

Governor's Advisory Council on Disability Affairs (GACDA)

Meeting Minutes, September 19, 2017

GACDA held a meeting on September 19, 2017 in the Thomas Jefferson Room at the Claiborne Building in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Chairperson Lynette Fontenot presided.

Present: Sharon Buchert Amy Dawson Lynette Fontenot
Ashley Jefferson Jamie Karam Steve Kauffman
Christopher Kirby
Linda Kocher Shawn Fleming (proxy for Katie Corkern)
Laureen Mayfield Rozella Viltz (proxy for Gale Dean)
Cynthia Obier Mark Martin (proxy for Ava Dejoie)
Paula Rodriguez Tina Anthalone (proxy for Joshua Hollins)
Rep. Malinda White Rosemary Morales (proxy for Mark Thomas)
Sande Winchell Kristi Jo Preston (proxy for Jamie Wong)

Absent: Sen. Gerald Boudreaux Laura Brackin Harry Brady
Donna Breaux Mary Breaud Pam Darby
Sharon Hennessey Libby Murphy Linda Theriot

Staff: Bambi Polotzola Jolan Jolivette Jessica Lewis
Chris Fuqua Brian Wood April Dunn

Call to Order and Introductions

GACDA Chairperson, Lynette Fontenot, called the meeting to order, and asked everyone to briefly introduce themselves. A quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes

Lynette asked members to review the minutes for approval. Sharon Buchert motioned to approve the minutes and Rep. Malinda White seconded. There were no objections and the minutes were approved.

LA Department of Health Updates

Rosemary Morales updated the Council on changes that were recently made to all waivers to align them with the tiered waiver system. She said that all the changes would be posted on September 20 and that there would be a 30-day public comment period for waiver changes, which will then be submitted to CMS for approval.

Subcommittee Reports and Discussion

Transportation: Jamie Karam informed the Council that the Transportation Committee received a Transportation survey update from DOTD, and that updated information with refined data will be sent out to members electronically. The committee discussed some members attending the DOTD conference in November as well as the issue of people with disabilities being able to evacuate early for disasters with the aid of DOTD. The committee discussed their transportation survey as well as issues with accessibility of the survey through Survey Monkey. Short-term goals were: notice of alternative survey formats to GODA, braille copies, and an accessible tagged PDF version. ARC is also available to receive printed completed surveys. Karam discussed the need for a hard push for the survey, which will be tweaked by GODA and then shared to all stakeholders and entities. The Council voted to make recommendations to Survey Monkey to make survey tools more accessible through widget use. Sandee Winchell asked the Council if the survey is asking what people's transportation needs are or what's available in their area, to which Jamie replied that it's seeking to answer both of those questions. Steve Kauffman suggested sending the survey to statewide mental health groups.

Education: Laureen Mayfield informed the Council that Bambi Polotzola went through the Education components of the Employment First report, and that they will leave deciding how to implement the changes to the Employment Committee. The Committee discussed the lack of fiscal transparency from LA DOE on information in expenditures, as well as the ongoing trend of stakeholder input when given little information for LA DOE, and a lack of expertise that is being seen with administrators writing IEPs. The committee expressed their frustration over the one-page financial document that was sent to the committee from LA DOE. The Dept. of Education representative stated that financial document provided to the committee was the same information that is provided to the federal government. Concerns were also raised by the committee about the potential for people not working with special education children receiving federal benefits due to lack of thoroughness in department oversight. A Motion was made to ask the governor to audit all expenditures by the LA DOE regarding funding for students with disabilities. Mayfield posed the question the Council of if they should ask the governor about IDEA funding being in jeopardy. A recommendation was made to have an audit carried out of the IDEA budget through the Legislative Auditor. This motion, to have a "long list" be developed by Bambi with specific focus of what the audit needs to focus on, was made at the full Council meeting by Sandee Winchell, with a second by Linda Kocher, with one opposed and five abstaining. A motion was made in Committee that an audit be conducted by the state auditor specifically in regards to the LA DOE's maintenance of effort, which was made and carried with no abstentions and one objection.

Accessibility: Steve Kauffman informed the Council about the committee's discussion about access issues with the State Capitol. The committee meeting had guests from the Office of State Buildings, the ADA coordinator for the legislature, and a representative from the Senate. The committee went over how to carry out the survey, and that they are still making changes and looking into specific questions about the interior and exterior. There is no update on captioning for meetings and sessions in the Capitol other than that it would cost approximately \$100-\$150 per hour. Bambi asked if they have gotten an RFP and if they said the captioning could be done off site. Paula Rodriguez said this is in progress with discussion between the Senate and House. She said this would likely not be ready for the upcoming legislative session and that the Commission for the Deaf should be included in the conversation. She also reminded the Council that the tax on cell phones recently increased to 4.5 cents. Steve Kauffman commented that stakeholders aren't being involved in this negotiation, and asked why the legislative body isn't responsible for paying. Rodriguez stated that the issue is whether or not the captioning can be done remotely and that there is a timing issue of there not always being enough notice to get interpreters to the Capitol. Mark Martin inquired if this was similar to closed captioning on live TV. Bambi suggested figuring out who's doing what so that it can get done through the legislature and Rep. Smith and the Commission for the Deaf. Steve asked if the money coming in will be enough to fund this endeavor, with Bambi replying that this is part of the planning that needs to happen. Jamie Karam suggested making legislative committee agendas accessible for people who use screen readers and similar aids. Shawn Fleming brought up that in the education committee it was discussed that students don't get their accessible materials until months after school starts. Sharon Buchert asked if this could be addressed in the motion about IEPs, and Steve asked if this issue was on the local or state level. Fleming said that 15-20 years ago, a universal ordering system for special education supplies was created and that today there is no such system, so this has become a local department issue. Christy said that there is a braille accommodation and that there is work being done to address the other issues in the area. Paula Rodriguez said since it's gone generalist, it has really hurt the kids. There is a huge concern about language acquisition, with 65% of the kids she's seen in counseling have no L1, saying that it's not just about speaking, but about language. Rep. White informed the Council that there is nothing in Washington parish for kids with autism in the gap of time after 3 years old, and mentioned the need for an assessment of needs; if there is no data, there can be no assessment. Rodriguez stressed that urgency is needed; language is needed to be developed early. She said that many deaf individuals are not born with cognitive deficiencies, but end up developing those issues, and added that an expert is needed in the DOE on deafness.

Employment: Bambi Polotzola informed the Council that October is National Employment Disability Awareness Month, and that there will be a GOV Talk held on the topic. Diversity job fairs will be held across, and in conjunction, regional meetings will be held to discuss employment, in partnership with Families Helping Families. There will be press releases regarding this initiative and the governor will make a proclamation. The DD Council will carry out a social media campaign, and local spotlights will be done. The committee reviewed the Employment First Report, and a recommendation was made in committee to have a subgroup of the Employment First workgroup to finalize the report. A need was discussed of having an executive summary and clear recommendations in the report. Sharon Buchert suggested having the governor do a Youtube video on the topic. Recommendation was made to have the subgroup finalize the Employment First report.

Other Business

Sandee Winchell let the council know that the DD Council will host an employment conference on November 9 focused on customized employment and that she will email out the info. Danny Bellanger, the state Director of Art Education and Accessibility spoke to the Council about his office's work with the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Center for Creative Aging, and the Veterans Administration. Bellanger's office is trying to engage the arts in Louisiana focusing on seniors who have disability to have them accommodated by arts organizations and to encourage them to take part in art. Jolan Jolivette reminded the Council about the Inclusive Art Contest with the deadline to submit art being October 2. He said that the Art Contest will be held the same day as the GOLD Awards, November 15 at the Old State Capitol.

Agency Updates

Mark Martin informed the council that on July 3, 1,007 individuals were taken off the waiting list for Order Selection 1 and in August, another 1,000 were taken off the waiting list. Sharon Buchert commented that Louisiana Senior Rx has assisted people with \$2 million in low-cost medications. Sandee Winchell reminded the Council that the DD Council's Partners in Policymaking program is accepting applications for their 2018 class through September 30. Kristi Jo said that the next SEAP meeting is September 27, and Paula Rodriguez informed the Council that the week of September 25 is deaf awareness week, and that deaf awareness cards will be given to drivers for dealing with law enforcement officers.

NEXT GACDA MEETING will be December 19, 2017.

MEETING ADJOURNED

Rep. Malinda White motioned to adjourn and Kristi-Jo Preston seconded.