanimous consent.

Moving on. Our first agenda item is an update from LRS. Melissa Bayham will now give her update.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Good evening. I will start with

information on the federal government shutdown and how that impacts LRS. Which luckily right now it's not much. So the government shutdown effects federal fiscal year 2026 funds but we have carryover funds from federal fiscal year 2025 so we are able to operate on funds from our federal fiscal year 2025 as well as state general funds that we received in July. So as of right now the only thing that's really effected is we can't do administrative activities for our independent living grants but right now that's not critical. That just means we can't do any monitoring but that's not anything we need to do right now.

I wanted to give an update. Last meeting I mentioned that we were working on staffing contracts for preemployment transition services for four of our regions. And I'm happy to report that now we have two contracts that have been executed. We have for region one, which is the New Orleans region, we have Families Helping Families of Greater New Orleans is our contractor for that region. These contracts were recently approved so we do not have staff yet on that particular contract. The contractor is working on hiring for that staffing contract. We also contracted with Easterseals for region seven which is our Shreveport region. And they have finished hiring so we have three new staff on that staffing contract who will assist region seven or the Shreveport region with preemployment transition services coordination.

To give an update on hiring for LRS, not within the staffing contract, we are as part of our efforts to improve recruitment we are working on a special entrance rate with our HR department which has to go through civil service. But we are making progress. The lady assisting me with this has already done a cost estimate which is part of the process. I spoke to her yesterday. So that we can increase the entry counselor pay to hopefully recruit some quality candidates who will come and stay.

We also in one of my other updates I spoke about Sara Works, which is a communication software. We were hoping to have that up and running by October 1st but it did not happen. We have to go through OTS, which is the Office of Technology Services and governance boards and all these different approvals that I didn't know about. But we have finally received final approvals from OTS so we're in the final stages of hopefully executing that contract with Sara Works. So hopefully we will be able to implement that

soon. And that platform will allow us to meet with customers virtually. It will allow us to text, email, do all these things. Everything that we do will also be recorded in our case management system. So it will help with our case management. Right now if you send a customer an email you're going to have to copy and paste that into our case management system. Whereas Sara Works will integrate our email with our case management system. So it keeps a record of text messages. It will keep a record of emails. It will also allow us if a customer needs to submit documents to us they can submit it through Sara Works which could include taking a picture on your phone. It has a lot more capabilities than we have right now. It will also allow us to send documents that might need to be completed and signed by customers. It will send those through the platform as well. So it will just hopefully help our communication and make some things seamless that are not seamless right now.

We are also piloting a new vocational rehab VR application form and streamlined application process to hopefully reduce some wait times in the vocational rehab process. Essentially there are some things that we are doing in the application process that need to be done in the planning process and it's holding some things up. So hopefully we're working on a streamlined process that will help to speed up the application eligibility process so that we get customers to the planning process, which is obviously where you want to be because that's where we're planning and providing services.

So those are my updates but happy to take any questions or if there's a topic that I didn't cover that you would like me to cover I'm happy to do that.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Thank you, Melissa. Any questions before we move on? All right. Moving on the agenda. Unfortunately there's no representative for LDOE here today but we will have a rep here tomorrow for the full council meeting.

Next is an update on contractual activities. If we're running short on time I may ask staff to keep updates brief. Details are in the status report inside your council meeting packet. Stephanie will share her update.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: All right, y'all. It's kind of just an attendance summary for all of the trainings for the transition to adulthood which is activity 3.1.5. Team

Dynamics finished their trainings. They held a training in New Orleans and Ruston in August and that completed their trainings. They had a total of 34 people attend each training. We have changed kind of how they're going to do these trainings moving forward because this activity is going to continue on the 2026 action plan so I just wanted to let y'all know that. They also presented at the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in September which was held in Alexandria. So they presented on this one and the other contract they have with us which is the abuse and neglect one. They had a panel. There were speakers. And they were able to give continuing education units, CEUs, to certain professionals. So they are certified, I guess, to give those CEUs for any of their trainings. So they're already planning this years. So the action plan that started October 1 to the federal fiscal year 26 they've already started planning out what they're going to do. Back when we had the planning meeting they had given a list of additional trainings that they wanted to include this year. So those will be implemented in this plan. And if you have any questions let me know. I can try to answer them.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Thank you, Stephanie. Any questions before we move on? We will move to announcements.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: I do have one announcement. It is just to let the committee know that at our next meeting you will be asked, so in January, you will be asked to come up with recommendations for the activities on our federal fiscal 27 plan. So just to kind of start thinking about things that you want to see on this new plan. This is the start of the next five-year plan which y'all are going to be looking at tomorrow. So just kind of looking through those things, what kind of activities you want to see in education or employment for that next year. Or if it's a multiyear. That kind of thing. So these are just ideas.

And then also if you have any additional, for example, any home and community-based kind of ideas you can present or be a public member for that standing committee so that the recommendations from the committee are just going to be when the education and employment meets. So if you have any other recommendations just make sure that you're going to the correct meeting. I guess that's what I'm trying to say.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Okay. Tomorrow is the full council meeting. It begins at 10:00 a.m. in this room. Please note the schedule because of the location. Any committee members have any announcements? I do want to recognize Ms. Webb. This is your last meeting with the education and employment committee. I just want to thank you for your service and your contributions to the council. Thank you.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Of course.

RENODA WASHINGTON: If there are no announcements and no objections we will adjourn. Any objections? Hearing none, I adjourn the meeting at 4:45.