

**THSCI Trust Fund Advisory Board
MINUTES**

August 7, 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 10:06 a.m.

II. ATTENDANCE

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

Not Present: John Fanning, Senator Bill Wheat, and Rep. Lawrence Bagley

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

Other Attendees: Kimberly Hill

III. APPROVAL OF Minutes

The board approved the minutes from the meeting held on February 13, 2025. 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. TBSCI Trust Fund Program Financial Report

Tonia Gedward, the TBSCI Trust Fund Program Manager, presented the program's financial report, which included the program's budget and expenditure information. She stated we have \$29,000 left in the budget as we are at the end of the fiscal year. She stated that the program did well. She stated we are in the process of adding new participants to the program, which will increase the expenditures for next year. She asked if there were any questions about the budget. She added that after reviewing 88 applicants, adding around 66 participants to the program, we will be at our max with the budget. Dr. Andrew made a motion to accept the report. Several board members seconded the motion. **Motion Passed**

2. TBSCI 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 stated that in the last three months, the program received 132 requests for goods and services. Once the requests were approved, they were forwarded to a staff member to create a Purchase Authorization (PA). The PA is a formal approval document that explains the program's payment terms to the vendors. 109 PAs were created based on the approved requests. The program also processed 296 payment requests and inquiries, which included 250 to vendors and 46 to participants for reimbursement.

She mentioned that there were 590 program participants. 382 of those participants have Traumatic Spinal Cord Injuries, 208 have Traumatic Brain Injuries. There are 172 applicants on the waitlist, and the applications date back to 2023 to current. 60 applicants have been added to the waitlist since the last Advisory Board Meeting, which was held in February 2025. She added that the program mailed 37 applications to individuals inquiring about the program since February. She also reported on other daily tasks such as requests for goods and services, payments to vendors, annual assessments, and caseload changes.

She added, the program removed 88 applicants from waitlist status to eligibility determination review status. This includes 2022 and some of 2023 applicants who were on the waitlist. This means that the program is in the process of obtaining all required documentation to determine if the applicants are eligible for services. If the applicants are determined eligible, the new participants can start requesting goods and services immediately.

Tonia informed the board that the program has formally been changed from the Traumatic Head and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund program to the Traumatic Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund program. She stated she is currently working on updating the program forms to reflect the change. She informed the board that information on how to apply for Medicaid was added to the program's eligibility determination letters.

Tonia said that during the previous meeting, Dr. Kuyoro asked that she reach out to LMA to see if he could meet with an LMA representative. She spoke with Ginger Eppes, the Corporate Relations Manager, who stated that there is a Mayor's Court Session that will include 125 clerks during the week of October 19th through the 24th. She stated that Dr. Kuyoro is more than welcome to present some information at the conference. Tonia forwarded the information to Dr. Kuyoro. Dr. Kuyoro asked the board to attend the session as well.

Tonia spoke to the board about Brandon Milner, a participant in the program, and discussed possible ways to increase funding by adding additional traffic violations to the fees imposed on motor vehicle violations. He also stated that he has a representative who is willing to sponsor the bill. Some of the violations he suggested were 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
- An 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
- Insurance violations that go through the city court

Rep. Bagley stated that it may be easier to request additional funds to be added to the program's overall budget. He said that he would talk with Senator Wheat about adding additional funds to the budget. He also asked Tonia to prepare an estimate showing the total amount of funds required to get rid of the waitlist.

Tonia asked the board to review the program's Medical Eligibility Form (MEF). She informed the board that she updated the form by adding a section for Goods and Services recommendations. She stated this section is helpful when reviewing the MEF because it supports the Functional Outcomes question. She added that she will ask the Support Coordinators to refer to the form to start requesting goods and services from the program. She asked Dr. Lee to discuss the changes he recommended for the Medical Eligibility Form. It was decided that the MEF will be discussed at the next board meeting.

3. TBSCI 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 TBSCI Trust Fund program and shares applications. She also talked about the upcoming annual BIALA conference.

Kimberly shared with them that BIALA has distributed 200 resource backpacks to rehabilitation hospitals statewide since May. The backpacks are given to newly injured patients to help navigate the early stages of recovery. She added that each one includes a trust fund application and other pertinent information they can use on their new journey. In the next few months, as funding becomes available, BIALA plans to assemble additional backpacks.

She informed the board that on June 2nd, BIALA participated in its first Disability Awareness Day at the Louisiana State Capitol. During this event, they met with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and his Assistant Secretary of Outreach, who were previously unaware of the Traumatic Brain and Spinal Cord Injury (TBSCI) program. Since then, they have connected and shared information about the TBSCI program and BIALA. She stated they were honored to be one of the organizations that

received a proclamation from Governor Landry, officially declaring June 2, 2025, as Disability Awareness Day in Louisiana.

She stated BIALA was awarded a grant from the Christopher Reeve Foundation that allowed them to enhance their virtual support offerings. They will continue to host two virtual support group sessions per month, now with guest speakers covering topics related to wellness and education. In addition, BIALA will offer virtual social events and several community gatherings for individuals living with brain and/or spinal cord injuries and their families. She added that these activities are designed to build stronger support systems, increase awareness of BIALA's services, and improve quality of life.

Kimberly added that the BIALA Craig Cares program continues to raise funds, which provides grants to help newly injured individuals with spinal cord injuries. The new program resulted from a generous donation and has raised over \$40,000 and helped 50 individuals across the state. She added that they are actively seeking additional funding to sustain and expand the program.

She shared that because of BIALA's strong commitment as the state affiliate of the United Spinal Association, they were selected to receive disaster relief funding to support individuals they serve in Louisiana who are affected by natural disasters. They now have access to up to \$100,000 in relief funds for 2025, if needed. She stated planning is already underway for BIALA's 2026 annual conference, which will be held March 27-28, 2026, in Kenner, LA.

Lastly, 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

VI. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 11:18 a.m. The next board meeting is scheduled for November 13, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.

2025 TBSCI ADVISORY BOARD MEETINGS:

May 8, 2025

August 7, 2025

November 13, 2025