

FAMILIES HELPING FAMILIES OF NELA

July, August & September 2026

Quarterly Newsletter



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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.





RIGHTS OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

What are public schools required to do for children with disabilities?

- They **MUST** identify, locate, and evaluate students who need special education and related services.
- If parents believe their child needs services, they should make a request for a special education evaluation **IN WRITING**.
- Once students qualify for special education services, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) must be developed for the student, and the school **MUST** work together with the parents and the student to develop an appropriate educational program.
- They **MUST** provide all special education and related services as determined by the IEP committee, which may include:

*adapted physical education *physical therapy *assistive technology *school psychological services
*occupational therapy *school social work services *orientation and mobility services *school health services *special transportation *speech/language pathology services
• These services **MUST** be provided in the least restrictive environment appropriate to the child's needs.

What about Discipline???

- Special education students, and those in the process of being evaluated for special education, are entitled to extra protections.
- A special education student **CANNOT** be without educational services for more than ten days per school year due to disciplinary actions.
- If a change of placement or expulsion is recommended due to behavior, the school must first conduct a Manifestation Determination Review Meeting (MDR) to determine if the behavior was related to the child's disability.
- If the behavior was related, the child's placement cannot be changed, unless the IEP team agrees.
- If the behavior was not related, the expulsion / change of placement can occur, **BUT** the student is still entitled to receive services, a re-evaluation should be performed, and the IEP team must meet and determine where and in what manner services will be provided.

If you believe your child's special education rights have been violated, contact Disability Rights Louisiana at 1-800-960-7705 (Voice) or 1-866-935-7348 (TTY).

NUTRITION TIPS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

or individuals with disabilities, proper nutrition is essential for maintaining energy, supporting focus, and enhancing overall well-being. However, unique challenges—such as limited mobility, sensory processing issues, or feeding difficulties—can make it harder to stick to a balanced diet. Whether you're a caregiver or seeking support yourself, these simple, practical tips will help you create a nutritious plan that meets specific needs. Working with a dietitian near you can also help personalise these recommendations to align with individual preferences and health goals.

Part 1: Simple nutrition tips tailored to common challenges

For individuals with disabilities, nutritional needs can vary significantly. Below are some easy-to-implement tips to address common challenges:

1. Choose easy-to-eat snacks: Soft fruits, yogurt, smoothies, and pre-cut vegetables are great for those with fine motor difficulties. These foods are nutrient-dense, easy to prepare, and often don't require utensils.
2. Prioritise protein and fiber: Protein and fiber rich foods (such as beans, eggs, lean meats, and whole grains) help with sustained energy and satiety. These are especially important for individuals with limited activity levels, as they prevent blood sugar fluctuations and promote muscle health.
3. Opt for low-prep meals: Pre-prepared and frozen meals can be lifesavers. Look for options rich in vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains. Pair these with easy additions like a side of pre-cut fruit or a salad kit to round out the meal without extra effort.

Part 2: Foods that support energy and focus

Choosing foods that offer lasting energy and support cognitive focus is essential for individuals with disabilities. Here are some nutrient-packed options:

- Whole Grains: Foods like oatmeal, brown rice, and whole-wheat pasta release energy slowly, helping maintain focus and energy throughout the day.
- Healthy Fats: Omega-3-rich foods like salmon, walnuts, and chia seeds can aid brain function and reduce inflammation.
- Colorful Vegetables: Leafy greens, carrots, and peppers are rich in antioxidants and vitamins that support immune health and cell repair.

If you're searching for a "dietitian near me" to help incorporate these foods, a dietitian specialising in nutrition for disability can provide a structured meal plan with these and other energy-supporting foods.

Part 3: Tips for caregivers to make mealtimes smoother

For many individuals with disabilities, mealtimes can be a challenging or stressful experience. Here are some ways to simplify it:

- Involve the person with disability in food choices: Offering two or three food options can increase willingness to eat while maintaining a sense of control. If possible, involve the person with disability in grocery shopping or meal preparation.
- Consider texture and sensory preferences: For individuals with sensory sensitivities, experiment with different textures to see what works best. If pureed or soft foods are preferred, try options like mashed potatoes, blended soups, or smoothie bowls.
- Set up a calm mealtime environment: A quiet, predictable setting can make a big difference for individuals who experience sensory overload. Reduce background noise, keep the lighting soft, and provide a comfortable seating arrangement.

Conclusion

Making small, supportive changes to mealtime can help individuals with disabilities achieve a balanced and enjoyable diet. For more personalised guidance, consider consulting a registered dietitian near you who specialises in nutrition for disability. An experienced dietitian can help create an individualised meal plan that meets specific needs, preferences, and health goals. For NDIS participants, finding the right dietitian or nutrition support can make all the difference in maintaining a nutritious, balanced diet.





BACK-TO-SCHOOL PREP FOR SPECIAL NEEDS KIDS:



A SENSORY-FRIENDLY APPROACH

Back-to-school transitions are hard, but for children with special needs, they can feel nearly impossible. Between the shift in routine, new environments, and sensory overload, this time of year can lead to big emotions and even bigger meltdowns. But it doesn't have to be that way. With the right sensory-friendly strategies, families can turn back-to-school chaos into calm, structured success.

This guide offers practical, research-backed tips to help parents prepare their child for a smoother transition. From using visuals and sensory tools to managing the pace of change, discover how to reduce overwhelm and build back-to-school confidence, without the power struggles.



Why Back-to-School Hits Different for Special Needs Families



For many children, the start of the school year is a mix of nerves and excitement. But for students with sensory processing challenges, autism, ADHD, or learning disabilities, the back-to-school season can bring serious stress. The noise, new faces, bright lights, unfamiliar routines, and high expectations can be overwhelming, causing shutdowns, anxiety, and disruptive behavior.

These transitions aren't just hard for kids. They're tough on parents, too. Juggling new school schedules, managing IEPs, prepping supplies, and helping children self-regulate can feel like a full-time job.

The good news? With thoughtful sensory-friendly planning, families can reduce friction and set the stage for a successful start to the school year.



Use Visual Schedules to Build Predictability

Children with special needs often thrive on routine and predictability. Visual schedules make the invisible, like time, visible. By showing what comes next, they reduce anxiety and help kids feel more in control.

Start introducing a back-to-school visual schedule a few weeks before school begins. Include morning routines, school bus pickup, and what happens after school. Keep it simple, consistent, and clear.

Tips for effective visual schedules:

- Use pictures or icons paired with words
- Post the schedule at child-height
- Involve your child in reviewing and updating it daily
- Start with home routines before school begins, then transition into a school-day version



For children who struggle with transitions between tasks, consider using a "first-then" board (e.g., "First breakfast, then get dressed").



Start Gradual Transitions Before the First Day

One of the biggest mistakes is waiting until the first day of school to make routine changes. Sudden transitions can trigger sensory overwhelm and emotional outbursts.



Instead, ease into school routines gradually:

- Adjust wake-up and bedtimes in 15-minute increments over 1–2 weeks
- Practice morning routines including getting dressed, packing a bag, and eating breakfast
- Visit the school building ahead of time if possible: walk the halls, explore classrooms, and meet staff
- Drive or walk the school route so it becomes familiar
- Use social stories to walk through what a school day will look and feel like

A slow transition allows the brain and body to adapt, especially for kids who struggle with executive functioning, sensory processing, or anxiety.



Build a Sensory Toolkit for School and Home

The back-to-school season comes with a flood of sensory input. Hallway noise, scratchy uniforms, cafeteria smells, and classroom clutter can all dysregulate a child.

A personal sensory toolkit can help regulate sensory input before overwhelm sets in.



Create a toolkit that fits your child's needs:

- Noise-canceling headphones or earplugs
- Chewable jewelry or fidget toys
- Sunglasses or hats for light sensitivity
- Compression vests or weighted lap pads
- Calming scents (lavender, peppermint)
- Stretch bands for chair legs or stress balls for hand focus

Work with your child's teacher or IEP team to ensure these tools are allowed and accessible during the day. For kids with significant sensory needs, make sure sensory strategies are written into the IEP or 504 plan.

Lean Into Movement and Sensory Breaks

Kids with sensory processing differences often need movement or quiet time to regulate their systems. If these needs go unmet, focus and behavior quickly unravel.

Back-to-school planning should include regular sensory breaks, both at home and in the classroom.

For home routines:

- Add morning movement before the bus (e.g., trampoline, yoga, stretching)
- Use heavy work activities like carrying a backpack or helping with chores
- Schedule quiet time in a sensory corner after school

At school:

- Collaborate with teachers to include sensory breaks in your child's daily schedule
- Request access to a calm-down space, fidget tools, or a sensory room if available
- Use movement breaks between academic tasks to refocus

These built-in sensory supports help prevent meltdowns and can make the entire school day more manageable.

Empower Kids with a Sensory-Friendly Back-to-School Routine

Back-to-school success starts with empowerment. When children feel heard, supported, and prepared, they're more likely to adapt to new routines and environments.

Try these empowering strategies:

- Let your child choose their backpack, lunchbox, or school supplies for a sense of control
- Offer choices during routines (e.g., "Do you want to get dressed before or after breakfast?")
- Celebrate small wins (getting up on time, using a visual schedule, communicating needs)
- Talk about feelings and validate emotions ("It's okay to feel nervous. Let's come up with a plan together.")

By including your child in the process, they learn how to advocate for themselves and build self-regulation skills that will serve them far beyond the first day of school.

Prepare the School Team with a Sensory Snapshot



Even the best teachers can't support a child's sensory needs if they don't know what those needs are. Give them the tools they need by providing a sensory snapshot before school begins.

What to include:

- Sensory sensitivities (e.g., noise, smells, textures, lighting)
- Calming tools that work at home
- Triggers to avoid
- Preferred communication style
- Signs your child is becoming overwhelmed
- What helps them return to calm

Include this information in a friendly one-pager and offer to meet with the teacher or IEP team before the first day. This builds collaboration, trust, and smoother transitions for everyone.

Support Beyond the Classroom

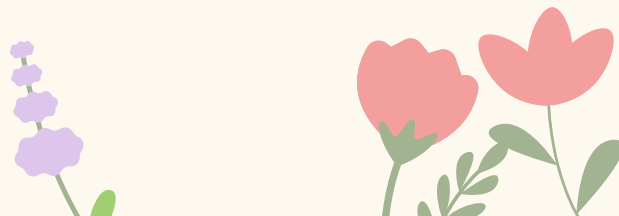
Sometimes, even with all the preparation, a child still struggles to adjust to school demands. Whether it's academic frustration, behavioral challenges, or emotional regulation, outside support can make a huge difference.

A special needs tutor can provide 1:1 guidance tailored to your child's unique needs, helping them regain confidence and catch up academically, especially if they're starting the school year behind. Specialized tutoring helps bridge the gap between home and school, creating a consistent learning experience that adapts to your child's pace and learning style.

Final Thoughts: A Kinder, Calmer Start to the Year

Back-to-school doesn't have to mean back to meltdowns. With the right tools, preparation, and support, children with special needs can start the year feeling grounded, safe, and ready to grow. Visuals, sensory-friendly routines, consistent transitions, and empowered self-regulation are the keys to unlocking a smoother experience for students and their families.

As schools reopen, families can feel confident knowing there are real, effective ways to help children thrive from day one.



2026 LOUISIANA LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

What happened — and why it matters for people with disabilities and their families

ADVOCACY MADE A DIFFERENCE. Louisianans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), families, and advocates helped move key priorities forward during the 2026 Regular Session.

MAJOR WINS

- **Bryan's Call is now law.** Act 347 creates a statewide emergency alert for missing children and adults with I/DD. It allows law enforcement to act quickly and uses Wireless Emergency Alerts to notify the public.
- **Disability funding was included in the state budget.** The final budget includes more than \$33.5 million in state and federal funding to strengthen home- and community-based waiver services and address the Direct Support Worker shortage.
- **Families Helping Families funding was restored.** Regional Families Helping Families Centers received \$250,000 to continue providing information, peer support, training, and navigation assistance.
- **Employment services received an increase.** Louisiana Rehabilitation Services received an additional \$2 million to help people with disabilities prepare for, find, and keep competitive integrated employment.
- **More waiver opportunities were funded.** The budget adds 750 Community Choices Waiver opportunities for older adults and people with adult-onset disabilities.

A KEY PROTECTION REMAINED

- **HB 1107 did not become law.** The proposal would have changed how intellectual disability is evaluated in death-penalty cases. Disability advocates raised concerns that it relied too heavily on IQ scores and did not give enough weight to adaptive functioning.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Advocacy continues year-round. Share your experiences with lawmakers, respond to LaCAN action alerts, attend community input meetings, and connect with your local LaCAN Leader as priorities are developed for the 2027 Legislative Session.

EDUCATION & SYSTEM CHANGES

- **HB 342 became Act 943.** In certain special education due-process hearings, the school system—not the family—must prove that the student's current or proposed program or placement is appropriate. This may create a fairer process for families.
- **HB 352 became Act 944.** The law supports access to medically necessary behavioral health services during the school day, including ABA when appropriate, and requires school systems to make related policies publicly available.
- **HB 283 became Act 539.** The school-safety law increases consequences for assault or battery involving school employees or students. Disability advocates secured changes intended to protect students whose behavior may be disability-related, although implementation concerns remain.
- **OCDD will have a new name.** Legislation changes the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities to the Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disability Supports—a name intended to better reflect the people served and the agency's role.

WHY THIS MATTERS

- **Faster response.** Families may receive quicker community support when a person with I/DD goes missing.
- **More community-based support.** New funding can strengthen waiver services, the direct-support workforce, family resource centers, and employment assistance.
- **Stronger family protections.** Changes to special education procedures and school-based services may reduce barriers and improve accountability.

Source: Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council, "2026 Legislative Session: What Happened and Why It Matters" (June 2, 2026), with final bill-status updates from the Louisiana Legislature.

Legislative Update • July 2026

Preparing Louisiana Youth with Special Health Care Needs and Disabilities for Adulthood

For many families, the transition from childhood to adulthood can feel overwhelming. As youth with special health care needs and disabilities approach their teenage years, families often find themselves navigating new systems, services, and expectations. Questions about healthcare, education, employment, independent living, and community participation become increasingly important.

In Louisiana, successful transition planning begins early. Families, healthcare providers, educators, and community organizations all play a critical role in helping youth develop the skills and supports they need to thrive as adults.

What Is Health Care Transition?

Health care transition is the planned movement from pediatric (child-centered) healthcare to adult healthcare. This process helps young adults learn to manage their own health needs, communicate with providers, understand medications, schedule appointments, and make informed decisions about their care.

Research shows that youth who actively participate in transition planning are more likely to experience improved health outcomes, increased independence, and greater confidence as adults.

When Should Transition Planning Begin?

Experts recommend beginning transition discussions as early as age 12 to 14. Early planning provides opportunities to:

- Build self-advocacy skills
- Learn about healthcare and insurance options
- Explore post-secondary education and employment opportunities
- Discuss independent living goals
- Understand legal considerations, such as supported decision-making and guardianship
- Connect with adult service providers before graduation

Transition planning is not a one-time event but an ongoing process that evolves as a young person's needs and goals change.

Louisiana Resources for Families

Louisiana families have access to several programs and organizations that can assist with transition planning, including:

- Families Helping Families Resource Centers
- Louisiana Family-to-Family Health Information Center
- Louisiana Parent Training Information Center





- Louisiana Bureau of Family Health
- Louisiana Department of Health
- Louisiana Department of Education
- Louisiana Rehabilitation Services
- Medicaid and Medicaid Waiver Programs
- Louisiana Postsecondary Inclusive Education Program

These organizations can provide information, training, referrals, and support to help families navigate available services and opportunities.

Tips for Families

Families can support a successful transition by encouraging youth to:

- Participate in medical appointments
- Learn about their health conditions and medications
- Practice communicating with healthcare providers
- Develop daily living skills
- Explore career interests and work experiences
- Set personal goals for the future
- Build a network of support within their community

Every young person deserves the opportunity to pursue their goals and live a meaningful, fulfilling life. With planning, preparation, and the right supports, Louisiana youth with special health care needs and disabilities can successfully transition into adulthood.

How the Louisiana Family-to-Family Health Information Center Can Help

The Louisiana Family-to-Family Health Information Center provides free information, education, resources, and peer support to families of children and youth with special health care needs. Our staff understands the challenges families face because many of us have lived experience navigating complex healthcare and disability systems.

If you have questions about transition planning, healthcare coverage, community resources, or advocacy, we are here to help connect you with information and support.

Together, we can help Louisiana youth prepare for a healthy, successful future.

Sources:

- Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Maternal and Child Health Bureau
- Got Transition National Resource Center
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Louisiana Department of Health
- Louisiana Department of Education
- Louisiana Rehabilitation Services
- Family Voices

Northeast Delta Human Services Authority

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



Home & Community-Based Waivers

Medicaid home and community-based waiver programs allow people greater flexibility to choose where they want to live and to use services and supports that best suit their needs. Services are provided must represent a least-restrictive treatment alternative. Each home and community-based waiver has specific service packages and eligibility requirements. Waiver opportunities are dependent upon funding, and are also offered based on the individual's need and priority level from their Screening for Urgency of Need (SUN) through the Request for Services Registry.

The Children's Choice Waiver (CC)

The Children's Choice Waiver program provides services in the home and in the community to individuals 0 through 20 years of age, who currently live at home with their families or who will leave an institution to return home.

This waiver provides an individualized support package with a maximum cost of \$17,500 per year, and is designed for maximum flexibility. Youth who reach the age of 18 and want to work may choose to transition to a Supports Waiver as long as they remain eligible for waiver services.

Youth who continue in the Children's Choice Waiver beyond age 18 will age out of Children's Choice Waiver when they reach their 21st birthday. They will transition to the most appropriate waiver that meets their needs as long as they remain eligible for waiver services. This program is not intended to provide 24 hours a day support. If you qualify you may receive.

- Support Coordination
- Family Support
- Crisis Support
- Respite
- Family Training
- Environmental Accessibility Adaptions
- Specialized Medical Equipment
- Permanent Supportive Housing Stabilization
- Sensory Integration
- Transition
- Therapy Services

The New Opportunities Waiver (NOW)

The New Opportunities Waiver program provides services in the home and in the community to individuals 3 years of age or older who are eligible to receive OCDD waiver services. The NOW is intended to provide specific activity focused services rather than continuous custodial care.

IF you qualify you may receive:

- Individual and Family Support (IFS)
- Center-Based Respite
- Community Integration
- Environmental Adaptations
- Specialized Medical Equipment
- Supported Living
- Substitute Family Care
- Day Habilitation
- Supported Employment
- Transportation
- Prevocational Services
- Personal Emergency Response
- Skilled Nursing
- Support Coordination
- One-time transitional services Housing Stabilization
- Transition Housing Stabilization

**Individuals who receive the CC Waiver may also receive EPSDT services*

**Individuals who receive the NOW may NOT receive LT-PCS services.*

The Residential Options Waiver (ROW)

The Residential Options Waiver program provides services in the home and in the community to individuals of all ages who are eligible to receive OCDD waiver services.

It is a capped waiver where the person's individual annual budget is based upon the person's assessed support needs.

Supports needs are determined by an Inventory for Client and Agency Planning (ICAP) assessment. This program is not intended to provide 24 hours a day of one to one support.

If you qualify you may receive:

- Support Coordination
- Community Living Supports
- Host home Services
- Companion Care
- Shared Living
- Adult Day Health Care
- Respite Care-Out of Home
- Personal Emergency Response System
- Transition Services
- Environmental Accessibility Adaptations
- Assistive Technology
- Specialized Medical Equipment and Supplies
- Dental Services
- Community Access
- Professional Services
- Nursing Services
- Supported Employment
- Prevocational Services
- Day Habilitation
- Housing Stabilization Service
- Housing Stabilization Transition
- Transportation

Services Individuals under 21 years of age must access Early Periodic Screening and Diagnostic Treatment (EPSDT) services.

**Individuals who receive the ROW may NOT receive Long Term - Personal Care Services (LT-PCS) when in this program.*



The Supports Waiver (SW)

The Supports Waiver program provides services in the home and in the community to individuals 18 years of age or older, who are eligible to receive OCDD waiver services.

This program is not intended to provide 24 hours a day support.

If you qualify you may receive.

- Support Coordination
- Supported Employment
- Day Habilitation
- Prevocational
- Habilitation Respite
- Permanent Supportive Housing Stabilization
- Permanent Supportive Housing Stabilization
- Transition
- Personal Emergency Response System

**Individuals under 21 years of age may access Early Periodic Screening and Diagnostic Treatment (EPSDT) services*

**Individuals who receive the SW may also receive Long Term Personal Care Services.(LTPCS)*

Additional program information, including Eligibility Requirements and details for each Waiver program can be obtained by contacting Northeast Delta Human Services Authority
2513 Ferrand St.
Monroe, LA 71203
(318) 362-3270

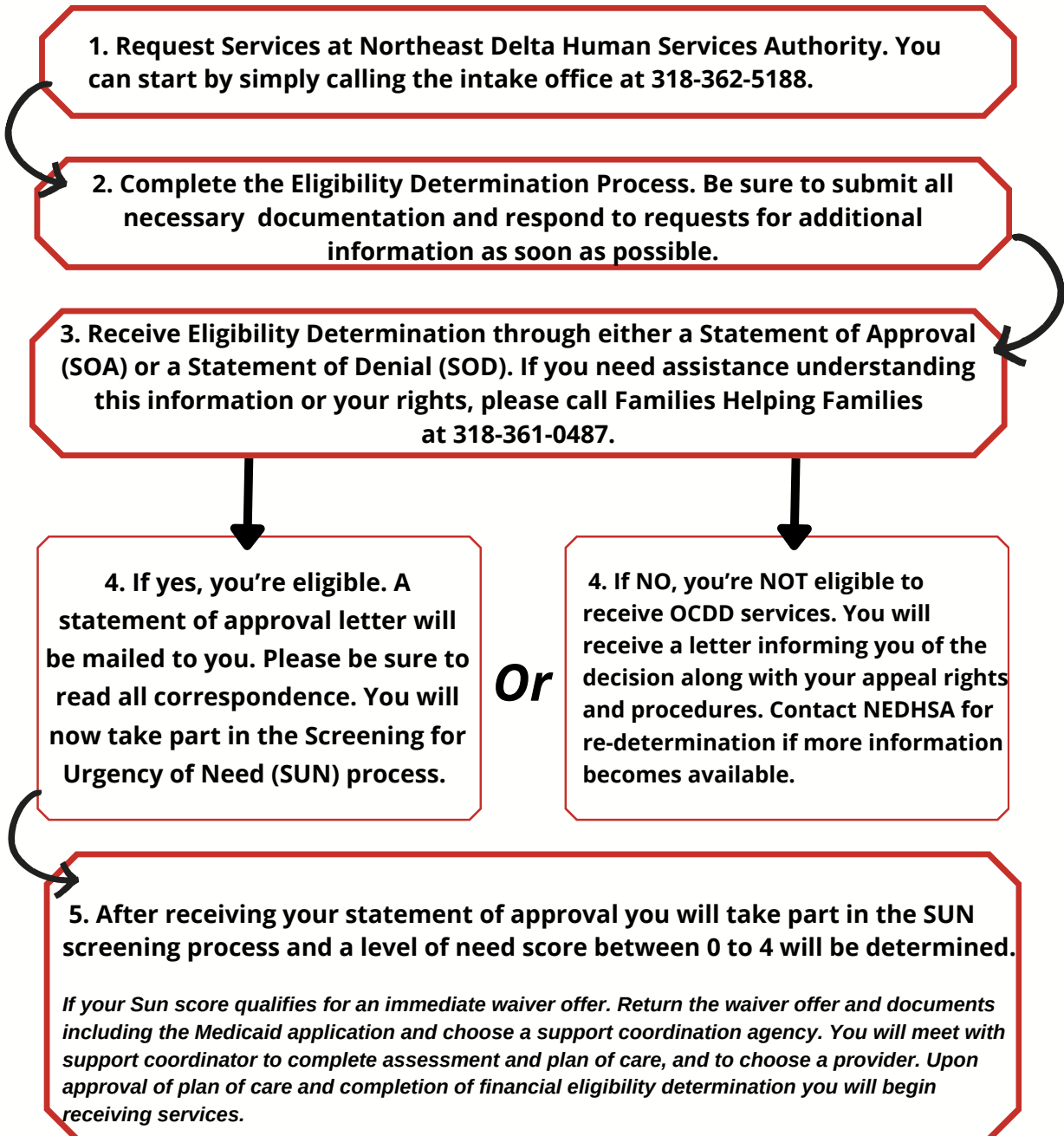


Developmental Disabilities / Waiver Services Flowchart

Confused about the process and what to expect when you request Developmental Disability Services to obtain Waiver Services on the Northeast?



Here's a brief guide to help you understand the process:



Reminder: Contact Northeast Delta Human Services Authority if you have a change in diagnosis or need and keep your address and phone information up to date. For urgent or emergency needs, please call Families Helping Families to determine if other resources are available to assist you or your family.

EVENTS & HELPFUL INFORMATION



New Name - Same Vision!

The Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) is now known as the Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disability Supports, or the Office of I/DD Supports (OIDD), under Act 702 (2026).

This new name better reflects our mission of supporting people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities in achieving their goals and living fully integrated and valued lives.

[Click here for the Fact Sheet](#)

Louisiana receives waiver allowing SNAP recipients to purchase hot foods through August 13 Temporary



Temporary statewide waiver gives all Louisiana SNAP participants additional flexibility following Tropical Storm Arthur

Jul 20, 2026 - The Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Administration (USDA FNA) has approved a temporary waiver allowing all Louisiana Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants to purchase hot or prepared foods with their SNAP benefits through August 13, 2026, following Tropical Storm Arthur.

[Click here for more info](#)



Louisiana Medicaid Work Requirements

Some Medicaid members will have new federally mandated work requirements beginning January 1, 2027.

Medicaid will send letters to affected members when they need to take action or provide information. Members should be sure to keep their contact information up to date with Louisiana Medicaid so they do not miss these important updates.

[Click here for more info](#)

2026 Social Security and SSI Updates

Families across Louisiana receiving Social Security, SSI, SSDI, or Medicaid should prepare for several critical changes this year. Federal adjustments and state renewal requirements mean you must take action to protect your monthly income and healthcare coverage.

Key Changes at a Glance

- **2.8% Benefit Boost:** Social Security and SSI monthly payments increased due to the 2026 Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA).
- **Higher Work Limits:** Income thresholds for SSDI and early retirement rose, allowing you to earn more money without losing your benefits.
- **Mandatory Medicaid Renewals:** Louisiana is continuously reviewing eligibility, especially for families using waiver services or long-term supports.

Action Steps to Protect Your Benefits

1. **Check Your New Payment Amount:** Log into your federal [my Social Security account](#) to view your official 2026 COLA notice.
2. **Update Your Contact Information:** Ensure both the Social Security Administration (SSA) and Louisiana Medicaid have your current mailing address and phone number so you do not miss critical mail.
3. **Watch for Yellow Envelopes:** Louisiana Medicaid renewal packets are sent by mail. Complete and return these forms immediately to avoid a sudden gap in healthcare coverage.
4. **Report Earnings Promptly:** If your household income or employment status changes, report it right away to the SSA and the Louisiana Medicaid Self-Service Portal to prevent overpayment penalties.



Navigating Parking Challenges for Parents of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

For parents of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), maneuvering through a busy parking lot can be an incredibly stressful task. Many families may not realize that they could be legally eligible for a mobility-impaired parking hang tag through the Louisiana Office of Motor Vehicles (OMV).



Disability placards are not limited to individuals who use physical mobility aids like wheelchairs or walkers. If a child's condition presents significant safety risks—such as eloping into traffic, a complete lack of danger awareness, or severe sensory overloads that make safe walking impossible—they may qualify under state regulations.

To apply for a Mobility Impaired Hang Tag in Louisiana, follow these steps:

1. Get the Certification Form: Obtain the Physician's Certification of Mobility Impairment (Form DPSMV 1966).
2. Consult Your Pediatrician: Have your child's doctor, physician, or medical specialist complete and sign the form, explicitly detailing how their autism impacts mobility or safety (e.g., severe elopement or flight risks).
3. Submit the Application: Bring the completed form, a fee of \$3.00, and a valid state-issued photo ID (your Louisiana Driver's License or ID) to any Louisiana Office of Motor Vehicles (OMV) or an authorized public tag agent.

[Click here for more info](#)

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



Emergencies can arise at any moment, making it crucial to have a personal preparedness plan, particularly for individuals with disabilities. Ready.gov provides tailored guidance to assist those with access and functional needs in preparing for disasters. Key steps include:

- ****Establishing a support network****
- ****Creating a go-bag with necessary medical supplies****
- ****Planning for accessible transportation and communication****

Investing time in preparation now can significantly impact your safety during a crisis.

[*Learn More Here*](#)

BECOME A MEMBER OF THE FAMILIES HELPING FAMILIES OF NORTHEAST TEXT GROUP



We are excited to announce the launch of a new text messaging system aimed at enhancing our connection with the community. This system will enable us to send important updates, events, and resources directly to your mobile device.

If you're interested in joining our text communication group, please fill out the brief form below. We look forward to staying in touch with you!

****Access the form [here](#).****



Human Development Center
[Click here July 2026 Newsletter](#)

WEBINARS



WHAT MATTER'S MOST!
A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION ABOUT THE ISSUES

LET'S TALK!

Have something to say about programs, policies, or services for kids or adults with disabilities? Join in a community conversation to share about the issues that matter most to you and your family. Share your thoughts, concerns, and ideas on topics like special education, waivers, support coordination, employment, community living, and more to help shape future advocacy priorities and policy efforts in Louisiana. Whether you are a parent, family member, service provider, or other community member, YOU ARE INVITED!

**THURSDAY,
AUG 13TH
6PM - 7PM**

VIRTUAL EVENT ONLY VIA ZOOM

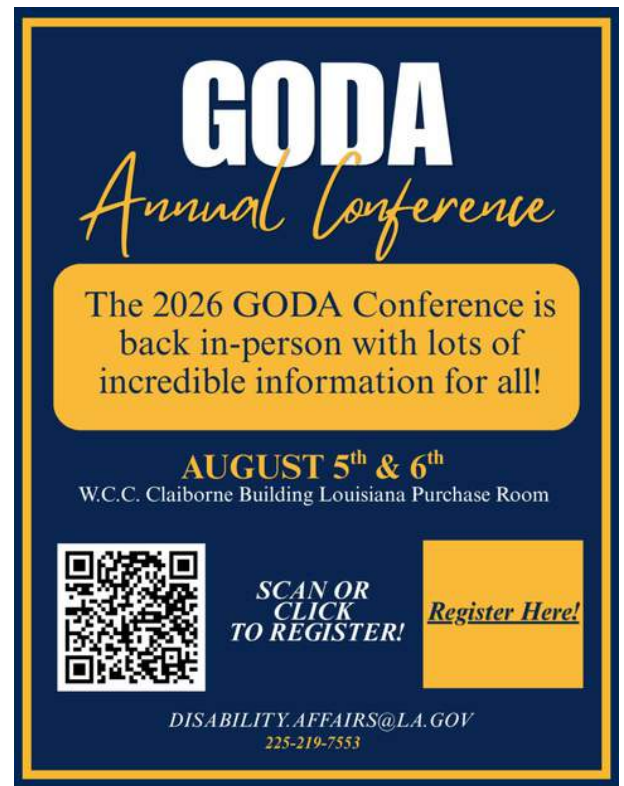
RSVP TO ATTEND:
[HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/BDDC43CM](https://tinyurl.com/bddc43cm)

LACAN
Louisiana Advocates for Children and Adults with Disabilities

Families Helping Families
of Northshore Louisiana, Inc.

FOR QUESTIONS OR MORE INFORMATION CALL (318) 361-0487.

[Register here](https://tinyurl.com/bddc43cm)



GODA

Annual Conference

The 2026 GODA Conference is back in-person with lots of incredible information for all!

AUGUST 5th & 6th
W.C.C. Claiborne Building Louisiana Purchase Room

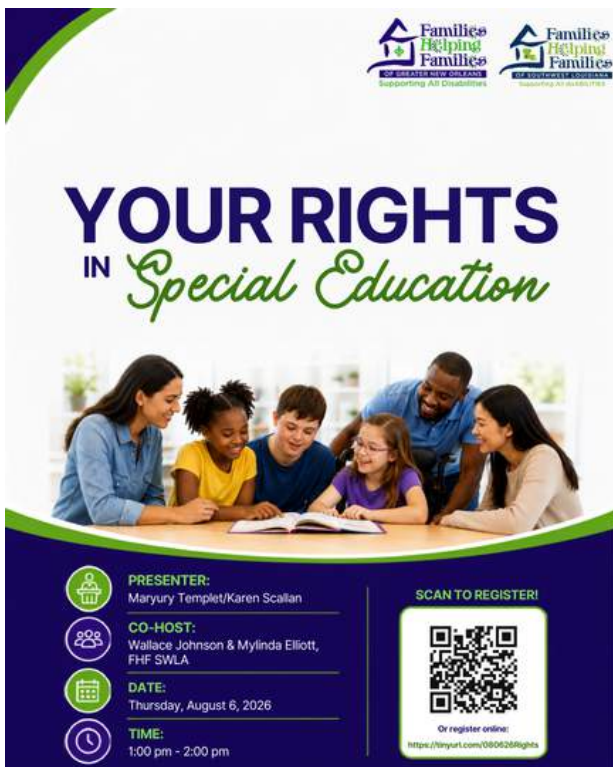


**SCAN OR
CLICK
TO REGISTER!**

Register Here!

DISABILITY.AFFAIRS@LA.GOV
225-219-7553

[Register here](https://tinyurl.com/bddc43cm)



YOUR RIGHTS IN Special Education

Families Helping Families
Supporting All Disabilities

PRESENTER:
Maryury Templet/Karen Scallan

CO-HOST:
Wallace Johnson & Mylinda Elliott,
FHF SWLA

DATE:
Thursday, August 6, 2026

TIME:
1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

SCAN TO REGISTER!



Or register online:
<https://tinyurl.com/080626lrights>

[Register here](https://tinyurl.com/080626lrights)



WHEN YOU AND THE SCHOOL Disagree

Families Helping Families
Supporting All Disabilities

PRESENTER:
Maryury Templet/Karen Scallan

CO-HOST:
Dianthe' Rose, Northshore FHF

DATE:
Tuesday, August 11, 2026

TIME:
11:00 am - 12:00 pm

SCAN TO REGISTER!



Or register online:
<https://tinyurl.com/081011disagree>

[Register here](https://tinyurl.com/081011disagree)

WEBINARS




GETTING AND KEEPING *Your First Job*





PRESENTER:
Maryury Templet/Karen Scallan



CO-HOST:
Kylie Grizzaffi, Bayou Land FHF



DATE:
Tuesday, August 11, 2026



TIME:
1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

SCAN TO REGISTER!



Or register online:
<https://tinyurl.com/081126FirstJob>

[Register here](https://tinyurl.com/081126FirstJob)




INTRODUCTION TO WORK *PART 1: Key Resources & Skills*





PRESENTER:
Maryury Templet/Karen Scallan



CO-HOST:
Pam Carey, FHF at the Crossroads of Louisiana



DATE:
Thursday, August 13, 2026



TIME:
11:00 am - 12:00 pm

SCAN TO REGISTER!



Or register online:
<https://tinyurl.com/080326WorkP1>

[Register here](https://tinyurl.com/080326WorkP1)




INTRODUCTION TO WORK *PART 2: Key Laws*





PRESENTER:
Maryury Templet/Karen Scallan



CO-HOST:
Brenda Bares, FHF Acadiana



DATE:
Tuesday, August 18, 2026



TIME:
11:00 am - 12:00 pm

SCAN TO REGISTER!



Or register online:
<https://tinyurl.com/081826WorkP2>

[Register here](https://tinyurl.com/081826WorkP2)



INTRODUCTION TO WORK *PART 3: Skills Needed to Work Independently*





PRESENTER:
Maryury Templet/Karen Scallan



DATE:
Thursday, August 20, 2026



TIME:
1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

SCAN TO REGISTER!



Or register online:
<https://tinyurl.com/082026WorkP3>

[Register here](https://tinyurl.com/082026WorkP3)

WEBINARS




INTRODUCTION TO WORK

PART 4: *An Overview of Resources to Support the Development of Skills*



 **PRESENTER:**
Maryury Tempel/Karen Scallan

 **CO-HOST:**
Konstance Causey/Hope Miller, FHF NELA

 **DATE:**
Tuesday, August 25, 2026

 **TIME:**
11:00 am - 12:00 pm

SCAN TO REGISTER!



Or register online:
<https://tinyurl.com/0E2338Wk9P4>

SCAN TO REGISTER!



Or register online:
<https://tinyurl.com/0E2338Wk9P4>

[Register here](https://tinyurl.com/0E2338Wk9P4)




LAWS PROTECTING STUDENTS with Exceptionalities



 **PRESENTER:**
Maryury Tempel/Karen Scallan

 **CO-HOST:**
Ester Wilson, FHF Region 7

 **DATE:**
Tuesday, August 25, 2026

 **TIME:**
1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

SCAN TO REGISTER!



Or register online:
<https://tinyurl.com/0E2338Wk9P4>

SCAN TO REGISTER!



Or register online:
<https://tinyurl.com/0E2338Wk9P4>

[Register here](https://tinyurl.com/0E2338Wk9P4)




LOUISIANA'S BULLYING PREVENTION Law



 **PRESENTER:**
Maryury Tempel/Karen Scallan

 **CO-HOST:**
Cynthia Chesterfield, FHF GBR

 **DATE:**
Thursday, August 27, 2026

 **TIME:**
11:00 am - 12:00 pm

SCAN TO REGISTER!



Or register online:
<https://tinyurl.com/087276BullyingLaw>

SCAN TO REGISTER!



Or register online:
<https://tinyurl.com/087276BullyingLaw>

[Register here](https://tinyurl.com/087276BullyingLaw)

THE 9TH ANNUAL

TOUCH A TRUCK

2026



2026

TRICK OR TREAT

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17th

10 AM - 3 PM

IKE Hamilton Expo | 501 Mane St | W Monroe

Kids of all ages welcome to come touch, climb & explore a variety of firetrucks, police cars, construction trucks and big rigs in this unique one-of-a-kind experience! Wear your Halloween costume & Trick or Treat at each vehicle!

Presented By:



Families Helping Families

of Northeast Louisiana, Inc.

\$5

ENTRY FEE PER
CHILD OR ADULT



CLICK HERE



BACK TO SCHOOL EVENTS

SAVE the DATE!

AUGUST 1ST
2:00 PM - 5:00 PM
9 BASTROP MUNICIPAL CENTER

9TH ANNUAL BACK TO SCHOOL Jubilee
PRESENTED BY VirtuouslyMade

EVERYTHING IS 100% FREE!

- FREE SCHOOL SUPPLIES
- FREE PERSONAL HYGIENE ITEMS
- FREE FOOD
- FREE RESOURCES
- FREE HAIRCUTS
- FREE HAIRSTYLING

PARTNERSHIP INVITATION:
If you have a back-to-school event, come and partner with us so we can make this ONE BIG, STRONG COMMUNITY EVENT!

WE ARE NOW ACCEPTING:
SPONSORS VENDORS / TABLE SETUPS
Want to promote your business or give back? Set up a table or become a sponsor today!

CONTACT:
Ms. Shon
318-805-2379
ON STOP BY:
1135 LEAVELL AVENUE

YOUNG drax

QUEENS OF TOMORROW

BACK SCHOOL BASH
& Community Resource Fair

AUGUST 1ST | 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

FREE FOOD & DRINKS | COMMUNITY RESOURCES | SHOW CONES
POPCORN | SCHOOL SUPPLIES | LAPTOP RAFFLE | GAMES | MUSIC | FACE PAINTING

HENRIETTA W. JOHNSON COMMUNITY CENTER

BACK 2 SCHOOL BASH

Liberty Christian Center
Senior Pastor
Dr. Pamela Drumgoe
3220 Hwy 165 S
August 1, 2026
9am-5pm

- Free Food
- Free Hair Cuts
- School Supplies
- School Uniforms
- Free Clothes
- Inflatable Ampers
- Inflatable Giant Slide

COME JOIN US FOR A DAY OF FUN, FELLOWSHIP & COMMUNITY!

PREPARING OUR KIDS FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE!

For More Information
Contact Pastor Johnny Warren @ 318-732-5121

BACK-TO-SCHOOL WELLNESS BASH!

PRESENTED BY: **Humana**
Healthy Horizons in Louisiana

GET READY FOR A NEW SCHOOL YEAR!

JOIN US FOR:

- Food
- Games
- School supplies giveaway

*School supplies will be given away until we run out. Child must be present to receive.

August 6th, 2026
3 PM - 6 PM
West Monroe Boys & Girls Club
500 Evergreen St

BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF NORTH LOUISIANA

Louisiana healthcare connections

Bonekrusher Youth Program Presents

THE BULLYING BACK TO SCHOOL Supply Giveaway

Date: Friday, August 7, 2026
Time: 12:00PM-3:00PM
Location: Bonekrusher Boxing Gym
3307 Renwick St, Monroe, LA

- Free Haircuts
- Health & Wellness Resources
- Blood Pressure Checks
- Sports & Outdoor Games
- Free BBQ Plates
- School Supplies

SPONSORS ARE NEEDED!
VENDOR FEE \$10
CONTACT US
Sammie Crawford (318) 789-6092

BACK TO SCHOOL BASH

PREPARE • EMPOWER • SUCCEED!

FRIDAY AUGUST 7TH 6:00 PM
YOUTH EXPLOSION!

SATURDAY AUGUST 8TH 10:00 AM
BACK TO SCHOOL GIVEAWAYS!

WILLIE DAVIS RECREATION CENTER
116 Cox Ferry Road, Farmerville, LA

BACK TO SCHOOL GIVEAWAYS • SCHOOL SUPPLIES FUN • FOOD • MUSIC • AND MORE!

VENDORS ENCOURAGED TO PARTICIPATE!
Set up a table, share resources, and help make a difference in our community! TOGETHER, WE CAN HELP OUR STUDENTS HAVE A BRIGHTER FUTURE!

REGION 8 COMMUNITY OUTREACH TEAM

9TH ANNUAL BACK TO SCHOOL BASH!

- BACKPACK & SCHOOL SUPPLY GIVEAWAY
- GAMES & DOORPRIZES
- INTERACTIVE BOOTH HEALTH-INFO & FUN
- FREE FOOD
- FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!

SATURDAY AUGUST 8 2026
10AM-2PM
LOUISIANA PURCHASE GARDENS AND ZOO PAVILION
1405 BERNSTEIN PARK RD. MONROE, LA 70202

PREPARE. EMPOWER. SUCCEED!

SPONSORS

TOP NOTCH FINANCIAL

BACK TO SCHOOL DRIVE

Let's come together to support our students and families for a successful school year!

SATURDAY AUGUST 8TH 2026 1:00 PM

1612 WINNSBORO ROAD MONROE, LA 71202

WE WILL BE GIVING AWAY:

- FOOD
- SCHOOL SUPPLIES
- UNIFORMS
- SHOES
- AND MORE!

SUPPORTING OUR KIDS. BUILDING OUR FUTURE!

ALL ARE WELCOME! WHILE SUPPLIES LAST!

BACK TO SCHOOL

Piney Woods Christian Church
550 Hamilton Rd. Downsville
Saturday, August 8th
11:00 - 2:00
Waterslide, Games, Snacks, and Bookbag Giveaway

BACK TO SCHOOL EVENTS



KNOW WHO TO CALL

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- THE WELLSPRING (318) 651-9314
- THE FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER (318) 998-6030

UTILITY ASSISTANCE

- CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF NORTH LOUISIANA (318) 361-5198
- OMCAP (318) 322-7151

HOUSING/RENTAL ASSISTANCE

- OUACHITA PARISH HOUSING AUTHORITY (318) 327-1384
- RUTH'S HOUSE RESOURCE CENTER (318) 512-4133
- WELLSPRING (318) 651-9314
- BAPTIST CHILDRENS HOME (318) 343-2244
- CHRISTOPHER YOUTH CENTER (318) 345-5556
- UNITED WAY (318) 325-3869 OR 211

FOOD ASSISTANCE

- FOOD BANK OF NORTHEAST LOUISIANA (318) 322-3567
- SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP) (1-888-524-3578)

FOR EMERGENCIES
PLEASE CONTACT
YOUR LOCAL POLICE
DEPARTMENT (911)

Helpful Information

Child & Adolescent Services For
MENTAL HEALTH & ADDICTION
ARE IMPORTANT



IF YOUR FAMILY IS STRUGGLING WITH CHILD & ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH OR ADDICTION-RELATED ISSUES, CALL
NORTHEAST DELTA HUMAN SERVICES AUTHORITY

 **318-362-3153**

2525 Ferrand Street, Monroe, LA 71201
www.nedeltahsa.org



Mental Health & Gambling

Problem Gambling takes a serious toll on mental health. It could increase risks of self-harm or suicide.

STAY - Your Life Matters.

If gambling losses, financial stress or emotional pain are making you feel trapped, you are not alone.

Reaching out is strength.

Call the 24/7 Crisis Line: Suicide Crisis Line
800-256-2522 988
nedeltahsa.org



ABOUT THE AGENCY:

“Opportunities for all; partiality shown to none.”
- Dr. Monteic A. Sizer, Executive Director

Northeast Delta HSA is dedicated to transforming how we provide vital services to our citizens. As part of our vision to be a catalyst for change and innovation, we conduct research and analyze social factors to help create programs to meet our region's needs.

Our Mission:
Serve as a catalyst for individuals with mental health, developmental disabilities, and addictive disorders to help realize their full human potential by offering quality, excellent care with greater accessibility.

nedeltahsa.org • 1-800-256-2522

#FollowThePhoenix - @nedeltahsa



SUN

SAFETY CHECKLIST



SUNSCREEN

Apply SPF 30 or higher 15 minutes before going out, apply every 2 hours.



HAT & SUNGLASSES

Wear a broad-brimmed hat and UV-protectant glasses for better protection.



SHADE

Find a shady or cool place to take breaks and recover from the heat. Especially between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Generator Safety Tips

1 Carbon Monoxide Kills!

Portable generators produce carbon monoxide, a colorless, odorless, and tasteless gas.

2 Do NOT use your generator:

- Inside an enclosed structure like a garage.
- Within 20 feet of your home.





3 Cool before refuel!

Turn off the generator and wait 15 minutes before refueling to reduce risk of accidental fire.

4 Stay Alert!

Place at least one battery-operated carbon monoxide detector on each level of your home near bedrooms. Call 911 if the alarm goes off.



5 Protect your household.

If you or someone else experiences headaches, dizziness, or confusion, immediately vacate your home and go to your nearest healthcare provider.

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

FROZEN CHOCOLATE COVERED BANANAS

Ingredients

- 4 ripe but firm bananas peeled
- 8 popsicle sticks or bamboo skewers
- ½ cup assorted toppings such as toasted coconut, sprinkles, mini chocolate chips or nuts
- 12 ounces semisweet chocolate chips
- 4 ounces peanut butter chips optional



Instructions

- Cut each banana in half crosswise and insert popsicle stick into the end of each banana half.
- Lay bananas flat on parchment-lined baking pan and place in freezer uncovered for at least 1 hour or up to overnight.
- Place each topping in its own shallow bowl or plate. Melt chocolate chips in double boiler over medium-low heat (see Notes), stirring frequently.
- Pour some of the melted chocolate into tall glass or cup. One at a time, dip frozen bananas into chocolate, turning to coat and letting excess chocolate drip off.
- Immediately dip bananas in toppings, lightly pressing to adhere if necessary. Refill glass with more melted chocolate as needed, and continue with remaining bananas.
- If desired, place peanut butter chips in small microwave-safe bowl and microwave in 20 second intervals, stirring between each heating, until fully melted and smooth. Pour into small pastry bag or zip top sandwich bag, snipping a small hole in the end. Use melted peanut butter chips to drizzle over some of the bananas.



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.

HFH 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 systems
- 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.