

THSCI Trust Fund Advisory Board
MINUTES
February 13, 2025 | 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 10:05 a.m.

II. ATTENDANCE

Board Members: Dr. Andrew Kuyoro, Melissa Bayham, Elizabeth Morgan, Roxane Bingham, Dr. Jason Cormier, Gary Matherne, Gearry Williams and Yvette Paccacio

Not Present: Dr. Bern Lee, John Fanning, Senator Bill Wheat, Dr. Floyd Roberts, and Rep. Lawrence Bagley

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

Other Attendees: Kimberly Hill

III. APPROVAL OF Minutes

The board approved the minutes from the meeting held on August 8, 2024. 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 explained funding to the new members. She stated the projected amount for the end of the fiscal year is \$29,000. She stated that the program is in the process of reviewing 68 applicants from the waitlist. She added once the program makes a final determination on those applicants the spending will increase. She explained to the new boards how the program receives funding. She explained the outreach efforts performed by program staff to remind the municipalities that they should be submitting payments to the program. Dr. Cormier suggested inserting a process where

Medicaid can be offered to the applicant (a Medicaid referral process). Tonia stated that was a good idea. She added the question is asked if they have Medicaid or Medicare, however, the program only asks for awareness purposes. Tonia stated the program can add the question "Have you applied for Medicaid" to the application. She asked if there were any questions. 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 545 program participants. 357 of those participants have Traumatic Spinal Cord Injuries, 187 have Traumatic Brain Injuries and 1 has both. There are 228 applicants on the waitlist with an application date dating back to 2022. 13 applicants have been added to the waitlist since the last Advisory Board Meeting, which was held in November 2024. She added the program mailed 22 applications to individuals inquiring about the program since November. She also reported on other daily tasks such as requests for goods and services, payments to vendors, annual assessments, and caseload changes.

In November, the program mailed 218 notification letters to participants who had not spent any of their funds over a year or more. Tonia explained that the program sends these letters to remind the participants that they still have funds available because the participants may forget the program. She added the Support Coordinator agencies contacting the participants every three months. Also, her staff performs a survey twice a year, where they pick random participants to call to find out if they were contacted by their support coordinators in the last three months.

Tonia stated her staff mailed 67 letters to Louisiana municipalities that made three payments or less in the last twelve months. She stated the program has some municipalities that may pay every three months. The board made suggestions on how the program can get the municipalities to pay. Mr. Matherne suggested posting the announcement in the Louisiana Municipalities Association (LMA) newsletter once a month. Dr. Kuyoro suggested a Zoom call with the municipalities. Other suggestions were to mail letters with copies of the Legislation to all annually, attend LMA meetings, and post participant testimonies in BIALA's monthly newsletter.

Tonia informed the board that the program is still working on changing the name of the program from Traumatic Head and Spinal Cord Injury to Traumatic Brain and Spinal Cord Injury. She stated program will be more in line with other states. She added hopefully it will be changed by this summer. Dr. Kuyoro further explained the reason for the name change.

Tonia spoke to the board about Emergency Funding for applicants which was mentioned in a previous meeting. She explained to the new members that the

emergency funding would be set aside for applicants who are newly injured so that they can get some type of funding for what they may need as they apply. She informed the board that the program has a waitlist and most of the time when the applicant is newly injured they need help right away. She stated because the program policy is first-come-first-serve; it would be difficult to implement an emergency fund. She stated she did some research and gave the board examples of the advantages and disadvantages of emergency funding.

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. Kimberly said BIALA continues to educate medical facilities around the state about the THSCI Trust Fund program and shares applications. She also talked about the upcoming annual BIALA conference.

Kimberly informed the board that BIALA just completed its work with the LSU Department of Psychology as the Community Partner for LA CaTs (Louisiana Clinical and Translational Science Center) research grant on caregiving in conjunction with individuals living with brain injuries. BIALA connected the researchers with 70 individuals living with brain injuries and/or caregivers to participate in the study. Kimberly added that BIALA created a new program called Craig Cares. The new program resulted from a generous donation and has provided up to \$32,000 in equipment to help individuals with basic needs to be more independent in their own homes. 42 individuals (32 back in November) have benefited from these grants from all over the state. She added seeing the impact these grants have made, they will continue to raise funds for this program. She stated on behalf of the board of directors and staff of BIALA, she would like to thank the board for their continued support. Because of the support, BIALA will continue its mission to be the statewide resource for people impacted by brain and/or spinal cord injury.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

Brandon Milner, a participant of the program spoke on possible ways to increase funding through adding additional traffic violations to the fees. He stated that he has a representative who is willing to sponsor the bill. Board members thought this was a good idea and informed him that the board would be discussing this more at the next meeting.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m. The next board meeting is scheduled for May 8, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.

2024 THSCI ADVISORY BOARD MEETINGS:

May 8, 2025

August 7, 2025

November 13, 2025