Governor’s Advisory Council on Disability Affairs

**March 19, 2019**

**Minutes**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **AGENCY** | **GACDA MEMBER** | **PRESENT** | **PROXY** | **PROXY NAME** | **ABSENT** |
| GOHSEP | Amy Dawson | √ |  |  |  |
| OBH (LDH) | Ashley Jefferson | √ |  |  |  |
| LaCAN/Parent | Ashley McReynolds | √ |  |  |  |
| DCFS | Christopher Kirby | √ |  |  |  |
| Fire Marshall | Cynthia Obier | √ |  |  |  |
| Provider/Parent | Donna Breaux | √ |  |  |  |
| Senator | Gerald Boudreaux |  |  |  | X |
| Advocate | Jamie Karam | √ |  |  |  |
| LDE | Jamie Wong |  |  |  | X |
| DOTD | Joshua Hollins |  |  |  | X |
| OCDD (LDH) | Julie F. Hagan | √ |  |  |  |
| FHF/Parent | Katie Corkern |  |  |  | X |
| Arc of LA | Kelly Monroe | √ |  |  | X |
| Providers | Laura Brackin | √ |  |  |  |
| LASEA | Laureen Mayfield |  |  |  | X |
| LRC | Libby Murphy |  |  |  | X |
| Parent | Linda Kocher | √ |  |  | X |
| LDVA | Linda Theriot |  |  |  | X |
| **Chair** / Advocate | Lynette Fontenot | √ |  |  | X |
| Representative | Malinda White | √ |  |  |  |
| Higher Education | Mary Breaud |  |  |  | X |
| LWC - LRS | Melissa Bayham |  | √ | Kandy Baker |  |
| GOEA | Michelle Guillory |  |  |  | X |
| Advocate | Pam Darby |  |  |  | X |
| Deaf/DB/HoH | Paula Rodriguez | √ |  |  |  |
| SILC | Roszella Viltz |  | √ | Jessica Lewis |  |
| DD Council | Sandee Winchell | √ |  |  |  |
| People First | Sharon Hennessey | √ |  |  |  |
| Advocacy Center | Stephen Kauffman | √ |  |  |  |
| OAAS (LDH) | Tara Leblanc | √ |  |  |  |
| LATAN | Yakima Black |  |  |  | X |
| **ROLE** | **STAFF** |  |  |  |  |
| Exec Director | Bambi Polotzola | √ |  |  |  |
| Asst. Director | Jamar Ennis | √ |  |  |  |
| Coordinator | April Dunn | √ |  |  |  |
| SICC Director | Melanie Washington | √ |  |  |  |
| **AGENCY** | **GUESTS** |  |  |  |  |
| Lighthouse Louisiana | Meredith Bailey | √ |  |  |  |
| Lighthouse Louisiana | Beau Ellerbe | √ |  |  |  |
| FHF | James Sprinkle | √ |  |  |  |
| Advocacy Center | Chris Rodriguez | √ |  |  |  |
| Lighthouse Louisiana | Paul Winfree | √ |  |  |  |
| LWC | John Schweitzer | √ |  |  |  |
|  | Charles Tate | √ |  |  |  |
|  | John Moran | √ |  |  |  |
|  | Keith Cunningham | √ |  |  |  |
|  | Anne Jayes | √ |  |  |  |

**Call to Order and Approval of the Minutes**

The committee meeting was officially called together at 12:30pm. The members of the Governor’s Advisory Council on Disability Affairs (GACDA) and guest in attendance provided a brief introduction of themselves. Quorum was established.

Ashley McReynolds made a motion to approve the December 18, 2019 meeting minutes with amendments, the motion was seconded by Sandee Winchell. The December 18, 2019 meeting minutes were approved unanimously by the members of GACDA.

**Committee Reports and Discussion**

Transportation Committee

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services discussed the idea of developing a non-emergency transportation model that will serve a wider population and working jointly with labor transit to enhance the availability of the transportation resources tied to the 5310 and 5311 vehicles. The Executive Counsel of DOTD agreed to require the participation of their department heads in future GACDA meetings and EMDAC meetings to plan for transportation in times of emergency and improvement of infrastructure. Transportation committee would like to facilitate a unified plan between the local, state, and federal governmental entities.

Accessibility Committee

Lighthouse Louisiana provided a presentation to the committee and members of the Louisiana legislature regarding the accessibility of the Legislative website. The presentation included an audit performed in real time using the JAWS system which revealed over 250 unique error codes on the website. Lighthouse Louisiana and the ADA Coordinator for the Louisiana Legislature will meet to discuss and resolve the various accessibility concerns in the near future. The members of the Accessibility Committee will meet with Mark Moses to discuss the various accessibility concerns of the Louisiana State Capitol. The Accessibility drafted a letter to advise the media of the importance of having an ASL interpreter available and on screen during emergency broadcast.

A motion was made by Donna Breaux that GACDA sends a letter to Representative Pat Smith, Senator Claitor, and the Commission for the Deaf requesting clarification and an update on the progress of implementing the law relative to appropriations that are intended to improve accessibility for individuals at the State Capitol and during Legislative Session. The motion was seconded by Linda Kocher. The motion was passed by the Council with no opposition or abstentions.

Housing Committee:

The Executive Director of the Louisiana Housing Corporation (LHC), Keith Cunningham, and Janel Young, the Director of Strategic Initiatives provided a presentation of the progress and services offered from LHC. On behalf of LHC, they answered questions relative to the allocation grant process, and shared information regarding the public input process for affordable housing programs. Mr. Cunningham invited committee members to participate in the First Annual Inclusive Housing Conference in April, and expressed LHC’s commitment to participate in future GACDA meetings. An information packet will be scanned and sent to the members of GACDA.

Legislative Committee:

Executive Director Polotzola provided GACDA members with a document regarding the legislative update. The priorities are to: fully fund LRS to enable the draw-down of federal funds, increase the EPSD personal care rate to $14 an hour, and to restore all supports and services to the rates for individuals with disabilities by resorting provider rates effective 2008, the funding of TETRA regarding the family cost participation for early steps.

Nick Alverez from the Office of the Governor provided updates relative to Governor John Bel Edwards in terms of legislation in the healthcare space. These updates included legislation that: protects individuals with pre-existing conditions, pharmacy supply regulations, and opioid tracking. Alverez answered questions from the Council members in attendance relative to the various topics, concerns, and bills that will be discussed during the 2019 Legislative Session.

Laura Brackin made a motion to add methodology legislation that will establish factors for consideration in developing and increasing rates appropriately for home and community based services to the legislative priorities list. The motion was seconded by Sandee Winchell. Julie Foster Hagan, Tara Leblanc, and Ashley Jefferson abstained from voting. The motion passed by majority vote of the Council.

Linda Kocher made a motion to support legislation relative to develop Medicaid reimbursement rates paid to providers of disability services, and to support legislation that prohibits discrimination against potential organ transplant recipients based on disability. Donna Breaux seconded the motion. The Council passed the motion without any opposition or abstentions.

Paula Rodriquez of Deaf Focus provided that their agency is working on the patients’ health bill to support the rights for individuals who are deaf and or hard of hearing. Under this bill, patients will have the option to choose language or the most effective means of communication for them. Paula mentioned that Representative Pat Smith will be working with Deaf Focus on this initiative.

Laura Brackin mentioned that she is working with Senator Hewitt regarding a bill related to certified medication attendants for people with a developmental disability that reside in a community home. This proposed bill will remove the residency requirement.

Julie Foster Hagan mentioned that her department is working with the Department of Health and the Division of Administration to update the state use council in regards to employment for all disabilities.

**Update on Employment Initiatives**

Kandy Baker of the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) mentioned that the LWC is in the midst of hosting the Annual Labor Summit. Baker also mentioned that the order of selection category four opened on February 14, 2019 and there is no one on the waiting list. Baker also mentioned that category five were removed, and that LRS is not anticipating a large cut this year. LRS has hired counselors around the state and has made an effort to ramp up services.

Executive Director Polotzola mentioned that the US Department of Labor has awarded the State Leadership Mentoring Project Grant to further workforce training programs in Louisiana.

GODA is currently making best use of the Vision Grant from the EFSLMP. The Vision quest grant is instrumental in to assisting with mental health employment, and will be working with OBH, LRS, and LWC, DOE, and Louisiana Medicaid. Executive Director Polotzola and Ashley Jefferson are co-coordinators for this initiative. This year mental health and employment will be the main focus of this grant, and Ashley Jefferson will provide future updates. GODA has been awarded a core grant which includes 200 hours of technical assistance. Executive Director Polotzola mentioned that Vision quest is more focused on policy, and the core grant is more focused on providing direct support and or training. The capacity building for these initiatives will begin in two regions, and will participate in provider transformation training provided by subject matter experts to encourage a transformation from the sheltered work environment to becoming more integrated.

Ashley Jefferson of OBH mentioned that there has been improvement from every region based on the monitoring of annual performances of the LGEs.

Executive Director Polotzola mentioned that the State as a model employer is still working, and hosted a Windmills training in February which featured two national presenters for a three day seminar that centered on employing individuals with disabilities. The goal of this training is to train HR directors who will intern train managers and other necessary personnel.

Sandee Winchell mentioned that the DD Council is assisting LRS to provide customized employment, has implemented a pilot program in collaboration with the ARC of Louisiana, and provided online training resources to OCDD.

**La Department of Health Updates**

Julie Foster Hagan provided updates on behalf of the Office of Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD). Hagan provided that OCDD has implemented a new process in regards to the community based waiver, and which enables waiver recipients who has an urgent or emergent need to gain priority access to the waiver. Hagan mentioned that that the department will work every day to remedy issue that arise, and will work with local ombudsmen to transition out of intermediate care and into home and community based wavers, build an initiative for kids ages 0-3 who are in need of waiver services, and developing an enhanced rate.

Tara Leblanc provided an update on behalf of OAAS. Leblanc mentioned that due to the Federal Department of Justice agreement signed last June, an implementation plan has been published to address the allegations of warehousing individuals with serious mental illness in nursing facilities. OAAS has transitioned 28 individuals out of nursing facilities that fall within the mental health population. OAAS has implemented a strategy to reduce the Community Choices waiver waiting list.

Ashley Jefferson provided an update on behalf of OBH. Jefferson mentioned that pursuant to the DOJ agreement, there is a website that anyone may visit to view the notes which captures everything OBH is doing and summarizes everything that is occurring. OBH will continue to assist GODA with the vision quest portion of the grant that is focused on mental health employment, and will strengthen the MOU to include other strategic partners.

**Agency/ Member Updates**

Paula Rodriquez of Deaf Focus provided that their agency is working on the patients’ health bill to support the rights for individuals who are deaf and or hard of hearing. Under this bill, patients will have the option to choose language or the most effective means of communication for them. Paula mentioned that Representative Pat Smith will be working with Deaf Focus on this initiative.

Laura Brackin mentioned that she is working with Senator Hewitt regarding a bill related to certified medication attendants for people with a developmental disability that reside in a community home. This proposed bill will remove the residency requirement.

Christopher Kirby of DCFS mentioned that disability determination services have revamped its process relative to disability determination cases. Kirby mentioned that SSDI applications that are denied may be returned to DCFS as reconsideration (if the claimant applies for it) as opposed to it going to a Federal Judge. This policy will lessen the wait time for federal judges, but will bring in more case work to DCFS.

**Establish 2019 GODA Conference Committee, GOLD Awards Criteria Review Panel, Inclusive Art Contest**

Jamar Ennis asked interested GACDA members to join the 2019 GODA Conference Steering Committee, the GOLD Awards Review Panel, and the Inclusive Art Contest Planning Committee. The 2019 GODA Conference Steering Committee will be tasked with making recommendations for topics, speakers, and other matters for the GODA Conference which will take place on July 26, 2019. The GOLD Awards Review Panel will be tasked with evaluating the criteria for the current GOLD Awards for accuracy and achieve a broader appeal. The Inclusive Art Contest Committee will be charged with further developing the contest, make recommendations, and create themes for the Inclusive Art Contest. An email will be sent to each GACDA member for further details in regards to the various committees.

**Other Business**

There was no other business

**Adjournment**

The GACDA Committee officially adjourned at 3:00pm.