

Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council  
Self-Determination and Community Inclusion Committee  
April 1, 2026

JILL HANO: Okay. Y'all ready?

REKEESHA BRANCH: We're good to go Jill.

JILL HANO: Okay. Good afternoon everyone. The time is 12:03. I would like to call the meeting to order. Rekeesha, would you mind calling the roll?

REKEESHA BRANCH: Not a problem. Dr. Barovechio. Mr. Bennett. Mr. Billings. Mr. Blunschi. Ms. Chachere.

ALAINA CHACHERE: Here.

REKEESHA BRANCH: Ms. Crain. Ms. Harmon.

ANGELA HARMON: Here.

REKEESHA BRANCH: Ms. Kelly-Aduli.

CHERIE KELLY-ADULI: Here.

REKEESHA BRANCH: Mr. Macaluso. Ms. Nguyen. Mr. Smith.

ROBBY SMITH: Here.

REKEESHA BRANCH: Mr. Williams.

GEARRY WILLIAMS: Here.

REKEESHA BRANCH: Ms. Xu.

KAREN XU: Here.

REKEESHA BRANCH: All right, Jill. We have seven. We have a quorum.

JILL HANO: Okay. Thank you, Rekeesha. Before we get started can you also review the rules please?

REKEESHA BRANCH: Yes, ma'am. Not a problem. 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 towards the 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. For attendees electronically raise your hand to request to speak. 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 to only 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 who requested the accommodation. As for 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 hand raised. Comments in the Q and A will be addressed last. As with all hybrid meetings it can be difficult to keep track of all those wanting to speak in person and virtually so please be patient. All comments and questions from the public may be subject to two minutes at the discretion of the chair so please keep that in mind. Depending on time constraints we may also limit comments to once per issue. 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. The chair may also use their discretion to determine if comments will be accepted outside of those times.

JILL HANO: Okay. Thank you, Rekeesha. So now at this time it's approval of the January meeting summary as distributed. Rekeesha or the council shared it. Everyone should have received it. Which was attached in the agenda you received via email. Can y'all see me?

REKEESHA BRANCH: Yes.

JILL HANO: Okay. There is also a copy in your committee packet. At this time I need a motion to adopt the January meeting summary.

GEARRY WILLIAMS: I motion that the January meeting summary be adopted.

JILL HANO: Okay, Mr. Williams motions to adopt the January meeting summary. Is there a second?

ROBBY SMITH: Second.

JILL HANO: Okay. Robby Smith seconds. Is there any discussion? Any public comment? Thank you. The January meeting has been accepted.

Now we are moving on to our non-contractual updates. Is Bernard in the room?

REKEESHA BRANCH: He is not. He hasn't made it in the room. And Mr. Bennett is also out today but we do have Mr. Williams can give the update if you would like.

JILL HANO: Okay. Mr. Williams, take it away please.

GEARRY WILLIAMS: Yes, ma'am. Thank you. For Office

of Aging and Adult Services we continue to work with HCBS Strategies. I mentioned previously that's the vendor we are contracting with to do a full review and revamp of our community choices waiver program. And not just that. Of course as I mentioned before we're looking to go with an acuity based or needs based wait list for the community choices waiver rather than first come first serve.

But in addition to that we're also looking at ways to develop a full continuum of care and from entry into receiving services under the Office of Aging and Adult Services, whether that be a state plan service or a waiver service, we want to make sure that participants' needs are met. Not just by receiving the personal assistance services. 90 percent of the services received in the community choices waiver are personal assistance services. So we want to make sure that we can look at other options whether that be other waivers or under a state plan service where those needs can be met. (Inaudible) only be met via the community choices waiver. So we continue to work with HCBS Strategies, our team. With HCBS Strategies we meet biweekly. There are also some ad hoc meetings that occur both internally and including HCBS Strategies. We are moving along in that process in making sure that we have our Is dotted and Ts crossed as it relates to what will require a state plan amendment and what will require a rule change through CMS. That process continues. We're hoping by June that we will at least be in a posture where we can make the recommendations to Medicaid on how we plan to move forward.

As far as any updates on the budget we are not facing any budget reductions for the Office of Aging and Adult Services. We have pretty much a standstill budget request. And the budget continues to move through the legislative process and we will continue to monitor. But there is nothing right now that for us is a cause of concern as it relates to the budget.

Bills we're following. We have several that we are monitoring on. No bills where OAS is listed as the lead agency on any of the bills that are going through the process. But again, we do have some bills that we're monitoring. Mainly there are several bills going through the process on the house side, or that originated on the house side and some on the senate side that involves nursing facilities. One in particular, the moratorium on nursing

facilities, was added to one of those bills last night. So we'll continue to review that to see if there will be a fiscal note associated. And then we can speak with our executive management team within the department to see if there (inaudible) author that bill to make any suggestions with regard to the amendment or any additional amendments that we may need to add for clarity. That's my update.

JILL HANO: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Gearry. Again, we are like one person short. No, sorry. We have just enough people for a quorum so can I just reiterate that everyone please have their cameras on the entire time. Thank you. And Ms. Crain, welcome. Thank you, Gearry. Alaina, you are recognized by the chair.

ALAINA CHACHERE: I just wanted to let you know that at 1:20 I will have to get off because I have a meeting at my daughter's school. So I don't know if anyone else is joining the meeting but I do have to leave at 1:20.

JILL HANO: Okay. Thank you. Ms. Crain, you're recognized by the chair.

CHERI CRAIN: Thank you, ma'am. I am working on video. I'm having technical difficulties this morning. So I do have volume and speaker but I'm trying to work on the video.

JILL HANO: Okay. Thank you.

CHERI CRAIN: Thank you.

JILL HANO: All right. So is OCDD coming at all?

REKEESHA BRANCH: We're not sure. He did reach back to let me know he will be here. But if he doesn't provide an update today he can provide it in the full council meeting.

JILL HANO: Okay. Brian is not here and Gearry spoke. Alaina, you're going to be impressively early for that meeting. So now we have the contractual updates which is in the status reports which are not ready yet. So I guess we still can move on to the staff's updates. First off is Stephanie with her activities.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: So just to I guess reiterate what Jill was saying. The status report is not ready yet. It will be ready for the full council meeting and it will be posted on the website prior to that. These are the updates, like the contractual updates. As for my contracts, because of the timing of this meeting, I have January, like a January and a February update. So it doesn't include March yet because they haven't had to submit those invoices and those documents. So if I get

that information before the status report it will be included on there also. So that way you can kind of read any other update there might be.

So I'll start with Partners in Policymaking. There were 22 applicants that were accepted into the 2026 Partners class. 18 completed the January session beginning the program. Of those 18 six of them were self-advocates. There's been three sessions of the Partners. So there was the January session. The speaker was Guy Caruso and he spoke about the history of disability. The second session was in February and they had a bunch of guests. So Mary Breaux from LAPIE, Tori Fontenot from LaCAN, Courtney Ryland from LRS and Stacy, I'm probably going to say this wrong, (inaudible) on inclusive education. And then the third session was in March and that included kind of information on the legislative process. So Ebony Haven was a speaker. She talked about the history of Act 378. LaCAN leaders Angel and Christina talked about LaCAN. And Liz Gary talked about the legislative process. So that's kind of just a little overview of what's been going on at Partners.

And then I'm going to move on to YLF. So as of March 9th YLF has received a total of 37 applications. 22 of them are staff applications. 15 are delegate applications. So of the staff applications 16 interviews have been completed with two other ones being scheduled. And then four applicants have not responded to the interview request. And then for delegate applications they've completed six interviews. Two of them are scheduled and six have not responded to follow up for that interview.

Additionally, all of the medical team has been confirmed. So that's including two RNs and one paramedic on staff. They've also been coordinating, the team, the YLF team has been coordinating with prior staff and delegates to make a trip to LSUE's campus. And the idea is to make a video that's going to be sent out to delegate families prior to camp to just kind of give them a little run down, show the campus and talk about different things that are also in like their delegate packets.

The next activity is 1.1.8 which is abuse, neglect and exploitation. Team Dynamics they sent a survey and I talked about it at the last quarterly meeting. So they sent us the survey results. They received 68 responses across the state. They used those survey results to

schedule the sessions. So they scheduled nine sessions. The information in that survey that they used was the best month for a session, the best day of the week and the best time of day in order to schedule those sessions. So on March 12th we sent out an LADDC news. It included the registration for all nine workshops. So we did get the dates and times for all those workshops. The first workshop was in Baton Rouge on March 27th from 10 to 12. And once we receive information from that it will be shared and updated. And those are my updates.

JILL HANO: Okay. Thank you, Stephanie. Any questions? Did you do transition to adulthood?

STEPHANIE CARMONA: I think that might have been a typo. That transition to adulthood is for the education and employment committee.

JILL HANO: See, Ebony, we were just talking about how good I was at this. What a waste of conversation. Okay. So next we have Rekeesha. Will you give us an update on the next few activities?

REKEESHA BRANCH: Yes, ma'am. The first one I'll go over is LaCAN. So as of March 2026 LaCAN has 6,912 individuals registered for the council and the LaCAN list serve to receive information and action alerts. Since October of 2025 we've had six action alerts with 624 actions being taken. We've had one yellow shirt day. We actually had another one today. But for the first yellow shirt day we had 53 in attendance. I'll give the update for the yellow shirt day from today for the council meeting. It will be in the status report. But for the first yellow shirt day I want to kind of give a shootout. We had three council members in attendance. We had five PIP individuals in attendance. And we had 19 post-secondary college students in attendance. So that was awesome. LaCAN continues to host two LaCAN leader conference calls per month to discuss current concerns, issues and develop advocacy strategies and support the LaCAN leader development. For legislative visits they have done a total of 45 so far with 29 of those visits being with key committee members. We also have a new LaCAN leader for region four. Her name is Erica Joseph. She's scheduled to start actually today and she should be receiving her orientation pretty soon.

For roundtables we had nine legislative roundtables across the State of Louisiana with 364 people in

attendance. It was 48 self-advocates, 144 family members, 135 professionals, 25 that was considered as other or unknown and we had 11 policymakers. So that is it for the update for LaCAN. Any questions?

JILL HANO: Any questions from the committee members? Y'all easy as hell.

REKEESHA BRANCH: I'll move on to Families Helping Families. Since October 1st of 2025 we've had 17,032 individuals with disabilities and families supported. Over 31,864 units of information and referrals were completed. 297 trainings were conducted with 4,884 people in attendance. And we've had 386 outreaches conducted at hospitals, pediatricians, school districts and ABA plannings. So that's the update so far for them.

JILL HANO: Okay.

REKEESHA BRANCH: All right. So for the next two we have one, the sex education which they also call the HEART initiative. We tag-teamed with LSU on this initiative to develop a universally designed comprehensive education curriculum for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families and professionals to navigate through their sexual development, (inaudible) and achieve lifelong sexual health. So for that contract I know we spoke in the planning committee about not having the contract signed but since then they actually signed and sent over the contract on last Wednesday, which was the 25th. So LSU has decided to go forward with the contract obligations. So for the status report I'm hoping to have some updated information for you guys for that particular initiative.

The next one I have is for women's preventive health which they also call HER initiative. And for this initiative they plan to develop plain language and have supported resources to address critical gaps in women's health identified by the CDC which is the Centers for Disease Control and prevention and NIH which is the National Institute of Health. And the same thing. They just signed the contract. It was actually sent over to us on Thursday, which was the 26th. So they're going to move forward with that initiative as well. And that's it. That's what I have.

JILL HANO: Okay. Thank you, Rekeesha. Any questions for Rekeesha before we move on to the final activity? All right. Brenton, will you please review our final

activity?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Sure. So this is our navigating the system initiative. And so this project we're focusing on helping folks with disabilities and their families better understand those systems that serve them. So developmental disability services, behavioral health services and the Medicaid or managed care organizations. And also this is the third year of this initiative. And there's been a stronger focus on not only engaging people with disabilities in a greater capacity but also adding a wellness component for their healthcare in this year. And so what they do is they look at their own health and creating health plans that work for them in this particular training now. And so each person that attends they get a wellness guide that they can use to kind of create their own health and wellness plan.

So over this past quarter there were four trainings. In January there was a statewide virtual training that had 13 people in attendance. This included self-advocates, family members and professionals. In February there was a training in East Louisiana in Monroe. There were 33 people that attended that training. It was in person. Most of them were self-advocates. In March I don't have the specific attendance numbers because we don't get March data until like the second week of April. But in March we held two trainings in person. One was here in the Baton Rouge capitol area and one was in the Lake Charles area. We advertised all of these trainings and promote these trainings through our council's social media and list serve. So there is one coming up on April 22nd at 10:30 and it's going to be at the East Bank Regional Library in Jefferson Parish. We sent out an LADDC news, I think maybe earlier this week or towards the end of last week, that shared information about that particular training.

And for the most part we've been seeing very positive results this year. So everyone that has completed a survey, so not everyone that attends completes a survey, but at least the majority of the people have been taking the surveys and they feel that they're better able to speak up for themselves or someone that they know as it relates to their healthcare as a result of this particular training. And everyone has been indicating that they are learning things in this training that they did not know before. And that they have been very pleased with the

training and the trainer. So this initiative is through the Arc of Louisiana and so Ashley McReynolds is the trainer. I believe she also works with a representative from the department to assist with some of the wellness component as well.

And a few-- just I pulled out some comments from some of the surveys. One individual said I learned more about my disability and how I can manage it. Another one said they like learning new information about their own wellness and their disability. And we also had someone write in to tell us that they actually witnessed people that took this training actually putting it into good use. So Lindsey Jones, who is the People First coordinator, she reached out to the trainer after a visit that she did to the Iberville Arc and stated that she saw people were actually using the materials that were handed out in the training to create their own wellness plans. They were very eager to talk about what they had learned. And two people had told her that they've already reached out to their insurance providers to ask for help with different things that they want to accomplish as far as what they think they need in order to better address their health needs. So that's the kind of impact that we want to see from our initiatives. So overall this is really helping folks feel more confident, more informed and more in control of their health. So things have been going pretty well. And there will be more trainings to come.

JILL HANO: Okay. Thank you, Brenton. Any questions before we move on to our next agenda item? Ebony.

EBONY HAVEN: Thank you. I don't have any questions. This is more of a comment to the committee. I know Rekeesha went over the sexual education and women's preventive health initiatives a little earlier and nobody had any questions but I kind of wanted to do a deeper dive into that. So we contracted with LSU. Just keep in mind that y'all's plan started October 1st. And so there was a lot of negotiations that we had to do with LSU and so we are just now signing the contract. And these are two initiatives that the council, one was your targeted disparity for women's preventative health. And this is the first year that you guys decided to actually put money towards that initiative and I guess have a specific activity to address that disparity.

And so I just kind of want to make sure you guys are

aware that we just signed the contract last week. So the contract was supposed to start in October. Now we have worked out a timeline where we feel like LSU will complete it by September 30th but we just kind of want the committee to be aware because this is something that we were hoping to get off the ground before now. It's April and they only have till September 30th to get what you guys wanted to have done. And so it's the same thing for the sexual education initiative. They were supposed to do pilots in a school district with like two different schools. And so I kind of wanted you guys to be aware that they're just starting. We just signed the contract last week. And so this is something that the council was really passionate about. We actually sent out surveys to individuals to see what the interest was. And so due to negotiations we had to push everything back so they have not started the contract yet. Or they should have started. We signed last week. So we're hoping that they have done some work. Like Rekeesha said, we'll give you guys an update at the full council meeting on April 30th.

But I kind of want this committee to be aware because you guys are the ones that will make recommendations to the full council. And just to make sure that you guys know that we're in a new five-year plan so the planning committee is going to be recommending newer activities. But since LSU has not done any of the work just yet we may want to consider doing something in the new plan with these particular initiatives. And so I just kind of wanted to make sure that the committee is aware of that. And if you guys have questions please ask so that if you guys have questions for LSU just let us know and we'll try to get those questions answered. But I just wanted to make sure that you guys are aware or that you fully answer like how the process goes. We were supposed to start the contract on October 1st. I will just say this. A lot of times we don't have the contracts in place by October 1st just because of how the state does contracts. However, a lot of the vendors or the contractors that we contract with they will go ahead and begin work. That was not the case with LSU. They were not going to begin work until we actually got the full contract negotiated and signed. So I just want y'all to be aware of that and if you guys have any questions we'll try to answer.

JILL HANO: When was the contract signed?

REKEESHA BRANCH: The contract was signed. We received one back on Wednesday of last week and the other one was sent on Thursday of last week.

JILL HANO: Okay. Thank you.

EBONY HAVEN: I think Karen had her hand raised, Jill.

JILL HANO: Okay. Karen, you have the floor.

KAREN XU: Just curious. So what's the reason LSU would just not respond (inaudible)?

REKEESHA BRANCH: So they were sent out the contract according to whatever they agreed to initially. You know, do as far as the initiative. They were sent out a contract. They reviewed it. They didn't agree with some of the wording. So we had to send it out to our legal. So once we sent it out to legal I guess wording was changed.

EBONY HAVEN: It was some of the HIPPA information in the contract that they wanted taken out. However, we were concerned that the HIPPA information needed to stay in so we contracted LDH legal to make sure they would be okay with us taking out that language. Well, they weren't. So we had to tell LSU that LDH legal advised us that that language could not be taken out. It's just like a long process because the people that we're communicating with they have to go and talk to their legal team to make sure that we're all in agreement.

I will also say that some of the documentation that we require for reimbursement we were negotiating on that as well. The usual documentation that we require of all of our contractors there was an issue with that so we had to go back and forth with them on that. And so we were finally able to get everything worded correctly and everybody agreed on everything. And like it just happened last week. So we did provide them with a deadline of Friday the 27th. If they didn't sign the contract by then then we were going to recommend to the council that you all use that funding for something else for another initiative.

KAREN XU: They still want to do this?

EBONY HAVEN: Yes. They have expressed interest. The principal investigator, Dr. Moon, he expressed interest that he still wanted the contract. But again, these are like LSU's legal team that's giving him or their contract team that has to approve the contract before he can start the work. So he is still very interested. I just wanted to make sure you guys were aware that they are very far behind and we might not see the results that you all wanted

to see because they're just starting the contract in April and the contract's going to end September 30th. So that doesn't give them a lot of time. Jill, Mr. Williams has his hand raised.

JILL HANO: Okay. Garry.

GEARRY WILLIAMS: So with this contract (inaudible) the five-year plan were there any (inaudible) contract expired do we have an option of two one-year options to extend or is it just that September is the final? Are there any options to extend?

EBONY HAVEN: So yeah. Usually the council does one-year contracts. So we don't write in the contracts where there can be an extension. But the reason I mentioned the planning committee is because right now they are coming up with the plan to recommend to the council at the full April meeting on the 30th. And so if you all are interested you can make a recommendation to the planning committee that they include one of these initiatives or even consider like extending the contract. That's a recommendation that this committee could make to the planning committee. But the planning committee has been really focused on doing new initiatives because this will be a new five-year plan. And so this is why it was so important that these initiatives get off the right track because this was our first time doing like an actual activity that the council put funding towards. Especially for their targeted disparity which was the women's preventative health. And then the sex ed we did a lot of research with the sexual education. We put in a lot of work to figure out what would actually work and we thought their plan was very, the council felt that their plan was very well written, which is why they agreed to give the contract to them. And so they just haven't started the work.

GEARRY WILLIAMS: (Inaudible).

STEPHANIE CARMONA: At this point it's not.

EBONY HAVEN: So again, if you guys want to make a recommendation. But you could also wait to see what progress they're going to make. And then we may not even get a lot of interest in the sexual education initiative. We don't know. But that is something that I think the committee as well as the full council should take into consideration that let's say it does really well and by September 30th when we're giving y'all the October update that we're like it did really well and we will recommend

that y'all add it to the plan again because LSU just wasn't able to conduct the activity like they could have if they had started earlier.

But I would also recommend that you guys maybe consider a different contractor because I think we might run into the same issues in the future if we were to ever contract with them again.

JILL HANO: Okay. Thank you. Hold on. Angela.

ANGELA HARMON: Hey, Jill. I had a question. I don't know if I'm confused or not. I think I'm confused. This initiative was going to be piloted in the high schools? I'm trying to remember exactly how it went. How was this going to be implemented.

REKEESHA BRANCH: It was supposed to be middle school and high school. They updated it. That's what the original agreement was but they changed it to-- so instead of them focusing just on the high schools and middle schools they changed it to just individuals with intellectual disabilities, their families and professionals.

ANGELA HARMON: Okay. So I guess my concern was they're just now getting it and the contract ends in September. When will this be implemented because schools are going to be out in May. That was my question. Okay. Thank you.

REKEESHA BRANCH: You're welcome.

JILL HANO: Okay. Thank you, Angela. Any more questions? Okay. So on to announcements. Wait. I do have a question while I'm thinking of it. Where on the new website can you track what we're doing on legislative session?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Where it's located, the bill tracking?

JILL HANO: Yeah.

BRENTON ANDRUS: It's on the same page as our factsheets.

JILL HANO: Okay.

BRENTON ANDRUS: So if you were at the website if you go click on LaCAN there is an option there for factsheets and then it's on that page.

JILL HANO: Okay. Cool. Thank you, Brenton.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Welcome.

JILL HANO: Anymore questions? Okay. Any announcements Rekeesha or staff?

REKEESHA BRANCH: Just want to remind you guys that education and employment committee will be meeting on next

Wednesday, which is the 8th from 1 to 3. Act 378 they will be meeting on the following Wednesday on the 15th from 12 to 2. And the executive committee and full council will be meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup> and will start at 8:30 a.m. All the meetings will be held virtual of course and we will have the meetings held here if you want to come in person. Other than that that's all the updates we have.

JILL HANO: Okay.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: I'm sorry. I have an update Jill. Is that okay? So the planning committee is going to meet April 21st. It will start at 9:00 a.m. It's already posted on the website. So anybody can join either in person or virtually, whatever you would like. It should last no more than four hours so we have it scheduled from 9 to 1 and that is just to complete the business that was not completed at the last planning meeting.

JILL HANO: Okay. Thank you, Rekeesha. We already did other announcements. Do we have any public comment?

STEPHANIE CARMONA: You do not.

JILL HANO: Okay. Then I hereby adjourn the meeting at 12:52. See y'all next time. Thanks, everybody.