



Education and Employment (E/E) Committee Summary

Wednesday, April 8, 2026

4354 S. Sherwood Forest Blvd.

Suite 200 Baton Rouge, La. 70816

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

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

Streaming Live on [YouTube](#)

[View meeting transcript here.](#)

Members Present: Melissa Bayham, Ayden Blunschi, Liam Doyle, Lamartine Meda, Brooke Stewart (Chair), Renoda Washington

Members Absent: Jude Boynton, Erick Taylor

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

Others Present: Constance Alphonse, Brenda Cossé, Mylinda Elliott, Nicole Flores, Lynsey Hebert (transcriptionist), Jacki Pierce, Susan Riehn, and Erick Taylor

Call to Order & Quorum

Brooke Stewart called the meeting to order at 1:19 PM. A quorum was established, meaning enough members were present to make decisions.

Meeting Summary Approval

Melissa Bayham motioned to approve the January 2026 meeting summary. Liam Doyle seconded the motion. The summary was approved by unanimous consent.

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) Update

Melissa Bayham shared updates on LRS, including Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), which help students with disabilities prepare for work. The Council's legislative agenda includes advocating for LRS to receive more state general funds to draw down the full federal allotment. LRS and the Council are tracking House Bill 1 (HB 1), which includes the LRS budget. The bill is currently moving forward with level funding for LRS.

A memorandum of understanding with the Louisiana Department of Education allows LRS to provide Pre-ETS services and determine eligibility earlier so students do not have a gap in services when transitioning into the program. Participation continues to increase, with about 3,805 participants in 2025 and 4,829 in 2026. LRS currently has two staffing contracts supporting Pre-ETS:

- EasterSeals
- Families Helping Families of Greater New Orleans

In addition, they are negotiating a new contract in Baton Rouge to expand service capacity.

There are now 16 third-party cooperative arrangements in place with school districts, which continues to strengthen local partnerships and service reach.

The state planning period for WIOA is underway. Public comment will open April 10 through Louisiana Works for 15 days. This plan includes vocational rehabilitation, workforce programs, and adult education.

Finally, there was a special rate adjustment approved for counselors on March 4. The hourly rate increased from \$17.18 to \$21.04 per hour, along with a 5% adjustment for all staff. This adjustment is intended to support recruitment, retention, and workforce stability.

Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) Update

There was no representative from LDOE at this meeting. A written report was submitted, highlights included updates from the Special Education Advisory Panel, information about stakeholder input for the IDEA grant application and upcoming public comment opportunities, and summaries of legislative proposals related to special education practices. A representative is expected at the full Council meeting.

E/E Contractual Updates

Stephanie Carmona shared an 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 2:01 PM.