

## ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE

Monday, June 19, 2023

10:00 AM to 12:00 PM

Call to Order and Roll Call Meeting started at 10:05 Bambi Polotzola called roll.

Granting Unserved Municipalities Broadband Opportunities (GUMBO)

Stephen Barnes and Margaret Storms, UL Blanco Center

BEAD plan is out for comment. Digital Equity Plan is due in July. BEAD plan comments have been extended. Jim Mitchell says the BEAD plan review has been extended. Digital Equity Plan needs to be stronger in terms of digital navigators and resources and the technology gap. The technology is not easy to access nor purpose. Overall, the plan was good. Margaret Storms was asked to get someone to discuss the BEAD plan. The Digital Equity Plan is up for public comment.

Updates from the State ADA Coordinator Office (HB143)

Rikki David

OSP will be implementing the language which provides an out for the state if the vendor doesn't

In March, a quarterly meeting was conducted in reference to the Family Leave Act. The meeting was well attended-over 150 participants. Rikki serves on LATAN Board, the LA Commission on Human Rights, and Rehab Council. David is hoping to expand and promote the ADA Coordinator Office.

ADA focuses on accommodating people on the job. FMLA deals with on-the-job injury and temporary medical issues. The FMLA institutes a provisional light work period that allows for an easier transition back to work.

Issues with ADA should be brought to OTS Accessibility team

Beau suggested inviting the OTS Accessibility Team to the next Accessibility meeting. Email at [a11y@la.gov](mailto:a11y@la.gov)

Kathy Dwyer filed a report of inaccessibility at a business in Jefferson Parish. She asked how to follow-up on her complaint. Previously, it was taken care of in an expedient manner. Kathy will send Bambi the details of the event to follow-up on. Liam recommended reaching out to Disabilities Rights Louisiana. Kathy said she has previously reached out to them. She was told that they are overwhelmed and do not have enough attorneys. She suggested setting time restraints on responding to complaints. Rikki suggested next session, define the roles and responsibilities of these agencies through legislation.

Invite the State Fire Marshal's office to the next GACDA meeting. Rikki will send Bambi the contact information for the ADA Coordinator at the SFM. Laura.patterson@la.gov

Since 2015, Community Living has defined best practices.

Updates from Emergency Management Disability and Aging Coalition (EMDAC) -Bambi Polotzola

EMDAC held two lunch and learns. Another training is on July 12 and in August. EMDAC had a planning meeting Thursday. Planning information was shared. There was a discussion on registers. Take away activities will be planned in the near future.

Bambi reminded the attendees to join the EMDAC email list if they aren't currently on that list. Bambi gave an update on the emergency situation currently impacting north Louisiana, this was a severe weather event.

Life saving equipment is currently being powered as efficiently as possible.

July 24 - 26 Rehabilitation of North America will be in New Orleans.

Cox Communications - Kristina Sarai

Kristina gave a presentation, including a video on the accessibility features Cox offers. Cox offers a 30 dollar affordability reimbursement program through the federal government for those who are on certain aid programs (SNAP SSA VA etc.)

Cox offers a \$30 internet service (100/5mbps) for those same users. Additionally, they offer a \$9.99 internet plan for the families of K-12 students.

Over \$200,000 donated to nonprofits. \$60,000 donated to low income schools.

Cox would like to partner with any organizations. It was suggested that Cox sends information about their capabilities to be put in the newsletter.

NOLA Roll With Me Presentation - Mark Raymond

Mark Raymond started Roll with Me. He puts politicians and community leaders in a wheelchair to make them aware of barriers faced by people in wheelchairs.

Transportation is also an issue. Uber Wav is not readily available, cab companies/rental car companies do not have enough accessible options.

Housing stock is extremely low, most new construction only adheres to 5% ADA compliance. There's not enough accessible hotel rooms/short term rentals across the state.

Mark's videos are on his Instagram and LinkedIn, his social media handle is @markraymondjr.

Litigation regarding CATS (Capitol Area Transit System) Update  
Attorney Andrew Bizer

ADA was a compromise. One of the compromises was on enforcement. Civil litigation was the compromise. Bizer is not impressed with the fire marshalls' handling of ADA. Bizer's law firm sued Uber and lost.

CATS was defeated without trial. Most of the bus stops were sticks in the ground with no landing or accessible curbs .

CATS' attorneys and Bizer got together to determine locations of bus stop pads.They have ten years to become fully compliant.

Additional information is available at Bizerlaw.com. Andy can be reached via email at Andrew@bizerlaw.com

Public Comments                      John suggested a digital navigator training program.

Adjournment

## EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Monday, June 19, 2023

1:00PM – 2:30PM

Meeting was called to order at 1:02. Bambi Polotzola called roll.

Discuss [Local Special Education Advisory Councils](#) Report    Meredith Jordan

The state has collected the link to the vast majority of SEAC reports. Meredith is finding that where there is no SPED Director, they have no report. Meredith reported that she should have it posted online within the next few weeks. Meredith put a link in the chat to a resource.

[Related Services Advisory Council](#)

Alishia Vallien

The council is still working on a survey that will go out in August to parents and the related service providers. Data from the survey will be used to make recommendations for caseload and ratios to improve services.

4. [Postsecondary Inclusive Education Fund](#)

Dr. Gerlinde Beckers

Southeastern, Nicholls, UL at Lafayette, Baton Rouge Community College, Bossier Parish Community College - all received \$50,000 enhancement grants (\$250,000)

Southern NOLA; LSU - BR; LSU-A; and UL at Monroe all received \$80,000 new program grants (\$320,000)

Southeastern was awarded as financial agent of LAPIE (\$100,000)

\$670,000 of the original \$1 million has been allocated.

Two major goals of PIEF: Start a program in the northern part of the state and have a program at a HBCU and both were accomplished.

We asked for \$3 million to be added to PIEF this session. We are unsure if LaPIE was awarded \$1 million or \$2 million.

5. Discussion of [Legislative Items for the 2023 Regular Legislative Session](#) related to students with disabilities

### PASSED

a. [HB12](#) - Prohibits promotion to fourth grade of students with reading deficiencies

IEP teams have authority on promotion and retention decisions. The April Dunn Act will also allow for promotion where appropriate.

b. [HB213](#) - Exempts certain school surveillance and security video from the Public Records Law

c. [HB242](#) - Provides relative to corporal punishment in elementary and secondary schools

Dr. Mayfield has been pushing this agenda. Prohibited for any student. Parents have to opt in.

d. [HB353](#) - Provides relative to student behavior, discipline, and behavioral and mental health

Gives students three days to be excused for behavior and mental health days. Their work can be made up.

e. [HB367](#) - Provides relative to pupil appraisal and services for children transitioning from EarlySteps to services provided by the local public school system upon their third birthday.

EarlySteps has to submit a list to LEAs of students who reach two and a half years old.

f. [SB12](#) - Requires AED at all educational institutions & athletic events Is now Act 234.

### FAILED

g. [HB9](#) - state funding for education of students with exceptionalities not enrolled in public school

h. [HB98](#) - Creates and provides for a program to provide state funding for the education of students not enrolled in public school and expands the ability of parents to enroll children in the public school of their choice

i. Additional items may be discussed, no additional questions were asked.

#### Public Comment

Kathleen Cannino got a record request back from LDOE. It states there is no single screening process.

Meeting adjourned at 2:05

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE  
Wednesday, June 21, 2023  
9:30 AM to 11:00 AM

Meeting called to order at 9:34 AM, Bambi called roll. There was a quorum.

Discussion of Legislative Session Kelly Monroe gave an update.

Kathy Dwyer asked what “disability services” entail as defined in HB 1. This was an addition made by LDH very close to the end of session.

Kelly believes the Governor will veto that line item. She also suggested speaking with LDH to find out what they mean, specifically.

It was proposed that GACDA meet with legislators and other stakeholders as to what the term means. Jim and Bambi expressed a need for GACDA to define disability services prior to moving forward.

An official motion was made to form a subcommittee from Karen Scallan with a second from Jim Mitchell. There was no opposition to this motion.

Robbie Gray asked for clarification on if SB 201 requires anchor locations to be opened to the public or staff; Ebony Haven and Tory Rocca answered that the anchor locations shall be available for the public, as well as staff.

Kelly went over all passed bills, excluding education bills due to them being discussed in the education committee; those bills will be discussed in the full council meeting.

HB41- Passed and is now Act 336 with no amendments

HB355- Passed and is now Act 214 with amendments

HB123- Passed and is now Act 003

HB449- Passed and is now Act 277

REVIEW: Jim recommended the Accessibility committee reach out to the ADA Coordinator in regards to what the disabled community is looking for within the position.

Tory spoke about SB39 and how it is a “big win” for the disabled community.

In regards to HB516, Kelly stated that other disabilities were added to the bill. The symbol will be an orange colored square that wouldn't be recognized by anyone else other than law enforcement - due to helping protect disabled constituents from becoming targets. They also added a Louisiana boot holographic so it can't be duplicated. The only disappointment is that those who are against having the puzzle piece that represents autism, this is the only choice.

HB353- Passed and is now Act 318 with several amendments. Kelly expressed that the amendments change the spirit of the bill and recommended revision next year.

Kelly also gave an overview of the bills that were not passed.

REVIEW:HB 9 Kelly suggests getting ahead of it for next year.

[Click here to access the GODA legislative tracking spreadsheet.](#)

Public Comment- Jim Mitchell reminded everyone that Veneeth Iyengar will be speaking at the GACDA full meeting about the Digital Equity Plan.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:45 AM via motion from Karen and a second from Jim.

**Full Council Meeting**  
Wednesday, June 21, 2023  
1:00 PM to 3:15 PM

- 1) Call to Order and Roll Call
- 2) Approval of [March 2023 GACDA Minutes](#)

Dr. Ashley Jefferson stated that March minutes should read IPS instead of IBS.

Tory Rocca made a motion to approve minutes with the amendment. Karen Scallan seconded motion; Motion approved.

- 3) Committee Reports and Discussions

Ø Education

Dr. Beckers gave an update on the Post secondary education fund, which consists of \$1 million. The two main goals were to add a HBCU and have the program started in North Louisiana (ULM). Both goals were met.

Ask, have \$3 million added; more money has been added to advance post secondary education. Bambi and the council thanked Senator Boudreaux. He stated that he believes a total of \$2 million was added.

Nicole Flores gave an update on the education bills that were passed and failed during the session. Jim asked if the failed bills were supported by GACDA; Bambi confirmed that GACDA did not support either bills (HB9 or HB98).

Bambi gave a statement on HB12. Per Bambi, HB12 was a split vote in both houses and the Governor has yet to sign the bill.

Kristen asked for more information on how the funds will be used. Dr. Beckers stated that the funds are used to create new programs for students with ID or to enhance existing programs. All statewide existing programs received enhancement funding.

All programs must meet CTP requirements per the US DOE and match the funds with their respective universities 1:1.

Through this program, eligible students can receive Pell Grant funding.

Ø Accessibility- Jim Mitchell gave the update

GUMBO Veneeth asked that everyone be reminded that the plan and comment forms are coming out

Jim spoke in regards of an infrastructure plan included in plan:

Digital navigator, there is a need for more; specifically those that have a background in disability.

Resources for people with disabilities being able to access the plan.

Jim stated that he will try to have the OTS accessibility team to join the next accessibility committee meeting to give a presentation.

EMDAC Bambi gave the update. Informed committee of the prior Lunch & Learns. She also informed the committee of the next Lunch & Learn that will take place July 11th.

Bambi emphasized how important it is for the contracts to have the language that Jim suggested. Jim also thanked Rikki for her hard work.

**REVIEW:** Andrew Bizer is an attorney in NOLA that is working on the "CATs" lawsuit. Jim mentioned that the proper way to handle an ADA lawsuit is through civil court and suggested we are aware of that for future legislative efforts.

Jim also spoke in the fire marshal's office; he hopes that will be able to show up for the Accessibility Meeting in Sept. Jim also suggested that expectations are discussed.

Kathy Dwyer - Major Rayborne contacted her to apologize and informed her that he forwarded her concern. They also went out this morning and addressed the issue. Kathy stated the committee needs to be aware that the Fire Marshall's Office is only given the

authority to address the ADA in 1995; anything after that is no longer in their jurisdiction.

Under the ADA, structures built prior to 1990 have a separate set of requirements to be considered compliant. This changes if the business updates the structure significantly or has new construction.

Ø Legislative

Kelly Monroe gave an update.

-HB1 passed with a \$1 million cut to the LDH budget. Some disability programs were cut but not all. A letter will be sent to the Governor to veto an item.

Bambi included GACDA's tracking spreadsheet link in the chat.

- Bambi will send a recording to the bills

Tory Rocca:

SB39 authored by Sen. Boudreaux  
- "BIG WIN"

Jim mentioned the discussion in the committee regarding the term "disability services" and suggested having a subcommittee to; Recommendation to create a subcommittee to put up a position about it.

Kathy Dwyer added a caution of warning that we're not too specific that the definition be updated. She stated that it is generic yet specific enough. Karen Scallan stated that she would want to sign on that additional services be added to the list

Bambi also wanted to highlight the major wins. She mentioned there was good progress in a lot of areas; voting rights for people; resolution for transportation issues; progress moving along the ABLE Account, and the meeting law.

4) Update on Employment initiatives (including but not limited to [LRS](#), [OBH](#), [OCDD](#))

LRS - Melissa B. gave an update. Kenneth York is retiring and the new Assistant Director is Gabriel McGrew; last rate study was conducted; lsu was the contractor; unemployed rates were increased by \$37. There is a whole new system.

June 29th, statewide training will take place. Will continue to do rate setting. want to implement other employment rates, every

- New rate by Oct. 1st.
- There is a new Disability innovation fund grant; Southern University available in BR, NOLA, Lafayette and Monroe areas.
- LRS is hiring statewide with 35 vacancies; 25 of those being rehab counsellors.



**OBH** - Dr. Ashley Jefferson gave an update

- Still working on the individual placement and supports
- OBH is looking to expand program (no questions)

**OCDD**- Julie Foster Hagan gave an update.

- 43 other states asked for an extension
- Approved on the correctional action plan; the state will have to do ongoing monitoring.
- Oct. 1st. Proposed institutional redesign roll out with new rates

5) [La Department of Health](#) updates (including but not limited to [OAAS](#), OBH, OCDD, [OPH](#))

**OAAS**- Melinda Richard gave an update

Leadership changes; Elizabeth Atkins has moved to OPH as deputy; Sheryl is retiring.

Legislative Session updates

- \$100 million cuts (clauses in HB1 that may affect their provide rates)
- 500 new waiver slots; will be able to keep.
- Bills that were passed that are considered a big win: SB 201; SB39; HB480; House Resolution 209
- Health Emergency
- American Rescue Plan - not sure how it will affect the state; just kick off April 1st
  - Round 1: assistive technology; put an ipad in home of person who is a recipient of waiver.
  - Medically meals on wheels

Provider rates:

-working hard to get the waiting list timeframe down.

-will be doing outreach in the communities in the Fall.

**OPH**- Jana Broussard provided an update

LBDMN- State birth defect monitoring program located in the LA Office of Public Health. LBDMN follows CDC and National birth defects prevention guidelines. An annual report was sent to the state legislature in January of 2023.

Title V continues to provide specialized services for children. Housed within OPH (Family Resource Center) M-F 8 AM-4PM.

Title V screening aims to find and support developmental delays early on. (Not available in regions 1 and 7)

EHDI uses a 1-3-6 model that outlines benchmarks to make sure children have proper care for hearing needs.

LCD- provides hearing aids based on age and income. Budget goal for FY23 will be reached per projections. Longest wait time is 2 months.

LCD created a deafblind advisory council- currently seeking committee members ([lcd@la.gov](mailto:lcd@la.gov))

LCD meeting Scheduled for Friday July 1 at LA state Capitol

**OBH-** Dr. Ashley Jefferson gave a report. OBH is reviewing legislative lists post-session and will update the council as needed upon completion.

**OCDD-** Julie Foster Hagan gave an update.

National START team is adding services for people with IDD. A Survey has been developed as part of a stakeholder meeting for best practices both locally and by looking at other states. Assistive technology includes public transit help, medication reminders, quality of life improvement.

American Rescue Act allowing LDH to begin training dentists to work with the IDD communities.

OCDD will be having a roadshow in the coming weeks for support coordinators, self direction users, etc. Roadshow will be a bi-annual event.

Early Steps director Brenda Sharp has retired; Caroline Nalliers-Olgesbee will serve as the new director

7) Governor's Office of Disability Affairs Conference – July 24-27 (virtual)

Bambi reminded GACDA of the upcoming GODA conference

Register to attend the GODA Conference at <https://www.bit.ly/GODAconf23>.

Schedule for GODA Conference <https://www.bit.ly/GODAconf23sched>

8) No public comment given

9) Adjournment

Meeting adjourned via unanimous consent at 3:18 PM