

**Traumatic Brain & Spinal Cord Injury (TBSCI) Trust Fund Advisory Board**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**May 14, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.**

**Office of Aging and Adult Services**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Dr. Andrew Kuyoro called the meeting to order at approximately 10:10 a.m.

**II. ATTENDANCE**

**Board Members Present**

Dr. Andrew Kuyoro; Gary Matherne; Dr. John Fanning; Dr. Bern G. Lee; Dr. Beverly Gladney; Melissa Bayham; Roxane E. Bingham; Dr. Elizabeth N. Morgan; Gearry T. Williams

**Board Members Not Present**

Senator William “Bill” Wheat, Jr.; Yvette D. Pacaccio; Dr. Jason Cormier; Representative Lawrence Bagley

**Agency Staff Present**

Tonia Gedward, Ebony Thomas, Valencia Roberts

**Other Attendees Present**

Charlie Picou; Kimberly Hill

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Dr. Kuyoro asked whether the spelling of Christopher Reeve’s last name has an “s” at the end. Members of the Board confirmed that the last name does not contain an “s.” Therefore, the name is correct as is in the previous minutes from the meeting held on November 13, 2025. The Board approved the minutes as is from the meeting held on November 13, 2025. Dr. John Fanning made a motion to approve the minutes as stated; Gary Matherne seconded the motion. **Motion Passed.**

**IV. ORDER OF BUSINESS**

**a. TBSCI Financial Report**

The TBSCI Trust Fund Program Manager, Tonia Gedward, presented the program’s financial report, including the budget and expenditures. She stated that an estimated \$145,000 is projected to remain at the end of the fiscal year. The plan is to use those funds to reduce the waiting list (if the projection is correct).

Gary Matherne inquired about the Aware cost reflected in February. Tonia explained that Aware is one of two systems the program uses to calculate participants’ annual balances. Each year, TBSCI pays a portion of the cost that Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) pays to use the Aware system. The \$15,000 represents TBSCI’s cost for four staff members' use of the system. Melissa Bayham, the LRS Director, stated that the TBSCI program’s portion will continue to increase as costs rise.

Kim inquired about the NASHIA membership listed on the report. Tonia stated that she will look into it and determine why it is not included.

Gary Matherne moved to adopt the financial report. Gearry Williams seconded the motion. **Motion passed.**

## **b. TBSCI Program Status**

### **i. Program Summary**

Tonia stated that as of May 13, 2026, there are 222 applicants on the waitlist. These applications date back to 2023. Once the program reviews funding availability, it can determine whether it can perform eligibility determinations for waitlisted individuals.

Tonia provided the Board with a copy of the current TBSCI Application for Services, noting that the changes to the Medical Eligibility Form (MEF) were approved.

The program has 594 eligible participants, including 384 individuals with traumatic spinal cord injuries and 210 with traumatic brain injuries. During the reporting period, 101 requests for goods and services were submitted, resulting in 91 Purchase Authorizations. A total of 162 payment requests were processed, consisting of 149 vendor payments and 13 participant reimbursements.

### **ii. BIALA's Contract Budget**

Under Revised Statute 46:2633(D)(2), the department may allocate up to \$50,000 annually for the information resource center. Because the statute sets this amount, the BIALA contract is not eligible for an increase. After reviewing BIALA's contract budget, Tonia asked the Board to assist and support efforts to pursue a \$10,000 statutory increase during the next legislative session.

Dr. Beverly Gladney asked the Program Manager to provide the number of services issued to new participants in 2025 (at the next meeting). Dr. Kuyoro asked that future reporting include year-to-year comparisons using charts and graphs.

## **c. BIALA Update**

Kim Hill reported that the resource center remains active, with the helpline receiving an average of 27 calls per month. The website continues to be beneficial, averaging 2,170 page views per month. Outreach activities average 27 per month.

For the first time, BIALA has been actively involved in two bills introduced this legislative session. Special thanks were extended to Senator Wheat for sponsoring SB295, which, if enacted, would require commercial insurance companies to cover cognitive rehabilitation in post-acute settings. BIALA collaborated with Blue Cross on amendments to the bill and successfully gained their support. Unfortunately, a fiscal note was attached to the bill, creating challenges due to the current state budget deficit. If the bill does not pass this session, they plan to reintroduce it in 2027.

The second bill, HB 1244, was introduced by Representative Lauren Ventrella. This legislation would allow individuals to voluntarily add a brain injury designation to their Louisiana driver's license or state ID. The designation would require medical documentation from a physician. The bill passed the House and is now pending before the Senate Transportation Committee. The Office of Motor Vehicles and the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement (LCLE) both appeared in support of the bill. If passed, BIALA will work with LCLE to develop training opportunities for law enforcement personnel.

On March 27–28, BIALA presented its 17th Annual Conference. Kim thanked Tonia and Ebony for attending. Also in March, BIALA represented Louisiana at the Brain Injury Association of America Annual Advocacy Event in Washington, D.C., meeting with six congressional offices to raise awareness about the needs of individuals living with brain injuries.

Continuing its advocacy efforts, BIALA participated in the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs' Disability Awareness Day at the State Capitol in May to raise awareness and support individuals impacted by brain and spinal cord injuries.

From May 22–24, BIALA will host its first-ever weekend camp for individuals living with brain injuries, spinal cord injuries, and their caregivers. BIALA will partner with the Brain Injury Association of Mississippi to learn from their successful camp model. Thanks to generous sponsorship support, the three-day camp is offered free of charge to all attendees. The camp is fully accessible and designed to create meaningful opportunities for connection, recreation, and support. TBSCI Program Support Coordinator Crystal Turner, with The Arc of Louisiana, is volunteering at the camp.

Kim also discussed BIALA's contract budget, including funding allocations for salaries, outreach, rent, technology (phone, internet, toll-free service), office supplies, and materials.

OAAS Assistant Secretary Gary Williams asked Kim what she would do differently or additionally if the resource center received increased funding. Kim stated that additional funding would support expanded travel, outreach, and printed materials for hospitals. Dr. Morgan noted that some larger hospitals and health systems have in-house printing capabilities and may be willing to assist.

#### **V. OTHER BUSINESS**

Andrew Kuyoro mentioned that the Board has become progressively more structured and focused, and he would like that momentum and progress not to be lost. Therefore, just in case he, being the Chairperson, is not present at a meeting, he suggested that they choose a Vice Chairperson. Andrew nominated Gary Matherne; no one else had any nominees. Gary Matherne made a motion and he accepted the position. No objections to the motion were made. **Motion passed.**

Andrew also inquired about travel reimbursement for the Board members. Tonia stated that the travel policy and procedures have changed significantly, and she will check with staff regarding the current process for Board members.

#### **VI. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

#### **VII. ADJOURNMENT**

There were no further questions or business to discuss; therefore, Dr. Andrew Kuyoro adjourned the meeting at 10:42 a.m. The next Board meeting is scheduled for August 13, 2026.

#### **2026 MEETING SCHEDULE**

February 12, 2026

May 14, 2026

August 13, 2026

November 12, 2026