



Quarterly Meeting

Wednesday, Nov. 6, 2024, 1pm to 4pm & Thursday, Nov. 7, 2024, 9am to 12pm
Crowne Plaza, Bayou Levee Room, 4728 Constitution Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA

Quarterly Meeting (Day 1) Wednesday, November 6, 2024, 1pm to 4pm

Member Name		Role/ Representation	Attendance	Appointment Date
Pamela	Allen		Virtual	10/25/24
Brandy	Bordelon		Absent	02/03/23
Rashad	Bristo		Absent	7/19/24
Brenda	Cosse		Virtual	02/03/23
Shaely	Cheramie		Absent	06/19/20
Danielle	Credeur	Secretary	In-person	10/27/22
Randy	Dartez	Director of a Center for Independent Living	In-person	10/27/22
Jamie	Duplechine		Virtual	10/18/24
Jill	Egle		Virtual	9/6/24
Claudia	Garofalo	At-Large (Executive Committee)	Virtual	9/11/20
Alisha	Hammond		In-Person	07/19/24
Antoinette	Harrell		Virtual	9/6/24
Esther	Jett	Vice-Chairperson	Absent	6/19/20 (2 nd term)
Teriyonda	Murray	Chairperson	In-person	10/27/22
		Ex-officio Members		
Robbie	Gray	LA Rehabilitation Services	In-person	8/16/24
Bernard	Brown	LDH- Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities	Absent	10/30/20 (2 nd term)
Cheri	Crain	Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs	In-person	10/02/20
Charlene	Gradney	LDH- Office of Behavioral Health	Virtual	6/19/20 (2 nd term)
Welma	Jackson	LA Dept of Veteran Affairs	Absent	06/19/20
Juon	Wilson	LA Housing Corporation	Absent	07/31/20

Call to Order (including reminder of [Meeting Protocols](#))

9:00am

Chairperson Teriyonda Murray called the meeting to order. Randy Dartez read the [Meeting Protocols](#)

Pledge of Allegiance All in attendance participated in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

[Roll Call](#) (including welcoming and introduction of new members)

Secretary Danielle Credeur called roll. New members Antoinette Harrell, Pam Allen, and Jill Egle introduced themselves.

Guests attending virtually were Sandra Trammell, Christina Martin, Tony Piontek, and Isaac Fenter. Guests attending in person were Patricia Yoruw, Phillip Credeur, Paige Kelly, and Yavonka George

Bambi Polotzola, Executive Director of the SILC introduced herself.

Tony shared the sad news of the recent passing of Lauren Womack, a self-advocate who worked on employment for people with disabilities.

Mission Statement

All in attendance read the Mission Statement:

"The mission of Louisiana's Independent Living program(s) is to maximize the leadership, empowerment, independence, and productivity of individuals with disabilities, facilitating integration and full inclusion of individuals with disabilities into the mainstream of American society. Louisiana's IL Partners promote a philosophy of Independent Living, including consumer control, peer support, self-help, self-determination, equal access, and individual and system advocacy."

Approval of the [August 2024 Meeting Minutes](#) and correction of [May 2024 Minutes](#)

The Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) discusses approving the August 2024 meeting minutes. The council struggles to establish a quorum due to members not having their cameras on as required. Ultimately, they decide to move forward with the agenda without voting until they can confirm a quorum.

Report of [Approval](#) and Review of FY25-FY27 [State Plan for Independent Living](#)

Claudia raised a question about editing the SPIL, which has already been approved but can be revised.

Centers for Independent Living (CILs) Reports

Indicator #1.1.1: CILs updates are presented at each SILC quarterly meeting.

Indicator #2.1.2: CILs promote completion of income taxes for consumers who are employed with referrals to free preparation sites or Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites and provide updates of referrals at quarterly SILC meetings.

Indicator #2.2.4: CILs maintain membership and participation in Louisiana's Emergency Management Disability and Aging Coalition (EMDAC) and report on EMDAC activities at quarterly SILC meetings.

Indicator #2.3.1: The CILs maintain AT/DME programs to ensure that individuals with disabilities have access to equipment as needed, with CILs reporting activities and progress in quarterly SILC meetings.

Indicator #2.3.2: The CILs provide telecommunication access equipment, hearing aids, and ASL interpreting to consumers who are Deaf, have hearing loss, or who have speech impairment and report on activities at each quarterly SILC meeting.

Indicator #2.3.3: The CILs provide referrals to DME providers and LA Assistive Technology Access Network (LATAN) and report referrals and related activities at quarterly SILC meetings.

Indicator #3.1.2: The CILs explore resource development sources to provide alternative funding and promote maintenance of current alternative funding, reporting updates at each quarterly SILC meeting.

- [Southwest Louisiana Independence Center \(@SLIC\)](#)– Randy Dartez

Southwest Louisiana Independent Centers' discussed their report, highlighting their 28 full-time staff, 68% of whom have a disability. They provided 5 core services, including information referral, independent skills living training, peer counseling, advocacy, and services transitioning. They also discussed their shelter project for HCBS consumers, which is currently in the approval process.

- [New Horizons Independent Living Center \(NHILC\)](#) – Patricia Yoruw

New Horizons, another independent living center, reported on their services, including tax preparation, equipment distribution, and community events. They also discussed their partnerships with property managers for housing assistance and their efforts to increase participation in IL initiatives. The conversation ended with a discussion on the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities transitioning out of prison and the need for support systems to prevent them from reverting to their old ways of living.

- [Resources on Independent Living \(RIL\)](#)- Alisha Hammond

Resources for Independent Living Centers discuss various outreach and awareness initiatives undertaken, including a back-to-school drive, community fairs, and voter registration efforts. They highlight partnerships with organizations like Split Second Foundation and efforts to serve underserved areas. They also mention providing guidance on Medicare and SNAP benefits. The centers delivered a range of core services like advocacy, skills training, and peer support. They plan to encourage consumer participation in events and explore new funding sources. Despite challenges from natural disasters, they maintain that consumers recognize the independent living centers in Louisiana.

SILC Members Reports

Objective #1.1: Individuals with disabilities throughout the state are informed of Independent Living philosophy and services.

Indicator #1.1.2: Quarterly presentation by SILC members any services or programs that will benefit the disability community.

Indicator #1.1.3: SILC members promote and attend disability-related events at least once a quarter to educate and raise awareness of the Independent Living philosophy, programs, initiatives, and CIL services.

Indicator #1.1.5: Updates are provided by SILC members at each quarterly SILC meeting regarding activities/events occurring in each member's local community that might provide opportunities for dissemination of Independent Living services and philosophy.

- Dr. Antoinette Harrell shared a significant achievement in securing a sign language interpreter for the town of Kentwood at the Parish Council meetings.
- Pam Allen discussed the significance of October as Blindness, Equality, Achievement Month in their community, with various events and proclamations across the state. White Cane Awareness Day was October 15.
- Brenda Cosse shared information about the North Shore Families Helping Families Adults Building Life Experiences (ABLE) Club will have an event on November 14th titled Life after High School.
- Claudia Garofalo was a consumer reviewer on the spinal cord injury panel for the Department of Defense. She participated in reviewing proposals for leading edge technology from universities and research groups from across the country.
- Jamie Duplechine, the Chapter Coordinator of People First of Louisiana, encouraged members to get involved with their local People First chapter and learn more about self-advocacy and advocacy skills.

CILs and SILC Members Report

Objective #3.2: SILC and the CILs utilize best practices of successful SILCs and CILs

Indicator #3.2.1: SILC members and the CILs participate in webinars, conference calls, and other training and report on new and creative ideas learned at each quarterly SILC meeting.

Indicator #3.2.2: SILC members and CILs partner with other SILCs, CILs and other disability-related organizations to foster best practices and report on new and creative ideas learned at each quarterly SILC meeting.

Indicator #2.2.1: SILC members and CILs organize and coordinate activities to promote voter registration through "Register, Educate, Vote - Use your Power" REVUP each year prior to major elections.

SILC members discussed their participation in the April Conference, with Danielle sharing her experiences and takeaways, including the termination of the IL technical assistance contract with ILRU and awarded to Partnership for Disasters Strategies but now it's in dispute so there's no TA provider at the time. We can reach out to our federal partners for assistance. Teriyonda shared how collaborative and inclusive Colorado IL network was operated. They have state funding to support their Centers. Bambi shared some takeaways from the APRIL Conference. She shared that she learned that many states have a broader scope of work and how to draft the SPIL goals to better align with the intentions of the SILC. She also discussed the importance of planning for disruptions rather than specific disasters, emphasizing the need to maintain communication, health, independence, support, safety, and transportation (CMIST). She highlighted the significance of the independent living movement, which encourages people to share their disabilities and support one another. The discussion also touched on the definition of a significant disability, which was clarified as a health issue or condition that requires independent living support. The conversation ended with a discussion on the importance of awareness and advocacy for people with disabilities, emphasizing the need for others to understand the struggles they face.

Patricia from New Horizons said she participated in Ticket to Work webinars. She discussed their plans to partner with Bossier Parish for internships and job skills training for students with disabilities. The group also discussed the potential for youth to participate in the Workforce Commission's holiday worker program.

SILC then discussed the organization's activities related to voter registration and the promotion of voter participation.

Amina Mitchell, Southern University, Founder of ASL on the Bluff

Indicator #1.1.6: Post-secondary youth are invited to participate in the quarterly meetings of the SILC.

The meeting then shifted to a discussion about post-secondary youth participation in quarterly meetings, with Amina Mitchell, a former Governor's Fellow, invited to share her experiences and advocacy work. Amina highlighted her efforts to create an inclusive environment at Southern University and her vision for an organization focused on promoting sign language and accessibility. SILC expressed gratitude for Amina's presentation and discussed the need for more funding for disability services. A question was raised about the progress of the Board of Regents' work with the disability services offices, and SILC suggested reaching out to the Board of Regent to get an update. The main topic of Amina's policy proposal was to secure more funding for disability services, as the current funding was insufficient.

Alisha suggested that individual situations, such as the bathroom issue mentioned by Patricia, could be addressed through individual advocacy. The group also discussed the need for a position at each public entity to ensure ongoing accessibility and compliance with regulations. The conversation ended with a discussion about the challenges faced in New Orleans, particularly with older buildings that are grandfathered in and may not meet current accessibility standards.

Compliance, Reporting, Training

Objective #4.2: The SILC achieves compliance with federal SILC standards and indicators.

Indicator #4.2.1: The SILC Chair will review an evaluation tool quarterly to note progress on fulfillment of SILC standards and indicators and will report findings at quarterly SILC meetings.

Indicator #4.2.2: The SILC Chair, Executive Committee and CIL Executive Directors will formulate an Orientation Training Plan during the first quarter of the SPIL for each SILC member to complete training, with members reporting at each quarterly meeting on their progress.

The SILC discusses several topics related to ensuring compliance with federal standards and indicators. Bambi shares a spreadsheet to track progress on fulfilling the indicators and plans to document progress. The group discusses providing orientation and training for SILC members, including utilizing online courses and dedicating meetings to training. Danielle put together binders for each SILC member. SILC members shared how helpful having the binders with all information together.

Pam Allen raises the importance of the binders being accessible for those who are blind.

Public Comment

No public comment was provided.

Recess

4:00pm



Quarterly Meeting (Day 2) Thursday, November 7, 2024, 9am to 12pm

Call to Order (including reminder of [Meeting Protocols](#))
 Chairperson Teriyonda Murray called the meeting to order.

9:00am

Roll Call

Secretary Danielle Credeur called roll.

Member Name		Role/ Representation	Attendance	Appointment Date
Pamela	Allen		Virtual	10/25/24
Brandy	Bordelon	Treasurer	Absent	02/03/23
Rashad	Bristo		Virtual	7/19/24
Brenda	Cosse		Virtual	02/03/23
Shaely	Cheramie		Absent	06/19/20
Danielle	Credeur	Secretary	In-person	10/27/22
Randy	Dartez	Director of a Center for Independent Living	In-person	10/27/22
Jamie	Duplechine		Virtual	10/18/24
Jill	Egle		In-person	9/6/24
Claudia	Garofalo	At-Large (Executive Committee)	Absent	9/11/20
Alisha	Hammond		In-Person	07/19/24
Antoinette	Harrell		Virtual	9/6/24
Esther	Jett	Vice-Chairperson	Virtual	6/19/20 (2 nd term)
Teriyonda	Murray	Chairperson	In-person	10/27/22
		Ex-officio Members		
Robbie	Gray	LA Rehabilitation Services	In-person	8/16/24
Bernard	Brown	LDH- Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities	Absent	10/30/20 (2 nd term)
Cheri	Crain	Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs	In-person	10/02/20
Charlene	Gradney	LDH- Office of Behavioral Health	In-person	6/19/20 (2 nd term)
Welma	Jackson	LA Dept of Veteran Affairs	Virtual	06/19/20
Juon	Wilson	LA Housing Corporation	Absent	07/31/20

Guests attending virtually were Isaac Fenter. Guests attending in person were Patricia Yoruw, Phillip Credeur, Paige Kelly, and Yavonka George. Bambi Polotzola, Executive Director of the SILC was also in attendance.

Mission Statement

The Mission statement was read by Jill Egle.

Approval of the [August 2024 Meeting Minutes](#) and correction of [May 2024 Minutes](#)

Danielle Credeur motioned to approve the August meeting minutes and Jill Egle seconded with no objections.

Corrections to the May meeting minutes were made with Brenda Cosse pointing out an error regarding her attendance. Randy Dartez motioned to approve the May meeting minutes as amended and Esther Jett seconded with no objections.

Discuss plan to engage transportation representatives

9:15am

Indicator #2.2.2: SILC members receive updates at quarterly SILC meetings from a state or local transportation representative regarding transportation issues that affect individuals with disabilities in order to provide advocacy when issues are identified.

Esther proposed the idea of having a local representative for transportation from each region, to better understand the transportation needs across the state. Isaac mentioned an advocacy group called Ride NOLA in Orleans Parish, but it was unclear if similar groups existed in other regions. SILC agreed to consider Esther's proposal and suggested that members could reach out to people in their areas for initial outreach, with SILC scheduling them for meetings.

State Government Agency Updates regarding SPIL Section 2: Services

Louisiana Department of Veteran Affairs - Welma Jackson

Welma from the Louisiana Department of Veteran Affairs discussed the department's fiscal year 2024 contact assistance, which services veterans with disabilities. She explained that the majority of service-connected disabilities are due to active-duty time, and the Louisiana National Guard benefit is an additional state benefit for service to Louisiana.

Office of Behavioral Health - Charlene Gradney

The Office of Behavioral Health provides services for individuals with serious mental illness, substance use disorders, and suicide prevention. During the first quarter, their PATH (Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness) program made contact with 464 homeless individuals, with 218 actively receiving services. Their SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery) initiative now has regional specialists in all 10 regions to assist with accessing disability benefits. The rental assistance program was expanded by 8 beds through December 2024. The office continues initiatives for first episode psychosis (FEP) treatment, supported employment using the IPS (Individual Placement & Support) model for all 44 ACT teams, and peer support specialist training, including a new family peer

program. The 988 crisis line was highlighted as an alternative to 911 for mental health crises.

Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs (GOEA) - Cheri Crain

Most GOEA programs are contracted through the local Councils on Aging, which are in every parish. She provided information about abuse and neglect cases. GOEA is in the process of hiring 16 additional investigators. Aging and Disability Resource Centers are in every region of the state. Call 877-340-9100 to identify the ADRC in your region. There is currently open enrollment for Medicare.

Office of Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) - Bernard Brown

The report was provided but Mr. Brown was unable to attend the meeting because OCDD is hosting regional road shows.

Louisiana Housing Corporation- Juon Wilson No report was provided.

Invited Guest: ULM Gerontology Institute- Dr. Anita Sharma

Dr. Sharma shared information about the ULM GERO (Gerontology Education, Research, and Outreach) Institute. The goals of the GERO Institute is to promote holistic healthy aging, develop collaborative resources, provide education, training, certification, workforce training, supportive services, advocacy, and address issues of ageism and ableism.

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services – Robbie Gray

10 :00am

Indicator #2.1.3: The SILC advocates to Louisiana legislators in support of Louisiana Rehabilitation Services within the Louisiana Workforce Commission and reports advocacy efforts at least once quarterly at SILC meetings.

Robbie Gray shared that as of October 25, 2024, there are were 9,794 open Vocational Rehabilitation cases and 3,876 open Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) cases. LRS is recruiting staff. LRS is partnering with the LA Dept of Education on a grant LDE received by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). The LRS state office has taken over some of the tasks of regional offices. There was discussion about the process of how an employer who wants to hire a person with a disability should go about reaching out to LRS to help identify LRS clients as potential employees.

SILC Quarterly Budget Update- Fiscal Agent (NHILC)

- [Fiscal Year Ending 2024 Final Financial Report](#)
- [Fiscal Year Ending 2025 Financial Report through October 31](#)

The meeting focused on the budget update for the fiscal year. SILC discussed the budget decrease of approximately \$15,000 and the challenges of managing a part-time executive director's time. The team also discussed the delay in

reimbursement, which could be up to 60 days. SILC emphasized the need for extra funds to cover costs until reimbursement is paid. The conversation ended with plans to discuss future resource development and grant opportunities to address the budget challenges. Volunteer Louisiana has committed to pay for ASL interpreters for SILC for Fiscal Year 2025 through a federal grant that they have secured. We no longer need a live captionist for our meeting because members were surveyed and all said that they don't need it. We now use Zoom captioning. The savings are approximately \$8000 for the year.

Resource Development and Policies and Procedures

10:30am

Objective #4.1: The SILC will continue to pursue full autonomy.

Indicator #4.1.1: The SILC Chair appoints a Resource Development Committee within the first SPIL year to explore ways to support independent SILC operations and receives committee reports at each SILC meeting.

Indicator #4.1.4: The [Policy and Procedure manual](#) and [By-Laws](#) will be reviewed at least once a year and updated as needed to reflect any operational or procedural changes, including virtual meetings to allow for a quorum.

Indicator #4.3.2: SILC will add new fiscal process to By-laws.

They then proceeded to discuss resource development and policies, with a focus on the development of committees within SILC. Nicole Dejean, a grant writer, was invited to share her expertise on grants and their role in supporting independent operations. She provided a broad overview of grants and the grant writing process, emphasizing the potential for grants to contribute to autonomy, sustainability, and financial diversification for nonprofit organizations. She discussed the importance of understanding grants and their role in supporting specific projects or programs. She emphasized the need for organizations to be ready for the grant process, including having a clear mission and vision statement, strong organizational capacity, a track record of success, and a plan for long-term sustainability. Nicole also highlighted the importance of honesty and transparency in the grant process, including providing clear information about the organization's financial health and the outcomes they aim to achieve. She suggested starting the search for a grant writer within the community, as they would have a better understanding of the disability community's needs. The conversation ended with the formation of two committees: the Resource and Development Committee and the Policies and Procedures and Bylaws Committee. Bambi will coordinate setting up meetings for each committee.

Public Comments

Phillip Credeur recommended moving public comments to the beginning of the meeting. Bambi shared that public comment must be allowed before any vote of a public body. He recommended that there are too many side comments during the meeting that is distracting. He expressed interest in the SILC's plan to become fully autonomous to handle its own finances. Teri share that the Resources Development Committee will address this issue.

Next Meeting Date and Location

February 5 & 6, 2025

Adjournment

12:00pm