Bambi Polotzola
Executive Director
Governor’s Office of Disability Affairs

Jamar Lanier Ennis
Assistant Director
Governor’s Office of Disability Affairs

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 2019

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 (GODA) hosted its Annual Conference on July 26, 2019 at the Claiborne Building in Baton Rouge, LA. The Conference was held on the 29th Anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. Governor John Bel Edwards provided a videoed welcome to participants in attendance. The Conference was attended by more than 350 people.

The GODA Conference featured a Keynote Presentation from Kristi Avalos, the founder and CEO of Accessology and national expert in accessibility, the ADA, and national disability related issues. The GODA Conference featured sessions on education, employment, healthcare, housing, transportation, and emergency preparedness.

To view the recap video of the GODA Conference please click here.
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 The Governor’s Advisory Council on Disability Affairs (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 2019 newsletters. These archived newsletters can be found at: http://gov.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/newsroom/category/13
Governor’s Office of Disability Affairs Programs and Events

The 2019 GOLD Awards

The Governor’s Office hosted the Governor’s Outstanding Leadership in Disabilities (GOLD) Awards on December 10, 2019 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**: Sondra Mullen
- **Direct Support Professional of the Year**: William Jackson
- **Service Provider of the Year**: Edda Curry
- **Employer of the Year**: Lenny Martinsen
- **Volunteer of the Year**: Pittre Walker
- **Family of the Year**: The Brooks Family
- **Service Animal of the Year**: Annie Frannie Corkern
- **Youth of the Year**: William Romero
- **Patsy Barrett Memorial Award**: Ali Hebert
- **Ken Vince Memorial Award**: Jeff Arseneaux
- **Distinguished Merit Award**: Tom Barnes
- **Elected Official of the Year**: Senator Dan Claitor
- **Public Servant of the Year**: Dr. Jay Sevin
The 2019 Inclusive Art Show Contest

Over 40 individuals participated in the 2019 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: “Living, Learning, and Loving Together.” A ceremony took place on December 10, 2019 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. To view the recap of the Inclusive Art Show Contest Ceremony please click here.

2019 Inclusive Art Show Contest Award Recipients

K-5th Grade Division
Ali Nezat- First Place
Tahj Thomas- Second Place
DaMarius Richard- Third Place
Madison Williams- Honorable Mention

6th-8th Grade Division
Emily Grimmett- First Place
Grace Daigle- Second Place
Zavier Simon- Third Place
Maise Richard- Honorable Mention

9th-12th Grade Division
Blake Artigue- First Place
Aunan Hanna- Second Place
Ivy Meyers- Third Place

Adult Division
Patrice Parks- First Place
Shawane Thomas- Second Place
Bonnie Dempster- Third Place
Diana Territo- Honorable Mention
Malorie Albert- Honorable Mention
Kat Guidroz- Honorable Mention

The Lynette Fontenot Excellence in Inclusion Award
Blake Artigue
Governor’s Advisory Council on Disability Affairs  
(GACDA)  
Annual Report
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.
GACDA Legislative Report

In 2019, GACDA made the following recommendations to the Office of the Governor during the 2019 Regular Legislative Session:

- Restore rates for home and community based services for people with disabilities.
- Increase of the EPSTD Personal Care Service rate to the same as the Children Choice IFS Rate.
- Fully fund Louisiana Rehabilitation Services: approximately an additional $5.5 Million is needed to draw down the remaining $20 Million of Federal allocation.
- Support the prohibition of discrimination against potential organ transplant recipients based on disability.
- Support using all but $1 Million of the funds currently in the New Opportunities Waiver Fund to restore waiver provider and support coordination rates to 2008 levels for this fiscal year.
- Provide funding of $600,000 to expand the State Personal Assistance Services (SPAS) program to serve individuals on the waiting list.
- Discontinue family cost participation in EarlySteps for Fiscal Year 2020 without changing eligibility criteria for the program.
- Support the prohibition of discrimination against potential organ transplant recipients based on disability

In 2019, GACDA voted to support the following legislation during the 2019 Regular Legislative Session:

**House Bill 199**, which requires the Louisiana Department of Health to begin a program to provide health care services via the state’s Medicaid program to children in the TEFRA population no later than June 1, 2020, pending CMS approval

**House Bill 320** and **Senate Bill 78**, which includes Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) providers in the definition of behavioral health service provider in order to allow these providers to gain access to students during school hours upon the request of the parents.

**Senate Bill 151**, which transfers the Louisiana Special Education Center from the Special School District to LDH and renames the center the Central Louisiana Supports and Services Center.

**Senate Bill 158**, which requires each local public school superintendent and the administrative head of each charter school to establish a special education advisory council to provide advice and feedback regarding special education policies, procedures, and resources and engage in community outreach.

**House Bill 143**, also known as Evie’s Law, prohibits discrimination against potential organ transplant recipients based on disability.
Governor’s Advisory Council on Disability Affairs Members

Lynette Fontenot  
GACDA Chairperson

Laura Brackin  
Representative of Community Providers Association

Donna Breaux  
Member at Large

Ashley McReynolds  
Representative of Governor’s Office of Elderly Affairs

Gerald Boudreaux  
Representative Member of the Louisiana State Senate

Katie Corkern  
Member at Large

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

Roszella Viltz  
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  
Member at Large
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

Laureen 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

Yakima Black
Representative of Louisiana Assistive Technology Network

Mary Breaud
Representative of Higher Education

Melissa Bayham
Representative of the Louisiana Workforce Commission
Mission And Areas of Responsibility

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

Committee Accomplishments

In 2019 the Housing Committee accomplished the following:

- Participated in the Governor’s Office of Disability Affairs Conference.
- Recruited developers, public servants, and advocates to participate in GACDA Housing Committee Initiatives.
- Strengthened the relationship between the Louisiana Housing Corporation and GACDA.
- Participated in the planning of the Louisiana Housing Corporation’s Inaugural Inclusive Housing Conference.
- Led in collaborative efforts with multiple agencies and organizations to promote education and awareness of the Qualified Application Process, LAHEAP Program, and Home Weatherization Programs.
- Bolstered advocacy efforts by encouraging interested parties to participate in public forums, and by disseminating information.
Accessibility Subcommittee

Members:
Cynthia Obier (Chairperson)        Amy Dawson
Jamie Karam                             Lynette Fontenot
Ashley Jefferson                       Katie Corkern
Sharon Hennessey                      Michelle Guillory
Tara Leblanc                           Paula Rodriguez
Laureen Mayfield                      Linda Theriot
Steve Kaufman                         Yakima Black

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 2019, the Accessibility Committee accomplished the following:

- Coordinated meetings with the Division of Administration in regards to improving the accessibility of the Louisiana State Capitol.
- Advocated for the passage of HCR 80.
- Recommended that the Office of the Governor investigate the funding allocation of Act 273 from the 2017 Regular Legislative Session.
- Participated in the coordination of the 2019 GODA Conference.
Education Subcommittee

Members:
Laureen Mayfield (Chairperson)  Ashley McReynolds
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 2019 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.
- Supported legislation that will allow cameras and microphones in any self-contained special education class rooms.
- Supported legislation that creates pay raises for teachers.
- Supported legislation that transfers the Special Education Center from the Louisiana Department of Education to the Louisiana Department of Health.
- Provided recommendations to school districts in regards to the implementation of SB 158 which established the creation of Local Special Education School Districts.
- Participated in the 2019 GODA Conference.
Transportation Subcommittee

Members:
Jamie Karam (Chairperson)     Linda Kocher
Amy Dawson                    Chris Kirby
Donna Breaux                   Kelly Monroe
Michelle Guillory             Laura Brackin
Steve Kaufman                 Sharon Hennessey
Roszella Viltz                Linda Theriot
Tara Leblanc                  John Schweitzer
Cynthia Obier                 Tina Anthlone
Julie F. Hagan                Andrew Baer
James Sprinkle                Jamie Ainsworth

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 2019, the Transportation Committee accomplished the following:

- Participated in the Department of Transportation and Development’s Section 5310 and 5311 grant review process which provides transportation resources for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and individuals residing in rural parishes.
- Voted to support HCR 68 of 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.
- Advocated for a favorable transportation contract during emergency evacuations within DOTD’s ESF1 Plan.
- Presented at the 2019 GODA Conference.
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

Shanida Mathieu
Chairperson

Angelá Lorio
Vice-Chairperson

Bambi Polotzola
Secretary

Mike Billings
Parliamentarian

Michelle Roberie
Parent-at-large

Melanie Washington
State Interagency Coordinating Council Director

Brenda B. Sharp
OCDD - EarlySteps Representative
State Interagency Coordinating Council Members

Tracy Barker
Louisiana Medicaid

Rebecca DeLaSalle
Insurance Representative

No Picture Available

Leslie Doyle
Insurance Representative

Marc Garnier
Insurance Representative

Jennifer Hannon
Insurance Representative

Kathyne D. Hart
Insurance Representative

Antiqua Hunter
Insurance Representative

Soundra T. Johnson
Insurance Representative

Colleen Klein-Ezell
Insurance Representative

Ursula O. Meaux
Insurance Representative

Tawnya Moore
Insurance Representative

Joy Pennington
Insurance Representative

Ann Phillips
Insurance Representative

Fiona Ritchey
Insurance Representative

Patricia H. Smith
Insurance Representative

Sandee Winchell
Insurance Representative

Libbie Sonnier-Netto
Insurance Representative
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.

Shanida Mathieu  
Angelá Lorio  
Bambi Polotzola  
Mike Billings  
Michelle Roberie  
Tracy Barker  
Mary Hockless  
Brenda Sharp

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  
Sandee 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
Jill Broussard
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 RICCs 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.

Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Leadership Conference 2019

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) held its annual conference on July 21st through July 24th in Arlington, VA. Sunday, July 21st was a day filled with pre-conference information and engagement activities for State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) Chairs, Members, and Staff. Topics covered during the pre-conference ranged from federal content of state ICCs to strategic planning and parent leadership and engagement, to name a few. For preconference, there was SICC representation from 21 U.S. States and territories.

Louisiana State Interagency Coordinating Council 2019 Recommendations

Date:
To: Louisiana Department of Education
From: State Interagency Coordinating Council for Early Steps

Title
State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) Recommendations to the Louisiana Department of Education, February 2019.

Recommendation
The SICC recommended that a letter be sent to the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) Superintendent of Education, John White, to request that the Early Childhood Care and Education Commission consider the inclusion of infants and toddlers with disabilities and the early childhood gaps that affect this population in their efforts to enhance the quality of early childhood education in communities across the state.

The recommendation was approved by the SICC and the actions went forth to the Louisiana Department of Education.
Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)
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

Danny Cottonham
Chairperson

Rashad Bristo
Vice-Chairperson

Steven Nguyen
Member-At-Large

Antoinette Harrell
Secretary

Sharron Hennessey
Treasurer

Jessica Lewis
Executive Director
SILC Activities in 2019

In 2019, the members of SILC 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.

During the 2019 Regular Legislative Session, SILC advocated for the creation of a Commission to represent the interest of the Aging and Adult population in Louisiana, to fully fund TEFRA, the State Personal Assistance Services (SPAS) program to serve all individuals on the waiting list, and for the favorable passage of HB 199, HB 390, and HB 237.

SILC established partnerships with the Louisiana Assistive Technology Access Network (LATAN), and the Office of Aging and Adult Services by participating on their respective councils.

The SILC has devoted its advocacy efforts to improve the availability of accessible and affordable housing in Louisiana participating in the Governor’s Advisory Council on Disability Affairs’ (GACDA) Committee on Housing.

Statewide Independent Living Council Inclusion Job & Resource Fair

The Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) hosted a series of Inclusion Job and Resource Fairs in October throughout the state. October was National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). The SILC encourages all interested parties to find out more about possible career opportunities and resources available to the community by with interfacing over 40 vendors.

The job fairs took place in various locations throughout the state including Lake Charles, Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Monroe, Shreveport, Pineville, Hammond, New Orleans, Shriver, and Metairie. These job and resource fairs provided valuable information regarding employment and other important resources for individuals with disabilities and reached over 500 job seekers. This event was sponsored by the Statewide Independent Living Council and Healthy Blue.
The Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) participated in the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) conference in Washington D.C July 21st- July 26th. The members of the SILC also participated in the ADA march to Capitol Hill on July 23, 2019 to spread awareness of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The participating members of SILC joined hundreds of advocates from all across the country to participate in this important event. After the march, the members of the SILC visited the offices of some of Louisiana Senators and Representatives and spoke with their staff. The members of the SILC met with U.S. Senator Bill Cassidy to discuss concerns regarding independent living.

**SILC GALA**

The Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) hosted its first Inclusion Gala on August 10, 2019 in Lafayette, Louisiana. Humana and United Healthcare sponsored the event.

The SILC's Inclusion Gala was created to create awareness of the importance of inclusion of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of today's society, and to recognize individuals and organizations whose contributions helped the independent living movement.

The following individuals were recognized:

- SILC Distinguish Servant Award – Gale Dean
- SILC Outstanding Advocate Award- Jamie Duplechine and Sharron Hennessey
- SILC Community Service Award- Antoinette Harrell and Rashad Bristo
- SILC Memorial Recognition Award – Kris “Biscuit” Herbert and Rev. Mallery Callahan Sr.
- Outstanding SILC Executive Director- Jessica Lewis
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.

Disability Voter Registration Week in Louisiana

In conjunction with the REV UP Campaign, the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) coordinated Disability Voter Registration Week in Louisiana during the week of July 16-20, 2019.

Disability Voter Registration Week was created to support all efforts to get individuals with disabilities registered to vote, as part of a nonpartisan initiative that coordinates with national, state, and local organizations to increase political participation of the disability community.
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.

Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program

In 2019, Louisiana was selected again to receive Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) as a Vision Quest (VQ) State as well as a Core State for the 2019 fiscal year under the United States Department of Labor’s, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP) Provider Visionary Opportunities to Increase Competitive Employment (VOICE).

Louisiana received 100 hours of T/TA to support the state in achieving its goals within the area is Mental Health and Employment. Louisiana received 200 hours of T/TA to support the state in achieving its goals within the area of Provider Transformation and/or Capacity Building.

Furthermore, the Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP) of Louisiana hosted two regional capacity building sessions to further its objective of providing increased community-based, integrated employment opportunistic for individuals with disabilities.

The two regions that were selected are:

Region 3 - Assumption, Lafourche, St. Charles, St. James, St. John, St. Mary, Terrebonne

Region 4 - Acadia, Evangeline, Iberia, Lafayette, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, Vermilion.

The regions are a combination of LA Department of Health and LA Workforce Commission regions.
The Employment First Vision Quest Team, coordinated by the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs, developed the Employment Resource Guide which can be found at [www.laworks.net](http://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 Taskforce**

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.
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

Cindy Rives  
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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.

http://www.thearcla.org/

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
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/](http://www.communityprovider.org/)

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."  


**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](http://www.lacanadvocates.org)
http://www.louisianabelieves.com/

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


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.

LATAN assists individuals with disabilities to achieve enhanced quality of life and greater independence through access to Assistive Technology (AT). LATAN serves Louisiana citizens of all ages with all types of disabilities and those with limitations due to aging who need AT. AT includes items that individuals use to assist them in daily activities, such as canes, wheelchairs, communication devices, hearing aids, keyboard alternatives, learning software, and vision aids. LATAN envisions a future in Louisiana in which individuals who use AT can achieve greater independence.

The Governor’s Office of Elderly Affairs serves as a focal point for Louisiana’s senior citizens and administers a broad range of home and community based services through a network of Area Agencies on Aging. GOEA has developed an extensive network of agencies recognized as the Aging Service Network. This network consists of the 64 Parish Councils on Aging (COA), 36 Area Agencies on Aging (AAA), 139 Senior Centers, University Centers, Advocacy and Service Organizations, the Senior Corps (Foster Grandparents, Senior Companion, Retired Senior Volunteer Program), and the state Senior Employment Program (Title V).
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 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.


### 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](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.