

Education and Employment (E/E) Committee Summary

Wednesday, January 29, 2026

4354 S. Sherwood Forest Blvd.

Suite 200 Baton Rouge, La. 70816

4:15 PM – 6:00 PM

Virtual via Zoom ([Register](#)) / [Virtual Meeting Protocols](#)

Streaming Live on [YouTube](#)

View meeting transcript [here](#).

Members Present: Melissa Bayham, Jude Boynton, Liam Doyle (Chair), Lamartine Meda, Brooke Stewart, Erick Taylor, Renoda Washington

Members Absent:

Staff: Brenton Andrus, Rekeesha Branch, Lauren Brown, Stephanie Carmona, Ebony Haven, Bridgette Talley

Others Present: Constance Alphonse, Ayden Blunski, AnnMarie Bihm, Alaina Chachere, Brenda Cossé, Mylinda Elliott, Nicole Flores, Jill Hano, Lynsey Hebert (transcriptionist), Chanel Jackson, Christina Martin, Bambi Polotzola, Jacki Pierce, and Susan Riehn

Call to Order & Quorum

Liam Doyle called the meeting to order at 4:18 PM. A quorum was established, meaning enough members were present to make decisions.

Meeting Summary Approval

Melissa Bayham motioned to approve the October 2025 meeting summary. Lamartine Meda seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken: 6 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstentions. The summary was approved.

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) Update

Melissa Bayham shared updates on Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), which help students with disabilities prepare for work. She also reported that Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) is level funded at about \$12 million, with a request for an additional \$6.7 million in state funding to access remaining federal funds. Entry-level pay for rehabilitation counselors is increasing slightly, and LRS is seeking approval to hire above the minimum pay level to help with recruitment.

She also explained several operational changes. LRS is creating specialized counselors for students in Comprehensive Transition Programs and for home and vehicle modification cases. Regions are being combined so individuals who are Deaf or blind can work with counselors who have specialized expertise. LRS is also simplifying the application process to reduce paperwork and help people access services faster.

Finally, LRS is implementing a new communication system called SARA that will allow counselors and clients to communicate more easily, send reminders and updates, and choose preferred communication methods such as text or email. Accessibility and plain language will be considered during implementation.

Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) Update

There was no representative from LDOE at this meeting, but one was expected at the full council meeting the next day.

Recommendations for Activities for the FFY27 Planning Committee

The committee discussed activities for Goal 3: Education and Employment and had a strong discussion around the gaps in employment opportunities and education.

They recommend the planning ad hoc committee consider the following activities for inclusion in the Federal Year 2027 action plan and offers this recommendation to the council for consideration:

- Create information/training on how Social Security works so that people with disabilities can work and be compensated fairly
 - Business highlight of vendors and employers
- Trainings/seminars for vendors on employment and how to support people with developmental disabilities
 - Business highlight of vendors and employers
 - Benefits of hiring people with disabilities
- Pipeline for recipients of SSDI/SSI that want to work full time to transition from those services
- Job fair sponsorship/funding
- Training on benefits planning
 - Who to contact, etc.
- Proving support and trainings for early childhood for children with disabilities
- Transition in the K-12 space, building in the supports specifically for the moderate to significant needs starting in middle school grades

E/E Contractual Updates

Stephanie Carmona gave a short update about [Activity 3.1.5](#) on the Council's 5-Year Plan. The Council is partnering with Team Dynamics to give trainings across the state for people with developmental disabilities.

Meeting Adjourned

There were no public comments. The meeting ended at 5:22 PM.