

Council Meeting Summary

October 17, 2024, 8:30 A.M. – 3:30 P.M.

5615 Corporate Blvd. Ste. 300A B.R., LA 70808

LIVE Streamed Via YouTube

You can watch the meeting here: <https://www.youtube.com/@LADDCouncil/streams>

View meeting transcript [here](#).

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cherie Kelly-Aduli
Patti Barovechio,
OPH/CSHS
Melissa Bayham, LRS
Brain Bennett, Medicaid
Michael Billings
Cheri Crain, GOEA
Jamar Ennis, GODA
Christi Gonzales
Julie Foster Hagan, OCDD
Jill Hano
Angela Harmon
Roslyn Hymel
Meredith Jordan, LDOE
Tony Piontek
Tory Rocca, DRLA
Brooke Stewart

Erick Taylor
Renoda Washington
Vivienne Webb
Lauren Womack

MEMBERS ABSENT

Pasqueal Nguyen
Phil Wilson, LSU-HDC

GUESTS PRESENT*

Constance Alphonse, LSU-
HDC
Lillian DeJean
Nicole DeJean
Nicole Flores
Rebecca Frugé
April Hampton

Lynsey Hebert,
Transcriptionist
Nicole Learson,
Parliamentarian
Kelly Monroe
Jacki Pierce
Danielle Poret
James Sprinkle
Mimi Webb
Garry Williams, OAAS

STAFF PRESENT

Brenton Andrus
Rekeesha Branch
Lauren Brown
Ebony Haven
Hannah Jenkins
Bridgette Talley

*Zoom did not capture the names of virtual attendees present at the October 2024 quarterly meeting.

Christi Gonzales called the meeting to order at 8:44 a.m. with a quorum present.

Mr. Tony Piontek was present for the July 2024 meeting but was marked as absent on the summary. Council staff will make that correction and repost the July 2024 Meeting Summary. The [July 2024 Meeting Summary](#) was approved by unanimous consent as corrected.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT – Christi Gonzales

Executive Committee

The Committee discussed the Council's Mission Statement for the new 2027-2031 Five Year Plan approved at the July meeting. Council staff recommended a more accessible and easy-to-read mission statement since the Council is redesigning the Council website including working on plain language documents.

MOTION PASSED: The Executive Committee recommends approval of the revised Mission Statement for the new 2027-2031 State Plan:

“To help Louisianans with intellectual and developmental disabilities live more independently, make their own choices, be more productive, and be fully included in all aspects of community living.”

Motion passed with 18 yeas, 0 nays and no abstentions.

The Committee also discussed the Council’s Position Papers for the new 2027-2031 Five Year Plan. The Council develops policy position statements and papers in areas of emphasis and regarding current issues being considered by policymakers including:

- **Community Supports**
- **Self-Determination**
- **Inclusion**
- **Healthcare**
- **Inclusive Education**
- **Employment**

Again, the Council staff made updates to make the language more accessible and easy-to-read.

MOTION PASSED: The Executive Committee recommends approval of the revised Position Papers for the new 2027-2031 State Plan. **Motion passed with 19 yeas, 0 nays and no abstentions.**

The Committee also discussed the upcoming Council Member Retreat. Council staff recommended adding an extra day to the January 2025 quarterly meeting to conduct the retreat with the ultimate goal of Council members getting to know each other better and working together better as a unit.

Lastly, the committee conducted the 2nd quarterly evaluation for our new Executive Director. The survey results were very positive, and the one area of improvement will be addressed with the Council retreat.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT - Ebony Haven

Ms. Haven highlighted items in the Executive Director’s Report including:

- The Action Plan for FFY25 was submitted August 9th and the Office for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (OIDD) approved the plan on September 24th.
- Council staff attended the 2024 National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) Conference in Washington, D.C. July 22nd – 25th.
- The Executive Director also attended:
 - Region VI CEO Onboarding meeting with the new Executive Director for NACDD, Jill Jacobs, on September 9th in Dallas, TX.
 - NACDD Executive Director Leadership Summit (EDLS) in Phoenix, AZ on September 23rd – 26th.
- Council staff revamped the Council’s internal contract process to make it more streamlined and consistent across the board for all contractors. Staff also created a survey to collect data/feedback directly from participants of Council initiatives.

- Staff Changes include Rekeesha Branch being promoted to the Program Manager position left vacant when Brenton Andrus accepted the Deputy Director position.

BUDGET REPORT - Ebony Haven

Ms. Haven shared details from the [End-of-Year SFY24 Budget Report](#), and highlighted the following:

- At the July meeting not all of the invoices from contracts and bills paid were processed, and the closing column accounts for those expenses now. It was noted the Council was short-staffed for about half the year after the previous Executive Director resigned and not all contractors were able to spend all of their funding which resulted in remaining funds.
- The [Budget Report SFY25 – 1st Quarter](#) was also provided, but not discussed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

ACT 378 SUB-COMMITTEE – Bambi Polotzola

The Act 378 Sub-committee met Wednesday, October 16th for their committee meeting and did not have any recommendations for the Council to consider. The committee reviewed fiscal year 24 year-end data and fiscal year 25 first quarter data for programs within the Offices for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) and Behavioral Health, and Aging and Adult Services/Arc of LA. These reports can be found linked in the committee agenda on the Council's meetings [webpage](#). For more information, please see the [summary](#).

SELF DETERMINATION/COMMUNITY INCLUSION COMMITTEE (SD/CI) – Angela Harmon

The Self Determination and Community Inclusion Committee met Wednesday, October 16th and did not have any recommendations to present to the Council. Julie Foster Hagan with the OCDD shared updates on the predicted fiscal cliff for FY2026 if revenue is not identified. Its possible LDH will sustain massive cuts to many services and programs that support the DD population. The committee also received an update on Families Helping Families of New which concluded the Center would be unable to fulfill any contractual requirements. The Center was notified the Council would not be issuing a contract for FY25. For more information, please see the [summary](#).

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT (E/E) COMMITTEE – Renoda Washington

The Education and Employment Committee met Wednesday, October 16th and did not have any recommendations for the Council to consider. Melissa Bayham shared that LRS left \$29 million of federal dollars on the table due to lack of state funding match. Meredith Jordan also gave an update on the Special Education Monitoring Audit and new education legislation including new Special Education Advisory Committee reports. For more information, please see the [summary](#).

BYLAWS COMMITTEE – Jill Hano

The Bylaws committee met on August 28th to make recommendations for changes to the Council's current policies and procedures for the Council to consider. Major changes included adding specific information to Section IV on Council Member Responsibilities, adding Section V on the Selection Process of the Executive Director and recommendations for a new meeting timeframe for quarterly Council meetings.

MOTION PASSED: The Bylaws committee recommends approval of the recommended changes to the Council's policies and procedures. **Motion passed with 17 yeas, 0 nay and no abstentions.**

MOTION PASSED: To give the Executive Director authorization to correct article and section designations, punctuations, and cross-references and make such other technical and conforming changes as may be necessary to reflect the intent of the Council in connection with approved policies and procedure changes made by Jill Hano, seconded by Vivienne Webb. **Motion passed with 17 yeas, 0 nays and no abstentions.**

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE – Jill Hano

The Membership Committee met October 11th to choose applicants to recommend to the Full Council for Council membership. The Council currently has 6 open seats which include the 4 seats that were not Senate confirmed, the vacancy that opened due to Nicole Banks resigning and the institutional facility seat. That seat has to be filled by someone who is currently living in an institution facility or has in the past or by a parent of someone that lives in an institutional facility.

The current Governor’s Office of Boards and Commissions has requested 3 nominations per available seat. However, the committee decided it was best to submit the names of all the applicants that rated highly and had great interviews then allow the Governor’s Office to make the final decisions.

MOTION PASSED: The Membership Committee recommends Zheng “Karen” Xu to fill the institutional/facility seat on the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council. **Motion passed with 16 yeas, 0 nays and 1 abstention.**

MOTION PASSED: The Membership Committee recommends Ayden Blunschi, Jude Boynton and Frank Macaluso to fill individuals with developmental disabilities’ seats on the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council with alternate Gwendolyn Hilliard. **Motion passes with 19 yeas, 0 nays and no abstentions.**

One parent applicant was mistakenly not contacted by the committee and the committee agreed to interview the applicant after the meeting.

MOTION PASSED: To amend the Membership Committee recommendation of Latoya Citizen, Lamartine Meda and Danielle Poret to fill parent/immediate relatives’ seats on the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council with alternate Alaina Chachere by adding Robert Smith to the alternates made by Lauren Womack and seconded by Mike Billings. **Motion passed with 18 yeas, 0 nays and no abstentions.**

MOTION PASSED: The Membership Committee recommends Latoya Citizen, Lamartine Meda and Danielle Poret to fill parent/immediate relatives’ seats on the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council with alternates Alaina Chachere and Robert Smith as amended. **Motion passed with 18 yeas, 0 nays and no abstentions.**

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY COMMITTEE – Lauren Womack

The newly formed Legislative Advocacy Ad Hoc Committee met on September 27th to review community input received regarding the Council’s 2025 Legislative Advocacy Agenda. The committee spent time hours discussing all the issues, soliciting great feedback and input from the public and our agency partners, and used all that information to develop our recommendation.

MOTION PASSED: The Legislative Advocacy Committee recommends the following issue(s) be considered by the full Council for inclusion in its 2025 Legislative Advocacy Agenda:

1. Funding for Families Helping Families Regional Resource Centers
2. Addressing the impending fiscal cliff and potential cuts to the Louisiana Department of Health

Motion passes with 11 yeas, 0 nays and 7 abstentions.

STANDING COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS:

[Disability Rights of Louisiana](#) – Tory Rocca

[Governor’s Office of Disability Affairs](#) – Jamar Ennis

[Governor’s Office of Elderly Affairs](#) – Cheri Crain

The Council recessed for lunch at 12:10 p.m. by unanimous consent.

The Council reconvened the meeting at 1:14 p.m.

STANDING COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS CONT’D:

[LSU Human Development Center](#) – Constance Alphonse

[Louisiana Rehabilitation Services](#) – Melissa Bayham

[Office of Aging and Adult Services](#) – Geary Williams

[Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities](#) – Julie Foster Hagan

[Office of Public Health: Children’s Special Health Services](#) – Patti Barovechio

[Bureau of Health Services Financing](#) – Brain Bennett

[Department of Education](#) – Meredith Jordan

During public comment staff clarified the next meeting dates and a guest provided clarity on Health Standards and the OCDD’s roles in reporting abuse and neglect. There was also a public comment about Medicaid vendors for dental services.

The Council Members were reminded of the new dates for the January 2025 including the Council Retreat, and asked members to come prepared to provide concepts for the new 5 Year Plan and activities for the FY2026 Action Plan .

The DD Council October Quarterly meeting adjourned at 3:17 p.m. by unanimous consent.