



**GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COUNCIL
ON DISABILITY AFFAIRS**
OFFICE OF GOV. JEFF LANDRY

**Full Council Meeting
Wednesday, March 19, 2025
10:00 AM to 2:00 PM**

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Wednesday, March 19, 2025, GACDA's Full Council meeting was called to order at 10:08 AM. The meeting took place in the press room on the fourth floor of the state capitol and via the virtual platform Zoom.

Role was called by GACDA Chairperson - Julia Tanner. A quorum was reached.

GACDA Member	Present	Proxy	Proxy Name	Absent
Ashley Allen	X			
Rep. Rhonda Butler	X			
Rikki David	X			
Jamar Ennis	X			
Sen Franklin Foil				X
Rocky Fuselier	X			
Barry Mele				X
Julia Tanner	X			
Attendees	Agency/Affiliate			Present
Sylvie Sullivan	ASL Interpreter			X
Gayle Coronado	ASL Interpreter			X
Danny Adams	Louisiana Spirit Crisis Counseling Program			X
Tiffany Alleman				X
Melissa Bayham	LWC/LRS			X
Patti Barovechio	LLDH- Office of Public Health			X
Allie Boquet	LSU			X
Kimberly Catalon	LDOH -Juvenile Competency Restoration Program Statewide Coordinator			X
Cynthia Chesterfield	FHF- BR – Program Director of Inclusive Education			X
Jancie Corie	GOSEPH			X
Brenda Cosse'	LSU Dept. of Health - Parent			X
Kristie Curtis	LaCAN- Leader- Region 4			X
Nicole DeJean	FHF Acadiana			X
Erin Downing	LDH – OCDD Senior Advisor			X
Melinda Elliott	Disability Advocate			X
Diana Esordi	Duotribe			X
	Families Helping Families - NELA			X
Renee Fauver	CCSS			X
Nicole Flores	Families Helping Families Acadiana			X
Sandra Gaspard	GOHSEP			X
	Gracefully Employed ED			X
Ben Grauer				X
Robbie Gray	LA Developmental Disabilities Council – Program Monitor			X
Natalie Harrison	Lighthouse LA			X

Janice Heck	Lighthouse LA	X
Noelani Pearl Hernandez		X
Keisha Hertzock	FHF- BR – Administrative Assistant Empowerment Program	X
Dana Hubbard	Office of Public Health and Early Hearing Detection & Intervention	X
Ashley Jefferson	Office of Behavioral Health – Chief of Staff	X
Christy Johnson	LDH - OCDD	X
Connor Junkin	LDVA – Executive Counsel	X
Kelli Kent	LDH - OCDD	X
Dr. Sabah Kingham	State of LA GEPA	X
Leah		X
Jazmyne Lemar	Louisiana Commission of the Deaf	X
Marlene		X
Robin Mayhall	Blue Cross	X
Audrey MacDermon	Leading Home Care	X
Rachel McGreevy		X
Marisa Mitchell	Lighthouse LA	X
Kaleb Moore	LDOE	X
Chuck Myers	LDI	X
Joann Powell	LDH - OCDD	X
Ben Quimby		X
Cat Randon	Lighthouse LA	X
Mark Raymond	Split Second Foundation	X
Susan Riehn	FHF - SWLA	X
Tory Rocca	Disability Rights of LA	X
Carina Rosenbaum	NOHSEP	X
Monica Stampley	FHF – Region 7 Early Steps Community Outreach	X
Susan		X
Amanda Tisdale	Easterseals LA – Region 9 -Program Director	X
Dr. Marilyn Thornton	FHF -BR – Executive Director	X
Joe Joyce-Turner	NOHD	X
Rebecca White		X
Larry Williams	LDVA	X
Staff	Title	
Jamar Ennis	GODA Executive Director	X
Liam Doyle	GODA Assistant Director	X
Tillie Carrier	GODA Senior Coordinator	X

2. **Approval of March 19, 2025 GACDA Meeting Agenda**

Jamar Ennis made a motion to approve the March [meeting agenda](#). Rocky Fuselier seconded the motion. The motion to approve the March 19, 2025, meeting agenda passed without any objections, abstentions, or discussion.

3. **Approval of December 2024 GACDA Meeting Minutes**

Ashley Allen made a motion to approve the December 2024 [meeting minutes](#). Rikki David seconded the motion. The motion to approve the December 2024 meeting minutes passed without any objections, abstentions, or discussion.

4. **ACT 393**

Liam Doyle, Assistant Director GODA, presented a recap of ACT 393.

- GACDA is responsible for creating and maintaining its own set of rules and an implementation plan to handle virtual access and accommodation requests.
- GACDA is working with Rikki David, State ADA Coordinator, to continue to be in compliance with ADA mandates. At the next GACDA meeting, the council will be ready for formal adoption of the implementation of the plan.

5. Proposed GACDA Bylaws and Amendments Discussion/Questions

Liam Doyle, Assistant Director GODA, presented a recap of the bylaws.

- The GACDA bylaws must be in compliance with ACT 393. Therefore, the council is working in congruence with the development of the ACT 393 rules. The bylaws cannot be completed until the rules are finalized and the council is working quickly to get the job completed.
- The floor was open for comments or questions. There were no comments/questions.

6. Disability Awareness Day at the Capitol

Mark Raymond with Split Second Foundation presented information on the first Disabilities Awareness Day at the Capitol.

- Split Second Foundation is sponsoring Disability Awareness Day at the Capitol along with GODA.
- The date is set for Monday, June 2, 2025.
- This day is to bring awareness to all aspects of the disabilities community and offer the public a chance to connect with representatives from various organizations and departments in addition to the legislatures.
- Robin Mayhall from Blue Cross wanted to know how they can get information about the event, stakeholders, volunteers, and attendees. Jamar Ennis responded by stating that GODA will be putting out all the information in the coming weeks- sending it out to everyone across the state, in the monthly newsletter and on social media.
- Mark Raymond shared his email - mark@splitsecondfoundation.org
- Jamar Ennis shared more specifics on the day.
- Mark Raymond shared his experience after having a life altering accident that left him paralyzed and the resources available with Split Second.
- The floor was open for comments and questions. There were none.

7. Updates from the Department of Veterans Affairs

Larry Williams, the Veterans Outreach Program Director, gave a presentation that discussed the abundance of resources for Louisiana veterans. The [power point presentation](#) included:

- Louisiana Veterans State Benefits- ppt has more specific information available
 - State Park Benefits
 - Hunting and Fishing Licenses
 - License Plates
 - Driver's Licenses
 - Property Tax Benefits
 - Airport Parking
 - College Education Benefits
- The LADV is also active in connecting disabled veterans with various organizations that can provide services and other benefits.
- The Louisiana Veterans Honor Medal is available to all current Louisiana residents. To apply: [Apply - Louisiana Veterans Honor Medal](#) or contact Holly Talley at 225-302-9554.
- Each parish has a Veterans Assistance Counselor to assist with all aspects for disabled veterans.

- The Military Family Assistance Fund exists to assist military families that are experiencing financial hardship. These funds can be used for things such as housing, utilities, medical services and other essential expenses that may have created financial hardship and maybe provided up to \$10,000 per calendar year. The MFA application can be accessed here: [Military Assist Application](#) or contact Holly Talley at 225-302-9554.
- Title 29 Educational Benefit waives the college tuition to any public university (including community and technical colleges) in the state for children of veterans rated with 90% or more service-connected disability and children of veterans rated with 100% service-connected disability due to unemployability. Does not apply to private universities.
- Louisiana Veterans Homes – LDVA homes house over 600 veterans and veteran spouses, and Gold Star family members. Each of our homes provide designated units for skilled nursing services to care for those residents that require a higher level of care or therapy (physical, occupational, and speech). They provide long and short-term care rehabilitative therapies, centralized pharmacy services, Alzheimer's care, and more.
- Louisiana Veteran Cemeteries- LDVA operates 5 cemeteries located in Keithville, Leesville, Slidell, Rayville and Jennings LA. They also provide gravesite services.
- Larry Williams, MPA, PHR contact information- Executive Management Officer- Veterans Outreach Program Director - Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs - United States Army (Retired) - 602 N. 5thSt | Baton Rouge LA 70802 - work cell 225.276.8626 | fax 225.219.5590 - larry.williams@la.gov - www.vetaffairs.la.gov
- The floor was opened to public comments or questions. Several attendees stated that they were excited to see the available resources for disabled veterans.

8. Updates from Lighthouse Louisiana

Janice Heck, Chief Operating Officer, provided a presentation about Lighthouse Louisiana. The [power point presentation](#) included:

- Lighthouse Louisiana is a 110-year-old agency who has been servicing people with disabilities.
- Pathways to Success – 2024 Disability innovation Fund-
 - The Federal government has allocated resources through the Disability Innovation Fund to support model demonstration projects designed to develop and implement new strategies or programs to transition youth and adults with disabilities into competitive integrated employment. 27 recipients awarded an average of \$8 – 10 million over a 5-year period.
 - Lighthouse Louisiana was granted \$10,068,975 to implement the PTS Project to provide a means for increasing competitive integrated employment opportunities for people with disabilities in Louisiana by implementing a holistic employment program model that leverages opportunities for people with disabilities through education, training, observation, & hands-on learning in the innovative use of advanced technologies to facilitate the growth of competitive integrated employment (CIE) in the 21st century workforce.
 - 30 parishes in south Louisiana will benefit from this grant.
 - Ms. Heck shared the objectives, goals, and plan for implementing the program and the impact that such a program will have on citizens of Louisiana.
- Ms. Heck answered questions from the public.

9. Updates from the LA GATOR Program

Dr. Sabrah Kingham, the Governor's Education Policy Advisor, presented information on the LA GATOR Scholarship Program. The [power point presentation](#) included:

- Part of the Governors educational initiative is to give parents and students the power and control over services and programs that are part of their education.
- Kaleb Moore is the Deputy Director of Student's Choice that could assist citizens with all information

concerning the LA GATOR program. He gave a descriptive outlook of the program.

- Signed into law by Governor Landry on June 19, 2024
- First-ever education scholarship account (ESA) in Louisiana.
- The Louisiana Giving All True Opportunity to Rise Scholarship Program opened student applications on March 1st for the 2025-2026 school year.
- Students currently participating in the Louisiana Scholarship Program (LSP), which will end June 30, 2025, will have priority access but must submit an application.
- He presented information on student eligibility and prioritization.
- Students with disabilities must provide a valid evaluation and/or IEP developed by a Local Educational Agency as proof of a student's current eligibility.
- Tiered funding will be determined by the student's disability as verified in the LDOE's internal system using the Student's LASID and the family income as verified through the Odyssey platform's verification process.
- There are 3 tier exceptionalities.
- He presented charts for tiered funding calculations and how those funds can be utilized.
- The maximum amount that a student with disabilities can be awarded is \$15,253.00 based on the calculation methodology in the act.
- Mr. Moore presented on completing the family application which can be found [here](#)
- LA GATOR resources may be found [here](#).
- Odyssey is the program administrator that can be reached by phone: 225-422-1538, or email: help.la@withodyssey.com
- The floor was opened to public questions.

10. Updates from Louisiana Fortify Homes Program

Chuck Myers, Deputy Commissioner of the Louisiana Department of Insurance, gave a look into the Louisiana Fortify Home Program.

- The department is working with organizations to connect people with disabilities with the program.
- Mr. Myers gave an explanation and description of what a fortified home entails and how the program can assist individuals.
- There are 2,160 approved and paid grants within the last year and a half. Currently in progress are over 1,900.
- There is a pilot program, specific to low to moderate incomes, working with Louisiana non-profits to make sure those homes are going to be fortified through this program. Looking for 150 to 300 homes for the pilot program.
- Through the Fortify Homes Program, homeowners saved approximately \$1,250.00 in addition to retrofitting the fortified roof reduces the uninsured loss for a savings of about \$213.00 a year. The value of the home also increases.
- More information may be found [here](#).
- The floor was opened for questions and comments.

11. Governor's Office of Homeland, Security, and Preparedness -GOHSEP

Sandra Dugas-Gaspard, Assistant Director over Hazard Mitigation and Preparedness Grants, gave a presentation on the New Orleans's Transitional Shelter.

- GOHSEP is the agency that leads and supports Louisiana and its citizens in preparation for, prevention of, and response to recovery from mitigation against all emergencies and disasters.
- GOHSEP operates the state emergency operations centers and coordinates efforts among states.
- GOHSEP coordinates support to subrecipients for pre-disaster and post-disaster Federal Grant funding.

- They also deliver training and exercises and technical assistance to stakeholders.
- GOHSEP activated an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in response to the NOLA terrorist attack and has been activated ever since.
- GOHSEP has provided shelter for the homeless population in key locations in NOLA since January.
- Statistics and reports were presented on all the services and resources GOHSEP has provided since the transitional center was established.
- Sandra Gaspard can be contacted at 985-969-0410 or at Sandra.dugas@la.gov
- Discussion:
 - How are the housing vouchers funded? Veteran's Affairs did assist in housing some of the homeless because they were veterans. Those that were not veterans, LHC was able to secure the vouchers through their normal process.
 - Kimberly Catalon stated that she worked with homeless individuals in the past and she just wanted to state that GOHSEP is doing amazing work.

12. Break- At 12:00 PM a motion was made to recess for an hour's lunch break by Jamar Ennis and seconded by Ashley Allen.

13. Call to Order: At 1:05 PM, Madame Chairperson began the meeting by calling roll. Quorum was met and meeting continued.

14. Updates Governor's Advisory Council

Julia Tanner, Chairperson of GACDA, gave a council report.

- Disability Awareness Day at the Capitol- June 2, 2025. GACDA will co-sponsor with Split Second Foundation. It is the first ever and they are looking forward to sponsoring it every year.
- GACDA submitted the [annual report](#) to the governor for 2024.
- 2025 The Governor's Office of Disability Affairs Annual Conference is set for July 22-23, 2025.
- Madame Chairperson is compiling a packet for all GACDA members with all the things necessary to be effective within the committee.
- Discussion: The floor was open for discussions and comments. There were none.

15. Updates from the Office of Public Health - Bureau of Family Health

Dana Hubbard gave a presentation on the agency's 6 different programs. The [power point presentation](#) included:

- Children with Special Health Care Needs Services: Clinical Services continues to provide direct specialist care clinics for children and youth with special health care needs in all Louisiana Department of Health regions (except 1 and 7) to meet specialty care needs in provider shortage areas. More information may be found [here](#).
- Transportation assistance provides needed medical appointment transportation assistance for eligible families. They must request transportation assistance through Children's Special Health Care Clinical Services. Families may contact the Family Resource Center (BFH-FamilyResourceCenter@la.gov) or their local Families Helping Families Center for more information.
- Family Resource Centers can connect you to Physical and Mental Health, Care Coordination, Early Childhood Education, and Insurance and Finances.
- Title V Pediatric Medical Home
 - It is a family-centered and team-based approach to providing comprehensive, coordinated primary care and is considered the gold standard for organizing and delivering pediatric health care services.
 - Implementation training and support for Louisiana providers (at no charge) to expand clinic capacity to deliver high quality, efficient pediatric medical home care is provided.
 - Resources, training and implementation support focuses on three key elements:

- Universal Developmental Screening
 - Holistic Care Coordination
 - Youth Health Transition: Adolescent Well-Care
 - More information: Julie.emory@la.gov
- Provider Medical Home Took Kits:
 - [Developmental Screening Toolkit](#)
 - [Care Coordination Toolkit](#)
 - [Youth Health Transition Toolkit](#) (Just Released!)
- Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program
 - It is to ensure that children who are deaf or hard of hearing are identified through hearing screening by one month of age; have received diagnosis by three months of age; and are enrolled in early intervention by six months of age to optimize language, literacy, cognitive, social and emotional development.
 - It provides oversight of newborn hearing screening and the tracking of audiological and early intervention services, to evaluate newborn hearing screening performance at each birthing facility
 - Provides [Newborn Hearing Screening Guidelines](#), [Physician Rescreening Guidelines](#) and [Pediatric Audiology Guidelines](#) for providers who perform hearing screenings and tests.
 - Advisory Council for the Early Identification of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Infants will be held April 25, 2025 from 12- 12:30 pm. Join by Zoom.
 - Contact info:
 - laehdi@la.gov
 - [Louisiana EHDl Program](#)
 - [Partners for Family Health](#)
 - [Infant Hearing.org](http://InfantHearing.org)
- [Louisiana Hands & Voices](#) (H&V) is a statewide parent-driven organization that supports families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
 - H&V advocates for families, shares information, and creates space and time for people to come together and help one another.
 - Interests: Effective newborn hearing screening, identification and early intervention, parent advocacy, education and support, parent and professional collaboration, parent and consumer partnerships, and cultural responsiveness, communication access for children who are deaf or hard of hearing, transitions from Part C to B, pro-active support to regional programs and school district, deaf education reform, legislative issues, educational interpreting services, child abuse and neglect, deaf child bill of rights, parents' right to make informed communication choices and technological access and improvement.
 - [Guide By Your Side \(GBYS\)](#) is a program from Hands & Voices that provides emotional support and unbiased information to families.
 - Parent Guides are available to support families by listening to and sharing stories about their own experiences raising a child who D/HH; share compassion and practical knowledge as parents who have a D/HH child; and are trained to support families without bias towards any particular communication approach (e.g. spoken, sign, cued speech, combined methods, etc)
 - Deaf Guides: are specifically trained to provide support to families with invaluable perspectives that come from personal, lived experience; are uniquely qualified and provide parents with a positive, hopeful perspective from their day-to-day, real-life experiences; and give parents the opportunity to ask questions.
 - To learn more about Hands and Voices, their programs and to become active in Louisiana's state chapter, visit: <https://www.handsandvoices.org/>
- **Louisiana Commission for the Deaf**
 - LCD's mission is to Engage, Empower, and Enrich the lives and opportunities of the Louisiana's Deaf, Deaf/Blind, and Hard of Hearing population. LCD provides people who are Deaf, Deaf/Blind, and Hard of Hearing with programs, services, and resources to ensure full communication access to the world around them.
 - Programs:
 - Hearing aid program- qualifying based on age and income
 - Assistive Technology- free for qualifying individuals free of charge
 - Support Service Providers (SSP)- to assist individuals to live within communities with

independence for deaf- deaf/blind

- Interpreting Program- support for those who use ASL & ASL interpreters
- ACT 128 of 2022 Regular Legislation session –
 - LSC had rulemaking requirements for ASL Interpreters.
 - The focus is on rules related to interpreters working in K-12 education settings, in community settings, and working in court settings which include minimum qualifications standards, registration and renewal processes, and ongoing professional development requirements
 - Additional rules applicable to all settings include grievance processes and procedures
 - A Notice of Intent is expected by March 20, 2025, for pre-K through 12th grade and community sign language interpreters
- Statewide Mentorship Program - Goal: Increase the quality and quantity of American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters working in Louisiana. 2 opportunities available:
 - K-12 Project: A Road to Excellence (Created by LCD)
 - Pilot Project- The Road of Excellence (10 months) July 2024 –May 2025 – 8 current participants
 - Designed for current working K-12 Educational ASL Interpreters
 - Idaho State University Promoting Equity in Healthcare Interpreting Project (PEHI) Partnership - Partnership Goals:
 - Partnership goals: Train interpreters to become specialists in healthcare interpreting through skill enhancement while increasing interpreters' healthcare-specific knowledge (3 participants)
 - Additional Opportunities
 - Applications for additional opportunities for the Interpreter Workforce are coming soon
 - Pre-certification Cohort 1
 - Pre- K Educational Interpreters Cohort 2
- Certification Exam Testing Site - Louisiana Commission for the Deaf partnered with the Center for Assessment of Sign Language Interpreters and Boys Town National Research Hospital to administer certification and assessment exams on their behalf. This allows sign language interpreters to schedule certification or assessment exams within the state, which may eliminate the need for out-of-state travel.
- Approved Continuing Education Unit Certification Maintenance Program Sponsor
 - Louisiana Commission for the Deaf partnered with the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf to approve continuing education units through the Registry of Interpreters' Certification Maintenance Program. This allows sign language interpreters to access learning opportunities to enhance their skills and maintain certification.
 - Continuing Education Unit Opportunities:
 - Academic Coursework
 - Sponsor-Initiated Activities
 - Participant Initiated Non-Registry of Interpreter Activities
 - Outreach & Training Opportunities
 - Offers Deaf Sensitivity Training upon request to organizations to increase awareness of deafness as more than a medical condition, exposure to common barriers, awareness of sign language interpreters/communication strategies and group discussion scenarios and more
 - Customized training courses are available upon request. Call for more information.
- Public Meetings dates scheduled are:
 - Friday, April 25, 2025
 - Friday, July 11, 2025
 - Friday, October 17, 2025
 - All meetings are live-streamed and open to the public.
 - Meeting times are 9 am – 1 pm
 - Location varies. Visit www.lcd.la.gov for more information.
- Louisiana Commission for the Deaf contact information:
 - 800-256-1523

- LCD@la.gov
- <https://lcd.la.gov/>
- Questions: Larry Williams with LDVA asked for a list of different types of assistive devices. Ms. Hubbard responded that devices could vary according to the person's chosen preference of communication and gave examples.

16. Updates from the Office of Citizens with Developmental Disabilities

Erin Downing, Senior Advisor at OCDD gave an agency update.

- OCDD continues to work on the ARPA initiatives.
- March 5th Medicaid did approve their value-based payments model.
- They will continue to work towards access rule compliance.
- The floor was opened to comments and questions. There were none.

17. Updates from the Louisiana Rehabilitation Services

Liam Doyle, GODA Assistant Director, gave updates for LRS

- Participants: As of March 7, 2025, LRS has 9,228 open cases in Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and 4,139 open cases in potentially eligible for students with disabilities only receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).
- Order of Selection: LRS currently has all three Order of Selection (OOS) categories open. All participants who apply and are determined eligible for VR services are being served at this time.
- Vacancies/Job Appointments: LRS is currently in the process of filling several vacancies for rehabilitation counselor positions in both probational/permanent classified positions and job appointments.
- Pre-ETS Vendor Applications: Vendor applications for next school year are currently being reviewed. LRS may have to reduce the number of units of services provided per student. Once the budget is final after the legislative session, this information will be provided.
- Louisiana Rehabilitation Council: The next Louisiana Rehabilitation Council (LRC) quarterly meeting is scheduled for April 24, 2025. The meeting will be held in Baton Rouge, details forthcoming.
- There were no questions or comments.

18. Updates from the Office of Behavioral Health

Dr. Ashley Jefferson, Senior Advisor, gave an agency update.

- Louisiana 988 Helpline for mental health-related distress is still up and going on and has been successful. [Helpline](#)
- Resources:
 - [OBH](#)
 - [Crisis System of Care](#)
 - Ashley.Jefferson@la.gov
- Louisiana was one of the 15 states that were awarded a state planning Grant for certified behavioral health clinics or CCBHCS.
 - The purpose of this planning grant is to support any state who has been chosen in developing and implementing certification systems for those certified behavioral health clinics.
 - Another piece of the grant is to establish prospective payment systems for Medicaid reimbursable behavioral health services and also to prepare an application to assist in a demonstration program for CCBHCS.
 - This model provides a comprehensive coordinated, community-based care for individuals across a lifespan with an at risk for serious mental illness or emotional disturbance, substance use disorders, and or co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders.
 - The model is designed to increase access to an array of outpatient behavioral health services including crisis services, services that are responsive to the local needs of the individuals living

in the state and to incorporate more evidence-based practices in the service array and establish care coordination as a linchpin for their service delivery.

- Crisis team is working hard to implement crisis care services to provide more access and more availability to Louisiana citizens,
- Policy academy is to assist the crisis team with further expanding the crisis system.
- The floor was open for comments and/or questions. There were no questions or comments.

19. Updates from the LA Developmental Disabilities Council

Liam Doyle, Assistant Director GODA, gave a brief agency update.

- Federal Fiscal Year 26 (FFY26) Planning Committee will meet April 1, 2025 from 9 AM – 4 PM. The public is encouraged to attend to provide suggestions and feedback on possible Council initiatives for next year. All initiatives must be aligned with the Council's current [Five Year Plan](#).
- The Council's next quarterly committee and business meetings will be held April 30 – May 1, 2025. The quarterly meeting will be held at the Bluebonnet Library in Baton Rouge. If you would like to participate virtually or provide public comment in advance of public meetings, all links and information can be found on the [Council's meetings page](#).
- Information about upcoming training opportunities for Council initiatives are sent via LaDDC News. You can view all news articles at <https://laddc.org/news/>.
- The council will be advocating for two important issues: affecting disability services and restoring funding for Families Helping Families centers.
- Legislative Roundtables are being held in all regions of the state. The schedule for the Roundtables can be found at <https://laddc.org/lacan/>
- All factsheets are posted on the [Council's website](#) and will be updated as needed throughout the legislative session. Additional fact sheets have been added regarding potential cuts to Medicaid and Louisiana's lawsuit against Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.
- The Council is reviewing legislation filed for the 2026 Fiscal Session to determine if any bills will impact the disability community. Our tracking document will be publicly available prior to the start of the session in April and will be updated throughout the session.
- We are working with the Arc of LA. and Disability Rights of LA. on legislation that will help address concerns about restraint and seclusion. This is in response to the restraint and seclusion audit of the Louisiana Department of Education that was released in December. More details will be released once bill language has been drafted and approved.
- LaCAN Leaders will also be conducting visits with regional delegations now and throughout the session to educate them on the Council's agenda. If you would like to participate in legislative visits or provide testimony on the advocacy agenda, please reach out to your [LaCAN Leader](#) today.
- Yellow Shirt Days: These dates are tentative, and more detailed information will be shared at a later date:
 - March 25th – Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) FY26 budget presentation in Senate Finance
 - March 26th – Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) will discuss the restraint and seclusion audit
 - April 8th – LDH FY26 budget Presentation in House Appropriations
 - April 15th – Public Testimony Day in House Appropriations
- The Council is in the early stages of its Five-Year Planning for FFY 2027 - 2031. They sent out a LaDDC News asking for concept papers to get innovative ideas for the upcoming plan. We will be hosting public forums to solicit ideas and feedback from the public to determine areas of emphasis and possible strategies to address needs over the next five years. Once scheduled, a LaDDC newsletter will be sent to announce the forum dates and times.
- March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, and the Council is excited to partner with the National Association of Council's on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) on the "We're Here All Year" disability awareness campaign.
- NACDD is taking submissions for the "We're Here All Year" photo gallery that will be unveiled in April! Submit your photos and the stories behind the photo of you, your friends, and family members living, playing, and working – and enjoying their community! To learn more about the campaign and submit your story, visit: [here](#).

- The floor was open for comments and/or questions. There were no questions or comments.

20. Updates from the Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs

Liam Doyle, Assistant Director GODA, gave an [update/report](#) for the agency.

- GOEA serves as an effective and visible advocate for the elderly population of Louisiana, ensuring seniors in need receive appropriate services from providers in the Aging Network.
- GOEA is the designated State Unit on Aging and is the administrator of the Federal Older Americans Act ("OAA") program services through the network of Louisiana's Area Agencies on Aging ("AAAs") and Councils on Aging ("COAs"):
- Many of the services provided:
 - Home Delivered Meals Congregate Meals
 - Nutrition Counseling Nutrition Education
 - Assisted Transportation Information & Assistance
 - Outreach Medical Transportation
 - Adult Day Health Care Group Respite
 - In-Home Respite Wellness
 - Individual Counseling Material Aid
 - Personal Caregiver Public Education
 - Caregiver Sitter Service Support Group
 - Counseling Crime Prevention
 - Homemaker Legal Assistance
 - Medical Alert Medication Management
 - Recreation Telephoning
 - Utility Assistance Visiting
- Other services provided through GOEA, or provided by partnerships, are SeniorRx Prescription Assistance, National Family Caregiver Support, Louisiana Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act ("MIPPA") Program and the Senior Employment Program.
- Programs of GOEA:
 - Long Term Care Ombudsman -
 - Long Term Care Ombudsman program is a federal and state funded program mandated to advocate on behalf of residents of long-term care facilities and to ensure that the rights of the residents of the long-term care facilities are being maintained. Ombudsman and Ombudsman volunteers make monthly visits to long-term care facilities across the state.
 - Louisiana has 269 nursing homes and 152 assisted living facilities accommodating approximately 44,000 residents.
 - There are 26 staff and volunteer ombudsmen in the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program.
 - For information, contact the State LTC Ombudsman, at 225-342-7100
 - Elderly Protective Services ("EPS")
 - EPS is mandated by Louisiana Revised Statutes 15:1501 *et seq.* to prevent, remedy, halt, or hinder acts of abuse and neglect against an older person in the community while promoting the maximum degree of personal freedom, dignity, and self-determination for that individual. EPS has six regional offices to respond to reports of abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
 - The purpose of EPS is to protect adults who cannot physically or mentally protect themselves and who are harmed or threatened with harm through action or inaction by themselves or by the individuals responsible for their care or by other persons. A total of 3,854 cases have been assigned since July 1, 2024.
 - The types of reports of abuse are as follows, as of the end of June:
 - Caregiver Neglect = 761
 - Emotional Abuse = 289
 - Extortion = 14

- Financial Exploitation = 1,304
- Physical Abuse = 308
- Self- Neglect = 1,249
- Sexual Abuse = 18
- Other = 19
- GOEA is currently in the process of adding new positions to staff. We will be adding several new supervisory positions and investigators for the Elderly Protective Services Unit.
- For more information about EPS, contact 1-800-259-4990.
- Aging and Disability Resource Centers (“ADRC”)
 - Each ADRC serves as a clearinghouse for an array of long-term care options, prescription assistance, and other resources available in Louisiana to elderly and disabled adults aged 21 and over.
 - The nine ADRCs in the state are housed within either a AAA or a COA.
 - For more information about ADRC, contact the toll- free Louisiana information, referral, and assistance line at 877-340-9100
- Louisiana Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act Program (MIPPA)
 - MIPPA is a federal grant to provide education, outreach and enrollment assistance to Medicare-eligible individuals relevant to Medicare
 - Medicare services, the Low-Income Subsidy Program (“LIS”) and the Medicare Savings Plan (“MSP”). This project continues to offer enrollment assistance for the LIS, MSP, conduct Medicare Part D Counseling, Medicare Part D enrollment assistance, and conduct follow-ups to ensure the needs of the client beyond Medicare have been met.
 - For Medicare Information and Counseling, call 1-877-340-9100 toll free.
- Recent News:
 - GOEA is hosting a Sub grantee Conference on April 1st thru the 3rd at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Baton Rouge.
 - GOEA continues to work on developing changes in our Policies & Procedures to comply with the new provisions of the older Americans Act to be compliant by October 2025.
 - Our next Louisiana Executive Board on Aging quarterly meeting will be held on April 24, 2025.
 - GOEA continues to work with the Emergency Management for Disabled and Aged Coalition (“EMDAC”), Feeding Task Force and other Response/Recovery Support Function groups. These activities are structured to plan and implement activities prior to an emergency, during the emergency, and post emergency for expedient recovery for the constituents and the state.
- The floor was open for comments and/or questions. There were no questions or comments.

21. Updates from the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs

Jamar Ennis- GODA Executive Director, gave an update for GODA.

- There will be a change in leadership at the Governor’s office. Andree Miller is leaving for the public sector, and Ryan Roberts will be replacing her.
- The 2025 Legislative session will begin on April 14, 2025. GODA will be tracking and monitoring the session to follow the supportive legislation that will affect our office. GODA will have a tracking document that is live. It will be available through the GODA newsletter.
- GODA is planning for the first Disabilities Day at the Capitol June 2, 2025, with the Split Second Foundation cosponsoring. Updates will be in the GODA newsletter and social media.
- GODA conference is set for July. Anyone interested should contact the GODA office.
- Jamar was recently selected and nominated to the Board of Social Work. He is looking forward to bringing disability issues and related issues to the table.
- GODA is still working on establishing a date for their mayors’ initiative for emergency preparedness, networking with other disability-centric committees councils, and state governments, ADA accessibility, open meetings laws, and transportation.
- Please submit any proclamation/certificate requests, appearances, or celebrations to the GODA office.

- GACDA did submit an [annual report](#) to the Governor about all of the accomplishments of our council.
- The floor was open for comments and/or questions. There were no questions or comments.

22. Public Questions/Comments:

Madam Chairperson opened the floor for any public questions or comments. There were none.

23. Adjournment:

Jamar Ennis made a motion to adjourn. Ashley Allen and Rikki David seconded the motion. The motion to adjourn the meeting passed without any objections, abstentions, or discussion. The meeting was adjourned at 2:05 pm.