Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council
Act 378 Subcommittee
July 29, 2026

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Hi everyone. Welcome to the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council Act 378 subcommittee. We'll go ahead and get started. I'll call the meeting to order. Rekeesha would you mind doing the roll call?.

REKEESHA BRANCH: Not a problem. Ms. Hano.

JILL HANO: Here.

REKEESHA BRANCH: Ms. Hano is here. Ms. Nguyen. Mr. Macaluso. Ms. Stewart.

BROOKE STEWART: Here.

REKEESHA BRANCH: Ms. Stewart is here. Mr. Taylor.

ERICK TAYLOR: Here.

REKEESHA BRANCH: Mr. Taylor is here. Ms. Xu. You have four. You have a quorum.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Thank you, Rekeesha. Before we get started I just want to remind you all of a few rules. 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 a quorum. Please keep your microphones muted unless you are called on 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 on. After speaking the microphone will be returned to mute.

Also, the Q and A is only to 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 hands raised. Comments in Q and

A will be addressed last. As for the 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 keep that in mind. Depending on time constraints we may also limit comments to once per issue. All comments about a person's character will not be allowed. Finally, members of the public will have the 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.

So everyone should have reviewed the April meeting summary which is attached in the agenda you received via email or it's also posted online. And for those in person there is a copy in the committee packet. We need a motion to adopt the April meeting summary. So we have a motion by Mr. Taylor. We need a second.

BROOKE STEWART: I second. This is Brooke Stewart.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Okay. We have a second by Brooke Stewart. Any opposition? Any discussion? Public comment? So the motion is passed unanimously to approve the minutes.

Okay. I want to adjust the agenda just for a moment if you guys would allow. We have, I think, two people from Northwest Louisiana Human Service District. If you guys would raise your hand if you're here to speak on behalf of Northwest Human Service District. I think Mary. Might be another person.

MARY MANUEL: I have Veronica Smith with me as well.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Oh, y'all are together.

MARY MANUEL: Yes, ma'am. We're in the same office.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Okay, you guys. So we're going to have, for those of you who haven't been at the meetings recently this will be our third time we're going to have a human service district to share about what they're doing, kind of the impact of the funds that are Act 378 funds. And I spoke to Ms. Sharon Doyle who is the director for the Office on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities at Northwest Human Service District in region seven and asked if they could present and that's why we have Mary and Veronica here to present.

One thing that I wanted to note about this human service district, for those of you who have been involved, and as we look at the reports later we'll be able to see that, but they have consistently provided a larger percentage of their funds for the developmental disabilities services. And so we always kind of compliment, and this has been going on for years, we've always complimented them and just really happy that that human service district puts such a large percentage of their funding into developmental disabilities. And so I just want to give them kudos before they speak. And I will go ahead and turn it over to you guys and just kind of share some of the impact you guys are seeing with the flexible family funds and the individual family support funds.

MARY MANUEL: Good afternoon. Can you all hear me?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yes. Much better.

MARY MANUEL: Good afternoon. My name is Mary Manuel and I have Veronica Smith here with me. As far as our flexible family fund we have 176 individuals that receive it and of those 176 I think it makes a great impact with them because it helps to offset the cost of things that they may not be able to afford. As far as our flexible family fund I try to make sure that we do spend up all those funds on individuals who need those services so that they can remain in the home. We do have a success story that we would like to talk about if--

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Yes, please.

MARY MANUEL: Okay. Do you all want a name or just tell the story?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Just the story is fine.

MARY MANUEL: We have an individual, she was 77 years of age and she came through systems entry in 2024. She lived with her husband in a smaller town in one of our rural parishes and she was requesting assistance with a lift. The husband's health had failed and he was unable to get her in and out of bed. He was older as well so he was having difficulty getting her in and out of bed. So when she came through entry she requested to see what assistance she could get from us and we were able to buy her a lift where she is able to get in and out of her bed independently without causing a strain on her husband. The lift was able to ensure her health and safety and to assist the husband where the lift can directly raise her up and place her in a wheelchair. It has helped out a great deal with her and her husband in the home.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Is that the first time she entered into the DD system at 77?

MARY MANUEL: Yes. She came in the system in March of 2024.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: How did you go about determining that she had a developmental disability? Was that a difficult process or for her it wasn't that difficult?

MARY MANUEL: No. It wasn't that difficult. Someone in the community told her about us and that's how her husband ended up reaching out to us to see if she would qualify for services under our office.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Okay. Thank you very much.

MARY MANUEL: You're welcome.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Did you have anything else?

MARY MANUEL: Well, I guess I could say since she has gone through entry she has been linked to a waiver and she is getting services in the home. A lift made a great impact on her and her husband's life. And we hope to continue to have success stories like that where it shows the services we provide has an impact on those individuals in our community.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Thank you very much. Does anybody have any questions for them?

BRENTON ANDRUS: I don't have a question but more of a statement just to kind of go off of what you said Bambi. Just the appreciation for your office to always be just constantly putting the needs of the DD community ahead of other needs that I'm sure your community has. Y'all have always contributed so much. But just to let folks know for those of you that aren't familiar with Act 73 that basically requires the equivalent of a certain percentage of each LGE's state general fund to go to DD services. We had to do that because years ago there was an imbalance in funding depending on where you were at it depended on how much money was being prioritized for DD services. And so even before that legislation was passed Northwest was always contributing excessive amounts compared to others to their DD system. So I just wanted to add that. Also an appreciation before there was laws mandating how much funding would go to DD services they were constantly prioritizing that population. Just wanted to also give that shootout and thanks.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Thank you so much, Mary and Veronica, for coming on and sharing. You guys sharing these stories adds, this is a very data-heavy committee so this helps to put real people situations for us to understand what this money is doing to help the people that you guys serve.

MARY MANUEL: Thank you all.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: So next we'll move on to the Office of Behavioral Health. I think Ms. Marcia Booker is on to report on their fourth quarter data. Marcia, you have the floor.

MARCIA BOOKER: Can y'all hear me?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Yes, ma'am.

MARCIA BOOKER: Okay. This is Marcia. In just one of the reports the expenditures that were reported some of them may not be at 95 percent because it was due before the invoices were paid out but they should meet at the years end. Florida Parishes should be at 97 percent once yearend reports are due as well as Jefferson Parish. CLHSD and Northeast Delta have not met their quota. CLHSD reported a number of barriers that resulted in low expenditures so we're going to request a corrective action plan from them. As well as Northeast who put in new procedures and so they didn't meet their expenditures so we're going to request a corrective action plan from them as well under consumer care resources.

When looking at the flexible family fund all LGEs are reporting meeting their slots. NLHSD reported 90 percent of their slots filled but this does not meet the necessary requirements and we're going to require a CAP from them. LGEs, most of them are just under 100 percent but they'll offer slots.

And with the supported living all LGEs reported meeting the 95 percent funding that they needed to meet. And that was it.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Do we have any questions in regards to Office of Behavioral Health report for consumer care resources and flexible family funds? Not seeing any. Going to move on to the supported living report.

MARCIA BOOKER: Supported living, all LGEs reported spending 95 percent of their funds. The required 9 percent.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Any questions about-- and this is on the backside of the report, the OBH report, supported living. Do we have any questions for them? Okay. I think that's it. Thank you, Marcia.

MARCIA BOOKER: Thank you.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Next we have Kelly Monroe to provide her report on the Office of Aging and Adult Services SPAS program through the Arc of Louisiana. Kelly.

KELLY MONROE: Hey guys. How is everybody doing. This is our fourth quarter report. We ended the quarter serving 43 people on the contract. Of those people we'll go through the demographics kind of quickly. Of those people 18 of them are African American. 24 of them are Caucasian. And one is Hispanic. 27 of those people were males and 16 were female. In the regions where they're being served there were seven people in region one. Four in region two. Two in region three. Three in region four. Four in region five. Two in region six. Ten in region seven. Zero in region eight. And 11 in region nine. That's an increase in region nine but as usual region seven is pretty high on where the people are being served just because that's where it kind of began in the very beginning.

Everybody on the contract receives support coordination. 34 of them are receiving personal care assistance. Four are receiving either utility assistance or rental assistance. 18 of them receive some type of medical supply or equipment. And three of them had either a home or a vehicle modification. I believe they were home modifications though. So this year we ended a little short. We did not fulfill the entire contract. It looks like they left about close to 10,000 on the table and mainly that was because there were six people this year who have passed away where we had to onboard people off of the waiting list and that takes a little bit of extra time. So unfortunately there were some people who did pass away and we tried to get other people on board in time and we just ran out of time.

Currently there are 77 people on the waiting list. Where the majority of the people that are waiting are in region one in New Orleans. But you'll see the demographics here where there are 17 people in region two. There are nine people in region three. Seven people in region four. Two in region five. Three in region six. Seven in region seven. Two in region eight that are waiting. And then 12 in region nine who are waiting for services.

In there if you scroll down to page five you'll see what they're kind of looking for. If we were to serve all of these people 68 of them are looking for personal care assistance. And then 11 is looking for some type of home modification or vehicle modification but I believe the majority of them are home modifications though. And then one is looking for dental services. Medical equipment and supplies are 23 people waiting. Rental assistance there are three. And then some type of therapy there were four people. So if we were to serve everybody on this waiting list we would need approximately $2.1-million with the match. So I don't know exactly what that would mean. I want to say it would probably be between five and 700,000 state general funds.

And then this was something that you guys had asked for. You wanted to know basically if these people were receiving any other type of service. And so this next chart kind of shows you a little bit about what people are receiving. So there are two people receiving LTPCS and on the next column is a number of applicants applied for other services. So there are 12 people who applied for LTPCS but only two of them are currently receiving it so that's kind of how you read this chart. 51 people applied for the CCW. Nobody applied for the NOW, which doesn't surprise me because most of the people on this contract are adults, adult onset. Although you can have early onset for the disability. You just have to be an adult to receive this. And then four people for TBSCI. And then nobody from the ROW. And then nobody also from the supports waiver. Does anybody have any questions or any concerns about the reporting that I could elaborate on for you?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Kelly is this the final report for the fiscal year?

KELLY MONROE: Yes, it is.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Kelly do you know the budget for this fiscal year that we just entered into? Is it a standstill budget? Do y'all have a little more, a little less? Do y'all know yet?

KELLY MONROE: It's going to be exactly the same.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Okay.

KELLY MONROE: It's going to be exactly the same. I know that at the Arc we had talked about advocating for more money for this program but we have not gone there yet because we haven't had a chance to talk to OAAS about it but we would love to serve more people.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yeah. That's kind of what I was thinking. Knowing that we're going into a fiscal only session I was thinking of things.

KELLY MONROE: Yeah. It definitely is cheaper to serve people in SPAS than it is in a waiver for sure.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Mylinda has a question.

MYLINDA ELLIOT: Kelly remind me. Is this an income-based program?

KELLY MONROE: It is income based but the income is much, much higher. So it's 650 over poverty level.

MYLINDA ELLIOT: Okay. Thank you.

KELLY MONROE: You're welcome. This program was really designed to help people continue to work in the community. Anybody else have any questions?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I don't see any other questions Kelly.

KELLY MONROE: Okay.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Thank you.

KELLY MONROE: All right. Thanks, guys. I might go ahead and just sign off if that's okay with you guys. I got some things going on over here that I need to take care of. Thanks, guys. Have a great week.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Now we are going to hear from the Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Supports OIDD. We have Bernard Brown who is here to present these reports.

BERNARD BROWN: So I guess we're starting with the fourth quarter expenditures for IFS and flexible family fund.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Yes, sir.

BERNARD BROWN: All right. So starting with IFS first you'll see the majority of the LGEs are meeting or expending close to 100 percent. There are a couple of outliers but those outliers with Metropolitan and Jefferson Parish are tied to their invoicing process. So those funds are obligated and once those are settled you'll probably see that reflected on October's report at 100 percent. That's what we're hoping. But generally we're averaging about 90, 95 to 98 percent across all the others.

For flexible family fund you'll see the same. You'll actually see a little better. Like all of those funds are pretty much expended. And you'll actually see where there is a couple of LGEs who actually moved more money to the flexible family fund to make sure they can cover some of the obligations out of those funds. So they're on target for the end of the year.

Going to the compliance report. Or do you want me to stop and take questions on that first?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Yes. Let's ask if there's any questions on the OIDD IFS funds or flexible family funds report.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I don't have a question but I guess this would go both for OIDD and OBH. I haven't been able to look at previous fourth quarters from other years but it seems like it's been better as far as how much they've expended. Especially whenever you're looking at IFS and (inaudible) so many 70s or 60s. And granted I guess they do have an opportunity to get these reports in a little bit later than they used to but I don't know that it makes that dramatic of a change. But I just feel like this fourth quarter it seems like things are expended quicker I guess if you will. So kudos to the offices.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I agree. It does look better this year. Any other questions about this report so far? Okay. Mr. Brown you can go to the Act 73 compliance report.

BERNARD BROWN: Much of the same on that report. You'll see there's a couple of LGEs who are kind of under the threshold per the compliance report but that's tied to expenditures. Basically you'll see a couple, you know, I think Northwest mentioned this like the commitment to supporting developmental disabilities. You will see some expended beyond what they are required to expend on the services. So definitely want to highlight those as well. That's worth calling out that they're pouring funds into those services that may have not been budgeted in the Act 73 dollars. But all in all you'll see the totals are 100 percent. I think it's within in the spirit of what the Act 73 requires. As well as if you average it all out the expended percentage of the 9 percent I did some math and it's at 10 percent. So the LGEs across the board are spending 10 percent of their total budget on developmental disabilities. So again, kudos to the LGEs for putting the money where their mouth is. And that is all.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Do we have any questions about the Act 73 compliance report?

BRENTON ANDRUS: I was actually thinking after Act 73 passed we saw a lot more LGEs start contributing more than the 9 percent. Which was nice because I know there was some anxiety, if you will, when we were trying to get Act 73 passed. And then to see so many of them dedicating more than whatever that 9 percent equivalent is.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: When was Act 73 passed?

BRENTON ANDRUS: 17.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Time flies. Any other questions for Bernard for OIDD?

REKEESHA BRANCH: I know last time at our last quarterly meeting there was some concerns put out there about support coordination not following up timely with family support requests and applications. So just kind of wanted to know if you guys were able to speak to support coordination and maybe get timelines in place.

BERNARD BROWN: Yeah, so there are timelines in place. And as I understand it those timelines have always been in place. I just want to encourage folks it's important as family and self-advocates to kind of know where you can go if something doesn't jive with you. I'm saying that to say if you're not getting the responsiveness from your support coordination agency, especially with Act 378 funds, so especially with IFS and flexible family fund, please go to the LGE. They're the ones who administer those funds. They review the applications. If you're not hearing back timely enough there's nothing stopping you from going to the LGE and asking or even trying to see where you are. Because I think part of the complaint that was brought last meeting was that folks' applications weren't being submitted because they had to be brought through the support coordination agency. We're evaluating that process. I get why it's kind of setup that way but at the same time there's nothing stopping a family from going to the LGE directly. And if the LGE says hey, that's usually routed through your support coordination agency just tell them I went to them and haven't heard anything back. Just so we're clear on that.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Thank you, Bernard. So Bernard the way I process it is that the support coordinator should be an advocate for that family. So if I'm a family member and I'm asking something like I need flexible family funds for my son my support coordinator should know our needs and be able to go, if I'm just overwhelmed with my life, I let my support coordinator know. That support coordinator should be able to go and be able to advocate effectively to help get my son what he needs. That's what the system I think is intended to be.

BERNARD BROWN: Sometimes.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: But if it's not then they have the avenue I could go to the LGE.

BERNARD BROWN: Sometimes. Like with IFS let's say if it's A, I'm up against it because I had to take off eight shifts this month to assist my kid so I might need some help with my light bill, right. Which is within the purview of the Act 378-dollars. From what I learned yesterday from Christy is that to your point support coordinators they're not only just tapping Act 378. They may be researching other resources that instead of running them at the same time, and that's why I say (inaudible) dive into the process because instead of pursuing the application through the LGE and looking for alternative resources at the same time they may be focusing on what can I provide them already in the community to help assist them. I say all that to say the delay may not just be the SC dropped the ball. It may be they are looking for other resources in the community because that is part of the requirement, right, that you exhaust all community options as well. So to your point Bambi, they probably are doing the job. I'm just saying as part of being an advocate for your family it doesn't hurt, and y'all know this, to tap multiple people to make sure the urgency is conveyed.

ERICK TAYLOR: So the support coordinator is the case manager, right?

BERNARD BROWN: Case manager, yep.

ERICK TAYLOR: So they supposed to help you research stuff?

BERNARD BROWN: Research what kind of stuff though?

ERICK TAYLOR: Like if you need assistance with certain programs and stuff.

BERNARD BROWN: Yeah. To an extent, yeah.

ERICK TAYLOR: So why the support coordination says you're supposed to go to your providers and not them?

BERNARD BROWN: So it depends, right. So in theory they're supposed to be working in tandem with the provider agencies. But some provider agencies provide SIL which is supported independent living, right. With that service there are supports in that service that theoretically, I'm not taking up for the SC, that that is the right answer in that instance for that person. Like hey, my lights are about to be turned off and you got SIL. That provider per that service is supposed to be assisting to make sure your bills are paid timely. So yes, the support coordination agency will say like hey, you might need to tap in with your provider agency because they're dropping the ball or there's some confusion somewhere, right. So to your point Erick there might be times where that does happen. But then there's other times where you're right, they may not champion you the way you need to be championed or the social work component of the case management service that's (inaudible). So they might just say you need to go to the Social Security Office when you got SIL and they know that SIL is supposed to help you and make sure you get all of that stuff squared away also.

ERICK TAYLOR: Y'all done woke me up now. My thing is why the providers don't want you to talk to your support coordinator. Let me explain myself. They said it's not for you to talk to them. We only supposed to have connection to them. And I'm going to say this, I spoke up and said I want to talk to both. I don't want to speak to one. I want to talk to both. So it's a wishy-washy thing like you're not supposed to talk to them. That's our connection to talk to them.

BERNARD BROWN: All right, Erick, you're not going to get me worked up man. But listen, all of them work to support you. So they shouldn't be telling you what you can and can't do. So if that's happening we might need to have a separate conversation. I ain't trying to get nobody in trouble because a lot of it is, you know…

ERICK TAYLOR: And I'm not trying to get nobody in trouble but my thing is it's a lot of loopholes. And I'm being serious because I'm being honest with you. I'm going to say this like you sitting on this board and you in here talking, a lot of us would get snatched out of here. You got too strong a connection if you understand what I'm saying.

BERNARD BROWN: I don't man and I'm not happy at what you're telling me. This is concerning. That's concerning man. But I get what you're saying. They don't have that control over you. And I know it happens sometimes in some instances. And some of the motivation behind it may be just looking out for your best interest, you know what I'm saying. But at the same time, Erick, like that's not supposed to be happening at all.

ERICK TAYLOR: I hear you but I'm just saying, and I ain't scared to say it and I'll repeat it again, there's a lot of loopholes between y'all.

BERNARD BROWN: To your point I can't address anything if people don't speak up so I appreciate you sharing this because that's concerning if you're being told not to--

ERICK TAYLOR: But I'm just saying like Bambi over there, and I'm right here and the loophole, that's for us to keep you a loophole away because you're explaining it but then they got a whole other book that they done made up in their mind.

BERNARD BROWN: Well, here's the other part Erick. Like the system, and I don't want to go through the whole story about how things are supposed to work. There's oversight things in place to make sure people are healthy and safe and not being exploited. Because what you're talking about is border an exploitation. So that's concerning. So that's why support coordination agencies or people complain about families who have a support coordinator in their home quarterly, right, because it used to be monthly. So that's why they had to be in their home every month for things like this. That's why they did pop-up visits. That's why providers are required to come pop in on their workers periodically. That's why because the system is designed a specific way and those things like in-home visits and pop-up visits and monitoring. Those things are in place to assure that stuff like this isn't happening. And that the services as they're designed are being provided that way. Not oh, I get off at 3:00 so we got to go from your event because I get off. See what I'm saying. That's not how it goes. That's not person-centered. Pulling you out of the community for convivence for them is not how the services are designed.

I'm serious man. Not you but if you know people who are experiencing that let me know. Because it may just be as simple as a conversation letting folks know how the services are supposed to be provided. It's not getting anybody in trouble. It's just knowing making sure they're clear on it. Any other questions?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I think to Erick's point one thing that I have found being a part of this council particularly is that our people that are like at the state agency, like Bernard, historically whoever's been in his role or the other state agencies to me they've always had like the best ideals that they want to put in place for what we aspire to but sometimes the details by the time it gets down to the provider sometimes it's just these policies and procedures and them going through the motions and this is how we do something. And those people that are the supervisors or the direct support workers they aren't hearing our conversations about what's person-centered planning, that type of thing. They're following this document that says this, this and this and this is when we have to do this and how we have to do this and who you're supposed to talk to. Our clients never talked to the support coordinator and they just think that's the way it's supposed to be.

ERICK TAYLOR: This is our company so this is what we're doing. This is how we run this. That's all I'm saying.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: And so that's why you as an advocate you know better. Once I know better I advocate for when I know something's not right then you advocate to try to make it better for yourself and for other people as well. Thank you, Erick, very much for that.

I just wanted to note that Herman Bigner was the person from OIDD that was on this committee and he is retiring this week.

BERNARD BROWN: Tomorrow.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: So Herman retired and then retired again and has served many years. So just wanted to let you guys know that. So wish him the best. Mylinda.

MYLINDA ELLIOT: That's always been the pleasure about the DD Council and the charm of the DD Council is that real people with disabilities were on the council and could talk to how it's working on the ground floor as compared to how people maybe higher up in the system know it's supposed to work. Not always the same as how it's working on the ground floor but that's the wonderful thing about the DD Council.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Thank you, Mylinda. Any other questions or comments about the OIDD report? Okay. Thank you, Bernard. Any announcements or public comment? I will say that after this meeting our education and employment committee will meet at 4:15. Also tomorrow is the full council meeting which will start at 10:00 a.m. It will be in the same room or on the Zoom link. So those of you who have registered to participate virtually should have the links to the meeting in your email. Does anyone on the committee have any other announcements to make? Or anyone in the room? Seeing none. Do we have anyone wishing to share public comment? Okay. So I hereby adjourn this meeting at 3:37.