



QUARTERLY INFORMER

April, May, and June 2024 Edition



FHFSWLA
Board of
Directors

Inclusion - Making our Community Better

Inclusion for people with disabilities means making sure we are not left out and are treated fairly, just like everyone else. Inclusion is important for many reasons:

- **Fairness:** Everyone should have the same chances and opportunities, no matter if they have a disability or not. Treating people equally is just the right thing to do.
- **Different Perspectives:** People with disabilities have unique experiences and ideas that can help us all learn and grow. When we people with disabilities are included, we get a richer, more diverse community.
- **Making Life Easier for Everyone:** When we design things to be accessible for people with disabilities, like ramps or captions for videos, it often ends up making life easier for everyone, not just those with disabilities.
- **Helping the Economy:** When people with disabilities can and do work and contribute to society, it helps the economy grow. Their skills and talents that are valuable, just like anyone else.
- **Laws and Being Ethical:** There are rules and laws in place in many countries that say we have to treat people with disabilities fairly. It's not just about following the rules, but also about doing what's right and fair.
- **Being Kind and Respectful:** Everyone deserves to be treated with kindness and respect, no matter what. Including people with disabilities is a way to show that everyone is valued and a part of our community.

Including people with disabilities is about being fair, learning from each other, and making sure everyone feels valued and respected. It's not just the right thing to do, but it also makes our communities stronger and more welcoming for everyone.

Like Us On Facebook
Want to keep up to date with FHF of SWLA?
Like our Facebook page!! You will receive event information and other bulletins about what is going on in the SWLA region!
www.facebook.com/fhfwla/



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.

Who we
Are ...
What we
Do!

Susan Riehn
Executive Director

Cynthia Brown
Bookkeeper

Wallace Johnson
Education Support
Specialist

Mylinda Elliott
Program Manager,
LaCAN Leader &
Senior Education
Support Specialist

Beryl Cook
Education Support
Specialist

Davelyn Patrick
Community
Resource Specialist

China Guillory
Early Steps COS

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ImCal DD
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Help the Words Flow

Do your child's great ideas get lost in his ADHD brain before they hit the page? Teach him to express himself through the written word with these simple strategies. child's great ideas get lost in his ADHD brain before they hit the page? Teach him to express himself through the written word with these simple strategies.

By Amelia Barnes, M.Ed., Greg Spoon Verified Updated on September 7, 2022

Written expression is a major problem for many students with attention deficit disorder (ADHD or ADD). One study showed that 65 percent of students with the condition have trouble writing essays or finishing written assignments. The following strategies will help your child express himself on paper or the computer.

Writing Tools for Teachers

Keep the student moving forward. For many students with ADHD, selecting a topic is often a challenge. Many are emotionally exhausted before they begin writing the essay. To counter this, assign the same writing topic to the entire class. The assignment might be "My favorite place I've been." Write on the board what each student "sees, hears, and smells" at his favorite place. This gives those with ADHD some ideas to get started.

Expand the student's knowledge about a subject. If a student doesn't know a lot about an assigned essay topic, have her list the things she does know. Then work with her to create a graphic organizer to generate more information and organize her thoughts. The student can start with a two-column chart that lists "what I know" and "what I've learned" about the topic. Next, have the student browse through websites or talk with classmates to add more information.

Nail down ideas. Allow the student to dictate ideas to an assigned scribe, or use speech-to-text software, such as Dragon Naturally Speaking, or a tape recorder.

Demonstrate essay writing. The teacher, with input from students, should write an essay in class on an overhead projector or a white board. The teacher asks students to supply three main ideas, and three details that support each idea. Kids with ADHD do better when they see the teacher work on a task.

Create a poster of colorful phrases or use graphic organizers. Forbid the use of "be" words — "is," "was," and "were" — in the essay, so that students have to select more interesting verbs. They may find it helpful to refer to "The Royal Order of Adjectives" graphic organizer.

Be flexible. If a student is a good artist but can't get words down on paper, then let him draw sequential pictures telling his story. Next, ask him to either write about or tell you about each picture.

Use tech to get words flowing. Because kids with ADHD struggle with handwriting, allow them to use assistive technology, laptop computers, or PCs available in the school computer lab. Editing and revising sentences and paragraphs are easier on a computer.

Organize content. Students with attention problems move from one topic to another to another within the same paragraph. One way to help is to ask them to cut the essay into parts, attaching the topic sentence for each paragraph to a separate page, and having him complete that paragraph before tackling another.

Writing Pointers for Parents

Finalize an essay topic. If your child can't choose an essay topic, ask questions to help him narrow his selection. "Which of these five topics are most interesting to you? Pick two." Minimize time spent on topic selection, so your child can move on to gathering ideas and writing the essay.

Brainstorm. Once the topic is selected, ask him for all the ideas he thinks might be related to it. Write the ideas on sticky notes, so he can cluster them together later in the paragraphs. He can cut and paste the ideas into a logical sequence on the computer.

Be a digital scribe. Ask your child to suggest three to five supporting details under each main idea. Type his ideas on the computer as he generates them. If he has difficulty generating facts for each idea, give him time to do an Internet search.

Encourage him to dress up his sentences. Make a word list or word bank at home of overused, dull words (1-cent words) to be traded in for more interesting words (10-cent and 25-cent words). For instance, substitute "race" or "dash" for "run."

This article is a resource of ADDitude. <https://www.additudemag.com/help-the-words-flow/>

No beauty shines
brighter than that of a
good heart.



EARTH DAY

is

April 22nd

June 20, 2024

is the first day of Summer



Allen Parish - April 1-5, 2024
Beauregard Parish - April 1-5, 2024
Calcasieu Parish - April 1-5, 2024
Cameron Parish - April 1-5, 2024
Jeff Davis Parish - April 1-5, 2024





What is an ABLE Account?

An ABLE account is a tax-free account that can be used to save for disability-related expenses for a person who became blind or significantly disabled before age 26*.

* ABLE Age Adjustment Act passed as part of the Omnibus Spending Bill. This bill will increase the age of ABLE eligibility from “before age 26” to “before age 46” effective 01/01/2026.

Why is there a need for an ABLE Account?

People with disabilities have many expenses that others do not have. Yet, to qualify for public benefits like SSI, individuals have to remain poor, having no more than \$2,000 in cash savings, retirement funds, and other items of significant value. This means that they cannot afford to pay for the extra expenses engendered by their disability. For the first time, eligible individuals will be allowed to establish ABLE savings accounts that will not affect their eligibility for SSI, Medicaid, and other public benefits.

Who can set up an ABLE account?

ABLE accounts can be created by individuals who became significantly disabled before the age of 26, or by families to support their dependents with disabilities.



How much can an individual put into an ABLE account?

The contribution limit in 2024 is \$18,000. Employed individuals can also contribute earnings up to \$14,580 in addition to the \$18,000 annual contribution limit, as long as they do not have a retirement plan that they or their employer contributes.

Does an ABLE Account have an impact on other benefits a person with a disability might receive?

If the account grows to more than \$100,000, the beneficiary’s SSI benefits will be suspended, but not terminated. The beneficiary would continue to be eligible for Medicaid. It is unclear whether other benefits, such as those provided by the State, would be affected if the account grows to more than \$100,000.

Which expenses are allowed by ABLE accounts?

Any expense associated with disability-related expenses. These include: education, housing, transportation, employment training and support, health care expenses, financial management and administrative services, assistive technology, personal support services, and other expenses which will be further described in regulations to be promulgated by the U.S. Treasury Department.

Can a person with a disability set up more than one ABLE account?

No, but each person is limited to one ABLE account. However, you can “roll over” your ABLE account to another state’s program if you choose to.

Do I have to open an ABLE account in the state that I live in?

No, but some states restrict their ABLE accounts to residents only. You can visit the ABLE National Resource Center at www.ablenrc.org to compare ABLE accounts across states.



What are the tax consequences of setting up an ABLE account?

- There is no federal tax on funds held in an ABLE account
- There is no federal tax when funds from the account are used for qualified expenses such as those listed above
- There is no federal tax deduction for someone who contributed to an ABLE account.

What happens upon the death of the person for whom an account was set up?

Upon the death of an eligible individual, any amounts remaining in the account must first be paid to any state Medicaid agency that provided assistance from the day the ABLE account was established, not to exceed the cost of care provided. Any excess over the Medicaid reimbursement amount will go to the deceased's estate or to a designated beneficiary, and will be subject to income tax—but will not be subject to a penalty.

How is an ABLE account different than a special needs or pooled trust?

An ABLE account will provide more choice and control for the beneficiary and family.

The cost of establishing an ABLE account will be significantly less than that of establishing a trust which requires hiring an attorney.

However, for some people, a trust may be preferable over an ABLE account. Determining which option is the most appropriate will depend upon individual circumstances.

If you would like more information about ABLE accounts, please visit the ABLE National Resource Center at www.ablenrc.org

If you need help or have questions about

Disability Rights Louisiana, call or visit us online:

CALL TOLL-FREE:
1-800-960-7705

8325 Oak St. • New Orleans, LA
70118

DisabilityRightsLA.org

Department of Education offers new guidance for assistive technology (AT)

The U.S. Department of Education has issued new guidance on how to support children with disabilities through the incorporation of AT into their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

The guidance provides information such as myths about AT, the requirements surrounding AT under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and creative ways AT can be used to help children.

[Learn more from the Department of Education](#)



Why **FIT IN**
when you
were **BORN TO**

STAND OUT?



April 2nd is
Autism
Awareness Day



Self-Advocates and People with Disabilities

If you are seeking a place where you can find a sense of belonging, learn how to become a more effective advocate for yourself, and so much more? People First of Louisiana, one of the oldest and best-known self-advocacy organizations, has exactly what you need.

• Please share with your friends or others who may be interested.

People First can help you learn about things that are going on in the state and you can also learn about your rights and responsibilities and by joining a people first chapter you can build your confidence by learning how to find the courage to speak up for yourself and others. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact

Nicole Jones or
Wallace Johnson
phone: 337-436-2570 or
1-800-894-6558



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.



OUR VISION

People with disabilities build personal visions that are reached through respect, equality and many different experiences that lead to choices and life decisions.

WHY JOIN PEOPLE FIRST?

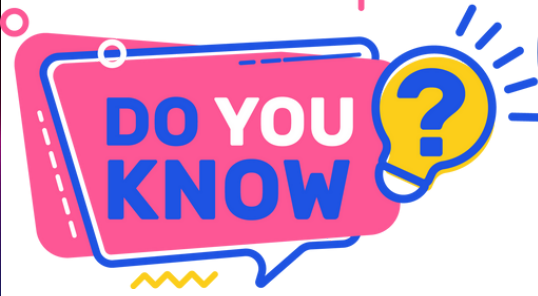
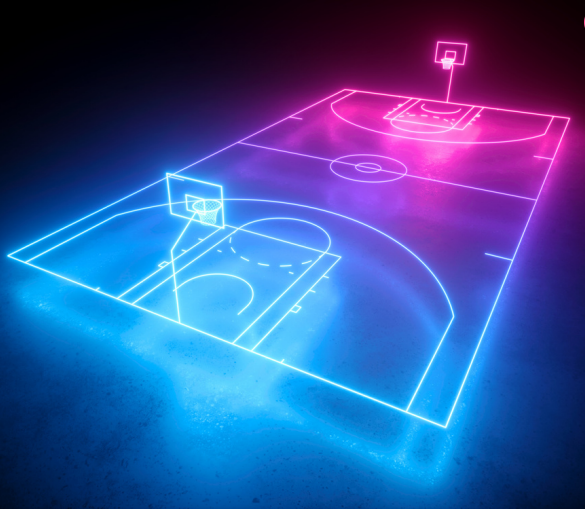
- We are a self-advocacy group run by people with disabilities, for people with disabilities.
- We learn to speak up for ourselves and support each other in making decisions.
- We connect with others in our community, across the nation and around the world.
- We learn about our rights and responsibilities as citizens of the United States of America.
- We empower each other to actively participate in and contribute to our community.

CONTACT US

 [www..peoplefirstla.org/](http://www.peoplefirstla.org/)

 600 Colonial Drive | Baton Rouge, LA 70806 | 225-383-1033 Ext. 206





There's a basketball court in the U.S. Supreme Court building.

Medicaid Buy-In Program

The Arc of Louisiana issued advocacy initiative for Medicaid Buy-In for Workers

Background Information:

The Medicaid “buy-in” program allows workers with disabilities access to Medicaid community-based services not available through other insurers. Nationally, workforce participation among people with disabilities is significantly lower than those without disabilities. For most, it is because they are faced with choosing between their healthcare, services and work. Medicaid “buy-in” breaks down this barrier and allows individuals who have disabilities to work and earn a living wage without losing their life saving services. The Administration for Community Living (ACL), Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), and the Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) are committed to policies and programs that promote and support successful employment outcomes for people with disabilities. However, each state gets to adopt the eligibility group that works for that state. To save money, Louisiana made changes to their Buy-In program forcing most people to make the decision to quit working so they could still have someone help them with their personal care needs.

What Can Legislators Do?


Require LDH to increase their income and asset rules within the Medicaid Buy-In program and submit a request to CMS. Like other proposed Medicaid changes, CMS reviews all state requests for approval.

Why Do This?

When workers with disabilities don’t need to lower their income or quit working to ensure access to critical healthcare services, they begin to participate in the community fully.

This means owning their own homes, possibly getting off of some public assistance programs, and becoming tax-paying members of their community.

For employers, they are able to attract and retain more workers. Employers can support employee skill development and promote high performers with less concern that a person’s health care needs will impact their ongoing employment. Allowing people to work without fear of jeopardizing their healthcare needs benefits everyone!



Juneteenth

FHF Office will be close **June 19, 2024** in Observance of Juneteenth.




FHF Office will be close **May 27, 2024** in Observance of Juneteenth.

4-INGREDIENT QUICK & EASY GOULASH



INGREDIENTS:

- 2 c. uncooked elbow macaroni
- 1 to 1 1/4 lb. ground beef
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 (10.5 oz.) cans condensed tomato soup
- salt & pepper, to taste



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Cook macaroni in salted water, according to package directions. Drain well. Return to the cooking pot.
2. While macaroni is cooking, brown the ground beef and chopped onion together; drain. Add tomato soup, a little salt, and a little pepper, to taste. Stir to combine and heat until the soup is heated through.
3. Add ground beef-soup mixture to the macaroni; stir together until well combined. Season with additional salt & pepper, to taste.

Continuing Tutorship and Interdiction: Louisiana's Guardianship options

If your child will turn 18 in the next few years, it's time to start thinking about whether they'll need help making decisions as an adult. Why? Because when they turn 18 they're considered an adult. You will no longer have the right to make legal decisions for them unless you go through a process to get legal permission.

Learn about Louisiana's "Guardianship" options:
Continuing Tutorship and Interdiction—what they mean and how to apply.

LEARN MORE



Creating Inclusive Summer Camp Experiences:



TIPS FOR EMBRACING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

<https://fhfofgno.org/>

Summer camps offer a unique opportunity for children to explore, learn, and make lasting memories.

Ensuring an inclusive environment for children with disabilities is not just a responsibility; it's a commitment to fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment. Here are some successful tips to help make summer camps truly inclusive for all children.

Early Planning and Communication: Begin the inclusivity journey by planning well in advance.

Communicate with parents and guardians to understand the specific needs of each child with a disability. This ensures that necessary accommodations and support can be arranged beforehand.

Training for Camp Staff: Provide comprehensive training for camp staff on inclusivity, sensitivity, and disability awareness. Equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to create an environment where every child feels valued and supported.

Accessible Facilities and Activities: Ensure that the camp facilities and activities are accessible to children with various abilities. This includes ramps, accessible bathrooms, and activity areas that accommodate mobility aids and sensory needs.



Personalized Support Plans: Work closely with parents, guardians, and any healthcare professionals involved to create personalized support plans for children with disabilities. These plans should outline specific accommodations, necessary equipment, and emergency procedures.

Buddy System: Implement a buddy system where each child with a disability is paired with a trained buddy. Buddies can provide additional support, assistance, and companionship, fostering a sense of inclusion and friendship.



Inclusive Activities and Programming: Design activities that cater to a diverse range of abilities and interests. Ensure that all children, regardless of their abilities, can actively participate and enjoy the camp experience. Adapt traditional games and activities as needed.

Communication Strategies: Establish effective communication strategies to ensure that instructions, information, and announcements are accessible to all children. This may include visual aids, sign language interpreters, or communication devices for those with speech impairments.

Encourage Peer Involvement: Encourage other campers to be inclusive and supportive. Educate the entire camp community about the importance of inclusion, kindness, and embracing differences.

Designated Quiet Spaces: Recognize the potential need for quiet spaces where children can retreat if they become overwhelmed. These areas provide a calming environment for children with sensory sensitivities or those who may need a break.

Continuous Feedback and Improvement: Establish open communication channels with parents, campers, and staff to gather feedback on the inclusivity initiatives. Use this information to continually improve and refine the camp's approach to better meet the needs of all participants.

Incorporating these successful tips into summer camp planning creates an environment where every child can thrive, regardless of their abilities. By fostering inclusion, promoting understanding, and celebrating diversity, summer camps become not only a place for fun and adventure but also a space where lifelong friendships are formed and cherished memories are created for every child.

HAPPY
Mother's
DAY

5/12/24

HAPPY

FATHER'S
DAY

6/16/24



Allen Parish - May 22, 2024
Beauregard Parish - May 22, 2024
Calcasieu Parish - May 22, 2024
Cameron Parish - May 22, 2024
Jeff Davis Parish - May 23, 2024

Give me a drink, and I will die. Feed me, and I'll get bigger. What am I?

Riddle



(Answer on Last Page)

Section 504? Special Education? What's the Difference?



Use this link to register for this webinar:
<http://tinyurl.com/504SPEDSWLA>

- Discover the similarities and differences between Section 504 and Special Education and how those differences may affect your child in school.

**APRIL 30,
2024
10:00 AM -
12:00 PM**

CO-SPONSORED BY :



&



EMPOWERMENT Through Employment

A United Way of Southwest Louisiana Initiative

The Empowerment through Employment Initiative, led by United Way of Southwest Louisiana, equips low-income individuals with the necessary skills and resources for successful job placement. It offers soft skills training, financial assistance for employment documentation, online job training, and connects participants with local employers and caseworkers. The Initiative aims to increase economic well-being and empower struggling community members.

Individuals seeking employment assistance through the Initiative can contact United Way of Southwest Louisiana's 211 helpline, which serves as the primary entry point for the program. The 211 operators will refer callers to an online application that is not publicly available, which will then be reviewed by caseworkers to determine program eligibility and available resources. The progress of accepted applicants will be monitored by an assigned caseworker.

[READ MORE >>](#)



Acronyms are used instead of repeatedly using such a long phrase. I find that they are used in the disability community, very often which leaves our parents lost and confused. Especially when dealing with special education and other medical needs. So, here is a link that I hope would help with that.



[CLICK HERE](#)



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.

A 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 to your local [Families Helping Families Center](#). We're here to guide, assist, and walk alongside you in your journey.



Early Steps would like to invite you to participate in the **State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC)** and the **Regional Interagency Coordinating Council (RICC)**

to discuss early intervention strategies for the Louisiana and the Southwest Louisiana Region. All family members are invited to attend, including providers, and other early intervention personnel. Our mission is to: -Provide a way to participate in the SICC and RICC to represent regional issues.



The SICC meeting will be held on:

Thursday, April 11, 2024

1:00p-3:00p via Zoom

&

The RICC meeting will be held on:

Thursday, April 25, 2024

1:30p-3:30p via Zoom



Please contact China Guillory for Zoom information at (337) 436-2570 or email: cfguillory@fhfswla.org

Thank you in advance for your participation, if you have any questions or concerns please don't hesitate to contact me.



NOT ALL
STORMS
COME TO DISRUPT
YOUR LIFE, SOME
COME TO CLEAR YOUR
PATH.



Beating the Summer Slide: Fun Strategies for Children with Disabilities

The "summer slide" refers to the loss of academic skills and knowledge that can occur over the summer break when students are out of school. For children with disabilities, the summer slide can have more pronounced effects, as they may require ongoing support and reinforcement of skills to keep their progress. Without access to structured learning environments or specialized services during the summer months, children with disabilities may experience greater regression in their skills compared to their peers.

To address the summer slide for children with disabilities, it's essential to provide continued support and opportunities for learning during the break. This might involve summer programs specifically designed for students with disabilities, individualized educational activities, or continued therapy and intervention services. By keeping up engagement and support throughout the summer, educators and caregivers can help mitigate the effects of the summer slide and ensure that children with disabilities continue to progress academically and developmentally.

As summer approaches, parents and educators alike gear up to combat the dreaded "summer slide". For children with disabilities, this regression can be even more pronounced. However, with creativity and a little planning, it's possible to turn the summer months into a time of continued growth and learning. Here are some unique and fun ways to prevent the summer slide for children with disabilities:

Create a Summer Learning Calendar: Design a colorful calendar filled with daily learning activities tailored to your child's interests and abilities. Include a mix of academic exercises, hands-on projects, and outdoor adventures to keep them engaged and excited about learning.



DIY Sensory Stations: Set up sensory stations around the house or in the backyard where children can explore different textures, sounds, and smells. Use materials like sand, water beads, playdough, and scented bubbles to stimulate their senses while promoting fine motor skills and creativity.

Adapted Outdoor Games: Modify classic outdoor games like tag, scavenger hunts, and relay races to accommodate children with disabilities. Use visual aids, verbal cues, and simplified rules to ensure that everyone can play and have fun together.

Virtual Field Trips: Take virtual field trips to museums, zoos, and national parks from the comfort of your own home. Many organizations offer online tours and interactive exhibits that allow children to explore new places and learn about different cultures and ecosystems.

Cooking Adventures: Turn mealtime into a culinary adventure by involving children in meal planning, grocery shopping, and cooking activities. Encourage them to explore new flavors and ingredients while practicing math skills through measuring and following recipes.

Storytelling and Role-Playing: Spark imagination and creativity through storytelling and role-playing games. Encourage children to create their own stories, characters, and settings, or act out scenes from their favorite books and movies.

Music and Movement: Incorporate music and movement activities into daily routines to promote physical fitness and emotional expression. Create playlists with songs that encourage movement and dance, or try simple yoga poses and relaxation techniques to help children unwind and de-stress.

SUMMER





STEM Challenges: Explore the world of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) through hands-on experiments and challenges. Build simple machines, conduct kitchen chemistry experiments, or design and build structures using everyday materials.

By incorporating these fun and engaging activities into your child's summer routine, you can help prevent the summer slide and keep them excited about learning all year long. Remember to tailor the activities to your child's interests and abilities, and most importantly, have fun together along the way!



SNAP

Sign up for

Calcasieu's Special Needs Assessment Program or S.N.A.P.



The SNAP system is a Voluntary program to register our citizens that require additional assistance during an emergency. This information will be placed on a map and if there is an emergency in your area, we will be notified that you may need assistance, so we can send the appropriate agency to assist you. This information is confidential and will only be shared in emergencies and only to public safety personnel. We will, on an annual basis, update your status to ensure that you still need assistance or if your status has changed.



<https://www.calcasieu.gov/services/emergency-preparedness/be-prepared>

Disaster Preparedness Guide for Caregivers

Caregivers are unsung heroes. This becomes especially true for those who carry out their duties before, during, and in the immediate aftermath of tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, and other extreme weather events. People with disabilities or other access and function needs, such as older adults, face a disproportionately higher likelihood of abandonment, additional injury, and death during disasters.

When forced to evacuate, relocate to emergency shelters, or find temporary housing, care recipients and caregivers require support and services that meet them where they are and account for unmet needs. FEMA is pleased to announce The Disaster Preparedness Guide for Caregivers, a new guide that focuses on the lived experience of caregivers who often serve as a lifeline for others, whether the skies are blue or gray.

There are three essential steps that can help caregivers feel more prepared and in control when disaster strikes: Assessing needs - Preparedness starts with considering the many tasks a caregiver performs as a matter of routine, such as hygiene care, meal preparation, routine medical assistance, and prescription drug management.

Engaging a support network - Caregivers also need care. Thinking through access to systems of support, especially if displaced, and the stress of keeping a care recipient safe and healthy are important.

Creating a plan - Recovering from a disaster begins with seeing preparedness as the first response to a disaster. By making an emergency plan, tracking alerts and updates, and keeping a checklist of everything a care recipient would need in the event a disaster disrupts the daily routine, caregivers become the true "first" responder.

I am committed to ensuring people with disabilities and other access and functional needs can recover from disasters. I thank our nation's caregivers for the role they play in helping FEMA meet that mission.



Navigating Early Diagnosis & Therapy for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Best Practices for Early Diagnosis of ASD & Optimal Early Childhood Development

Virtual Workshop!

Hosted by Families Helping Families of Southwest Louisiana
in Louisiana Department of Health Region 5

Wednesday, April 24th | 10:00 am - 12:30 pm

WORKSHOP PRESENTERS

Davelyn Patrick

Community Resource Specialist, Families Helping Families of Southwest Louisiana

Taylor Mardi DeWoody, MA, BCBA, LBA

Senior Behavior Analyst, McNeese Autism Program

Lettie Goings, MA, BCBA, LBA

Senior Behavior Analyst, McNeese Autism Program

Colton Peebles, MA, BCBA, LBA

Clinical Director McNeese Autism Program

2.5 Free
for Nurses and
CEUs
social Workers



Join Us on Zoom!

Scan the QR Code or use this link to register:

<http://tinyurl.com/R5RIW2024>



The Bureau of Family Health is approved as a provider of nursing continuing professional development by the Louisiana State Nurses Association, LSNA Provider No. 4003257. The event planners and presenter(s) have no relevant financial disclosure. Nurses must attend the entire event and complete an evaluation to receive a continuing education (CE) award. The views and information expressed by the presenter(s) of this training/event and any supplemental information provided by the presenter(s), in print or electronic form, should not be construed as legal advice or final determinations of the Louisiana Department of Health and do not necessarily represent the opinions or policies of the Louisiana Department of Health, Office of Public Health or the Bureau of Family Health.

The activity has been submitted for approval to the LA Department of Health, Office of Public Health, Bureau of Family Health for 2.5 General contact hours of Social Work Continuing Education. The Louisiana Department of Health, Office of Public Health, Bureau of Family Health is an authorized approval organization of the Louisiana Board of Social Work Examiners. Presenters have no conflicts of interest to disclose. Social Workers must attend the entire event and complete an evaluation to receive a continuing education (CE) award. The views and information expressed by the presenter(s) of this training/event and any supplemental information provided by the presenter(s), in print or electronic form, should not be construed as legal advice or final determinations of the Louisiana Department of Health and do not necessarily represent the opinions or policies of the Louisiana Department of Health, Office of Public Health or the Bureau of Family Health.

For more information about this event, please contact dtpatrick@fhfswla.org

The Impact of Gardening for People with Disabilities

Gardening, whether it's working with a vertical garden or a large plot, is a wonderful way to get in touch with nature. For people living with intellectual or developmental disabilities, gardening (or horticultural therapy) can be a holistic way to learn a new skill while also feeling more grounded.

How Does Gardening Help People with Disabilities?

Gardening helps people with disabilities in several ways. It can help a person with disabilities feel productive, or it can encourage someone to learn a new skill. Those with limited mobility can have raised bed gardens or gardens created with their needs in mind, so they can participate in an activity with their peers regardless of their skill levels.

Gardening helps people use their fine motor and cognitive skills, and it also encourages them to get outside in the sunshine. For those who can't get outdoors, indoor gardens or window boxes create a space for the adaptive gardener to get involved.



Benefits of Gardening for People with Disabilities

There are multiple benefits of gardening for people living with disabilities. Here are four of the most significant benefits to consider.

Physical Activity

One of the main reasons to try gardening is because it's a good way to increase physical activity. Gardening can require skills and movements like bending, digging, pulling, and pushing, all of which can help with exercise.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have recognized gardening as exercise. In fact, it can burn up to 210 to 420 calories in just one hour. The health benefits are great for everyone.

Social Opportunities

Another reason to get involved in gardening is because of the social opportunities that come with it. An accessible garden in the community creates a place where people with disabilities can get fresh air and interact with others in their community. Gardening can be used as a tool to improve social skills. It also provides easy access to support from others who may have more knowledge about gardening.

Incorporates Motor and Cognitive Skills

Gardening incorporates both motor and cognitive skills, making it a great task to improve physical health. Someone who has an intellectual or developmental disability may have improved self-esteem after raising their own healthy foods, and someone with limited mobility may find low-stress exercise good for the body and mind.



Community Inclusion

One final reason to consider gardening as a hobby is that it's good for your mental and emotional well-being. Along with social inclusion, people who work on their own gardens find that they meet more people than they would have outside of a gardening program. Additionally, they're able to grow healthy food that they can share, increasing the benefit of their growing gardening experience.

<https://alsoweb.org/nonprofit-blog/the-impact-of-gardening-for-people-with-disabilities>



Transition planning takes time

Transitioning from special education services to adult services may seem far in the future for many families, but it is helpful to prepare. Access to special education, including transition services, ends when a student either graduates from high school or completes their transition program at age 22. Families can use this transition planning timeline to guide their child's journey to adulthood.

[Learn more from our new tip sheet](#)



earlySteps Louisiana's early intervention system Early Steps Workshops

A Family Orientation Webinar

May 8, 2024
11:00 am - 12:00 pm

As a parent of a child currently receiving EarlySteps, I would like to invite you to a parent orientation webinar to help you and your child get the most out of your experience from the services provided.

These topics and more will be covered:

- What is EarlySteps?
- What are my responsibilities?
- What are my rights as a parent?
- What is an IFSP?

Link to Register:

<https://tinyurl.com/ESFO5824>

Early Steps Transition Webinar

May 8, 2024
12:30 pm - 2:00 pm

Join us to get more information about Early Steps Transition.

China Guillory – Community Outreach Specialist will walk you through the process of Transition from Early Steps.

Guest Speaker:
Myllinda Elliot

Link to Register:

<https://tinyurl.com/EST5824>



FINANCIAL PLANNING FOR FAMILIES WITH A *Special Needs Child*

6:00-7:00 PM, TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 2024

HARDTNER HALL,
STOKES AUDITORIUM
5500 E SALE ROAD
LAKE CHARLES, LA 70605
QUESTIONS? CALL 337-562-4246



Guest speaker
**BRIAN YOUNG, CFP®,
CHSNC®**

Join the McNeese Autism Program and Brian Young, a Certified Financial Planner™ and Chartered Special Needs Consultant™ with over 25 years of experience, as he draws from his personal journey as a parent to a child with autism. You will gain insights into vital topics such as legal documents, Special Needs Trusts, ABLE accounts, retirement and survivorship plans, and tax strategies to ensure a secure financial future for your child.



earlysteps
Louisiana's early intervention system



General Education Provision Act

The Louisiana Part C FFY 2024 Grant Application Draft and The General Education Provision Act (GEPA) Posted A draft for a **60-day public participation period**.

The information can be accessed at

<https://ldh.la.gov/assets/docs/OCDD/EarlySteps/LouisianaPartCGrantApplication032024.pdf>.

For comments or questions, please send to caroline.oglesby@la.gov.

Chisholm: a class-action lawsuit on behalf of Medicaid-eligible children with Developmental Disabilities

Disability Rights Louisiana (DRLA) is a statewide non-profit agency providing FREE legal services, advocacy, and other supports to people with disabilities of all ages.

The Chisholm lawsuit¹ was filed in federal court because Louisiana's Medicaid agency was leaving eligible children waiting for years to receive services through what is now called the New Opportunities Waiver (NOW). Louisiana's Medicaid agency has a duty to actively identify and arrange needed services for these children. The judgments and settlements in this case intend to provide class members with improved services, not financial compensation. Disability Rights Louisiana (DRLA) continues to enforce Chisholm requirements. If you or your child qualifies as a Chisholm Class Member, and there are covered services which you have requested but not received, DRLA may be able to help!

Who is a Chisholm Class Member?

This class action lawsuit applies to people in Louisiana who:

- have a Developmental Disability
- receive Medicaid
- are at least 3 years of age but have not yet turned 21, and
- are on the waiting list / registry for a DD Medicaid Waiver (NOW, ROW, Supports Waiver, and/or Children's Choice Waiver).



What is required by law under the Chisholm settlement?

- Better notices to Medicaid recipients about what services are available to people who are not on a Waiver
 - Support Coordinators to help class members access all needed services before they get a waiver
- Support Coordinators must identify additional services that might help class members, even before the family requests those services
- Services (including nursing and speech / occupational / physical therapy) must be made available in the home when needed
- Access to one-on-one assistance to locate a nurse, therapist, or personal care provider within 10 working days
 - Medicaid cannot deny "prior approval" of services or medical supplies for paperwork reasons,
 - A request for prior approval to continue services at the same amount cannot be denied, unless there is evidence of significant medical improvement
- Psychologists, Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) therapists, and emergency mental health services during crisis for children with autism
 - Access to other needed services, like MultiSystemic Therapy and Therapeutic Foster Care.
 1. Civil Action No. 97-3274, EDLA, Judge Carl Barbier
 2. Medicaid agencies are required to perform Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment for recipients under age 21. Louisiana must provide these recipients with all services any state covers (outside of a Waiver), even if not in its own "state plan" for adults. This is called EPSDT.
 3. For children under the age of 3, Support Coordination is through EarlySteps.



Contact us:
Call: 800-960-7705
Visit: DisabilityRightsLA.org

Luke's Legacy Grant

If you or someone you know could use a helping hand – whether it's for home renovations, extra equipment, therapy, or travel expense reimbursements – don't miss the chance to apply. Our \$1,500 one-time payment aims to make a lasting impact on a family or individual in need.

The application period is closing soon on March 18th, so be sure to share your story before it's too late. We've already received inspiring stories of resilience, strength, and the power of community.

Let's keep the momentum going!

Save the date for May 27th when we'll announce the well-deserving recipient of the Luke's Legacy Grant. It's our way of giving back and fostering a more inclusive and supportive world for everyone.



Apply now and let's continue spreading the word!

<https://www.ffi-swla.com/lukes-legacy-application>



CYBERBULLYING WITH A DASH OF INTERNET SAFETY

Whether you are a child with a disability or an adult, there are unbiased predators and potentially inappropriate content that can be very harmful to unsuspecting users. Don't make it easy to regret your online experience whether with internet safety or cyberbullying. Cyberbullying can be particularly damaging and upsetting for a typical child but for a child with a disability this act can have long term effect on their self-esteem and mental health.

Cyberbullying has unique concerns, and this webinar will address those concerns. Please join us to learn more on internet safety and cyberbullying.

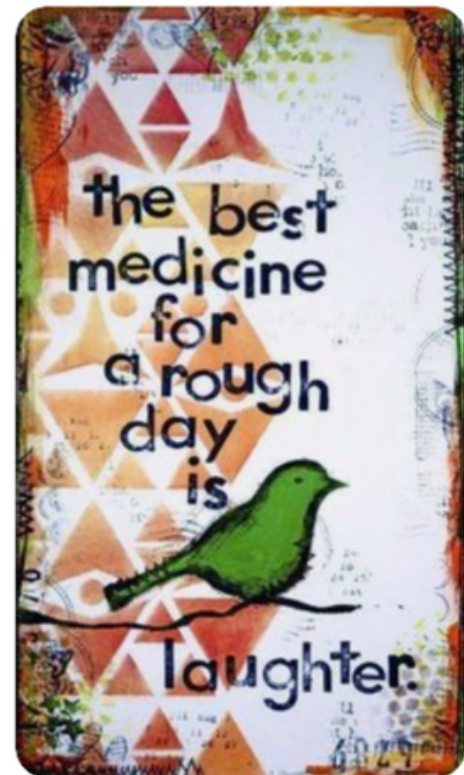
Tuesday,
April 23, 2024

1 pm - 2 pm

Link to Register:
<https://tinyurl.com/CBIS4-23-24>

Guest Speaker:
Joshua Tannehill
Technical Sales Consultant

For More Information call China at:
(337) 436-2570 ♦ 1-800-894-6558
info@fhfswla.org



NEED DISABILITY
RESOURCES???

MEET US AT THE MALL

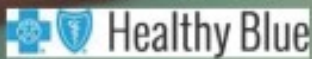
**FHF SWLA
EMPOWERMENT RESOURCE EXPO**

Saturday, April 20, 2024

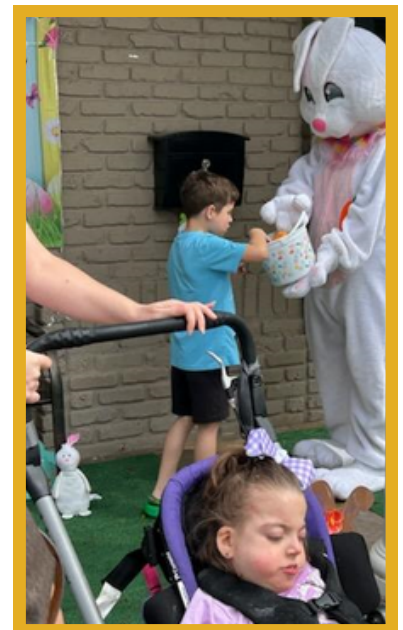
10:00AM - 2:00PM

**PRIEN LAKE MALL
496 WEST PRIEN LAKE ROAD
LAKE CHARLES, LA 70601**

info@fhfswla.org - 337.436.2570



**FHF 2nd Annual
Bunny Stop &
Hop 2024**



Is my Teen with autism ready to drive

Many parents grapple with this topic to one degree or another. How do I know if and when my child is ready to drive? The level of concern is understandably elevated when your child has autism. It's important to remember that there's no set rule to determine when someone is ready to drive, regardless of autism-related challenges. Some teenagers feel ready to drive as soon as they're old enough. Others wait several years or choose the alternative of navigating their local public transportation system.

Often, life circumstances play the largest role in the decision-making process. For example, if your son is going to be responsible for commuting to and from college or a job, learning to drive may become an important component of his independence. However, if there's a bus or subway stop nearby, learning to drive may not be imperative.

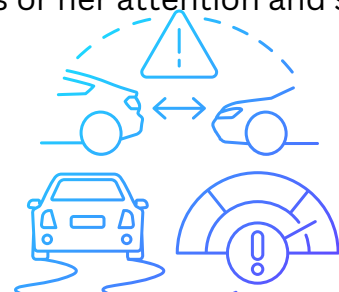


Here are a few points to consider when helping your son to make this important decision:

A checklist of crucial driving skills

You mention that your son is good at following laws. That's a great start, and a strength frequently associated with autism. Of course, there's much more to driving than simply remembering rules. In order to drive safely and effectively, an individual must use:

- Social judgement and perspective-taking – For example, a good driver has to ask and answer such questions as “Is the driver in the opposing lane going to allow me to turn in front of him?”
- Fine and gross motor skills – Can the driver use the wheel, brake and gas pedals and other controls in an effective and timely manner?
 - Physical coordination – Maneuvering a vehicle requires the driver to use hands and feet simultaneously and in coordination.
- Planning – A driver needs to know how to plan a route and follow it without getting disoriented. He or she also needs to understand when the car needs gas or service.
- Cognitive flexibility – A driver needs to figure out to do when the unexpected happens. What if a road is closed or there's construction? What if it starts to rain or snow heavily? What if the car gets a flat tire or otherwise starts making an unexpected sound that may require a response?
 - Sustained attention – The average commute is about 25 minutes. Drivers needs to keep their full attention on driving for the entire length of a trip.
- Impulse control and emotion regulation – How would your son react if another driver shouted at him or used a rude gesture? Would he respond appropriately if pulled over by police? How would he respond if other drivers were not abiding by the rules of the road as precisely as he thought they should?
- Multi-tasking and prioritizing – Many distractions can and will compete for a driver's attention. A cell phone rings. A drink spills. An irritating – or favorite – song plays on the radio. For safety's sake, a driver must continually evaluate what should be foremost in his or her attention and screen out distractors as needed.



Handling potential sensory overload

Second, many people on the autism spectrum have a tendency to be over-stimulated by the sights, sounds, smells and other sensory information in their environment. It is important to consider the very real possibility that situations such as heavy traffic, highway speeds or a profusion of road signs will prove over-stimulating to a driver who has autism.

Third, you and your child do not need to make this decision alone! A variety of professionals can help you and your son determine if they are ready and able to drive safely. Such an expert may also be able to help your son become more confident in his skills.

One place to start is through your son's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), if he has one. The school district's IEP transition coordinator should be able to connect you with someone who can conduct a driver readiness assessment. Another possible resource would be a community organization that specializes in vocation rehabilitation services. Even a local driving school can be a great resource if it has instructors who can recognize and assess your son's issues.



Autism study looks at driver readiness

In a 2012 study, researchers at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia surveyed nearly 300 parents of teens with autism who were registered with the Interactive Autism Network. In the process, they identified some of the characteristics increased the likelihood that a teen with autism was driving. These factors included having an Individualized Education Plan that included driving goals, planning to attend college, holding a paid job outside the home and having a parent who had previously taught a teen to drive. These aren't requirements for driving with autism. Rather they represent some additional characteristics that might help you and your son determine whether driving is right for him at this time. And if he's not comfortable with learning to drive now, encourage him to keep an open mind as he might feel ready in a few years.

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/expert-opinion/teen-autism-reluctant-drive-should-parent-push>

Explosive Atlantic hurricane season predicted for 2024

A super-charged hurricane season could spawn a near-record number of storms in the Atlantic this year, and forecasters may even run out of names for storms amid a frenzy of tropical systems. The Atlantic hurricane season officially gets underway on June 1 and runs through the end of November, and now is the time to prepare for a frenzy of tropical systems. There are signs that the first named system could spin up before the season kicks off as the calendar flips to June, a precursor of what's to come.

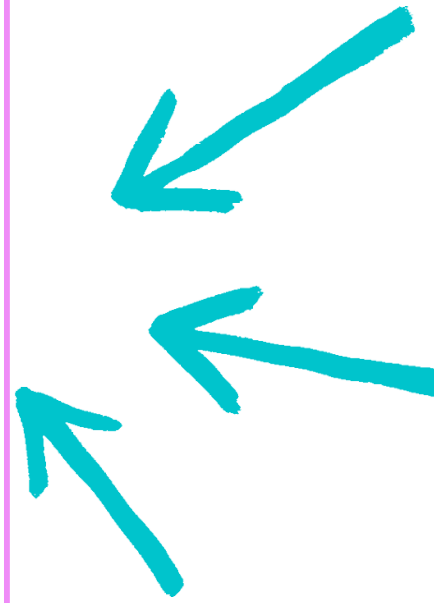
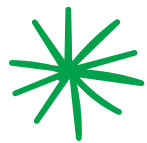
How many tropical storms and hurricanes are predicted in 2024?

AccuWeather meteorologists are forecasting 20-25 named storms across the Atlantic basin in 2024, including 8-12 hurricanes, four to seven major hurricanes and four to six direct U.S. impacts. This is all above the 30-year historical average of 14 named storms, seven hurricanes, three major hurricanes and four direct U.S. impacts. With so many factors that could bolster development, there is the potential that there could be even more than 25 named storms in 2024.

"There is a 10-15% chance of 30 or more named storms this year.

Be Prepared

<https://www.ready.gov/plan>



FREE WEBINAR

Supporting Your Child's Literacy Development in Preschool



SCAN ME

WEDNESDAY
APR 10, 2024
10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Presenter:
Dr. Beth McLean of the National Center for Improving Literacy

Register:
<https://tinyurl.com/LiteracyApr10>








FREE WEBINAR **TUE APR 16, 2024**
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

The ABCs of ESY (Extended School Year) Services

Sharon Blackmon, FHF of GNO;
Wallace Johnson, FHFSWLA

REGISTER NOW
<http://tinyurl.com/ESYApr16>

Community Partner Spotlight:



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



Hello 
SUMMER

**Riddle Answer:
A fire.**

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>

Invest in Families Helping Families of Southwest Louisiana.

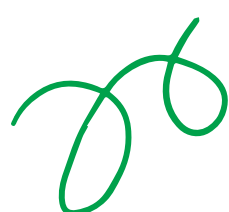
FHFSWLA is a 501 (c)3 nonprofit agency that relies on donations to meet the needs of our agency's mission and vision. By donating to FHFSWLA you are investing in the lives of

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

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



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