

**LSBA Legal Services for Persons with Disabilities Committee**  
**Thursday, May 20, 2021**  
**Virtual Zoom Meeting**

*Attendees:*

- **Elena Perez, Committee Chair** (*Southeast Louisiana Legal Services*)
- Derek Warden, *Louisiana Supreme Court*
- Melanie Bray, *Disability Rights Louisiana*
- Chris Edmunds, *Attorney at Law*
- Garret DeReus, *Attorney at Law*
- Margot Hammond, *Attorney at Law*
- Debra Weinberg, *Disability Rights Louisiana*
- Rubye Noble, *Attorney at Law*
- Sophia Mire, *Southern Poverty Law Center*
- Jo Nixon, *Attorney at Law*
- Sean Morrison, *Attorney at Law*
- Wendra Moran, *Attorney at Law*

*LSBA Staff*

Stephanie Beagh  
Mariarenee Contreras

**Minutes**

**1. Welcome & Introductions:**

- Minutes – Melanie moved, seconded by Margot - Approved.

**2. COVID-19 Updates**

- *Debbie Weinberg* – Disability Rights Louisiana received a grant to help people with disabilities receive their COVID-19 vaccines. Grant is meant to help cover all costs revolving the vaccination process, including transportation and is available for all Louisiana. They are still pushing for the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines in nursing/care facilities, and CMS is obligating both staff and patient's vaccination numbers to be reported. If anyone knows somebody who needs this assistance, please contact Debbie. Medicaid waiver extensions are continuing until next fall. These waivers allow for support workers to continue living in the same home as the person they are supporting. This great for high-risk kids below the age of 12 who are not allowed to get vaccinated.

**3. 2021 CLE Ideas:**

- *Derek Warden* – Derek and the Law Library of Louisiana are hosting a virtual CLE at the Louisiana Supreme Court based on his thesis, *Disability Rights and The Louisiana Constitution*. Derek asked if the Committee could co-sponsor his presentation on June 25<sup>th</sup> at Noon. Committee approved. Elena will most likely speak for 2-3 minutes to

introduce the committee and increase membership, but Chris Edmunds is willing to speak and Rubye Noble volunteered as well. Stephanie will share the registration information.

- Survey Results – *Stephanie* announced the results from the survey and there was an even split amongst committee members to gear training towards disability right experts and attorneys that are new to the practice of disability law. Elena listed the reported suggested topics.
  - *Debbie* Weinberg mentioned she may be able to conduct a training with Jessica Sawyer on the communication and ethical/professional obligations to clients with disabilities. Debbie suggested that someone from the disability rights center may be able to provide a CLE training on special education.
  - *Melanie Bray* mentioned that she has also provided several types of trainings in collaboration with Arc of Louisiana on legal status, interdiction, tutorship, and alternative supportive decision making for people with disabilities. She is willing to conduct similar trainings for potential CLE credit.
  - *Garret DeReus* also volunteered to offer an ethics training if needed. Debbie says if Garret presents then she can just focus her training on professionalism.

#### 4. **Bar Journal Publications:**

- *Sean Morrison* talked about his article that is going to be published later this year and would he like to conduct a CLE on general disability rights issues and introducing the Committee to other Bar members. However, he is happy to conduct a training within a potential Disability Rights CLE series or having a separate one with him alone. The disability related journal articles are going to cover the following topics:
  - Supportive Decision Making
  - Estate Planning

Sean would like to have his separate training around September or October. He is open to having the training in-person or virtual. Though virtual might be the better platform at this time.

- *Elena* asked if people wanted to vote at this meeting about whether the Committee wants to host a series of CLE's or if they want to do separate CLE trainings:
  - 6 people were in favor of doing a CLE series.
  - Sean's specific training would be in the Fall, but the group would like to do the more general training towards the end of the year in November or early December.
  - Debbie suggested for training to be held virtually. Chris and Elena suggested a hybrid model for the training. We could host the training within one of the courthouses. This would be for the general training session. Sean's would be virtual.
- *Elena* encouraged for people to write more bar journal articles. It is a great way to announce the Committee's work and recruit more members. Melanie was interested and Stephanie will circulate some guidelines the LSBA has for the bar journal.

#### 5. **Engaging Law Students:**

- Elena asked members to encourage law student involvement in any way they can. Law Clerks can also help with writing these articles. In addition, the committee can help with hosting additional skills trainings for students. Some ideas that were brought up were Stephanie's suggestion that if members have any summer interns to please invite them to

the Committee's future meetings. Melanie suggested having the Committee speak at Capital Assistance program's brownbag lunch sessions.

**6. Policy/ Legislative Updates:**

- *Margot Hammond* said she may be able to send a summary of bills that affect disability rights issues but did not know of any now. Debbie suggested to check out the GODDA page for legislative updates that may affect disability rights Issues. She mentioned to also be on the lookout for the Dental Medicaid State bill and the Cameras in Special Ed Classrooms house bill. Chris mentioned that the TEFRA-Section 134 (**Katie Becket**) Eligibility Option law is supposed to be implemented soon but has yet not occurred.

**7. Upcoming Trainings:**

- *Debbie Weinberg* mentioned that the Disability Rights Center in collaboration with Families Helping Families Acadiana is holding two trainings during the summer aimed towards consumers. One will be on SSI and the other on SSDI.
- *Garret DeReus* mentioned that his firm is working on a Deaf Rights (interpreter rights) trial at the Middle District Court of Louisiana.
- *Melanie Bray* gave an updated about a recent case of hers. It won at the Middle District Court but is up for appeals in the 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit. The case involved the enforcement of mandated reasonable ADA accommodations for prisoners with disabilities in Angola State Penitentiary.

**8. Other Business**

- Justice Index – *Stephanie* reminded everyone to look at the National Center for Access to Justice's survey results for the state of Louisiana. If members can look at the different questions that were asked and maybe at the next meeting members can decide if there are certain issues the Committee could potentially work on to help improve.

**9. Adjournment** – *Elena* reminded members that this is the last Committee meeting for the 2020-2021 Bar Year and to please on the lookout for the next Bar Year's meeting dates. She encouraged members to inform others about the Committee and its great work.