

THI/SCI TRUST FUND
ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

August 10, 2023

Prepared By Ayanna Wilson

CALL TO ORDER

Andrew Kuyoro, the Chair of the Board, called to order the regular meeting of the Traumatic Head and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund Advisory Board at 10:04 a.m. on August 10, 2023.

IN ATTENDANCE

Board Members: Dr. Andrew Kuyoro, Melissa Bayham, Dr. Bern Lee, John Fanning, Gary Matherne, Yvette Pacaccio, Senator Franklin Foil, Melinda Richard

Board Members Not in Attendance: Robert Chatelain, Stephanie Fletcher, and Rep. Lawrence Bagley

Agency Staff: Tonia Gedward, Lora Bennett, Ebony Thomas, Valencia Roberts, John Korduner and Ayanna Wilson

Contractors in Attendance: Kimberly Hill

Public: None

BOARD MEETING ATTENDEES' INTRODUCTIONS

Board Members and others in attendance introduced themselves. Dr. Kuyoro asked if we could have name cards made so that we would know who is speaking. Tonia agreed to have name cards at the next meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES/2023 MEETING DATES

The board reviewed the minutes from the last meeting held on February 9, 2023. The meeting minutes were approved with corrections. The board reviewed the meeting dates for 2024. The dates were approved as presented.

PROGRAM UPDATES / BUDGET-FINANCIAL REPORT – LORA BENNETT

Tonia asked everyone to review the financial report. She stated Lora would answer any question. She added we spent all the money that was allotted. We were able to serve a lot of the participants. Lora stated that we spent \$1.26 million, and she explained that we did not have any money to carry over. Tonia stated that with all the efforts we made with contacting the Municipalities, we did see a slight increase in collections. Dr. Kuyoro asked if there were any questions about the financial report. The financial report was approved as presented.

PROGRAM STATUS – TONIA GEDWARD

Tonia began by stating the THSCI Trust Fund program secured additional funding to offset the shortfall of the budget due to the decrease in municipality collections. She stated the additional funding allowed the THSCI Trust Fund Program to serve 106 waitlist applicants who had been waiting for services since 2018 and 2019. This wait list was reduced by 34% and the program will explore reviewing 2020 applications in the fall.

She stated that as of 8/9/23, there are 237 applicants on the waitlist. Tonia stated we’ve added 34 new applicants to the waitlist since the February board meeting.

<u>Application Year</u>	<u>Number of Appl.</u>
2020	63
2021	60
2022	72
2023	42

Tonia reminded the board that in April, the program mailed over 210 participant-related Support Coordination Agency notification letters to current participants who had not used their funds in over a year or more. The letter included the Support Coordination Agency contact information for each participant and information about the program’s covered services. She stated the letter was intended to remind the participants that they had funds available to assist them and encourage them to utilize the funds. This included THSCI participants who are also eligible for waiver programs where the waiver support coordinator may not be familiar with the THSCI program. She stated that the waiver participants may not hear about the program as much and tend to forget that they have these funds available to them. The mail-out project, along with adding new participants from the waitlist, increased client expenses by over 50% from April to June. She added because this project was so successful, we will ensure these letters go out twice per year.

She stated as of today, the program has 557 eligible participants.

370 = Spinal Cord Injury.
187= Brain Injury.

She stated since the last board meeting (February 2023), the program reviewed and processed numerous participant and applicant-related requests.

<u>Request Type</u>	<u>As of Today</u> (6-Month Period)	<u>Reported Last Meeting</u> (6-Month Period)
New Application Reviews	55 (34 added to waitlist, 3 Pending a decision, and 18 not approved)	43 (33 added to waitlist and 10 not approved)
Participant Services Plans	278 (255 were Approved, 6 are Pending Review and 17 were either denied)	195 (184 were Approved and 11 were either denied)

	or canceled by the Support Coordinator)	or canceled by the Support Coordinator)
Purchase Authorizations	255	189
Annual Assessment	257	214
Payments	583 (497 Paid, 28 Currently Pending Review and 58 Not Approved)	417
Caseload Change Requests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Closure (26) • Transfer to another region (6) • Updated participant's information (5) • Reinstated participant's case (2) • Requests to mail a new application (28) <p><i>Note: The program mailed the requested applications directly to the individuals.</i></p>	67	88

Tonia stated last year we discussed changing the name of the program from the Traumatic **Head** and Spinal Cord Injury program to the Traumatic **Brain** and Spinal Cord Injury program. She would like to bring this back to the table for discussion.

Mendy suggested doing a one-pager which is a dashboard to present the data that Tonia gave in the Program Status Report. She added we can use maps to show where the participants are in the program, and also with the application information. Tonia stated she is working with Kevin to provide that information to the current participants. She stated they have not started with the applications, however, that would be the next step. Mendy stated that would be a nice thing to have on the dashboard. Kimberly stated that would be great information for BIALA as well.

Mendy gave a few highlights from the Legislative Session for this year. She stated it was a good session for the Office of Aging and Adult Services. She added one of the things that was huge for us was House Bill 1 which is the budget for all state departments. She added this is where the monies are allocated for the next year. During COVID there were American Rescue Act Dollars that were given out to help with gaps in home and community-based services; she stated we had to submit a spending plan to CMS, they approve it and we executed it. She added one of the things we executed was increased rates for providers. She explained those were the support coordination agencies as well as the people who are taking care of the people in their homes. She stated it increased the money by 70% to companies and that money had to be pushed to the workers, in the form of direct compensation or other benefits. She stated those were one-time monies that were provided due to the pandemic. She added it was proposed in our budget this year to sustain those rates; to bake them into our budget, so that when those American Rescue Act dollars go away our providers will not see a drop in their rates, and they will be sustained. She stated the bill passed with HB1 which was a huge win for our office in this session because the providers received an increase and they will stay at that level.

Mendy stated we also received 500 Community Choice Waivers with HB1. She stated they are slots and someone has to get out of a slot for someone else to get into a slot. She added that receiving 500 more slots was huge for us as well.

Another thing that came out of HB1 was the Virtual Meetings. She stated Senate Bill 201 allows a panel or commission board like ourselves to have 25% of their board meetings be virtual. She added that would further allow access to some of the members of the board with disabilities. Mendy stated that we could have one of our meetings each year virtual.

She stated one of the highlights was House Resolution 209, to form a work group with our Support Coordination Agencies to address some of their concerns. She stated they do some work before the case is certified and then they begin to get paid for that case. She added they are asking how they can get paid sooner. She stated some states have found ways to work around how they can get paid, maybe retroactively. She stated that the work group will meet starting in the next week. She added she will be on the panel along with OCDD, Medicaid, and OAAS. They will meet with some of the providers and participants to build the infrastructure so that they can stay in business.

BIALA – KIMBERLY HILL

Kimberly stated our helpline has remained consistent receiving on average 26 calls per month. Their website continues to be beneficial with an average of 1,538 page views per month.

She stated their monthly virtual peer group calls continue with case managers continuing to join rehab hospitals with their patients to participate in their calls. The attendance has increased over the past few months including rehab directors joining us to learn about valuable resources and support for patients. In-person in-services have been minimal but contact with case managers and rehab directors remains consistent each month. She thanked Ebony for joining the peer group calls.

Kimberly stated our Ambassador Program is working wonders to help us connect with places and people around the state including in the more rural areas. Their membership numbers continue to increase and participation by new people on peer calls, in-person events, and in-person support groups is on the rise. She stated in May, through this program, they have had caregivers step up offering to host Caregiver Coffees around the state. Currently, coffees have occurred in Shreveport and New Orleans with more planned for Mamou, Opelousas, Lafayette, Baton Rouge, Lake Charles, and New Orleans. She added because of the huge outreach from caregivers, they are actively creating a program to develop a caregiver community which will include a virtual caregiver support group monthly (led by two caregivers), continued coffees or gatherings, and resources specifically for caregivers. She stated recently they were asked by the LSU Department of Psychology to be the community partner on a grant submission that will also focus on caregiving. They have connected with other organizations and hospitals and are working with them to offer in-person caregiver support groups. And, through this program, a new in-person support group for individuals with brain and/or spinal cord injuries and their caregivers has started in Raceland.

Kimberly stated that to bring individuals with brain and spinal cord injuries together for fun and fellowship, they offered an art event in Baton Rouge in July where 25 people attended, and an event in August in Shreveport where 36 people attended. She stated more events are being planned around other areas of the state as time and funds permit.

Lastly, Kimberly stated Louisiana was represented by three delegates at United Spinal Association's yearly advocacy event, Roll on Capitol Hill in Washington DC. They met with Legislative Directors from five different congressional offices and met with Senator Kennedy briefly in person. One of the big issues they discussed was making air travel more accessible for all people with disabilities, and recently in the news, there have been great announcements about this success.

She stated on behalf of the board of directors and staff of BIALA, they thank you for your continued support. Because of your support, they will continue their mission to be the statewide resource for people impacted by brain and/or spinal cord injury.

OTHER BUSINESS

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

FUTURE MEETINGS

The next board meeting is scheduled for November 9, 2023, at 10:00 a.m., at the Bluebonnet Regional Branch Library, located at 9200 Bluebonnet Blvd., Baton Rouge, LA 70810 in Room 1.

2023 THSCI ADVISORY BOARD MEETINGS:

February 8, 2024

May 9, 2024

August 8, 2024

November 14, 2024

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 11:33 a.m.