

Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council
Education and Employment Committee
April 8, 2026

BROOKE STEWART: Good afternoon everyone. It is 1:19. I now call to order the meeting. Stephanie, please take roll call.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Sure. Ms. Bayham.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Here.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Ms. Bayham, here. Mr. Boyton.
Mr. Doyle.

LIAM DOYLE: Here.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Mr. Doyle, here. Dr. Meda.

LAMARTINE MEDA: Here.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Mr. Taylor. Ms. Washington.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Here.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Ms. Renoda, we need your camera on in order to count you for the quorum. And Ms. Stewart.

BROOKE STEWART: Here.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: We have exactly a quorum unless Renoda can have her camera on. Just letting you know that we cannot have anybody leave right now. Thank you. Perfect. Just before we get started I see Ayden has his hand raised. I don't know if you had a question Ayden. I know you're not on the EE committee but you are welcome to be here. But if there's confusion please let me know if that was your question.

EBONY HAVEN: Or if he wants to join.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Or if you want to join the committee.

EBONY HAVEN: The chair is here so she can add you to the committee now.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Okay. I'm so confused. I'm so sorry. I was trying to join and it wouldn't let me.

BROOKE STEWART: Would you like to join as a panelist Ayden?

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Yeah.

BROOKE STEWART: Okay.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: I just want to make sure. Would you like to be on the education and employment committee also so that way I can add you to the roll and Brooke can appoint you to the committee?

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: You can. Yes, ma'am.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Okay. I'll go ahead and add you if Brooke would like to appoint you. So we're good then. I went ahead and added him so we're good for quorum. Thank you.

BROOKE STEWART: Thank you, Stephanie. Before we start here are the meeting rules. For people in the room raise your hand if you want to speak. Wait until I call on you before talking. Keep side conversations quiet. Stay on the topic we are discussing. For committee members joining by Zoom you must be on camera with your full name showing to count for quorum. Keep your microphone off unless I call on you. Click raise 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 ask for an ADA accommodation. It is not for public comment. Committee members in person speak first then ones on Zoom. Then in person public members. Then public members on Zoom. Please be patient. Hybrid meeting can be hard to manage. If we run 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. Let's work together to keep the meeting respectful and on track. Everyone should have reviewed the January meeting summary. A copy is in your packet and linked in the agenda sent by email. I need a motion to accept the minutes.

MELISSA BAYHAM: I'll motion.

BROOKE STEWART: Okay. I need a second.

LIAM DOYLE: This is Liam. I second.

BROOKE STEWART: The January meeting summary passes by unanimous consent. Our first agenda item is an update from LRS. Melissa Bayham will now give her update.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Hi. Good afternoon everybody. I'm going to provide some updates and then obviously any other topics y'all want me to discuss I can certainly do that. I was asked to give an update on three specific bills which is house bill 209, 353 and 230. Those are all minimum wage bills and so I don't have an update on those. I don't think anything has progressed at this point with them but those are all state minimum wage law bills.

In terms of what we are looking at, definitely house bill one which is the budget bill. But so far there's been

no movement in terms of our allocation in house bill one at this point. I was also asked to give an update on the MOU that we have with the Department of Education. So in terms of that particular MOU the responsibility LRS has, the primary responsibility is essentially that we provide access to preemployment transition services to all students with disabilities who request those services. And then also just as importantly, if not more importantly, to make sure that students before they exit the school system that we determine them eligible for services and we get them in a plan for employment so there's no gap there. So when they're leaving the school systems their services are in place.

So we know that obviously is not perfect at this point because of our staffing. And I'm going to talk about staffing in a minute. However, our staffing is improving. I do have some numbers to share with you to kind of show that we have increased our preemployment transition services. So at this time last year we had 3,805 students in preemployment transition services. And this year at this point we have 4,829. So we're definitely increasing participation and we continue to look for ways to make these services better to make them more seamless.

So one thing that we have done to kind of address the staffing issue is we did negotiate and we have executed two pre-employment transition services staffing contracts. One is in Shreveport and the contractor for that contract is Easterseals. And we have a contract in New Orleans which is Families Helping Families of Greater New Orleans. The New Orleans contract was a little, it came after the Shreveport contract. And that one has been a little more slow moving just because of hiring. But I know we do have our first staffing, first staff person coming on board on that contract imminent. They're in the process of hiring their first person in that contract. We are also in the middle of negotiating a contract for Baton Rouge. And once that has been finalized, it's still in the negotiation period, but once we have executed that contract I will certainly share with you the contractor for Baton Rouge.

In terms of third-party cooperative arrangements, which are our contracts with school districts, we still have 16 of those. And we continue to have school districts who will ask for information on those particular contracts. But we don't have any new contracts that are upcoming. Or

anywhere near that. But as school districts approach us we do provide them with that information.

We are in the state planning period. Every two years we have to modify our state plan and so we're in the state plan modification period. This is the workforce innovation and opportunity act state plan meaning it's not just vocational rehabilitation. It's all of the workforce programs and adult education. So that state plan should be out for public comment on April the 10th. So that will be posted on the Louisiana Works website for public comments and it will be out for 15 days.

And the last update that I want to give is a very exciting update because I have been talking about this for many, many years. And I hope y'all are as excited as I am. So on March the 4th civil service approved a special entrance rate for our rehabilitation counselor position. So our counselor position, our entry level bachelor level counselor position has increased from 17.18 an hour to \$21.04. So that is approved. It's already in effect. We also were able to give a 5 percent corresponding adjustment to all of our other rehabilitation staff. So that is the most positive update I can give for you. So we're hoping that with the increase in that counselor pay plus the corresponding adjustments that we were able to give we're hoping that will help with both recruitment and retention. So those are my updates.

BROOKE STEWART: Thank you, Melissa. Does anyone have any questions before we move on?

EBONY HAVEN: I have a question. Melissa, so how many school districts are there?

MELISSA BAYHAM: A lot.

EBONY HAVEN: Is it like 40 something school districts? Oh, it's more than that?

MELISSA BAYHAM: I believe so. Especially with the charter school network.

EBONY HAVEN: Okay. And so you said y'all have 16?

MELISSA BAYHAM: We have 16 third-party cooperative arrangements. Which means those school districts that we have those contracts with they put up the matching funds for that particular contract and through that contract they hire a transition specialist who serves that district for their transition. I don't know the numbers off the top of me head but like Livingston Parish is one of our contractors. That's a larger parish so they have at least

three if not four people on that contract. But all of their pre-employment transition services are coordinated and provided through those staff that are paid for by that contract. So any of the districts or most of the districts that don't have third parties that's where we get to the situation where we have one of our fee for service vendors who go into the districts to provide those services.

EBONY HAVEN: And how many fee for service vendors do y'all have?

MELISSA BAYHAM: I can find out.

EBONY HAVEN: Okay.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Sorry. It's a fluid number.

EBONY HAVEN: Got you.

BROOKE STEWART: I have a few questions. How many people is LRS serving currently?

MELISSA BAYHAM: I'm sorry. That's in my big update that I don't have yet. But I can give round about numbers. A little over 9,000 is our vocational rehabilitation program and then we have the 4829 who are in preemployment transition services only.

BROOKE STEWART: And do you know how many people are on the wait list who are unable to be served?

MELISSA BAYHAM: We do not have a wait list. People are served more slowly than I would like them to be but we do not have an actual wait list.

BROOKE STEWART: And does that apply for the current wait times for students leaving school to receive LRS services?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Right. So what should happen is that we should, you know, those students should be in preETS cases and then we should be identifying them while they're still in school and taking those applications. So their process is a little bit different. But it's going to improve with these staffing contracts.

BROOKE STEWART: Okay. And my other question is do any of the bills directly affect the preETS or transition services for students with disabilities?

MELISSA BAYHAM: The only thing that is going to happen the more federal funds we receive the higher the preETS allocation is. So preETS is 15 percent of our federal allocation so the more federal money we get the higher that 15 percent allocation will be.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: If the funds are there, like if we got like full ask in HB1, would that increase the number

of people that are able to get services or would it shorten the amount of time-- am I making sense or it kind of depends?

MELISSA BAYHAM: It depends but I will explain more than that. So there's a couple things going on right now. Meaning like we have about 18 vacancies in LRS right now that we're actively trying to fill that we have TO. So hopefully with the SER, the special entrance rate, we will be able to fill those positions. I constantly have usually it's 23 vacancies just because of the turnover. With the additional funds our department has access to provide information concerning-- so if you get these additional funds how many more staff. Because essentially a staff person can only assist a certain number of people. So the more staff people that I have the more counselors that I have the quicker we can get people through the process. Does that answer your question?

STEPHANIE CARMONA: I think so. Yeah.

BROOKE STEWART: Thank you, Melissa. Next we were going to have an update from the Louisiana Department of Education, Lauren Wells, but she is stuck in a meeting. But we do have her updates.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: She provided a report and if it's okay I can kind of go through it. I won't be able to answer questions. I did just get the report last night so that's why it's not included with any documents. But I can kind of just talk through what's on here. And then if there's any questions they can be brought up at the full council meeting on April 30th because I believe she has RSVPed for that.

I asked for stuff that I thought the education and employment committee might be interested in. Especially with the legislative session being in right now. So the first thing was just the update from SEAP, so the Special Education Advisory Panel. They met on March 18th. There's some reports that were included. She did include the link to the materials and the reporting for that but the big updates just included revisions to some bulletins related to differentiated monitoring and support. And the IDEA grant application. So those were the two main topics that they talked about. And I will have this on the website by the end of today so you can view those.

We also sent out, as in LADDC, we sent out the IDEA grant stakeholder input survey. I believe it was last week. It may have been the week before. My days are all

mixed up. But they do have a grant application. So I sent out that stakeholder input survey. The last day to complete it is this Friday. So March 10th. And then the next part is to give public comment on that grant application. So April 10th. I'm sorry. April 10th. So this Friday. So they take the stakeholder input in order to write that application. And then once they have that kind of finalized then you can give public comment on that application. So the public comment form I believe we're going to be sending that out next week that way you can comment on kind of like that input and what they have put together from that stakeholder input.

She gave some legislative updates. So the first one is HB342. It would require that in special education due process hearings the local education agency carry the burden of proof to demonstrate that a student's current or proposed program or placement is appropriate and it specifies that the LEA must meet this burden by preponderance of the evidence. And then currently it is, Louisiana's practice is consistent with the US Supreme Court precedent. The party seeking relief generally bears the burden of proof. In most cases this means that parents challenging an IEP must demonstrate that it is not appropriate. So it would reverse that default rule by placing the burden on LEAs at all due process hearings.

HB352 would amend existing language to behavioral health services shall be provided instead of may in physical classrooms to the extent that is medically necessary. It also references supervision of the behavioral health provider stating that if the supervision occurs virtually then no other student except for that student receiving those services will be recorded.

And then senate bill 64 sponsored by Senator Hodges addresses policy surrounding video and audio recordings from cameras in self-contained special ed classes. The bill amends the existing privacy and disclosure protocols and it adds two key mandates. Mandatory joint viewing. So it requires that both school superintendent or their designee and the parent or legal guardian must be present during the initial viewing of any requested recordings. And then also mandatory reporting which requires that any person who views a recording and suspects that the footage shows a violation of state or federal law must report the suspected violation to the appropriate law enforcement

agency.

The next update is on seclusion and restraint. All incidents of seclusion and restraint must be reported in eSER. I don't know exactly what that stands for but I know it's like their electronic student thing where they report, their reporting system. Key considerations with this report include are teachers and school staff using consistent protocols, tools, and timelines for collecting and maintaining data. What are the follow up and intervention procedures when these procedures repeatedly occur with the same student and/or adult. In what manner and under what timelines are incidents communicated to principals, local special education directors and parents who is responsible for submitting the incidents of seclusion and restraint. Those are all of, I think, all the things when they submit those reports. But again, y'all can ask those questions because I'm not sure.

Special education camera installation. It just says that the department oversees submissions of funding in special education camera receipts via eGMS. I don't know what that is either but that's what it says. That's all I have on it.

The Louisiana Works partnership. Previously LRS they now go by Louisiana Works. But y'all are still LRS, right?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Can I address that? She had sent me this report last night as well. I let her know we still go by LRS but we always identify ourselves by our department as well which changed from Louisiana Workforce Commission to Louisiana Works.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: So there is an MOU and Melissa did talk about that when she gave her update to ensure that students with disabilities are supported throughout the state. I can kind of go through all of this if you would like but I'm literally just reading it so it's up to you Brooke.

BROOKE STEWART: No, you don't have to.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Can I give a point of clarification? So there's two MOUs. The MOU that I gave an update on is the state level MOU between the rehabilitation agency and the Department of Education. That MOU that she's referencing there has to do with their disability innovation fund grant. It's a separate grant that they have through the US Department of Education to improve transition. Just wanted to make that point of

clarification.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Thank you. I'm sorry. What was it called again?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Disability innovation fund. It's in there. We call it the DIF grant.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: I found it. Thank you. I was unaware that y'all even had two so thank you for letting us know that.

BROOKE STEWART: Thank you, Stephanie. Since no one from LDOE has come to our committee meetings I really want someone to make a motion to send to the full council so we can write a letter to Cade Brumley and maybe even the Boards and Commissions to explain that the Department of Education representative on the DD Council is required by the DD Act. And I really just want to make sure we can get that done. Is there anyone that can make a motion? Since we were not able to ask or get any questions or get a department update. To make a motion to have the full council write a letter to Cade Brumley and the Boards and Commissions to explain that the Department of Education representative on the DD Council is required by the DD Act. Yes, Ayden.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: I'll motion.

BROOKE STEWART: Thank you.

LAMARTINE MEDA: I'll second.

BROOKE STEWART: Thank you, Dr. Meda.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Just give me one moment. Let me pull up a Word document real quick.

BROOKE STEWART: And we would also like to let them know the representative that has been assigned to the council has not come to any education and employment committee meeting since Meredith left.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Was she here in October? I don't remember. So since July. Okay. Let me just share this really quickly. I just want to make sure I wrote it correctly. If I need to change anything I can. And then public comment.

EBONY HAVEN: I don't know if Dr. Meda still has his hand raised from before or if he wants to discuss this further.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Would you like me to read this motion?

BROOKE STEWART: Yes.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: So Ayden Blunschi motions to ask the full council to consider writing a letter to Cade

Brumley and Boards and Commissions to explain that having a representative from LDOE is part of the DD Act. Do I need to include anything else in that motion? I just want to make sure that I (inaudible). I don't know if I need to change wording.

EBONY HAVEN: It would be up to the person who made the motion, to Ayden. Ayden, does this capture your motion?

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: This sounds good. Yes.

BROOKE STEWART: Is there any discussion from committee members. Dr. Meda, do you have anything?

LAMARTINE MEDA: Yeah. I was going to say so we are talking about the EE committee, right, not the full council? Was she not at the full council last time?

BROOKE STEWART: Yes. Stephanie is going to answer for you.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Yes. We're talking about the education and employment committee. She was at the full council meeting. She has not been able to attend any education and employment committee meetings.

LAMARTINE MEDA: Got it.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: The last time we had a representative was July of 2025.

LAMARTINE MEDA: Got it. Thank you.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: You're welcome.

BROOKE STEWART: Is there any more discussion from the committee? Now do we have any public comment? And now we'll move on to the roll call vote.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: I'm going to share this one more time and then I'll go ahead and take that vote. A vote for yes is to ask the full council to consider writing the letter to Cade Brumley and Boards and Commissions to explain that having a representative from LDOE is part of the DD Act. A vote for no is against that. Or you can abstain. Ms. Bayham.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Abstain.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Ms. Bayham, abstain. Mr. Boyton. Mr. Doyle.

LIAM DOYLE: Abstain.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Mr. Doyle, abstain. Dr. Meda.

LAMARTINE MEDA: Yes.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Dr. Meda, yes. Mr. Taylor. Ms. Washington. Mr. Blunschi.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Yes.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: Mr. Blunschi, yes. Two yeses.

Two abstentions. Zero noes. Does it fail? Do you want me to wait for other people to come up? Does it pass? I'm not sure. Oh, it's a tiebreaker, right? Do I ask Brooke? Is that considered a tiebreaker?

BRENTON ANDRUS: The abstentions are essentially just not doing anything so your yeas have it.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: I just wanted to make sure that I had it correct. Thank you.

BROOKE STEWART: Next is an update on contractual activities. Stephanie will share her update.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: So I'm going to give an update on I think it's 3.1.4 which is the transition to adulthood. So Team Dynamics sent their survey results. They did send out a survey to their list serve and they sent it to us and we sent it out also. They received 46 responses across the state. They use this survey to schedule sessions including the best month for the session. The best day of the week. And the best time of day to have these sessions. They are going to have trainings in five regions. So that's region one and ten, region two, region four, region seven and region nine. On March 13th we sent out an LADDC news that included the registration for all those workshops. The first workshop was in Ponchatoula on March 25th. So it's two sessions. There was a 9:30 to 11 and then I think like a 12 to 2:30. Those topics were employment. So that was the first session. The second session was health and wellbeing. So they had eight people registered and two people attended. So that is my update for that.

BROOKE STEWART: Are there any questions before we move on? We now will move on to announcements. April 30th is the full council meeting. It begins at 10:00 a.m. in this room. Do any committee members have announcements?

STEPHANIE CARMONA: April 21st is the second part of the planning committee. It's scheduled from 9 to 1 so I just wanted to let everybody know. So it's April 21st from 9 to 1. The information is on the website to register if you would like to join virtually. It will also be here so you're welcome to come in person. And Act 378 is next Wednesday from 12 to 2.

EBONY HAVEN: I can also announce that the executive committee meeting will be right before the full council meeting on April 30th from 8:30 to 9:45. I encourage, and I'm going to send this out in an email to all council

members, but I encourage you guys to attend the executive committee. They will be discussing the council meeting schedule again. And so I know that there were a lot of comments that we received from the survey that we gave you guys at every council meeting. Got a lot of feedback that a lot of people were not happy with the schedule so we're going to revisit the schedule. So I encourage members on this committee and every council member to attend the executive committee to make sure that you can get your comments in and we can come up with a schedule that not only saves the council money but also everybody's satisfied. I'm just worried about the participation in our meetings so far. The self-determination and community inclusion committee met last week and we were fighting to keep a quorum the entire time. So I do want to make sure that people are able to attend the meetings. I wanted to make it convenient for everyone. But we also want to make sure that people are participating and just responding to staff's emails. Because we even had a hard time getting people to RSVP for the committee meetings. I encourage you guys to attend the executive committee from 8:30 to 9:45 on April 30th.

BROOKE STEWART: Yes, Ayden.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: You answered my question Ebony.

Thank you.

EBONY HAVEN: You're welcome.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I do have one thing. For Monday April 13th house appropriations is going to be voting on the budget, HB1. So for this committee's purposes y'all know we're advocating for additional dollars for LRS, 6.8 million. So we are going to send out an alert either today or tomorrow, depending on when we can get it done, just asking folks to reach out to house appropriations. We'll also have a yellow shirt day if anyone can join. It's at 9 a.m. Monday in house room five.

BROOKE STEWART: Any public comment? Liam.

LIAM DOYLE: Just real quickly. I know y'all have had a few of them since the session. How things are going with the construction and all that? I hadn't heard any feedback saying anything negative so I was just wondering if there was anything else we need to do with that before y'all come please let me know.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I would say based on our previous yellow shirt days there's always concern for parking. We

knew that would happen. As far as the house appropriations when they had public testimony I mean that was not great. We had almost 60 people there. Probably 30 percent of them couldn't get in the room. They didn't open an overflow room so they couldn't even watch the committee. And that's the first time, at least since I've worked here, that I can recall that an overflow room was not available on public testimony day. So I thought that was strange. We even had reports that some sergeant at arms when there were actual seats available in the room that they weren't letting people come in. Now it might have only been maybe three or four seats available but that should have been available to the three or four people that could have taken those seats. That's only some of the feedback that we've observed or seen. I know we can't address the parking situation but certainly those other issues I think could have been in consideration for changes.

LIAM DOYLE: Absolutely. If someone from the council would shoot me an email with that information (inaudible) so they're a little bit better. I think the one with 60 people was kind of earlier in session (inaudible) the flow should be a little bit easier. But I'll make sure we get with capitol security and make sure that they have the space available. Like I said, if someone can make a note to shoot me an email prior to the next yellow shirt day I'll be sure to make sure they're ready.

REKEESHA BRANCH: Liam I sent it over to you. I can resend it.

LIAM DOYLE: Yes. I'm getting a ton of emails right now. But yes. Like I said, I'll flag it. Because I know we have talked to them and they were aware the last time y'all were there. (Inaudible) want to get back with them again and make sure that we do better hopefully this time. I'll make sure to request, if we can, a specific overflow room and make sure to deal with the sergeant at arms if necessary. If you don't mind resending that feedback and I will take it from there.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Okay.

BROOKE STEWART: Okay. Any public comment? All right. Hearing none I will adjourn the meeting at 2:01. If there's no objection? All right. Bye everybody.