



• It's who we are. It's what we do. •

CAPITAL AREA QUARTERLY

SUMMER NEWSLETTER FOR JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER 2025



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CAPITAL AREA QUARTERLY

Summer Newsletter / July - September 2025

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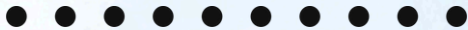
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UPCOMING MEETINGS

August 28

11:30 AM - 1:00 PM @ FHFGBR office

BOARD MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.



Thank you so much for your help... The information you provided was so incredibly helpful... I am so grateful for an organization like Families Helping Families and people who are willing to help parents, such as myself, advocate and help their children. Thank you so much again!

Joni



• It's who we are. It's what we do. •

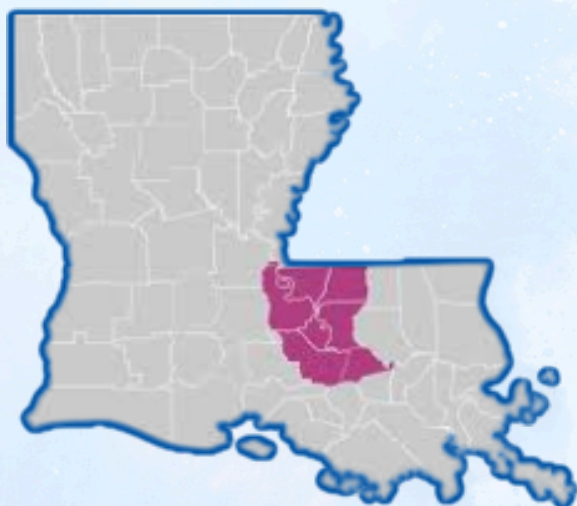


OUR VISION

**“Access Inclusion.
Empower Lives.”**

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to provide the individualized services, information, resources, and support to positively enhance the independence, productivity, and integration of persons with disabilities into the community.



PARISHES WE SERVE

REGION 2:

East Baton Rouge
West Baton Rouge
East Feliciana
West Feliciana
Ascension
Pointe Coupee
Iberville

OUR PROGRAMS



Bureau of Family Health
Family 2 Family Health Information Center
Inclusive Education
Louisiana's Council's Advocacy Network
Autism Spectrum Disorder Resource Program

OUR SERVICES

Education and Training - Families receive training and information on their rights, responsibilities, and protections under federal and state laws and policies so they can actively participate in planning and decision-making that affects their children; help educate youth and adults with disabilities to increase their capacity for self-advocacy. Our education and training provide opportunities for families and youth/adults to build on existing strengths to become stronger advocates and self-advocates.

Peer-to-peer Support - Parents who are raising a child with disabilities or special healthcare needs often feel overwhelmed, helpless and alone. Many parents say what helped them the most was talking to another parent. FHFGBR Center staff are parents of children/adults with disabilities. FHFGBR staff are a source of hope and inspiration. We know your child can succeed.

Information & Referral - Families need to be aware of the resources and services available to them in the community. We can assist by providing you with referrals and helping you navigate complicated service systems and provide ways to overcome challenges faced in these settings. We can answer questions and provide assistance for any disability, any age. Our information services provide opportunities for families to increase their knowledge and build their own capacity. We are a resource for the community to help educate, increase awareness and acceptance of citizens with disabilities.

Autism Spectrum Disorder Program – A comprehensive source of unbiased and factual information for families that have a member with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The program provides individualized services, information, parent-to-parent support, and family education on autism resources and offers referrals to available services. Individuals who work with the Autism Spectrum Disorder Program have resources and support that aim to positively affect the well-being of individuals with ASD and their families.



APRIL HAMPTON

LaCAN Region 2 Leader

Serving Ascension, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Iberville, Point Coupee, West Baton Rouge, and West Feliciana Parishes

Phone: (337) 522 6363 or (866) 216 7474

Email: ahampton@lacanadvocates.org

LOUISIANA COUNCIL'S ADVOCACY NETWORK

WWW.LACANADVOCATES.ORG

- Links lawmakers, individuals with disabilities and family members to make positive change in systems serving people with disabilities.
- Advocate for policies and systems that support inclusion everywhere people work, live, play, learn and grow!
- Support systems that help children and adults with disabilities to live in their own homes and be fully-included and participating members of their communities.
- LaCAN Leaders provide connection with a regional team of advocates, provide information on proposed policy changes and how those changes may affect you and others, provide training in skills to effectively advocate for systems change, and support you in linking with your policymakers!
- Complete our online membership form at www.lacanadvocates.org

MEMBERSHIP IS FREE! NO DUES. NO FEES.

www.facebook.com/LaDDCouncil

Make Your Voice Heard: LaCAN Community Meetings in August

LaCAN (Louisiana Council's Advocacy Network) is hosting a series of **Community Input Meetings** this month, and we want to hear from **parents, caregivers, and self-advocates**. These meetings are your opportunity to share your experiences, voice your concerns, and influence the next **legislative agenda** that will guide disability advocacy in Louisiana.

Throughout August, there are multiple opportunities to participate:

- **Region 2 (Greater Baton Rouge) Community Input Meeting**
Wednesday, August 13, 2025 | 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM | Virtual
- **Region 2 (Greater Baton Rouge) Community Input Meeting**
Wednesday, August 20, 2025 | 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM | Virtual
- **Statewide Community Input Meeting**
Wednesday, August 27, 2025 | 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM | Virtual

These meetings are designed to gather community feedback that directly shapes LaCAN's advocacy efforts. Whether you attend one of the Region 2 sessions or the statewide meeting, your input will help set priorities that matter most to Louisiana's disability community.

Why Your Voice Matters

- Share what's working—and what's not—when it comes to services and supports
- Highlight the needs of individuals with disabilities and their families
- Be part of a collective voice that brings issues to lawmakers' attention

How to Join

Details and registration links are included in the meeting flyers pictured here. Simply click the link or scan the QR code to register for the meeting that works best for you.

Your experiences and ideas are powerful. Don't miss this chance to make your voice heard and help create positive change for Louisiana's disability community.



COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT:

Episcopal School of Baton Rouge Middle School Student Council



Families Helping Families of Greater Baton Rouge (FHFGBR) is honored to have been chosen as the beneficiary of this year's **Episcopal School of Baton Rouge Middle School Field Day fundraiser**.

Each year, Episcopal hosts a fun and spirited **Field Day** where students can purchase concessions. The proceeds are then donated to a local charity organization, teaching students the value of giving back to their community.

This year, thanks to the leadership of **Avery Bradford** and the **Middle School Student Council**, the proceeds were generously donated to FHFGBR. Their thoughtful choice reflects not only kindness but also a strong commitment to supporting families of individuals with disabilities and special healthcare needs.

A Message of Gratitude

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Avery, the Student Council, and the entire Episcopal Middle School community. Your generosity helps us continue providing resources, training, and peer-to-peer support for families across the Greater Baton Rouge area.

Keep up the great work, Episcopal! Your efforts are making a difference in the lives of many families.



The logo features the letters "ADA" in large red font. Below it is a large blue "35" with a white star to its right. A horizontal blue line extends from the star to the right. Below the "35" is the word "Celebrate" in red and "July 26, 2025" in small black text. To the right of the line is the text "Americans with Disabilities Act" in black. Below the entire logo is the main title "CELEBRATING ADA DAY 2025" in large blue font.

CELEBRATING ADA DAY 2025

Families Helping Families of Greater Baton Rouge Honors 35 Years of the Americans with Disabilities Act

July 26, 2025, marks the 35th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a landmark civil rights law that continues to transform the lives of individuals with disabilities across our nation. The ADA prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in all areas of public life, including employment, schools, transportation, and access to public and private places open to the public.

For families and individuals with disabilities in Louisiana, the ADA has been life-changing—removing barriers, opening opportunities, and ensuring equal rights and protections under the law.

Why ADA Day Matters

- **Equal Access:** The ADA ensures that people with disabilities can fully participate in their communities.
- **Independence:** From accessible transportation to inclusive education, the ADA has made independence more achievable.
- **Advocacy in Action:** ADA Day is a reminder of the power of advocacy, and that progress is possible when individuals, families, and communities work together.

Our Work Continues

At Families Helping Families of Greater Baton Rouge, we see every day how the ADA makes a difference in the lives of the families we serve. Yet, we also know that there is still work to do to ensure true inclusion and accessibility for all.

This ADA Day, we encourage families, self-advocates, and community partners to reflect on the progress made and to recommit to building a world where people of all abilities can thrive.

Learn More & Get Involved

- Visit the ADA National Network for resources and updates.
- Connect with us to learn how Families Helping Families and LaCAN can support your advocacy efforts.
- Share your story of how the ADA has impacted your family's life.

Together, let's celebrate the promise of the ADA—and continue working toward a future where **access, inclusion, and equality** are more than laws; they are everyday realities.



Can You S.P.O.T. the Early Signs of Autism?

Spotting the Early Signs of Autism Can Make All the Difference.

Early signs of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) can typically be spotted by a child's first birthday. If your child is 12 months or older, take the first step by using the S.P.O.T. resource below.

If your child is 12 months of age or older, check each box you feel describes your child. If one or more are boxes are checked, share this sheet with your child's doctor or visit [SpotASDby3.com](https://www.spotasdby3.com) to take an additional assessment called MCHAT.® You can also contact the National Autism Association (NAA) at naa@nationalautism.org or 877.622.2884 for assistance.



Social Differences

- ☐ Avoids eye contact
- ☐ Does not point to show you something, or look at what you're pointing at (like a balloon or airplane)
- ☐ Does not bring you objects or items of interest to show you
- ☐ Does not look at others' faces during an exciting event, or respond to expressions, such as a smile
- ☐ Does not play pretend, copy, or imitate
- ☐ Plays with toys in an unusual way (i.e., lines up toys, spins wheels of a toy car repeatedly, etc.)
- ☐ Does not seem interested in other children



Persistent Sensory Differences

- ☐ Gets upset over everyday noises
- ☐ Over- or under-reacts to sounds, lights, smells, tastes, touch, and/or textures
- ☐ Has difficulty being consoled after becoming upset
- ☐ Resists loud or stressful areas or situations (may try to exit on own, run, or wander away)
- ☐ Has unusual fears (i.e., a non-threatening object, particular song or sound)
- ☐ Over- or under-reacts to the perceived feelings of people or objects



Obsessive & Repetitive Behaviors

- ☐ Obsessive interest in a particular object, activity, topic, or place (i.e., pond, fountain, train station)
- ☐ Repeats words or phrases over and over
- ☐ Repeats body movements: may flap hands or arms, rock, spin, twirl or flicks fingers
- ☐ Looks at objects or items close up from corner of eye
- ☐ Prefers sameness: has difficulty with changes to routine, or times of transition
- ☐ Walks on toes for a long time, or continues to toe-walk beyond age 2



Talking & Communication Delays

- ☐ Little to no babbling by 12 months
- ☐ Does not say single words by 16 months
- ☐ Does not wave 'bye,' or point to something needed or wanted
- ☐ Does not respond when name is called, but responds to other sounds
- ☐ Does not seem to understand what is being asked or said
- ☐ Loss of previous babbling, language skills, or words



- ☒ Autism affects all races, genders, and ages
- ☒ Studies show that nearly 80% to 90% of parents saw signs of autism in their child by 24 months, and that early intervention can have a positive impact on a child's longterm success
- ☒ Understanding autism also allows caregivers to learn about important safety topics, such as wandering/elopement behaviors in children with autism

#SpotASDby3



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AUTISM & WANDERING PREVENTION TIPS

Promoting Safety In the Home & Community



Similar to wandering in people with dementia, people with autism spectrum disorder may wander or elope from a safe environment. Because people with ASD have challenges in areas of sensory processing, impulse control and bodily autonomy, it is critical for parents and caregivers to understand ways to keep loved ones with autism safe.

 Prevention
 Education
 Response

Install Home Safeguards



Install secure locks (exterior doors), home security system or door/window chimes; fence yard; secure gates; keep garage opener out of reach; use baby monitors and visual prompts like simple stop signs.

Identify Triggers/Teach Self-help



Be aware of any known triggers that could prompt fleeing (loud noises, bright lights, fears, etc.) and work towards teaching your child safe alternative ways to respond.

For an individual who demonstrates bolting behaviors due to fear or stress, etc., use aids, such as noise-cancelling headphones, and teach calming techniques using favorites topics or items.

Secure Personal Safeguards



Have wearable identification on your child; Temporary Tattoos are great for field trips and other outings; Check with local law enforcement to see if they offer Tracking Devices.

Teach Safety Skills



Enroll your child into swimming lessons. Final lessons should be with clothes and shoes on.

Use social stories to teach individuals with autism ways to stay safe, and use favorite objects or tools to demonstrate when it's outside time versus inside time.

Pursue forms of reliable communication, and seek a therapist who can help with impulse control and purposeful motor skills.

Create Community Awareness



Alert trusted neighbors, and introduce them to your child; fill out an alert form for local police, include a current photo and unique characteristics, likes, fears, and behaviors; alert the school, and bus drivers.

Call 911



Remain calm and always call 911 immediately if an individual with ASD is missing; law enforcement should treat each case as "critical." Law enforcement agencies are encouraged to contact the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children at 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678) for additional assistance.

Remain Hyper Vigilant



Stay on extra high alert during warmer months, holidays, vacations, camping trips, transition periods, outdoor gatherings, a recent move to a new home or school, visiting an unfamiliar setting, public outings.

Initiate a "tag, you're it" system during family gatherings and transitions. Tag one responsible adult to closely supervise your child for an agreed-upon period of time.

Search Water First



Immediately search areas that pose the highest threat first, such as nearby water, busy streets, train tracks, and parked cars.



Part of the Big Red Safety Box® Program Brought to You By the National Autism Association, ©Copyright 2022



If someone with autism is missing, always search water first.



HAVE A CHILD WITH AUTISM?

Request a Free Big Red Safety Box!

NAA's Big Red Safety Box is a free safety resource for families in the autism community living in the U.S. Request your free box today at nationalautism.org



What's Inside the Box:

- ✓ One (1) BeREDy Booklet
- ✓ Two (2) GE Wireless Door/Window Alarms with batteries
- ✓ One (1) RoadID Bracelet or Shoe ID tag voucher
- ✓ Four (4) Adhesive Stop Sign Visual Prompts for doors and windows
- ✓ One (1) Safety Alert Window Cling for car or home windows
- ✓ One (1) Child ID Kit from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children



Regardless of any tools caregivers may have in place, if a loved one's medical condition interferes with their ability to recognize danger or stay safe, it is critical that caregivers maintain close supervision and security in all settings. For more information and ways to prevent wandering-related incidents, please visit nationalautism.org.



877.NAA.AUTISM (622.2884)
nationalautismassociation.org
naa@nationalautism.org



Advocacy



Tools



Education



Hope

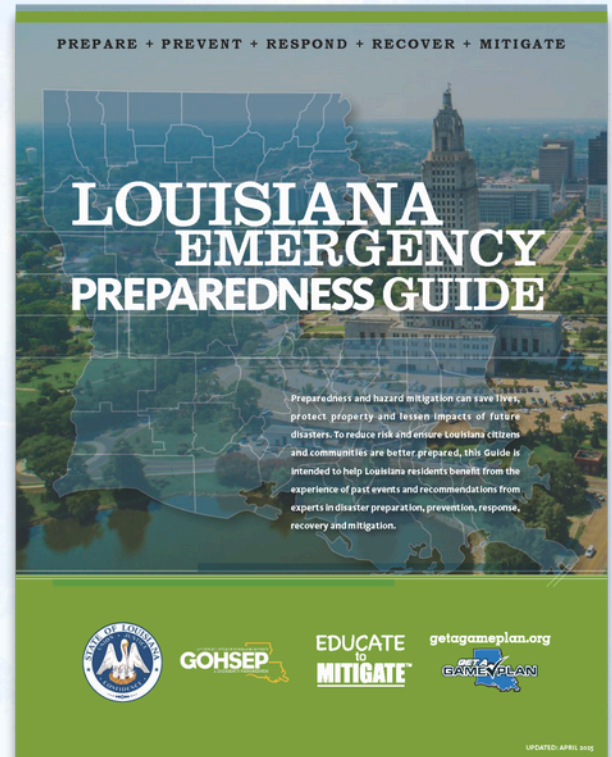
HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS: SUPPORTING FAMILIES OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Living in Louisiana means that hurricane preparedness is a way of life, but for families of individuals with disabilities or special healthcare needs, planning ahead is especially critical. Taking the time now to prepare can reduce stress, protect health and safety, and ensure that you and your loved ones have what you need during an emergency.

The 2025 Louisiana Emergency Preparedness Guide is a valuable resource designed with families like ours in mind. It provides step-by-step instructions, checklists, and important information on shelters, evacuation routes, and emergency contacts. You can view and download the guide [here](#).

Key Tips for Families:

- **Create a personalized emergency plan.** Think through your family's unique needs, including medications, medical devices, mobility supports, or dietary requirements.
- **Build a "Go Bag."** Include essentials such as prescriptions, medical supplies, adaptive equipment, important documents, and comfort items for your loved one.
- **Register for local assistance.** Many parishes offer registries for residents who may need transportation or medical support during an evacuation. Check with your local Office of Emergency Preparedness.
- **Stay connected.** Keep updated with weather alerts, evacuation orders, and shelter information through trusted news and official parish or state channels.



- **Practice your plan.** If possible, walk through your evacuation or shelter-in-place plan with your loved ones to help them feel more secure and familiar with the process.

Every family's situation is different, and there is no "one size fits all" plan. Taking time now to prepare helps ensure that individuals with disabilities are safe, supported, and included in every step of the process.

For full details, tools, and resources, we encourage you to read the 2025 Louisiana Emergency Preparedness Guide.

A “BACK 2 SCHOOL” MOMMY MOMENT

By: Fran Peterson, FHFGBR Disability Initiatives Specialist



The time has come for the back-to-school hustle and bustle—a season that can be especially stressful for parents of children with disabilities. It doesn’t have to be if you have preparations in place. Over the years, I’ve learned a few tips to help make the first day of school “easy breezy.”

1. Review and Update Important Documents

Start by reviewing your child’s IEP and 504 plans. Confirming their goals and accommodations is essential for the first day of school and being ready to communicate them to teachers. Make sure services and accommodations are current. Understanding my son’s IEP accommodations was vital in creating an effective schoolwork schedule.

2. Prepare Your Child for the Transition

Visiting the school together helped my son feel comfortable and acclimated, making the drop-off smoother on the first day. Allowing your child to witness the initial exchange between parents and teachers creates a sense of bonding and establishes a friendly atmosphere for both teacher and student.

3. Practice Daily Routines

The week before school began, I would take a daily stroll with my son to the bus stop. This became our special time together and made the bus routine familiar and stress-free on the first day.

4. Update Your Contact Information

Ensure the school has accurate emergency contact numbers and emails. Nothing is more stressful than being unreachable if an emergency arises.

5. Create a Crisis Plan

Prepare a list for the school and teachers outlining how to manage meltdowns, aggressive behavior, or medical issues. For example, my son loves being hugged, held, and comforted—but many children on the spectrum do not. Make sure your child’s teachers are aware of triggers and strategies to help keep your child safe and supported.

These are just a few tools I’ve used to minimize the stress of back-to-school season. For more tips and resources, visit [Reading Rockets](#) for detailed back-to-school guidance for parents of students with special needs.

TRANSITIONING TO ADULthood: EMPOWERING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

As students with disabilities approach the end of their high school journey, it's essential to plan for the next steps in their lives early. Transitioning to adulthood encompasses various aspects, including further education, employment, and independent living. In Louisiana, several resources are available to support this transition.



Postsecondary Education Options

Louisiana offers several inclusive higher education programs for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. These programs provide opportunities for academic learning, social engagement, and career development. For more information on these programs, visit the [College Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities Resource Guide](#).

Employment Resources

Transitioning into the workforce is a significant milestone. The Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) offers comprehensive services to assist individuals with disabilities in obtaining and maintaining employment. Their programs include vocational guidance, job readiness training, and assistive technology assessments. [Learn more about LRS services at Louisiana Rehabilitation Services.](#)

Independent Living Supports

Independent living is a critical component of adulthood. The Louisiana Division of Administration's Office of the ADA Coordinator provides resources to help individuals with disabilities live independently. Their [Disability Resources page](#) includes information on housing, transportation, and community services.

Additional Resources

- Disability Rights Louisiana: Offers advocacy and legal services to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities. Explore their employment resources at [Disability Rights Louisiana Employment](#).
- Louisiana Employment Resource Guide: A comprehensive guide compiled by the Louisiana Division of Administration, offering information on available services to help individuals with disabilities obtain and maintain employment. Access the guide at [Louisiana Employment Resource Guide](#).

What is the EarlySteps Program?

EarlySteps is Louisiana's Early Intervention System for children with disabilities and developmental delays ages birth to three and their families. By providing resources and support during those critical years, EarlySteps helps children get off to a great start.

Who is eligible?

Children with medical conditions likely to cause disability or developmental delay, or with delays in the following areas, may be eligible: physical development, cognitive development, social and emotional development, adaptive development and/or communication. We would like to invite you to our RICC and SICC meetings.

Anyone can refer a child to Early Steps

If you know of a child that would benefit from receiving services from EarlySteps please call 225-925-2426. It's never too soon to ask questions about your baby's development.



Services Provided by Early Steps:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| * Audiology | * Special Instruction | * Health Services | * Family Training |
| * Speech-Language Therapy | * Assistive Technology | * Nursing Services | * Transportation |
| * Occupational Therapy | * Service Coordination | * Vision Services | * Psychological Services |
| * Physical Therapy | * Nutrition services | * Medical Evaluations | * Social Work services |



State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC)

The mission of the SICC is to work in collaboration with the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities, in an advisory capacity, to design and oversee the implementation of a family-centered, community-based, comprehensive, interagency service delivery system for infants and toddlers (birth through two) who are eligible for Part C services, and their families. The SICC meets quarterly on the second Wednesday of the month. All meetings are open to the public and held in accordance with the Louisiana Open Meeting Laws.

Regional Interagency Coordinating Council (RICC)

The Regional Interagency Coordinating Council (RICC) is an essential component of the Part C early intervention system at the local level. The group's membership includes family

members of children with disabilities, as well as service providers, community leaders, and agency representatives. The RICC meets quarterly. All meetings are open to the public and are held in accordance with the Louisiana Open Meeting Laws.

The Early Steps Region 2 office is located at 566 Lobdell Ave in Baton Rouge.

LOUISIANA WAIVER SUPPORT SERVICES

Supporting Children & Youth with Special Healthcare Needs

Raising a child with special healthcare needs can be challenging—but Louisiana offers Medicaid waiver programs that provide essential services to support children and youth in home and community settings.

Children's Choice Waiver (CCW)

Supports children birth–20 years with services up to \$20,200/year:

- Support Coordination
- Physical, Occupational, & Speech Therapy
- Family Training
- Respite Care
- Environmental Modifications
- Learn more: <https://ldh.la.gov/office-for-citizens-with-developmental-disabilities/childrens-choice-waiver>

Supports Waiver (SW)

For individuals 18+, focuses on independence and employment:

- Supported Employment & Prevocational Services
- Day Habilitation & Habilitation Services
- Respite
- Learn more: <https://ldh.la.gov/office-for-citizens-with-developmental-disabilities/supports-waiver>

Residential Options Waiver (ROW)

Supports individuals of all ages with home & community-based services:

- Community Living Supports
- Companion Care
- Host Home & Shared Living Options
- Environmental Modifications
- Learn more: <https://ldh.la.gov/office-for-citizens-with-developmental-disabilities/residential-options-waiver>

Children's Special Health Services (CSHS)

Ensures children with special healthcare needs have access to:

- Specialty Medical Care
- Care Coordination
- Youth Health Transition Support
- Developmental Screening
- Learn more: <https://ldh.la.gov/bureau-of-family-health/childrens-special-health-services>



Tip for Families: Start early! Work with your child's school and healthcare team to develop a plan tailored to your child's needs.



Fact Sheet: Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

What is SSI?

SSI is a federal program that provides monthly payments to adults and children with a disability or blindness and with limited income and resources. SSI payments are also made to people age 65 and older without disabilities who meet the financial qualifications.

To get SSI, you must meet certain requirements:

- If you are an adult, the medical condition must prevent you from working and be expected to last at least 1 year or result in death.
- There are different rules for children. For more information, read *Benefits for Children With Disabilities* (Publication No. 05-10026).

How much can you get?

- The basic monthly SSI payment for 2025 is the same nationwide: \$967 for 1 person and \$1,450 for a couple.
- Not everyone gets the same amount. You may get more if you live in a state that adds money to the federal SSI payment. You may receive less if you or your family has other income. Where and with whom you live also affects the amount of your SSI payment.

How do you qualify for SSI?

- General tax revenues, not Social Security taxes, fund SSI. You do not need to have worked or paid Social Security taxes to qualify for SSI.
- Your income and the things you own affect eligibility for SSI.
- Your income includes the money you earn, any Social Security benefits, pensions, and the value of items you get from someone else, such as shelter.
- You may be able to get SSI if your resources (the things you own) are worth no more than \$2,000 for a person or \$3,000 for a married couple living together. We don't count everything you own when we decide if you can get SSI. For example, we don't count a house you own if you live in it, and we usually don't count your car. We do count cash, bank accounts, stocks, and bonds.

- You must live in the United States or the Northern Mariana Islands to get SSI. If you're not a U.S. citizen, but you are lawfully residing in the United States, you still may be able to get SSI. For more information, read *Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for Non-Citizens* (Publication No. 05-11051).

How do you apply for SSI?

- Visit our SSI webpage at www.ssa.gov/ssi to learn if you can begin the application process online.
- Once you complete the online process, a Social Security representative will contact you if we need additional information.
- If you cannot apply online, you can call 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778) or your local Social Security office.

Did you know?

- If you get SSI, you usually can get benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid too. SNAP helps pay for food and Medicaid helps pay doctor and hospital bills.
- People who have worked may also be eligible to receive Social Security disability or retirement benefits in addition to SSI.

Other resources

- You can learn more about the SSI program in our publications, *Supplemental Security Income, You May Be Able to Get Supplemental Security Income*, and *A Guide to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for Groups and Organizations*.
- You can also help someone you care about apply for benefits and access Social Security services by visiting our People Helping Others page at www.ssa.gov/thirdparty.



Securing today
and tomorrow

SSA.gov     

Social Security Administration

Publication No. 05-11002

January 2025 (Recycle prior editions)

Fact Sheet: Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

Produced and published at U.S. taxpayer expense

MEDICAID MEMBERS

Don't risk losing your health coverage.

Keep your contact information up to date, including your address, phone number, cell phone number and email. Choose the way that is easiest for you:



Online at mymedicaid.la.gov



By email at mymedicaid@la.gov



By calling Louisiana Medicaid

toll-free at 1-888-342-6207,

or by calling your health plan

(your plan's number is on your insurance card)

Don't miss important updates about your health insurance. If you do get a letter in the mail, follow the instructions and respond to Medicaid.



www.healthy.la.gov



ACHIEVE A BETTER

LIFE EXPERIENCE



Contribute up to

\$18,000
per year



ELIGIBILITY

You must be a **resident of Louisiana** at the time of application and have a qualifying disability with **onset prior to age 26**.

Scan here to learn more about eligibility information. →



LAABLE is Louisiana's 529A savings plan which offers tax-advantaged savings accounts for individuals with disabilities, allowing them to save and invest without affecting their eligibility for certain public benefits.

ADVANTAGES

- It allows the family to save without worrying about whether the funds in an account will be counted as an asset for purposes of determining eligibility for federal and state benefits programs such as Medicaid and Social Security.
- An account owner can personally save up to \$18,000 per year or save with help from family and friends. (As long as the balance in an account does not meet or exceed \$100,000, the funds will not be counted as a resource for purposes of determining eligibility for SSI. In addition, if an account does meet or exceed \$100,000, SSI will only be suspended; it will not be canceled. Once the balance in the account goes below this \$100,000 threshold, the SSI benefits can be reinstated.)
- Any earnings on your account (i.e., interest that accrues on the account) are tax free as long as you spend the funds on qualified disability expenses.

QUALIFIED EXPENSES

- **Education** (including education expenses for preschool through postsecondary)
- **Housing**
- **Transportation**
- **Employment Training and Support**
- **Assistive Technology and Related Services**
- **Personal Support Services**
- **Health, Prevention, and Wellness**
- **Financial Management and Administrative Services**
- **Legal Fees**
- **Expenses for Oversight and Monitoring**
- **Funeral and Burial Expenses**
- **Other expenses which may be identified by the Internal Revenue Service**

FOR MORE INFORMATION



←  Scan here to visit www.able.osfa.la.gov

 Email laable@la.gov

 Follow [@startsaving529programla](https://www.facebook.com/startsaving529programla)

National Suicide Prevention Month

Supporting the Mental Health of Individuals with Disabilities

September is **National Suicide Prevention Month**, a time to raise awareness, spread hope, and share resources to prevent suicide. For families of individuals with disabilities, this month is also a reminder that mental health is just as important as physical health.

Why This Matters

Research shows that individuals with disabilities—especially those with complex health needs, communication challenges, or social isolation—may face an increased risk for depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. Families and caregivers play a critical role in recognizing the warning signs and supporting their loved ones.

Warning Signs to Know

The **National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)** has developed a fact sheet highlighting warning signs of suicide. Some of these include:

- Talking about wanting to die or feeling hopeless.
- Withdrawing from family, friends, or usual activities
- Changes in mood, sleep, or appetite
- Expressing unbearable emotional or physical pain

👉 We've included the full NIMH fact sheet with this article for families to review and keep handy.

How Families Can Help

- **Check in often.** Create space for honest conversations and let your loved one know their feelings matter.
- **Trust your instincts.** If something feels off, take it seriously.

💚 **If you or someone you know is in crisis, call or text 988 right away. Help is always available.**

WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE:
The behaviors listed below may be some of the signs that someone is thinking about suicide.

TALKING ABOUT:

- ▶ Wanting to die
- ▶ Great guilt or shame
- ▶ Being a burden to others

FEELING:

- ▶ Empty, hopeless, trapped, or having no reason to live
- ▶ Extremely sad, more anxious, agitated, or full of rage
- ▶ Unbearable emotional or physical pain

CHANGING BEHAVIOR, SUCH AS:

- ▶ Making a plan or researching ways to die
- ▶ Withdrawing from friends, saying goodbye, giving away important items, or making a will
- ▶ Taking dangerous risks such as driving extremely fast
- ▶ Displaying extreme mood swings
- ▶ Eating or sleeping more or less
- ▶ Using drugs or alcohol more often

If these warning signs apply to you or someone you know, get help as soon as possible, particularly if the behavior is new or has increased recently.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
Call or text **988**
Chat at 988lifeline.org

NIMH National Institute of Mental Health

www.nimh.nih.gov/suicideprevention
NIMH Identifier No. OM-25-4316

- **Seek professional support.** Reach out to healthcare providers, mental health specialists, or local support organizations.
- **Use crisis resources.** In the U.S., call or text **988** for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, available 24/7.

You Are Not Alone

At **Families Helping Families of Greater Baton Rouge**, we know that supporting a loved one with a disability can be both rewarding and challenging. Mental health is a vital part of the journey, and no family should walk it alone. By knowing the signs, offering support, and connecting to resources, you can help protect your loved one's well-being.

2025
FALL

sunshine social



aug. 15



FAN FEST

sept. 19



WILD WILD WEST

oct. 17



FESTIE WITH YOUR BESTIE

nov. 21



DOWN ON THE BAYOU

dec. 19



MERRY AND BRIGHT BALL

Disc jockey DINNER PRIZES *SOCIALIZATION and FUN!*

*To register and for
more information:*



BREC.ORG/ADAPTIVEREGISTRATION



RECADAPTIVE@BREC.ORG

**MILTON J. WOMACK
PARK BALLROOM**

6-9 p.m.

Ages: 16+

[with intellectual/developmental
disabilities + their families]

\$5/person

BREC does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, religion, veteran status or sexual orientation in its programs and activities.



DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

LEARN THE SIGNS

WEBINAR

Learn the Signs - Act Early

- Join us for a webinar on how early experiences shape children's growth and learning. Discover key developmental milestones, how to spot delays early, and explore the CDC's free tools to track development from birth to age five.



DATE & TIME

09/24/2025

11:00AM TO NOON

REGISTER TODAY!

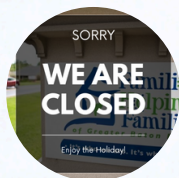


<https://tinyurl.com/EarlyDevSept2025>

(985) 875-0511

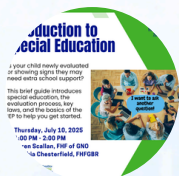
info@fhfnorthshore.org

QUARTERLY CALENDAR



Friday, **July 4**

Independence Day



Thursday, **July 10**
1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

Intro to Special
Education

Free Webinar
tinyurl.com/071025IntroSpEd



Wednesday, **July 16**
2:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Top Tips for an Effective
IEP Meeting

Free Webinar
tinyurl.com/071625TopTips



Wednesday, **August 6**
1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

IEPs & Behavior & Discipline -
Oh My!

Free Webinar
tinyurl.com/080625IEPBEHAV



Wednesday, **August 13**
11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

LaCAN Community Input
Session 1

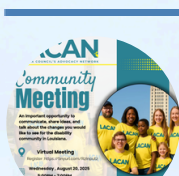
Online Meeting
tinyurl.com/R2Input1



Friday, **August 15**
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Sunshine Social: Fan Fest
Ages 16+/\$5 per person

Milton J. Womack Park
Ballroom, Baton Rouge



Wednesday, **August 20**
5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

LaCAN Community Input
Session 2

Online Meeting
tinyurl.com/R2Input2



Thursday, **August 28**
11:30 AM - 1:00 PM

FHFGBR Full Board Member
Meeting

FHFGBR Office

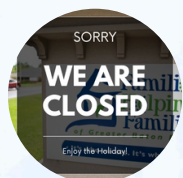
QUARTERLY CALENDAR



Friday, **August 29**
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Step Into Early Steps

Free Webinar
tinyurl.com/EarlySteps829



Monday, **September 1**

Labor Day



Friday, **September 5**
11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Your Special Education
Rights

Free Webinar
tinyurl.com/090525Rights



Friday, **September 19**
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Sunshine Social: Wild Wild West
Ages 16+/\$5 per person

Milton J. Womack Park
Ballroom, Baton Rouge



Monday, **September 22**
12:00 PM - 12:30 PM

Families Supporting Families

Facebook Live

Save the Date

04.25.26

ACTIVE FOR AUTISM

5K RUN/WALK & FUN FEST 2026

Location:
Pennington Biomedical Research Center
6400 Perkins Rd.
Baton Rouge, LA 70808

Time:
8:00AM TO 12:00PM

www.fhfgbr.org

2356 Drusilla Lane, Baton Rouge LA, 70809 | phone 225.216.7474

STAY UPDATED!

For more information, check out our Event Calendar on our website at www.fhfgbr.org. Follow us on Facebook, Instagram & Twitter X for news and updates.



AWARENESS DATES

JUL 25

Disability Pride Month
National Cleft & Craniofacial Awareness & Prevention Month
National Fragile X Syndrome Awareness Month
Sarcoma Research Awareness Month

13 Gastrointestinal Stromal Tumor (GIST) Awareness
26 Americans with Disabilities Act Anniversary
28 World Hepatitis Day
30 Gastroschisis Awareness Day

AUG 25

Children's Eye Health & Safety Month
Psoriasis Action Month
Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) Awareness Month

7 Purple Heart Day
17 National Nonprofit Day
20 National Accessible Air Travel Day
21 National Senior Citizen's Day

SEP 25

Achalasia Awareness Month
Childhood Cancer Awareness Month
Craniofacial Acceptance Month
Deaf Awareness Month
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Syndrome Awareness
Leukemia & Lymphoma Awareness Month
National Guide Dog Month
National Suicide Prevention Awareness month
Pain Awareness Month
Spinal Cord Injury Awareness Month

7 Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy Awareness
7-13 National Suicide Prevention Week
13 Celiac Disease Awareness Day
20 Usher Syndrome Awareness Day
26 Mesothelioma Awareness Day
28 International Day of the Deaf
30 Limb Girdle Muscular Dystrophy Awareness



Parents & Caregivers... You're not alone.

If your child has a developmental or learning disability, **we can help.**
Resources. Information. Peer support from those who understand.



Parishes we serve...

East Baton Rouge • West Baton
 Rouge • Pointe Coupee
 East Feliciana • West Feliciana
 Iberville • Ascension



We're here for you—reach out today! Check out our website or social media for events, resources, and support for your family.

2356 Drusilla Lane, Baton Rouge, LA 70809
 225.216.7474 • info@fhfgr.org • www.fhfgr.org



save the date
04.25.26

**Annual
 5k Run/Walk
 & Fun Fest**



Families Helping Families (FHF)

is the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council's statewide network of ten family-directed and family-staffed regional resource centers which provide information on all types of services, goods, technologies, and activities that improve the quality of life in the community; help individuals understand their rights and how to advocate for themselves; and lend support from someone "who has been there."

REGION 2 – FHF of Greater Baton Rouge, Inc.
Serving parishes of East and West Baton Rouge, East and West Feliciana, Iberville, Pointe Coupee, Ascension
 Dr. Marilyn Thornton, Executive Director
 2356 Drusilla Lane
 Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70809
 225-216-7474 or 1-866-216-7474, 225-216-7977 Fax
 Email: info@fhfgr.org
 Website: www.fhfgr.org

Region Map



REGION 3 – Bayou Land FHF, Inc.

Serving parishes of Assumption, Lafourche, St. Charles, St. James, St. John, St. Mary, Terrebonne
 Jacki Pierce, Executive Director
 286 Hwy. 3185 Thibodaux, Louisiana 70301
 985-447-4461 or 1-800-331-5570, 985-447-7988 Fax
 Email: jpierce@blfhf.org
 Website: www.blfhf.org

REGION 4 – FHF of Acadiana, Inc.

Serving parishes of Acadia, Evangeline, Iberia, Lafayette, St. Landry, St. Martin, Vermillion
 Nicole Flores, Executive Director
 100 Benman Road
 Lafayette, Louisiana 70506
 337-984-3458 or 1-855-984-3458, 337-984-3468 Fax
 Email: info@fhfacadiana.org
 Website: <http://www.fhfacadiana.org/>

REGION 5 – FHF of Southwest Louisiana, Inc.

Serving parishes of Allen, Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, Jeff Davis
 Susan Riehn, Executive Director
 324 W. Hale St.
 Lake Charles, Louisiana 70601
 337-436-2570 or 1-800-894-6558, 337-436-2578 Fax
 Email: info@fhfswla.org
 Website: www.fhfswla.org

REGION 6 – FHF at the Crossroads of La., Inc.

Serving parishes of Avoyelles, Concordia, Catahoula, Grant, LaSalle, Rapides, Vernon and Winn
 Jim Sprinkle, Executive Director
 Kristen Reed, Deputy Director
 2840 Military Hwy., Suite A
 Pineville, Louisiana 71360
 318-641-7373 or 1-800-259-7200, 318-640-4299 Fax
 Email: fhfroads@gmail.com
 Website: www.fhfroads.com

REGION 7 – FHF of Region 7, Inc.

Serving parishes of Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Claiborne, Desoto, Red River, Natchitoches, Sabine, Webster
 Chanel Jackson, Executive Director
 215 Bobbie Street, Suite 100
 Bossier City, Louisiana 71112
 318-226-4541 or 1-877-226-4541, 318-425-8295 Fax
 Email: info@fhfregion7.com
 Website: www.fhfregion7.com

REGION 8 – FHF of Northeast Louisiana, Inc.

Serving parishes of Caldwell, East Carroll, Franklin, Jackson, Lincoln, Madison, Morehouse, Ouachita, Richland, Tensas, Union, West Carroll
 Stacey Guidry-Little, Executive Director
 5200 Northeast Road Monroe, Louisiana 71203
 318-361-0487 or 1-888-300-1320, 318-361-0417 Fax
 Email: info@fhfnela.org
 Website: www.fhfnela.org

REGION 9 – Northshore FHF, Inc.

Serving parishes of Livingston, St. Helena, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Washington
 Karen Artus, Executive Director
 108 Highland Park Plaza, Suite 108
 Covington, Louisiana 70433
 985-875-0511 or 1-800-383-8700, 985-875-9979 Fax
 Email: info@fhfnorthshore.org
 Website: www.fhfnorthshore.org

REGION 1&10 – FHF of Greater New Orleans, Inc.

Serving Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, and Jefferson Parish
 Laura S. Nata, Executive Director
 700 Hickory Avenue Harahan, Louisiana 70123
 504-888-9111 or 1-800-766-7736, 504-353-2350 Fax
 Email: info@fhfogn.org
 Website: <http://www.fhfogn.org/>



OFFICE CLOSURES

Independence Day: July 4

Labor Day: September 1

Office Hours: Monday to Friday 8 am - 4 pm

FHFGBR is funded by many individuals, foundations, small businesses, local governmental entities, state government departments, and corporations. Major funders include Bayouland Families Helping Families, Capital Area Human Services, Early Steps, the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council, Louisiana Department of Education, the Louisiana Department of Health Office of Behavioral Health and the Louisiana Department of Health, Bureau of Family Health.

FHFGBR does not endorse or promote any legislation, institutions, individuals, or methods of treatment or therapy.