

Governor’s Advisory Council on Disability Affairs (GACDA)

Meeting Minutes

March 20, 2017

GACDA held a meeting on March 20, 2018, in the Thomas Jefferson Room at the Claiborne Building in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

<u>Present:</u>	Mary Breaud Pam Darby Ashley Jefferson Linda Kocher Christopher Kirby Laura Brackin Gale Dean	Sharon Buchert Amy Dawson Jamie Karam Laureen Mayfield Sandee Winchell Lynette Fontenot Kelly Monroe	Katie Corkern Donna Breaux Steve Kauffman Cynthia Obier Jamie Wong Tara Leblanc Libby Murphy
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<u>Absent:</u>	Sen. Gerald Boudreaux Linda Theriot Sharon Hennessey	Harry Brady Rep. Malinda White Paula Rodriguez	Joshua Hollins Mark Thomas Katie Corkern
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<u>Staff:</u>	Bambi Polotzola Melanie Washington	Jolan Jolivette April Dunn	Jessica Lewis
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Call to Order and Introductions

Lynette Fontenot 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 December 19, 2018, meeting for approval. Laureen Mayfield motioned to approve the minutes and Amy Dawson seconded. There were no objections and the minutes were approved.

LA Department of Health Updates

Dr. Ashley Jefferson with OBH informed members they have a suicide prevention initiative which is ongoing to address this issue as well as focusing on preventing suicide amongst our youth. In the last fiscal year, the OBH staff provided Suicide Prevention and Early Prevention training to over 970 people. Jefferson stated they are keeping an eye out for HB 148, which is a bill that provides for the implementation of the Zero Suicide Initiative and a state suicide prevention plan. They are also working on opioid prevention regarding the opioid crisis.

Legislative issues regarding services provided by LA Department of Health

Bambi Polotzola asked members what legislation is important regarding the 2018 session. Sandee Winchell said the DD council has concerns regarding SB 300, and SB 347 would try to capture savings in the waiver program and keep it there rather than it go to the state general fund. Winchell also stated the DD councils legislative agenda is the following: increased funding for additional waiver opportunities for people who have the most emergent and urgent need since OCDD is prioritizing the waiver list; advocating for an enhanced rate for waivers to serve people with complex and challenging medical and or behavioral support needs; and funding to implement TEFRA (Tax Equity Fiscal Responsibility Act), which would provide a Medicaid card to children regardless of their parents income. They also have concerns with HB 46 regarding Medicaid work requirements because even though individuals with disabilities are exempt from the work requirements this legislation negatively impacts individuals with disabilities since it is a burden on them to prove their disability and may be at risk of losing their benefits. Laura Brackin stated the providers would support a minimum wage increase if legislation also required a rate increase for providers and reimbursements.

Subcommittee Reports and Discussion

Transportation: Jolan Jolivette informed the council Tina Athalone gave an update regarding the 5311 application process and that she would provide more information at the next meeting. There was a representative from DOTD's Commuter Krewe who provided information about a new ride sharing service being facilitated by DOTD which would help decrease traffic congestion. A representative from CATS discussed the paratransit services they offer. There were two bills the Transportation committee recommended to support, and they were the following: HB 457 and HB 474 by Rep. Patricia Smith, which gives the option to indicate one has a disability on their license plate and require additional training for law enforcement officers when approaching individuals with disabilities.

GACDA voted to support HB 457 and HB 474 with an abstention from Jamie Wong.

Education: Laureen Mayfield informed the Council the committee discussed the large number of special education students not on Alternate Assessment enrolled in non-credit-bearing courses. She stated only Alternate Assessment students can earn a high school diploma without taking Carnegie Unit courses and no non-Alternate Assessment students—even if on the Act 833 Pathway —cannot earn diplomas without earning 23 Carnegie Units (CUs). The Committee discussed whether this could be considered a denial of FAPE in the LRE (if students are being denied access to CU

courses), especially in light of the Endrew Supreme Court decision (meaningful benefit and progress vs. de minimus progress), or if there were legitimate explanations (such as coding of academic support courses that were in addition to CU course enrollment). The Committee asked GACDA LDOE representative, Jamie Wong, what the department has done to explore this issue, determine the reason for the data, and specifically what assistance, support, and oversight have been provided to districts with this issue if appropriate.

GACDA voted on and passed the following motion:

The Committee is requesting that the Department of Education look into the high numbers of students not on alternate assessment enrolled in non-credit high school courses (Applied courses) and the appropriateness for students working toward a high school diploma, and to provide feedback and next steps to the Committee at least two weeks prior to the June 2018 GACDA meeting.

Bambi reported that the Governor has included HB 199 in his Legislative Package. This bill creates a Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) Task Force to develop a framework for assessing children who are deaf or hard of hearing to determine language skills and ensure kindergarten readiness. GACDA had previously supported all state agencies working together on the LEAD-K initiative.

Accessibility: Cindy Obier stated Accessibility had two ADA coordinators present within the meeting: Heather Huval with DOTD and Lynn Noland with the State Capitol. The Accessibility recommended that GACDA ask the Governor to write a letter to Sen. Cassidy and Sen. Kennedy in opposition to HR 620, which would could significantly reduce access for people with disabilities to stores, restaurants, hotels, doctors' offices, social service establishments, private schools, and other places of public accommodation.

GACDA voted to ask Gov. Edwards to write a letter to Sen. Cassidy and Sen. Kennedy to oppose HR 620. Jamie Wong abstained from the vote.

Cindy Obier informed the council about GACDA's position on supporting legislation for armchair accessibility, which would require places that serve the public to have 5% of their chairs to be chairs with arms to assist individuals with disabilities and the elderly when leaving their seat. HB 191 by Stuart Bishop is legislation that discusses armchairs, but in its current posture it only requires restaurants to have the same number of chairs with arms as highchairs are available within the restaurant. There was a brief discussion on HB 292 regarding facility dogs in courthouses.

Employment: Gale Dean stated the committee reviewed the disability statistics report and fact sheet for the US and saw that Louisiana has a low employment rate for individuals with disabilities and discussed other reasons why other states have higher percentages of employment for individuals with disabilities. It was stated in Iowa all people with disabilities are offered supportive employment. The committee received a status update from Bambi Polotzola on the Employment First Report and Vision Quest. Gale informed GACDA members the Governor signed an executive order which creates the State As a Model Employer Taskforce, which will look at policies and strategies for hiring and retention for people with disabilities. Gale informed members there are 6,000 people waiting for a disability determination in Louisiana and that DCFS is requesting 50 positions which will be fully federally funded so Louisiana can receive their disability determination information timelier.

The committee brought their recommendation to GACDA to support DCFS requests for 50 federally fully funded positions to assist with disability determination. GACDA voted to approve the recommendation with an abstention from Jamie Wong.

GACDA Annual Report and Other Business

Members went through the 2017 Annual report as Bambi went over what was in the report. Bambi informed members that next year's report will also include what the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs is doing as well as SICC and SILC.

This meeting will be Sharon Buchert's last meeting since she will be retiring before the next quarterly meeting.

Sandee Winchell stated they are currently recruiting applicants for 3 vacancies on the DD council.

Bambi recognized Dr. Adren Wilson as the new Deputy chief of Staff for Programs and planning.

NEXT GACDA MEETING will be June 19, 2018

MEETING ADJOURNED

Motion to adjourn made by Sandie Winchell and seconded by Sharon Buchert.