

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Sandee Winchell; 225/342-6804 office; 225/938-9056 mobile

La. DD Council Applauds the Direction of Governor's Budget

Proposed changes will result in improved quality of life for people with developmental disabilities and more cost effective services for taxpayers

BATON ROUGE- Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council Chairperson Sandra "Sam" Beech announced the Council's full support of several proposed changes to the state's system responsible for serving people with developmental disabilities that were included in Governor Jindal's FY 2011 Executive Budget released today. The closure of Northeast Supports and Services Center in Ruston and the transition of individuals with low support needs in the remaining centers to community based services are two provisions in the budget that are consistent with reforms the Council has long advocated to implement.

"These are monumental steps forward, putting Louisiana on the path that most states have already taken – investing the majority of their dollars spent for people with developmental disabilities in community services rather than institutions," Beech said. "This is what the overwhelming majority of people with disabilities and their families want – to be able to live in the community just like everyone else," she added. Decades of research have also demonstrated that people with even the most significant disabilities enjoy a healthier, higher quality of life when they live in individual settings with appropriate supports or share a home with 1-2 others than those who live in institutional settings.

The services people receive in the community are also much less expensive on average than those provided in a large institution (supports and services center). The average cost of serving someone in a state institution is over \$170,000 while the average cost of serving someone in their own home in the community is about \$66,000. The state is currently implementing a new resource allocation model that is proving to reduce these costs even further – to an average of about \$48,000 per person. Therefore, the provisions in Governor Jindal's budget to move residents into their communities are also fiscally responsible decisions, especially since thousands of Louisiana citizens with developmental disabilities are on a waiting list for home and community based services.

The Governor did not ignore the need to increase the availability of home and community based services in his budget. The Council applauds the funding of 150 New Opportunities Waiver (NOW) "slots" the Governor included for people with developmental disabilities currently on that waiting list. These NOW slots will provide much needed services to people living in their own homes who have been waiting up to nine years for services. Making these changes will allow savings from the downsizing of the remaining supports and services centers to be realized in years to come – dollars that can be invested in community services for those who have chosen to remain at home and wait rather than enter an institution.

"The reform measures in this budget are refreshing," Beech said. "They will not only result in a better quality of life for the residents who will be moving into the community, but also bring hope to the thousands on the NOW waiting list that resources will be available to serve them in the future."

The Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council is charged by Congress to conduct advocacy, capacity building and systems change activities. The Council's efforts are designed to promote the increased self-determination, independence, productivity, integration and inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in their communities.

To learn more about the Council, visit <http://www.laddc.org>

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