

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

## **Meeting Minutes**

**December 19, 2017**

GACDA held a meeting on December 19, 2017, in the Thomas Jefferson Room at the Claiborne Building in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

**Present:** Mary Breaud Sharon Buchert Katie Corkern  
Pam Darby Amy Dawson Sharon Hennessey  
Ashley Jefferson Jamie Karam Steve Kauffman  
Linda Kocher Laureen Mayfield Cynthia Obier  
Paula Rodriguez Linda Theriot Mark Thomas  
Rep. Malinda White Sandee Winchell Jamie Wong  
Jessica Lewis (proxy for Gale Dean)  
April Dunn (proxy for Lynette Fontenot)

**Absent:** Sen. Gerald Boudreaux Laura Brackin Harry Brady  
Donna Breaux Ava Dejoie Lynette Fontenot  
Joshua Hollins Christopher Kirby Tara Leblanc  
Kelly Monroe Libby Murphy

**Staff:** Bambi Polotzola Jolan Jolivette

### **Call to Order and Introductions**

Bambi Polotzola called the meeting to order, and asked everyone to briefly introduce themselves. A quorum was present.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Members reviewed the minutes from the September 19, 2017 meeting for approval. Sandee Winchell motioned to approve the minutes and Rep. Malinda White seconded. There were no objections and the minutes were approved.

### **LA Department of Health Updates**

Mark Thomas provided an update for Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities. He informed members OCDD will be implementing its electronic visit verification, which is an electronic sign in used by direct support workers to verify when individuals have showed up for work according to the proposed schedule. He said that LDH believes with the implementation of electronic visit verification with home and community based waivers that Louisiana will have one of the stronger fraud prevention systems in the country. Mark shared that OCDD is moving forward with the consolidation of waivers.

He also shared that Pine Crest is the last publicly operated supports center for OCDD. Over the last several years a disturbing trend is that Pine Crest is admitting more people than discharging. OCDD's goal is to increase home and communities based services and decrease the institutionalization of individuals.

### **Legislative issues regarding services provided by LA Department of Health**

Sandee Winchell stated the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council at its October meeting adopted its legislative agenda for the 2018 session and many of the issues fall under home and community based services. The first relates to funding for 800 waiver slots that would go to the people in the most emergent and urgent needs. The second is for an enhanced rate that would just be limited to the people with these complex behavioral or medical needs. It's 2.6 million in state general funds for an enhanced rate to serve individuals with complex needs. The third is TEFRA, the Tax Equity Fiscal Responsibility Act. It would be a Medicaid state plan option that allows states to provide Medicaid coverage to children with developmental disabilities regardless of parents' income.

Jamie Karam motioned to support the three legislative issues discussed from DD Council and Laureen Mayfield seconded. There was no objection.

### **Subcommittee Reports and Discussion**

**Transportation:** Jamie Karam informed the Council that the Transportation Committee received an update from Joshua Hollins about DOTD's conference in November. Jaime Karam also stated the transportation committee has decided on goals. The first is to meet with the regional DOTD liaisons, the people who administer 5311, with regard to getting access to them during emergencies for emergency transportation. We want to raise awareness of the need for people who have disabilities or children with disabilities and need that emergency evacuation help. We want to raise awareness of the importance of accessible transportation. Our long term goal is to effect a policy changes to help DOTD automatically will know that yes they can assist in emergency situations for transportation.

**Education:** Laureen Mayfield informed the Council that Bambi presented an update on the GACDA request regarding the legislative audit for IDEA funds by LDOE. Senator Morrish, chairman of the education committee, sent a letter requesting the legislative auditor asking for this detailed audit for the past five years. The committee then addressed some proposed legislative issues. The first was the ongoing issue of SEAPs

failure to meet special rule requirements in federal regulations. This rule requires the majority of members on SEAP be either people with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities. SEAP has been out of compliance for at least five years. Most recently SEAP addressed this problem not by replacing existing members with members that meet the special rule, but by voting at that September 27th meeting to change bylaws to increase membership from 19 to 23 to add more people with disabilities. The problem with this was because the SEAP group was not properly constituted, it did not meet the special rule and it also had 20 members present instead of the 19 allowed its membership did not meet the federal requirements and because it was not properly constituted the decisions made at that meeting are not enforceable. This of course would put Louisiana at risk for losing IDEA funding which would devastate our school districts and cause untold harm to students with disabilities. A motion was then made and with one objection. A vote was taken with 9 in favor, 10 abstentions, and 1 opposed. There was then a discussion regarding the number of votes that must be in favor of a motion when abstentions are made. After discussion two people who abstained asked to change their vote to in favor and the Council approved. The final vote of record was 11 in favor, 8 abstentions, and 1 opposed.

There was a motion to recommend to the Governor to include in his legislative package to include Deaf education teachers and sign language interpreters to the list of teacher shortage positions which would allow those professionals to re-enter into the profession immediately without affecting pension. There were no objections and it was approved by the council.

Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) is a national campaign to establish procedures to promote the sharing of comprehensive information and resources and provide assessment opportunities for families for children who are Deaf, Deaf Blind, and hard of hearing. This is to make sure these children are progressing in language development early on, especially those key years before it's too late and come to kindergarten language ready. Our committee voted to recommend to the full body that GACDA support all applicable agencies in the state working together to support this. There were no objections and it was approved by the council.

**Accessibility:** Steve Kauffman informed the Council about Mr. Green, who came and talked to the accessibility committee about advocacy for project arm chair, which is to require five percent of all seating at a public facility to have arms on them. Because he says there are a number of elderly people who are disabled and pregnant woman who need the assistance of an arm on their chair in order to be able to get up out of the chair. The committee agreed unanimously to recommend to GACDA to support legislation that calls for 5% of chairs to have arms in public facilities. The GACDA council moved unanimously to support the recommendation from the accessibility

committee. Steve Kauffman also stated the committee recommended Cindy Obier as the new chair.

**Employment:** Bambi Polotzola informed the Council in regards to employment over the past two months since that they held roundtables across the state. The feedback we received is that more needs to be done to improve employment for people with disabilities. Louisiana was selected as a Vision Quest and received a grant given to the Governor's Office to get 100 hours as a state technical assistance around employment for people with disabilities. We will have a subject matter expert coming in from New York, going to work with OCDD, OBH, Medicaid, Department of Education, Workforce Commission and vocational rehab, LRS, DD Council, and the Advocacy Center. And the grant was given to the governor's office. Civil service is working with the lieutenant governor's office to have someone talk about that at all of our different state agencies inclusive for everyone. Also the governor has agreed to issue an executive order for the state as model employer. Drafting that language really allows us to work with stakeholders to get something that is really meaningful. A few of the points we need to have is data to measure how effective it is as well as working with all our partners to make sure that executive order is meaningful.

### **Accessibility and Employment Initiative**

A guest Randi Stephens stated she is a mom with two sons with autism, eight and nine years old, and wanted to plan for the future. Right now employment opportunities are weak and her children are growing up fast. She wants to make sure in the next ten years there are opportunities out there available for them. Randy Stephens stated it came through going to meetings with the DD Council and LaCAN and learning where there were deficits within our park systems and employment and understanding that maybe the two could work together. She approached the Lieutenant Governor and they started working on an initiative to bring Louisiana to the forefront for individuals with special needs. Basically it's three parts to it. The first part is sensory areas within our actual park systems itself or welcomes centers and that's going to go into the second part of it or actually the third part. The second part is playground equipment. The third part is employment. The employment is the biggest part of it, and there are so many opportunities here within our park systems and not just at the park level. Randy Stephens stated 71 jobs have already been created and more to come.

**NEXT GACDA MEETING** will be March 20, 2018

**MEETING ADJOURNED**