

QUARTERLY INFORMER

October, November, and December 2023 Edition

Mayor's Commission on Disability Conference

10.4.23



**Who we Are ...
What we Do!**

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- Cynthia Brown**
Bookkeeper
- Wallace Johnson**
Education Support Specialist
- Myllinda Elliott**
Program Manager,
LaCAN Leader &
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- Beryl Cook**
Education Support Specialist
- Davelyn Patrick**
Community Resource Specialist
- China Guillory**
Early Steps COS
- Carla Chenier**
ImCA DD Facilitator
- Nicole Jones**
I&R/Clerical Assistant

Fore for Families Golf Tournament - 10.6.23



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Like our Facebook page!!
You will receive event information and other bulletins about what is going on in the SWLA region!
www.facebook.com/fhfswla/

FHF SWLA Mission:
Our mission is to enable and empower individuals with disabilities and their families by providing information, referral, education, training, peer support and advocacy skills.

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Families Helping Families
Spirit Night

DATE & TIME:

Wednesday, October 18th 3:00pm-9:00pm

LOCATION:

4110 Ryan Street
Lake Charles, LA 70605



raisingcanes.com

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Families Helping Families
office will be closed
November 23-24, 2023
due to Thanksgivings



*Happy
Thanksgiving*



Mental Health Challenges of LGBTQ+ Kids

A look at risk factors and protective factors

Writer: Juliann Garey

Submitted by: Beryl Cook

If you have a child, whose LGBTQ+ you may worry about whether they're getting the support they need to be safe and healthy. You may be aware that LGBTQ+ kids are at higher risk than other kids for developing mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. They also have higher rates of contemplating, attempting, and dying by suicide.

That's why it's important to understand what factors make an LGBTQ+ young person more or less likely to develop a mental health problem, including considering or attempting suicide.

To read the full article

<https://childmind.org/article/mental-health-challenges-of-lgbtq-kids/>

*FHF office will be closed
December 18, 2023 -
January 2, 2024
due to Christmas Break*



FHF office will be closed
November 10, 2023
due to



www.fhfsvla.org

 info@fhfsvla.org

2023 Governor's Outstanding Leadership in Disabilities (GOLD) Awards & Inclusive Art Contest

The Governor's Office of Disability Affairs is proud to continue its rich tradition of hosting both the [Governor's Outstanding Leadership in Disabilities \(GOLD\) Awards](#) and the [Inclusive Art Contest](#).

The [GOLD Awards](#) recognizes extraordinary people and organizations who have contributed their time and talents to benefit the lives of people with disabilities in Louisiana. The award categories are:



Distinguished Merit Award
Patsy Barrett Memorial Award
Ken Vince Memorial Award
April Dunn Youth of the Year
Educator of the Year
Family of the Year
Volunteer of the Year
Employer of the Year
Service Provider of the Year
Direct Support Professional of the Year
Veteran of the Year
Service Animal of the Year
Elected Official of the Year
Public Servant of the Year



The nomination form for the 2023 GOLD Awards can be found at [2023 GOLD Awards Nomination](#).

The [inclusive art contest](#) enables participants to increase awareness of the importance of inclusion in today's society through artistic expression. Entries should illustrate or describe ideas related to this year's theme:

"Nothing About Us Without Us"

The Inclusive Art Contest is open to any resident of Louisiana, with and without disabilities of any age. A medal and special recognition from Governor John Bel Edwards will be presented to the winners.

The deadline for submissions for both the 2023 GOLD Awards and Inclusive Art Contest is October 31st!

[Unlocking the Potential:
Understanding Dyslexia & Meeting
Individual Needs Webinar](#)

Link to Register:

<https://tinyurl.com/Dyslexia1024>

For More Information
Contact

Families Helping Families of SWLA

337-436-2570 or 1-800-894-6558

info@fhfswla.org

Tuesday, October 24 at 10AM



SCAN ME



When a Loved One Dies: How to Help Your Child

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/death.html>

When a loved one dies, children feel and show their grief in different ways. How kids cope with the loss depends on things like their age, how close they felt to the person who died, and the support they receive.

Here are some things parents can do to help a child who has lost a loved one:

Use simple words to talk about death. Be calm and caring when you tell your child that someone has died. Use words that are clear and direct. "I have some sad news to tell you. Grandma died today." Pause to give your child a moment to take in your words.

Listen and comfort. Every child reacts in their own way when they learn that a loved one has died. Some kids cry. Some ask questions. Others seem not to react at all. That's OK. Stay with your child to offer hugs or comfort. Answer your child's questions. Or just be together for a few minutes. It's OK if your child sees your sadness or tears.

Put feelings into words. Ask kids to say what they're thinking and feeling. Label some of your own feelings. This makes it easier for kids to share theirs. Say things like, "I know you're feeling very sad. I'm sad, too. We both loved Grandma so much, and she loved us too."

Tell your child what to expect. If the death of a loved one means changes in your child's life or routine, explain what will happen. This helps your child feel prepared. For example, "Aunt Sara will pick you up from school like Grandma used to." Or, "I need to stay with Grandpa for a few days. That means you and Dad will be home taking care of each other. But I'll talk to you every day, and I'll be back on Sunday."

Explain events that will happen. Allow children to join in rituals like viewings, funerals, or memorial services. Tell them ahead of time what will happen. For example, "Lots of people who loved Grandma will be there. We will sing, pray, and talk about Grandma's life. People might cry and hug. They might say to us, 'I'm sorry for your loss.' We can say, 'Thank you,' or, 'Thanks for coming.' You can stay near me and hold my hand if you want."

You might need to explain burial or cremation. For example, "After the funeral, there is a burial at a cemetery. The person's body is in a casket (or coffin) that gets buried in the ground with a special ceremony. This can feel like a sad goodbye, and people might cry." Share your family's beliefs about what happens to a person's soul or spirit after death.

Explain what will happen after the service, too. For example, "We all will go eat food together. People will laugh, talk, and hug some more. Talking about happy times with Grandma and being together helps people start to feel better."

Give your child a role. Having a small, active role lets kids feel part of things and helps them cope. You might invite your child to read a poem, pick a song to be played, gather some photos to display, or make something. Let kids decide if they want to take part, and how.

Help your child remember the person. In the days and weeks ahead, encourage your child to draw pictures or write down stories of their loved one. Don't avoid talking about the person who died. Sharing happy memories helps heal grief.

Give comfort and reassure your child. Notice if your child seems sad, worried, or upset in other ways. Ask about feelings and listen. Let your child know that it takes time to feel better after a loved one dies. Some kids may have trouble sleeping or have fears or worries. Let kids know these things will get better. Give them extra time and care. Support groups and counseling can help kids who need more support.

Help your child feel better. Provide the comfort your child needs but don't dwell on sad feelings. After a few minutes of talking and listening, shift to an activity or topic that helps your child feel a little better. Play, make art, cook, or go somewhere together.

Give your child time to heal from the loss. Grief is a process that happens over time. Be sure to talk often and listen to see how your child is feeling and doing. Healing doesn't mean forgetting about your loved one. It means remembering the person with love. Loving memories stir good feelings that support us as we go on to enjoy life.

Get more help if needed. If a loved one's death was sudden, deeply stressful, or violent, a child may need therapy to help them heal. If your child's distress lasts for more than a few weeks, or if you think your family needs more help, talk with your child's doctor. They can help you find the right therapist to work with.

Early Childhood

[Early childhood education funds restored by Gov. Edwards](#) (The West Side Journal)

Edwards's decision funneled \$7.5 million back into the program, which covers education for children 0-3. The governor's move came in response to a decision by Louisiana Republican House leadership to cut funds from the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP).



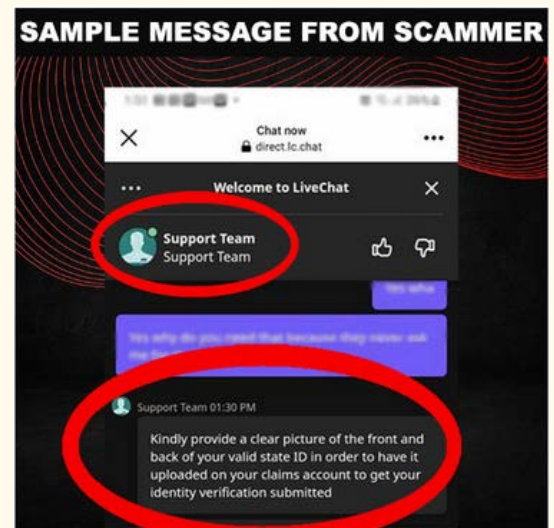
Scammers Target DCFS Clients through Social Media Messaging

A scammer posing as a DCFS employee recently targeted clients through Facebook Messenger using LiveChat. The imposter, claiming to be from the "Support Team" falsely promises that benefits payments will be made to the individual's account. The LiveChat, operated by an unknown source, specifically asked our clients to provide personal information, including their phone number and a picture of their driver's license or identification cards. Please be cautious of any such claims and remember that direct communication regarding benefits and assistance will occur through official DCFS channels only.

Examples of the most recent incident are provided below to help you recognize the scammer in the event they try to target you.

We want to emphasize that DCFS would never request sensitive, personal information or identification documents through a social media platform like Facebook or Instagram.

To report scam incidents, email DCFS.fraud@la.gov



Navigating a New Diagnosis: 5 Things to Know, 5 Things to Avoid, & 5 Ways to Grow



By Anitra Rowe Schulte w/The Nora Project

<https://thenoraproject.ngo/nora-notes-blog/navigating-a-new-diagnosis>

Learning that your child has been diagnosed with a disability is a moment that many parents recollect with strong emotions. This post is designed to support parents who have had this experience and provide understanding and focus for parents and children as they journey through life together. We hope that parents, family members, caregivers, and professionals will benefit from this information and share it with others.

5 Things to Know

1. It's going to be okay. You may not have expected this, but there is no reason to be afraid. The world is full of all kinds of people, and disability is simply another form of human diversity. Your child's disability is part of who they are, and they deserve to be loved and accepted exactly as they show up in the world.
2. You and your child are not alone. Although we are led to believe that disability is tragic and rare, it is neither. Disability is seldom reflected in mainstream news, art and media, but about one billion people in the world (15 percent) have a disability. That makes disability the largest minority group in the U.S. and many other countries, as well. It's also the only minority group that anyone can become a part of, at any moment.
3. Being a parent is hard, no matter what. And being a parent of a disabled child will be hard, too. There will be challenging moments, and at times they will be different from the challenges of parents of nondisabled children. Seek out supportive people and the resources you need. These are the tools that will help in tough times.
4. You will love your child. So much. You will worry about your child's health and wellbeing, but that will not be the basis of your bond. You will snuggle and cradle and rock. You will sing songs and play games and go to amazing places. With every minute and passing hour, your love will grow and grow.
5. Your child will bring you joy. You will laugh together and be so proud of who they are, and you will share those proud moments with family and friends. Sometimes, you will worry. And sometimes, things will be scary. But those moments will not define you or your child, their life, or your relationship.

5 Things to Avoid

1. Avoid euphemisms for disability, such as "special needs" and "differently abled." There is nothing special about needing support. We all need tools to thrive. When talking about disability, say the word. Civil rights and protections are connected to disability. It is important, powerful, and a valid identity and culture.
2. 3. Avoid characterizing yourself as a "Disability parent," an "Autism mom" or "Down syndrome dad." As a parent, you will support your child in Avoid sharing medical information on social media. As parents, our children's privacy is our responsibility to protect. Sharing medical challenges privately with close family and friends, rather than publicly, will fulfill your need for support and will protect your child's personal information, too. If your child can't or does not provide consent, information should be kept private.

See More

4. Avoid posting photographs of medical hardship online. When considering sharing photos of your child receiving treatments, or in a state of crisis or distress, ask yourself: If someone posted this photo of me, would I approve? Medical moments are trying for children and their parents, but empathy and sympathy for a parent should never come at the expense of a child's dignity.

5. Avoid conveying disability as a tragedy. A child's diagnosis is part of who they are, and the differences that come with it can be celebrated. Your child may experience challenges due to an impairment or lack of universal access. But difficult experiences should not be used to describe or define anyone. Imagine how your child might feel if they knew that you portrayed caring for them as a burden or an overwhelming hardship.

5 Ways to Grow

1. Embrace disability. It is a valid way of being and a culture with a rich, ongoing history – of challenging the status quo, winning rights and protections, and celebrating differences. Your child is now part of a community committed to ensuring that all are included and have the opportunity to succeed. That's something to celebrate! Embracing your child's disability will also play a role in their self-acceptance and identity pride.

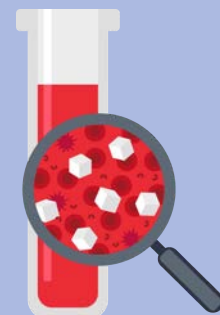
2. Presume competence in everyone, especially your child. There may be times that you wonder if your child understands you or comprehends what is going on in their environment. Believe that they do. Assuming otherwise is incredibly damaging to their sense of identity and self-worth. Always believe in your child. Set high expectations.

3. Advocate for your child and give them space to advocate for themselves. There will be barriers to meeting your child's needs, and they will come in different forms – in insurance denials and medical treatment plans, in therapy recommendations and educational decisions. Stand firmly in your child's corner and demand what is deserved, and make sure that your child has the opportunity to advocate for themselves - in doctor's appointments, school meetings... everywhere.

4. Amplify disabled voices. People with power and big platforms occupy so much space in the proverbial town square. Make sure the opinions of disabled people are centered. Seek out the perspectives of disabled folx in books, articles, movies and art, and in the social media accounts you follow. Then share them with others.

5. Keep learning. This post is merely a starting point in your journey of disability awareness. Keep reading. Keep talking. Keep attending panels, webinars and meetings. Learn from disabled folx. Knowledge of disability, and disability rights and advocacy, will help your child reach their goals and their dreams - dreams that you can share and work toward together.

If the ideas expressed in this post are challenging or bring forth feelings of regret due to past actions, remember that we are always learning. At The Nora Project, we believe that when we know better, we do better. Growing in our understanding and awareness of disability is a journey, and we are here to support you.



International Day of Persons with Disability

December 3

Disability inclusion is an essential condition to upholding human rights, sustainable development, and peace and security. It is also central to the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no one behind. The commitment to realizing the rights of persons with disabilities is not only a matter of justice; it is an investment in a common future.



Apply for Free and Healthy Lunches

USDA's school meal programs are important to millions of children every school day. These meals give children the healthy food they need to learn, grow, and thrive. For the 2023-2024 school year, many families will need to fill out an application to find out if they can get free or reduced-price meals.



HOW TO APPLY - Contact your local school at any time to see if your children are eligible.

Your child is eligible for **FREE SCHOOLS MEALS** if:

- Your annual income is \$39,000 or less with a household of four.
- Your household receives benefits like EBT and cash assistance.
- Your child is in foster care, is a child of migrant workers, or is experiencing homelessness.
- Your child participates in the Head Start program.

Your child is eligible for **REDUCED PRICE MEALS** if:

- Your annual income is \$55,550 or less with a household of four.



MORE

You want to know who's amazing, lovely, smart, and has a beautiful smile?
Read the first word again.

Make It Safe for Employees to Disclose Their Disabilities

by Laurie Henneborn

<https://hbr.org/2021/06/make-it-safe-for-employees-to-disclose-their-disabilities>

I'll start with the good news: Many organizations are employing a greater number of persons with disabilities than ever before. Many have committed to a deeper understanding of what inclusion means for persons with disabilities, subgroups therein (such as persons with neurological disorders), and other communities (race, gender, LGBTQ, and so on) and have been taking steps to create supportive business climates for all. Many are doing so because they're aware that there is a proven business case for hiring persons with disabilities. Many believe they've made significant progress: In Accenture's most recent global survey on the topic, 67% of the nearly 1,750 business executive respondents said they believe their companies support employees with disabilities, including having the right technologies in place to do so and the right environment.

Now here's the bad news: Despite this clear progress, our survey also found that just 20% of the 5,870 employees in the survey who had a disability agreed that their workplace culture is fully committed to helping them thrive and succeed. Meanwhile, 76% of employees with disabilities in the survey report not fully disclosing their disabilities at work. And 80% of C-suite executives and their direct reports who have disabilities are also not disclosing them.

What are the best steps a business can take to create a culture in which employees with disabilities feel safe to disclose? The answers emerged from our survey, in which we also examined more than 200 workplace culture factors to see which impact employee engagement most. Eight stood out in particular for employees with disabilities. Interestingly, five of these eight also correlate significantly with a climate in which persons with disabilities feel safe about disclosing their condition. These certainly resonated strongly with me. They are:

1. Bold Role Models

When employees with disabilities have role models at the leadership level who have disclosed their own disabilities, they are 15% more likely to have higher career aspirations than their peers in other organizations. And with this factor in place, employees are 26% more likely to be open about their disability. Working alongside executives willing to share their lived experiences with areas such as disability, gender identity, race certainly has impacted my own willingness to disclose. And since I went public with my disability, a growing number of people at my company and beyond — many of them from the communities I mentioned — have told me that my disclosure has helped them feel more included, more willing to ask for what they need at work to thrive, and more confident in their own futures. I'm grateful that's the case.

Knowing now how my experience has helped others, I often wish that I had opened up sooner.

2. Enterprise-Wide Training on Inclusive Practices

In organizations that have accessible training designed to advance awareness of inclusion and diversity topics and to help employees with disabilities to thrive and advance in their careers, employees are 35% more likely to disclose their disabilities than in other organizations.

India's Lemon Tree Hotels provides an example. The chain employs approximately 550 persons with a range of physical, intellectual/developmental, and special learning disabilities — 10% to 12% of its workforce. New recruits must take an introductory sign language course so they can communicate with non-hearing colleagues. Employees also undergo training on how to work with colleagues with disabilities; for example, they are taught to avoid making too many last-minute changes to schedules, since advance planning is often key to an employee with a disability's successful navigation of daily life and work. The results of this work have included tangible productivity gains among persons with disabilities, and a company-wide boost in morale.



See More 

3. The Space to Be Creative

Inclusion and the ability to bring your whole self to work (and not adopt a “work persona” that conceals your true identity) powers collaboration and innovation. Our survey further shows that leading organizations providing freedom to innovate are also seeing 26% higher career aspirations among their employees. Incredibly, they are also seeing a 48% higher likelihood of self-disclosure among employees with disabilities.

Japan-based Sony offers an example. The company is a member of the World Economic Forum's Valuable 500, the largest global network of CEOs committed to disability inclusion. As such, it has made a point of assessing its practices for potential barriers and asking for feedback on that front. As one employee with a disability has said, “I get the impression that Sony is a workplace where nobody pays attention to whether people have disabilities or not. Some 20 people joined the information systems division when I entered the company, but we all worked together naturally during training, and people provided support as a matter of course when I needed it... I was also impressed by efforts to establish facilities that took disabilities into consideration.”

4. Formal Mental Wellness Policies and Programs

In organizations that have them, confidence among their employees is, on average, 31% higher than the employees of those that don't. In addition, the likeliness that employees of the former will disclose a disability is 38% higher than the employees of the latter.

Through Accenture, I have personally experienced the benefits of a tool called “Thriving Mind,” which was created for companies by Thrive Global and Stanford Medicine; it has helped me better understand and mitigate the stress I feel related both to MS and to the pandemic. We also have a mental health ally program, through which more than 5,000 employees in 24,000 countries are volunteers trained to listen when a peer needs support; provide a safe, nonjudgmental space; and help colleagues access other resources as needed.

5. Supportive and Supported Employee Resource Groups

The best disability employee resource groups (ERGs) are those that foster open dialogue and networking not only among their own members but also with members of other ERGs. When a company fosters a range of such groups and offers its support (management interest and sponsorship and even modest financial backing), persons with disabilities benefit.

These groups (centered around ethnicity, religion, gender, LBGTQ status, military affiliation, and parenting, among others) provide their members with a safe space to learn, grow, and share experiences. It's no wonder that organizations with this factor in place are seeing employee career aspirations that are, on average, 21% higher than in other organizations — and confidence levels that are 34% higher. Employees with disabilities are 26% more likely to disclose their disability to others in companies with active ERGs.

Ultimately, I fully disclosed my disability at work through an internal blog in the fall of 2018; I did the same externally through another blog in 2019. At that point, colleagues with disabilities began confiding in me, testing the waters as a prelude to their own disclosures. My engagement improved, and my desire to accomplish more increased — as did my ability to follow through on those new, higher aspirations. My anxieties lessened while my confidence and sense of belonging grew.

My employer helped me become a stronger employee when I felt comfortable enough to disclose my disability. Your organization can do the same for the members of its workforce who are on a similar journey.

trust your
JOURNEY



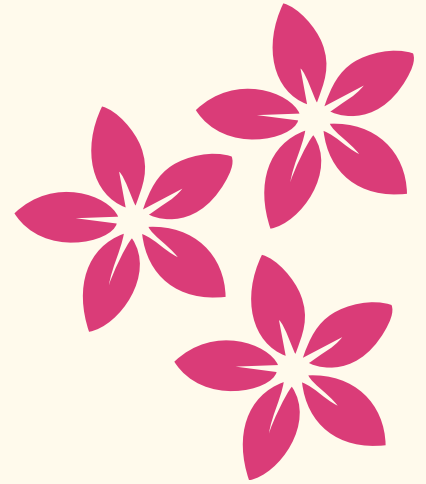
SAVE THE DATE!

OCTOBER 25, 2023

*Louisiana Autism Conference
L'Auberge Casino Resort*

— — — — — ” — — — — —
"It takes a village to
raise a child with
Autism. It takes a
child with Autism to
raise the
consciousness of the
village."

-COACH ELAINE HALL



**DISABILITY is
NOT INABILITY**

ADDITUDE

From: <https://www.additudemag.com>

Informal School Removal

Informal school removal (also called off-the-books suspension) is an insidious, pervasive, and often illegal response to student misbehavior. Here is a link from Attitude Mag about what it is and how to get help for your child at school.

<https://www.additudemag.com/school-suspension-iep-students-rights/>

10 Tips for Hosting an Accessible Holiday Gathering

By: Katie Carr w/The Nora Project

<https://thenoraproject.ngo/nora-notes-blog/10-tips-for-hosting-an-accessible-holiday-gathering>

As the winter holiday season approaches, folks are gathering with family and friends. As you do so, don't forget to be intentional about making your event accessible to everyone!

When you create intentionally accessible gatherings using Universal Design, everyone benefits! For example, some disabled people may benefit from a designated sensory space, but many nondisabled people do too. A child that needs a nap, a person taking an important phone call, or a new parent that needs to breastfeed all benefit from a quiet and relaxing space that is not crowded.

We've created a starter list of tips for your next event below. While these suggestions are catered to the holidays, these tips can be applied to create inclusive and accessible gatherings all year long.

1. Offer Supports

In your invitation, ask your guests if there are any accommodations, supports, or things you can do that will improve their experience. This not only gives people the space to advocate for themselves, but promotes a culture of inclusivity and accessibility, while decreasing the stigma around support and accommodations.

2. Set Expectations and Schedules

When inviting your guests to your get-together, it can be helpful to include a tentative schedule of events that will take place so that guests feel prepared for the gathering and know what to expect. Then display this schedule or print it out for guests to grab so they can reference it. You can also share reminders with your guests throughout the event, like "In ten minutes we will sit down in the living room to open gifts."

3. Create a Sensory Space

You can create a sensory space in a room that is not actively being used for the celebration, such as a bedroom or office. Sensory spaces are areas where guests can go to take a break from the typical hustle and bustle of a holiday gathering. No one should feel as though they have to remove themselves from a group setting because we should be accepting of all ways of being and make all of our spaces accessible. However, there are many instances where people may want or need to take a break in a separate space. To make this space comfortable use low lighting, keep it quiet, and provide items like pillows, blankets, fidget toys, or books and magazines. Additionally, make sure to let your guests know where this designated space is when you welcome them into your home or in your invitation.



4. Adjust your Physical Space

Make sure that your home or other gathering space is as physically accessible as possible to everyone attending. Depending on the needs of those attending, this could mean renting a ramp for front doorsteps, having step stools strategically available, or rearranging furniture so that people can navigate your space safely. Make sure that everyone is able to reach the table tops that hold food, activities, or gifts. You may also offer tours or display signs so everyone knows where the important spots are, like bathrooms, gathering areas, and the sensory space.

5. Provide a Remote Option

Whether it is due to a disability, distance, sickness, or not being able to travel, it's common for people to be left out if they cannot attend a gathering in person. Having a remote video chat option, like Zoom, Google Meet, or Skype gives guests the chance to connect with folks that were not able to make it, making them feel included and valued! You can even mail or drop off a package with items beforehand so they can participate in the festivities at home. This package can include food, decorations, or supplies for activities such as decorating cookies or completing a craft project.

See More ✨

6. Respect and Engage with all Forms of Communication

People communicate in a multitude of ways, all of which are valid and should be respected! Give guests your attention and time to communicate in whatever ways work best for them. When planning your gathering, ask if there are any supports that you can offer your guests such as notepads, communication boards, or choice boards. For holiday themed visual supports, choice boards, communication boards, and Sign Language phrases check out last year's Inclusive Holiday Gathering blog post!



7. Plan Your Meal

Holiday meals are known for bringing loved ones together. However, it is important to be mindful that not all folks are able to eat everything on the table. When you ask folks about their needs before an event, it's important to remember dietary restrictions and preferences. One simple thing you can do to make your meal more accessible is label foods with names and ingredients, so people are aware of the contents. There are numerous reasons why guests may bring their own food or nutrition. No matter the reason, make a space in your kitchen for people to bring their own meals and supplies so they can enjoy the event in the way that works best for them.

8. Wrap Your Gifts

Opening gifts is always an exciting part of a holiday party! Ripping open a present to unveil a surprise is an experience that many people enjoy. Consider using the rip cord method of wrapping gifts (which unwraps a present with one tug of a cord) so more guests can engage in this excitement. Watch this video from TechOwl PA to learn how to wrap a gift like this. You can also explore other options like using gift bags or decorative boxes where the lid just needs to be removed.

Another option is to wrap each person's gift in a designated color or pattern. You can also use glue to create tactile words or designs to help guests distinguish their gifts from other people's.

9. Be Mindful of Sensory Input

The holiday season often comes with a lot of decorations, music, foods, and scents. Experiencing too much, or a certain sensory input can be very overwhelming. For example, flashing string lights or strobe lights can cause visual overwhelm, distraction, induce headaches, and can even trigger seizures, and should be avoided. Also keep the background noise in the room to a minimum. This can help guests follow conversations better and prevent folks from becoming overstimulated. You can also ask guests to lower their voices or talk one at a time as well. Lastly, use classic, faint scents if you want to light a candle or use a wax melter during your gathering. As tempting as it is to light a pine tree or gingerbread cookie scented candle during the holiday season, wait until your guests have left to do so since they can be bothersome to some.

10. Protect the Health of Your Guests

COVID-19 continues to be a huge risk to all people, and even more so, the elderly and immunocompromised. Influenza and RSV are also on the rampage this season, creating a triple pandemic. Protect your guests by encouraging them to wear masks, get vaccinated, test before coming, and only attend if they are not ill. If they aren't feeling well, or aren't comfortable attending in person, encourage them to attend virtually! Additionally, respect other guests' choices about physical contact and personal space.





Special Education Help for Behavior: Navigating a Crucial Aspect of Learning

Hey there, fellow educators, parents, and advocates of the learning community! Addressing behavior in special education settings is a journey, and like all journeys, it comes with its unique set of challenges and rewards. So, let's unpack this together.

First things first – each student is unique. Special education doesn't mean a one-size-fits-all approach. Whether it's ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, or emotional disorders, understanding each student's individual needs is paramount. It's kind of like getting the right pair of shoes; it just makes the journey more comfortable.

Enter the world of Positive Behavior Supports (PBS). It's a proactive approach, focusing on teaching positive behaviors and making the environment conducive for all. Instead of just reacting when things go south, it's about setting up the stage for success. Think of it as planting seeds for good behavior and watching them grow.

Dialogue, dialogue, dialogue! Keeping communication channels open between educators, parents, therapists, and students can make a world of difference. Regular check-ins, sharing insights, and working collaboratively can bring about meaningful change.

Ever heard of Functional Behavior Assessment or FBA? It's like being a detective but for behaviors. Through FBA, educators can pinpoint the reasons behind challenging behaviors. Is it to seek attention, avoid a task, or maybe a sensory issue? Once you know the "why", strategizing becomes a tad easier.

Every student in special education has an Individualized Education Plan or IEP. This document is gold when it comes to behavioral support.

Tailoring behavioral goals and interventions specific to the student ensures they receive the right help, at the right time.

Last, but by no means least, is to celebrate progress, no matter how small. Did your student maintain focus a bit longer today? High-five! Managed to communicate their feelings instead of an outburst? That's a win! Every step forward is progress.

In wrapping up, remember that behavior, especially in special education settings, is like an iceberg. What we see is just the tip, and understanding what lies beneath makes all the difference. So, hats off to everyone working in this field and making a difference one student at a time.

Cheers to a brighter, more understanding tomorrow!



PROJECT



S.O.A.R

Screen Often & Accurately Refer

Project SOAR (Screen Often and Accurately Refer) is a project led by the Louisiana Department of Health. With the help of parents, guardians, and caregivers, Project SOAR hopes to make sure screening and follow-up are happening in ways that work best for Louisiana families.

This project will partner with families like yours, healthcare providers (doctors/nurses), and community organizations to learn about experiences with developmental screening, caregiver depression screening, and follow-up during your child's check-up visits.

PARTICIPATION

YOU SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN PROJECT SOAR
IF YOU'D LIKE TO:

Share your experiences with screening and check-ups and ideas for the future.



Be a part of positive change for all Louisiana families.



Get paid for your time and input.



Fill out surveys or take part in group discussions with other families. You can choose virtual or in-person settings.

CONNECT WITH PROJECT SOAR!



OCTOBER IS
**NATIONAL BULLYING
PREVENTION MONTH**

Start planning to participate in and support this month-long event to prevent childhood bullying and promote kindness, acceptance, and inclusion.

Show Your Support



Watch the video overview of PACER's National Bullying Prevention Month, created in 2021 by Medha, a student from Virginia.

Louisiana Bullying Prevention Law Webinar
Friday, October 27, 2023 at 10 AM to 11 AM

Link to Register: <https://tinyurl.com/BullyPrevention10-27-23>

Link to Flyer: <https://tinyurl.com/BullyPreventionFLYOCT-27-23>

ADDITUDE

From:

<https://www.additudemag.com>

Behavior Problems at School

The phone rings. It's the teacher calling about behavior problems – again. Here is a link from Attitude Mag for a step-by-step guide for parents how to help a child with behavior problems at school.

<https://www.additudemag.com/how-to-help-a-child-with-behavior-problems-at-school-adhd/>



Social Security



Social Security

From Monday, August 14, 2023 Press Release From the Social Security Administration:

Social Security Administration Expedites Decisions for People with Severe Disabilities – Social Security Administration Adds to its Compassionate Allowances List

<https://www.ssa.gov/news/press/releases/2023/#8-2023-1>

For information about Social Security Administration Compassionate Allowances Program

<https://www.ssa.gov/compassionateallowances/index.htm>

Opportunities to Share Feedback on Louisiana's Supports and Services System



The Louisiana Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) has partnered with the University of New Hampshire's Institute on Disability (IOD) to conduct an evaluation of how the current service system in Louisiana supports individuals with an Intellectual or Developmental Disability (I/DD) and behavioral/mental health needs.

The purpose of this project is to help determine what services are currently working well in our state and where improvements can be made. IOD's goal is to collect as much feedback as possible from individuals with an I/DD, parents, caregivers and any individual working within the service system. There are two ways you can share your thoughts:



Louisiana Service System Evaluation

The survey should take about 15 minutes to complete. Even if you are not familiar with all the services listed, please review the entire survey to provide input on any services you have knowledge of or experience with.



Family Member Interview

Families can participate in a 15-20 minute confidential telephone interview to discuss their experiences with Louisiana's behavioral/mental health service system. Those who have a family member with a I/DD, as well as behavioral/mental health needs, are encouraged to participate.

If you have any questions about the survey or if you would like to participate in the telephone interview process, please contact Ann Klein at ann.klein@unh.edu.

Don't forget to share this information with other people who may be interested in sharing their experiences.

*** FEEDBACK ***

Survey: https://unh.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6xnQbsIfKVuqT66



Life has no
remote....get up and
CHANGE IT yourself.

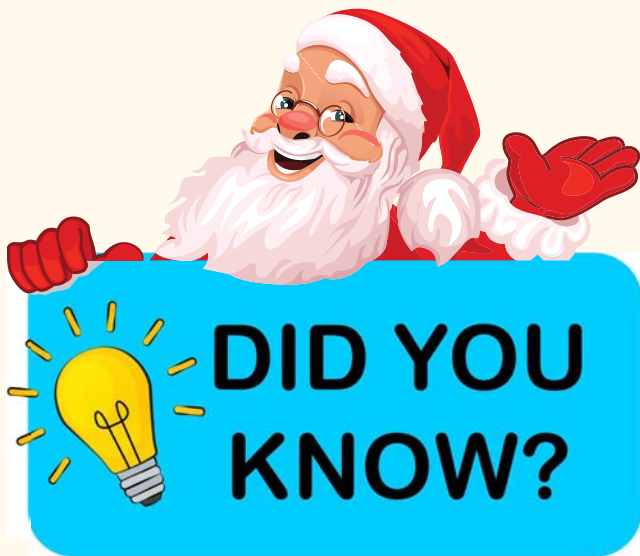


MARK A. COOPER

Quarterly Riddle



Q: What appears once in a minute,
twice in a moment, but not once in a
thousand years?



Santa Claus was
given an
official pilot's
license in 1927.

3-INGREDIENT BROWN SUGAR ITALIAN CHICKEN

Equipment:

- 9×13-inch Baking Dish
- Meat Thermometer



Ingredients:

- 4 to 6 boneless skinless chicken breasts
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1 (0.7-oz) packet Italian Dressing Mix

Instructions:

- Preheat oven to 425°F. Line a 9×13-inch baking pan with aluminum foil.
- Combine the brown sugar and Italian dressing mix. Coat both sides of the chicken with the brown sugar mixture. Place in prepared pan. Top chicken with any remaining brown sugar mixture.
- Bake for 20 to 25 minutes.
Turn broiler on HIGH. Broil chicken until brown sugar caramelizes, about 1 to 2 minutes.
Watch it carefully so it doesn't burn!

The campaign launch is timed to recognize National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

The Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) is launching a new marketing campaign aimed at raising awareness, destigmatizing the need for mental health treatment and services, and increasing [Louisiana 988 usage statewide](#). A key goal of the campaign is reaching vulnerable populations about the services available through 988, including individuals who are Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), LGBTQ+ people and veterans.

A series of historic storms, the COVID-19 pandemic and other traumatic events have taken a major toll on the mental health and emotional well-being of Louisianans of all ages in recent years. Because of these challenges, the message from LDH has been clear: It's OK to not be OK, and Louisiana 988 has counselors ready to assist anyone seeking help.

“LDH recognizes that stigma and even fear may deter individuals from seeking support from 988. This campaign is designed to address those barriers and encourage Louisiana residents to reach out whether they are in a mental health crisis or just having a bad day,” said LDH Secretary Stephen Russo. “Our hope for this new marketing initiative is to reach a wider audience, including vulnerable communities, so that all Louisianans know how to utilize 988 and what to expect. All of us need help sometimes, and LDH is committed to eliminating the stigma around mental health and substance use. The 988 helpline ensures everyone has easy and confidential access to high-quality emotional support, regardless of why the support is needed.”

One in five adults in the U.S. lives with a mental health condition. Death by suicide is the 14th leading cause of death in the state, and it is the third leading cause of death for Louisianans ages 10-34. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, 689 Louisianans died by suicide in 2021.

The campaign is informed by field research that identified three primary barriers to individuals contacting 988:

**CALL
988**

988:

**SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE**

- Not knowing what to expect when calling 988;
- Fear of being let down when someone is feeling most vulnerable; and
- Fear of overstepping personal boundaries or making things worse for someone else when calling for help.

Key components of the campaign include an aggressive paid media strategy starting with social media advertising, a new website – [Louisiana988.org](#) – for people to learn more, and a platform for community partners, advocates and local influencers to generate their own 988 promotional materials.

To help kick off the new marketing campaign, and in recognition of National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, the Governor's Mansion will light up in purple on the evening of Wednesday, September 13.

About 988 in Louisiana

In July 2023, Louisiana, along with other U.S. states transitioned to using the 988 dialing code to strengthen and expand the existing Lifeline. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) sees 988 as a first step toward a transformed crisis care system in America, and LDH believes 988 to be an important resource for residents to get immediate support when they need it.

According to national studies, the helpline works – individuals who contact 988 are significantly more likely to feel less depressed, less overwhelmed and more hopeful after speaking to a counselor. Almost 98% of people who call, chat or text the 988 helpline get the support they need and do not require emergency services in that moment, according to SAMHSA.

The LDH Office of Behavioral Health (OBH) has contracted with two certified call centers in Louisiana to answer 988 calls:

**LÍNEA DE
PREVENCIÓN DEL
SUICIDIO Y CRISIS**

- The call center in New Orleans answers calls for area codes 504, 225 and 985.
- The call center in Bossier City answers calls from area codes 318 and 337.

The two call centers provide backup to each other to help ensure calls, chats and texts are answered by an in-state 988 center with access to local resources. Since launch, call volume for 988 has increased by 11%, and the in-state answer rate rose from 64% in June 2022 to 87% over the last year. The helpline offers specialized support to veterans and their families, Spanish speakers, LGBTQ+ youth, and deaf and hard-of-hearing people.

Both centers are certified by Vibrant Emotional Health, the federal 988 administrator. They must meet Vibrant's national standards in addition to being accredited by a national accrediting agency.

In May, LDH launched a [dashboard](#) that provides key monthly metrics from Louisiana's two 988 centers. Calls to 988 are confidential and any self-reported data is aggregated before sharing with the public.

988 was established nationally in 2022 to improve access to support services in a way that meets our country's growing suicide and mental health-related care needs. 988 replaces the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800 number with an easy-to-remember phone number, providing access to the helpline network and referrals to local resources.

2nd Annual

Special Olympics Louisiana - Jeff Davis Parish

Participants: 3rd—12th graders



Fall Games



Horseshoes
and
Bocce Ball

Jeff Davis Parish
Special Olympics
Louisiana



2023



Date: Friday, October 20, 2023

Time: 8:30 a.m.—12:00 p.m.

Location: Welsh High School Football Stadium

306 Bourgeois Street , Welsh, LA 70591

For more information contact *Jeremy J. Fuselier*, Supervisor | Department of Special Services, 337.824.3522



Don't Be
Ashamed
of your story

It Will
Inspire
others



1-800-331-5570



1-800-894-6558

THE NEW
AND
IMPROVED
SECTION
504

OCTOBER 26, 2023
10:00 A.M.

<https://tinyurl.com/NewandImproved504Region5>

Louisiana Family to Family Health Information Center (F2F HIC) -Empowering Families Through Knowledge and Support

Welcome to the Family to Family Health Information Center (F2F HIC) of Louisiana. At the heart of our mission lies a profound commitment: to arm families with information, training, and resources so they can advocate for enhanced health services and outcomes for their children.



Who We Are &

Where We're Located

We proudly operate under the auspices of Bayou Land Families Helping Families, a key initiative of the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council. Our center stands as a beacon of support for families with children or adults with special health care needs and professionals.

Program Supervisor: Julie Folse

Address: 286 Hwy. 3185, Thibodaux, LA 70301

Phone: (985) 447-4461

Email: jfolse@blfhf.org

Website: <http://www.blfhf.org/>

Our Services and Support

The Family to Family Health Information Center offers specialized services and support for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs and their Families, spanning ages 0-26. Our offerings include:

- Empowering parents and transitioning youth with skills for proactive partnership with medical professionals.
- Facilitating families' navigation through health care challenges and financing complexities.
- Outreach through health fairs to raise awareness about community programs and services.
- Conducting training sessions on services, resources, and advocacy for superior health care services in our state.

Statewide Outreach, Localized Support

Our collaboration extends beyond our immediate premises. Through our partnership with Families Helping Families Resource Centers across the state, we ensure that Louisiana's Family to Family Health Information Center reaches you right in your own backyard.

Your Information Specialists

Our specialists, parents of children or youth with special health care needs, are not just professionals – they resonate with the experiences, challenges, and aspirations of families with special health care needs. Their lived experiences make them an invaluable resource for understanding and addressing your concerns.

See More ✨

National Network of Support

Our efforts are part of a larger network. Family-to-Family Health Information Centers (F2Fs) function as family-led organizations supporting families of children with special health care needs. This initiative receives robust support from the Family Voices through the Family Engagement and Leadership in Systems of Care grant, funded until 2028 by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Maternal Child Health Bureau.

Furthermore, the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) sponsors F2Fs not just in our state, but across the nation, encompassing every state, the District of Columbia, five US territories, and dedicated F2Fs serving American Indians and Alaska Natives. This cohesive network ensures that CYSHCN and their families receive comprehensive support, irrespective of their location.



Connect with Us

For more information, or to locate an Information Specialist in your region, please reach out using the contact information provided above or to your local Families Helping Families Center.

We're here to guide, assist, and walk alongside you in your journey.



Social Security Services for the Hispanic Community

September 18, 2023 • By Stephen McGraw, Acting Deputy Associate Commissioner, Office of Strategic and Digital Communications

We strive to deliver great customer service and helpful information to everyone, including people who are more comfortable reading and speaking Spanish. Our [Spanish-language website](#) provides information about our programs and services. You can learn how to get a Social Security card, plan for retirement, apply for benefits, and much more.

You can also learn more about why Social Security is important to the Hispanic community [on our website](#). We provide many [publications in Spanish](#) on popular topics such as:

- Retirement, disability, and survivors benefits.
- Medicare.
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

Spanish-speaking customers who need to speak with a representative can call us at [1-800-772-1213](tel:1-800-772-1213) and press 7.

Please share these resources with friends and family who may need them. And follow us on our Spanish-language [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).



When Parents & Schools Disagree Webinar

12 PM, Thursday, October 19, 2023

PARENTS

DO YOU KNOW WHAT OPTIONS YOU HAVE IF YOU DISAGREE WITH YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL?

Join us for this webinar as we discuss Louisiana's Special Education dispute resolution options when parents disagree.

SCAN ME!



For More Information
Contact

Families Helping Families of SWLA

337-436-2570 / 800-894-6558

info@fhfswla.org

Link to Register:

<https://tinyurl.com/DisputeOct19-23>



TEACHER

Friends
brother

GRANDMA

Uncle

MYSELF

Appreciate those who
are happy for your
happiness
and
sad
for your sadness.
These are
people
to truly treasure.



proud
AUNT

DAD

Couples

Family

GRANDPA

sister

#1 Doctor

JOIN US AT THE ALLEN PARISH CAREER AND TRANSITION FAIR!

11:30-12:00 EHS and RHS
12:00-12:30 KHS
12:30-1:00 OKHS
1:00-1:30 FHS and OBHS

OCTOBER 24, 2023
ALLEN PARISH CIVIC CENTER

Parents are welcomed to attend!

2nd Annual Department of Special Services Transition Expo



Date: Thursday, December 7, 2023
Location: Jennings High School ~ Cafetorium
(2310 N Sherman St, Jennings, LA 70546)
Time: 5:30pm - 7:30pm
Audience: JDP 8th - 12th grade students and parents

*Every Student, Every Day
Building Partnerships,
Working Together*

This event is geared to addressing the needs of our 8th-12th grade families and students with exceptionalities.

For more information contact Jeremy J. Fuseller, Supervisor | Department of Special Services, 337.824.3522

LOUISIANA BULLYING PREVENTION LAW WEBINAR

Free New Webinar for Parents, Caregivers, & Professionals of Children with Disabilities

10 AM Friday,
October 27, 2023

SCAN



Link to Register:
<https://tinyurl.com/BullyPrevention10-27-23>



For More Information contact
337-436-2570 • 1-800-894-6558
info@fhfswla.org • www.fhfswla.org

Act 378 Community & Family Supports Webinar

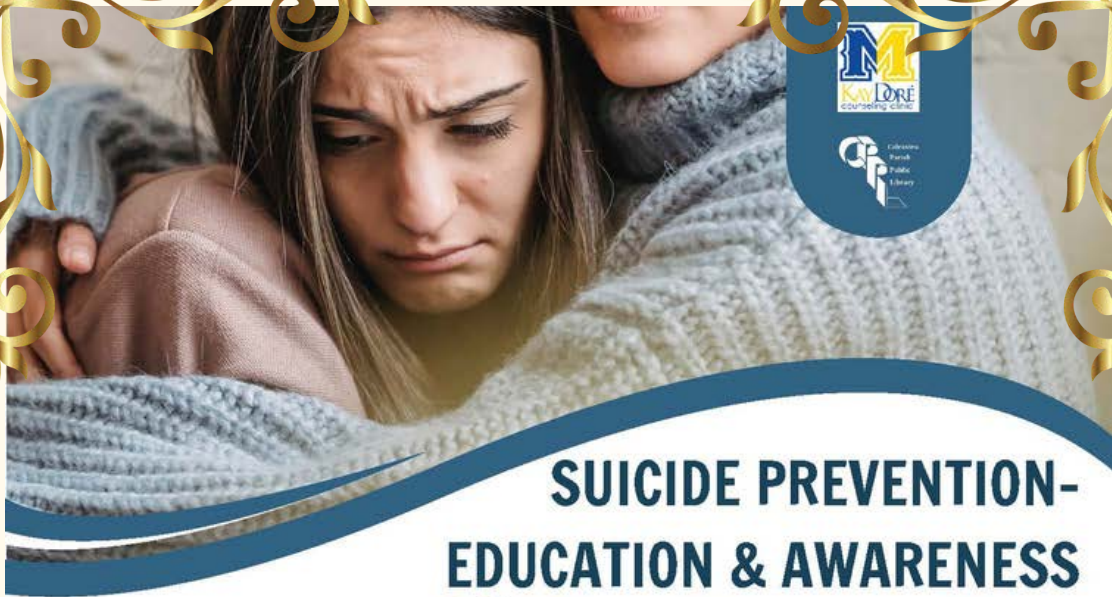
1 PM Monday, October 16, 2023

Join us to learn about Act 378, the Community & Family Support System and what supports are available for individuals with developmental disabilities!

REGISTER

Link to Register:
<https://tinyurl.com/Act378-Oct16-23>





SUICIDE PREVENTION- EDUCATION & AWARENESS

with the Kay Doré Counseling Clinic

Join us either in-person or online via Zoom for a Question, Persuade, and Refer class that teaches suicide education. We'll review what to do if someone in your life experiences a mental health crisis.

Led by the Suicide Education & Awareness Coordinator at Kay Doré Counseling Clinic, these educational programs are provided through a partnership with SWLA United Way. Patrons will receive information about how to pick up on clues when someone is experiencing a mental health crisis and how to offer assistance in the moment until professional help can be secured.

Join us online via the Zoom online meeting platform on:

Monday, October 16: 4:00pm - 5:00pm

Or join us in-person at Central Library on

Thursday, November 9: 6:00pm - 7:00pm

Registration is required for both classes.
To sign up, call (337) 721-7117 or sign up online at www.calcasieulibrary.org/events

Central Library
301 W. Claude St.
Lake Charles, LA 70605
(337) 721-7117



Families Helping Families of Southwest Louisiana

MAILING ADDRESS: P O BOX 1627, LAKE CHARLES, LA 70602
OFFICE ADDRESS: 324 W. HALE ST., LAKE CHARLES, LA 70601
(337) 436-2570 • 1-800-894-6558 • (337) 436-2578 FAX
EMAIL: INFO@FHFSWLA.ORG
WEBSITE: [HTTPS://WWW.FHFSWLA.ORG](https://www.fhfswla.org)
FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/fhfswla>

**Families Helping Families
It's Who We Are!
It's What We DO!**

Invest in Families Helping Families
of Southwest Louisiana!

FHFSWLA is a 501 (c)3 nonprofit agency that relies on donations to meet the needs of our agency's mission and vision. By donating to FHFSWLA you are investing in the lives of people with disabilities and their families. If passion paid, we would be the richest nonprofit in SWLA. Unfortunately, passion alone does not fully support our organization.

Please consider making a contribution so families who are touched by disability can be assured this one of a kind, family directed resource center is always here when they need us.

Contributions can be made to:
Families Helping Families of Southwest Louisiana
P O Box 1627
Lake Charles, LA 70602

FHF is funded in part by a contract from the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council.



TOY DRIVE
SANTA & FHF NEED YOUR HELP!

FHF needs donations of
UNWRAPPED TOYS for our **JOLLY SANTA DRIVE THRU** for individuals with disabilities
to be held on **Saturday, December 2, 2023**
Here is a link to our Amazon Wishlist
<https://tinyurl.com/jollysanta2023>
or you can drop off toys at the FHF Center -
324 West Hale Street in Lake Charles.
All ages needed - Birth to Adult

info@fhfswla.org | 337-436-2570

FHFSWLA Jolly Santa Drive Thru
Saturday Dec 2, 2023
Time: to be announced
at FHFSWLA office,
324 W. Hale St, Lake Charles, LA



Riddle Answer: The letter "M"

Opinions contained herein do not necessarily represent those of the funding source, and no endorsement should be inferred.