

HDC Agency Report

July 2009

As with all state supported organizations, the past quarter has presented some daunting challenges for the fiscal “health” of HDC. At the time of the writing of this report, the exact impact on HDC’s budget remains unclear. However, if nothing changes HDC will sustain a reduction in state support of approximately 80% relative to last year. We have had some success in securing funding/support from a number of sources to off-set these anticipated reductions which will be briefly described below.

During the past quarter HDC received approval from the Louisiana Department of Education on requests to continue funding of the Louisiana School Psychology Internship Consortium (LASPIC) and the Louisiana Autism Spectrum and Related Disabilities (LASARD) projects. Both projects received substantial increases in funding level from the Department, for which HDC is very grateful. In addition, HDC submitted a proposal to OCDD (EarlySteps) to establish a “best-practice” Transdisciplinary Services model-demonstration pilot project designed to deliver to families with young children who screen positive for an autism spectrum disorder. This project will build on, and extend the work HDC is doing with partial support from the DD Council and OCDD (i.e., the Early Intensive Treatment project). This proposal has not received final approval but we are very optimistic that it will. HDC has proposed to provide contracted services to a number of school districts or local education agencies (LEA) to assist them with establishing and implementing Response to Intervention services in their schools. We are awaiting word from several districts in Greater New Orleans area regarding their interests in this area.

Sadly, we recently received word from Louisiana Rehabilitation Services that despite their expressed satisfaction with our Supported Employment Continuous Improvement Project (SECIP) that they will not be able to renew our contract for this project. As a result, we will be forced to lay off three staff, David Legendre, Sam Slavich, and Alycia Burch. I would like to acknowledge the contributions of these individuals to employment services and outcomes, statewide, and affirm that losing the ability to maintain their efforts is not a reflection of the good work they have done over the years. We wish David, Sam, and Alycia well- and hope that they will find new jobs soon.

HDC continues to believe awareness, knowledge, skills, and capacity to provide accessible and high quality employment supports/services to persons with significant support needs remains one of the most important targets for improvement within the service system in Louisiana. Indeed, HDC supports the “Employment First” initiative that is gaining support across the nation. HDC is committed to maintaining some level of staff expertise and infrastructure in the area of employment supports and services for persons with significant support needs until such time as we can secure additional sources of funds to “re-start” or expand our efforts in this critical area.

Thankfully, the contract from the DD Council for the Employment Consortium project provides an important resource for maintaining our Employment programs coordinator, Ms. Patty Ghiossi.

On April 22-23, HDC held the third annual HDC Institute. This year's theme was, "Response to Intervention". The Institute was attended by approximately 200 persons. Presentations and information from the institute can be viewed at the HDC Institute website:

<http://www.hdc.lsuhs.edu/hdcinstitute/>. On June 5, HDC hosted a workshop on Response to Intervention which was attended by about 180 educators, primarily school psychologists, educational diagnosticians and social workers.

The third Louisiana Autism and Related Disabilities Summer Institute was held at the Hampton Inn, across the street from the Earnest M. Morial Convention Center, in New Orleans on June 22-25. This 4-day institute was attended by more than 275 special and general teachers and paraprofessionals, therapists, family members, self-advocates, and school administrators. Each day a different topic was covered including: Social Support, Communication, Systematic Instruction, and Transition. National and Regional speakers delivered keynotes in the morning and participants selected from afternoon strands. For those wishing to view information from presenters please go to: <http://www.hdc.lsuhs.edu/ASI2009/>.

Brief summaries of activities related to the three projects the DD Council has provided partial funding for (i.e., Employment Consortium, Employment Study, and Early Intensive Treatment for Young Children with ASD project) were presented at DDC committee meetings. For more information about the Employment Consortium or Employment Study projects, please contact Dr. Alisa Lowrey at klowe@lsuhsc.edu. Persons wanting more information about the Early Intensive Treatment project are referred to Dr. Gina Easterly-Taylor at geaste@lsuhsc.edu.