

LADDC
LOUISIANA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL



OCTOBER 2024 -
SEPTEMBER 2025

2025

ANNUAL REPORT

Positive Change in
Louisiana Starts *Here*

A Message from Leadership

The Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council is proud of the work we accomplished in 2025 to improve the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families.

Our work is guided by our **Five-Year State Plan** and by the voices of self-advocates, family members, and partners across Louisiana. Together, we help improve systems, services, and opportunities for people with I/DD across Louisiana.

One of our biggest accomplishments was working with advocates across Louisiana to help protect **Medicaid and other home and community-based services** from potential budget cuts. These services help people remain in their homes and communities and avoid unnecessary institutional care. We also continued to support and invest in future leaders. More than **2,000 self-advocates and family members** learned new skills, shared their experiences with policymakers, and helped shape decisions that affect disability services throughout the state.

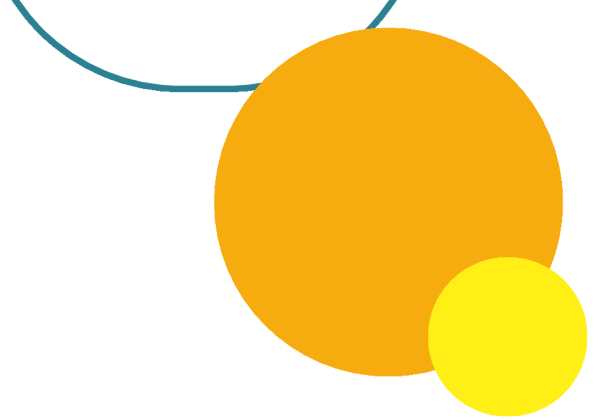
As we prepare for the final year of our current State Plan and begin developing our next five-year vision, we remain committed to listening to stakeholders, promoting inclusive communities, and advancing policies that support independence, self-determination, and equal opportunity.

Together, we are building a Louisiana where everyone has the opportunity to belong, contribute, and thrive.



EBONY HAVEN
Executive Director

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About the Council

The Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council was created in 1971 to help people with developmental disabilities live full and meaningful lives. The Council works to make sure people with disabilities can go to school, get jobs, and live in their communities with the supports they need.

**We lead. We advocate. We empower. We educate.
We partner. We inform. We advise.**

3 MAIN GOALS



OUR MISSION

The Council's mission is to increase independence, self-determination, productivity, integration, and inclusion for Louisianans with developmental disabilities by engaging in advocacy, capacity building, and systems change.

Council Membership

2025

Self-Advocates

Ayden Blunsch
Jude Boynton
Jill Hano
Frank Macaluso
Tony Piontek
Erick Taylor
Vivienne Webb

Parents/Family

Mike Billings
Christi Gonzales
Angela Harmon
Lamartine Meda
Pasqueal Nguyen
Robbie Smith
Brooke Stewart
Renoda Washington
Karen Xu

Agency Reps

Patti Barovechio (OPH)
Melissa Bayham (LRS)
Brian Bennett (BHSF)
Cheri Crain (GOEA)
Jamar Ennis (GODA)
Julie Foster Hagan (OCDD)
Meredith Jordan (LDOE)
Cherie Kelly-Aduli
Tory Rocca (DRLA)
Gearry Williams (OAAS)
Phil Wilson (LSU-HDC)



**COUNCIL MEMBERS & STAFF WITH
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR BILLY NUNGESSER**

2025 at a Glance



Throughout 2025, advocates, families, and community partners worked together to create positive change across Louisiana.

6,859

LaCAN Members

1,131

Advocacy Actions

17

Action Alerts

234

Roundtable
Participants

18

PIP Graduates

12

YLF Delegates

2

Public Forums

233

FASD Training
Participants

LACAN

Louisiana Council's Advocacy Network



LaCAN furthers the Council's mission by advocating for policies and systems that support inclusion everywhere people learn, work, live, and play.



**LACAN MEMBERS AT A
YELLOW SHIRT DAY AT THE CAPITOL**

LaCAN gives people the information and support they need to speak up for changes that improve services, education, jobs and community living for people with disabilities.

LACAN

Advocacy Activities



Legislative Roundtables

Roundtables give members a chance to meet local lawmakers, learn about important state issues, become a better advocate, and find ways to tell personal stories to help make positive changes. In 2025, **9** hybrid (virtual and in-person) roundtables were held with **234** LaCAN members attending.

Legislative Visits

LaCAN Leaders help members in their area meet with lawmakers by giving them talking points and helping them share their personal stories and messages. In 2025, LaCAN members participated in **77** formal and **197** informal visits.

Yellow Shirt Days

LaCAN members attend important committee meetings when big decisions are being made. It's important to tell lawmakers how these bills and policies might affect people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families. In 2025, **132** members joined these events.

Information & Action Alerts

Alerts keep LaCAN members informed about possible policy changes that could affect people with disabilities and the services they get. They also let members know what actions they can take to speak up about these changes. In 2025, there were **17** action alerts and **1,131** advocacy actions taken.

Your Voice Made a Difference

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), their families, and other advocates spoke up during the 2025 Legislative Session. Together, we worked to protect disability services, restore funding for Families Helping Families Regional Resource Centers, and improve school safety policies for students with disabilities.



**SENATOR ROYCE DUPLESSIS
& LACAN ADVOCATES**

“As a mother, LaCAN has changed my life. It has given me knowledge, confidence, friendships, and a purpose beyond my own family’s needs. It has shown me that advocacy is not just for politicians or professionals. It is for parents, caregivers, individuals with disabilities, and anyone who wants to make their community better.

One of the most important lessons I have learned through LaCAN is the disability rights motto: **Nothing About Us, Without Us**. This phrase reminds us that individuals with disabilities and their families deserve a seat at the table when decisions are being made. Our voices matter, our experiences matter, and our stories have the power to create change.”

WHITNEY SCHWEGMANN

Advocacy Wins

No Disability Services Cut

- Advocates helped protect services that support people with disabilities in their homes and communities.

\$500,000 Restored

- Funding was restored for Families Helping Families Resource Centers.

Act 479 Passed

- New protections for students with disabilities when restraint or seclusion is used in schools.



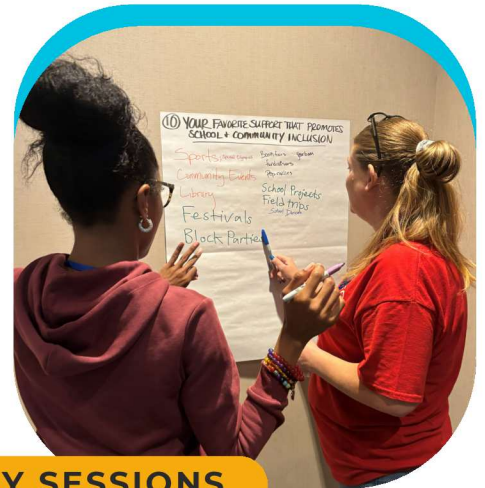
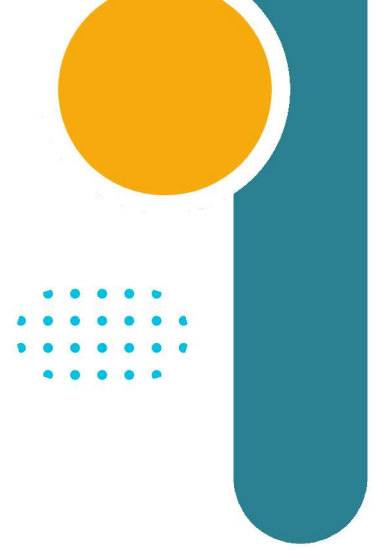
GOVERNOR LANDRY WITH DISABILITY ADVOCATES SIGNING ACT 479

Act 479 helps keep students safer by:

- Expanding rules for cameras in the classroom
- Improving training for school staff
- Increasing oversight when seclusion or restraint is used
- Requiring parents be notified sooner when seclusion or restraint is used

These successes happened because people spoke up. Self-advocates, family members, and partners shared their experiences, contacted lawmakers, and took action through LaCAN. We also thank Representative Shane Mack, the bill's co-authors, and our advocacy partners for helping make these changes possible.

Partners in Policymaking



PIP PARTICIPANTS DURING MONTHLY SESSIONS

Partners in Policymaking (PIP) is a national leadership training program for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and parents of young children with I/DD.

The program helps participants build leadership and advocacy skills so they can make a difference in their communities.

Participants attend six weekend training sessions in Baton Rouge, held over six months, to learn about disability rights, public policy and effective advocacy.

Topics Include:

- Disability History
- Inclusive Education
- The Legislative Process
- Supported Employment
- Supported Living
- Community Building
- Systems Change Advocacy

Partners Graduates



PIP GRADUATING CLASS OF 2025

The Class of 2025 had **18** graduates, including **7** people with disabilities. Many graduates used what they learned to make a difference in their communities. Eleven took part in advocacy activities such as Legislative Roundtables, Yellow Shirt Days, meetings with lawmakers, and Action Alerts.

Alumni

As of 2025:

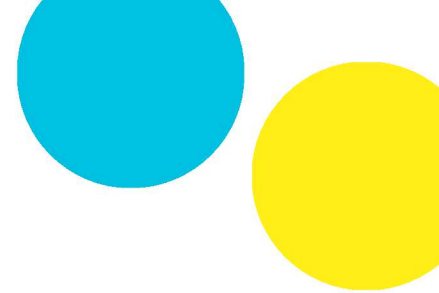
7 graduates serve on the DD Council.

6 graduates serve as LaCAN Leaders.

2 graduates serve as Families Helping Families Directors.

29 graduates sit on other Boards and Committees.

Partners Testimonies



"I can honestly say that Partners has been a blessing. From the very first month, I found myself learning things I could immediately put into practice—not just for Chance, but for other families in my rural community. Every session was packed with information, insights, and tools that I could take home and use. And what's been most powerful for me is realizing that we can influence systems. We can make our voices heard. In fact, I've already seen changes happening—by sharing resources with other parents who, like me, just needed someone to point them in the right direction.

Moving forward, I know my role is to continue advocating for change. I plan to continue speaking up for families in rural communities, sharing information, and helping others navigate the services maze that can feel so overwhelming. I want to be a bridge for families—just like Partners has been for me."

Marilyn Goodwin



"Partners is a truly special program. Partners has taught me disability or not, we all have the same basic needs and aspirations. It taught me how the policies we adhere to everyday are born and take shape. It taught me how to give input on bills being introduced that will affect my son and his peers for years to come. It also taught me how to be more than just a potential vote to our representatives and legislators.

Partners taught me how to organize my thoughts and deliver a clear effective message. Partners taught me about empathy instead of sympathy and the knowledge to know the difference. Most importantly Partners has given me a bold confidence to stand on the front line and fight for the rights of those with disabilities, not just at the Capitol, but at my job and in my community."

Markus Revelle



Alumni Reunion

Leadership. Advocacy. Impact.

More than **75** Partners in Policymaking alumni gathered in Baton Rouge to celebrate leadership, advocacy, and the progress made over the last two decades. Many graduates have helped shape policies and laws that expanded opportunities and protections for people with disabilities across Louisiana.



PIP ALUMNI FROM 2008-2025

Advocacy in Action

2008 Insurance Mandate for ABA (updated 2012, 2018, 2019, 2023)

2014 ABLE Legislation (updated 2023)

2018 TEFRA (updated 2025)

2020 April Dunn Act, Supported Decision Making

2021 Cameras in the Classroom (updated 2022, 2024, 2025)

2025 Restraint and Seclusion

Youth Leadership Forum

The **Louisiana Youth Leadership Forum (LAYLF)** is a summer camp for 10th–12th grade students with disabilities. The camp helps students grow in confidence, become more independent, and feel proud of their disability. It's held on a college campus so students can experience what it's like to live away from home. All the guest speakers are successful adults with disabilities who share their stories and help guide the students.

2025 YLF DELGATES



Topics Include

- Disability History
- Self-Advocacy
- Leadership
- Your Good Life
- Legislative Process
- Legislative Advocacy
- Dating & Relationships
- Mock Bill Prep
- Mock Debate

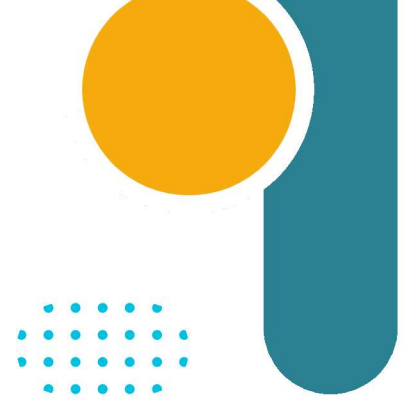
100%

OF DELEGATES
AND GUEST
SPEAKERS ARE
PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES

50%

OF STAFF ARE
PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES

Youth Leadership Forum



**2025 YLF DELGATES
LEARNING TO COOK**

2025 Participants

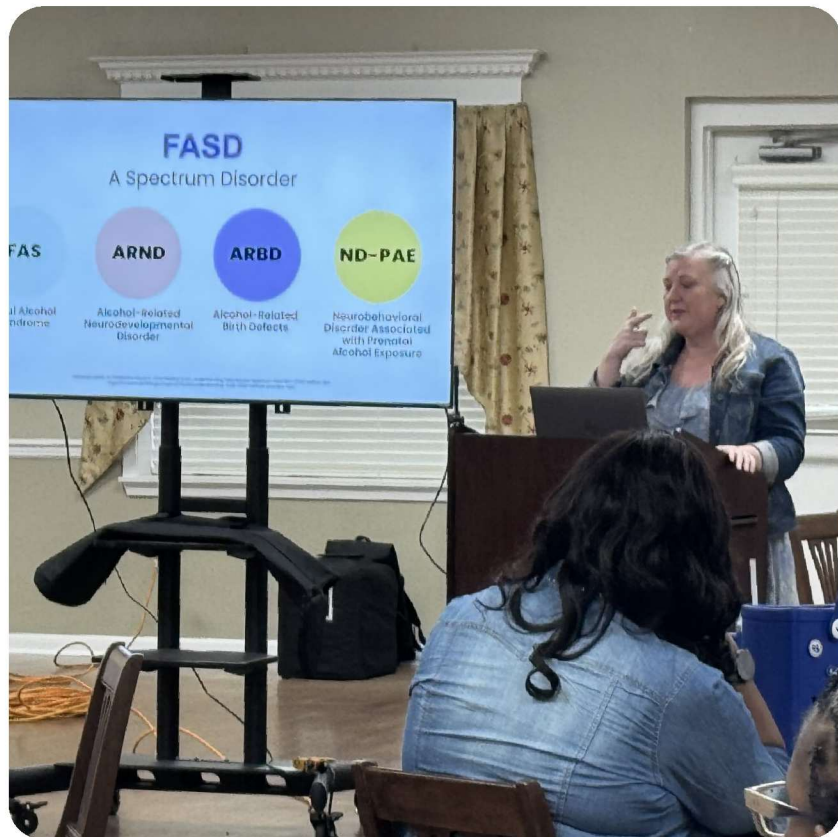
12 LAYLF participants learned how to become confident community leaders, get ready for future jobs and independent living, and understand the history and culture of the disability community.

“My favorite part was the smile on my child's face before I left. He was nervous at first but once he saw his surroundings and that there were other children there that looked like him, act like him he was excited to stay. My son came home explaining his rights as a person, knowing when to say NO and that is ok. Listening to others when they are talking and how to interact with others. Applause to the entire group for assisting in making this program such a success. I hope and pray that it continues well into the future. Job well done!”

PARENT TESTIMONY

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

The Council partnered with the **LSU Human Development Center (LSU HDC)** to increase awareness of **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)** across Louisiana. LSU HDC coordinated the Louisiana FASD United Chapter, shared FASD resources with judges and public defenders, participated in FASD impact week in Washington D.C., and provided training for social workers, foster and adoptive parents and other professionals. A total of **233** people gained skills to better identify and support children and youth affected by FASD.



KRISTA JAMES PRESENTING ON FASD

“We are fostering a child with prenatal drug exposure. We want to learn as much as we can about FASD and other issues pertinent to his background. This is an excellent first step.”

PARTICIPANT TESTIMONY

Public Forums

The Council began developing its new **Five-Year Plan** for 2027–2031. This plan will guide the Council’s work to improve services, supports, and opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) across Louisiana.

A poster for Public Input Forums. At the top left is a yellow ribbon with a blue circle containing a white outline of Louisiana. Below this, the text "PUBLIC INPUT FORUMS" is written in large, bold, white letters on a blue background. Underneath, in smaller yellow text, is "YOUR VOICE. YOUR VISION. LOUISIANA'S FUTURE". To the right of this text is a small inset photo of a young girl with blonde hair, wearing a white shirt, sitting at a table and drawing with a red crayon. Below the main text, there are two event details, each preceded by a yellow circle. The first event is on May 7th from 11:00am to 1:00pm at 1810 Martin Luther King Jr. Dr., Monroe, LA 71202. The second event is on May 14th from 11:00am to 1:00pm at 9200 Bluebonnet Blvd., Baton Rouge, LA 70810. To the right of these details is a paragraph of text: "Please join us for an important discussion and help us ensure that the next five-year plan is responsive, inclusive, and effective. Let's work together towards a brighter tomorrow." At the bottom right is the LADDC logo, which consists of the letters "LADDC" in blue and yellow, with "LOUISIANA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL" written in small blue text below it.

PUBLIC INPUT FORUMS
YOUR VOICE. YOUR VISION. LOUISIANA'S FUTURE

May 7th
11:00am - 1:00pm
1810 Martin Luther King Jr. Dr.,
Monroe, LA 71202

May 14th
11:00am - 1:00pm
9200 Bluebonnet Blvd.,
Baton Rouge, LA 70810

Please join us for an important discussion and help us ensure that the next five-year plan is responsive, inclusive, and effective. Let's work together towards a brighter tomorrow.

LADDC
LOUISIANA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL

What we heard from YOU!

Top three priorities:

1. Formal and Informal Community Supports
2. Education and Early Intervention
3. Health

To make sure the plan reflects the needs of the disability community, the Council partnered with **Disability Rights Louisiana** and the **LSU Human Development Center** to host public forums in Monroe and Baton Rouge.

People with disabilities, family members, advocates, and community partners shared the challenges they face, the changes they want to see, and the issues that matter most to them.

Improving Access to Information

The Council worked to make information easier to find, understand, and use for people with disabilities, family members, and community partners.

Find Information

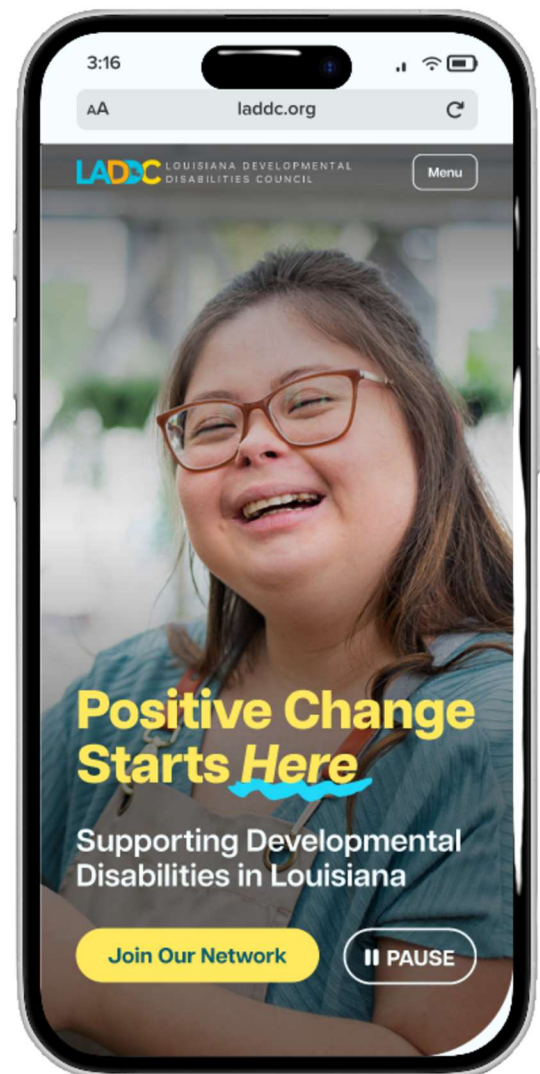
Redesigned website
Easier navigation

Understand Information

Plain language resources
Clear information about
services and supports

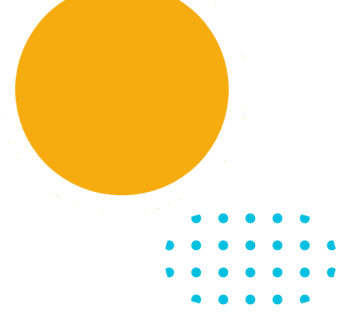
Take Action

Learn about advocacy
opportunities
Connect with programs and
resources

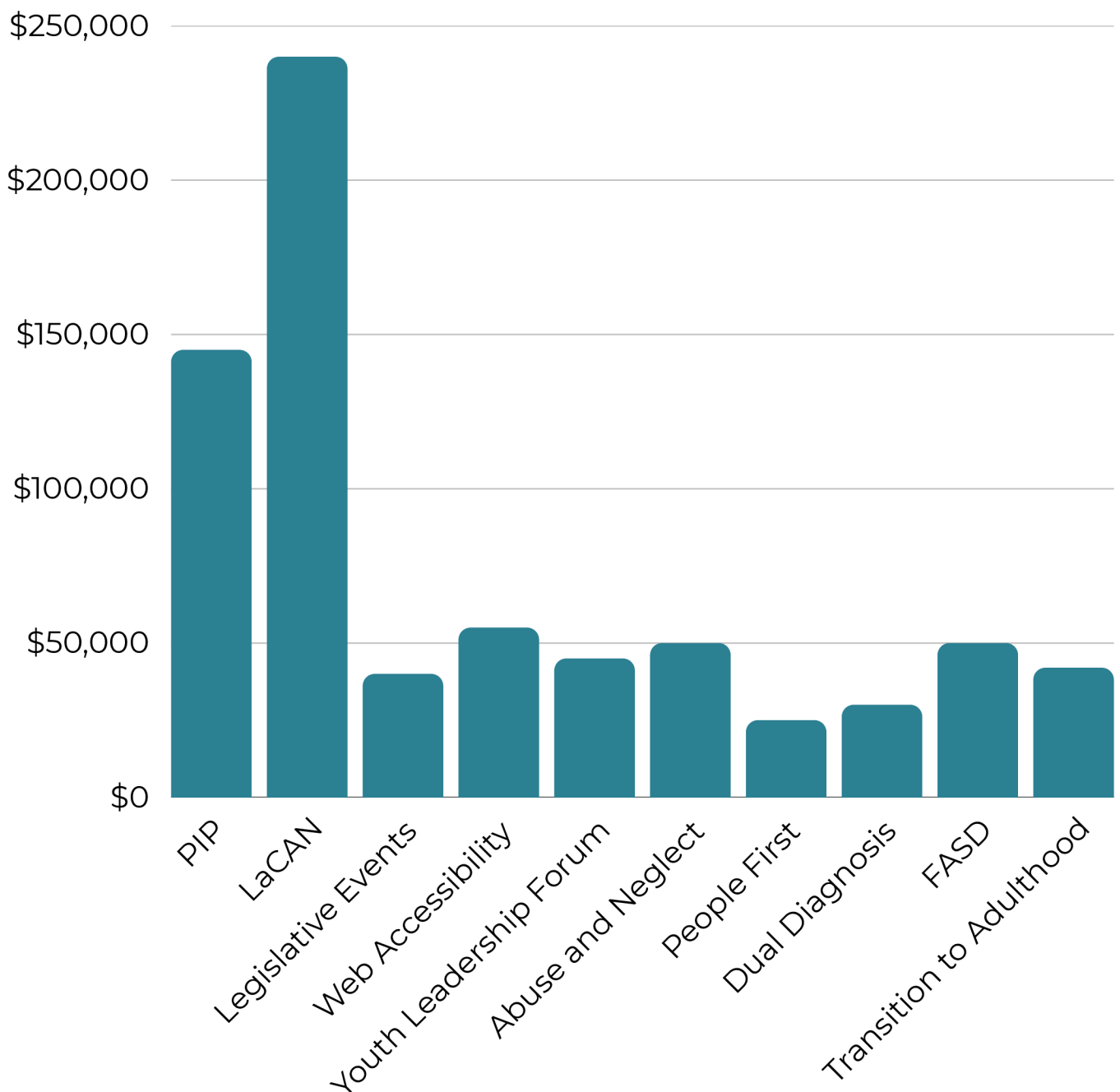


For more information and to view the documents visit the Council's website at www.laddc.org.

Investing in Change



In 2025, the Council received \$1,376,896 in federal funding. Up to 70% of those funds could be used for State Plan activities. The Council also received \$1,007,517 in State General Funds. Those funds were divided among the nine Families Helping Families Regional Resource Centers.



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