



Quarterly Meeting

Wednesday, Feb. 5, 2025, 1pm to 4pm & Thursday, Feb. 6, 2025, 9am to 12pm  
 Crowne Plaza, SamCIm-Natchez Room, 4728 Constitution Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA

**Quarterly Meeting (Day 1) Wednesday, February 5, 2025, 1:00pm to 4:00pm**

Member Name		Role/ Representation	Attendance	Appointment Date
Pamela	Allen		Absent	10/25/24
Brandy	Bordelon		In-person	02/03/23
Rashad	Bristo		In-person	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)	Virtual	9/11/20
Alisha	Hammond		In-person	07/19/24
Antoinette	Harrell		Virtual	9/6/24
Esther	Jett	Vice-Chairperson	In-person	6/19/20 (2 <sup>nd</sup> 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 <sup>nd</sup> 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 <sup>nd</sup> term)
Welma	Jackson	LA Dept of Veteran Affairs	Absent	06/19/20
Juon	Wilson	LA Housing Corporation	Absent	07/31/20

Guests: Tamara Crane, Phillip Credeur, Hope Day, Yavonka George, Matthew Hammond, Paige Kelly, Jamarce Thorton, Patricia Yoruw

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

### [Roll Call](#)

#### **Mission Statement and Pledge of Allegiance**

The mission statement was read by Rashad Bristo, emphasizing the program's focus on leadership, empowerment, independence, and productivity of individuals with disabilities. The team then proceeded to the pledge of allegiance.

#### **Approval of the [November 2024 Meeting Minutes](#)**

Rashad Bristo made a motion that was seconded by Danielle Credeur to approve the minutes of the November Meeting.

#### **[Louisiana Rehabilitation Services](#) – Melissa Bayham**

Indicator #2.1.1: Collaboration with Louisiana Workforce Commission is achieved through the SILC Executive Director holding membership on the Louisiana Rehabilitation Council to report SILC activities and reporting LRC information at quarterly SILC meetings.

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.

- Discussion of Program Performance Report (PPR) which is due March 31, 2025.

The Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) then presented their report, highlighting their service of 9,482 participants and 4,000 pre-employment, transition services participants. They also mentioned their third-party cooperative agreements with school districts. The meeting then shifted to the PPR, where Patricia Yoruw shared that it is a collaboration between LRS and the SILC and Yavonka George explaining its importance.

#### **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.

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

Alisha Hammond discussed the underserved parishes within the New Orleans area and the services provided, including advocacy, independent living skills, information and

referral, peer support, transitional use, and transition support. She also mentioned an initiative to increase overall awareness and skill, which involved participating in the Autism Society's Halloween party and community advocacy groups. She also discussed their participation in the SILC Subcommittee meetings to identify resource development strategies. Tamara Crane, the executive director for Bossier Council on Aging, provided information on transportation grants and Medicaid payments for Uber and Lyft services. The conversation ended with a discussion on the need for better coordination among regional transportation groups.

- [Southwest Louisiana Independence Center \(@SLIC\)](#)– Randy Dartez  
Randy Dartez reported that @SLIC has 26 employees, with 68% of them having a disability. They provided various services, including information referrals, independent living skills training, peer counseling, advocacy, and transition services. They also reported on their community activities, including outreaches, consumer events, and group events.
- [New Horizons Independent Living Center \(NHILC\)](#) – Patricia Yoruw  
Patricia Yoruw from New Horizons reported on their operations, including their board of directors, administrative staff, and direct service workers. She also discussed their community activities, including community events and group events. Patricia reported on their participation in various initiatives, including tax preparation, emergency preparedness, and internship programs. She also discussed their partnerships with other agencies and their focus on consumer direct spending. The conversation ended with a discussion on the number of community activities and group activities conducted.

### **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.

Jamie Duplechine announced the annual People 1st conference in March and shared the details via email.

Hope Day inquired about the best way for the public to learn about upcoming events and services, to which Patricia and Danielle suggested using websites and Facebook pages. Alisha mentioned that they could potentially update their website to include more information. The idea of a newsletter was also discussed, with Bambi suggesting that the centers could email their flyers to be included in a monthly newsletter from SILC.

### **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 #2.2.5: SILC members and CILs participate in advocacy and education to decision-makers for accessible, affordable housing for individuals with disabilities and report activities and progress at each quarterly meeting.

Brenda Cosse announced that the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council will be conducting a legislative round tables in each region of the state, which can be registered on [www.laddc.org](http://www.laddc.org).

Brandy Bordelon shared that the Louisiana Association for the Deaf will be hosting their 53rd Annual Conference from June 26th to 28th, with former Governor Edwards attending. Patricia from New Horizons shared her participation in the ACL training on the final rule and her work on youth transition.

There was also a discussion about the federal funding freeze and its potential impact on services in the state. The conversation ended with a discussion about the Ticket to Work program and its distinction from other vocational goals.

### **Matthew Hammond, Nichols State University, Bridge to Independence**

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

Matthew, a 25-year-old college graduate from Nichols State University, shared his experience at the college, highlighting the support he received from programs like Bridge to Independence. He also shared his current activities, including living independently and doing voluntary work. SILC encouraged Matthew's success and asked him for suggestions on how the council could better support individuals in similar situations. Matthew suggested tutoring sessions with different teaching methods to prepare individuals for their future lives. Matthew also shared that he is in this year's 'partners in policy making' class and how it involves setting up new types of policies and how they can help people.

### **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.

- Discuss [“The Power of Your SPIL” webinar training](#)

SILC members discussed the 'Power of Your SPIL' webinar training, which was about collaboration and the importance of the SPIL in driving everything that the council does. The group discussed the need for more public input and suggested ways to increase participation, such as using social media and outreach events.

## **Federal Funding Freeze Impact**

Concerns were raised about the recent federal budget freeze and its potential impact on services for people with disabilities. The group agreed to work together to address these issues and possibly reach out to their legislators for support. The SILC discussed the impact of the federal funding freeze on their services and the community. They decided to send a letter to their representatives, explaining the importance of independent living services and the potential consequences of the funding freeze. The letter will be drafted and shared with the team for feedback. The team also discussed the importance of educating political leaders about the services provided by independent living centers and the Statewide Independent Living Council. The team agreed to send the letter to their Congressmen, Senators, and Representatives, and to follow up with further communication about independent living centers and the SILC. The team also discussed the potential impact of the funding freeze on Medicaid and other services, and the need to protect their services under the law.

**SILC recessed until Thursday, February 6 at 9:00am**



## **Quarterly Meeting (Day 2) Thursday, February 6, 2025, from 9:00am to 12:00pm**

Member Name		Role/ Representation	Attendance	Appointment Date
Pamela	Allen		Virtual	10/25/24
Brandy	Bordelon		In-person	02/03/23
Rashad	Bristo		In-person	7/19/24
Brenda	Cosse		Virtual	02/03/23
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Esther	Jett	Vice-Chairperson	In-person	6/19/20 (2 <sup>nd</sup> term)
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Welma	Jackson	LA Dept of Veteran Affairs	Absent	06/19/20
Juon	Wilson	LA Housing Corporation	Absent	07/31/20

Guests: Tamara Crane, Phillip Credeur, Kristie Curtis, Hope Day, Yavonka George, Matthew Hammond, Paige Kelly, Cheryl Tessier, Patricia Yoruw

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

**9:00am**

### **Roll Call**

#### **Mission Statement**

The Mission Statement was read. SILC discussed the mission of Louisiana's independent living program, emphasizing consumer control, peer support, self-determination, equal access, and individual and system advocacy.

#### **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.

The discussion then shifted to transportation issues faced by individuals with disabilities, with Rashad Bristo sharing experiences and suggesting the engagement of transportation representatives to address these challenges. He highlighted the importance of reporting transportation issues to the case manager of the health plan to ensure proper handling and potential contract renegotiations. Patricia from New Horizons added that personal care attendant programs can include transportation services. The conversation ended with a mention of the Department of Transportation 5310 program and its application review process. SILC discussed the need for public transportation and the importance of identifying agencies to work with. The team also discussed the need for a speaker at each council meeting to address transportation issues.

#### **Updates on Emergency Preparedness**

Indicator #2.2.3: SILC members receive updates at quarterly SILC meetings regarding emergency preparedness at least once per year.

There was a discussion about the challenges faced by wheelchair users during emergencies, with Claudia expressing concern about the lack of support for those who don't depend on life-saving equipment. The team also discussed the availability of 9-1-1 text capabilities in different parishes, with SILC promising to find out more information. Bambi shared her involvement in meetings and training related to emergency preparedness and access and functional needs. She shared that she would be presenting a webinar on emergency preparedness for Bayouland Families Helping Families on February 27.

### **State Government Agency Updates regarding SPIL Section 2: Services 9:30am**

[Louisiana Department of Veteran Affairs](#) - Welma Jackson was not in attendance but a written report was provided.

[Office of Behavioral Health](#) - Charlene Gradney

Charlene, from the Louisiana Department of Health Office of Behavioral Health, discussed the department's initiatives, including partnerships with the Louisiana Housing Corporation and the implementation of the SSI and SSDI outreach and access model. She also mentioned the expansion of the runway transitional housing program, the early serious mental illness and first episode psychosis program, and the supported employment initiative. Charlene also highlighted the department's peer training programs and upcoming events, including a webinar on behavioral health peers on college campuses and a day at the Capitol for mental health awareness. Jill Egle asked about advocating for behavioral health legislation, to which Charlene suggested contacting Melanie Roberts, the person overseeing the Louisiana Behavioral Health Advisory Council.

Brandy Bordelon discussed the challenges faced by deaf individuals in accessing behavioral health services and interpreters. She highlighted a case where a deaf woman was placed in a hotel without an interpreter, leading to the death of her husband. Charlene acknowledged the issue and mentioned that they are working on improving services and supports for the deaf community. Bambi Polotzola also raised the need for deaf individuals to be employed in relevant roles, such as counselors and support workers. Charlene mentioned the Save all program, which conducts consumer satisfaction surveys, and the need for more deaf individuals to be trained as counselors.

[Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs](#) - Cheri Crain

Cheri Crain discussed the programs and services provided by their organization, including the Older Americans Act, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program, and the Elderly Protective Services. They also mentioned the Louisiana Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) and the Louisiana Executive Board on Aging Quarterly Meeting. She also shared updates on their staffing and caseloads, indicating improvements in staff numbers and caseloads.

[Office of Citizens with Developmental Disabilities](#) - Bernard Brown was not in attendance but a written report was provided.

Louisiana Housing Corporation- Juon Wilson was not in attendance and no written report was provided.

### **Pam Allen, Louisiana Center for the Blind**

**10:15am**

Indicator #1.1.8: At least once a year, other disability-related advocacy groups are invited to present information about their organization.

Pam Allen discussed their recent advocacy efforts in Washington, DC with the National Federation of the Blind, focusing on accessibility, medical device access, and Social Security Act adjustments. She also mentioned their ongoing work with Congress to advocate for these issues.

Brandy Bordelon discussed the need for accessibility in medical equipment for deaf-blind individuals, with Pam confirming that the legislation would provide a non-visual way of accessing written information. SILC also mentioned the use of a device called Human for deaf-blind individuals, which is heavy, bulky, and expensive. Hope offered to discuss more affordable options for braille displays or note takers

### **SILC Quarterly Budget Update**

**10:30am**

- [FY 2025 Financial Report through December 31](#) - Fiscal Agent (NHILC)

Patricia Yoruw explained the expenses billed for October, November, and December, including payroll, travel, operating expenses, and indirect costs. SILC clarified that the travel expenses included food, mileage, and transportation costs for attending a conference. They also discussed the cost of attending a meeting, which is estimated to be around \$3,500 per quarter. SILC discussed the need for an itemized report of expenses. Patricia agreed to provide a detailed report, including specific expenses for each month.

The SILC approved providing health insurance for Bambi, the executive director, at a cost of \$300 per month. Additionally, the meeting touched on the potential of hiring a part-time employee as an assistant for next fiscal year when the SILC takes over the function currently provided by the fiscal agent. The council also discussed the possibility of revisiting the budget if additional funds were needed in the future.

- SILC Bank Account Balance: \$2,523.15 – Brandy Bordelon, SILC Treasurer

### **Resource Development and Policies and Procedures**

**10:45am**

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.

Danielle Credeur, Resource Development Committee Chairperson

The Resource Committee presented their recommendations, including the need for technology interpreters, startup funds of \$20,000 to become financially autonomous, informational flyers, and consumer participation from the sales. The council voted in favor of these recommendations. There was also a discussion about the use of printed flyers, with suggestions for digital alternatives.

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.

Phillip Credeur, Bylaws and Policy & Procedure Committee Chairperson

Phillip Credeur shared the committee had reviewed the bylaws and was approximately 90% done with the recommendations. The final draft of the bylaws will be sent out for review before the next meeting, where a vote on the updated bylaws would take place. The committee also discussed a conflict of interest policy, which was already in place and was being requested by a federal partner, ACL. The committee decided to share the current policy with ACL and to consider potential revisions during ongoing committee meetings. The conversation ended with a call for any questions or concerns to be expressed via email before the next meeting.

### **Executive Director's Report**

**Bambi Polotzola**

**11:30am**

Bambi Polotzola discussed her recent visit to Washington DC, where she met with Congressman Feels and his chief of staff. She reminded the council about the financial disclosure form due by May 15th and encouraged members to complete it. SILC also shared updates about her appointment to the Louisiana Rehab Council and an upcoming disability day at the Capitol on June 2. The council agreed to send a joint letter to elected officials, with Teri having the authority to sign on behalf of the council.

### **Decide when and where SILC Meeting will be held at a CIL**

Indicator #1.1.7: One quarterly SILC meeting each year is held at a Center for Independent Living.

### **Future Meeting Dates**

May 7 & 8, 2025

Crowne Plaza, Baton Rouge, LA

August 6 & 7, 2025

New Horizon Independent Living Center, Shreveport, LA

November 5 & 6, 2025

February 4 & 5, 2026

**Adjournment** was established through unanimous consent.