

**THI/SCI TRUST FUND
ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES
May 12, 2022
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 10:11 a.m. on May 12, 2022.

ATTENDANCE

The following board members were in attendance, establishing a quorum: Andrew Kuyoro, Sherlyn Sullivan, Melissa Bayham, Gary Matherne, Dr. Michael Chafetz, Robert Chatelain and Yvette Pacaccio

The following board members were absent: Stephanie Fletcher, John Fanning, Senator Franklin Foil and Representative Lawrence A. “Larry” Bagley

Others in attendance:

Agency Staff: Melinda Richard, Lora Bennett, Tonia Gedward, Ayanna Wilson and John Korduner

Program Contractor: Kimberly Hill

Public: None

BOARD MEETING ATTENDEES' INTRODUCTIONS

Board Members and others in attendance introduced themselves. Melinda Richard, the newly appointed Office of Aging and Adult Services Assistant Secretary, introduced herself to the board.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The board reviewed the minutes from the last meeting held on February 10, 2022. Andrew asked if anyone had any comments about the minutes. Dr. Chafetz suggested a correction to paragraph two on the second page of the minutes. The shortfall amount should be \$600,000 instead of \$600,00.

The updated minutes will be emailed to the board to include the revisions. Yvette Pacaccio moved to accept the minutes with the corrections. Dr. Chafetz seconded. Motion carried.

PROGRAM UPDATES / BUDGET-FINANCIAL REPORT – SHERLYN SULLIVAN

Sherlyn asked everyone to review the financial report. She stated this year was consistent with last year. She stated we are expected to collect about \$1.2 million, which means the collections are still down. By now, we were hoping to see an increase. She also said the program expenditures have decreased. We projected \$1.8 million in expenditures at the beginning of the year but now we are

projecting \$1.6 million. She explained the reason for the reduction is due to individuals exiting the program and the inability to provide services to individuals who are on the waitlist. She stated the client services cost is decreasing, which is not good for the program. However, there is nothing we can really do about it because we do not have the money to add new participants to the program.

She moved on to the percentage of the actual amount projected. She stated our personnel services are higher than we want them to be. In the previous years, we ran between 15 – 20% for our administrative services with 80% going to client services. She stated the report shows that we are currently \$241,000 short from what we collected to what we have spent. By the end of the year, we will be \$450,000 short. She stated the good news is we have state funds to cover this amount this year, but we cannot use those funds for recurring costs. Sherlyn stated she and Mendy have been talking to Senator Foil's office and another senator, Senator Price, has shown interest in the program funding as well. She stated she gave Senator Price all types of data (regarding the program). Senator Price is attempting to get the \$1 million (now \$800,000 if we want to state that) shortfall added to the program's budget in 2023. She stated what that would mean for the program is not only will we be able to pay for our current program cost, but we will also be able to start reviewing applications from the waitlist and adding new participants to the program.

Mr. Kuyoro asked when we plan to have the \$1 million. Sherlyn stated if it passes through the legislative, which is what Senator Price is trying to do, we would have it in July. She said, if they give us the \$1 million, it would be enough to add at least 100 new participants from the waitlist. She explained before COVID we were adding about 100 new participants per year. Therefore, if this happens, the program can get back to Pre-Covid conditions. She stated that Senator Foil and Representative Bagley are telling us that they are willing to author a bill for next year in an attempt to get extra funding for 2024.

Mr. Matherne asked about the building and parking fees for February. Sherlyn explained that it's a recurring expense for housing program staff.

Mr. Kuyoro asked if the board should write a letter to request anything. Sherlyn stated she did not think so because it is state funds. Mendy added that the funds are in House Bill One. She stated HB1 is where the state budget is every year. She stated it would be added as an amendment to that bill. Mendy said Senator Price would probably be successful in getting the \$800,000 to help us clear the debt and add another 100 cases. She stated we gave them a second option, which is if we can get the \$1.6 million we can clear everything. Mendy said Senator Foil is advocating for the second option. She added we do not know which one will be approved if not both. She added as far as the letter of support, the way that process works is within the next couple of months our department will be asking what bills would we like to put forth for the next legislative session. She stated it goes through our leadership to approve. She stated once that is vetted by our department and the governor's office and the "package" is confirmed, at that point we can start gathering letters and making the case for why we need what we need.

Dr. Chafetz asked when the bill comes out can we get the language of HB1 and other bills sent by email. Sherlyn explained the language is vague but she will let them know when it happens. Mendy added letters of support are very helpful. She stated, however real-life examples or emails from individuals would be more useful. Mendy stated it may come across as negative but it is very helpful to us because our representatives and senators are really there because of our constituents. She added

if they know that a program is being avoided because we are not connecting the dollars to the people, it helps to make our case in the future. Ms. Kimberly Hill, BIALA, added that she gets ten emails a day from people willing to do whatever they have to do to get help.

PROGRAM STATUS – TONIA GEDWARD

Tonia stated currently the program has 497 participants and there are 316 applicants on the waitlist. She said that the program is not reviewing any applicants for eligibility to actually start receiving services at this time. Based on the budget projections, the program will not be able to provide services to any additional individuals on the waitlist. They will remain on the waitlist until additional funding is available.

Application Year	Number of Applicants
2018	74
2019	100
2020	63
2021	48
2022	31

Tonia informed the board that since the last board meeting, the program received 93 Participant Services Plans (PSP); issued 87 Purchase Authorizations; reviewed 100 annual assessment documents; released (authorized) 214 payments to vendors; reviewed 24 (approved and denied) new applications and processed 55 Caseload Change requests and requests to mail new applications. She stated application and caseload change requests consist of the following: We received 17 requests for new applications in the last three months; we mailed the requested applications to the individuals.

She explained the support coordinators submit Participant Service Plans to the program to request goods and services on behalf of the participant. These requests consist of goods and services such as wheelchairs, medical supplies, home modifications, and assistive devices.

She stated the Annual Assessment Documents are documents received from the participant’s support coordinator on an annual basis. The assessment document is a standardized assessment of each participant’s functional capabilities and health needs.

She stated the Payments Released to Vendors are based on PSPs that were previously approved. The vendor has since delivered the goods and/or services and provided an invoice requesting payment.

In other process improvement efforts Tonia stated, she is always trying to streamline our processes. She developed a system in SharePoint that send us reports every week; it reminds her and her staff of what they have pending so that we do not drop the ball on any requests. She stated we continue to update policy and procedures to better serve program participants.

Tonia stated that we still need to fill two board member seats: the Louisiana state medical society (LSMS) or designee, and the Louisiana Hospital Association or designee.

She has been in contact with LSMS, but as of today, they have not found a replacement. She stated she follows up with them every month but they have not found anyone. Mendy asked who was head of LSMS. Tonia stated she has been in contact with the vice president, which is Terry Watson.

Kenneth Alexander, who was previously appointed the designee for the Louisiana Hospital Association board position, is now retired. Meaghan, the Executive Assistant to the President & CEO, states they are currently interviewing individuals for Mr. Alexander's old position. They stated until they hire someone they could not appoint anyone to our board. Tonia stated the president of the appointed person should sit on the board.

Mendy stated she could reach out to Dr. Roberts to see what is going on. Tonia stated that would be helpful. Mendy suggested that she and Tonia work together to get the seats filled. She stated she would try to at least get some names to Tonia to consider or to see who may be interested. She added she thinks filling those vacancies is important.

NON-PAYING MUNICIPALITIES

Tonia stated we are still doing what we can internally to get to get the municipalities to submit the funds that are due to the program. The program sends out letters every six months. She stated we would be mailing letters in July to the ones who made three payments or less in the last fiscal year. She added it (the letters) stimulates a few payments but unfortunately, it does not last long.

Sherlyn stated some of the places she knows do not have court systems or police departments. Dr. Chafetz asked if there was a way to do record keeping. Tonia said that the municipalities self-report so there's no way to manage their records. She added that when the municipalities submit a payment, they complete a form, self-reporting how many tickets they received and how much is due to the program.

Mr. Kuyoro stated we have to stay on top of the municipalities. He suggested having a Zoom meeting to educate the municipalities on why their payments are important to our program. Ms. Pacaccio stated she would be happy to join the Zoom meeting to speak as a caregiver of a survivor to educate on how the funds help her and her family.

Ms. Bayham asked if the program give the participants information about LRS. Tonia stated starting a referral program is on her to-do list. Tonia said when the support coordinators do annual assessments, they refer participants to the Long Term Care program if applicable.

Kimberly Hill stated she refers individuals to LRS whenever she receives phone calls from individuals who may benefit from the program. Dr. Chatefz asked do we have a resource guide. Kimberly stated that BIALA is the resource center/guide.

In reference to the two board members that Tonia mentioned earlier in the conversation, Mendy said that Dr. Floyd Roberts, LHA, will check on Ken's replacement. He is willing to be Ken's replacement on the board until they find someone. She stated we would need to make sure he is the right person for the seat. She said we also need to see what he needs to do to become a board member.

BIALA – KIMBERLY HILL

Kimberly stated their helpline has remained consistent receiving on average, 25 calls per month. Their website continues to receive good traction with an average of 2,173 page views per month. She stated that BIALA had its annual conference and it was a huge success. She stated it was their largest conference ever. There were 225 Allied Healthcare Professionals, caregivers, and brain and spinal cord injury survivors. She stated BIALA also did a survival chat on Friday. The chat was a break out from the professional sessions. She added individuals with brain or spinal cord injuries were able to attend the survival chat. She stated there were about 40-50 people in the survival chat with great sessions for the participants. There was also a “social” for them at the end of the day.

She stated that BIALA’s exhibitor hall was amazing. There were 35 exhibitors/sponsors, which was up from 20 in 2020. She added the exhibitor hall was filled with energy. She stated it was the first time many of the businesses had been together. She added there were so many great resources for the professionals, the caregivers and the individuals with injuries. She stated she is already planning for next year. Next year’s conference will be on March 24-25, 2023.

Kimberly stated she is now doing in-services in person. She added it has been a little slow but it should start increasing soon. She stated that BIALA sends many emails, makes numerous calls and performs zoom calls. She stated they provide the case managers at different hospitals with a folder that includes BIALA’s information. The folders have information about BIALA’s program, the THSCI Trust Fund application and a resource sheet with other good information. She said that 250 resource backpacks were given out to the hospitals. She stated they are trying to get funding to do more backpacks because they were resourceful. Gary Matherne asked how much each backpack cost. Kimberly said that she would get the information to him. Gary said that he would like to help get more backpacks.

She also stated they (BIALA) holds virtual peer group calls. She added that BIALA has case managers at rehab hospitals that are now joining the calls with their patients, which has been great.

Kimberly added thanks to a generous donation by the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation, United Spinal Association offered the opportunity for people impacted by Hurricane Ida to apply for individual disaster relief grants. She stated due to the enormous task of processing applications, they have been helping the national organizations. Roofs have been replaced/repared, home equipment has been purchased, wheelchairs have been replaced and damaged homes have been fixed. She added over \$400,000 has been provided in disaster relief grants.

OTHER BUSINESS

None

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

FUTURE MEETINGS

The next board meeting is scheduled for August 11, 2022, at 10:00 a.m., normally held at PACE, 7436 Bishop Ott Dr., Baton Rouge, LA 70806.

2022 THSCI ADVISORY BOARD MEETINGS:

May 12, 2022
August 11, 2022
November 10, 2022

ADJOURNMENT

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