



Families Helping Families

Region 7

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



The Miracle of Jay-Jay

By: Louise Tucker Jones

"He doesn't look like the other boys," Grandpa said as he viewed the blanketed bundle I held in my arms. He was right. James Ryan, whom we called Jay-Jay, with his skinny little legs, almost bald head, and tiny, slanted eyes, bore little resemblance to my other chubby babies with their full heads of hair. But I knew the comment went far beyond looks. Grandpa couldn't accept the fact that Jay-Jay had Down syndrome and had mental retardation.

On subsequent visits, Pa-Pa, the name the other children used for their grandpa, ignored Jay-Jay. He picked him up once at a family reunion when it seemed to be expected for a family picture. Other than that, he never touched him, and looked upon him with something between pity and displeasure.

Then, one day, a miracle began. We were once again at a family reunion, and Jay-Jay, being the outgoing little boy he was at three years old, walked over to his grandpa and crawled onto his lap. Pa-Pa was a little shocked, but what could he do in front of all these people? This was his grandson. How could they understand that he hardly knew Jay-Jay?

Jay-Jay took his grandpa's glasses out of his shirt pocket and placed them on his own face, upside-down, precariously perched on his short, pudgy nose. He looked at Pa-Pa and giggled, making Pa-Pa laugh, too. Soon, they were walking around the room, Jay-Jay leading Pa-Pa, a little smile on the older one's face.

Their next encounter came months later when Pa-Pa decided to visit. Jay-Jay played the clown, making his grandpa laugh, and pick him up and throw him into the air.

Pa-Pa turned to my husband and said, "Why, he's just like any other kid."

We had tried to tell him, but Pa-Pa's preconceived ideas and fears of the disabled had kept him out of his grandson's life. But Jay-Jay, being an effervescent little boy, would not let him remain in darkness. With his love and actions, he showed Pa-Pa and others that they were missing out on some of God's greatest blessings by not loving and caring for him.

After that day, a strong bond began to form. Pa-Pa found that Jay-Jay loved balloons and would have one waiting for him each time we came to visit--visits he now welcomed. Then he discovered that Jay-Jay was not only sweet, but ornery, and he loved pillow fights. So each visit would end up with pillows flying across the room. I never figured out which of the two enjoyed it most. Soon Pa-Pa began to telephone--supposedly to talk to my husband, who was now glowing in the new relationship between his father and son--but always insisting, on speaking to his youngest grandson.

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

Although Jay-Jay has a severe speech articulation disorder, he can understand most of what is said to him. Yet he finds it difficult to form the words he wants to say, making communication difficult. Nevertheless, Pa-Pa always wanted to speak to him by phone, and Jay-Jay would laugh and talk in words that neither his dad nor I understood. Pa-Pa swore he understood every word.

The phone chats became a weekly ritual. Every Saturday morning, Jay-Jay knew it was the day to talk to Pa-Pa. Since it was long distance, they took turns calling. One week, Pa-Pa would call. The next week, all excited, Jay-Jay would make the call and talk until we made him hang up.

Through the years, Jay, as he is called today, and Pa-Pa continued those weekly phone calls, along with letters, cards, fishing trips, and frequent trips to Wal-Mart. They became "best buddies."

When Jay was nineteen, his beloved Pa-Pa died unexpectedly. One of the hardest days of my life was watching Jay stand at his Pa-Pa's graveside as he was presented the American flag that draped the casket. But one of the things I cherish most is knowing that Jay's unconditional love built a bridge to his grandfather's heart and changed both of their worlds forever.

Age does not protect you from love. But love, to some extent, protects you from age. - Jeanne Moreau

The Facts on Charter Schools and Students with Disabilities

By: Elaine Mulligan and National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY)

Learn the answers to 10 commonly asked questions that families and educators of students with disabilities have about charter schools. You'll also find links to state-specific resources that can help you better understand how charter schools work in your individual state.



Charter schools are fairly new in public education, and they've generated a lot of interest and inquiry. For many families and educators, charter schools offer more options for how students will be educated. For others, charter schools are confusing. Why, for example, are some charter schools not open for enrollment to students who live nearby? And what about students with disabilities? May they go to charter schools? If so, is special education available in charter schools?

In this short document, we answer 10 commonly asked questions that families and educators of students with disabilities have about charter schools. We also offer links to state-specific resources that can help you better understand how charter schools work in your individual state.

What is a charter school?

Charter schools are public elementary and secondary schools, just as traditional neighborhood schools are. Charter schools have existed in the United States for about 20 years, beginning with state legislation in Minnesota in 1991. In the 2010-2011 school year, there were 5,275 authorized charter schools nationwide.¹

Each state has the authority to include charter schools in its state law as a way of offering students a public education. Most states have done just that and have written state charter laws that guide how charter schools operate.

How do charter schools differ from traditional public schools

Important differences exist between traditional public schools and charter schools including:

The school's purpose or mission

People start charter schools for a variety of reasons. According to the first-year report of the National Study of Charter Schools, the three reasons most often mentioned for starting a charter school are to:

- realize an educational vision
- gain autonomy
- serve a special population

Perceived benefits

Families and teachers choose charter schools for a variety of reasons. Charter schools are considered schools of choice that give families more options for their children's public education. Charters claim high academic standards, small class size, and innovative approaches to teaching and learning. On average, charter schools serve about 300 students.

Lack of funding for facilities

Charter schools typically do not receive funding from their school districts to purchase, lease, or improve facilities. Securing financing for the facility can be problematic for a charter school because some schools lack tangible assets and an operating history that lenders use when evaluating a mortgage loan application.

The U.S. Department of Education's Credit Enhancement for Charter School Facilities Program provides grants to absorb some of the risk of making loans to charter schools. The State Charter School Facilities Incentive Grant program provides competitive grants to help states establish and enhance or administer "per-pupil facilities aid" for charter schools. Arizona, California, Colorado, the District of Columbia, Florida, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Utah have a per-pupil facilities law in place, and Indiana and Hawaii have statutory language for a per-pupil facilities program.

Do charter schools have to meet the same accountability standards as traditional schools?

State laws often grant charter schools some freedom from meeting certain state or local education regulations or policies. However, charter schools must follow all federal laws that apply to any other public school. Currently, this includes ensuring that charter school data are included when reporting to the federal government every year on student progress. Data are broken out by race, ethnicity, gender, grade, and disability status, as required by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001.

Public charter school data about students with disabilities are also included in the IDEA data reports submitted by State Education Agencies (SEAs) each year to the Office of Special Education Programs at the U.S. Department of Education. These data include counts of children, educational environments, reasons for exiting special education, assessment participation and performance, personnel, dispute resolution, and discipline.

Are charter schools required to provide services to students with disabilities?

Yes. The responsibility to make a free appropriate public education (FAPE) available to all students with disabilities applies to ALL public schools under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Charter schools are public schools; therefore, they bear the same responsibility.

Who is actually responsible for ensuring that special education services are available to students with disabilities in a charter school? The answer depends on how the charter school is legally identified in the state.

If a charter school is considered to be an independent Local Education Agency (LEA) under its state's law, that charter school bears the exact same legal requirements for providing special education services as any other LEA (or district).

If a charter school is considered part of an existing LEA, the LEA (or district) retains most or all of the responsibility for special education in the charter school. The charter school is considered a school within that LEA and is responsible for following LEA policy.

How are charter schools funded?

Much like traditional public schools, charter schools are primarily funded by a combination of federal, state and sometimes local funding, based on the number of students they enroll or on total enrollment (census formula). The flow of funding to charter schools for special education varies based mainly on the LEA status of the charter school as follows:

- If the charter school is an LEA, federal and state funding for students with disabilities enrolled in that school flow from the state to the school.
- If the charter school is a school within a traditional LEA, the flow of funding varies greatly by state and may depend on the specific arrangement between the charter school and the district. The district retains responsibility for special education for the charter school's students, but the way special education is provided can vary from all services being delivered by LEA staff in the charter school, to all services being arranged by the charter schools with the charter school being reimbursed by the LEA. In some states there are negotiated arrangements that result in a variety of practices related to funding of special education services while in other states, funding procedures are the same for all charter schools.

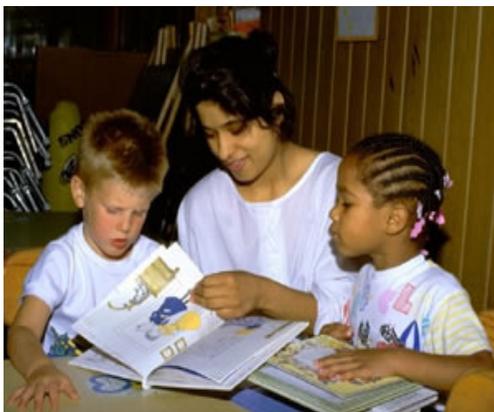
Which states have charter schools?

It might be easier to ask which states do not authorize charter schools as an option for public education in the state (yet)! Forty-one states and the District of Columbia have laws authorizing and governing charter schools. Only Alabama, American Samoa, Guam, Kentucky, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, South Dakota, Vermont, Washington, and West Virginia do not have charter schools (as of August, 2011).

Are charter schools required to allow students with IEPs to enroll?

According to IDEA, yes. As was said above, the responsibility to make FAPE available to all students with disabilities applies to ALL public schools under federal law. Charter schools are public schools; therefore, they bear the same responsibility.

However, if more students apply to the school than the charter can serve, the charter may use a random selection system to determine student enrollment. In this scenario, many charter schools use a lottery system.



Are certification requirements for teachers the same for charter schools as for other public schools?

Guidance from the U.S. Department of Education asserts that ALL students should be taught by a highly qualified teacher. However, state charter laws control local certification requirements. In some states, the answer is a simple yes or no, while others have more complicated rules. For example, New Jersey requires that all charter school teachers be certified, while Georgia does not. New York's policies are more complicated; in New York, a charter school may employ:

- uncertified teachers with at least three years of elementary, middle, or secondary classroom teaching experience;
- tenured or tenure-track college faculty;
- individuals with two years of satisfactory experience through the Teach for America program; and
- individuals with exceptional business, professional, artistic, athletic, or military experience.

New York's guidelines, however, limit how many noncertified teachers with the above qualifications may be hired. The total number may not be more than 30% of the teaching staff of the charter school, or five teachers, whichever is less.

Wondering what your state's certification requirements are for teachers in charter schools? Visit the Education Commission of the States. You'll find a helpful chart of what different states require.

Are charter schools responsible for providing transportation?

In some states, yes, charter schools are responsible for providing students with transportation to and from school. In other states, the district in which the school resides may be responsible for providing transportation.

To find out whether charter schools in your state are required to provide students with transportation, see the section just below called "What's My School's Charter School Policy?" Find your state, click on the link, and you'll go to your state's charter school law, which will include the specifics of your state's transportation policies for charter schools.

Bottom line

A charter school is a public school. There are state-specific rules around who can start a charter, who oversees the charter, and how the funding flows, and they are responsible for serving students with disabilities in keeping with state law and the charter school's status as an LEA or a school of an LEA. If you have issues or concerns, get to know your state's charter school law.

For more information on charter schools or special education please contact the Families Helping Families Region 7 Education Specialist Monica Sullivan at (318)226-4541/1-877-226-4541 or email her at msullivan@fhfregion7.com.

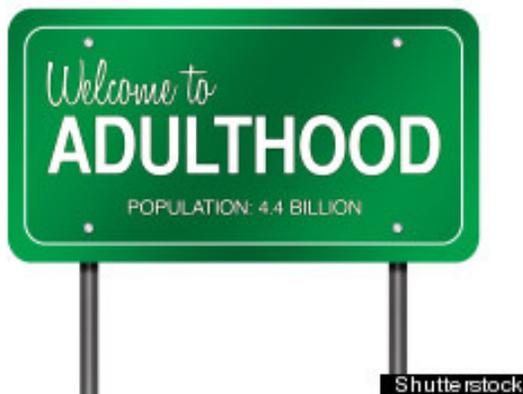
High School to Adulthood Special-Education Transitions

By Terri Mauro, About.com Guide

Starting at age 16, your child's IEP should include plans for the transition from high school to college or work. Your child will be asked what he hopes to do with his future, and it will be a good idea for you to have had some conversations about that ahead of time. If your child isn't able to think that far or make those plans, start doing some research yourself about what programs might be appropriate. If your high school has a transition coordinator, that individual can be a big help in hooking you up with information and services.

Whether your child will leave high school with a diploma or just a certificate of completion may depend on the laws in your state at the time. With the rise of standardized-test requirements for high-school graduation, some hard-working special-education students may find themselves unable to do what's needed to get that all-important piece of paper. It may be possible to get an exemption from the test, and that's something you'll want to consult with your special-education caseworker about.

U.S. special-education law specifies that your child is entitled to a Free and Appropriate Public Education through the school year in which he or she turns 21, or until graduation. (Summer birthdays are counted with the previous school year.)



So your young person may well stay in high school while age peers graduate and move on. She may get a certificate at the age-appropriate graduation time and then remain for classes to reinforce life or work skills. Discuss these issues with your caseworker and transition coordinator, too.

While your child has the right to stay in high school until that legal age, it may not always be in his or her best interests. That's a decision that should be made based on your child's *individual* needs, not on what programs the school feels like providing or the space the school wants to save. Kids with developmental delays may benefit from extra time in the familiar and sheltered environment of high school, and those extra years may help with some academic catch-up. On the other hand, as colleges become more friendly to students with disabilities and work programs become more community-based, there may be real benefits to branching out.

If your child will need significant services after graduation, you'll need to be sure to be registered with the agencies in your state that provide those well before graduation time. Again, your high-school transition coordinator should be able to provide that information, or you can contact a parent center near you such as Families Helping Families Region 7 for some advice on where to apply.

Though the transition out of school can be a scary one, look on the bright side: No more IEP meetings!

For more information on transition, please contact Families Helping Families Region 7 Transition Facilitator Brenda Watkins at (318)226-4541/1-877-226-4541 or email her at bwatkins@fhfregion7.com.

Family Information Guide to Assistive Technology

The Possibilities of Assistive Technology

More than ever before, technology makes it possible for children with disabilities to lead independent and fulfilling lives.

For example, a young girl who is unable to speak can communicate with family and friends using a portable electronic device that “speaks” for her; a boy with a physical disability can use his electric wheelchair to participate in sports; and a young adult with a learning disability can compose a school report with the help of a computer.



Parents may have seen or heard about this type of technology and wondered how it might help their children. This equipment is frequently called “assistive technology.” Assistive technology (AT) helps a person with a disability do something s/he otherwise cannot to do. Assistive technology can be anything from a simple device, such as a magnifying glass, to a complex device, such as a computerized communication system.

The term “assistive technology” comes from several laws that address the needs of people with disabilities. Assistive technology includes both the *devices* and the *services* needed to use the devices effectively.

AT services might include assessing a child’s need for AT and the training the child and his teacher, aide, and family to use the AT.

How can assistive technology help my child?

The potential of technology to help children with disabilities is tremendous. Assistive technology can help children be more self-sufficient at home and in school, communicate with friends and family, get out into the community, and as they grow older, find employment. The story on page 4 illustrates how assistive technology can play a key role in the life of a child with a disability.

How do I determine what type of AT me child needs?

The process of choosing assistive technology for your child usually starts with an evaluation of your child's AT needs. The evaluation can be conducted by the school, an independent agency, or an individual consultant. Because the scope of assistive technology is so large, the evaluation will most likely have a focus. For example, an AT evaluation conducted by the school is directly related to achieving educational goals and outcomes.

Every AT evaluation should address what the child is having difficulty doing. For example, if a child is having difficulty with mobility, the evaluation would focus on technology to assist with that, such as a wheelchair or scooter.

During the evaluation it is important to talk about your child's strengths in addition to his challenges. For example: "What does he do well?" "What does he enjoy doing?" This type of input will provide clues as to what type of technology might work, and how well your child will respond to it.

It is also important to consider the different environments in which your child interacts with others – at home, school, and in the community. Think about how your child's needs for assistive technology might be different on the playground, the classroom, at a friend's house, or at a public place, such as a library or mall.



An AT evaluation will result in a recommendation for specific devices and services, including any modifications to the child's environments. Long-term success with AT involves an ongoing look at need, equipment trial and evaluation followed by maintenance and growing expertise by the user, family, and professionals. It is important to remember that AT needs usually change with time, circumstances, and goals.

Learning about assistive technology

Parents can help to identify potential AT for their children if they learn more about the choices that are available. Speech-language therapists, occupational therapists and school professionals are often a good starting point. You may not be aware, however, of the many other organizations that provide AT information and training, such as parent training and information centers (PTIs), community technology centers, state assistive technology programs, and rehabilitation centers. The Family Center on Technology and Disability (FCTD) is funded by the U.S. Department of Education to make available a wide range of AT resources to people and organizations that work with families. Families are always welcome to visit the FCTD's website at www.fctd.info to find organizations to work with and to learn more about assistive technology. See the Resource Section of this guide for more information about locating such centers and programs.

If possible, you should visit an assistive technology center with your child to see and try out various devices and equipment. Some AT centers offer a lending device program that enables families to borrow devices for a trial period. Parents can seek out AT workshops, trainings, and conferences and there are many opportunities to learn about AT on the Internet as well.

To learn more about the Assistive Technology centers in Region 7 please contact Families Helping Families Region 7 at (318) 226-4541/877-226-4541.

This article was reprinted from <http://www.fctd.info/resources/fig/Sec1.htm>.



End of the Year Update from the La Family to Family Health Information Center

By Karen Scallan
Program Director, La F2FHIC

Greetings from the La Family to Family Health Information Center, your resource for health, health care financing, Medicaid and insurance questions for families of children and youth with special health care needs and disabilities (CYSHCN), ages 0-26.

Bayou Health and Waiver Recipients

To date, Medicaid Waiver Recipients are NOT included in the Bayou Health, Managed Care program. This could change sometime in the future; however, we have no indication if or when it could change from the State. For now, Waiver recipients will remain on "Legacy" Medicaid.

Prescription Limits through Legacy Medicaid

There is a 4 prescription limit through Legacy Medicaid, HOWEVER, that limit can be overridden by the pharmacy if the doctor correctly indicates for an override on the prescription. If you are denied a prescription, you and/or your pharmacist should call the physician to discuss if an override is appropriate.

Pharmacy Benefits and Bayou Health

Three of the 5 Bayou Health Plans began providing pharmacy benefits. Louisiana Healthcare Connections, LaCare and Amerigroup plan members began getting their prescriptions through their plans on November 1st. If you have Medicaid through Community Health Solutions or United Health Care you will still receive their prescriptions through "Legacy" Medicaid. For more info on how these changes will affect your prescription drug coverage, visit <http://new.dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/page/1328/n/362>.

Medicaid Managed Care and Children with Special Health Care Needs

Do you have a child with complex medical needs and need to choose a Bayou Health Plan? You may want to check out the DHH Informational Bulletins which give more information critical to families of CYSHCN than the brochures being sent out. These bulletins explain the differences in plans on things like referral and pre-authorization policies, and EPSDT. You can find out more by visiting: <http://new.dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/page/1198/n/311>.

How Will Changes to the DSM-5 Effect Diagnosis of CYSHCN?

The new Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders is almost complete and new criteria change the way doctors diagnose things like Autism, Asperger's and other disorders. The following article in Forbes magazine discusses some of the changes [http://www.forbes.com/sites/alicegwalton/2012/12/03/what-effect-will-changes-to-the-dsm-5-have-on-people-with-and-without-mental-health-issues/DSM V](http://www.forbes.com/sites/alicegwalton/2012/12/03/what-effect-will-changes-to-the-dsm-5-have-on-people-with-and-without-mental-health-issues/DSM-V). For more information on the DSM-5 which will be issued in May 2013, visit the American Psychiatric Association at <http://www.dsm5.org/Pages/Default.aspx>.

Social Security Administration Announces 200 New Diagnoses which Qualify for Fast Track Disability Approval

SSA allows for certain disability diagnoses to be "fast track" diagnoses for disability benefits approval. They are called "Compassionate Allowance Conditions." By definition, these conditions are so severe that SSA does not need to fully develop the applicant's work history to make a decision. For more information on the New Compassionate Allowances added, please visit www.socialsecurity.gov/compassionateallowances.

For more info on any of the above topics or other assistance, contact the Louisiana Family to Family Health Information Center at 1-800-331-5570.

What's the Difference Between Medicare and Medicaid?

By: Marlo Sollitto

Many caregivers are confused about the difference between Medicare and Medicaid. Here's a brief explanation:

Medicare is a federal health insurance program while Medicaid is a federal-state medical assistance program.

What is Medicare?

Medicare is an insurance program that provides medical care to people over 65. Seniors' medical bills are paid from funds which those covered have paid into. People of 65 are covered, regardless of their income...but it is not free. Patients pay part of the costs through deductibles for hospital stays and they are required to pay monthly premiums health care services. Because Medicare is run by the federal government, its coverage, rules and regulations are basically the same everywhere in the United States. The program is run by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

There are several parts to Medicare. Part A covers hospital bills, Part B covers medical insurance, Part C is health maintenance organization HMO/PPO, and Part D covers prescriptions. Some of these are options that require the Medicare recipient to pay additional premiums.



What is Medicaid?

Medicaid is a financial assistance program for low-income people. Medicaid is based on need and social welfare. Eligibility is based on a person's income. Medical bills are paid from federal, state and local tax funds. It serves low-income people of every age. Patients sometimes don't pay any costs for covered medical expenses, but in other instances, a co-pay is required.

The only way to find out is to contact your state Medicaid office. Because Medicaid is jointly run by states and the federal government, rules and eligibility requirements vary widely depending on what state you live in.

If a person has limited income or financial resources, Medicaid covers a broader spectrum of services than Medicare does. In addition to people over age 65, it usually covers people with disabilities, children, pregnant women, and parents of eligible children. Though poverty is used to determine eligibility, a person must fall into one of the coverage groups in addition to being determined eligible due to being in poverty. Medicaid benefits are paid directly to the provider of services. In addition to covering individuals who meet financial requirements, in some states Medicaid covers individuals who cannot otherwise afford insurance.

Having both Medicare and Medicaid

Some people have both Medicare and Medicaid. Medicaid may cover services that Medicare can't, like extended long-term care. It may also pay for Medicare's out-of-pocket costs. Certain programs exist that people with Medicare may be eligible for.

For more information, visit www.cms.gov.

The article was reprinted from <http://www.agingcare.com>.

Decisions! Decisions! Decisions!



When making decisions about choosing a provider you need to be resourceful, involved, supportive, and effective. Making a decision is easier when you approach it step- by- step. Knowing your options and making informed choices about services will make the decision process go more smoothly. Some things to consider when choosing a provider:

1. **General Agency Information**-Ask what is the turnover rate with your direct-support staff?
2. **Staff Education and Training**-Ask what training do your employees attend?
3. **Quality of Programs**-Ask do you provide health care supplies, gloves, back-support belts, etc?
4. **Involvement in Decision Making**-Ask do I or my family get to evaluate the direct- support staff?
5. **Quality Review and Improvement Practices**-Ask how do you monitor and supervise your staff?
6. **Responses to Emergencies**-Ask how is the 24-hour emergency assistance provided?
7. **Grievance and Complaint Policy**-Ask how would you describe your complaint process?
8. **Agency Policies and Practices**-Ask do you have a “say-so” over works to provide support?

Make a list of your wants and needs, these should be very simple, clear instructions on how you expect to be supported and what your expectations are of your provider agency and direct support staff. It is very important that you are honest with yourself in identifying support needs. The interview should take place at a time and place that is convenient for you and all questions should be answered. Maybe, bring a friend along or someone that you trust to the interview!

For more information or a brochure with more interview tips on “How to Choose a Provider” contact Mary Russell at Families Helping Families Region 7 (318) 226-4541/1-877-226-4541 or email her at mrussell@fhfregion7.com.



Planning Your Child's Transition to Preschool: A Step-by-Step Guide for Families

By: Lynette K. Chandler, Susan A. Fowler, Sarah Hadden, and
Lisa Stahurski

As parents, you have much to offer and much to gain from actively participating in your child's transition. Involved families can learn about the transition process, share valuable information about the child and family, and work with the transition team to make decisions. For many families, participation helps reduce some of the stress that may be associated with transition and makes some of the changes that are required by transition more manageable.

The level and type of participation in the transition process will vary across families, based on each family's interests, resources, and ability to be involved. There is no "ideal" level of participation that fits all families. Your family may be involved in transition in many ways and for varying amounts of time. At the very least, you may learn about the transition process and provide consent for various transition-related activities. Other roles may include:

- sharing information about your child and family,
- asking questions, receiving information, and making decisions about transition goals for your child and family,
- identifying services based on your child's needs, and
- identifying and visiting preschool programs.

For more information or to talk about your child's transition call Monica Stampley, EarlySteps COS, at Families Helping Families Region 7 at (318)226-4541 or 1-877-226-4541 or email her at monica.stampley@la.

From your Region 7 LaCAN Leader



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.

We are rapidly approaching the next legislative session. There will be plenty of opportunities for LaCAN members to advocate during this time. Members can participate in one or more of the following activities: a regional roundtable with local legislators on January 10th, 2013, individual legislative visits, a state-wide rally in Baton Rouge in the Spring, key committee meetings, and yellow shirt days.

When you advocate you make a difference. Does your child receive Flexible Family Funds (formerly cash subsidy)? Have you been on the NOW waiting list for a long time and need services NOW? Are you an individual or family receiving Individual and Family Support (IFS) funds still waiting for waiver services? Do IFS services enable you to get by while you wait for a waiver? Would the loss of IFS to budget cuts be devastating? Your services may be in jeopardy. LaCAN is looking for families to contact their legislator and/or give public testimony before a legislative committee meeting. Always visit our website to read the latest issues www.lacanadvocates.org

If you are interested in joining LaCAN or are already a member and would like to know more about getting involved in these activities, call Duane Ebarb at (318) 688-4830 or email me at dke1949@bellsouth.net.



LaTEACH
Louisiana Together Educating ALL Children

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 www.lateach.org.

People First of Louisiana



People First of Louisiana is a self-advocacy group ran by people with disabilities, for people 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.

What Is HWF?

Hanging with Friends aka HWF is Families Helping Families Region 7 support group for self-advocates over the age of 18 or out of the school system. Hanging with Friends was birthed out of the idea that all people should have friends as well as being active and included in their community. We get together one a month to have fun, meet new people, and participant in community activities. Some activities include bowling night, movie night, sweetheart dance, community festivals, and holiday celebration plus much more. As a group we are serious about self-advocacy issues, but we also want to make you laugh and feel good about life.

Join us to celebrate the strengths of self-advocates. Most of all, let's work together to help people live the life they want with the support they need. All HWF activities can be found on our website at www.fhfrregion7.com or you can contact Brenda Watkins or Mary Russell at 318-226-4541/877-226-4541 for additional information.

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.

A Note from the Director

Families Helping Families Region 7 in collaboration with SPAR Therapeutic and Recreation would like to say "Thank You" to all of those who attended our Christmas Dinner and Dance on December 14, 2012. A special "Thanks" goes out to the following listed below for their donations and time. Because of their kind hearts and giving spirit our Christmas Dinner and Dance was once again a SUCCESS and we were able to provide over 180 participants with gifts, food, and door prizes.

Amerigroup
A Quiet Place in the Woods
Raising Canes – Mansfield Road
S&S Transport
Nancy Howard
April Hearron
Harris Catering
Leon Wheeler and Associates
Margaret Ann Springer
Benne Morris-Irwin State Farm Insurance Company
Adrienne Rogers

Changing Behavior Services, LLC.
Custom Shots Photography
Hilburn Printing
Libbey Glass Outlet
Jewel and Willis Davis
DJ Drew
Families Helping Families Region 7 Staff
Families Helping Families Region 7 Board
Ivan Smith Furniture – Jewella Ave
MJ's Soul Food Café
National Total Care Services, LLC.



"It's Who We Are...It's What We Do!"



For more information about Families Helping Families Region 7 and a listing of upcoming events, workshops, conferences, and support groups please visit our website at www.fhfregion7.com.

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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 Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council Louisiana State Department of Education, Office of Citizens with Development Disabilities, and Office of Public Health