

SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND COMMISSIONS
LOUISIANA SPECIAL EDUCATION CENTER



PERFORMANCE AUDIT
ISSUED APRIL 25, 2012

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AT 225-339-3800.**

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LOUISIANA LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR
DARYL G. PURPERA, CPA, CFE

April 25, 2012

The Honorable John A. Alario,
President of the Senate
The Honorable Charles E. "Chuck" Kleckley,
Speaker of the House of Representatives

Dear Senator Alario and Representative Kleckley:

This report provides the results of our performance audit on the Louisiana Special Education Center (LSEC).

The report contains our findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Appendix A contains LSEC management's response to this report. I hope this report will benefit you in your legislative decision-making process.

We would like to express our appreciation to the management and staff of the LSEC, the Louisiana Department of Education, and the Office of Citizens with Disabilities within the Department of Health and Hospitals for their assistance during this audit.

Sincerely,

Daryl G. Purpera, CPA, CFE
Legislative Auditor

DGP/ch

LSEC 2012

Louisiana Legislative Auditor

Daryl G. Purpera, CPA, CFE

Special Schools and Commissions Louisiana Special Education Center



April 2012

Audit Control # 40110012

Executive Summary

This report provides the results of our performance audit of the Louisiana Special Education Center (LSEC). We conducted this audit based on the results of our risk assessment of the Special Schools and Commissions budget unit. The purpose of the audit was to determine whether LSEC's activities align with its mission as a special education school and to identify potential areas of coordination between LSEC and the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) within the Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH). The audit objectives and results of our work are as follows:

Objective 1: Do LSEC's activities align with its mission as a special education school?

Results: The mission of LSEC is to provide special education programs and related services to developmentally delayed, mentally disabled, and severely orthopedically challenged students with the goal of maximizing each student's potential toward the successful integration into mainstream society. While LSEC conducts some activities that align with its mission as a special education school, it conducts other activities that do not. For example, as of August 2011, LSEC provides educational services to 38 (48.7%) of 78 students in its school setting who are school age (3-21 years). However, the remaining 40 (51.3%) students are 22 years of age or older and, according to state law, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) is no longer required to provide them with special education services. LSEC provides these individuals with specialized medical and therapeutic services, which fall outside of its mission as a special education school.

In addition, since 2006 LSEC has been operating a residential group home called the Transitional Family Life Center (TFLC) on its school campus for former students. The TFLC is licensed by DHH as an Intermediate Care Facility for the Developmentally Disabled (ICF/DD). Operating a residential group home falls outside of LSEC's mission as a special education school. In addition, because of the TFLC's location and reliance on some LSEC resources, the group home potentially puts the state at risk for non-compliance with federal integration mandates such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Olmstead ruling.

Objective 2: Are there opportunities for coordination between LSEC and OCDD?

Results: Both LSEC and OCDD provide residential therapeutic services with educational components to clients with orthopedic and developmental disabilities. We identified two areas where LSEC could potentially benefit from coordination with OCDD. These areas, listed below, would assist LSEC in returning to its mission as a special education school and help ensure the state's compliance with federal integration mandates.

- LSEC should coordinate with OCDD in the development of a comprehensive transition process that identifies long-term placement options for its students after exiting LDOE's educational services.
- LSEC should coordinate with OCDD to expand the use of best practice assessment tools, such as the Supports Intensity Scale and Louisiana PLUS, in evaluating each of its student's supports needs and ability to transition into a community setting.

Background

Mission. The Louisiana Special Education Center (LSEC) is a special education school located in Alexandria, Louisiana. The mission of LSEC is to provide special education programs and related services to developmentally delayed, mentally disabled, and severely orthopedically challenged students with the goal of maximizing each student's potential toward the successful integration into mainstream society.

Population and Services. As of August 2011, LSEC provides services to 89 individuals, aged 3 through 44 years. LSEC's admissions policy requires that students have an orthopedic impairment to be considered eligible for services. Approximately 97.8% (87 students) of LSEC's population use large, customized wheelchairs to accomplish daily living tasks. These students also have other medical conditions that affect their physical and cognitive functioning abilities. As a result, LSEC's population is medically fragile and requires a wide range of support needs.

LSEC. LSEC supports the needs of its students by providing services within two settings. LSEC provides special education services through the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), therapeutic services through its Transitional Living Skills and Habilitative classrooms, and specialized medical care to 78 students in its school facility (75 resident students and 3 day students). In addition, LSEC operates a residential group home¹ called the Transitional Family Life Center (TFLC), under a separate Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) license that serves 11 former LSEC students. Students in the school and residents of the TFLC have access to such services as occupational, physical, and speech and language therapy three to five times a week. Monday through Friday, students and residents attend classes or day programs appropriate to their needs. See Appendix C for the distribution of LSEC students and residents by daytime activity.

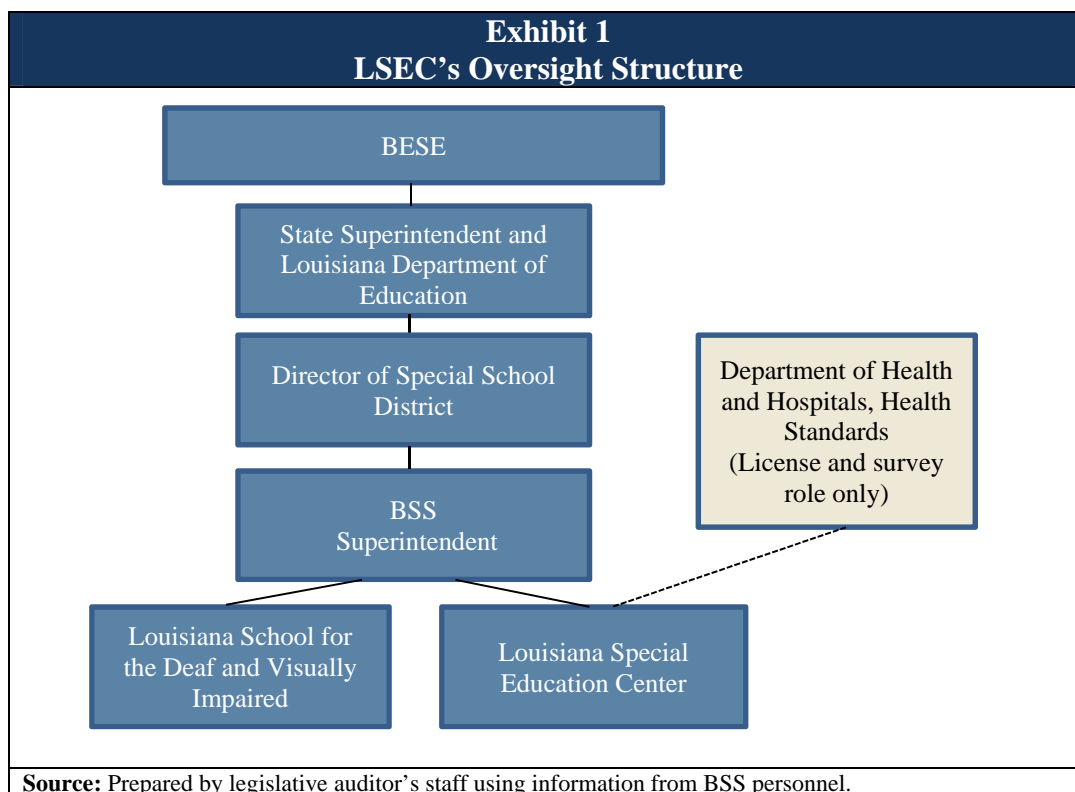
Budget and Staffing. Approximately \$15.5 million (96.3%) of LSEC's \$16.1 million budget for fiscal year 2012 was funded through Medicaid Title XIX. Another \$501,212 (3.1%) was comprised of inter-agency transfers from the LDOE. As of August 2011, LSEC employed 233 staff. Appendix D depicts each of LSEC's activities and lists the number of staff associated with that activity.

Oversight Structure. LSEC was established by Act 290 during the Regular Session of the 1948 State Legislature. Louisiana Revised Statute (R.S.) 17:1945 places LSEC under the jurisdiction of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). BESE delegated this authority to the State Superintendent of Education, represented by the LDOE. LDOE appointed a Board of Special Schools (BSS) Superintendent that directly oversees the operations of LSEC, as well as the Louisiana Schools for the Deaf and Visually Impaired. LSEC's director reports directly to the BSS Superintendent.

Because of the medical services provided by LSEC, the school is also licensed by DHH as an Intermediate Care Facility for the Developmentally Disabled (ICF/DD). LSEC participates

¹ Group homes are residential Intermediate Care Facilities licensed under DHH to provide therapeutic and/or healthcare-related services for 8-15 people.

in the Medical Assistance Program, also known as Title XIX (of the Social Security Act) or Medicaid. The DHH Health Standards section conducts annual surveys for the facility to maintain its license as an ICF/DD. Exhibit 1 shows the oversight structure for LSEC.



Similarities Between LSEC's and DHH's Populations and Services. Both LSEC and the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) within the DHH provide residential therapeutic services with educational components to clients with orthopedic and developmental disabilities. However, certain elements within OCDD's system prevent us from classifying these similar services/populations as duplicative or recommending integration of the programs without conducting a full performance audit on OCDD's capacity and quality of services. Specifically, these elements include the following:

- Because of federal law and national trends to move away from institutional care, OCDD's current administration emphasizes providing services in community settings. For example, its admissions policy for services does not allow clients to select a public ICF/DD setting for services. As a result, OCDD would not transfer segments of LSEC's population to their support and services centers, i.e., other public ICF/DDs.

- Due to limited funding for community-based services, 8,832 people across the state, as of February 2012, are on OCDD's waiting list for services through its community waiver programs.² As a result, there may not be enough capacity in the community to serve current LSEC students.
- Previous Louisiana Legislative Auditor audits cite issues related to OCDD's waiting list for services and the quality and sufficiency of OCDD's oversight of community-based services.

Federal Integration Mandates. As a special education school with a residential component for medically fragile students, LSEC is subject to the integration mandate in Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Supreme Court's ruling in *Olmstead v. L.C.*, 527 U.S. 581, (1999), more commonly known as the Olmstead ruling. The goal of the integration mandate in Title II of the ADA is to provide individuals with disabilities opportunities to live their lives like individuals without disabilities and in the least restrictive setting appropriate. The ADA requires public entities to provide community-based services when:

- (1) such services are appropriate;
- (2) the affected persons do not oppose community-based treatment; and
- (3) community-based services can be reasonably accommodated.

The Olmstead ruling clarified that the ADA prohibits the unjustified segregation of individuals with disabilities, including unnecessary institutionalization. The federal Department of Justice (DOJ) and/or individual plaintiffs may initiate cases in order to force states and public entities to develop and implement Olmstead plans to increase access to community services. Louisiana was one of the first states sued under the Olmstead ruling. Since then, DHH has focused on downsizing the number of individuals served in private and public ICF/DDs.

Objective 1 of this report identifies areas where LSEC may be incurring liability regarding Olmstead violations by engaging in activities outside of its educational mission. Objective 2 identifies opportunities for coordination between LSEC and OCDD that would assist LSEC in returning to its mission as a special education school and help ensure its compliance with federal integration mandates.

² This is unaudited data provided by DHH.

Objective 1: Do LSEC's activities align with its mission as a special education school?

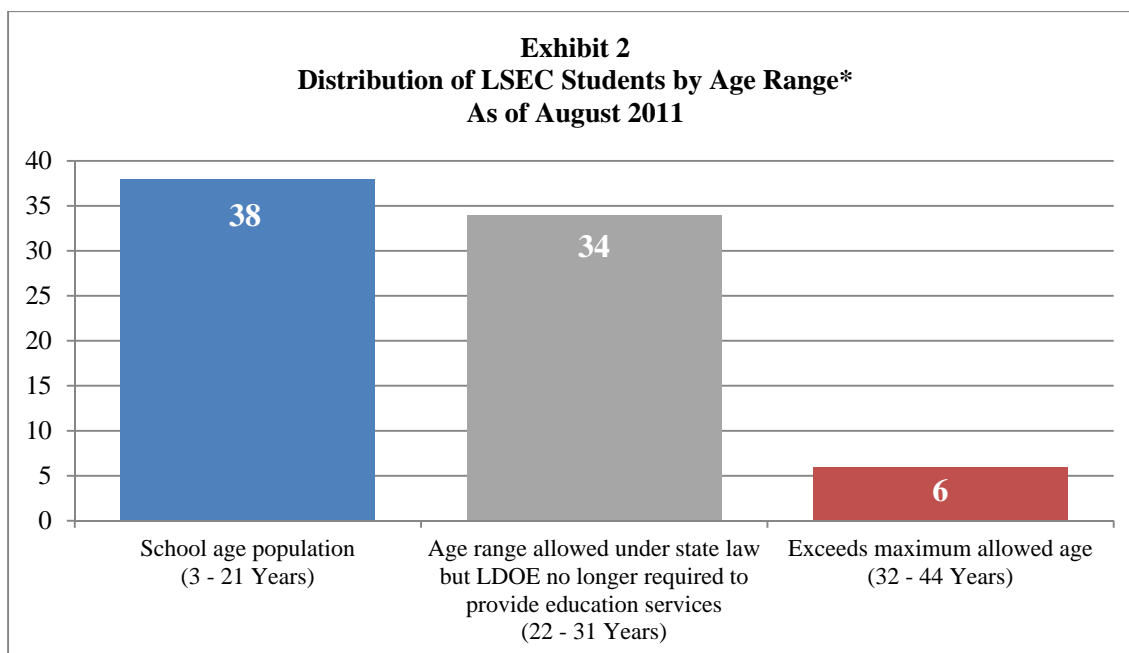
While LSEC conducts some activities that align with its mission as a special education school, it conducts others that do not. For example, 38 (48.7%) of the 78 students in LSEC's school setting are school age (3-21 years). The remaining 40 (51.3%) are 22 years of age or older and according to state law, LDOE is no longer required to provide them with special education services. LSEC provides these individuals with specialized medical and therapeutic services, which fall outside of LSEC's mission as a special education school.

In addition, since 2006 LSEC has been operating a residential group home on its school campus for former students. Operating a residential group home falls outside of LSEC's mission as a special education school. In addition, the group home potentially puts the state at risk for non-compliance with federal integration mandates under the ADA and Olmstead ruling.

The majority (51%) of LSEC's student population are 22 years or older; LDOE is no longer required to provide these students with special education services.

R.S. 17:1941 requires that LDOE provide special education services for individuals up to the age of 22. However, 40 (51.3%) of the 78 students LSEC currently serves are 22 years of age or older and have exited LDOE's educational services by either graduating with a diploma or obtaining a certificate of achievement. As stated previously, LSEC is primarily (96.3%) funded through Medicaid reimbursements, not educational dollars. LSEC's education services qualify as active therapeutic treatment under Medicaid and are therefore an allowed cost. However, LDOE is not required to provide special education services to individuals over the age of 22, who make up the majority of LSEC's student population. In addition, providing these individuals with specialized medical and therapeutic services falls outside of LSEC's mission as a special education school.

To address the increasing age of the LSEC population, the legislature amended R.S. 17:348 in 1985 to allow individuals to remain at LSEC until age 32. According to LSEC staff, the law was amended in response to the lack of appropriate placement options for their students once their special education services had ended. Exhibit 2 summarizes the age of students at LSEC as of August 2011.

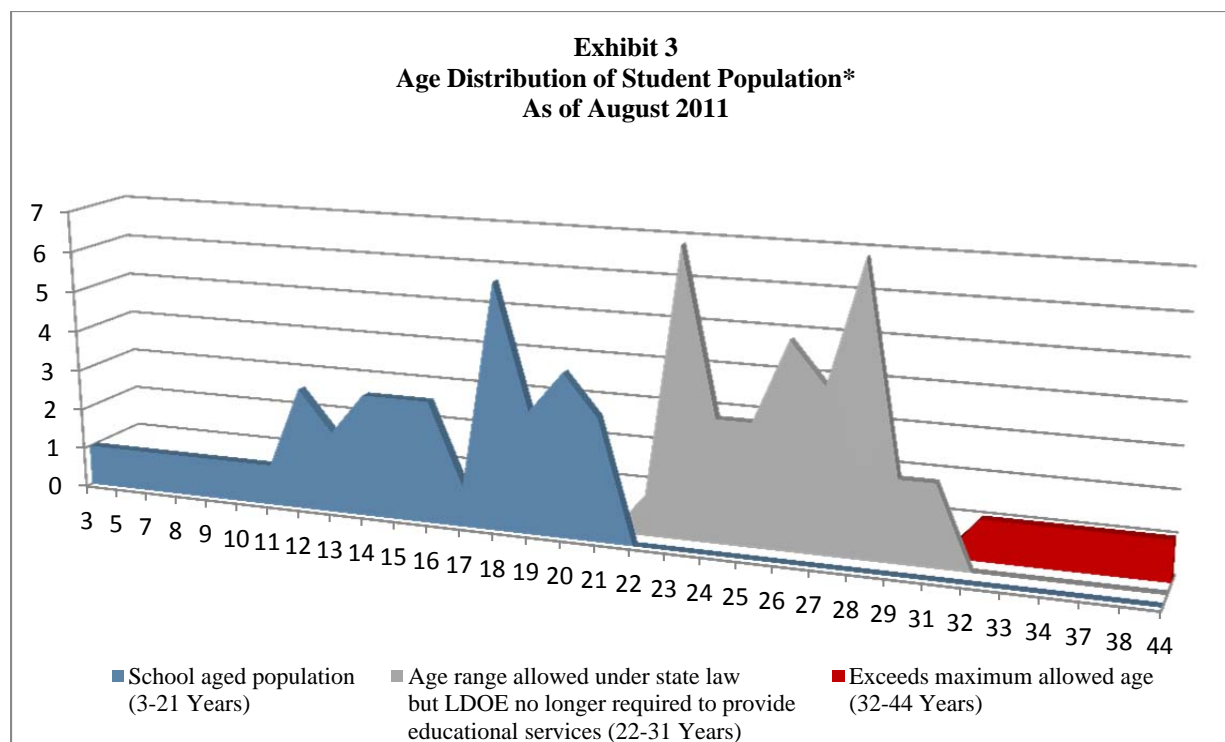


*This exhibit does not include the TFLC population.

Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using client records from LSEC.

As shown in Exhibit 2, LSEC currently provides services to six students over the age of 31. In addition to LDOE no longer being required to provide them with education services, these students also exceed the maximum age allowed by state law for residing at LSEC. By serving this older population, LSEC potentially puts the state at risk for non-compliance with the ADA and Olmstead ruling on inappropriate institutionalization.

LSEC is also serving an aging population within the age range allowed by state law (ages 3-31 years). Currently, approximately 34 (47.2%) of LSEC's 72 students are aged 22-31 and are nearing the maximum age that can be served at the facility. Exhibit 3 shows the distribution of students, by age, for the 3-44 year-old population, which is concentrated in the 18-29 age range. LSEC has not proactively responded to its aging population. For example, it has not developed a comprehensive transition process to identify appropriate alternative placements for students who are no longer eligible for LDOE's educational services. In addition, LSEC has not maintained reliable and accessible data on the support needs of these students to help develop such a transition process.



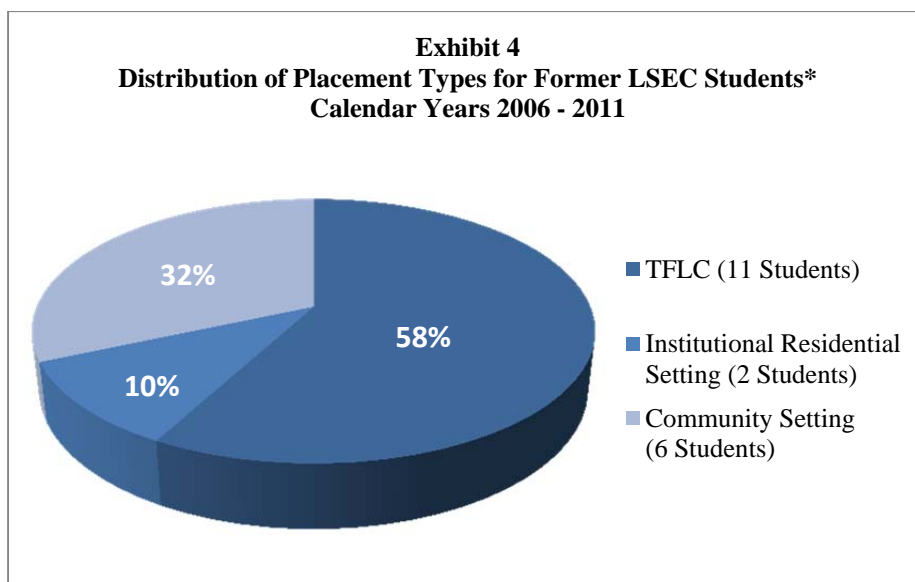
*This exhibit does not include the 11 TFLC residents.

Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using LSEC records.

LSEC has not developed a comprehensive transition process for its students.

Although LSEC's ultimate goal is to integrate students back into the mainstream of society, LSEC's current transition process mainly focuses on students exiting LDOE's special education services rather than exiting the facility. Discharges from the facility are typically motivated by either the family/resident's wish to move or the resident's declining health. Family members and LSEC staff are responsible for identifying potential placement options and investigating whether these options are feasible, given the student's particular needs.

From January 2006 to August 2011, LSEC has discharged 19 students. However, 11 of these students are still on the LSEC campus and are now residents of the TFLC, LSEC's group home. Exhibit 4 summarizes discharges and placements for former LSEC students over the last six years.



*Institutional residential settings refer to nursing homes or other public ICF/DDs. Community settings refer to residents returning to their home, a community group home, or assisted independent living.

Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information provided by LSEC.

Because LSEC's budget is driven by census-based Medicaid reimbursements, this financial structure provides LSEC management with an incentive to maintain maximum capacity rather than focus on transitioning students into the community or other facilities. LSEC staff also cited failed placement attempts in the past due to the complex nature of its students' medical conditions and the logistical supports needed for their assistive technology equipment, such as large, customized wheelchairs. However, because LSEC does not maintain information on discharges or placement attempts, we were not able to confirm their statements regarding these attempts.

Recommendation 1: LSEC should develop a comprehensive transition process that identifies long-term placement options for students and documents attempted placements to help reduce the state's liability regarding inappropriate institutionalization.

Summary of Management's Response: LSEC agrees with this recommendation and has developed an action plan that includes collaborating with OCDD, developing and implementing formal transition policies and procedures, accessing monthly vacancy lists from the Greater New Orleans Resource Center on Developmental Disabilities, contacting community homes with identified vacancies for possible placements, and informing parents and advocates about the mission and role of LSEC and the necessity of transitioning clients to less restrictive placements.

LSEC has not maintained reliable, accessible data on the support needs of its students, which is needed to help develop a transition process. While LSEC maintains hard-copy documents on its population, it does not have electronic data in a format that can be easily summarized and analyzed. LSEC's software, a customized version of FileMaker Pro used to create electronic documents, is also capable of building a database using the data elements within those documents; however, LSEC personnel opted not to develop this reporting capability when the software was implemented.

In addition, LSEC is only required to report information on its population aged 3-21 to LDOE. There is no requirement to report information on its aging population; therefore, there is no guidance or training for LSEC personnel to collect standardized information on this segment of its population. As a result, our review of data on LSEC's population identified instances of inconsistent recording of information and inaccurate data entry.

Because of these issues, there is a lack of sufficient historical data on the institution and its population, including reliable information on students who have left the institution. We were only able to obtain anecdotal information on these students from certain staff members eligible for retirement and, therefore, relied heavily on LSEC personnel for historical information on its students. As key staff members retire, however, valuable historical and institutional knowledge is lost. Currently, LSEC does not have a succession plan in place for all key personnel nearing retirement age to minimize the impact of this loss. The absence of a formal succession plan makes maintaining data even more important.

The lack of historical data may have also contributed to LSEC's deviation from its mission by making it difficult for key decision makers and stakeholders to fully understand and manage LSEC's operations. For example, discharges from the facility are not tracked, making it difficult to judge LSEC's success in fulfilling its mission to successfully integrate students into the mainstream of society. Tracking discharges would not only support the effectiveness of LSEC's integration efforts, but would also help LSEC develop a relevant transition process that identifies successful placement options. Maintaining easily accessible documentation, including failed placement attempts, may also assist LSEC in showing its compliance with federal integration mandates by providing a foundation to justify the services it provides to students in an institutional setting.

Recommendation 2: LSEC should develop its existing software's capability to create and maintain a database for student records that allows management to easily identify key characteristics of the population it serves for both reporting to stakeholders and management decision-making processes.

Summary of Management's Response: LSEC agrees with this recommendation. LSEC is in the process of upgrading its overall student records database to make it more accessible. The FileMaker Pro System has been recommended and LSEC administration will order and secure training to help implement this system.

Recommendation 3: LSEC should develop a formal record-keeping process that includes training and guidance as to which data elements to collect and how to consistently record them.

Summary of Management's Response: LSEC agrees with this recommendation. LSEC is in the process of identifying data elements to collect in its new database. Once the data elements have been identified and the database has been developed, LSEC administration will provide training to help implement this system. Ongoing training will be provided to ensure sustainability of the database.

Recommendation 4: LSEC should collect information on students as they transition into long-term placements in order to measure LSEC's success in meeting its stated mission as well as identify potential community partners and settings where future transitioning LSEC students will be successful.

Summary of Management's Response: LSEC agrees with this recommendation. A system of student tracking will be developed within the parameters of the new database. LSEC is committed to gathering information for improving the success of placements for current aged-out clients and for providing the data needed for future decisions, ensuring all efforts are appropriately documented.

LSEC operates a residential group home for former LSEC students.

In 2006, LSEC obtained a license from DHH to operate the TFLC. As of August 2011, the TFLC houses 11 former LSEC students, all 22 years of age or older. The TFLC is located on the same campus as LSEC, provides services exclusively to former LSEC students, and relies on some LSEC resources to provide these services.

Unlike LSEC, the TFLC is not bound by age requirements beyond what DHH has approved in its license as a group home. However, the state is required by federal law through the ADA to provide services in the least restrictive setting appropriate. Although a group home is a suitable long-term option under the Olmstead ruling, the TFLC's location and reliance on LSEC resources for some services leaves the facility vulnerable to arguments that the facility does not truly meet the intent of a community-integrated group home. Not only does LSEC's operation of a group home on its campus fall outside of its mission as a special education school, but it also potentially puts the state at risk for non-compliance with the ADA and Olmstead ruling.

Recommendation 5: LSEC management should evaluate the appropriateness of a special education school operating a group home on its campus and other activities directed specifically at their aging population as well as the potential liability these activities create for both LSEC and the TFLC regarding Olmstead violations.

Summary of Management's Response: LSEC agrees with this recommendation. The TFLC was never intended to serve as a permanent placement. It was simply created to address an aging population that lacked appropriate community placements. The placement landscape for the orthopedically impaired, medically fragile population makes community placement very challenging. Since the clients are medically fragile, LSEC will work with OCDD and DHH to transition clients as soon as appropriate placements have been identified. Documentation of all efforts will be included in the new database system.

Objective 2: Are there opportunities for coordination between LSEC and OCDD?

We identified two areas where LSEC would potentially benefit from coordination with OCDD. First, LSEC should coordinate with OCDD in the development of a comprehensive transition process that identifies long-term placement options for its students after exiting LDOE's educational services. In addition, LSEC should coordinate with OCDD to incorporate best practice assessment tools. These tools would help LSEC management identify the supports and services its students need to live in the community or in other ICF/DD facilities. Coordinating with OCDD in both of these areas would assist LSEC in returning to its mission as an educational facility and help ensure its compliance with integration mandates such as the ADA and the Olmstead ruling.

LSEC and OCDD should coordinate to develop a transition planning process.

As stated previously in this report, LSEC has not developed a comprehensive transition process for its students. To address this weakness, LSEC should coordinate with OCDD to develop a comprehensive transition planning process that identifies long-term placement options for its students after exiting LDOE's educational services. OCDD's three supports and services centers across the state already have experience with transitioning residents into alternative placements and tracking their progress in the community. For example, Pinecrest Supports and Services Center (PSSC) is located within eight miles of LSEC and currently provides transition services with the goal of giving its clients the skills needed to live in a community setting. PSSC's transition department conducts regular assessments on its population that assist in determining when an individual can transition back into a community setting, identifying an appropriate community setting, and assuring the supports necessary for a successful transition. In addition, PSSC has made significant improvements in reducing the average stay of clients as a result of the federal mandate from the DOJ regarding violations of the Olmstead ruling and Louisiana's large public institutions.

Recommendation 6: LSEC should coordinate with OCDD's PSSC transition teams to develop its comprehensive transition process that identifies long-term placement options for students, ensures the supports necessary for a successful transition, tracks residents' progress in the community, and documents failed attempts resulting in institutionalization.

Summary of Management's Response: LSEC agrees with this recommendation. LSEC has already sent a team to PSSC to guide our future transition planning. Tracking of residents' progress and documented failed attempts to place the client resulting in institutionalization will be included in the database being developed. In addition, a transition team will be established to ensure continued documentation of efforts to transition clients into community placements.

LSEC and OCDD should coordinate to incorporate best practice assessment tools.

LSEC should coordinate with OCDD to incorporate best practice assessment tools to evaluate its student population, such as the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) and Louisiana PLUS (LAPLUS). OCDD uses best practice assessment tools, such as SIS and LAPLUS, which help evaluate its clients to identify an individual's necessary supports and services and to gauge their ability for community living. These assessment tools measure the individual's support needs in personal, work-related, and social activities in order to identify and describe the types and intensity of the supports an individual requires. While LSEC currently uses some of these assessment tools to assess the TFLC population, expanding the use of these best practice tools on its entire population would allow the facility to acquire valuable information on its students. This information would then help in each student's transition process, including identifying appropriate training objectives and facilitating transfers into the OCDD system for long-term placement options.

Recommendation 7: LSEC should coordinate with OCDD to expand the use of best practice assessment tools, such as SIS and LAPLUS, in evaluating each of its student's supports needs and ability to transition into a community setting. For example, expanding the use of the SIS to the school age population may provide a foundation for comprehensive transitions plans and facilitate a smoother transition into OCDD placement options.

Summary of Management's Response: LSEC agrees with this recommendation. LSEC currently uses the SIS when assessing the needs of our post school- age population. LSEC will expand the use of this assessment to all students. The LAPLUS component is meant to be administered in conjunction with the SIS. The LAPLUS will be incorporated during the assessments.

APPENDIX A: MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE



STATE OF LOUISIANA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
POST OFFICE BOX 94064, BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70804-9064
Toll Free #: 1-877-453-2721
<http://www.louisianaschools.net>

April 2, 2012

Mr. Daryl G. Purpera, Legislative Auditor
1600 North Third Street
Post Office Box 94397
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9397

Dear Mr. Purpera:

In response to the performance audit report on the Louisiana Special Education Center (LSEC), I am enclosing the recommendation checklist and an action plan that identifies my response to each recommendation, the staff that will be responsible for that action and the expected completion date for each action. In addition, I have identified documented evidence of completion for each recommendation.

Your audit team is to be commended for their thorough and professional review of the Louisiana Special Education Center. The report provides an opportunity to focus on the mission of the school and to improve current practices, while enhancing opportunities for transitioning clients to community settings, when appropriate placements have been identified.

To address each recommendation, I offer the following:

- **Recommendation 1:** LSEC should develop a comprehensive transition process that identifies long-term placement options for students and documents attempted placements to help reduce the state's liability regarding inappropriate institutionalization.

LSEC agrees that a more systematic transition process should be implemented, with appropriate documentation. An action plan has been developed that includes:

1. *Collaborating with the Office of Citizens with Developmental Disabilities through Pinecrest Supports and Services Center to acquire their transition and staff training process regarding the transition of post-school aged clients in community placements.*
2. *Developing and implementing formal transition policies and procedures.*
3. *Providing families with updated transition policies and procedures.*
4. *Accessing monthly vacancy lists from the Greater New Orleans Resource Center on Developmental Disabilities.*
5. *Contacting community homes with identified vacancies for possible placements of our older population.*
6. *Informing parents and advocates at the Interdisciplinary (ID) Team meetings about the mission and role of the LSEC to educate students up to age 22, and informing families about the necessity of transitioning clients to less restrictive placements, emphasizing the parents' role in actively seeking other placements.*

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- **Recommendation 2:** LSEC should develop the existing software's capability to create and maintain a database for student records that allows management to easily identify key characteristics of the population it serves for both reporting to stakeholders and management decision-making processes.

LSEC is in the process of upgrading its overall student records database to make it more accessible. The FileMaker Pro System has been recommended and LSEC administration will order and secure training to help implement this system.

- **Recommendation 3:** LSEC should develop a formal record-keeping process that includes training and guidance as to which data elements to collect and how to consistently record them.

LSEC is in the process of identifying data elements to collect in its new database. Once the data elements have been identified and the database has been developed, LSEC administration will provide training to help implement this system. Ongoing training will be provided to ensure sustainability of the database.

- **Recommendation 4:** LSEC should collect information on students as they transition into long-term placements in order to measure LSEC's success in meeting its stated mission as well as identify potential community partners and settings where future transitioning LSEC students will be successful.

A system of student tracking will be developed within the parameters of the new database. LSEC is committed to gathering information for improving the success of placements for current aged-out clients and for providing the data needed for future decisions, ensuring all efforts are appropriately documented.

- **Recommendation 5:** LSEC management should evaluate the appropriateness of a special education school operating a group home on its campus and other activities directed specifically at their aging population as well as the potential liability these activities create for both LSEC and TFLC regarding Olmstead violations.

The Transition Family Life Center was never intended to serve as a permanent placement. It was simply created to address an aging population that lacked appropriate community placements. LSEC has always been committed to serving the orthopedically impaired, medically fragile population. Too often families have no viable placement options, which motivated LSEC leadership to create a platform to continue to serve the aged-out population while families worked on finding placements. The Transition Family Life Center's mission is to continue work on daily living skills that can translate into developing skills needed to successfully transition to private or community group homes. The placement landscape for the orthopedically impaired, medically fragile population makes community placement very challenging. Since the clients are medically fragile, LSEC will work with OCDD and DHH to transition clients as soon as appropriate placements have been identified. Documentation of all efforts will be included in the new database system.

- **Recommendation 6:** LSEC should coordinate with OCDD's PSSC transition teams to develop its comprehensive transition process that identifies long-term placement options for students,

April 2, 2012

ensures the supports necessary for a successful transition, tracks residents' progress in the community, and documents failed attempts resulting in institutionalization.

LSEC has already sent a team to PSSC to guide our future transition planning. At this point, we have gained valuable insight on what an agency can say to a family or advocate regarding placement. According to PSSC, our agency should be in an advisory role to our families regarding community services that are available. Tracking of residents' progress and documented failed attempts to place the client resulting in institutionalization will be included in the database being developed. In addition, a transition team will be established to ensure continued documentation of efforts to transition clients into community placements.

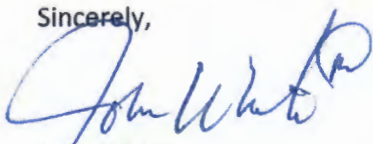
- **Recommendation 7:** LSEC should coordinate with OCDD to expand the use of best practice assessment tools, such as the Supports Intensity Scale and Louisiana Plus (SIS/LAPLUS), in evaluating each of its student's supports needs and ability to transition into a community setting. For example, expanding the use of the SIS to the school age population may provide a foundation for comprehensive transitions plans and facilitate a smoother transition into OCDD placement options.

LSEC currently uses the SIS when assessing the needs of our post school-age population. LSEC will expand the use of this assessment to all students. The LAPLUS component is meant to be administered in conjunction with the SIS. The LAPLUS will be incorporated during the assessments.

The Louisiana Special Education Center is committed to fulfilling the mission of the school in providing the best care available to the students and clients in their care.

If further information is needed, please contact Elizabeth Moore at 225-763-5539 or via email at Elizabeth.Moore@la.gov.

Sincerely,



John White
State Superintendent of Education

JW:ECM

c: Elizabeth Moore
Kevin Lemoine
Michael Joiner

RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION	TIMELINE	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	DATE/EVIDENCE OF COMPLETION
<p>Recommendation 1: LSEC should develop a comprehensive transition process that identifies long-term placement options for students and documents attempted placements to help reduce the state's liability regarding inappropriate institutionalization.</p> <p>(p. 9 of the report)</p>	1. LSEC will identify a Transition Team to work on long-term placement options.	1. May 2012	<p>1. Transition Team comprised of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Joiner, Interim Director • Michael Slater, Psychologist • Kristy Flynn, Principal • Allen Jenkins, TFLC Administrator • 2 Members to be named by May 2012 	1. Transition Team list of members on file.
	2. LSEC will meet with OCDD Transition Team at Pinecrest Supports & Services Center to identify placement options.	2. April 2012	2. LSEC Transition Team	2. Documentation of meetings, with time, place and participants.
	3. LSEC will develop a policy and procedure handbook for transitioning aged-out students into the community setting.	3. June 2012	3. LSEC Transition Team	3. Policy and Procedure Handbook on file.

<p>Recommendation 2: LSEC should develop its existing software's capability to create and maintain a database for student records that allows management to easily identify key characteristics of the population it serves for both reporting to stakeholders and management decision-making processes.</p> <p>(p. 10 of the report)</p>	1. LSEC will order the FileMaker Pro system as recommended by legislative audit team.	1. April 2012	1. Michael Joiner and Daniel DeBevec	1. Documentation of order on filed.
	2. LSEC will implement the FileMaker Pro system with project team identified by Interim Director.	2. June 2012	2. LSEC FileMaker Pro project team identified by Michael Joiner and Daniel DeBevec	2. FileMaker Pro Team list on file.
	3. LSEC will maintain a database of student records within the FileMaker Pro system.	3. Ongoing	3. LSEC FileMaker Pro Data Managers	3. FileMaker Pro database.

<p>Recommendation 3: LSEC should develop a formal record-keeping process that includes training and guidance as to which data elements to collect and how to consistently record them.</p> <p>(p. 10 of the report)</p>	<p>1. LSEC will define the process for maintaining the data elements within the FileMaker Pro system.</p>	<p>1. June 2012</p>	<p>1. LSEC FileMaker Pro Project Team</p>	<p>1. Data maintenance details on file.</p>
	<p>2. LSEC will develop training materials as guidance for maintaining the database of student records within the FileMaker Pro system.</p>	<p>2. June 2012</p>	<p>2. LSEC FileMaker Pro Project Team</p>	<p>2. Training documents, dates of training and participants on file.</p>
	<p>3. LSEC will identify data elements to collect and how to maintain them.</p>	<p>3. June 2012</p>	<p>3. LSEC FileMaker Pro Project Team</p>	<p>3. Data elements and method for collection and maintenance on file.</p>

<p>Recommendation 4: LSEC should collect information on students as they transition into long-term placements in order to measure LSEC's success in meeting its stated mission as well as identify potential community partners and settings where future transitioning LSEC students will be successful.</p> <p>(p. 10-11 of the report)</p>	<p>1. LSEC will develop a tracking system within the parameters of the database to collect information on students transitioning into long-term placements.</p>	<p>1. June 2012</p>	<p>1. LSEC FileMaker Pro Project Team</p>	<p>1. Tracking system sample kept on file, with training materials, data elements, parameters and method of collection and maintenance identified.</p>
	<p>2. LSEC will measure success of long-term placement of transitioning students using the database of student records within the FileMaker Pro system.</p>	<p>2. June 2012</p>	<p>2. LSEC FileMaker Pro Data Managers</p>	<p>2. Data managers list on file.</p>
	<p>3. LSEC will identify potential community partners and settings.</p>	<p>3. June 2012</p>	<p>3. LSEC Transition Team and Data Managers</p>	<p>3. Documentation of community partners and settings on file.</p>

<p>Recommendation 5: LSEC management should evaluate the appropriateness of a special education school operating a group home on its campus and other activities directed specifically at their aging population as well as the potential liability these activities create for both LSEC and TFLC regarding Olmstead violations.</p> <p>(p. 11 of the report)</p>	<p>1. LSEC will form a TFLC Evaluation Committee potentially comprised of LSEC representative, Kevin Lemoine representing SSD, OCDD, Greater New Orleans Resource Center and community officials to study the appropriateness of the group home on LSEC grounds.</p>	<p>1. June 2012</p>	<p>1. LSEC Transition Team</p>	<p>1. Documentation of Evaluation Committee members and meetings.</p>
	<p>2. Current training practices to be evaluated will include: training in daily living, personal independence, and community integration and the impact on potential future placement.</p>	<p>2. June 2012</p>	<p>2. TFLC Evaluation Committee</p>	<p>2. Evaluation and results of evaluations on file.</p>
	<p>3. The existence of the group home will be evaluated in regard to any possible violations of court rulings including Olmstead.</p>	<p>3. June 2012</p>	<p>3. TFLC Evaluation Committee</p>	<p>3. Documentation of evaluation and impact of court rulings will be kept on file.</p>

<p>Recommendation 6: LSEC should coordinate with OCDD's PSSC transition teams to develop its comprehensive transition process that identifies long-term placement options for students, ensures the supports necessary for a successful transition, tracks residents' progress in the community, and documents failed attempts resulting in institutionalization.</p> <p>(p. 12 of the report)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LSEC will identify a Transition Team to meet with OCDD Transition Team at Pinecrest Supports & Services Center to develop a comprehensive transition process that identifies long-term placement options. 2. LSEC will identify, monitor, and track the supports necessary for the residents' successful transition and progress in the community. 3. LSEC will document failed attempts resulting in institutionalization . 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. April 2012 2. Ongoing 3. Ongoing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LSEC Transition Team 2. LSEC Transition Team 3. LSEC Transition Team 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Documentation of Transition Team members and meetings on file. 2. Database for tracking will be developed and maintained. 3. Documentation on file.
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<p>Recommendation 7: LSEC should coordinate with OCDD to expand the use of best practice assessment tools, such as SIS and LAPLUS, in evaluating each of its student's supports needs and ability to transition into a community setting. For example, expanding the use of the SIS to the school age population may provide a foundation for comprehensive transitions plans and facilitate a smoother transition into OCDD placement options.</p> <p>(p. 13 of the report)</p>	<p>1. LSEC currently uses the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) when assessing the needs of post-school aged population and will expand its use to include all students. The LAPLUS component is meant to be administered in conjunction with SIS and will be incorporated into the assessments.</p>	<p>1. June 2012</p>	<p>1. LSEC Transition Team</p>	<p>1. Assessments using the SIS and LAPLUS will be kept on file.</p>
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APPENDIX B: SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

We conducted this performance audit under the provisions of Title 24 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, as amended. This performance audit is based on the results of our risk assessment of the Special Schools and Commissions budget unit. Our audit focused on the Louisiana Special Education Center (LSEC) and covered the time period from 2006 to February 2012. The audit objectives were to answer the following questions:

- (1) Do LSEC's activities align with its mission as a special education school?
- (2) Are there opportunities for coordination between LSEC and OCDD?

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. To answer the audit objectives, we reviewed internal controls relevant to the audit objectives and completed the following procedures:

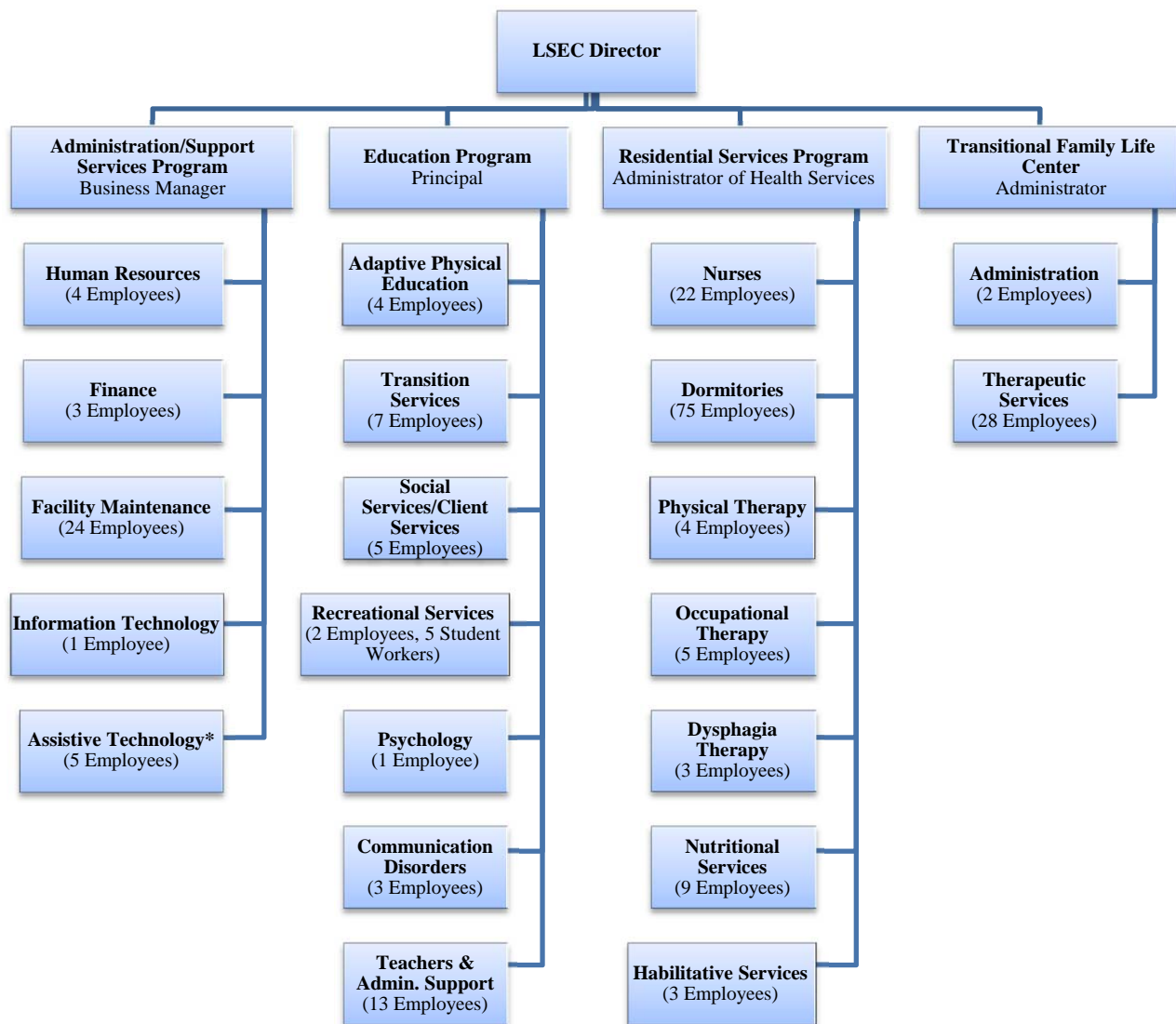
- (1) Inventoried LSEC's population and services by:
 - Reviewing student/resident records to create a data-set for analysis.
 - Analyzing data-set to summarize significant characteristics of student population and create a student profile.
 - Interviewing LSEC management and key staff to determine management processes related to admissions, assessments, and transitions.
 - Observing classroom and therapeutic activities.
- (2) Inventoried OCDD's population and services by:
 - Researching services listed on OCDD's website.
 - Interviewing OCDD management and key staff on management processes related to admissions, assessments, and transitions.
 - Obtaining data from Statistical Resources, Inc. to confirm similar population and services provided.

- (3) Compared LSEC's and OCDD's management processes, populations, and services to identify potential areas for coordination.
- (4) Conducted best practices and legal research to identify relevant legal issues and criteria for providing services to individuals with disabilities.

APPENDIX C: DISTRIBUTION OF LSEC POPULATION BY DAYTIME ACTIVITY

LSEC's Population by Activity			
Activity	Description	# Students	% Population
Education	LSEC operates five special education classrooms. Each student receives customized instruction based on their Individualized Education Program.	53*	60%
Transitional Living Skills	LSEC operates two classrooms that focus on aiding student progress towards personal objectives in daily living, job-readiness and employment, socialization, and leisure skills. Activities include community and on-campus employment, shopping, cooking, art projects, and computer use.	17	19%
Habilitative	LSEC operates one classroom for older students that require more intensive medical care. Activities include current events, fieldtrips, music and the arts, and outdoor time.	8	9%
School Total		78	88%
TFLC	TFLC's group home program and services focus on developing functional living skills to increase residents' ability to actively participate in home life.	11	12%
Facility Total		89	100%
<p>*Only 38 of the 53 students in the education classrooms are school age (3-21). Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff based on observations and interviews with LSEC personnel and the review of LSEC records.</p>			

APPENDIX D: LSEC'S ACTIVITIES & STAFFING



*LSEC houses and administers funding for the Assistive Technology Department; however, they are organizationally part of LDOE's Region 6.

Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information provided by LSEC.