



Accessibility Annual Report
FY: 2018-2019

The objective of Easterseals Louisiana's (ESL) Accessibility Plan is to provide all ESL participants, employees and stakeholders accessible services and remove any identified accessibility barriers. This plan is reviewed and revised annually by ESL management. During FY: 2018-2019, ESL identified six (6) service accessibility areas to monitor. During this timeframe, ESL management assessed current functioning and implemented procedures to assist in the reduction of potential barriers. The narrative below provides an update on progress made throughout FY: 2018-2019, and in instances provides a comparison to the previous fiscal years data.

Objective 1: Continuous assessment, planning and improvement of architectural and environmental accessibility.

Throughout FY: 2018-2019 ESL continued to assess and improve its architectural and environmental accessibility. During this timeframe each ESL office across the state continued to complete a semi-annual facility/residential inspection providing updates on facility condition and accessibility. Once the completed inspections are completed, they are reviewed by the ESL Director of Quality Enhancement and Training with written feedback being provided on any identified concerns. It is always strongly encouraged that ESL staff report any facility concerns immediately to ensure a quick resolution.

ESL facility evacuation maps were reviewed and revised ensuring evacuation accuracy in the case of an emergency. In each office the facility evacuation maps posted in common areas ensuring that all staff and visitors know a direct evacuation route if an emergency should arise. Included on the evacuation map are the locations of all exits in the building, natural disaster safe areas, the location of office fire extinguishers, as well as the location of office First Aid kits. A sample of the regional evacuation maps can be found in ESL's Safety and Emergency Preparedness Policies and Procedures manual.

ESL also reviewed evacuation plans for individuals with disabilities ensuring they are able to safely evacuate a facility in case of an emergency. Designated personnel in each ESL office will assist individuals with disabilities safely evacuate in case of an emergency.

ESL regional offices also completed quarterly fire drills and semi-annual emergency/natural disaster drills providing all ESL staff an evacuation trial run ensuring everyone knows the proper evacuation procedures and designated evacuation safe areas. Documentation from the fire/emergency/natural disaster drills were reviewed by ESL's Director of Quality Enhancement and Training for analysis and trend identification. This information is discussed during ESL's Safety Committee and identifies areas of concern as well as an improvement plan to implement steps to assist in overcoming any identified barriers. Each ESL office also submitted documentation

from local fire marshals tracking annual fire prevention walkthroughs conducted by an agency other than ESL.

ESL reviewed and honored accommodation requests submitted by employees to help ensure the work environment was conducive to employee's needs. During FY: 2018-2019 ESL only had one (1) request that was submitted and honored which was providing an employee a computer keyboard and mouse to reduce wrist strain. ESL also continued to accommodate employees with physical limitations with caseloads in areas where homes are easily accessible to them, as well as designated accessible parking at ESL facilities.

ESL continues to conduct semi-annual facility inspections, as well as offer health/training to all employees based on OSHA suggestions and trends identified while reviewing participant and staff incident/accident reports. ESL will also continue to accommodate employees with accessibility requests in the workplace.

Objective 2: Assess social and attitudinal barriers which impact access to services.

Throughout FY: 2018-2019 ESL continued to assess social and attitudinal barriers that impacted access to services. ESL continued to build relationships with social service organizations and business owners to promote acceptance and awareness of our mission. Several members of ESL management have active roles in community organizations, ranging from local Homeless Coalitions, Hope for the Homeless, partnerships with local homeless shelters as well as representation on the regional advisory committee for the Office of Behavioral Health. These community memberships allow ESL staff to network with a variety of agencies and resources locally and across the state, working together to provide the best supports and services to the participant.

In the spring of 2019, ESL was excited to begin operating a Transitional Housing program in Region 8 (Monroe) which provides residential services for adults with a behavioral health disorder. These are facility-based services to individuals and their families, who have a mental and/or substance use disorder and are homeless with the expectation that they will quickly transition to self-sufficiency and permanent housing through the use of support services and coordination.

ESL continued to offer annual training in cultural diversity via Relias Learning to enhance all ESL employees understanding on various cultures and practices that they will encounter while working in the community. Cultural diversity training has also been included in ESL's new hire orientations for all programs. Also, all staff complete a training in person-first language training, which stresses the importance of using language to speak appropriately and respectfully about an individual with a disability. People first language emphasizes the person first not the disability. In addition to

cultural diversity and person-first language training, all ESL managers and supervisors have also completed a course in working with multi-generational employees. This course stresses the importance of having a management style that is accommodating to all ages in the workforce to ensure that all employees feel respected and valued.

ESL also continued to utilize technology to remove attitudinal barriers towards disabilities. The following resources are listed on ESL's website:

- City Guides
- Living with Autism
- Living with Disability
- Facts about Disabilities
- Making Life Accessible
- Services For Caregivers
- No More Stigma (social media)

In the 'Making Life Accessible' section, there is information about accessibility and the ways in which Easterseals is building a more accessible world on a local and national level. Information listed in this section includes:

- What is Accessibility?
- What is Web Accessibility?
- What does handicap accessible mean?
- What are the ADA accessibility guidelines?
- How is Easterseals making the world more accessible?

Additionally, the following information is provided on the ESL website to assist in the breakdown of barriers:

- **Easterseals and Freddie Mac Offer Financial Guidance** – Easter Seals is partnering with Freddie Mac to provide credit education to the community through its Credit Smart program.
- **Easterseals Project ACTION** – resources to find accessible public transportation.
- **Accessibility of the Web and Web Tools** - Easterseals leads efforts to put people with disabilities to work on the Web and to promote Web accessibility.
- **Easy Access Housing** – resources if building or remodeling a home to ensure it is accessible for people with disabilities.
- **s.a.f.e.t.y. first** – resources for creating an emergency evacuation plan for you and your colleagues.
- **Accessible Child Care** – resources to ensure your childcare center is accessible for children of all abilities.

- **FRIENDS WHO CARE®** - FRIENDS WHO CARE® is designed to help children better understand what it means and how it feels to be a young person with a disability.
- **Employment and Job Training for People with Disabilities** – assists people with disabilities, older workers, and veterans find and hold meaningful employment.
- **Camping and Recreation for People with Disabilities** – Easterseals is proud to be the largest provider of recreation and camping services for people with disabilities in the United States.

Additional resources are also periodically shared via ESL’s blog and social media pages.

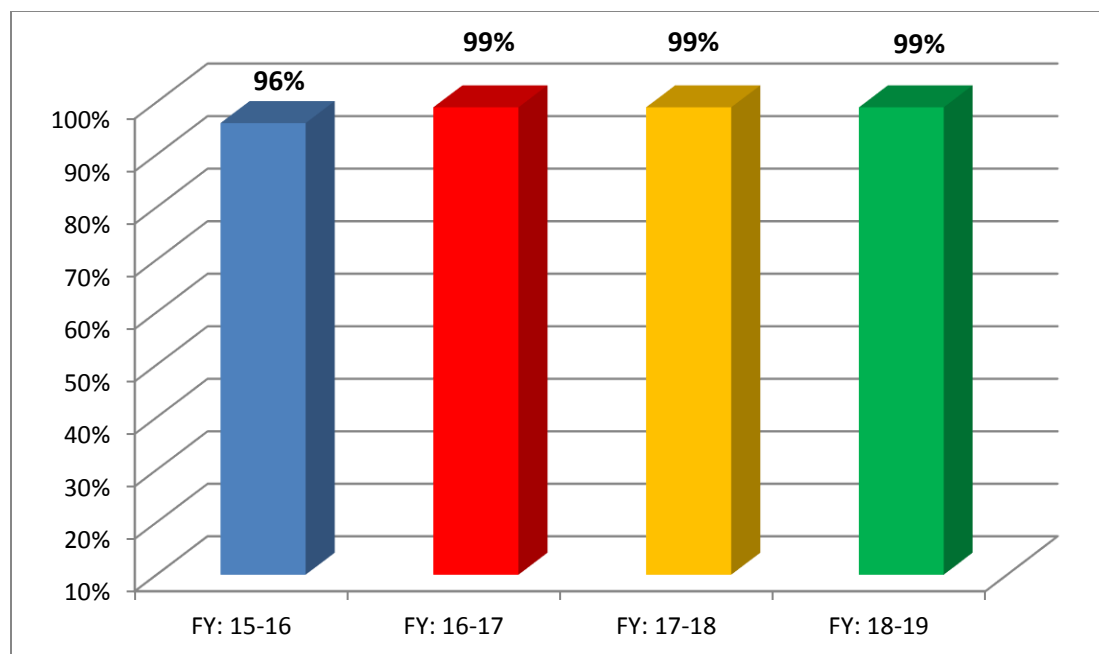
The Easterseals Louisiana website also has the capability to translate the content to Spanish to accommodate individuals whose primary language is not English and allow them to research and access services.

Additional information regarding Easterseals Louisiana and how it strives to remove online barriers and improve website usability can be found at <http://www.easterseals.com/louisiana/accessibility.html>.

ESL continued to gather valuable information by distributing satisfaction surveys to participants at least annually. Participant satisfaction surveys results are analyzed and provide ESL valuable data on service satisfaction and serve as a guide for quality improvement.

ESL participant satisfaction surveys were distributed annually for Behavioral Health (BH), Office of Aging and Adults Services (OAAS) and the Office of Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) programs. While reviewing participant satisfaction surveys (across all ESL programs), it was noted that ninety-nine percent (99%) of ESL participants stated that their Support Coordinator assisted them in locating additional non-waiver/non-behavioral health services if needed. The satisfaction percentage remained the same when compared to the FY: 2017-2018 and FY: 2016-2017 data and was a three percent (3%) increase when compared to FY: 2015-2016 data.

Figure 2.1: FY: 2015-2016 / FY: 2016-2017 / FY: 2017-2018 / FY: 2018-2019 Assistance in Locating Additional Resources Annual Comparison



ESL Support Coordinators discuss voting information with participants, including information on how to register to vote, information on how to vote (early voting, absentee voting, etc.), upcoming election dates, assistance in voting, as well as information on how to volunteer as a poll worker. ESL Support Coordinators also provided participants information on the Advocacy Center Election Hotline, a group that provides individuals answers on voting questions or any disability-related issues that they may be experiencing. This information serves as a valuable resource to ESL participants ensuring that they have the same opportunity as everyone else in the voting process.

ESL continues to strive to assist all participants in locating additional supports and services through building and enhancing community partnerships to benefit our participants and their families.

Objective 3: Promote Economic Opportunities and Reduce Financial Barriers to receiving services and accessing the community.

ESL continued to partner with Camp ASCCA in Alabama and Camp ABLE in Louisiana to send as many kids with special needs to camp as possible during the summer.

Through sessions at Camp ASCCA and Camp ABLE it is ESL's goal to provide a healthier, happier, longer, and more productive life for children and adults of all abilities. After a session at camp participants will return with:

- A renewed sense of independence
- New friends
- Confidence in their abilities
- Stories to share with their friends at home
- Athletic and emotional growth

During FY: 2017-2018 ESL was able to send twenty-four (24) participants to Camp Able in Louisiana and five (5) to Camp ASCCA in Alabama.

Additional information regarding ESL's Campership program can be found by clicking on the 'Our Programs' tab on the Easterseals Louisiana website homepage and then clicking on the 'Play' tab by visiting: <http://www.easterseals.com/louisiana/our-programs/camping-recreation/>

During FY: 2016-2017 ESL began offering Program for the Evaluation and Enrichment of Relational Skills (PEERS) services in Region 8 (Monroe) and Region 9 (Covington). PEERS is a parent-assisted, evidence based intervention focusing on teens in middle and high school who are having difficulty making or keeping friends. Studies show that developing and keeping friendships correlates positively with self-esteem and independence. The intervention includes separate parent and teen sessions which meet at the same time for 90-minutes each week over a 14-week period. The group focuses on skills that include having conversations, different forms of communications, choosing appropriate friends, handling bullying, how to enter/exit conversations, appropriate use of humor, and managing arguments/disagreements with friends.

Following the success of the initial classes, ESL obtained a grant from the Charles T. Beard Foundation to train thirteen (13) additional staff in PEERS. With the addition of the thirteen (13) new trained staff, ESL will have certified PEERS facilitators in each service region. Additionally, with funding obtained from the Charles T. Beard Foundation, ESL was able to assist twelve (12) participants with the cost of tuition fees associated with program enrollment.

Currently, participant screenings are taking place in Region 8 (Monroe) and Region 9 (Covington) for classes that are planned for the fall of 2019.

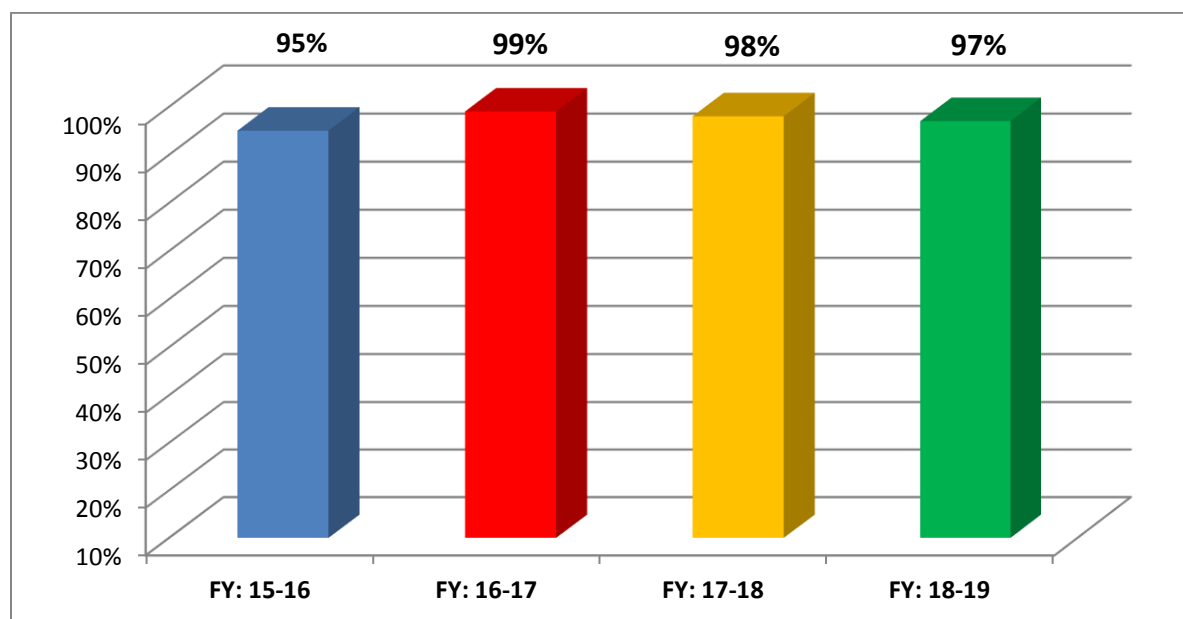
Additional information regarding ESL's PEERS program can be found by clicking on the 'Our Programs' tab on the Easterseals Louisiana website homepage and then clicking on the 'Live' tab by visiting: <http://www.easterseals.com/louisiana/our-programs/peers/peers.html>

Objective 4: Assess and Implement Action Plans to Reduce Communication Barriers to Receiving Services.

All of ESL's policies and procedures are reviewed on an annual basis for accuracy and clarity. ESL staff continued to review participant's rights, responsibilities, and grievance procedures with the participant or responsible representative during the initial face-to-face visit as well as annually.

Data gathered during FY: 2018-2019 via the ESL participant satisfaction survey reflected that ninety nine percent (97%) of participants across all ESL programs felt they had a clear understanding of the proper way of filing a complaint with ESL.

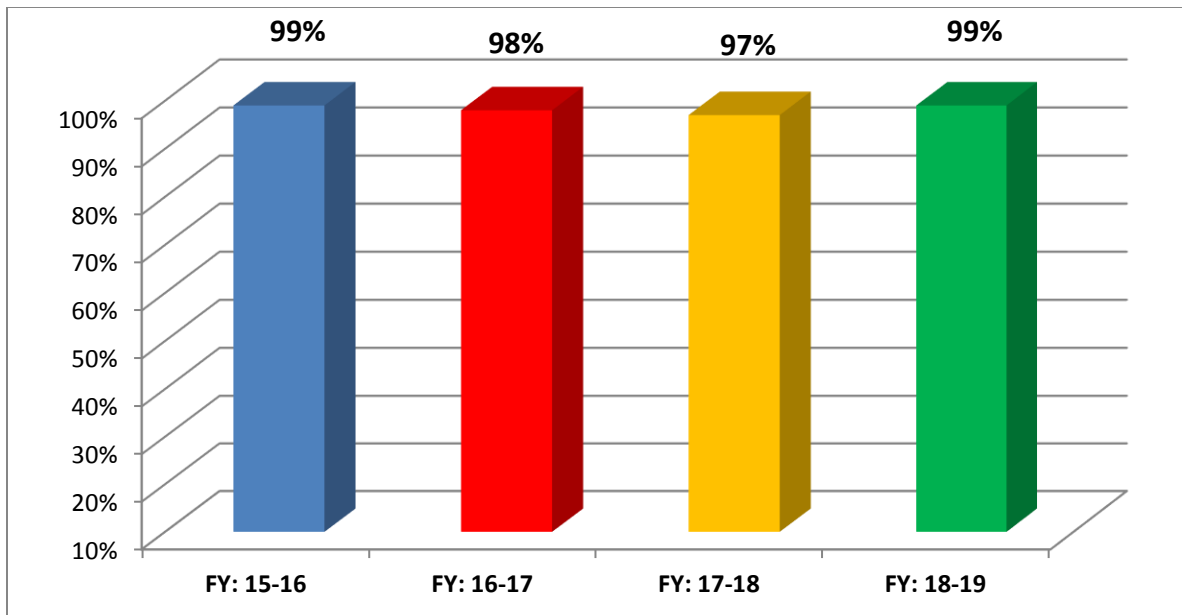
Figure 4.1: FY: 2015-2016 / FY: 2016-2017 / FY: 2017-2018 / FY: 2019-2019 Participant Understanding of Proper Way to Report and Issue/File a Complaint Annual Comparison



ESL continues to work diligently on ensuring that all participants or responsible representatives have a clear understanding of their rights and grievance procedures. ESL will also continue stress the importance of effective communication techniques which will enable them to clearly communicate information.

Additionally from data gathered during FY: 2018-2019 via the ESL participant satisfaction survey, it was identified that ninety nine percent (97%) of participants that completed the survey across all ESL programs reported that if their support coordinator was not in the office and they required immediate assistance, that someone was available to answer their call and questions?

Figure 4.2: FY: 2015-2016 / FY: 2016-2017 / FY: 2017-2018 / FY: 2019-2019 If You Require Immediate Assistance, a ESL Rep. is Available to Answer Questions



Additionally, on a monthly basis, ESL Information Technology (IT) consultant distributes an electronic ‘Tech Talk’ to all employees which provides helpful technology resources that can be shared in an effort to educate participants on accessibility features included on computer and computer software. The newsletter also provides best practices for safeguarding information that may be transmitted electronically.

Objective V. Assess and Implement Action Plans to Reduce Transportation Barriers to Receiving Services.

Each ESL facility has adequate accessible parking available and is also conveniently located on public transportation routes in cities that currently have a public transportation system. ESL has listed on its website a variety of resources relating to the reduction of transportation barriers, including links to the Easterseals Project ACTION and National Center on Senior Transportation websites. This information can be found by clicking on the ‘Our Programs’ tab on the Easterseals Louisiana website homepage and then clicking on the ‘Making Life Accessible’ tab in the Explore Resources section or by visiti.

ESL’s Behavioral Health offices continued to assist participants that have no income with bus passes for transportation to necessary medical appointments (Behavioral Health Clinic, Primary Care Physician, Dentist, etc.) on an individual basis ensuring that participants are able to make appointments when scheduled. In rural areas, ESL Behavioral Health also coordinated with local health clinics to arrange transportation to necessary medical appointments. ESL continues to understand transportation, both rural and urban, is often a barrier for many individuals and will continue to work on ensuring participants have transportation available if needed.

Objective VI. Assess and Implement Action Plans to Reduce Employment Barriers for persons served.

ESL continued to work on 'Employment First', an initiative based on the fact that all individuals, including ones with significant disabilities, are capable of full participation in integrated employment and community life. All of ESL's Office of Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) participants who are of working age (between the ages of 16 and 65) has a primary outcome included in their Comprehensive Plan of Care (CPOC) relating to employment with competitive compensation. Participants who are still attending high school have a primary outcome added to their CPOC that will assist with the transition process from school into the workforce. 'Employment First' has also been included in ESL's OCDD Performance Measurement, Management and Improvement plan.

ESL's Behavioral Health programs provide Psychosocial Rehabilitation (PSR) services to participants teaching various skills, including but not limited to, workforce development. Through PSR, participants develop a strengths-based plan that will help achieve maximum independence. The primary focus of PSR is to help individuals develop skills and access resources needed to increase their capacity to be successful and satisfied in living, working, and learning in social environments of their choice.

ESL programs also link participants who have a desire to work, whether expressed or it is shown during their assessment, to Goodwill Industries or Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) through the Louisiana Workforce Commission. Through LRS, participants are assisted in their desire to obtain or maintain employment and/or achieve independence in their communities by providing rehabilitation services and working cooperatively with business and other community resources.

Conclusion

Throughout FY: 2018-2019, Easterseals Louisiana continued to make progress in the goals that were set during this fiscal year. By gathering data throughout the year, ESL was able to assess and identify any specific areas that fell below agency expectations and identify strategies for improvement. By using the data gathered, ESL will develop the FY: 2019-2020 Accessibility Plan and implement strategies for outcome achievement, and also continue to monitor outcomes that are being met for compliance. ESL will continue to work diligently on reducing accessibility barriers for individuals with disabilities, our staff as well as our stakeholders.