

THSCI Trust Fund Advisory Board

MINUTES

August 8, 2024 | 10:00 a.m. | Office of Aging and Adult Services

I. CALL TO ORDER

Andrew Kuyoro, the Chair of the Board, called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

II. ATTENDANCE

Board Members: Dr. Andrew Kuyoro, Gearry Williams, Melissa Bayham, Dr. Bern Lee, Gary Matherne, Senator Franklin Foil, Rep. Lawrence Bagley, John Fanning, Sen. Bill Wheat, and Yvette Pacaccio-Neelis

Not Present: Dr. Andrea Toomer, Robert Chatelain, and Stephanie Fletcher

Agency Staff: Tonia Gedward, Ebony Thomas, John Korduner, Valencia Roberts, and Ayanna Wilson

Other Attendees: Kimberly Hill

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The board approved the minutes from the meeting held on November 8, 2023. A motion was made by Dr. Kuyoro to approve the minutes and other board members seconded the motion. **Motion Passed**

IV. ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. THSCI Trust Fund Program Financial Report

Tonia Gedward, the THSCI Trust Fund Program Manager, presented the program's financial report which included the program's budget and expenditure information. She asked that the board review the report. Lora explained the budget amount and stated the program is getting back to our pre-COVID collections. Tonia asked if there were any questions. Mrs. Pacaccio-Neelis asked if the monies coming were state funds and collections. Lora explained the state funding and collections further. Rep. Bagley asked if the collections from the municipalities have improved. Tonia stated the collections have improved and the program is back to where we were as far as collecting consistently. The board discussed some ideas of how to have the municipality pay their fines to help the program. Tonia mentioned that we have a participant who's a police officer and is not happy with the \$15,000 per year and the \$50,000 max. She stated the

participant suggested that we add some other violations such as *Careless Operations (which is the lesser conviction for Reckless Operation but it's a different offense)*, *Use of cell phones while driving (fairly new law)*, *Failing to obey signs and signals*, *Illegal left or right turn at an intersection*, *Running Red lights*, *Following too Closely*, *Passing in no-passing zones*, *Improper lane usage*, *Driver under suspension*, *Seatbelt/Child Restraints*, and *Insurance violations that go through city court*. Tonia stated we will discuss these ideas at the next meeting. Dr. Andrew made a motion to accept the report. Several board members seconded the motion. **Motion Passed**

2. THSCI Trust Fund Program Manager's Operational Report

Tonia Gedward presented the program's operational report which included a summary of the program's day-to-day operations, quarterly performance, and statistical information. She mentioned that there were 561 program participants and 257 applicants on the waitlist. She also reported on other daily tasks such as requests for goods and services, payments to vendors, annual assessments, and caseload changes.

Tonia stated the name change for the program has been approved. She added at this time LDH is working on finalizing the name change internally. Eventually, LDH will have to change the name on all the documents from Traumatic Head and Spinal Cord Injury to Traumatic Brain and Spinal Cord Injury. She stated that would put the State of Louisiana in alignment with most of the other states. She asked if there were any questions.

Dr. Kuyoro suggested putting monies aside to help those on the waitlist until they are approved for the program. Tonia stated it is in the statute that the program is first come, first serve. She stated she would get with LDH Legal to see if the first come, first serve is not an issue. She added if it is not an issue it is something we can bring to the table.

Tonia stated in the history of the program individuals whose injuries have been caused by a surgical procedure have always been ineligibility. She added is this something the program should continue to deny or should we revisit the fault of injury. She asked should the program approve someone who's had a spinal cord injury because of a surgery that went wrong. The board discussed different outcomes of a surgery that went wrong. She added at this time the program will continue to not approve surgical injuries. She asked if we should have this discussion at the next meeting.

Lastly, Tonia asked the board to review the suggestions made by Dr. Lee. She explained that the difference with the suggestions is that the form asked further questions about the anoxia. Dr. Andrew made a motion to accept the changes to the Medical Eligibility Form. Several board members seconded the motion. **Motion Passed.** Tonia stated she would bring the changes to LDH Legal

Executive Management. She stated internally they will decide if the program will be able to make these changes. She added we she would let the board know what the outcome was at the next meeting. Tonia stated the program could look into changing the rule if necessary.

3. THSCI Trust Fund Program's Resource Center Report

Kimberly Hill, the Executive Director of the Brain Injury Association of Louisiana (BIALA), presented the resource center's report which included a summary of the center's day-to-day operations and accomplishments. She also talked about the 15th annual BIALA conference in March. She added it was the largest conference attending the conference which had 238 healthcare professionals, caregivers, and individuals living with brain and spinal cord injuries in attendance. She added there were 40 speakers, two different tracks one on brain injury and the other on spinal cord injury. Along with 40 different companies in their exhibit hall which was the best they ever had. She stated the upcoming conference is March 28-29, 2025. She asked for help with finding presenters.

Kimberly informed the board that since January BIALA has started two new support groups. She added two caregiver support groups have also started. She stated through the Craig H. Neilsen grant, BIALA was able to host four different recreational community events this year around the state. She added they have a few more planned. They have also hosted three Adaptive Yoga sessions and sponsored an Adaptive Water Skiing Program that offers clinics throughout the summer.

Kimberly added in August of last year, BIALA created a new program called Craig Cares. The new program resulted from a generous donation and provides up to \$500 grants to help individuals with spinal cord injuries obtain necessary equipment or help with needs that insurance doesn't cover. She stated the majority of the things BIALA covers are ramps and adaptive bathroom equipment. She added to date BIALA has provided \$17,600 in equipment to 22 individuals around the state.

Kimberly stated in March, BIALA attended the Brain Injury Awareness Day on Capitol Hill with the Brain Injury Association of America. She added BIALA's focus was to educate lawmakers on the TBI Act which is an important Bill that's up for reauthorization. The TBI Act provides much-needed funding to improve rehabilitation and community support for people with brain injuries. She added Louisiana does not get any funding for the TBI Act. She stated if there were it would be something she and Tonia would be willing to work on to receive additional funding for the state.

Kimberly stated in June six representatives from Louisiana participated in United Spinal Associations Advocacy Day. She added that BIALA had some successful

Zoom meetings with the congressional officers that they met with. She stated some of the topics discussed were wheelchair repairs, wheelchair service reform, increasing the length of stay in rehabilitation hospitals after injuries, and improving home and community-based care. She mentioned the resource backpacks filled with valuable resources have been distributed to rehabilitation and acute hospitals around the state.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments

VI. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 11:28 a.m. The next board meeting is scheduled for November 14, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.

2024 THSCI ADVISORY BOARD MEETINGS:

~~February 8, 2024~~

~~May 9, 2024~~

~~August 8, 2024~~

November 14, 2024