



Louisiana Rehabilitation Council

P.O. Box 91297
Baton Rouge, LA 70821-9297

General Committee Meeting Minutes Thursday, October 26, 2023 at 9:00 AM CT

**Hampton Inn & Suites Baton Rouge I-10 East
11271 Reiger Road
Baton Rouge, LA 70809
Assemblee 1 & 2**

Members Present	Members Present- (16) Stephen Carrier, Warren Chauvin, Rikki David, Kathleen Funderburk, Elizabeth Fussell, Suzanne Lentz, Brian Patchett, Cody Rabalais, Donna Reno, Laura Stazio, Lynn Stevens, Megan Thompson, Roszella Viltz, Lauren Womack, Ashley Volion, and Patrick Holmes (Non-voting Members- (2) Nicole Poiencot and Melissa Bayham)
Members Absent	Jamar Ennis, Laura Nata, Michelle Ned
Liaison	Courtney Ryland
Guests Present	Lynsey Hebert (captionist), Gabriel McGrew, Stephen Johnston, Audra Muslow-Hicks, Kelly Monroe, Sandra Manuel, Stephen Johnston
Call to Order	The general meeting was called to order by Chair Lynn Stevens at 9:10am with a quorum.
Minutes	July 2023 Quarterly Minutes were reviewed. Warren Chauvin motioned to approve the minutes and Laura Stazio seconded the motion. Motion passed without abstention or objection.
Old Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have 5 vacancies (Federal Section 121, Workforce Investment, Rehab Tech, and 2 current or former applicant of voc rehab)<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Lynn suggested we look at who we had previously discussed in the past.○ Melissa B will reach out to the WIC Director about membership.○ Courtney will send out the membership flyer to us, so that we can spread the word.



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- The consumer survey has not been done. Updates were made. LWC offered features (language, skip-logic, offered in different languages). The survey may happen within 2 months.
- Open law meeting rule update (Act started Aug 1): LWC has not finalized anything regarding the open meetings law. LWC is in the process of promulgating rules for the law. Rikki David shared that we do not currently meet eligibility since we only meet quarterly. You will always have to have an anchor location and the chair must attend at the anchor location. Brian suggested that we count the Executive Meetings, so that we could meet the 6 meeting count. People with disabilities can attend electronically. We should begin offering a Zoom link for future meetings for those with disabilities to access. Rikki suggests that we start meeting 6 times. If you have 6 meetings, you still have to have the anchor location. We will talk about this option in New Business.
- Ethics Training- There are 10 people who still need to do the training for 2023.
- LRC Recruitment Flyer: **Megan Thompson moves to approve the flyer and Brian Patchett seconds the motion.** Donna suggests we update the meeting sentence at the bottom the page if the number of meetings change.
- Vendor Coalition Update: The coalition has added members to capture the disability population across the state and will meet with Melissa's team in the future.
- An LRC group picture was taken.

Presentation

- State ADA Coordinator's Office: Rikki David is in this role and fosters compliance with ADA. She is not enforcement or regulatory. She interprets the law and provides background. She is very familiar with Title 1 and 2 of ADA. She tracks and promulgates rules connected to disabilities. More training is



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needed regarding ADA. She works to help anyone better understand those laws. Her office participated in councils and boards to promote awareness of ADA.

LRS Director's Report

- Melissa has been at LRS in the position for 5 years. RSA flagged that people wanted information on many things that LRS was unaware of. They have since shared the information. She wants the LRC to offer their suggestions and guidance. They are still short-staffed. They are attempting to go paperless. They are working on engaging people into services more efficiently. LRS is a partner of the \$10M grant the LDOE was awarded. The case management system has some drawbacks, but they are thankful for the upgrades. Docusign can now be used which has been helpful in many instances. During Covid, the Randolph Sheppard businesses were not making as much revenue as in the past. LSUS is trying to start a Voc Rehab program. In July, many positions were given an increase in pay. LRS vendors are struggling and LRS wants to present updates to rates. Yes-LMS will offer training on-demand for new counselors to attend, which will help get employees ready sooner. The Counselor Academy will begin again after being put on pause during Covid. They are working on a TA Manual as one document. It will still be available online. There are currently 9,000 VR cases. **Brian moves to invite someone from Civil Service (compensation representative) to come in and explain the pay scale for the positions and Roszella seconds the motion.** Stephen offered a fiscal and statistical presentation.

Public Comment

- None



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New Business

- 2024 WIOA State Plan: LWC needs to submit the 2024 WIOA State Plan this month. Melissa requested that we offer suggestions to add to the draft by 10/31/23. **Courtney will send the Strategic Plan and Title 4 to the LRC so that they can offer feedback.**
- LRS Technical Assistance and Guidance Manual Changes: LRS is working on the new manual. Regarding supported employment, LRS plans to increase \$25/hour twice a month to \$40/hour twice a month (youth with disabilities-up to 24 years old). \$1,025 plans to increase the rate to \$2,350 for Customized Discovery. For job readiness, job search assistance, job placement assistance, and short term job supports will be more flexible to allow a client to receive multiple services that they need. Vendors can offer on-the-job-training. **Lauren Womack motions to include health benefits as good as or better than SSI/SSDI as a high quality indicator and Ashley Volion seconds the motion.** Disability related augmentative skill training has been increased from \$40/hour to \$65/hour. Adult work-based learning will match the rates that the students with disabilities have. This was discussed in one of the committees in the past. The \$1K max will be revised for books and supplies for college. The community-based assessment will be increased from \$500 to \$750.
- **Donna Reno and Patrick Holmes will send Roszella their electronic packets for her to distribute.**
- Future Meeting Schedule: **Brian moves to provide a virtual meeting option for LRC for those with disabilities as early as January providing Melissa's legal council approves and Megan seconds the motion.** We will need to track that those who are virtual are being accommodated. Rikki said that we can do this now, but need to have a column on our attendance that can be checked for those who are virtual due to accommodation.



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Standing Committees

- Training can be virtually offered. Courtney will send out a DoodlePoll to determine dates (early December).

Megan moves to forgo the Standing Committees due to timing and the vast amount of presentation material covered. Brian seconds the motion. Planning and Eligibility

- Eligibility and Planning lead is now Lauren.

Member Reports

IDEA report – Megan Thompson

IDEA- At the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), the Special Education Office has been awarded a [\\$10M grant](#) to improve career opportunities for students with disabilities. The project supports partnerships between vocational rehab agencies (includes LRS), state and location agencies, and centers for independent living to help students with disabilities transition to life after high school.

- The pilot will provide comprehensive training for students with disabilities in career exploration and job readiness. The pilot will focus on innovative activities that develop career opportunities such as internships and apprenticeships for students with disabilities.
- Dr. Brumley [issued a letter PDF \(will open in new tab\)](#) to system leaders in August outlining a number of steps the LDOE is taking to upgrade outdated special education systems and processes, provide greater support and oversight, and improve outcomes for students with disabilities. These include:

- **Special Education Playbook:** The LDOE is hosting a statewide tour this month to support school systems with implementation.
- **Enhanced Family Support:** The LDOE will employ a Special Education Ombudsman with authority to hold confidential conversations with parents. The agency is also adding an additional complaint investigator.

Adjourn



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- **Enhanced Teacher and Leader Support:** This includes technical support through statewide access to special education law and compliance training, staff to support school systems with special education compliance, and the possible placement of a special master with direct oversight authority over special educational programming within a system.

The Special Education Office was very thankful that LRS joined the meeting for Special Education Directors this month.

CAP – Patrick Holmes

- CAP- Intertribal Council no longer has a VR services. There are only two service providers for natives in Louisiana (Tunica-Biloxi and Houma).

SILC – Jamar Ennis

- Jamar was not at the meeting

Chair's Report

- Lynn provided a list of things that LRC would like to be seen in the future from LRS and shared it with Melissa. **Courtney will look to see if there is a flowchart-type document that shows when things happen for students and what they qualify for at those times.**

Roszella motioned to close at 3:05pm and Warren seconded the motion. All approve.

Our next meeting IS January 25, 2024.