

OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, & DECEMBER 2025

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Families Helping Families of Northeast Louisiana, Inc. is a family-directed resource center whose mission is to provide information, referrals, and peer to peer support to individuals with disabilities and their families.

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Funding Acknowledgements:



These agencies provide the core funding to support programs and services provided by the network of Families Helping Families resource centers across the state of Louisiana. These agencies also work hand-in-hand with FHF Centers to support various collaborative initiatives, as they too believe that families are a vital component in the array of services provided to individuals with disabilities.

Who We Are:

Families Helping Families is one of the lead resource centers serving individuals with developmental disabilities and their families in Northeast Louisiana. Eligible disabilities include physical, mental, emotional, behavioral, and/or learning disabilities.

Caring for individuals who have disabilities takes a wealth of support, knowledge, and information. The Families Helping Families Center is uniquely committed to empowering individuals who have a disability. Each staff member at Families Helping Families is personally connected to the disabled community.

Families Helping Families utilizes a parent-driven, coordinated network of services to assist families in achieving the ultimate goal of full inclusion for individuals with disabilities.

Families Helping Families has successfully assisted thousands of families in connecting them to services, understanding their rights and responsibilities which allow individuals to live, work, and play in our communities.

WHAT WE DO...

Information and Referral

- We provide information about developmental disabilities and direct you to the resources you need for services or additional information.
- We also have an extensive lending library with topics ranging from education to health issues. This library is available to you, your child's educators, and health professionals.

Education and Training

- Workshops are coordinated and presented on topics relevant to the issues facing persons with disabilities and their families. Call our office or visit our website today for topics, times and locations.

Family to Family Support

- We will link families with similar experiences who can provide emotional support, specific information, and guidance.
- Our Family to Family Support program can help families navigate through difficult times and also share the joys of our children's ABILITIES.





Northeast Delta HSA Relaunches its Phoenix Clinic to Serve People with Intellectual and Physical Disabilities

October 14, 2025

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MONROE, LA – Northeast Delta Human Services Authority (NEDHSA) continues to break down barriers for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. NEDHSA installed new signage at the Monroe Integrated Care Clinic in a dedicated waiting area for Phoenix Clinic clients.



The Phoenix Clinic, a trusted behavioral healthcare provider serving individuals with developmental disabilities for nearly a decade, is proud to announce a relaunch to celebrate a major milestone in the clinic's history. For the first time in its 9 years of service, The Phoenix Clinic will have its own dedicated signage, marking a new chapter of visibility, growth, and commitment to the community.



"This sign is more than just a marker – it represents our roots in this community and our ongoing mission to provide compassionate, specialized care to individuals with developmental disabilities," said NEDHSA Executive Director Dr. Monteic A. Sizer. "For the past nine years, we have been honored to walk alongside our patients and their families, and this new signage is a symbol of the home we've built together."



About The Phoenix Clinic:

The Phoenix Clinic, a collaboration between Integrated Care and Developmental Disabilities, addresses the significant barriers to health services faced by the intellectual and developmental disabilities community in the region. This initiative enables recipients to receive access to consistent, high-quality care tailored to their integrated care needs, supported by professionals familiar with their developmental disability support needs.



Referrals to the clinic are made through the Developmental Disabilities office at 318-362-3396. Once an individual has a statement of approval from Developmental Disabilities and a behavioral health diagnosis has been identified, they are referred to the Monroe Integrated Care Clinic. Not only can they access behavioral health services, but they also have access to any of the integrated care services.

The Phoenix Clinic is an essential step toward bridging the gap in behavioral health services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. By fostering collaboration and delivering integrated care, NEDHSA ensures that these individuals receive the comprehensive support they need to thrive.

***For more information contact Katie Terrell
at 318-362-5481 or email Katie.Terrell@la.gov***

SOCIAL SECURITY ANNOUNCES 2.8 PERCENT BENEFIT INCREASE FOR 2026

**BARTON MACKAY,
PRESS OFFICER**



PRESS RELEASE



24 OCTOBER 2025

For Immediate Release
press.office@ssa.gov

Baltimore, MD – The Social Security Administration (SSA) announced today that Social Security benefits, including Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI), and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments for 75 million Americans will increase 2.8 percent in 2026. On average, Social Security retirement benefits will increase by about \$56 per month starting in January.

Over the last decade the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) increase has averaged about 3.1 percent. The COLA was 2.5 percent in 2025.

Nearly 71 million Social Security beneficiaries will see a 2.8 percent COLA beginning in January 2026. Increased payments to nearly 7.5 million people receiving SSI will begin on December 31, 2025. (Note: Some people receive both Social Security benefits and SSI).

"Social Security is a promise kept, and the annual cost-of-living adjustment is one way we are working to make sure benefits reflect today's economic realities and continue to provide a foundation of security," said Social Security Administration Commissioner Frank J. Bisignano. "The cost-of-living adjustment is a vital part of how Social Security delivers on its mission."

Other adjustments that take effect in January of each year are based on the increase in average wages. Based on that increase, the maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security tax (taxable maximum) is slated to increase to \$184,500 from \$176,100.

Social Security begins notifying people about their new benefit amount by mail starting in early December 2025.

Similar to last year, Social Security beneficiaries will receive a simplified, one-page COLA notice, which uses plain and personalized language, and provides exact dates and dollar amounts of an individual's new benefit amount and any deductions.

Individuals who have my Social Security accounts can view their COLA notices online, which is secure, easy, and faster than receiving a letter in the mail. Account holders can set up text or email alerts when they receive a new message, such as their COLA notice.

To receive a COLA notice online, individuals will need to create or sign in to their personal my Social Security account and opt out of paper notices by November 19, 2025. Go Digital! Create an account today at www.ssa.gov/myaccount. An online my Social Security account also gives individuals access to request a replacement Social Security card, view

their claim status and benefits, and view their SSA-1099.

Information about Medicare changes for 2026 will be available at www.medicare.gov. For Medicare enrollees, the 2026 premium amount will be available via my Social Security Message Center starting in late November. Individuals who have not opted to receive messages online will receive their COLA notice by mail in December.

The Social Security Act provides for how the COLA is calculated. The Social Security Act ties the annual COLA to the increase in the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) as determined by the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics.



LACAN

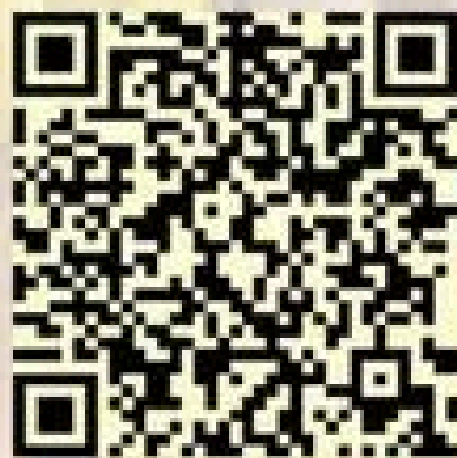
LOUISIANA COUNCIL'S ADVOCACY NETWORK

STATEWIDE MEMBER *Meeting*

Join you Region 8 Leader and the LaCAN delegation in a Statewide LaCAN Member Meeting! We'll discuss important updates and the 2026 LaDDC Advocacy Agenda! You don't want to miss this chance to network and engage with advocates from across the state!



KONSTANCE CAUSEY,
REGION 8 ADVOCACY LEADER
KCAUSEY@LACANADVOCATES.ORG



Thursday, November 13, 2025

6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

Visit our website: www.lacanadvocates.org

IEP Tip Sheet for Parents An Overview of the IEP



What to Know About Your Child's IEP and How It Is Developed

This tip sheet reviews the elements of the individualized education program (IEP) and the IEP development process. To learn more, review the additional resources and check with your state law for any additional requirements.

What is an IEP?

An IEP is a written statement developed for each eligible child with a qualifying disability between the ages of 3 and 21 who attends a traditional public or charter school. The IEP is developed by a team. You are an important member of the IEP team. The IEP documents your child's current performance, learning goals, and the supports and services needed to help your child to be successful and make progress toward their goals.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) section 300.320 outlines seven requirements that must be part of the IEP as well as additional requirements once your child reaches transition age.

Element

What does it mean?

Where can I learn more?



Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) or Present Levels Statement

This statement describes your child's current performance, strengths, and needs. The statement includes information about academic areas (reading, writing, and mathematics) and functional areas (social skills, behavioral skills, dressing, eating, mobility, and more).



[IEP Tip Sheet: PLAAFPs](#)



[IDEA Regulations Section 300.320\(a\)\(1\)](#)

This statement also includes how the disability impacts your child's involvement and progress in general education.

GOAL!

Measurable Annual Goals

This statement outlines your child's learning goals. This is the progress the team expects your child will make during the next year. These goals should connect to the needs that were identified in the present levels statement.



[IEP Tip Sheet: Measurable Annual Goals](#)



[IDEA Regulations Section 300.320\(a\)\(2\)](#)

If your child is taking an alternate assessment, the team will also identify short-term goals or objectives that act as steppingstones toward the annual goals.

Monitoring Plan

This plan outlines

- how the team will measure your child's progress over time toward the IEP goals.
- how and when that information will be shared with you.



[IEP Tip Sheet: Measuring Progress Toward Annual Goals](#)



[IDEA Regulations Section 300.320\(a\)\(3\)](#)





Statement of Special Education and Services and Aids

This statement describes the special education, services, and supports provided to your child to allow them to make progress toward the IEP goals and to participate, as much as possible, with peers in the regular education setting, extracurricular activities, and nonacademic opportunities.

This statement also includes supports to help your child's educators and you implement the IEP.



[IEP Tip Sheet: Overview of the Statement of Services & Aids](#)



[IDEA Regulations Section 300.320\(a\)\(4\)](#)



Explanation of Educational Setting

This explanation describes the extent your child will not participate with peers in the regular education classroom. Districts are required to provide a continuum of options for students with disabilities, but they must ensure that your child will participate with peers without disabilities to the maximum extent possible.



[IEP Tip Sheet: Explanation of Educational Setting](#)



[IDEA Regulations Section 300.320\(a\)\(5\)](#)



Participation in Assessment

This statement details whether your child needs accommodations to participate in state and districtwide assessments or if your child will participate in an alternate assessment.

- Accommodations change how your child is tested but do not change what is tested.
- The alternate assessment changes what is tested, so the team must explain why an alternate assessment is needed.



[IEP Tip Sheet: Participation in Assessment](#)



[IDEA Regulations Section 300.320\(a\)\(6\)](#)



Dates, Frequency, Location, and Duration of Services

This portion describes

- when your child's services will start,
- how often your child will receive services,
- where your child's services will occur, and
- how long your child will receive services.



[IEP Tip Sheet: Dates, Frequency, Location, and Duration of Services](#)



[IDEA Regulations Section 300.320\(a\)\(7\)](#)



Transition Plan and Age of Majority

Once your child turns 16 (or earlier in some states) the IEP must include a transition plan with your child's goals for after graduation and the transition services needed to help your child reach those goals.

In addition, after your child reaches the age where they are recognized as a legal adult in your state, the IEP must include a statement that your child has been informed of their rights and any rights that will transfer to them.



[IDEA Regulations Section 300.320\(b\) Section 300.320\(c\)](#)



How is the IEP developed?

The IEP is developed, reviewed, and revised each year, or as frequently as needed, by the IEP team.

Developing the first IEP

After it is determined through a comprehensive evaluation that your child requires special education, an IEP team meeting must be held within 30 calendar days.

At that meeting, the IEP team reviews information about your child and develops the IEP to support your child.

Following that meeting, your child's school will implement the IEP that was developed by the team and will share periodic updates with you.



Reviewing and updating the IEP

After the initial IEP is developed, the team meets *at least* once a year to determine whether your child's annual goals are being met and to revise the IEP to address lack of progress and any anticipated or new needs.

The team may meet more than one time per year, if needed.

At least once every 3 years, unless you and the public agency (district) determine it is unnecessary, the school will conduct a reevaluation. The IEP team uses this information to identify additional academic or functional needs and update the IEP.

Where can you learn more?



Developing Your Child's IEP (Center for Parent Information & Resources). This webpage provides an overview of the IEP development process and the components of the IEP document.



Helping Families Prepare for an IEP Meeting (Center on PBIS). This tip sheet shares some ideas to support families in preparing for and participating in the IEP meeting.



Disability & Special Education Acronyms (Center for Parent Information & Resources). Special education includes lots of acronyms. This list includes some of the common acronyms that you might come across during the IEP development process.



IEP Checklist (WI FACETS). This checklist provides helpful considerations for getting ready to participate in an IEP meeting.



PROGRESS Center Website. The PROGRESS Center website includes additional information about developing high-quality IEPs and additional tip sheets for each component of the IEP.

PROGRESS Center

at the American Institutes for Research[®] ■ www.promotingprogress.org

1400 Crystal Drive, 10th Floor Arlington, VA 22202-3289
202-403-5000 | www.air.org



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The Disability Assessment & Coordination Entity

What is DACE?

- We are here to help the disability community prepare for and recover from disasters.
- We are a bridge between emergency management and the disability community.



PREPARE

We provide emergency preparedness trainings, meetings, and outreach in all regions of the state. Everything we do is to meet the unique needs of the disability community.



RECOVER

When disaster does strike, we meet survivors where they are — often in shelters or impacted areas — to help with recovery by connecting them to resources and support.

Who should be involved?

People with disabilities and their families, organizations who support the disability community, local government, and emergency management professionals.

Why is this important?

People with disabilities are 2-4 times more likely to be seriously hurt or lose their lives in disasters.

Many face barriers to evacuation, shelter access, communication, and medical care.

We help ensure *no one* gets left behind.



HELPLINE:

337.331.2534



EMAIL:

info@disability-access-solutions.com



WEBSITE:

disability-access-solutions.com



LOUISIANA WAIVER

LA ADULT DAY HEALTH CARE (ADHC) WAIVER (0121.R08.00)

Provides adult day health care, support coordination, activity and sensor monitoring, adult day health care health status monitoring, assistive technology, home delivered meals, personal emergency response system, transition intensive support coordination, and transition services to individuals ages 65 or older and individuals with physical disabilities ages 22-64 years who meet a nursing facility level of care.

LA CHILDREN'S CHOICE (CC) WAIVER (0361.R04.00)

Provides center-based respite, support coordination, specialized medical equipment and supplies, financial management services, aquatic therapy, art therapy, environmental accessibility adaptations, family support services, family training, hippotherapy, housing stabilization service, housing stabilization transition service, music therapy, sensory integration, and therapeutic horseback riding services to individuals with autism, intellectual disabilities, or developmental disabilities ages 0-20 years who meet an ICF/IID level of care.

LA COMMUNITY CHOICES (CC) WAIVER (0866.R02.00)

Provides adult day health care, caregiver temporary support service, support coordination, financial management services, assistive devices and medical supplies, assistive technology, environmental accessibility adaptation, home delivered meals, housing stabilization services, housing transition or crisis intervention services, monitored in-home caregiving, nursing, personal assistance services, skilled maintenance therapy, transition intensive support coordination, and transition services to individuals ages 65 or older and individuals with physical disabilities ages 21-64 years who meet a nursing facility level of care.

LA COORDINATED SYSTEM OF CARE (CSOC) SEVERELY EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED (SED) CHILDREN'S WAIVER (0889.R02.00)

Provides independent living/skills building, parent support and training, short-term respite, youth support and training services to individuals with mental illness ages 18-20 years and individuals with serious emotional disturbance ages 5-17 years who meet a hospital or nursing facility level of care. This waiver operates with a concurrent 1915(b)(1), 1915(b)(3), and 1915(b)(4) authority.

LA NEW OPPORTUNITIES WAIVER (NOW) (0401.R04.00)

Provides center-based respite, day habilitation, individual and family support, monitored in-home caregiving, prevocational services, supported independent living, supported employment- individual and group, skilled nursing, specialized medical equipment and supplies, financial management services, adult companion care, community life engagement development, dental services, environmental accessibility adaptations, housing stabilization service, housing stabilization transition service, one-time transitional, personal emergency response, professional service dietician/nutritionist, professional service psychologist, professional service social worker, and substitute family care services to individuals with autism, intellectual disabilities, or developmental disabilities ages 3 or older who meet an ICF/IID level of care. This waiver operates with a concurrent 1915(b)(1), 1915(b)(3), and 1915(b)(4) authority.

LA RESIDENTIAL OPTIONS WAIVER (ROW) (0472.R03.00)

Provides adult day health care, day habilitation, monitored in home caregiving, prevocational services, respite services - out of home, shared living services, support coordination, supported employment, assistive technology/specialized medical equipment and supplies, financial management services, community life engagement development, community living supports, companion care, dental services, environmental accessibility adaptations, host home, housing stabilization service, housing stabilization transition service, nursing, one-time transitional services, personal emergency response system, professional services, and transportation - community access services to individuals with autism, intellectual disabilities, or developmental disabilities ages 0 or older who meet an ICF/IID level of care. This waiver operates with a concurrent 1915(b)(1), 1915(b)(2), and 1915(b)(4) authority.

LA SUPPORTS WAIVER (0453.R03.00)

Provides day habilitation, habilitation, prevocational services, respite, support coordination, supported employment, specialized medical equipment and supplies, community life engagement development, dental services, housing stabilization service, housing stabilization transition service, and personal emergency response system services to individuals with autism, intellectual disabilities, or developmental disabilities ages 18 or older who meet an ICF/IID level of care. This waiver operates with a concurrent 1915(b)(1), 1915(b)(2), and 1915(b)(4) authority.



HOW DO I CHOOSE A SERVICE PROVIDER

AN INTERVIEW GUIDE

STEPS TO CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING A SERVICE PROVIDER

- Talk to other self-advocates or family members who are using the services you are interested in. Ask what works and what does not work.
- Obtain a current Region 8 Resource Directory of Services for People with Developmental Disabilities.
- Contact the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) or Families Helping Families to obtain a complete and current list of services providers.
- Select at least 2 or 3 providers to interview.
- Review the sample interview questions in this brochure and choose the questions most important to you.
- Make a list on the "I want, I need" panel of this brochure of the things that are most important about how you wish to be assisted. Say as clearly as possible what is necessary to meet your needs.
- If you need help during the interview, contact Families Helping Families. If you have a case manager, request help from your case manager.
- Interview the service providers using the interview questions and the "I want, I need" list.
- Choose a provider that you feel would best meet you and your families' needs.
- Notify your case manager or whoever recommended you choose a service provider of your choice.

Agency Policies and Practices

- Do you provide transportation or mileage reimbursement for staff? Does your agency provide automobile insurance coverage to your employees that provide transportation?
- What is the pay range for your employees? Do your employees receive raises? How often?
- What benefits and incentives does your agency provide to Direct Support Professionals?
- How do you show rewards and recognition to your Direct Support Professionals?
- How do you determine if employees have good references and work history? What kind of background checks do you use to assure that employees are not involved in abuse, mistreatment, neglect, or exploitation?
- Do I have final “say so” over who works with me to provide my support services?
- What recruitment strategies do you use to hire Direct Support Professionals?
- What kind of documentation do you use? For example: time sheets, progress notes, incident reports, etc.?
- What is the policy for reporting critical incidents? Do you report critical incidents to parents/guardians?
- How is my confidentiality and my family’s confidentiality protected?
- Is there someone that you serve that I can talk to who has concerns and needs similar to mine?

Staff Education and Training

- What trainings do your employees attend? Who does the training? Are they knowledgeable and experienced? What are their credentials?
- What information is provided to the staff about respecting my rights and the boundaries of my home? For example: bringing children/grandchildren to work, talking on the phone, running personal errands, using family’s property for personal use, refrigerator, food, drinks, TV, computer, washer and dryer.
- Do employees receive training on recognizing and preventing abuse, mistreatment, neglect and exploitation?
- What kind of training do you provide to employees so that they can understand my or my family’s uniqueness such as culture, gender and age related issues?

- Does your agency organize staff support teams? (Support team: administration and other supervisors work together with Direct Support Professionals to provide feedback and problem solve issues related to quality service provision to me.) How do you provide staff time for team building between Direct Support Professionals and their supervisors?
- What staff from your agency will make up my support team?
- Does your agency do pre-employment orientation and training? What topics are addressed?
- Do you require staff to spend time getting to know me and my family in my home before they begin work? How much time is allowed before they officially begin work?

Response to Emergencies

- What procedures will staff implement in a crisis situation for me or my family member?
- What procedures will your supervision implement in a crisis/emergency situation that happens for the Direct Support Professional?
- How is 24 hour emergency assistance provided?
- How do you assure back-up staff coverage so that I am not left without assistance?
- Do you have procedures in place to obtain my permission before you send a staff member back-up to my home? What are the procedures?
- Do you know how and when to use the Community Response Team for emergency behavioral psychiatric assistance?
- Will the facilitator/administrator have a back-up key to my or my family members’ apartment/home?
- Do you have staff that can evacuate with me or my family member in an emergency?

Grievance and Complaint Policy

- Describe your complaint process.
- Do you have an appeals process if I am not satisfied with my services?
- How do I make a grievance if I am not satisfied with an agency decision that affects the quality of my life?

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General Agency Information

- What disabilities do the people have that your agency serves?
- How many people does your agency provide services for?
- How many people are you serving close to or in the general area where I live?
- What are your policies regarding my friends who visit in my home?
- What is your turn-over rate with your Direct Support Professionals?
- What qualities do you look for in screening possible Direct Support Professionals?
- What are the qualifications and experience of the agency's director?

Quality of Programs

- How do you handle disagreements or conflicts between me, my family members and friends?
- Do you provide health care supplies, gloves, back-support belts, etc.? If not, do you know how to obtain these resources?
- How do you show respect to me and my family when you are in my home?
- How do you help your Direct Support Professionals with assisting individuals to participate in community, social and recreational activities?

Involvement in Decision Making

- How do you encourage individuals receiving services to interview their Direct Support Professionals? How do you facilitate an interview of a possible Direct Support Professional with the individual and their family before the person is hired?
- Is your Board of Directors or Advisory Committee composed of at least 50% people with disabilities or their family members?
- How do you assure the goals important to me are on my personal support plan and that Direct Support Professionals assist me to achieve my goals?
- How do you incorporate person-centered planning principles into daily schedules and activities?
- How will your staff show flexibility to my needs?
- How is my or my family's information used as part of the employee's evaluation?
- How do you encourage individuals to speak up for themselves?

Quality Review and Improvement Practices

- How do you monitor and supervise employees?
- Do you monitor your employees by calling me or my family for feedback?
- How do you use the information from me, my family or my friends for your quality improvement plan? Give me an example.

I Want, I Need Checklist

Write below the most important things you want or need from service providers when they are supporting you every day and/or when they support you to achieve your hopes, dreams, and goals for your future. State as clearly as possible what is necessary to meet your needs.

Louisiana Family-to-Family Health Information Center



Louisiana’s Family-to-Family Health Information Center’s (F2FHIC) mission is the commitment to arm families with information, training, and resources to effectively advocate for enhanced health services and outcomes for their children. Louisiana’s F2FHIC is housed at Bayou Land Families Helping Families; however, our collaboration with the statewide network of Families Helping Families centers ensures that Louisiana’s Family to Family Health information reaches you right in your own backyard. 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. 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.

For more information, or to locate an Information Specialist in your region, please contact your local Families Helping Families center or:

Louisiana F2FHIC Program Supervisor: Trinity Cole

Address: 286 Hwy. 3185, Thibodaux, LA 70301

Phone: (985) 447-4461

Email: tcole@blfhf.org

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

Region	FHF Center	Mailing Address	Phone Number(s)	Executive Director
2	Families Helping Families of Greater Baton Rouge	2356 Drusilla Ln. Baton Rouge, LA 70809	225-216-7474 866-216-7474	Dr. Marilyn Thornton mthornton@fhfgbr.org
3	Bayou Land Families Helping Families	286 Highway 3185 Thibodaux, LA 70301	985-447-4461 800-331-5570	Jacki Pierce jpierce@blfhf.org
4	Families Helping Families of Acadiana	100 Benman Rd. Lafayette, LA 70506	337-984-3458 855-984-3458	Nicole Flores nflores@fhfacadiana.org
5	Families Helping Families of Southwest LA	P.O. Box 1627 Lake Charles, LA 70602	337-463-2570 800-894-6558	Susan Riehn smriehn@fhfswla.org
6	Families Helping Families at the Crossroads	2840 Military Hwy., Ste. A Pineville, LA 71360	318-641-7373 800-259-7200	Jim Sprinkle Jamessprinkle152@bellsouth.net
7	Families Helping Families Region 7	215 Bobbie St., Ste. 100 Bossier City, LA 71112	318-226-4541 877-226-4541	Chanel Jackson cjackson@fhfregion7.com
8	Families Helping Families of Northeast LA	5200 Northeast Rd. Monroe, LA 71203	318-361-0487 888-300-1320	Stacey Guidry sguidry@fhfnela.org
9	Northshore Families Helping Families	108 Highland Park Plaza Covington, LA 70433	985-875-0511 800-383-8700	Karen Artus kartus@fhfnorthshore.org
10	Families Helping Families of Greater New Orleans	700 Hickory Ave. Harahan, LA 70123	504-888-9111 800-766-7736	Laura Nata lnata@fhfognor.org

NEWS & INFORMATION

Healthy Louisiana



Medicaid members can change their health or dental plan anytime during the #OpenEnrollment period. After Open Enrollment, members may only change their plan if they have a special reason. LEARN MORE: myplan.healthy.la.gov

Changes to Medicaid Pharmacy Benefit Management



On October 1, 2025, the pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) for most Medicaid members will change. Medicaid will discontinue its single PBM and each health plan will handle pharmacy services for their members, including prior authorizations, claims and prescription coverage.

This change does not apply to fee-for-service (FFS) members or people who have behavioral-health-only coverage through their Medicaid health plan.

FFS pharmacy will continue to be processed by Gainwell, and prior authorizations will still be managed by the University of Louisiana at Monroe.

[Learn More](#)

Transfer of Programs: DCFS moves to LDH

The Louisiana SNAP and Disability Determination Services (DDS) programs officially transferred over from the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services to the authority of LDH on October 1.

Our mission is to make it easier for the state to deliver streamlined health and nutrition services – including SNAP, Medicaid and WIC – to Louisianans in need. During this time of transition, there should not be a break in service or a disruption to benefits.

The SNAP Customer Service Hotline will remain the same. If you experience issues with SNAP or DDS, please contact our team at 1(888) 524-3578 or LAHelpU.dcms@la.gov.



OCDD to Host Informational Summit on January 20

The Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) will host an informational summit on January 20, 2026 for participants, caregivers, providers, lawmakers, LGEs, and anyone interested in learning about our programs and services. The event will take place at L'Auberge Hotel & Casino in Baton Rouge from 8:00 a.m. (registration) to 4:00 p.m. Accommodations, special dietary requests, and accessible parking are available.

Registration for the event is required, and the deadline to register is January 7, 2026.

Please sign up all who will be attending in advance using this link:

<https://www.ldh.la.gov/form/ocdd-summit-2026>.



More details to come.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month



October 2025, marked the 80th anniversary of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), which celebrates the contributions of people with disabilities in the workforce. Originating in 1945 as a weeklong observance, NDEAM was officially designated by Congress in 1988 to address opportunities for individuals with disabilities, including mental health conditions. The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) now oversees NDEAM, including its annual theme. The 2025 theme, "Celebrating Value and Talent," will acknowledge the achievements of American workers with disabilities, coinciding with the lead-up to America's 250th anniversary in 2026.

[Learn More](#)

Protecting Children from Bullying in Schools

Bullying is a serious behavior impacting children's well-being, defined in Louisiana as threats, taunting, exclusion, and physical harm. State law mandates quick action from school staff when bullying is reported, requiring principals to notify parents the same day and complete investigations within ten days. Families are encouraged to use the Bullying Report Form and understand their rights to help ensure their child's safety and promote a protective school environment.



[Learn More](#)

REGION 8 RAC MEETING

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Join us for our upcoming Quarterly Meeting!

We'll be talking about how services are being delivered and implemented for individuals with developmental disabilities—including services like EarlySteps, waivers, family support, and access to care.

Parents, caregivers, family members, and community advocates are encouraged to attend. This is a great opportunity to share your questions, concerns, and ideas—your voice matters!



TUESDAY

January 27, 2026



START AT

1:30 PM -

2:30 PM



TO PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON:

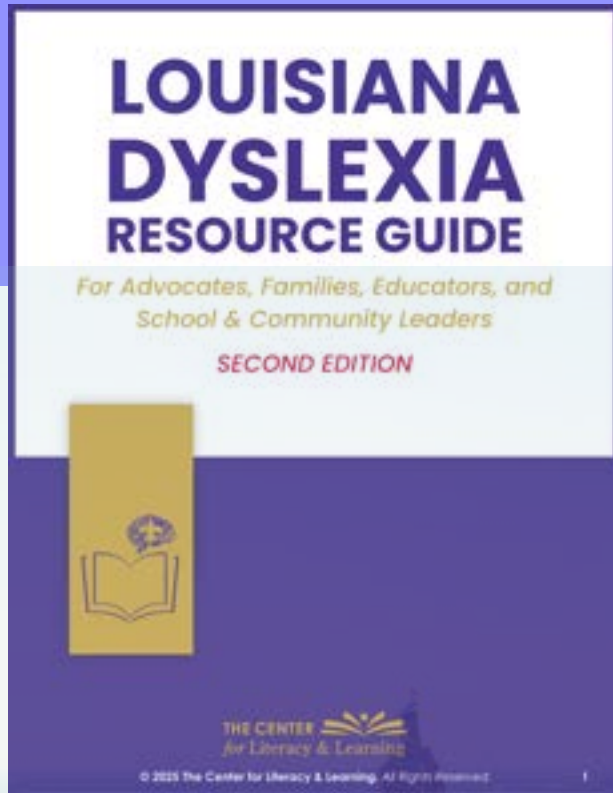
5200 NE Road, Monroe

TO PARTICIPATE VIRTUALLY:

<http://tinyurl.com/R8RACMEET>

RAC Meetings are held the 4th Tuesday of every quarter (Jan, April, July, October). For more information about becoming a committee member, call 318.361.0487.

Louisiana Dyslexia Resource Guide



Welcome to the Louisiana Dyslexia Resource Guide – 2025, brought to you by The Center for Literacy & Learning! This comprehensive guide helps families, educators, and advocates access dyslexia support across Louisiana.

Created for the inaugural Plain Talk About Dyslexia Summit, this guide offers essential resources, strategies, and insights to help individuals with dyslexia thrive. Dyslexia affects 1 in 5 people, but with the right support, success is possible.

How to Use This Guide:

- Find local and virtual resources by region.
- Locate your parish & region in the appendix.
- Explore statewide public resources for support.
- Use the Louisiana Dyslexia Resource Chat for quick assistance.

[Access The Guide](#)

Website Launch

Have you checked out the new Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council Website? Same Mission.... New Look!

What's New?

- **Easier to Navigate**: Find meeting dates, current projects, publications, and advocacy news in just a few clicks.
- **Works on All Devices**: You can use the site on your phone, tablet, or computer.
- **More Accessible**: The site works better with screen readers and is easier for everyone to read and use.
- **Plain Language**: Each section explains information in clear, easy-to-understand terms.

**Positive Change
in Louisiana
Starts Here**

Supporting Developmental
Disabilities in Louisiana

Join Our Network W PAUSE

**CHECK
IT OUT**

WWW.LADDC.ORG

Louisiana Task Force on Fatherhood Engagement



Why Participate?

Fathers play a vital role in their children's health and success. By sharing what's working and what's missing, you can help guide resources and support for fathers across Louisiana.

How to Join:

Be part of the conversation.
Share your story.
Strengthen fatherhood in Louisiana.

Confidentiality:

All responses are confidential and used only to improve fatherhood support in Louisiana.

Call to Action:

Be part of the conversation. Share your story.
Strengthen fatherhood in Louisiana.



Scan Here!

<https://survey.zohopublic.com/zs/frDzwP>



UPCOMING WEBINARS:



IEP ESSENTIALS: UNLOCKING RELATED SERVICES FOR YOUR CHILD'S SUCCESS

Discover how related services like counseling, transportation, and therapy fit into your child's IEP and support their learning. This session will empower families to understand their rights and advocate for the services their child needs to thrive.

Monday
NOV 10th
1:00pm - 2:00pm



Link to Register:
<https://tinyurl.com/48BRVDRE>

For questions or more information, please call 318.361.0487
or email edspecialistregion8@fhfnela.org.



SPECIAL EDUCATION **FAQS 1.0**



Got questions about special education? You are NOT alone. Join us for a live webinar that tackles the most common concerns families face—from evaluations to services—so you can feel confident and informed every step of the way.

Tuesday
NOV 18th
12:00pm - 1:00pm



Link to Register:
<https://tinyurl.com/EDFAQS>

For questions or more information, please call 318.361.0487
or email edspecialistregion8@fhfnela.org.





Let's Talk Services w/

New Horizons Independent Living Center



"Changes that make life more satisfying don't occur overnight. But, for people who are willing to work toward greater independence, New Horizons Independent Living Center can help put the pieces together."

Join Us to Learn:

- What Services are available?
- Who is Eligible?
- How/where to apply.
- and more...

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES



DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING SERVICES



EMPLOYMENT SERVICES



THE GREEN PROGRAM



PEER COUNSELING

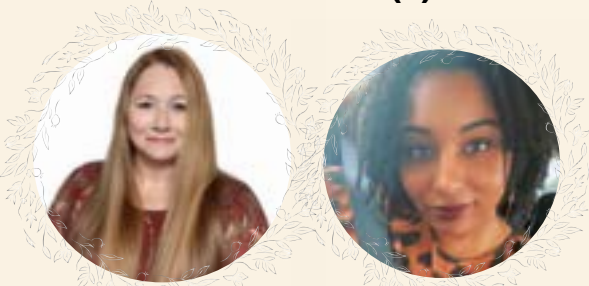


TRANSITION



ADVOCACY

Presenter(s):



Sandy Wall
Director of Extended Services
Administrator/Supervisor

Dee Gray,
Program Assistant/LCD
Coordinator

Also joined by: Brandon Booth, Director of IL Services
and Brain Mack, IL Specialist



Tuesday, December 2nd

10 AM to 11AM

ZOOM REGISTRATION LINK : [HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/CENTILS](https://tinyurl.com/CENTILS)

For questions, or more information please contact (318) 361-0487.



Empowering people with disabilities to be active participants in their workplaces, activities and communities. It starts with everyday inclusion, confidence and self-determination.

Disability Advocacy Summit

SPEAK UP STAND UP

A virtual self-advocacy series
led by people with disabilities,
for people with disabilities!

COMING JANUARY 2025

[REGISTER HERE](#)



LSU Health
NEW ORLEANS

School of Allied Health Professions
Human Development Center

NOVEMBER 2025 TRAINING CALENDAR

Families Helping Families of Greater New Orleans the Louisiana Parent Training & Information Center (LaPTIC) invites you to join us for our FREE monthly webinars. Our webinars provide attendees with important training on a variety of educational topics and supports and services available to individuals with disabilities and their families in the community. Webinar events are viewed right from your computer, tablet, or cell phone where you can watch, listen and have the option to post questions and get LIVE responses. For a list of webinars, please visit our website at <https://fhfogn.org/> then click on "Training Calendar" choose a topic and then register.

How to Write Ambitious IEP Goals - Join us as we discuss some tips to help you focus on making your child's IEP as complete as possible to ensure good outcomes. During this webinar, we will discuss measurable annual goals and how they are written, your role as an IEP team member, and how to create a results-driven IEP.

Presenter: Karen Scallan, FHF of GNO

Date: Monday, November 3, 2025

Time: 1:00pm - 2:00 pm

Co-Host: Cynthia Chesterfield, FHF of GBR

Audience: Parents, Caregivers, and Professionals working with students with exceptionalities or complex medical needs.

Registration link:

<https://tinyurl.com/110325Ambitious>

Moving from EarlySteps and Day Care to

School Services - Caring for a young child with an exceptionality is already overwhelming, even more so when they begin their education journey. That's when even more knowledge and responsibility are required. This webinar can lighten the load a bit as we learn about:

- Moving from EarlySteps to school services; Evaluation requirements and timelines;
- Who qualifies for special education;
- Evaluation requirements for students in private schools;
- What to do if your child is struggling in school;
- How to handle bullying in school, and more!

Presenter: Karen Scallan, FHF of GNO

Date: Tuesday, November 4, 2025

Time: 11:00 am - 12:00 pm

Co-Host: Pam Carey, FHF Crossroads

Audience: Parents, Caregivers, and Professionals working with students with exceptionalities or complex medical needs.

Registration link:

<https://tinyurl.com/110425ES2SchoolServ>

The ABC's of ESY (Extended School Year)

Services - Did you know that data collected during the holidays often determine if your child will qualify for ESY (Extended School Year) Services? This training provides an overview of the ESY process for children with exceptionalities, including how children qualify and why, in many circumstances, the school uses the holiday breaks to screen whether a child will qualify for ESY.

Presenter: Karen Scallan, FHF of GNO

Date: Wednesday, November 5, 2025

Time: 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Co-Host: Hope Miller, FHF NELA

Audience: Parents, Caregivers, and Professionals working with students with exceptionalities or complex medical needs.

Registration link:

<https://tinyurl.com/110525ESY>

Get SMART with IEP Goals – This training will help you understand what measurable annual goals should look like and how to be sure the goals in your child's IEP are actually SMART!

Presenter: Karen Scallan, FHF of GNO

Date: Thursday, November 6, 2025

Time: 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm

Audience: Parents, youth receiving special educations, or professionals working with students with exceptionalities or complex medical needs.

Registration link:

<https://tinyurl.com/110625GetSMART>

Your Special Education Rights - Join us as we discuss the rights that parents have when it comes to their child's special education and related services, such as parental participation, access to education records, informed consent, prior written notice, your right to disagree with school, and more.

Presenter: Karen Scallan, FHF of GNO

Date: Friday, November 7, 2025

Time: 11:00 am - 12:00 pm

Co-Host: Wallace Johnson & Mylinda Elliott, FHF SWLA

Audience: Parents, youth in special education, or professionals working with students with exceptionalities or complex medical needs.

Registration link:

<https://tinyurl.com/110725SpEdRights>

Overview of the Individualized Education

Program (IEP) –

Are you new to Special Education, and about to experience your child's first IEP? Or have you been questioning whether your child's IEP is all it should be? This webinar will take a birds-eye look at this plan that drives your child's education and services. We will talk about the purpose of the document, what it should include, who develops it, and how students can be involved in the process of planning their educational journey.

Presenter: Karen Scallan, FHF of GNO

Date: Monday, November 10, 2025

Time: 11:00 am - 12:00 pm

Co-Host: Ester Wilson, FHF Region 7

Audience: Parents, Caregivers, and Professionals working with students with exceptionalities or complex medical needs.

Registration link:

<https://tinyurl.com/111025OverviewIEP>

IEPs & Behavior & Discipline - Oh My! The title says it all! In this training webinar we will talk about the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process, functional behavior assessments, and disciplinary issues in school.

Presenter: Karen Scallan, FHF of GNO

Date: Monday, November 10, 2025

Time: 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Co-Host: Brenda Bares, FHF Acadiana

Audience: Parents, Caregivers, and Professionals working with students with exceptionalities or complex medical needs.

Registration link:

<https://tinyurl.com/111025IEPBehav>

When Parents and Schools Disagree - This training session will delve into Louisiana's Special Education dispute resolution options and what to do when you disagree with the school regarding your child's special education services. We will discuss different informal and formal dispute resolution options offered by the Louisiana Department of Education, and how to request one of the dispute resolution options.

Presenter: Karen Scallan, FHF of GNO

Date: Thursday, November 13, 2025

Time: 11:00 am - 12:00 pm

Co-Host: Dianthe' Rose, Northshore FHF

Audience: Parents, youth in special education or professionals working with students with exceptionalities or complex medical needs.

Registration link:

<https://tinyurl.com/111325Disagree>

Do you know what your child's Related

Services are on their IEP? - Children with exceptionalities are entitled to special education and related services. The IEP must contain a statement of the special education, related services and supplementary aids and services to be provided to the child. Participants will learn several critical elements used to determine what related services a student needs.

Presenter: Karen Scallan, FHF of GNO

Date: Friday, November 14, 2025

Time: 11:00am-12:00 pm

Audience: Parents, Caregivers, and Professionals working with students with

exceptionalities or complex medical needs.

Registration link:

<https://tinyurl.com/111425RelatedServices>



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Changing Lives Every Day

Empowering people with disabilities to be active participants in their workplaces, activities and communities. It starts with everyday inclusion, confidence and self-determination.



NEDHSA is the single point of entry into the developmental disabilities system and oversees public and private residential services and additional services for those who have a developmental disability.

Services Offered:

- Flexible Family Fund
- ICF/DD Residential Services
- Individual and Family Support
- Support Coordination
- Supported Living
- Transition Services
- Vocational and Rehabilitative Services



The Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council was founded in 1970 as a result of the passage of the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. The Louisiana Council was established in 1971. Councils were created to engage in advocacy, capacity building and systems change activities and contribute to a coordinated, consumer- and family-centered, and consumer- and family-directed comprehensive system of community services, individualized supports, and other forms of assistance that enable individuals with developmental disabilities to exercise self-determination, be independent, productive, and integrated and included in all facets of community life.

Bureau of Family Health

BFH works to ensure that Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN) in Louisiana have access to services are designed to minimize their disabilities and maximize their ability to live as independently as possible.

Children and youth who have special health care needs either have or are at increased risk for chronic physical, developmental, behavioral or emotional conditions. They require services beyond what other children require.

FHF Community Resource Specialists are available to help families connect to resources and services that can help them. They have the knowledge and skills to work families of children with special health care needs. Community Resource Specialists can help you and your child by providing:

- Tips for accessing services
- Peer and emotional support
- Referrals to medical and support services
- Connections to other parents with children and youth with special health care needs



“We are family members ourselves, with first hand knowledge of raising a child or youth with special health care needs.”

The Louisiana Family-to-Family Health Information Center Provides:

- Assistance to families and professionals in navigating health care system
- Finding resources
- Peer to peer support
- Information, education, training, support and referral services to families with children and youth with special health care needs



In partnership with the LDOE, Families Helping Families Education Specialists provide support to school districts and families with children in Special Education in Region 8.

These parishes include: Morehouse, Lincoln, Union, Madison, West Carroll, East Carroll, Tensas, Jackson, Caldwell, LaSalle, Concordia, Catahoula, City of Monroe, Richland, Franklin, Ouachita.



LaCAN provides information and support to individuals wishing to effectively advocate for systems change in the areas of home and community-based services, education, and employment.

LaCAN advocates for service systems that support children and adults with disabilities to live in their own homes and be fully-included and participating members of their local schools and communities.