



# Families Helping Families

## Region 7

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



### My Miracle Son: A Gift From God

By: Dorothy Sweeney

This story is not about me. It is about my 23 year old son, Matthew. Little did I know all those years ago when I named him, that it meant "Gift from God" and that he is. I lost Matthew's twin in my third month and he was born a preemie with cerebral palsy. My world fell apart when he was diagnosed at the age of 10 months. We were told we could simply put him in a home. I told them I don't think so he was the survivor and so he stayed with us.

We enrolled him in an early intervention school by the age of 13 months and within three weeks, the absolutely wonderful teachers there had him sipping from a cup and sitting up. By the age of 3, he was walking what a miracle. Matthew is always smiling and always friendly. He is truly the light of my life. When he was 11, he had a seizure and was diagnosed with epilepsy but through it all, he always smiled. He was on meds for four years and is now free of epilepsy. But at the age of 16, he developed manic depression and we thought we would never get his "mind" back again. God surely does smile on my son he was put on very strong meds and he did come out of it.

My son was a commencement speaker at the Overbrook School for the Blind here in Philly (he is not blind, but visually impaired). To watch my son on that stage proves to me that God continues to smile down on him. He works now at a WaWa store. No matter how bad I might look, he always tells me I'm beautiful. He is loving and caring and would be a friend to all, if he could. All those who know him, think he's the best and my husband has been calling him the "Rock" ever since he came out of that manic depression. I have been living a shattering life with my oldest son but all I have to do is look at Matt and just the sight of him pulls me out of my own depression. I also have a teenage daughter who is the light of my life but Matt (he's not disabled and he's not handicapped) is Heaven's Special Child.

This article was reprinted from <http://www.beliefnet.com>.

#### Who?

A family directed resource center for all individuals with disabilities and their families

#### What?

Providing information, referral, and support through a network of services and assistance throughout Region 7

#### When?

8:30 am – 5:00 pm  
Monday – Friday

Drop-ins are always welcome!

#### Where?

2620 Centenary Boulevard  
Building 2, Suite 250  
Shreveport, LA 71104  
318.226.4541  
877.226.4541  
info@fhfregion7.com  
www.fhfregion7.com



## **Bayou Health Changes Bring Some Confusion for Waiver Recipients**

By: Karen Scallan

From the Louisiana Parent to Parent Health Information Center

*A statewide program of  
Bayou Land Families Helping Families*

You may recall hearing that Medicaid Waiver recipients would not be included in the state's conversion to managed care (Bayou Health). Recently, that changed and Medicaid Waiver recipients began receiving packets and information on the various plans at the end of May.

Not all Medicaid Waiver recipients will be required to participate in Bayou Health managed care though. Children under the age of 19 and on a Medicaid Waiver will not be required to join Bayou Health. If you do not join, you will need to let Bayou Health know that you are choosing to "opt out" of the program. Be sure to keep information on the name of the person you spoke to when calling and the date you called. You may want to request something in writing confirming that you opted out of Bayou Health for your child.

Adults 19 and over on Medicaid Waivers are mandatory participants in Bayou Health unless they also have Medicare or are also receiving LaHIPP benefits. (LaHIPP is the Louisiana Health Insurance Premium assistance program.) As of now, the only adults 19 and over with Medicaid Waivers NOT included in Bayou Health are those with Medicare or LaHIPP benefits.

Additionally, packets first sent to all families indicated everyone was a "mandatory" group. This was not correct and new packets are being sent out and the deadline to enroll or opt out has been moved to July 20th, 2012. The La Family to Family Health Information Center also presented concerns to Medicaid for families in two other groups who may have difficulty with the Bayou Health enrollment requirements: those with private insurance as primary insurer and Family Opportunity Act or Waiver Medicaid as secondary insurer; and those with children with complicated medical needs. Potential concerns include how they these families manage 2 different enrollment periods (1 for private insurance; 1 for Medicaid) and managing complex medical care in unique circumstances with another layer of approvals and administration to go through. We are hoping that these groups will have an exemption from Bayou Health.

We are awaiting a reply regarding this and our center will be posting information updates as we receive them to LaDisabilityTalk and other newsgroups, as well as sending it out to various parent support groups.

**In the meantime, if anyone has any concerns or other issues, questions about Bayou Health or managed care, or if they would like to be on a mailing list for updates, they may feel free to contact the La Family to Family Health Information Center at 1-800-331-5570 or [f2fhic@bellsouth.net](mailto:f2fhic@bellsouth.net).**

## CSHS Family Resource Center

Children's Special Health Services (CSHS) opened a Family Resource Center at Children's Hospital in New Orleans in January 2012 after discontinuing direct health care clinics in that location in December 2010. The Center was opened in collaboration with Children's Hospital to meet one of the core functions of CSHS funding from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau. This mandated function is to assist families of children and youth with special health care needs with learning about and accessing community-based services.

The CSHS Family Resource Center offers support services to families who have a child with a chronic health condition or disability and receive outpatient services at Children's Hospital (except clinics where this service is provided by Children's Hospital social work staff). There are no income criteria for this service.



Located on the second floor of the Ambulatory Care Center (outpatient services section), the Family Resource Center offers a comfortable place for families to relax while using the Center's facilities. Books, brochures and other resources are available for family use. The Center also has 2 computers/printers for family use as well as phone, fax and copy machine to coordinate care with schools or other health providers.

CSHS worked with Children's Hospital to develop ways to inform families of Family Resource Center services. Family Resource Center brochures are placed in all Children's Hospital outpatient areas (clinics, therapy, Dental Clinic, Brace Shop, etc).

Family Resource Center "Information Requests" are placed inside the brochures. The request consists of a checklist of services that the family may choose to get information and/or linkage. Included are:

- Community and state resources and services (agencies that serve children with special health care needs)
- Insurance/Medicaid/Medicare services and eligibility
- Transition to adult services (wills, special needs trusts, guardianship; LRS; college/vocational information, etc)
- IEP or 504 (services and accommodations at school to meet child's unique needs)
- Families Helping Families staff in the family's area of the state
- Education programs for families at sites around the state and online
- Connecting with other parents of a child with similar health issues in their area of the state
- Getting books from lending libraries on family issues related to special health need services
- Summer camp or community activities for children with special health needs
- Using the Internet to find needed services
- Tips on working with health care providers

Families may access services by going to the Family Resource Center at the hospital, calling staff to meet them at an appropriate location within the facility or by mailing the Information Request to the Family Resource Center office.

In keeping with the goal to assist families with accessing appropriate resources that fit their child's needs, we have developed a webpage on the CSHS website that is specifically devoted to the information needs for Louisiana's CYSHCN and their families. The CSHS website was recently updated and the "National, State & Local CYSHCN Resource Links" (family section) re-organized to make it more user-friendly for families, as well as CSHS staff and other professionals.

The Family Resource Center works collaboratively with Families Helping Families (FHF) statewide. All families accessing services at the Family Resource Center are informed about and (with their permission) linked to FHF services in their area of the state. Copies of current newsletters from each FHF are available for families to read or take home. In addition, the Center has a display of "Events in Your Area of the State." This includes training and other events sponsored by FHF offices.

The Family Resource Center is currently staffed by a part time coordinator, 1 CSHS social services counselor and a parent liaison from Families Helping Families. Funding is available for an additional parent liaison and youth liaison, as other services are offered.

The Family Resource Center is funded by the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, Office of Public Health, Children's Special Health Services and a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Maternal and Child Health Bureau.

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### **Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities Resource Centers**

The Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities has developed resource centers to increase capacity to support and include people with developmental disabilities. These resource centers are committed to enhancing quality of life by identifying, maximizing, and supplementing the existing supports through utilization of expertise within the services system. Each resource center has a specialty area. Primary focus groups include people with disabilities and their families, providers, professionals and other state agencies. Resource center initiatives involve:

- Developing and providing capacity building in specialty areas through training events/educational materials, consultations, technical assistance, and limited direct services;
- Building partnerships and collaborative relationships with providers, community professionals, other state agencies, educational institutions, professional organizations, and other stakeholders to efficiently target gaps and improve multiple efforts;
- Recruiting and retaining highly qualified and capable professionals to maintain and increase the pool of expertise in Louisiana; and
- Accomplishing and promoting research and publication in specialty areas.

#### **The Office of Citizens with Developmental Disabilities currently administers four resource centers:**

- *Northwest Resource Center on Developmental Disabilities Regions 7 & 8 3808 Kilpatrick Drive, Bossier City, LA 71112 (318) 741-2802*  
*The Northwest Resource Center provides assessments, behavioral health services, social services, occupational, physical, and speech therapy, and resources in the community to help individuals and families with developmental disabilities.*
- Greater New Orleans Resource Center on Developmental Disabilities – Regions 1,3, and 10
- Central Louisiana Resource Center on Developmental Disabilities – Regions 4, 5, and 6
- North Lake Resource Center on Development Disabilities – Regions 2 and 9

**For more information please contact Mary Russell OCDD Family Facilitator at Families Helping Families Region 7 at 318-226-4541/877-226-4541 or email her at [mrussell@fhfregion7.com](mailto:mrussell@fhfregion7.com).**



## Louisiana State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC)

The Louisiana State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) is an independent board that operates within The Office of the Governor.

The purpose of the SICC is to advise and assist the Lead Agency (EarlySteps) in the performance of its responsibilities. All council members are appointed by the governor.

Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) states that “at least 20% of the members shall be parents of infants or toddlers with disabilities or children with disabilities aged 12 and younger. At least one such member shall be a parent of an infant or toddler with a disability or a child with a disability aged 6 and younger.” These requirements allow Louisiana to bring together consumer, clinical, political, and administrative communities, which facilitate the building of bridges between agencies, service providers, and families.

Parents are encouraged to participate in both SICC and RICC. There is currently an opening on the SICC for parent representation from Region 7. Members can be reimbursed for travel and child care if needed.

Each region in the state also has a Regional Coordinating Council (RICC). This gives parents an opportunity locally to stay current with the latest information and provide valuable feedback to EarlySteps. The RICC meetings in Region 7 are held quarterly at the Caddo Parish Health Unit.

**For more information on the SICC or RICC please contact Monica Stampley, EarlySteps Community Outreach Specialist at Families Helping Families Region 7 at 318-226-4541/877-226-4541 or email her at [monica.stampley@la.gov](mailto:monica.stampley@la.gov).**

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## How to Prepare for a Manifestation Determination Review

By Doug Goldberg Special Education Advisor Blog

One of the most devastating calls you can receive as a parent is the School calling to tell you they have initiated an expulsion proceeding against your child due to poor behavior. If your child has an Individualized Education Program (“IEP”) before the expulsion process can start they must hold a Manifestation Determination review. This review must be held within 10 days of the conduct. At which time the IEP team must review the complete file and consider all relevant information, including the IEP, any teacher observations, and any information supplied by the parents. The IEP team must then answer two questions:

1. Was the conduct caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to the child’s disability; and
2. Was the conduct the direct result of the School’s failure to implement the IEP.

The importance of this meeting is sometimes lost on the Parents and they show up unprepared and oblivious to the magnitude of this undertaking. If the answer to either of those questions is yes, then by law, the behavior was a manifestation of the disability and the expulsion process will stop immediately. If the answer is no to both questions, then the school personnel may then apply the same disciplinary procedures to children with

disabilities in the same manner and for the same duration as the procedures would be applied to children without disabilities. This means the expulsion process would be allowed to continue. It's important to note that your child will not be expelled during a manifestation determination review but rather this will determine whether that process will be allowed to continue to an expulsion hearing.

While there is no guarantee of outcome, preparation for a Manifestation Determination review is crucial to increase the likelihood of success. Especially since most Schools will be highly reluctant to admit that the behavior was caused by the child's disability or the School's FAILURES to implement the IEP correctly.

### **Immediate First steps:**

1. Send a letter to the School in writing requesting a complete copy of your child's education records and an incident report of the alleged behavior. This is the file you will be reviewing in the meeting to answer the manifestation determination questions;
2. Review your State's policy on tape recording IEP meetings and send a letter notifying the School that you will be recording the Manifestation Determination review (i.e. in California you need to give the School 24 hours' notice to tape record);
3. If your child has private assessments that will be helpful during the review then provide copies to the School;
4. If your child has private physicians, therapists, psychiatrists or other providers contact them immediately and solicit their help in determining whether the behavior is symptomatic of your child's disability. If any of them think the behavior is symptomatic of your child's disability ask them to attend the review meeting;



5. If you do not have private providers to solicit for help begin researching symptoms of your child's disabilities (i.e. ADHD children are impulsive and don't think things through). Print out credible information to bring to the manifestation determination review regarding your child's disability. Start researching at the National Association website for your child's disability (i.e. Autism Society, Attention Deficit Disorder Association, etc.); and

6. Contact a Special Education Advocate or Special Education Attorney that specialize in discipline issues to discuss your child's upcoming meeting. It is my opinion you should hire an advocate or attorney to attend the meeting with you but at minimum you should consult with a professional on the process.

These initial first steps should help you organize and strategize but these steps are just the tip of the iceberg in preparing for the manifestation determination review.

### **The next steps:**

1. Review all of the documents highlighting all statements made in the IEP or assessments discussing your child's needs that can be directly related to the discipline issue. Statements that might include, acts impulsively, has difficulty processing spoken language, does not think through actions prior to acting, is highly stimulated by environmental factors. Statements like these can be used to make the case that your child's actions were a manifestation of their disability;
2. Create a list of all these statements and try to tie them back to your child's disability and the behaviors that caused the referral for expulsion;

3. Review all of the documents again this time highlighting all services that your child is supposed to be receiving, how the school is collecting data on IEP Goals and whether the IEP lists specific behavior goals and/or has a behavior support plan. Try to determine whether the School has been following the IEP and providing your child with all of the required services; and
4. Create a list of those services that the School has not been providing. These could include failure to provide adult supervision as provided in the IEP, failure to collect data on behavior goals as stated in the IEP or failure to follow the behavior support plan to name a few.

At this point you should be prepared to attend the Manifestation Determination review. When attending the meeting try to remain calm especially since you will be tape recording the meeting. Make sure the administrative designee for the meeting explains the process correctly to the entire IEP team and everyone reviews the complete file. The private therapists/doctors you have brought with you should be ready and willing to explain their qualifications, their experience with your child and how they have determined that the behavior was symptomatic of their disability.

You should also provide copies of both of the lists you created above and ask for the information to be reviewed during the process. Try to ask specific, direct questions and make sure the answers you receive are adequate. Are the team members answering the questions you ask or skirting around the issues?

If at the conclusion of the meeting the School still feels the behavior **WAS NOT** a manifestation of the child's disability then if the parents disagree they may appeal the decision by requesting a due process hearing. Due process hearings regarding discipline issues are handled on an expedited basis which must occur within 20 school days of the date the complaint requesting the hearing is filed. The hearing officer must make a determination within 10 school days after the hearing. The tape recording you made at the manifestation determination review may also be used as evidence in the Due Process hearing.

**If you have any questions about manifestation determination or need a special education advocate please contact Monica Sullivan, Education Specialist at Families Helping Families Region 7 at 318-226-4541/877-226-4541 or email her at [msullivan@fhfregion7.com](mailto:msullivan@fhfregion7.com).**

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### **Getting ready for work, Is it for my young adult with a disability?**

"To Work or Not to Work" and that is the question being asked by many individuals with disabilities and their family members as they begin to think about going to work in their local communities. This fact sheet addresses frequently asked questions by family members and provides answers to dispel the concerns. After reading this, it is hoped that family members will agree that the answer to the question: "To Work or Not to Work" is "To Work!"

**Question: I have been told that my son / daughter is not ready to work in the community.**

Answer: Customized employment eliminates the need for a person to "get ready" to work. If your son / daughter wants to go to work, then it is time for him / her to go. A key aspect to customizing employment is finding work that matches your son's / daughter's interests and skills. Using this approach, a personal agent or employment specialist works closely with a job seeker to negotiate a specific position that uses the person's talents to match the needs of a business. The goal is not just to locate any job, but a job specifically negotiated that capitalizes on your son's / daughter's interests and abilities.

**Question: But, my son / daughter does not have the skills to meet the demands of a real job and needs training.**

Answer: Many people with significant disabilities do not transfer skills learned in one setting such as a workshop to another such as a community business. One of the reasons is that it is difficult to simulate the features of a job in a setting that does not have coworkers and the demands of a real workplace. For instance, your son / daughter may be in a training program to learn how to work in an office. The participants in the program take turns completing tasks such as sorting mail, delivering messages, and folding letters and stuffing envelopes. However, typically position descriptions change from business to business. The way that one office prepares and delivers mail can be very different from another. The time spent learning the task in the training program would be better spent in the actual workplace where your son / daughter is employed.

**Question: Well, that raises another serious concern! My son / daughter can't lose Social Security benefits and Medicaid. The reality is that he / she needs the benefits and health care coverage.**

Answer: The answer is to get informed! You should contact your local Social Security Administration Office to locate a Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach Specialist. This person can sit down with you to explain the basics of how work will impact your son's / daughter's monthly benefit check. You also will need more information on work incentives. These incentives were developed to encourage Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries to become self-sufficient.

This article was reprinted from <http://www.worksupport.com/resources/viewContent.cfm/501>.

**If you have any questions about supported employment or need a special education/disability advocate please contact Minnie Jenkins, Transition Facilitator at Families Helping Families Region 7 at 318-226-4541/877-226-4541 or email her at [mjenkins@fhfregion7.com](mailto:mjenkins@fhfregion7.com).**

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## Caregiving Support & Help

### TIPS FOR MAKING FAMILY CAREGIVING EASIER

As a family caregiver, you may find yourself facing a host of new responsibilities, many of which are unfamiliar or intimidating. At times, you may feel overwhelmed and alone. But despite its challenges, caregiving can also be rewarding. And there are a lot of things you can do to make the caregiving process easier for both you and your loved one. Read on for tips on getting the help you need and caring for your own needs while caring for others.



Providing care for a family member in need is an age-old act of kindness, love, and loyalty. And as life expectancies increase, medical treatments advance, and increasing numbers of people live with chronic illness or disabilities, more and more of us will participate in the caregiving process. There are many different types of family caregiver situations. You may be taking care of an aging parent or a spouse with a disability. Or perhaps you're caring for a child with a developmental or mental disability. But regardless of your particular circumstances, you may feel like you're facing a challenging new role. If you're like most family caregivers, you aren't trained for the responsibilities you now face. And you probably never anticipated you'd be in this situation. At the same time, you love your family member and want to provide the best care you can. The good news is that you don't have to be a nursing expert, a superhero, or a saint in order to be a good caregiver. You can be a good caregiver without sacrificing yourself in the process.

- **Learn as much as you can** about your family member's illness or disability and about how to be a caregiver as you can. The more you know, the less anxiety you'll feel about your new role and the more effective you'll be.
- **Seek out other caregivers.** It helps to know you're not alone. It's comforting to give and receive support from others who understand what you're going through.
- **Trust your instincts.** Remember, you know your family member best. Don't ignore what doctors and specialists tell you, but listen to your gut, too.
- **Encourage your loved one's independence.** Caregiving does not mean doing everything for your loved one. Be open to technologies, strategies, and supports that allow your family member to be as independent as possible.
- **Know your limits.** Be realistic about how much of your time and yourself you can give. Set clear limits, and communicate those limits to doctors, family members, and other people involved.

### **Family caregiving tip 1: Accept your feelings**

Caregiving can trigger a host of difficult emotions, including anger, fear, resentment, guilt, helplessness, and grief. It's important to acknowledge and accept what you're feeling, both good and bad. Don't beat yourself up over your doubts and misgivings. These feelings don't mean that you don't love your family member they simply mean you're human.

Even when you understand why you're feeling the way you do, they can still be upsetting. In order to deal with them, it's important to talk about them. Don't keep your emotions bottled up. Find at least one person you trust to confide in.

### **Places you can turn for caregiver support include:**

- Family members or friends who will listen without judgment
- Your church, temple, or other place of worship
- Caregiver support groups at a local hospital or online
- A therapist, social worker, or counselor
- National caregiver organizations
- Organizations specific to your family member's illness or disability

### **Family caregiving tip 2: Don't try to do it all**

Even if you're the primary family caregiver, you can't do everything on your own. You'll need help from friends and family members, as well as health professionals. If you don't get the support you need, you'll quickly burn out which will compromise your ability to provide care.

But before you can ask for help, you need to have a clear understanding of your family member's needs. Take some time to list all the caregiving tasks required, being as specific as possible. Then determine which activities you are able to meet be realistic about your capabilities and time. The remaining tasks on the list are ones you'll need to ask others to help you with.

### **Family caregiving tip 3: Attend to your own needs**

Pablo Casals, the world-renowned cellist, said, "The capacity to care is the thing that gives life its deepest significance and meaning." It's essential that you receive the support you need, so you don't lose that capacity. While you're caring for your loved one, don't forget about your own needs! Caregivers need care too.

## Family caregiving tip 4: Take advantage of community services

There are services to help caregivers in most communities, and the cost is often based on the ability to pay or covered by the care receiver's insurance. Services that may be available in your community include adult day care centers, home health aides, home-delivered meals, respite care, transportation services, and skilled nursing.

This article was reprinted from [http://www.helpguide.org/elder/caring\\_for\\_caregivers.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/elder/caring_for_caregivers.htm).

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**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 contact Region 7 Coordinator Mindy Hartzo at [mindy.hartzo@lateach.org](mailto:mindy.hartzo@lateach.org) or call her at 1.800.894.6558.**

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Go Hard R Go Home Softball Benefit Tournament

Families Helping Families Region 7 would like to thank Accomplished Learning Services and Amerigroup for sponsoring the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Go Hard R Go Home Softball Benefit Tournament. All proceeds from the tournament were donated to Families Helping Families Region 7. The tournament was held on June 16, 2012 with a total of 14 teams from Shreveport, Bossier City, Monroe, and Texas. It was a day of family fun in the sun.

Families Helping Families Region 7 would also like to say a special thank you to this year's tournament director Roy Gilbert formerly of the Baltimore Orioles and the following teams who participated in the tournament and donated their time and energy for the cause: Anything Goes, Balls Deep, Fire and Ice, Free Agents (1<sup>st</sup> place men's division), Hit Ladies (2<sup>nd</sup> place woman's division), Mooretown Connect, Ocean Canyon, Rack City Pitchers, Unity Conqeors, Untouchables (2<sup>nd</sup> place men's division), RIP Jam, Texas Heat (1<sup>st</sup> place woman's division), Unknown, and X Rated.



## 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 or Monica Sullivan at (318)226-4541/877-226-4541 for additional information or directions.**

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### From your LaCAN Leader Region 7:



Hi LaCAN Members I hope everyone had a very good first half of the year. We will be looking forward to an active Legislative Session beginning March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012. I will again ask you to do the Action Alerts as soon as they come to your email inbox. We didn't have a very good Legislative Session the Legislators did not fund any new NOW slots for FY 2012-2013 didn't restore funds for 168 existing NOW slots. There is now a waiting list for the NOW Self Direct program. All 306 NOW Self Direct slots are filled. This is why the Action Alerts are so important.

Also if you wish to visit with your Legislator about an OCDD issue let me know so I can schedule a meeting. I made a trip to the Capital in April for the House Appropriations Committee meeting and a trip again in May to then Capital to testify before the Senate Finance Committee. We have our Legislative Roundtable in January at Christ United Methodist Church; we had two Senator Buffington and Senator Peacock plus 4 Reps. and three Legislative Assistants. The more the Legislators, DHH, OCDD and other policy makers hear from you the more likely they will be to support our concerns.

Just a reminder of our Mission below:

#### **Advocating for individualized community supports for Louisiana's citizens who experience developmental disabilities**

LaCAN is a statewide grassroots network of individuals and families who have worked together since 1988 advocating for a system that supports individuals to live in their own homes rather than having to move to a facility to receive needed services. Specifically, they have advocated for implementation of Louisiana's Community and Family Support System Plan.

Regional LaCAN teams include parents, family members, and individuals with disabilities. These members are notified by email or phone when communication with state agency officials, legislators or the Governor is necessary.

LaCAN provides information and support to individuals wishing to effectively advocate for the expansion and improvement of community and family support services for people with disabilities and their families through email updates, regional workshops, regional team leaders, and personal contact.

**For more information about LaCAN or if you are interested in becoming a member please contact Duane Ebarb at (318)688-4830 or email him at [dke1949@bellsouth.net](mailto:dke1949@bellsouth.net).**

## People First of Louisiana



people

**People First of Louisiana** is a self advocacy group ran by people with disabilities, for with disabilities. Where people learn to speak up for themselves about the decisions they make. People First of Louisiana members can connect with others in their community, across the nation and around the world and they can also learn about their rights and responsibilities as citizens of the United States of America.

### **Our Mission:**

People First of Louisiana supports people with disabilities to empower themselves in becoming effective decision makers, to gain more independence, and enjoy life as equal citizens of the United States of America.

**People First of Louisiana** has chapters in every region of the state and is committed to the self advocacy movement in Louisiana. There are at least 400 self-advocates who are actively participating.

**People First of Louisiana** has been the vehicle that has provided people with disabilities a statewide presence. Remember we are not our disabilities...we are people first.

**To join other people with disabilities in Caddo-Bossier in letting your voice be heard contact Daryn Broussard, Caddo-Bossier People First mentor at (318)564-6636 or email him at [daryn.broussard@yahoo.com](mailto:daryn.broussard@yahoo.com).**

## Stipend Money Available!

Do you want to learn more about your child's disability? Have you heard of a new technique that might help him learn? Families Helping Families Region 7 might be able to help you get this knowledge.

There are stipend dollars available for individuals with disabilities and their families who live in the parishes of Region 7. Please apply for these funds if you would like to attend a conference, convention or other activity that will increase your knowledge.

To apply, you may call 318.226.4541/1.877.226.4541 or email: [info@fhfregion7.com](mailto:info@fhfregion7.com).

Please have the following information handy when calling to ask for funding or include these details in any email:

- 1) When
- 2) Where
- 3) Registration Cost
- 4) How much you are able to contribute

This is a great opportunity to attend a state, regional or national event that otherwise might not be possible!



## Board of Directors

**Gretchen Petterway, M.D.**  
Pediatrics Associates

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Caregiver  
Attorney of Law

**Tabatha Taylor**  
Parent

**Shamarra Williams**  
Parent

**Carolyn Fitzgerald, LSW- 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](http://www.laddc.org)

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