



State of Louisiana
Louisiana Department of Health
Office of Public Health

**ADVISORY COUNCIL
FOR THE EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING INFANTS**

**Friday, January 23, 2026
12:00-2:30 p.m.**

Location

Benson Tower, Suite 2024
1450 Poydras Street
New Orleans, LA 70112

Meeting Minutes

- I. Call to Order at 12:09 p.m. – Ashley Argrave-Smith, Chair
 - a. Reviewed meeting and communication standards
- II. Roll Call – Dana Hubbard, Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program Manager for Susannah Boudreaux, Secretary
- III. Council membership (as of 1.14.2026) – Ashley Argrave-Smith, Chair, for Susannah Boudreaux, Secretary
 - a. Council members present: Ashley Argrave-Smith, Deborah Cowan, Cynthia Voelker, Paul Remedios, Caitlyn Robinson
 - b. Council members absent: John Carter, Susannah Boudreaux, Jana Broussard (Vanessa Magnon), Natalie Delgado (Ivette Perez)
-No quorum
 - c. Council member vacancies: a hospital administrator (awaiting appointment), a deaf person (awaiting appointment), a parent of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing using spoken language (awaiting appointment), a speech and language pathologist (awaiting appointment), an otolaryngologist/otologist (no applicants), a neonatologist (no applicants), a parent of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing utilizing total communication (no applicants), a representative from the Louisiana Commission for the Deaf (one applicant)
 - d. Bureau of Family Health: Dana Hubbard, Terri Ibieta, Gina Easterly
 - e. Public: Melissa Dillmore, parent
 - f. Interpreters: Sylvie Sullivan, Jennifer Ware

Cynthia Voelker indicated she has an interested party for the role of neonatologist.

- IV. Mandate review – Dana Hubbard, Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Program Manager reminded that those in attendance must have their video cameras on, names accurately reflected.
- V. Approval of Agenda and Minutes – Ashley Argrave-Smith, Chair
 - a. January 2026 Agenda – no quorum, no vote.
 - b. October 2025 Minutes – edits were made to the EHDI Infrastructure section to accurately reflect that the needs in the EHDI pipeline related to children who are deaf or hard of hearing and not early intervention as a whole. - no quorum, no vote.
- VI. Old Business
 - a. Law Workgroup – Ashley Argrave-Smith shared that she and Jana Broussard had preliminary discussion with Senator Caleb Kleinpeter regarding the possibility of amending the current legislation in the upcoming legislative session based on the proposed changes recommended by the workgroup.

- b. EHDI Infrastructure: Guidelines – Ivette Perez from the Louisiana School for the Deaf: Guidance, Outreach, & Language Development program shared that inquiries regarding the Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) initiative were at a stand-still, as the Special School District (SSD) interim superintendent had relocated out of state. Once a new interim superintendent is appointed, Ms. Perez will pursue again. Chair Argrave-Smith suggested a letter from the Council would possibly aid in endeavors.

In retrospect to the Council discussion at the October meeting, Dana Hubbard asked about the status of review of the Guidelines for Working with Children Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing from Birth to Age 21 in Louisiana, and if any movement had been achieved. Ms. Perez responded there was no movement, and was waiting to see if schools responded with needs. Chair Argrave-Smith inquired if Ms. Perez had the Guidelines. Ms. Perez indicated she did not. Chair Argrave-Smith responded she would send them to her and reiterated the origination and purpose of the Guidelines was restated – the Guidelines were created by a large and diverse workgroup of individuals working with children who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families in 2020-2021. The Guidelines extensively outline state and federal legislation, processes, and best practices ranging from a baby's initial identification as deaf or hard of hearing, through referral and enrollment in Part C early intervention, and transition to Part B, the local education agency. The intent of the Guidelines are to support all individuals, agencies, school systems, and families at providing comprehensive care and support for children who are deaf and hard of hearing, in the absence of a dedicated department for the needs of children who are deaf and hard of hearing at the Louisiana Department of Education.

Melissa Dilmore, parent, inquired as to what LEAD-K was. Ms. Perez explained that LEAD-K aims at improving kindergarten readiness. Dana Hubbard provided the acronym, Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids, and referred to the [Louisiana Department of Health response to the LEAD-K Taskforce](#).

- VII. EHDI Program Updates– Dana Hubbard, EHDI Program Manager
 - a. Medicaid Billing Codes for Audiological Services – Dana Hubbard, program manager, shared that she had participated in two internal newborn screening workgroups comprised of newborn screening leadership staff, Office of Public Health laboratory leadership staff, and representatives from OPH fiscal office to address barriers, concerns, or present issues related to newborn screening. In order to move forward with exploring methods for addressing the barriers related to Medicaid billing for certain audiological testing, samples of various documents must be reviewed (billing statement versus actual payment; frequency and quality of clinical documentation reflecting standard of care for each test or procedure and the latest Medicaid fee schedule). Paul Remedios, pediatrician, inquired if Medicaid billing was affected by school screenings. Deborah Cowan, audiologist, responded no. Ashley Argrave-Smith provided confirmation.
 - b. Program Staff – Dana Hubbard, program manager, announced that Amanda Cancienne-Burkhardt, audiologist, is joining the EHDI team on a part-time basis in the role of system development specialist and will be primarily focusing on improving outcomes of the “3”, of the EHDI 1-3-6 goals, increasing diagnosis by three months of age. Amanda will continue to provide support to families at Manning Family Children's Hospital, as needed.
 - c. Family-to-family support – Dana Hubbard shared that the contract with Louisiana Hands & Voices remains in process, so family-to-family support has been limited since July 2025. The contract process includes a nine-month timeframe for new contracts. The EHDI program is hopeful the contract will be finalized by Quarter 2 of 2026, which reflects the end of the nine-month timeframe
- VIII. New Business – No new business was raised.
- IX. Public Comment – No public comment.
- X. Adjourned 12:53 p.m. no quorum, no motion. The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, April 24, 2026 from 12:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. and will be held at Benson Tower in New Orleans.

Presenters, members, and guests may submit requests for accessibility and accommodations prior to a scheduled meeting. Please submit a request to laehdi@la.gov at least 2 weeks prior to the meeting with details of the required accommodations.