



Families Helping Families

Region 7

Serving: Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Claiborne, DeSoto, Natchitoches, Red River, Sabine, and Webster



To Any Special Needs Parent Who's Having One of Those Days By Autism Speaks staff Kerry Magro

Dear Special Needs Parent,

I know some days are tough. You are beaten down. Your child is having a meltdown. Your teenager is having challenges at school and your young adult is desperately trying to be placed in a job or find somewhere to live.

No matter what the obstacle is, we've all been there, special need parent or not. We want to run away at times because we wonder to ourselves, "Will it get better? CAN it get better?" Your son can't be bathed because of the texture of the water. Your daughter hasn't said her first word and she's just turning four years old.

The spectrum of disability is so wide and with each individual diagnosed comes some struggle for that individual's parents.

It's a struggle that I've never had to deal with from the parent side of the spectrum, but as someone who helps talk parents through these challenging times, I often tell them about my own personal journey...

My journey began 23 years ago when I was diagnosed with autism. For me, between sensory issues, emotional challenges, motor delays, cognitive issues, not speaking for the first three years of my life, being scared to show affection to my loved ones with the fear of going into overload, my parents definitely had THOSE days while trying to help me succeed.

It can be really easy to tell yourself it's something that YOU did. To say that YOU are not doing everything you can to help your child.

When that time comes though I want you to take a second...and pause..

Who?	What?	When?	Where?
A family directed resource center for all individuals with disabilities and their families	Providing information, referral, and support through a network of services and assistance throughout Region 7	8:30 am – 5:00 pm Monday – Friday Drop-ins are always welcome!	2620 Centenary Boulevard Building 2, Suite 250 Shreveport, LA 71104 318.226.4541 877.226.4541 info@fhfregion7.com www.fhfregion7.com

You see everything in life is not always black and white. Not all of us are going to be math geniuses (i.e. Rain Man) and some will need more help than others along the way. My own personal journey has taken me from one side of the spectrum, where nothing seemed possible for my future, to a point where I could graduate from college, get a full time job and now speak professionally about growing up with autism.

My personal advice is to take those little successes as they come and cherish each and every day you are blessed enough to have with your loved ones. If you need to scream every once in a while, do it...Cry along the way too. Sometimes, more than anything, we need to remember we're human... And that's okay...

Regardless of where the road takes you, travel it by knowing that we've all been through our own challenges in life. Hope is coming. It may not be today or tomorrow, but as long as we have "community," we will never be alone. Learn to embrace the stories of those around you and live a life where we can pick each other up in our times of need.

After you're done reading this and the next time one of THOSE days hits you right in your face, I hope that you remember one thing. Whether your child is able to tell you or not...

You're making a difference...

Why You Want To Attend a Families Helping Families Workshop

1. A chance to bond with parents or individuals with disabilities in similar situations.
2. Visit a nice, relaxing, and positive place.
3. Attending might let you find a parent who can go to meetings with you and you can do the same for them.
4. Collaborate with parents and professionals around disability issues.
5. Explore our issues and other parent's issues around disabilities.
6. Free food – sometimes snacks, sometimes a light meal.
7. Free stuff – giveaways and door prizes.
8. Have a good time.
9. Have something to talk to your spouse and family about.
10. Learn about the laws around special education/disability.
11. Learn about the researched based theories around special education/disability.
12. Learn how to make your life and the lives of your children/ourselves work better.
13. Letting your child know you value them enough to go learn what you need to know to help them.
14. Learn strategies to deal with issues.
15. Meet the Families Helping Families staff.
17. Meeting local, regionally, and state speakers – did I mention for free?
18. Motivating and re-energizing break for you.
19. Practice skills needed when working with professionals concerning our needs.
20. Teachers and Professionals will appreciate you took the time to learn how all this works.
21. The workshops are free. Other people are paying to get this type and quality of training.
22. Visit a place that can be a resource for ideas, suggestions, and solutions.

For more information about Families Helping Families Region 7 workshops please visit our website at www.fhfregion7.com or call us at (318)226-4541/877-226-4541.



What is the Northwest Louisiana Human Services District-Developmental Disabilities Division?

As of July 1, 2013, the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities is now known as Northwest Louisiana Human Services District.

The Northwest Louisiana Human Services District provides Mental Health, Addictive Disorder and Developmental Disability Services to the residents of Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Claiborne, DeSoto, Natchitoches, Red River, Sabine and Webster Parishes.

Referral and Intake

Anyone in the community can make a referral to the regional Human Services District office. For example, a parent, teacher, doctor or other professionals can call the local office at 318-741-7455, or come by in person to **3018 Old Minden Rd., Ste. 1211, Bossier City, LA 71111**. Information on the family and individual will be asked. Family will be contacted for an appointment. During the appointment documents such as an IEP (Individual Education Plan) or medical records will be helpful to determine eligibility.

Statement of Approval or Denial

Once your application for Developmental Disabilities services is processed you will receive an **approval or denial letter** in the mail with further instructions. If a denial letter is received you have the right to appeal. However, if an approval letter is received then services **must be requested**.

Requesting Services

After an individual is found eligible for services **YOU MUST REQUEST THE APPROPRIATE SERVICES!!!** You will receive paperwork from Statistical Resources in Baton Rouge to sign and request services. If an individual does not return proper paper work your name will not be placed on the registry and will not have a protective date for further services. It is recommended to call Statistical Resources every year to verify the individuals still on the registry at 1-800-364-7828.

Services to request with SRI

The services to request with SRI are **Children's Choice, New Opportunity, Supports, and Residential Options Waivers (ROW)**. Also, for children 3 to 21, **EPSDT (Early and Periodic, Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment)**, under support coordination services, children could receive personal care services.

There are waiting lists for some of these services. Currently the waiting list is over 13,000. The Statement of Approval date is used for the place on the waiting list and once the slot is available a letter will be mailed. In the meantime, there are alternative services to request.

Alternative Services

Flexible Family Fund-Monthly stipends to families with severe or profound developmental disabilities from birth to age 18 to help with extraordinary needs.

Individual and Family Support-IFS services provide assistance not available from any other resource. These services include respite care, personal care services, or equipment and supplies. To request a Flexible Family Fund or IFS application call Northwest LA Human Service District-DD Division at 318-741-7455.

For more information about NWLAHSD call Mary Russell at Families Helping Families Region 7 at (318)226-4541/877-226-4541 or email her at mrussell@fhfregion7.com.

Disability Awareness: 10 Things Parents Should Teach Their Kids About Disabilities

By Tiffany Carlson, The Mobility Resource



Parents are all over the board when it comes to how they teach their kids about disabilities. Some scold their kids when they ask what's wrong when a person with a disability passes by, and other parents are totally cool with letting their kids run around and approach us at will. No two parenting techniques are alike.

But there are a few things that are repeated. From telling their child to always look away or giving them a generic viewpoint of people with disabilities, mistakes on how to talk about us are abound. Since even the most well-meaning parent can accidentally flub up, here are 10 ways to help give your kid a leg up on how to think differently about disabilities.

1) Answering "Why can't they walk?"

One of the most common questions kids ask when they see someone who uses a wheelchair is this, "Why can't they walk?" Kids are naturally curious and have no filter, which are without question one of their best and worst qualities.

If your child is younger, saying, "They just have an owie," can be enough. If they're older however, just be honest. "I don't know, baby, but most likely it's because their nerves," is all you need to say. My 6-year-old niece is a great example. She's still too young to understand the concept of a spinal cord injury, so I just tell her my legs just don't listen to me anymore, and she understand it completely.

But what's great is once they fully understand, fear is erased.

2) Don't get mad when they get curious.

While it's great so many parents want to make sure their kids don't offend us, which for some kids is a legitimate concern when it comes to sensitive people with disabilities, getting angry with your child when they ask questions about our disability should be avoided. Fear, shame or embarrassment is not what you want your kids to feel in the presence of disability. I hear kids ask their moms about me all the time. Cutest thing ever.

3) Being different isn't a negative thing.

Instead of putting a "sad story" spin on disability whenever they inquire about someone, saying something along the lines of, "But it's ok." "The world is full of people who are different," is vital. We all get around in our own ways. As long as we get there is the important part.

4) Always ask before helping.

A lot of well-meaning parents like to teach their kids to help us whenever possible. But it's just as important to teach them to ask before helping so they can appreciate our autonomy, and respect us as such. Teaching your child to automatically jump to our aid is kind, but it can make it harder for them to see us as a person apart from the chair. Letting them know we can do many things on our own is a huge lesson for kids.

5) Our wheelchairs aren't oversized strollers.

Seeing a wheelchair as our "legs" is another big lesson to drive home. Kids can come up with some hysterical words when referring to a wheelchair – a mini car, a wagon, a "what's that" (my personal favorite), but don't let them go on thinking of our wheelchair as a stroller. Kids like to, but driving home the notion of a wheelchair as being an empowering object, not one that symbolizes helplessness, can make a huge impact.

6) Be careful how you react yourself.

It's no secret kids are sponges and instantly sense whatever mom or dad is feeling. Feeling nervous, awkward or afraid around people with disabilities will only make your kids feel exactly the same way. Try to put those feelings aside in the best interest of your kids. Respond positively and calmly when encountering a person with a disability and they'll do the same (and hopefully into adulthood too).

7) A 10-second stare is ok. I promise.

When it comes to staring, kids get a "Get of Jail Free" card. At least that's how I feel about things. As long as it's not a long drawn out stare that is, which in that case you should tell them, "Looking is ok, but not too long." I say this because it always saddens my heart whenever I see a parent scold their children for looking at a person with a disability for a brief moment. Kids are shiny new people learning about the world. Their innocent glances are 100 percent ok.

8) We aren't in pain.

When I told my niece, "My neck has an owie. That's why Auntie Tiffy can't walk," her first response was, "Well does it hurt?" Kids are just learning about the human body and the double-meaning of words too. By saying "I hurt my neck," she heard "hurt" and equated "pain." While some of us do have some awful chronic pain, letting your kids know a disability doesn't necessarily equate to physical pain can take a definite load off their mind.

9) We can be awesome too.

Whenever possible, showing your child a movie, book or play with a positive portrayal of disability can make a huge difference. Sad movies about skiers who break their necks, then fall in love with a pilot who ends up dying in a crash is not such a good movie to show. They need to see us involved, having fun, even dare I say cool.

While it can be hard finding children's books with a positive disability spin, they're out there. Arlen, Marvelous Mercer, Saddle Sore, Cinderella's Magical Wheelchair and Mama Zooms are some good reads. And a few good kids movies or shows to check out in the same vein include Miracle in Lane 2, a movie with a young adult in a wheelchair who dreams of winning trophies like his brother, Dragon Tales, a cartoon with a character who uses a wheelchair and Pinky Dinky Doo, an animated series with one of the main characters having a friend with a disability. ** (Win one of these books by

sharing this article on Facebook, google + or twitter, but make sure you tag or mention us so we know it's you).

10) Our chairs aren't glued to our butts.

I've always felt every child needs to see someone in a wheelchair get out of their wheelchair just once. Maybe onto a couch, or even better – into a pool or onto a motorcycle – leaving their wheelchair behind, just so they can see we are a person first, wheelchair-user second.

The first time my niece saw me get out of my chair and onto the couch was at Christmas when she was 2-years-old. Her eyes widened and she was deliriously happy when she saw me get out. I think she saw it as breaking free (I don't think she thought it was even possible until that point).

Parenting is a huge responsibility, and molding your kids into hopefully soon-to-be awesome adults is the end goal. I've met a handful of these adults who were raised in a disability-positive environment and they have been some of the most amazing people I've ever met. If your child ends up being one of these very people, you've done a parenting job well done. And remember, the above tips are mine alone. Not all people with disabilities may agree on these recommendations. Whenever possible, ask people with disabilities in your life for any input or tips. There's knowledge to be learned from everyone.

Seven Ways to Keep Your Kids Busy Over Summer **By Allie Gray**



When summer begins, children jump for joy and parents cringe with the thought of entertaining their children for the long summer months. Summer has been long thought of as vacation time, but for parents of young children, without school, preschool and activities, summer can seem like a chore instead of relaxation time. We know from early childhood expert and theorist, Erik Erikson that primary aged children are balancing between two developmental dilemmas: a sense of industry versus a sense of inferiority. At this stage, children need to experience competence and success in skills and tasks that mean something to their culture and community.

Children want to experience success and fulfilling work, instead of failure or meaningless work. During the school year, most children in primary grades are busy challenging themselves and succeeding at a job well done. They are learning. During the summer, their challenges are often few and their work becomes monotonous and meaningless. Learning either takes a backseat or is thrust upon them to keep them “up to speed.”

In order to help children feel that sense of competence and fulfillment, parents can offer their children many opportunities to become involved and purposeful every day during the summer months. Learning can become a part of every summer day through these great ideas on how to keep your kids busy and engaged:

1. Outdoor activities are an obvious choice. During most of the summer, children can spend many hours outdoors. When children are outside, whether actively playing or not, the benefits are immeasurable. Outdoor playing allows for the following things:

- Large motor, active play offers children developmental benefits
 - Fresh air and vitamin D intake
 - Development of social skills
- Outdoor activities should be structured and planned as well as spontaneous and free. Just because children participate in outdoor group sports, it does not mean that they no longer need outdoor play.

2. Use nature to spark healthy living. Take time this summer to cultivate a garden either in your backyard or containers on your patio. Children can be uniquely patient when it comes to planting vegetables. Watching plants grow—and watering and feeding plants—gives a children a sense of purpose and something to look forward to every day.

While the garden grows, children can track growth, through charts, graphs, photos and drawings. Upon harvesting, the vegetables become a means for learning about healthy eating and a great science cooking project. Children are more likely to eat vegetables which they help to grow than those on the grocery shelf. They are invested in the outcome and can celebrate their success with a grand feast.

3. Visit museums and historical places. Many of these wonders exist are never seen by children. Take time to visit town history museums—from large to small. Children find learning about their community to be tangible and more intriguing than somewhere far away or in a book.

4. View art galleries. Art galleries and children do not seem to connect very easily. However, children are inherently creative and enjoy learning how others create art. It is also interesting to see what they see in piece of modern art or how they feel about an impressionist painting. By exposing children to these wonders, they can learn about their local culture and how to express themselves visually.

5. Offer open-ended art activities every day. Offering open-ended art activities for children is a simple way to give your child the freedom of creative expression. Encourage the use of crayons, markers, pencils, chalk, watercolor paints, play dough, clay, tissue paper, and more. Open-ended art activities are just that activities with no specific desired outcome. Craft activities are those with specific materials designed to create something specific. When children use open-ended art materials, they are able to express themselves and their ideas. Often children will spend a longer period of time working with open-ended materials than with craft supplies. After all there is no end predicted for the activity. Parents can also add materials that are considered “useable junk,” such as, paper towel tubes, plastic containers and boxes. With a little bit of tape and glue, children can create amazing sculptures and add to their dramatic play.

6. Find a cause worth fighting for and support it. Children can be just as passionate about important causes than an adult. Their motives are pure; to help others. It is also important for parents to start demonstrating for their children at a young age, the importance of giving to others. As a family, talk with your child about what is important to your community and to your children. Decide on a cause that is worth fighting for and figure out how your family can do just that. Community-driven activities could include:

- Raising money and pet supplies for a local animal shelter
- Organizing birthday party bags for homeless children
- Creating placemats for mobile meal services
- Writing letters to church members who are elderly and homebound. Using your child's talents and interest in helping others will bring about a sense of worthiness and purpose with benefits reaching far past the summer months.

7. Incorporate learning opportunities into everyday activities. The most important thing you can do to keep your child busy this summer is to weave learning into every aspect of their day (without your child knowing they are learning). When parents take time out of what their child perceives as "their summer" to continue learning tasks, such as writing practice, reading and math, then children often rebel.

Remember: summer is a child's vacation from school. How then do parents help children keep "up to speed" on learning so they are not losing valuable knowledge over the summer? Incorporate learning into everyday tasks.



For example: before going to the grocery store, go through your kitchen and help your children to write the grocery list. When at the grocery store, help children to read the list and find the items themselves. This takes time, but allows your child to practice reading skills and letter recognition; plus it allows them to practice a key life skill.

Parents can also being a calculator for children to track expenses, adding items, multiplying for discounts and subtracting for budget. In this manner, children are practicing real mathematics and contributing to the family.

Now that you have some great starter ideas for the summer months; make sure to follow these tips too:

Keep a consistent schedule with your child. Although there is temptation to sleep in each morning, helping your child establish a daily schedule that is a compromise between early and late wake times will give them freedom they never even dreamed of when they were in school. Be sure that you offer a consistent bedtime and mealtimes too.

Provide a calendar of planned events for your child. Keep a calendar with your special activities or events penciled in. When the day passes, have your child cross off the day in a countdown through summer or to a special event. If you are vacationing, include your child in the planning. Children can offer unique and simple ideas for vacations that over-planning adults often overlook. Be sure your child knows what is happening when—both visually and verbally. Children crave predictability and repetition to feel secure and safe as well.

Create long-term projects to last for days, weeks, or months. Children have many ideas and many interests. Capitalizing on what your child enjoys will peak their interest in the activity. When interest is peaked, children will spend time investigating, exploring and creating to follow that activity.

Instead of planning activities for them, offer a brainstorming meeting where you both can offer ideas of interest and ability. If your child is interested in dinosaurs, rocks, grocery stores or animals, find out what they want to know about them. What are they curious about? Make lists and mind maps for ideas so nothing is forgotten. Use the ideas you come up with to help shape activities and events for the summer. Collaboration and provocation between children and parents are key components to the Reggio Emilia approach to education for children (Gestwicki, 2010). By working together, being able to listen to the children's interests and then going one step further to offer further ideas and actions, children will be able to be themselves and learning will be natural.

Leave down time or "white space" for your child to be a child. Always remember, children need time to relax and be themselves. Parents will often schedule their children tighter than their own work schedule and expect their child to feel successful and not run out of steam. If parents keep their child busy, they will stay out of their hair, right? No matter how busy a child might be, if the activities are not meaningful, mind active and interesting, children will become bored or fight to not participate. Including your child in the planning of the summer, what and how of their days and weeks, children will experience a sense of industry and competence. With the "white space" in their day, your child can take the time to enjoy it.

Back-to-School Tips for Parents of Children with Special Needs

A new school year means a new grade, new teachers, new goals, and maybe even a new school! In order to help you and your child with special needs be as successful as you can be, we've put together a list of eight helpful back-to-school tips that we hope will make the transition into a new school year a little easier for you and your child.

Organize all that paperwork

In the world of special education, there are lots of meetings, paperwork, and documentation to keep track of. Try to keep a family calendar of school events, special education meetings, conferences, etc. Setting up a binder or folder to keep your child's special education documentation, meeting notices and IEPs in sequential order can also help you stay organized.

Start a communication log

Keeping track of all phone calls, e-mails, notes home, meetings, and conferences is important. Create a "communication log" for yourself in a notebook that is easily accessible. Be sure to note the dates, times, and nature of the communications you have.

Review your child's current IEP

The IEP is the cornerstone of your child's educational program, so it's important that you have a clear understanding of it. Note when the IEP expires and if your child is up for reevaluation this year. Most importantly, be sure that this IEP still "fits" your child's needs! If you're unsure, contact the school about holding an IEP review meeting.

Relieve back-to-school jitters

Just talking about the upcoming year and changes can help reduce some of that back-to-school anxiety! Talk to your child about exciting new classes, activities, and events that they can participate in during the new school year. If attending a new school, try to schedule a visit before the first day. With older students, it is sometimes helpful to explain the services and accommodations in their IEP so that they know what to expect when school begins.

Keep everyone informed

It's important that routine that will happen once school starts. You can even begin practicing your new schedule, focusing on morning and evening routines, and begin implementing them well in advance of the first day of school.

Stay up-to-date on special education news

Being knowledgeable about your child's IEP and their disability can help you become a better advocate for your child. Try to keep up-to-date on new special education legislation, news, and events. The more you know, the more prepared you will be to navigate the world of special education and successfully advocate for your child!

Attend school events

Take advantage of Open House, Back-to-School Night, and parent-teacher conferences to help you and your child get a feel for the school and meet the teachers, other staff, students, and families. Share the positives about working with your child, and let the teacher know about changes, events, or IEP concerns that should be considered for children in special education.

For more information about starting the year off right, please contact Families Helping Families Region 7 Education Specialist Ester Drakes at (318)226-4541/877-226-4541 or email her at edrakes@fhfregion7.com.

Article reprinted from Reading Rockets www.readingrockets.org

Key Roles in Planning the Transition to College and Careers by Margo Vreeburg Izzo

Students with disabilities have the most important role in planning their own transition from high school to postsecondary education, employment, and independent living. However, parents, educators, and adult services personnel also have crucial roles in the teams that work with the students to prepare for post-high school life. This article provides an overview of some of the key roles of those adults in assisting students to explore, plan for, and move into further education and career preparation opportunities after high school.



The Role of the IEP Team

Federal legislation provides very clear guidance on how educators and parents must design special education and related services to prepare students with disabilities for further education, employment, and independent living. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 requires school personnel to begin planning transition services with the student, parents, and other agency representatives prior to the students 16th birthday, or younger if determined appropriate.

The IEP team meets on an annual basis to discuss the student's vision for the future, present levels of performance, transition services, and annual goals. The IEP is developed to prepare the student for

postsecondary education and employment. Once students reach the age of 16, they assist the IEP team to develop measurable postsecondary goals. Once these measurable postsecondary goals are developed, the IEP team writes annual goals and identifies transition services needed to prepare students to reach their postsecondary goals. Since students postsecondary goals guide what types of annual goals and transition services are delivered, it is essential to identify postsecondary goals that students are motivated to achieve. They need to give him or her an opportunity to take steps toward better preparation to achieve that goal or to revise the goal. Going to college will require attending classes, doing homework, and receiving grades. If a student does not like these tasks, perhaps the student could look at alternative forms of post-high-school education, such as attending non-credit adult learning classes through the local adult and community education program where participants do not have to complete homework or take tests.

The IEP team is also involved in planning community experiences with the student to confirm potential employment and postsecondary goals and to explore various work and college settings. Research indicates that the best predictor of employment following high school is paid work experience in high school. The IEP must include a statement of the interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages. For example, a rehabilitation counselor may support a summer work experience by funding a job developer and coach to work with a student. By including descriptions of both educational and adult services in the IEP, a coordinated set of transition services leading to postsecondary education and careers is more likely to occur.

The Role of Transition Services

Transition services are designed to facilitate movement from school to adult settings including college, vocational education, employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and community participation. IEP teams consider students strengths, preferences and interests when planning these services. Transition services are provided by teachers and related services personnel such as occupational therapists, transition specialists, and rehabilitation counselors. These school and adult services personnel provide instruction and community experiences to develop the skills students need to navigate college and employment settings. Bridge programs located on college campuses, but designed for high school students, are becoming increasingly popular. These programs give students opportunities to navigate college settings with their age-peers without disabilities, enroll in or audit college classes, and move toward employment and adult participation in the community.

The Role of Rehabilitation Services

The Rehabilitation Act was reauthorized under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to consolidate, coordinate, and improve employment, training, literacy, and vocational rehabilitation services. The act mandates that vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors participate in transition planning for students served under IDEA, at the very least, in the form of consultation and technical assistance (National Council on Disability, 2009). Students with disabilities are eligible for VR services if they meet the following three criteria:

- Their physical or mental impairment constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment.
- They can benefit from VR services in terms of an employment outcome.
- They require VR services to prepare for, secure, retain or regain employment.

However, not all eligible students can be served by VR due to a lack of funds.

Vocational rehabilitation counselors provide direct services to help transition-age youth gain the educational and vocational skills needed to transition to living, working, and participating as adults in community life. The VR counselor works with eligible youth and the IEP team to develop an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) designed to assess, plan, develop and provide VR services to prepare for, and engage in, gainful employment (National Council on Disability, 2009). An IPE contains the specific employment outcome that is chosen by the eligible individual, and any services provided by VR listed and described in the IPE must be focused toward securing a reasonable employment outcome. VR counselors provide services to enable youth with disabilities to leave high school, attain postsecondary education and training, and achieve employment rates and levels of wages comparable to their peers without disabilities.

Conclusion

In summary, professionals and parents should encourage high school students with intellectual disabilities to take the lead in exploring the skills and education needed to transition to college and careers of interest. Students must take an active role in developing their IEPs and be comfortable talking about the nature of their disabilities with both educators and other professionals. Encouraging students to advocate for necessary accommodations in the high school setting will prepare them for college. Finally, empowering students to embrace their futures with the self-determination needed to set goals and make adjustments on a daily basis will help ensure their success.

For additional information about transition please contact Comeaka James, Transition Specialist at (318)226-4541/877-226-4541 or email her at cjames@fhfregion7.com.

Article reprinted from www.ici.umn.edu



What is RICC?

The Regional Interagency Coordinating Council (RICC) is an essential part of the Part C early intervention system at the local level. Each region in the state has a RICC. The group's membership includes family members of children with disabilities, as well as EarlySteps Service Providers, Family Service Coordinators (FSC) and, Intake Coordinators. There is also participation from Local Education Agencies (LEA) and Other interested community leaders.

If you are a parent of a child that receives services through EarlySteps we would like to invite you to attend an RICC meeting. This gives parents an opportunity locally to stay current with the latest information and provide valuable feedback to EarlySteps.

The RICC meetings for Region 7 are held Quarterly at the Caddo Parish Health Unit located at 1035 Creswell Ave. Shreveport, LA 71101.

For more information about upcoming meetings or participating please contact Monica Stampley, EarlySteps Community Outreach Specialist, at (318)226-4541 or (877)226-4541. Or email monica.stampley@la.gov.

Families Helping Families Spring Fling 2015



On May 22, 2015 over 100 individuals with disabilities and their caregivers attended the FHF Region 7 Spring Fling 2015. The evening was full of skating, music, food, and fun. The attendees were able to skate, play basketball, play soccer, and jump in the bounce houses. This was an awesome way to end the school year for the students and kick off summer.

Families Helping Families Region 7 would like to thank Medco for sponsoring the event for our families. Their generosity sponsored a great event and as Executive Director of FHF Region 7, I thank you for putting a smile on so many faces.

Meet Our New Staff Members



I would like to take this time to introduce you to the newest editions to the Families Helping Families Region 7 Ms. Ester Drakes and Comeaka James.

Ms. Drakes is the new education specialist for region 7. She comes to us with over 10 years in education which includes an internship in special education, and over 12 years in social work and case management.

She has firsthand knowledge and experience on caring and advocating for individuals with disabilities. Ms. Drakes is here to assist with all of your education concerns for students who are in elementary and middle school. She can be reached at (318)226-4541/877-226-4541 or email her at edrakes@fhfregion7.com.



My name is Comeaka James and I would like to introduce myself as the new Transition Facilitator here at Families Helping Families Region 7. I have 3 children with disabilities myself that are going through high school transition to date. For the past 18 years, I have obtained experience in working with children that have disabilities. I have also had the pleasure of working in a day care, head start, and as a sub teacher for Caddo Parish. I look forward to getting to know all of the families and students working as the new transition facilitator with FHF Region 7. My goal is to make the transition process smooth and easy for all involved. Again, I look forward to meeting all of you and addressing your transitional concerns.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at (318)226-4541/877-226-4541 or cjames@fhfregion7.com.

A Note from your LaCAN Leader Duane Ebarb

First off I wish to THANK ALL of the people who did the Action Alerts and contacted your Legislators to fund the Waiver Slots, EarlySteps and funding the 9 FHF Centers across the State, as well as those who made trips to the Capital for Testimony before the House Appropriations Committee and Senate Finance Committee. Your Advocacy sure made a difference.

Legislators heard the voices of LaCAN members and responded in this year's legislative session. Thanks to your persistent advocacy efforts, the legislature passed the State Budget for Fiscal Year 2016 with \$3.5 Million in state funds (\$9.25 Million total) to fill all frozen home and community-based waiver slots for individuals with developmental disabilities, \$170,000 restored to Families Helping Families, and an additional \$500,000 for EarlySteps.

As we celebrate this success, we will continue to monitor the budget situation closely and keep you informed. There continues to be on-going concerns about the budget and insufficient funding for Medicaid. Mid-year cuts are predicted that would once again put funding for DD services in jeopardy.

LaCAN Leaders had a debriefing in June and will have a Kickoff in July to find out more ways to help you be better advocates.

I'm planning a time this summer for LaCAN Members to meet and talk about our success and to socialize. I do need compelling stories of your wait on a waiver slot so let me know about them.

LaCAN will continue to educate our Legislators for Community and Home Based Services and I will try to help LaCAN Members build relationships with their Legislators so you can express any concerns with them. Anytime you wish to meet and speak with your Legislator about a Waiver issue I will help you set up a visit.

Remember this fall we will be voting for a new Governor, other State Officials and Senate and House members who have termed out. Read all you can about the candidates before voting. Please feel free to contact me anytime you wish with your concerns 318-688-4830 or email me at dke1949@bellsouth.net.



LaTEACH (Louisiana Together Educating ALL Children) is an initiative of the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council. We were formed to effect systems change in the education system that promotes inclusive education for students by using best practices and research based methods.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

"LaTEACH promotes appropriate, inclusive education for all students. We work to make parents, educators, the general public, and state leadership informed and supportive of research based and effective practices used appropriately for each student."

We believe all students, with or without disabilities, should be provided the same opportunities to be educated in neighborhood schools as their sisters, brothers, friends and neighbors.

We believe all students, with or without disabilities, need and should be provided with the support to learn together effectively, involving family, school and community.

We believe all educators should be provided with the training and resources to teach students with diverse learning styles and needs.

We believe all students, with or without disabilities, need and should be provided educational opportunities which address their individualized needs, use research based practices, result in meaningful outcomes, and prepare them for productive and satisfying lives.

We believe all parents should take the lead through active participation and be given the training and resources to address their child's individualized needs, use research based practices, result in meaningful outcomes, and prepare them for productive and satisfying lives.

We believe that ALL students are valued members in society and can and should become fully participating and contributing citizens.

Who should join? Students, Parents, Family Members, Educators, Administrators, or any interested person in inclusive education.

For more information about LaTEACH or to become a member of LaTEACH please visit their website at www.lateach.org.

WHAT IS P.O.P.?



Power of the Parent aka P.O.P. is Families Helping Families Region 7 support group for parents or caregivers of individuals with disabilities. Parents and family members of children with disabilities or special needs are encouraged to come, share, and learn with other parents. Power of the Parent meets every third Wednesday of the month at the Families Helping Families Region 7 center from 5:30pm – 6:30pm.

Please feel free to contact Monica Stampley at (318)226-4541/877-226-4541 for additional information or directions.

Children's Special Health Services Medical Transportation Project

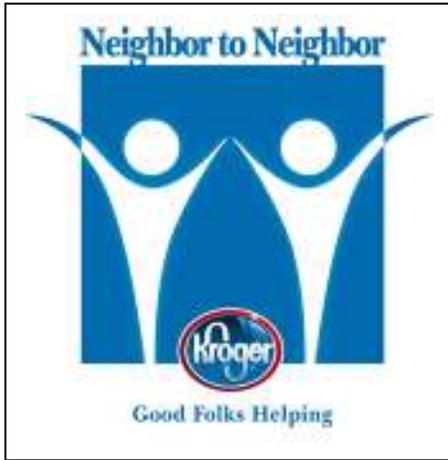
In continuing our spirit of partnership, Families Helping Families and Children's Special Health Services have joined to provide travel assistance through the CSHS Medical Transportation Project. Our agencies are working together to provide eligible families with financial assistance for the costs of travel to out-of-town medical appointments or services. ***Please contact Families Helping Families Region 7 at (318)226-4541/877-226-4541 to find out more. Many families have benefited from this help with their expenses.***

Ways to Give Back to Families Helping Families Region 7



Support Families Helping Families Region 7 by starting your shopping at smile.amazon.com. AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know and love. Same products, same prices, and same services.

Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to Families Helping Families Region7 whenever you shop on AmazonSmile.



Families Helping Families Region 7 is proud to announce their participation in the Kroger Neighbor to Neighbor Donation Program. If you shop at Kroger and use a KrogerPlus Card this is an easy and fast way to donate money to Families Helping Families Region 7 without coming out of your pocket. Kroger will donate money Families Helping Families Region 7 every time you use your card.

Helping Families Helping Families Region 7 is so simple just register your Kroger online at www.krogercommunityrewards.com. You must have a registered KrogerPlus card account to link to FHF Region 7. If you do not have a KrogerPlus Card, cards are available at the customer service desk at any Kroger. If you are a new online customer, you must click on SIGN UP TODAY in the 'New Customer?' box.

- You can sign up for a Kroger Community Rewards Account by entering your zip code, clicking on favorite store, enter your email address, create a password, and agree to the terms and conditions.
- You will get a message to check your email inbox and click on the link within the body of the email.
- You will click on My Account and use your email address and password to proceed to the next step.
- You will click on Edit Kroger Community Rewards information and input your Kroger Plus card number.
- You will update or confirm your information.
- You will enter our **NPO number 90225** or our **name Families Helping Families Region 7**, or select **Families Helping Families Region 7** from list and click on confirm.

To verify you are enrolled correctly, you will see Families Helping Families Region 7 name on the right side of your information page.

REMEMBER, purchases will not count for Families Helping Families Region 7 until after member(s) register their card(s).

LET THE DONATING BEGIN!!

Board of Directors

Justine Shipley
Parent

Michelle Tullis
Parent/Treasurer

Renata Bradberry
Self-Advocate/Secretary

Charles Spearman
Self-Advocate

Shaina Newton
Parent/Chair

Chanel Jackson
Executive Director

Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council's Mission

To ensure all individuals with disabilities benefit from supports and opportunities in their communities so they achieve quality of life in conformance with their wishes.

Through the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act Congress funds and authorizes the Developmental Disabilities Council 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.

The Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC) is made up of people from every region of the state who are appointed by the governor to develop and implement a five year plan to address the needs of persons with developmental disabilities. Membership includes persons with developmental disabilities, parents and representatives from public and private agencies. Several members rotate off the Council each year in October and nominations for new members are always welcomed.

You may contact the DDC by calling 1.800.450.8101 or visit their website: www.laddc.org

Families Helping Families Region 7 programs and this newsletter are supported by the F2FHIC, Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council Louisiana State Department of Education, and Office of Citizens with Development Disabilities



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