



**Governor's Office of Disability Affairs
(GODA)**

Annual Report 2018



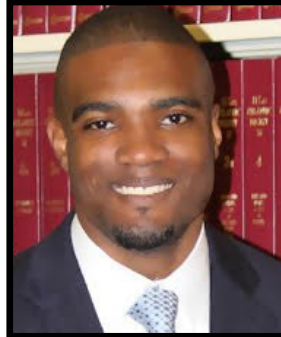
OFFICE of the GOVERNOR

JOHN BEL EDWARDS



Bambi Polotzola
Executive Director

Governor's Office of Disability Affairs



Jamar Lanier Ennis
Assistant Director

Governor's Office of Disability Affairs
(9/2018– Present)



Jolan Jolivet
Assistant Director

Governor's Office of Disability Affairs
(1/2018– 8/2018)



Melanie Washington
Director

State Interagency Coordinating
Council



Jessica Lewis
Director

Statewide Independent Living
Council



April Dunn
Coordinator

Governor's Office of Disability Affairs



Adren Wilson, Ph.D
Deputy Chief of Staff

Governor's Office of Programs and Planning



Bruce Parker, Ph.D
Director

Governor's Office of Programs and Planning

GODA Activities in 2018

The Governor's Office of Disability Affairs works to adequately educate, address, and resolve issues and concerns relative to the disability community. GODA participates in initiatives that promote, encourage and support citizens with disabilities so they may have an equal opportunity to actively participate in all aspects of life.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Symposium

The Governor's Office of Disability Affairs hosted the ADA Symposium at the Claiborne Building on July 26, which was the 28th anniversary of when the Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law. The ADA Symposium was free to attend and featured national accessibility expert Kristi Avalos, CEO/President of Accessology. Over 250 people attended the ADA Symposium and were able to participate in one of the breakout sessions for ADA Accessibility; K-12 Education; ACT 833 and graduation pathways; Emergency Preparedness; Early Childhood and Inclusive Care; Independent Living; Higher Education; OCDD Waiver System Transformation; and Increasing Employment Opportunities and Local Disability Awareness which allowed attendees to network, collaborate, and discuss next steps. Governor John Bel Edwards also expressed that accessibility and the needs of individuals with disabilities are important for his administration.


YOU'RE INVITED TO THE
**Governor's Office of
Disability Affairs Conference**

Thursday, July 26th, 2018
9:00 AM - 4:30 PM

Louisiana Purchase Room, Claiborne Building
1201 N. 3rd St. Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70802

Will Include Sessions on ADA Accesibility, K-12 Topics,
Emergency Preparedness, Early Childhood, Employment,
Independent Living, Higher Education,
and OCDD Wavier Changes.

RSVP: jolan.jolivette@la.gov or call (225)219-7553
or online at gov.louisiana.gov/GODA


OFFICE of the GOVERNOR



GODA Legislative Report

Representative Patricia Smith authored 3 bills related to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. They are HB 17, HB 199, and HB 474.



[HB 14](#) authorizes retirees of the Teachers' Retirement System of La. (TRSL) to return to work who are interpreters, educational transliterators, or educators of the deaf or hard of hearing to the list of critical shortage positions that may be filled without benefit suspension.

[HB 199](#) creates the Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) Task Force to develop a resource for parents to monitor and track deaf and hard of hearing children's expressive and receptive language acquisition and developmental stages toward English literacy; and develop a framework for assessing children who are deaf or hard of hearing to determine their competencies in language and literacy skills for the purpose of ensuring they are able to achieve kindergarten readiness in an equitable manner. The law provides that the task force shall study and make recommendations relative to matters that shall include, but need not be limited to, developing a framework for assessing children who are deaf or hard of hearing and selecting language developmental milestones from existing standardized norms. It requires the task force to do all of the following:

- (1) Review and make recommendations relative to existing tools or assessments for educators to use to assess the language and literacy development of such children.
- (2) Determine how often such tools or assessments should be used for children from birth to age five.
- (3) Identify language development milestones for such children by consulting with professionals trained in the language development and education of such children.
- (4) Identify procedures and methods for reporting language acquisition, assessment results, milestones, assessment tools used, and progress of such children to parents, teachers and other professionals involved in their early intervention and education.
- (5) Make recommendations relative to ensuring that state law and state and local policies are adequately addressing the language developmental needs of such children

GODA Legislative Report

[HB 474](#) requires that the council work with the deaf community to develop a communication training plan that uses face-to-face techniques with limited pre-recorded videos. Peace officers are required to complete this training program on and after Jan. 1, 2019. It also requires the council to utilize communication cards from a nongovernmental agency that specializes in working with deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

Representative Beryl Amedee authored [HB 292](#) which requires the court to allow a witness who is either under 18 years of age or who has a developmental disability to have a facility dog, if available, accompany them while testifying in court. The law also authorizes the court to allow the use of facility dogs in cases involving all other witnesses. A "facility dog" is a dog that is certified and a graduate of an assistance dog organization that is accredited, and specially trained to provide emotional support to witnesses testifying in judicial proceedings without causing a distraction during the proceedings.



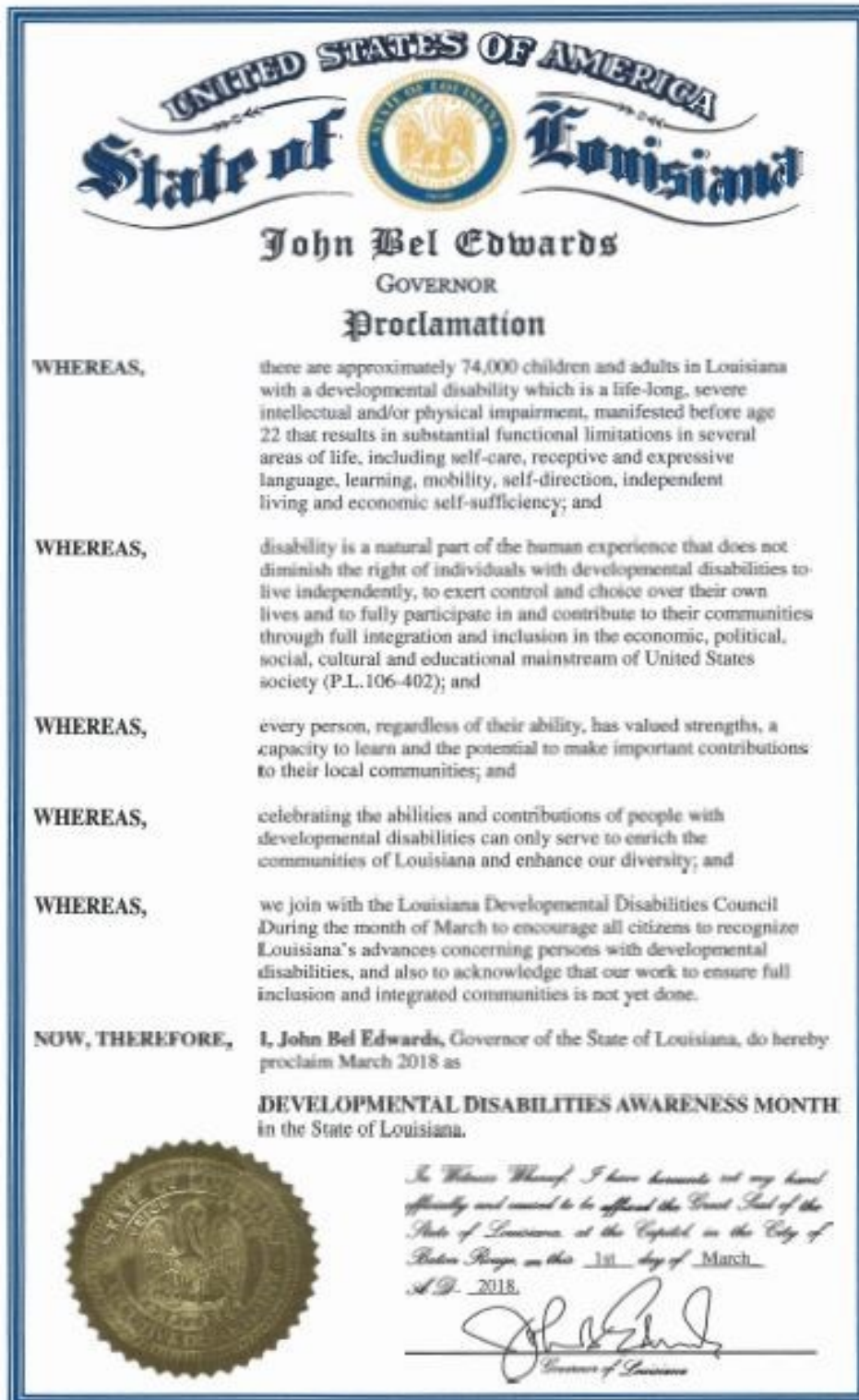
Representative Rodney Lyons authored [HB 627](#) authorizing the recommendation or prescription of medical marijuana in treating certain health conditions associated with autism spectrum disorder. In 2016, Governor Edwards signed into law Act 96 by Senator Fred Mills which authorizes physicians who are domiciled in La. and licensed by and in good standing with the La. State Board of Medical Examiners to recommend tetrahydrocannabinols (commonly referred to as "medical marijuana"), or chemical derivatives thereof, for therapeutic use by patients clinically diagnosed as suffering from a debilitating medical condition including cancer, positive status for human immunodeficiency virus, acquired immune deficiency syndrome, cachexia or wasting syndrome, seizure disorders, epilepsy, spasticity, Crohn's disease, muscular dystrophy, or multiple sclerosis. HB 627 adds the following conditions associated with autism spectrum disorder as conditions for which physicians may recommend treatment with medical marijuana:

- (1) Repetitive or self-stimulatory behavior of such severity that the physical health of the person with autism is jeopardized.
- (2) Avoidance of others or inability to communicate of such severity that the physical health of the person with autism is jeopardized.
- (3) Self-injuring behavior.
- (4) Physically aggressive or destructive behavior.

The law stipulates that no physician shall recommend medical marijuana for treatment of any condition associated with autism spectrum disorder for a patient who is under the age of 18 unless the physician is a pediatric subspecialist licensed by the La. State Board of Medical Examiners and credentialed by the La. Board of Pharmacy.

Developmental Disability Awareness Month Campaign

To coincide with National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, Governor John Bel Edwards proclaimed March 2018 as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month in Louisiana. The proclamation reads, in part, "celebrating the abilities and contributions of people with developmental disabilities can only serve to enrich the communities of Louisiana and enhance our diversity." Read the full proclamation [here](#).



The Governor's Office of Disability Affairs Monthly Disability Newsletter

The Governor's Office of Disability Affairs distributes a monthly newsletter to highlight the relevant issues and concerns of disability in Louisiana. The newsletter is designed to deliver important news and announcements that impact the disability community. Some of the content in this newsletter is created by the members of GACDA. This newsletter also provides information about disability affairs and other programs and events sponsored by agencies and organizations that serve individuals with disabilities. The newsletter is distributed statewide to increase awareness of the available statewide disability programs and services. The Governor's Office of Disability Affairs has archived all of its 2018 newsletters. These archived newsletters can be found at: <http://gov.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/newsroom/category/13>

Governor's Office of Disability Affairs Newsletter October 2018

September 26, 2018

National Disability Employment Awareness Month 2018

In recognition of the ongoing efforts to increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in our state, and to support the efforts nationwide, Governor John Bel Edwards has issued a Proclamation declaring October as Disability Employment Awareness Month in the State of Louisiana. The purpose of National Disability Employment Awareness Month is to educate employers about the value of maintaining a diverse and inclusive workforce, and empowering individual disabilities. The Governor's Office of Disability Affairs (GODA) will be participating in various disability employment awareness events during the month of October including but not limited to:

- **Inclusion Day: Overcoming Barriers to Employment** sponsored by Lighthouse Louisiana on October 5, 2018 in Baton Rouge Louisiana. Invitation Link: [Here](#)
- **The Acadian Regional Diversity Job Fair** on October 9, 2018 in Lafayette. Click [Here](#) for more information.
- **The Conference on Disability Advocacy** on October 9, 2018 at the University of Monroe (ULM) Library 7th Floor Conference Center. Invitation Link: [Here](#)
- **The APSE Employment First Policy Symposium** on October 26, 2018 in Baton Rouge. For more information click [Here](#).
- **The HDC Employment First CORE Training** beginning on October 30, 2018 in New Orleans. For more information click [Here](#).

GODA continues to participate in various ongoing initiatives such as:

- **The State As A Model Employer (SAME) Task Force**, which is a coalition that makes recommendations and policies that will support the State in expanding the diversity of its workforce.
- **The Employment First Vision Quest Team**, coordinated by the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs with assistance from a federal grant, developed the Employment Resource Guide which can be found at www.laworks.net. This guide will be useful for people with disabilities, their families, and the professionals who support them, in exploring employment and career possibilities. It includes six sections that summarize resources to meet a variety of employment related questions and concerns.

CONNECT *with*
the GOVERNOR

EMAIL *the*
GOVERNOR

REQUEST *of*
the GOVERNOR

APPLY *to*
SERVE



Happening **NOW**



LouisianaGov 2 hours ago

@truthwinged A pay raise for teachers is my number one priority when the legislature returns in April.

Governor's Office of Disability Affairs Programs and Events

The 2018 GOLD Awards

The Governor's Office hosted the Governor's Outstanding Leadership in Disabilities (GOLD) Awards on November 28, 2018 at the Old State Capitol. The GOLD Awards ceremony was created to serve as an opportunity for Louisiana to pay tribute to the achievements, dedication, and extraordinary efforts of individuals who benefit the disability community. The Award Ceremony can be viewed [here](#). The GOLD Awards ceremony was televised statewide. The following awards were presented:

- Educator of the Year: Mary Breaud
- Direct Support Professional of the Year: Roger Wells
- Service Provider of the Year: Katrina Labouliere
- Employer of the Year: Hand Up Thrift
- Volunteer of the Year: Ainsley's Angels
- Family of the Year: The Hamilton Family
- Service Animal of the Year: Dementor "Moose" Finley
- Youth of the Year: Hannah LaCour
- Veteran of the Year: Barry Guidry
- Patsy Barrett Memorial Award: Mattie Wilson
- Ken Vince Memorial Award: Harlon Cowsar II
- Distinguished Merit Award: Tabatha H. Taylor
- Elected Official of the Year: Mayor Joel Robideaux
- Public Servant of the Year: Gina Rossi



The 2018 Inclusive Art Show Contest

Over 60 individuals participated in the 2018 Inclusive Art Contest. To bring greater awareness of the importance of inclusion in today's society, the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs accepted entries that illustrated or described ideas related to this year's theme: "Working Together." A ceremony took place on November 28, 2018 in recognition of the Inclusive Art Contest participants. Patrice Parks was selected as the "Lynette Fontenot Excellence in Inclusion Award" recipient (named after the GACDA chairperson) for the best overall entry. Participants were encouraged to use art as a means to share their vision, experiences, and talents to demonstrate this year's theme of inclusion. Medals and special recognition from Gov. Edwards were presented to those who earned first place, second place, third place, and honorable mention. Other individuals received recognition at the ceremony. GACDA Chairperson Lynette Fontenot was the keynote speaker. This event was also televised statewide.



2018 Inclusive Art Show Contest Award Recipients

K-5th Grade Division

Hayden Badon- First Place
Hannah Chatman- Second Place
Leah Robertson- Third Place
Alasia Spurling- Honorable
Mention

6th-8th Grade Division

Kailib Hoang- First Place
Emily Grimmatt- Second
Place

9th-12th Grade Division

Twyla Henderson- First Place
Dustin Kinney- Second Place
Abbey Youngblood- Third
Place
Hailey Enamorado- Third Place
Jacqueline Difulco- Honorable
Mention

Adult Division

Patrice Parks- First Place
Bonnie Dempster- Second Place
Jason Copes- Third Place
Logan Bishop- Honorable Mention

The Lynette Fontenot Excellence in Inclusion Award

Patrice Parks





**Governor's Advisory Council on Disability Affairs
(GACDA)
Annual Report**

Governor's Advisory Council on Disability Affairs

The Governor's Advisory Council on Disability Affairs (GACDA) was established by Governor John Bel Edwards through Executive Order NO. JBE 2016-10 on April 7, 2016 to monitor state compliance with the Americans with Disability Act and to advise the governor on the needs of individuals with disabilities in Louisiana. GACDA is also charged with assisting the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs with the resolution of state disability issues and provide education, communication, and networking services concerning disability issues and needs for all Louisiana citizens. GACDA is composed of 31 members appointed by Governor Edwards. Support staff, facilities, and resources for GACDA are provided by the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs within the Governor's Office of Programs and Planning.



GACDA is required to submit an annual report to the Governor pursuant to Executive Order NO. JBE-2016-10. This report highlights the significant activities undertaken by GACDA in addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities in the state of Louisiana. In order to fulfill this requirement, the GACDA Annual Report is included in this section of the GODA report.

This annual report provides an overview of the important achievements of GACDA. The council carries out its responsibilities through its various standing committees. These committees are comprised of individuals representing the public, not-for-profit, and self advocate sectors who provide invaluable contributions of time, expertise, and unwavering commitment to articulate the needs of individuals with disabilities.

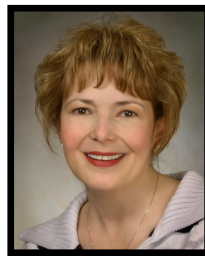
Governor's Advisory Council on Disability Affairs Members



Lynette Fontenot
GACDA Chairperson



Laura Brackin, Ph.D.
Representative of
Community
Providers
Association



Donna Breaux
Member at Large



Ashley McReynolds
Member at Large



Sharon Buchert
Representative of
Governor's Office of
Elderly Affairs



Gerald Boudreaux
Representative
Member of the
Louisiana State
Senate



Katie Corkern
Representative of
Families Helping
Families



Pam Darby
Member at Large



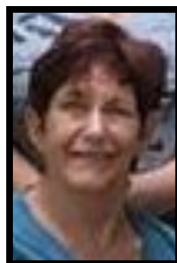
Amy Dawson
Representative
Member of the
Governor's Office of
Emergency
Preparedness



Ashley Jefferson
Representative
Member of the
Office of Behavioral
Health



Gale Dean
Representative
Member of the
Statewide
Independent Living
Council



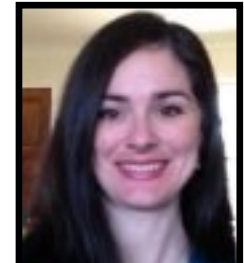
Sharon Hennessey
Representative
Member of People
First Louisiana



Joshua Hollins
Representative of the
Department of
Transportation and
Development



Jamie Wong
Representative of the
Louisiana Department
of Education



Jamie Karam
Representative
Member of LATAN



Steve Kaufman
Representative
Member of the
Advocacy Center



Christopher Kirby
Representative of the
Department of
Children and Family
Services



Linda Kocher
Member at Large



Tara Leblanc
Representative of
Office of Aging and
Adult Services



Cynthia Obier
Representative of the
State Fire Marshal
Public Safety



Lauren Mayfield
Representative of
the Louisiana
Association of Special
Education
Administrators



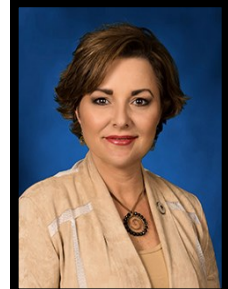
Kelly Monroe
Representative of the
Arc of Louisiana



Libby Murphy
Representative of the
Louisiana
Rehabilitation Council



Paula Rodriguez
Representative of the
Deaf Grassroots
Movement



Malinda White
Representative of the
Louisiana House of
Representatives



Linda Theriot
Representative of the
Department of Veteran
Affairs



Julie Foster-Hagan
Representative of the
Office of Citizens with
Developmental
Disabilities



Sandee Winchell
Representative of the
Louisiana
Developmental
Disabilities Council

Employment Subcommittee

Members:

Libby Murphy	Jamie Wong
Dr. Laura Brackin	Linda Theriot
Dr. Laureen Mayfield	Sandee Winchell
Linda Kocher	Sen. Gerald Boudreaux
Donna Breaux	Chris Kirby
Pam Darby	Julie F. Hagan
Yakima Black	Kelly Monroe
Roszella Viltz	Mary Breaud
Melissa Bayham	

Mission And Areas of Responsibility

This committee provides recommendations to identify problems and concerns with issues of employment, while promoting and understanding employment needs and potential of individuals with disabilities. The Employment Committee monitors legislation relative to equal opportunity and access for employment.

Committee Accomplishments

In 2018 the Employment Committee accomplished the following:

- Participated in the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs Conference.
- Provided recommendations that GACDA supports DCFS requests for fully federally funded positions to assist with disability determination.



Accessibility Subcommittee

<u>Members:</u>	Steve Kaufman (Chairperson)	Amy Dawson
	Jamie Karam	Lynette Fontenot
	Ashley Jefferson	Katie Corkern
	Sharon Hennessey	Michelle Guillory
	Tara Leblanc	Paula Rodriguez
	Cynthia Obier	Linda Theriot

Mission And Areas of Responsibility

This committee meets quarterly and provides recommendations to identify the problems and concerns with issues of accessibility for Louisiana citizens with disabilities. The Accessibility Committee provides assistance to ensure that communications, emergency services, public services, and public entities are accessible for people with disabilities.

Committee Accomplishments

In 2018, The Accessibility Committee accomplished the following:

- Recommended that GACDA ask the Governor to write a letter to Sen. Cassidy and Sen. Kennedy in opposition to HR 620.
- A motion to request the governor's communications department to include ASL interpreters in emergency situations and to assist with local media during such broadcasting.



Education Subcommittee

Members: Laureen Mayfield (Chairperson) Libby Murphy
Jamie Wong Ashley Jefferson
Paula Rodriguez Sandee Winchell
Katie Corkern Yakima Black
Sen. Gerald Boudreaux Lynette Fontenot
Rep. Malinda White
Mary Breaud

Mission And Areas of Responsibility

This committee provides recommendations to identify problems and concerns with issues of education on behalf of individuals with disabilities.

Committee Accomplishments

In 2018. The Education Committee accomplished the following:

- Recommended that the Louisiana Department of Education provide data relative to non-alternate assessment students who are enrolled in non-credit high school courses and seeking a high school diploma.
- To ask the Governor to support any legislation that will allow cameras and microphones in any self-contained special education class rooms.
- To ask the Governor to support continued discussions and efforts to monitor LRE in Louisiana's public schools.
- Wrote a letter urging LDOE and BESE to delay their Louisiana ESSA Plan submission.



Transportation Subcommittee

<u>Members:</u>	Jamie Karam (Chairperson)	Linda Kocher
	Amy Dawson	Chris Kirby
	Donna Breaux	Kelly Monroe
	Michelle Guillory	Dr. Laura Brackin
	Steve Kaufman	Lynette Fontenot
	Roszella Viltz	Sharon Hennessey
	Tara Leblanc	Linda Theriot
	Cynthia Obier	Pam Darby
	Joshua Hollins	John Schweitzer*
	James Sprinkle*	Tina Anthlone*
	Jamie Ainsworth*	Andrew Baer*

Mission And Areas of Responsibility

This committee shall identify the needs, concerns, and availability of accessible transportation for individuals with disabilities in Louisiana. This committee is charged with making recommendations to the Governor and appropriate agencies relative to accessible transportation.

Committee Accomplishments

In 2018, The Transportation Committee accomplished the following:

- Created and implemented a statewide transportation survey to determine the transportation needs of people with disabilities in Louisiana.
- Voted to support HB 457 and HB 474 during the 2019 Legislative Session.
- Planned a meeting with Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) to go over policies and preparedness during emergency and disaster situations for individuals with disabilities.





**Statewide Interagency Coalition Council
(SICC)**

State Interagency Coordinating Council

The State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) for EarlySteps is an independent board that advises EarlySteps. A state that desires to receive financial assistance under Part C of IDEA must establish a State Interagency Coordinating Council. In drafting the original legislation, Congress recognized the need for a group outside of the Lead Agency to “advise and assist” in the development of this comprehensive system of coordinated early intervention services. The Council must be appointed by the Governor and the appointment of membership must reasonably represent the population of the state.

The SICC advises and assists in the performance of its responsibilities, particularly in regard to:

- The identification of the sources of fiscal and other support for early intervention services;
- The assignment of financial responsibility to the appropriate agency;
- The transition of toddlers with disabilities to preschool and other appropriate services;
- The provision of appropriate services for children from birth through age five;
- The promotion of interagency agreements;
- The SICC also advises and assists the Lead Agency in the preparation of applications, the transition of infants and toddlers to preschool or other appropriate services at age three, and the preparation and submission of an annual report to the Governor and to appropriate federal authorities on the status of EarlySteps.



SICC Mission

To work in collaboration with the Louisiana Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities, in an advisory capacity, to design and oversee the implementation of a family-centered, community-based, comprehensive, interagency service delivery system for infants and toddlers (birth to two) who are eligible for Part C services, and their families. This system will be monitored and evaluated to ensure that families are supported and that the potential of each child is maximized.

State Interagency Coordinating Council Members



Sam Beech
Chairperson (1/2017- 5/2018)



Shanida Mathieu
Vice-Chairperson 1/2017-7/2018
Chairperson 7/2018 - present



Bambi Polotzola
Secretary



Kahree Wahid
Parliamentarian



Nina Seneca
Parent-at-large



Melanie Washington
State Interagency Coordinating Council
Director



Brenda B. Sharp
OCDD - EarlySteps
Representative



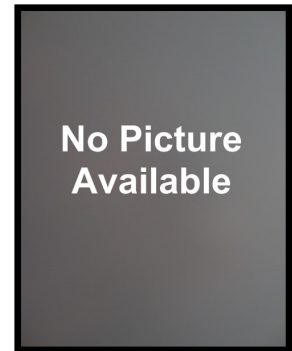
Tracy Barker
**Louisiana Medicaid
Representative**



Mike Billings
Parent Member



Rebecca DeLaSalle
Insurance Representative



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Kaye Eichler
Preschool Services



Marc Garnier
Member-at-large



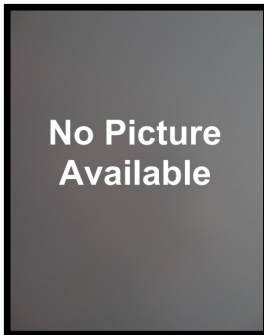
Antiqua Hunter
Department of Education



Soundra T. Johnson
Member-at-large



Colleen Klein-Ezell
Personnel Preparation

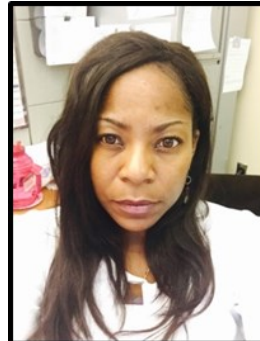


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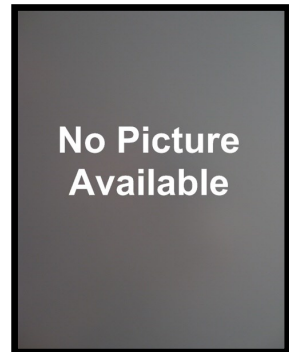
Danita Leblanc
**Behavioral Health
Representative**



Angelá G. Lorio
Parent Member



Charmaine Jarvis Magee
**DCFS – Foster Care
Representative**

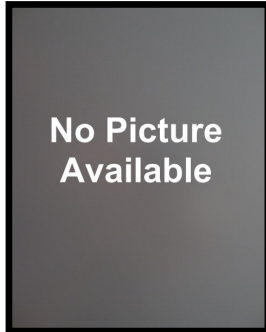


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Joy Pennington
Private Provider



Ann Phillips
Private Provider



Dionka Pierce
Office of Public Health



Michelle Roberie
Parent Member



Patricia H. Smith
Louisiana Legislature Representative



Libbie Sonnier-Netto
Member-at-large



Sandee Winchell
LDH-Developmental Disabilities Council



Allison Young
Member-at-large

SICC Committees

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee provides leadership for the SICC and Lead Agency. The duties include overseeing the activities of the Executive Director, appointing other committee members, appointing task forces as needed, planning SICC quarterly meeting agendas, and overseeing the business of the SICC, handling special requests/concerns as related to EarlySteps, and certifying the Annual Performance Report.

Sam Beech
Shanida Mathieu
Bambi Polotzola
Kahree Wahid
Nina Seneca
Michelle Renee
Tracy Barker
Mary Hockless

SICC Standing Committees

The SICC has standing committees to address the needs of the council as determined by the SICC. The role of the council committees is to provide advice and assistance to the Council regarding the development and implementation of Louisiana's Early Intervention System by making recommendations that are endorsed and approved by the Council and submitted to the Lead Agency for their consideration. The committees were re-formed in 2017 to address the current needs of the EarlySteps State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP). The committees meet quarterly.

Family Assessment Committee

This committee was formulated to establish the process that identifies and supports family concerns, priorities, and resources needed to address their child's development resulting in functional Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) outcomes.

Mary Hockless (co-chair)
Monica Stampley (co-chair)

Valarie LaDay
Joyce Ridgeway
Helen Monic
Lisa Pierron
Ariana Alexander
Terri Coombs
Tomorrow Fondal
Tracy Crump
Kelli Morgan
Chardell Young
Kelli Kent
Nina Seneca
Santee Winchell
Kahree Wahid
Bambi Polotzola

Team-Based Practice Supports

This committee was formulated to develop and implement a team-based approach where early interventionists and families collaborate with each other to address the family CPRs.

Tim Butler (Chair)

Steve Ivey
China Guillory
Kelly McGehee
Chrissy Kraemer
Ashley Casteel
Holly Bell
Anthony Stafford
Jen Walle
Joanna Cottrell
Tracy Barker
Ann Phillips

Service Delivery Supports Family Priorities

Service Delivery supports Family Priorities such that early interventionists address IFSP outcomes using intervention strategies where both the child and family are actively engaged and focused on familiar, everyday routines and activities.

Marc Garnier (co-chair)

Shanida Mathieu (co-chair)

April Hearron
Monica Dowden
Penny Thibodaux
Tedra Landreaux
Rebecca Walker
Annette Fruge'
Dianne Pitts
Torrie Keller
Nicole Meyers
Sonya Heisser
Valencia Allen
Donna Talley

Melanie Washington named Executive Director of SICC for Early Steps

At the start of the New Year, January 25th, The Governor's Office of Disability Affairs welcomed Melanie Washington as the new Executive Director of the State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) for Early Steps. Melanie received her Master of Social Work degree in from Louisiana State University in 2005 and is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker – Board Approved Clinical Supervisor (LCSW-BACS) in the state of Louisiana. She received her Bachelor of Arts Degree from Southern University in 2001. After completing the Master's program, Melanie spent 3 years working as a counselor with under-resourced students at LSU's Student Support Services program. She then spent the next 6.5 years working as a Mental Health Counselor at Southern University's Counseling Center before returning to LSU in December 2014 as Program Director of a violence prevention program, YEP Village, for African American males. YEP Village was a three year program that ended late 2017.

In addition to this, Melanie is also an adjunct instructor at Southern University in their undergraduate Social Work program. Currently, Melanie is completing a doctoral program at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette (ULL). We are excited to have Melanie Washington join our team as a valuable member of the Governor's Office.



EarlySteps is a federal program that provides a comprehensive system of coordinated early intervention supports and services to families of infants and toddlers with disabilities. The requirements for the program are outlined in the legislation of Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, otherwise known as IDEA. Early Steps is an interagency effort administered through the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) in conjunction with LA-SICC.

EarlySteps provides services to families with infants and toddlers aged birth to three years (36 months) who have a medical condition likely to result in a developmental delay, or who have developmental delays. Children with delays in cognitive, motor, vision, hearing, communication, social-emotional or adaptive development may be eligible for services. EarlySteps services are designed to improve the family's capacity to enhance their child's development. These services are provided in the child's natural environment, such as the child's home, child care or any other community setting typical for children aged birth to 3 years (36 months).

Experience has shown that families with young children with special needs frequently require a range of services which cannot be provided entirely by a single agency. Intervening with coordinated health, social, and educational services during the first three years of life increases developmental and educational gains for the child, improves family function, and reduces the costs of special care later in life. For more EarlySteps information, go to: <http://www.ldh.la.gov/index.cfm/page/139>

EarlySteps Regional Offices

Nine regional coordinators are responsible for training, technical assistance, provider and referral source outreach, providing leadership at the regional level to support the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), enrollment, and handling problems and complaints, etc. Regional coordinators are housed in LDH Human Services District/Authority offices, OCDD regional resource center offices, or in other state agency offices.

Each Region within the state has an Interagency Coordinating Council (RICC). The regional coordinators are responsible for coordinating the RICC activities and meetings with regional providers, families, and other stakeholders. The RICC's are a major communication source at the local/regional level for EarlySteps information and early childhood activities in general. Parents, guardians, caregivers, providers, stakeholders, and all interested parties are encouraged to attend RICC meetings to stay current with the latest information and provide valuable feedback.

Louisiana State Interagency Coordinating Council 2018 Recommendations

Date: October 11, 2018

To: Louisiana Department of Health

From: State Interagency Coordinating Council for Early Steps

Title

State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) Recommendations to the Louisiana Department of Health, October 11, 2018.

Recommendation

The SICC recommended that a letter be sent to the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) Assistant Secretary, Julie Foster Hagan, and a copies to Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) Deputy Secretary Mark Thomas and Secretary Rebekah Gee, to request that Family Cost Participation for EarlySteps families be eliminated without changing eligibility criteria. A follow-up meeting with Dr. Gee will also be requested to discuss the issue and explain the reason for the request.

The recommendation was approved by the SICC and the actions went forth to LDH. The Governor's Advisory Council on Disability Affairs (GACDA) and the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council (LADDC) joined the SICC in this recommendation.



**Statewide Independent Living Council
(SILC)**

Statewide Independent Living Council

The Louisiana Statewide Independent Living Council is a Governor appointed council established to develop and monitor the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL). This responsibility is held jointly with the Centers for Independent Living (CILs). Mandated under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended in 1992, the governing body of the LASILC is composed of twenty-two (22) individuals, seventeen voting members appointed by the Governor of Louisiana based on recommendations provided by the Council after a nominations and review process, and five ex-officio, non-voting members representing various state agencies which are also appointed by the Governor. A majority of the Council members are individuals with disabilities who are not employed by any state agency or a Center for Independent Living. Funding for the LASILC is federal from the Administration of Community Living (ACL) provided by Title I and Title VII, Section 705 of the Rehabilitation Act. LRS is a pass-through entity, applying for and distributing the funds. All policies governing the activities and operations of the LASILC are made by the Council.



VISION STATEMENT: “The Louisiana Statewide Independent Living Council envisions a fully inclusive Louisiana; where all of its citizens, including those with disabilities, have the resources and opportunities to live, work and thrive in their integrated communities.”

MISSION STATEMENT: “The mission of Louisiana’s Independent Living program(s) is to maximize the leadership, empowerment, independence, and productivity of individuals with disabilities, facilitating integration and full inclusion of individuals with disabilities into the mainstream of American society. Louisiana’s IL Partners promote a philosophy of Independent Living, including: consumer control, peer support, self-help, self-determination, equal access, and individual and system advocacy.”

PURPOSE STATEMENT: “The purpose of the Council is to promote a philosophy of independent living, including a philosophy of consumer control, peer support, self-help, self-determination, equal access, and individual and system advocacy.

Statewide Independent Living Council Members



Roszella Vitz
Chairperson



Steven Nguyen
Vice Chairperson



Jamie Duplechine
Secretary



Jay Cochran
Treasurer



Erick Taylor
Member at Large



Jamie Ainsworth



Kandy Baker



Keiara Beverly



Rashad Bristo



Darvin Broussard



Danny Cottonham



Jill Egle



Rocky Fueslier



Sharron Geddes



Mitch Granger



Anita Gray



Michelle Guillory



Antoinette Harrell



Kris Hebert



Sharron Hennessey



Rosemary Morales



Bambi Polotzola

SILC Activities in 2018

In 2018, the members of SILC consistently participated in various initiatives that promoted a philosophy of independent living and the full inclusion of individuals with disabilities into the mainstream of American society.

In July 2018, SILC received a budget increase from \$110,993 to \$120,993. In addition, the Administration for Community Living (ACL) announced an increase of \$26,694 to Louisiana's award under Subpart B of the Rehabilitation Act.

In October 2018, the following members were formally appointed by Governor John Bel Edwards to the SILC:

Jamie Ainsworth, Baton Rouge,
Daryn Broussard, Shreveport
Danny K. Cottonham, Lafayette
Jill Egle, New Orleans
Michelle Guillory, Baton Rouge
Kristopher Hebert, Lafayette
Sharron Hennessy, Baton Rouge

REV UP Campaign for Disability Voter Registration



The [Statewide independent Living Council](#) (SILC) promoted the REV UP Campaign at various events across the state. The REV UP Campaign is a national initiative implemented to increase the political participation of the disability community. REV UP stands for: Register Educate Vote and Use your Power. SILC used the REV UP Campaign as a platform to discuss: eliminating barriers to voting, promoting accessibility of voting technology and polling places, and promoting voter turnout of individuals with disabilities in future elections. In addition to promoting the REV UP Campaign, SILC educated interested parties about the Centers for Independent Living located throughout the state. CILS are consumer-controlled, community-based, cross-disability, non-residential, private, non-profit agencies that are designed and operated within a local community by individuals with disabilities and provide an array of independent living services.

REV UP Campaign for Disability Voter Registration



The [Statewide independent Living Council](#) participated in the [Walkability, Roll-ability, Possibility: Integrating Accessibility into Your Walking Audits](#), a New Orleans event which took place on September the 17, 2018. This event was developed to create awareness and educate others on the importance of universal design in public places for increased inclusion of people with disabilities. Attendees participated in an interactive walking and rolling audit, identifying key features of accessibility, making recommendations, and learning firsthand of the structural and architectural barriers that can be cumbersome for individuals with disabilities. This event was also created to encourage partnerships within the disability community to improve access and inform and educate all community leaders, elected officials, city planners, stakeholders, etc. about research, trends, and best practices in inclusive design.

REV UP Campaign for Disability Voter Registration



The Governor's Office of Women's Policy, in partnership with the Louisiana Statewide Policy and the Louisiana State Police, hosted a statewide event to honor the memory of victims of Domestic Violence (DV) as well as the courageous survivors impacted by DV and living with disabilities. On October 11, the Domestic Violence Prevention Commission acknowledged Domestic Violence Awareness Month and celebrated those who have survived tragic circumstances.

Statewide Independent Living Council Inclusion Job & Resource Fair



In recognition of Disability Employment Awareness Month, the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) hosted its Inclusion Job and Resource Fair on October 30, 2018 at the Cortana Mall in Baton Rouge, LA. More than 40 vendors participated in this event to provide resources and employment opportunities to individuals with and without disabilities. More than 200 job seekers participated in the SILC Job and Resource Fair. This event was created in partnership with Healthy Blue, an initiative of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana to celebrate and create awareness of the importance of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). Promotions/Media: <http://www.wafb.com/video/2018/10/30/community-inclusion-job-resource-fair/>

Governor John Bel Edwards and the Statewide Independent Living Council Creates Public Service Announcement



Governor John Bel Edwards and the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) released a Public Service Announcement (PSA) to bring awareness to the programs and initiatives offered to individuals with disabilities in Louisiana. The PSA which features a message from Governor Edwards and members of the SILC can be seen [here](#) with closed captioning.



**State As A Model Employer Task Force
(SAME)**

Employment Initiatives

The Governor's Office of Disability Affairs hosted workgroups, roundtables, and other events in collaboration with diverse and varied stakeholders about Employment First, which is an initiative of stakeholders designed to address barriers to employment and improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities. Due to those efforts, in collaboration with diverse and varied stakeholders, Louisiana was selected to receive Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) as a Vision Quest (VQ) State for the 2018 fiscal year under the [United States Department of Labor's, Office of Disability Employment Policy \(ODEP\) Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program \(EFSLMP\)](#). This technical assistance has furthered the efforts to increase competitive, integrated employment outcomes for all individuals with disabilities.

In March 2018, Louisiana set a goal to serve as a "model employer for business by a commitment to improved hiring, recruitment, and retention of people with disabilities" through an [Executive Order](#) signed by Governor John Bel Edwards. The convening of a [State As a Model Employer Task Force](#) and the Task Force report were the first steps in launching this important initiative which will enhance the diversity of the public workforce, lead the business community, and highlight the State's position as a leader in the protection of civil rights for individuals living with disabilities. The Task Force report includes a series of recommendations and policies which will support the State in achieving the goals of the Executive Order and encourage State agencies as they seek to expand the diversity of their workforce. The Task Force report is available [here](#).



EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBER 18-08

STATE AS MODEL EMPLOYER TASK FORCE

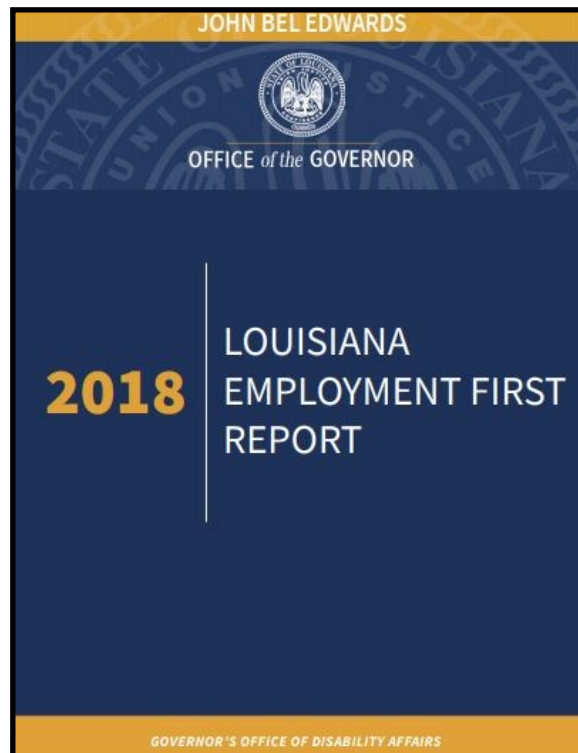
The SAME Task Force was delegated responsibility to: develop policies, strategies, and services designed to achieve the employment targets established in the Order; establish a five-year plan with annual goals that will enable the state workforce to reach parity with the percentage of working age people with disabilities in Louisiana; and provide guidance and other support to agencies and institutions of higher education for recruitment, retention, accommodations, and accessibility for persons with disabilities. Each state agency was required to designate a State as Model Employer point of contact and delegated responsibility to develop an individual agency plan to promote hiring, recruitment, and retention.

Employment Initiatives Continued

Governor John Bel Edwards and the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs Coordinator April Dunn promote Louisiana's state government initiative to serve as a model employer for business through improved hiring, recruitment, and retention of people with disabilities in this [video](#). The [State As a Model Employer Task Force Report](#) also includes recommendations and policies that will support the State in expanding the diversity of its workforce.



The Employment First Vision Quest Team, coordinated by the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs with assistance from a federal grant, developed the Employment Resource Guide which can be found at www.laworks.net. This guide is useful for people with disabilities, their families, and the professionals who support them in exploring employment and career possibilities. It includes six sections that summarize resources to meet a variety of employment related questions and concerns.



State As a Model Employer (SAME) Task Force



Kaffie Arvie
Louisiana
Workforce
Commission



Jeff Arseneaux
Advocate



Taryn Branson
Department of
Children and Family
Services



Joan Haase
Louisiana State
Civil Service



Julie Foster Hagan
Office for Citizens with
Developmental
Disabilities



Susan Killam
Louisiana State
University Human
Development Center



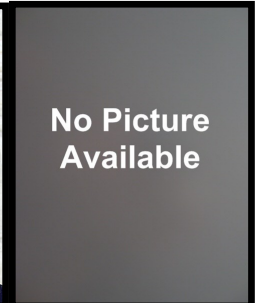
Tanisha Matthews
Louisiana Department
of Corrections



Bambi Polotzola
Governor's Office of
Disability Affairs



Cindy Rives
Louisiana
Department of
Health



Cheryl Schilling
Division of
Administration



Quintin Taylor
Louisiana Community
and Technical College
System



Lisa Vosper
Louisiana Board of
Regents



Nancy Watkins
Louisiana Department
of Culture, Recreation,
and Tourism



Ken York
Louisiana
Rehabilitation
Services



Aneatra Boykin
(previously Elena Branzaru)
Department of
Transportation and
Development

State As a Model Employer (SAME) Agency Designees



Holly Anderson
Coastal Protection and
Restoration Authority



Brenda Bohrer
Louisiana
Rehabilitation
Services



Doug Bordelon
Louisiana Department
of Environmental
Quality



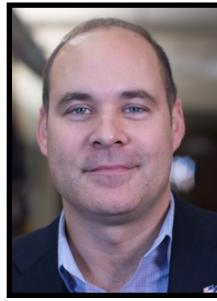
Brandi Conway
Louisiana Department
of Revenue



Gena Doucet
Louisiana Community
and Technical College
System



Stacie Evans
Louisiana Department
of Insurance



Dustin Guy
Louisiana
Department of
Veteran Affairs



Shelly Johnson
Department of
Children and Family
Services



Valerie Joseph
Louisiana State
Employees Retirement
System



Kaya Lambert
Louisiana State Civil
Service



Beverly James
Governor's Office of
Homeland Security
and Emergency
Preparedness



Marcella Jones
Louisiana Department
of Health



Dawn Monk
Louisiana
Department of
Economic
Development



Susan Pellegrin
Department of
Transportation and
Development



COMMUNITY PROVIDER ASSOCIATION

The **Community Provider Association** is a member-driven association dedicated to providing leadership and support to agencies serving individuals with disabilities through community-based programs. <http://www.communityprovider.org/>



Louisiana Developmental
Disabilities Council

The **Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council** advocates for a system of services and supports in Louisiana which enable individuals with developmental disabilities to exercise self-determination, be independent, productive and integrated and included in all facets of community life. The Council's mission is to lead and promote advocacy, capacity building, and systemic change to improve the quality of life for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.



Families Helping Families is a statewide network of ten family-directed and family-staffed regional resource centers which provide information on all types of services, goods, technologies, and activities that improve the quality of life in the community; help individuals understand their rights and how to advocate for themselves; and lend support from someone "who has been there."

<http://www.laddc.org//Initiatives.cfm?aid=6&id=9>



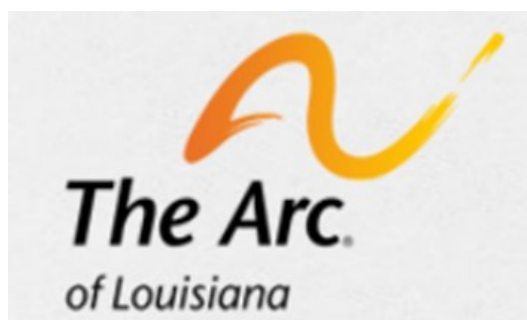
LaCAN advocates for policies and systems that support inclusion everywhere people learn, work, live, and play. LaCAN advocates for service systems that support children and adults with disabilities to live in their own homes and be fully-included and participating members of their local schools and communities. www.lacanadvocates.org

GACDA Community Partners

Governor's Office of Disability Affairs and GACDA collaborates with various community partners in the effort to connect individuals with disabilities with the appropriate and necessary information and resources. Establishing relationships with other groups enables GACDA to build a diverse network of individuals to better serve the disability community.



The **Advocacy Center of Louisiana** (AC) protects, empowers, and advocates for the human and legal rights of people with disabilities and seniors living in Louisiana, in order that they may live an integrated life in the community, free from abuse, neglect and exploitation. The AC is the protection and advocacy (P&A) system for Louisiana. There is no charge for AC services. AC provides 6 types of assistance: Information & Referral, Legal Assistance, Investigations of Abuse and Neglect, Outreach & Training, Systems Advocacy, Legislative Information and Education.



The **Arc of Louisiana** advocates with and for all people with intellectual and related developmental disabilities and their families so that they shall live to their fullest potential.



People First of Louisiana is a self-advocacy group run by people with disabilities, for people with disabilities, where people learn to speak up for themselves about decisions they make. Members can connect with others in their community, across the nation, and around the world and learn about their rights and responsibilities as citizens. <http://www.peoplefirstla.org>

GACDA State Agency Partners



AGING & ADULT SERVICES BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

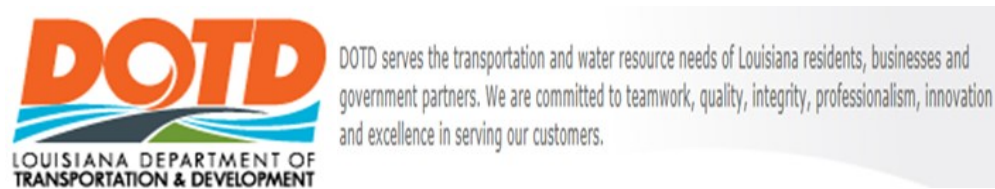


<http://www.louisianabelieves.com/>



Our Vision

- Working to keep children safe
- Helping individuals and families become self-sufficient
- Providing safe refuges during disasters



LOUISIANA office of state
FIRE MARSHAL
PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES

protecting life and property from
the hazards of **fire** or **explosion**



<http://sfm.dps.louisiana.gov/>

The **Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness** is responsible for coordinating the State's efforts throughout the emergency management cycle to prepare for, prevent where possible, respond to, recover from, and mitigate against to lessen the effects of man-made or natural disasters that threaten our State. The State, through GOHSEP, has a significant responsibility to protect communities, citizens, property, and assets in the event of an emergency or disaster. GOHSEP does that by working with partners from State and Federal agencies; Parish, Tribal and local governments; nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); private nonprofits (PNPs) and other private-sector businesses to achieve its Mission and Vision.

Children's Cabinet

The **Children's Cabinet** serves as the governing body for the State of Louisiana and is responsible for coordinating funding and programmatic services at the state and local level, related to children and their families. It consists of the cabinet secretary of each state department and is chaired by the executive director of the Children's Cabinet, who is appointed by the governor. The mission is to achieve the most effective and efficient use of monetary, human, and organizational resources to lift children and their families out of poverty. The Children's Cabinet Advisory Board provides information and recommendations from the perspective of advocacy groups, service providers and parents on policies and programs relating to Louisiana children.

Children's Cabinet Advisory Board Strategic Goals:

- Advise and assist the Children's Cabinet
- Coordinate agency resources and provide linkages among agencies that serve children and families
- Develop policy, program and budget recommendations to address child and family issues



Louisiana's early intervention system

<http://www.gov.la.gov/page/childrens-cabinet>

The **Louisiana Statewide Interagency Coordinating Council** (LA-SICC) works in collaboration with the Louisiana Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities, in an advisory capacity, to design and oversee the implementation of a family-centered, community-based, comprehensive, interagency system for infants and toddlers (birth through two years of age) who are eligible for Early Steps and their families. Our goal is to advise and assist the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), as the Lead Agency, in the monitoring and evaluation of this system to ensure that families are supported and the potential of each child is maximized.

Women's Policy and Research Commission

The **Louisiana Women's Policy and Research Commission** exists to:

- Research and collect facts and statistics about the wellbeing of women.
- Make special studies of conditions pertaining to the employment, health, safety and financial status of women in the state of Louisiana.

Louisiana.gov > LDH > Office of the Secretary

Louisiana Commission for the Deaf

The **Louisiana Commission for the Deaf** provides accessibility services for persons who are Deaf, deaf-blind, or have hearing loss or speech impairment to gain equal access to any public or private service. Accessibility services include, but are not limited to: Interpreting, Document Interpretation, Telecommunication Interpretation, Telecommunications and general accessibility equipment, Hearing Aids, Information and referral, Advocacy, Consumer Training, and Public Service Announcements. Each year over 20,000 residents benefit directly from services contracted for by the Louisiana Commission for the Deaf (LCD). LCD has eight (8) community-based Regional Service Centers who ensure accessibility is provided to all consumers.

[Workforce Development > Louisiana Rehabilitation Services](#)

Louisiana Rehabilitation Council (LRC)

The **Louisiana Rehabilitation Council** listens to the concerns of those with disability issues, reviews, analyzes and evaluates the state rehabilitation program, collaborates with other state agencies, organizations, and consumer groups. The LRC consults with and advises LRS on the performance of its responsibilities under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, particularly in the areas related to eligibility, extent, and scope of services provided.

http://www.laworks.net/workforcedev/lrs/lrs_lrc.asp

The mission of Louisiana's Independent Living program(s) is to maximize the leadership, empowerment, independence, and productivity of individuals with disabilities, facilitating integration and full inclusion of individuals with disabilities into the mainstream of American society. Louisiana's Independent Living Partners promote a philosophy of Independent Living, including: consumer control, peer support, self help, self-determination, equal access, and individual and system advocacy.