



Families Helping Families

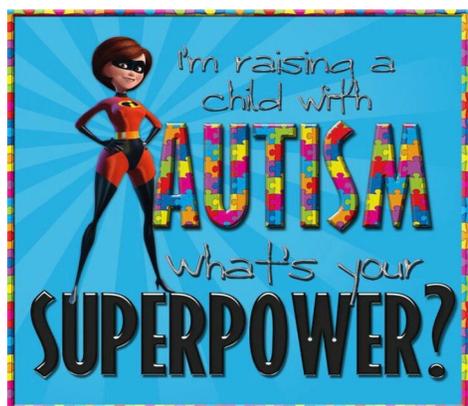
Region 7

Serving: Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Claiborne, DeSoto, Grant, Natchitoches,
Red River, Sabine, Webster, and Winn Parishes



Eight Reasons Why Autism Moms Rock!

Autism Speaks asked to hear stories of motherhood and received an overwhelming amount of beautiful responses. Here is a compile a list to show just how much you ladies rock!



1. They Keep Going

I am a 32-year-old mom of 3-year-old twin boys, one with autism and the other with sensory unawareness. My journey has come with challenges I have been raising them as a single mother since they was 7 weeks old. I never knew or understood why the Most High would pick me for this journey but I had no choice but to KEEP GOING!!! Along the way I have suffered health issues that could of took my life but again I couldn't stop to figure it out I had to KEEP GOING.

At 22 weeks after long evaluations and assessments I heard one of the hardest things that a mother could hear. Your child has moderate to severe Autism. In that moment time stood still. Everything that I've been through began to flash back to me. Now I understand why I had to go through what I did. Why I had to be so strong and determine. For a time such as this. So I tell every parent or family member or anyone that is faced with autism. KEEP GOING!!!!

-Tiesha Hudson

2. They Embrace the 'Family Circus'

I entered the world of Autism in 2010. Since then, three of my children have been diagnosed with Autism and our 4th child is being evaluated in June. I go to 14 therapy sessions per week. We are also doing evaluations with the school district for the fall and will soon be writing 3 IEPs for next year.

For the past 2 years I have organized fundraisers and a team that for Walk Now for Autism Speaks. Since the beginning we have been Team Bradley. This year we are walking with our new name, Autism Family Circus, for our journey. I had an event on World Autism Awareness Day and have 2 more scheduled before our Walk in September.

Who?

A family directed resource center for all individuals with disabilities and their families

What?

Providing information, referral, and support through a network of services and assistance throughout Region 7

When?

8:30 am – 5:00 pm
Monday – Friday

Drop-ins are always welcome!

Where?

2620 Centenary Boulevard
Building 2, Suite 250
Shreveport, LA 71104
318.226.4541
877.226.4541
info@fhfregion7.com
www.fhfregion7.com

My kids truly represent the Autism Spectrum. They are all so different, so unique, with their own set of strengths. They amaze me with their hard work, even when things are tough. I see huge potential in each of them and know that everything I do every day will help them succeed in their own way in the future. I would do anything for my kids. I am doing everything I can for them. My life is about theirs. I live for them, for their success and their future. In life, we never know where paths will take us. Sometimes we end up in a place we never knew existed. I didn't know about Autism before I was thrown into this world. I'm a better person because I'm here, thanks to my kids. I am proud to be their Mom and forever grateful for them, Autism and all.

-Amy Huizenga

3. They Hold Down the Fort While Their Husbands are Abroad

I am a 30 year old Army wife, mom, and student. My husband and I have been married for 7 and a half years and our son is 3 and a half years-old. I am in culinary school and my husband is currently deployed. This means I'm doing a whole bunch on my own. Our son was diagnosed in October 2012, but we kind of always knew he might be autistic. I worked with special needs children for about 2 years and kind of knew what to look for. It didn't make the words any easier, but it did help in knowing how to work with him and in helping him grow. He doesn't talk yet, but with the combination of daycare, school and home; he has learned so much. We stand up for him and fight for whatever is best for him. Husband isn't here, but he watches videos of Daddy every night. We have our low moments, but I wouldn't change who he is for the world. *-Christina Bouldin*

4. They Light It Up Blue

My oldest son Xander has autism. My husband and I have an amazing support system in our community, but more importantly, in our family! On this Mother's Day, I am very thankful to be a mother to these perfect little boys. I also feel very blessed to have a mother and mother-in-law (who are more supportive than I could ever imagine) to celebrate with... I AM SO BLESSED! [You can still Light It Up Blue!](#)

-Andrea Leeth

5. They Walk

After 8 years of only getting through part of our St. Louis Autism Walk, in 2012, my son was able to get through the entire walk. *-Jenn Laskie*

6. They Are Silly

Autism never stopped us from being silly!

-Isabelle Tam

7. They Celebrate Every Milestone

My son was diagnosed in (Feb 2013) although we were already receiving OT and speech therapy a few months prior to the diagnosis. Before therapies I couldn't play with my son in this manner and it's because of occupational therapy that my son actually enjoys being spun around and played with now. I am very proud of all of my children (2 typical and one on the spectrum) and I will celebrate every milestone they make because I know what an accomplishment it is and how hard they had to work to get there.– *Katie McVay Campbell*

8. They Dance

My kids truly represent the Autism Spectrum. They are all so different, so unique, with their own set of strengths. They amaze me with their hard work, even when things are tough. I see huge potential in each of them and know that everything I do every day will help them succeed in their own way in the future. I would do anything for my kids. I am doing everything I can for them. My life is about theirs. I live for them, for their success and their future. In life, we never know where paths will take us.

Summer Time Activity Ideas for Children with Disabilities

By: Michelle Hicks

Staying at home day after day can make for long summer days, whether you have a child with a disability or not. Why not get out of the house with your child and try activities that can educate, help with sensory needs and be fun all at the same time? Listed below are a few ideas you could try this summer with your child.

The Wheels on the Bus. Most children love riding or going places. Why not incorporate something important like learning a bus route your child may need to travel one day? If your child uses a wheelchair for mobility this would be a great way to show them some skills to use toward independence and self-determination! Make an afternoon of it and ride the bus with your child. Choose departure times during off-peak hours so you can get a seat next to a window and deal with fewer crowds. Bring along books and electronics with ear buds to keep your child engaged. You could write a story before the ride to introduce your child to the idea and talk about what to expect on a bus. Check out other public transportation options in your community as well.



Firehouse Visit. Call your local fire department and ask if you and your child can stop by for a quick visit to see the fire trucks and meet the firemen. If your child wanders, this is a great way to introduce them to first responders. If there's time, perhaps they can talk to your child about what to do in an emergency, offer them safety tips and may even let them sit in a fire engine. Take pictures of your visit and make it into a social story to read later.

Jump Centers. Jump centers are private indoor arenas, filled with gigantic inflatable slides, bounce houses, obstacle courses and more. Some jump places offer special times for children with disabilities. It is worth finding one near you and inquiring about jump times for children with disabilities.

Strolling the Mall. Malls are a great way to take advantage of someone else's air conditioning on hot summer days. Malls are cool and not too crowded on the weekdays. It is a good way to keep your child moving and active as you walk back and forth in a controlled environment; less worries about children darting in front of traffic. Some stores offer interactive displays or indoor play areas that are fenced off and give you a break while your child plays. It's also a great way to practice those power chair skills if your child uses a power wheelchair for mobility!

Sensory Friendly Films. Get up, dance, walk, shout, or sing! Some local theaters offer sensory-friendly screenings in a safe and accepting environment on a monthly basis. In order to provide a more accepting and comfortable setting for individuals with sensory needs, the movie auditorium keeps their lights turned slightly up (some lights will remain on) and the sound turned slightly down. The movie (typically G- or PG-rated) won't show previews or advertisements. Because some have strict, special dietary needs, families may be permitted to bring their own snacks from home.

Local parks. Find a park and swing with your child this summer. Swings are beneficial for physical, social and cognitive development, and they offer certain therapeutic benefits. They promote movement and perceptual skills, spatial awareness, general fitness and social interaction. If your child has trouble with crowds, visit the park in the morning during summer camp hours when it's likely to be less crowded.

LaDDC News

Leadership Changes at OCDD and LDH

June 18, 2018



Mark Thomas has been named the new Deputy Secretary of the LA Department of Health (LDH). Mark has led the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) for over five years where he has overseen transformational changes to the waiver service delivery system, which this year will result in all individuals with developmental disabilities who have current needs receiving the waiver that best meets their needs. No longer will someone with an immediate need have to wait years for that need to be met. OCDD was able to accomplish this monumental task partly because

Mark recognizes the importance of working with, and more importantly, listening to stakeholders. He is a person of integrity who is well respected by individuals with developmental disabilities, families, providers, advocates and government officials across the state. This respect is based upon a longstanding relationship of trust, his ability to handle situations in a professional and caring manner, and his proven track record in the field of developmental disabilities over the past 25 years. Mark is also a man who truly understands the meaning of public service. For these, and many other reasons, it's no surprise he was selected for this leadership position.

As LDH Deputy Secretary, Mark will supervise the Offices of Behavioral Health, Aging and Adult Services, Public Health, and Citizens with Developmental Disabilities. The Deputy Secretary also coordinates the Human Services Interagency Council which includes the Regional Human Services Districts/Authorities. The DD community is not losing Mark; he will always advocate for people with developmental disabilities and their families, and will now be able to advocate from a higher level of authority. The other populations served by LDH are the true beneficiaries, as they will now have Mark serving and

advocating just as passionately for them as well.

It was also no surprise that Julie Foster Hagan was named as Mark's replacement for OCDD's Assistant Secretary. Julie has served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for the past three years, working at Mark's side not only on the transformational waiver changes, but all of OCDD's major initiatives, such as transitioning the state into an Employment First State and the continued downsizing of the state's large residential facilities. Her values, work ethic, and intelligence are among the qualities which have earned her the respect of her colleagues, advocates, families, and providers. Having worked 19 years in various leadership positions at OCDD, Julie is knowledgeable and experienced in all aspects of the service delivery system. She is also driven by the individuals and families we serve and will do everything in her power to afford them the opportunity to live self-determined lives in their own homes, fully included in their communities. As Assistant Secretary, Julie will be joining the Council as an official member. We look forward to our continued work with Julie and her team.



Mark will replace outgoing Deputy Secretary Michelle Alletto who has resigned to take a position with the Milbank Memorial Fund in her home state of New York. Upon assuming the Deputy Secretary position several years ago, Michelle soon became a friend to the DD community, often communicating the importance of not only maintaining, but also increasing home and community based services to legislators.

LDH also announced the upcoming departure of LDH Undersecretary and career employee, Jeff Reynolds, who has accepted the position of Vice Chancellor of Finance at LSU Shreveport. A constant presence at legislative committee meetings, Jeff often tells legislators he is "just an accountant," but Jeff is also a compassionate advocate with an enormous amount of historical knowledge of Medicaid and LDH's finances. Cindy Rives, currently serving as Deputy Undersecretary, will transition to the Undersecretary position. Cindy has 24 years of experience in public finance, the last ten with LDH, to draw upon in her new role.

The Council wants to thank both Jeff and Michelle for all they have done to improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities in Louisiana and to wish them the very best in their new positions.

Contact Us

LaDDC News is the electronic newsletter for the LA Developmental Disabilities Council. If there are any questions about the information above, contact the Council by replying to this email, or calling the toll free number listed below:

phone: 1-800-450-8108
email: info@laddc.org
website: www.laddc.org
facebook: www.facebook.com/LaDDCouncil
twitter: www.twitter.com/laddcouncil



What is the Northwest Louisiana Human Services District?

The Northwest Louisiana Human Services District formerly OCDD was created by Act 373 in the 2008 Legislative Session to serve the parishes of **Caddo, Bossier, Webster, Claiborne, Bienville, Red River, Desoto, Sabine and Natchitoches** as a Local Governmental Entity (LGE). The district completed its' readiness assessment on May 19, 2014 and began operating as a fully authorized Local Governmental Entity on July 1, 2014.

Northwest Louisiana Human Services District is one of 10 LGEs created by the Louisiana Legislature as part of a statewide integrated human services delivery system. With local accountability and management, LGE's are charged with providing **behavioral health and developmental disabilities** services to the residents of Louisiana. All LGE's operate with a framework anchored in clear public policy objectives, well-defined local responsibilities, and accountability measures designed to assure quality services are delivered to Louisiana consumers efficiency and effectively.

Referral and Intake Anyone in the community can make a referral to the regional Human Services District Office. For example, a parent, teacher, doctor or other professionals can **call the local office at 318-741-7455, or come by in person to 3018 Old Minden Rd., Ste. 1211, Bossier City, LA 71111**. Information on the family and individual will be asked. Family will be contacted for an appointment. During the appointment documents such as an IEP (Individual Education Plan) or medical records will be helpful to determine eligibility.

Statement of Approval or Denial Once your application for Developmental Disabilities services is processed you will receive an approval or denial letter in the mail with further instructions. If a denial letter is received, you have the right to appeal. However, **if an approval letter is received then services must be requested.**

Requesting Services After an individual is found eligible for services **YOU MUST REQUEST THE APPROPRIATE SERVICES!!!** You will receive paperwork from Statistical Resources (SRI) in Baton Rouge to sign and request services. If an individual does not return proper paper work your name will not be placed on the registry and will not have a protective date for further services. **It is recommended to call Statistical Resources every year to verify the individuals still on the registry at 1-800-364-7828.**

Services to request with SRI the services to request with SRI are **Children's Choice, New Opportunity, Supports, and Residential Options Waivers (ROW)**. Also, for children 3 to 21, **EPSDT (Early and Periodic, Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment)**, under support coordination services, children could receive personal care services. There is a waiting list for services.

Waiver Services 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 need. Services are provided in the home or in the community and must represent a least restrictive treatment alternative. Waiver programs include:

Children's Choice Waiver offers supplemental support to children through age 20 who currently live at home with their families or with foster families. Funding is received for: Support Coordination, family supports, center – based respite, environmental accessibility adaptations (including vehicles), and family training.

New Opportunities Waiver offers individuals age 3 and older supports that include: individual and family supports (day and night); community integration and development; environmental accessibility adaptations; assistive devices; specialized medical equipment and supplies; supported employment with transportation; employment related training; professional services; personal emergency response systems; skilled nursing services; center – based respite; and one – time transitional services.

Supports Waiver offers people age 18 and older services that include: supported employment; day habilitation; prevocational services; respite; habilitation; and personal emergency response systems.

Residential Options Waiver (ROW) offers individuals of all ages services designed to support them to move from ICFs/DD and nursing facilities to community – based settings and to serve as an alternative to institutionalization. ROW services include residential services (e.g., host home and shared living); vocational services (e.g., day habilitation and supported employment); support services (e.g., support coordination, one – time transition services, respite – out of home); and professional services (e.g., speech therapy and psychology).

Alternative Services: Flexible Family Fund-Monthly stipends to families with severe or profound developmental disabilities from birth to age 18 to help with extraordinary needs. **Individual and Family Support**-IFS services provide assistance not available from any other resource. These services include respite care, personal care services, or equipment and supplies. **To request a Flexible Family Fund or IFS application call Northwest LA Human Service District-DD Division at 318-741-7455.**

***Article reprinted from: <http://www.nlhsd.org/developmental-disability>.*

Meet your new Region 7 LaCAN Leader Mimi Webb!!



My name is Mimi Rankin Webb and I am your LaCAN Leader for Region 7 which includes Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Claiborne, DeSoto, Natchitoches, Red River, Sabine and Webster parishes. I am the Mother of four children. Three of mine are 12 years old, each carrying their own version of an Autism diagnosis as well as other accompanying diagnoses.

Over the years, I have become familiar with the many processes and subsequently the struggles that we as families go through in trying to navigate everyday life. I understand the difficulties

families experience when trying to gain access to needed healthcare and acquire the often elusive school accommodations necessary for our children to access their education. I too am navigating the often confusing aspects of accessing much needed therapies that would ensure that our children have the best chance at developing and reaching their full potential both at home and within the community.

As a parent, I understand the fight for accommodations, access, awareness and acceptance that we as families experience and am going through this myself on a day to day basis. I feel strongly that society needs to be more aware and inclusive for those who are differently-abled and that access to services designed to keep our disabled living within their own homes with their families and working where possible out within the community are of the utmost importance. I worry for my own children as adults and want to help encourage everyone to advocate actively towards ensuring a better tomorrow.

As your LaCAN Region 7 Leader, I am here to help you understand how together, we can make our voices heard by writing or calling your legislator, scheduling a legislative visit to discuss our current situations, or preparing public testimony. I am here to offer my support to individuals wishing to effectively advocate for systems change in the areas of home and community-based services, education, and employment. I believe that together we can make effective change and a strong impact with our grassroots advocacy. I encourage you and your family to join me as we advocate for effective change and strengthen our community as a whole. Together, we CAN make a difference. If you would like to be an advocate for systems change or connect with LaCAN please contact Mimi Webb at mwebb@lacanadvocate.org or call her at 318-226-4541.



What Families Can Do to Avoid “Surprise” Medical Bills?

Most families with CYSHCN are familiar with managed care and understand that they have better health care coverage if they stay within their plan’s network. However, even when families go to network hospitals, they are sometimes hit with surprise medical bills.

How Does This Happen?

Even if a hospital is in a family’s plan network, not all of the providers who provide services at the hospital may be in the network. It is important that parents know if individual doctors are also participating in the plan. This can be important to know for routine visits to a children’s hospital as well as for in-patient or emergency care.

In-Patient Care

Parents may have been diligent in finding both a hospital and also a provider who works there in their plan’s network. However, if their child needs surgery or other care, it is possible that the anesthesiologist, for example, may not be participating in their plan. Then the family receives an “out-of-network” bill.

Emergency Care

The situation is even more difficult during an emergency. Families may have to go to the nearest hospital or perhaps get admitted or transferred to a hospital that may be out-of-network.

What Can Families Do?

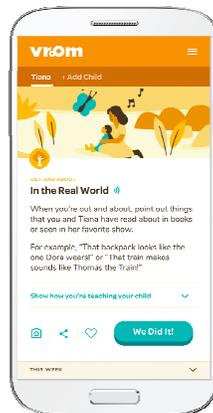
- Use in-network hospitals.
- For medical appointments, check that the providers at the hospital are also in-network.
- If using Medicaid as secondary payor, get an out-of-state authorization. NOTE: Even non-participating providers can bill Medicaid out-of-network as secondary to private insurance.
- File a complaint, see <https://consumersunion.org/insurance-complaint-tool/>.

Families need to be vigilant about using in-network providers to ensure that their insurance will cover medical



There is an APP for That!

Did you know that there is a variety of ways you can track your baby's development, and you can do it right on your smart phone! There are several different developmental milestones tracker apps that are available for a free download. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have a milestones tracker app. You can get more information on at www.cdc.gov. Vroom also has a child development app that will give you daily tips and activities. Both of these apps are a free download and available for Apple or Android phones.



For more information or if you have concerns about your baby's development contact Monica Stampley, EarlySteps Community Outreach Specialist, at 318.226.4541 or monica.stampley@la.gov

Children's Special Health Services Medical Transportation Project

In continuing our spirit of partnership, Families Helping Families and Children's Special Health Services have joined to provide travel assistance through the CSHS Medical Transportation Project. Our agencies are working together to provide eligible families with financial assistance for the costs of travel to out-of-town medical appointments or services. Please contact Families Helping Families Region 7 at (318)226-4541/877-226-4541 to find out more. Many families have benefited from this help with their expenses.

What Is Hanging With Friends?

Hanging with Friends aka HWF is Families Helping Families Region 7 support group for self-advocates over the age of 18 or out of the school system. Hanging with Friends was birthed out of the idea that all people should have friends as well as being active and included in their community. We get together one a month to have fun, meet new people, and participant in community activities. Some activities include bowling night, movie night, sweetheart dance, community festivals, and holiday celebration plus much more. As a group we are serious about self-advocacy issues, but we also want to make you laugh and feel good about life. Join us to celebrate the strengths of self-advocates. Most of all, let's work together to help people live the life they want with the support they need. **All HWF activities can be found on our website at www.fhfregion7.com or you can contact Comeaka King at (318)226-4541/877-226-4541 or cjames@fhfregion7.com for additional information.**

Parent Support Group



Our parent support group is Families Helping Families Region 7 support group for parents or caregivers of individuals with disabilities. Parents and family members of children with disabilities or special needs are encouraged to come, share, and learn with other parents. Power of the Parent meets every third Wednesday of the month from 5:30pm – 6:30pm.

Please feel free to contact Monica Stampley at (318)226-4541/877-226-4541 or mstamply@la.gov for additional information or location.

Ways to Give Back to Families Helping Families Region 7



Support Families Helping Families Region 7 by starting your shopping at smile.amazon.com. AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know and love. Same products, same prices, and same services.

Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to Families Helping Families Region 7 whenever you shop on AmazonSmile.



Families Helping Families Region 7 is proud to announce their participation in the Kroger Neighbor to Neighbor Donation Program. If you shop at Kroger and use a KrogerPlus Card this is an easy and fast way to donate money to Families Helping Families Region 7 without coming out of your pocket. Kroger will donate money Families Helping Families Region 7 every time you use your card.

Helping Families Helping Families Region 7 is so simple just register your Kroger online at www.krogercommunityrewards.com. You must have a registered KrogerPlus card account to link to FHF Region 7. If you do not have a KrogerPlus Card, cards are available at the customer service desk at any Kroger. If you are a new online customers, you must click on SIGN UP TODAY in the 'New Customer?' box.

- You can sign up for a Kroger Community Rewards Account by entering your zip code, clicking on favorite store, enter your email address, create a password, and agree to the terms and conditions.
- You will get a message to check your email inbox and click on the link within the body of the email.
- You will click on My Account and use your email address and password to proceed to the next step.
- You will click on Edit Kroger Community Rewards information and input your Kroger Plus card number.
- You will update or confirm your information.
- You will enter our **NPO number 90225** or our **name Families Helping Families Region 7**, or select **Families Helping Families Region 7** from list and click on confirm.

To verify you are enrolled correctly, you will see Families Helping Families Region 7 name on the right side of your information page.

REMEMBER, purchases will not count for Families Helping Families Region 7 until after member(s) register their card(s).

LET THE DONATING BEGIN!!

Families Helping Families Region 7 Presents *Tools for Special Needs Planning*

**GUEST PRESENTERS: ATTORNEYS MICHAEL CARNEY AND KYLE MOORE
AND CERTIFIED MEDICAID PLANNER VICKIE T. RECH**

Able
Account

Tutorship
and
Continuing
Tutorship

Full and
Limited
Interdiction

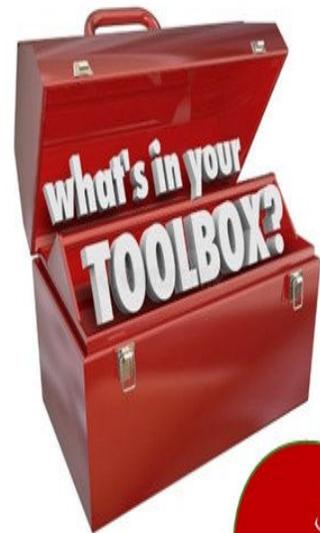
WEDNESDAY, JULY 18, 2018

BOSSIER PARISH AULD BRANCH

3950 WAYNE AVE.

BOSSIER CITY, LA 71112

10:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.



Special
Needs
Trust



TO ATTEND THIS WORKSHOP, PLEASE RSVP WITH COMEAKA KING, NWLAHSD FAMILY FACILITATOR AT

318.226.4541 OR EMAIL CJAMES@FHFREGION7.COM



WE NEED YOU

WHEN

Aug. 2-3, 2018
8:30am - 3:00pm

WHERE

**Bossier Instructional
Center**

2719 Airline Dr., Bossier City, La 71111

FEATURING • *Caddo Special Programs, *Parris Taylor, Disputes Resolution/LDOE, *Jennifer Campbell/Bossier Parish Schools, *LASARD, *Dr. Jeannetta Jones/Webster Parish Schools

"This workshop/conference" is supported under contract with Louisiana Department of Education with funds under Part B on Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act of 2004.



2-DAY IEP BASIC TRAINING CAMP

IEP TOPICS

IEP Start to Finish

Positive Behavior Supports/BIP's

Transition/Person Centered Planning

LEAP Connect

504/IAP's

Disputes Resolutions

REFRESHMENTS

Light Breakfast & Light Lunch Provided

HOSTED BY

Families Helping Families Region 7

2620 Centenary Blvd.

Bldg. 2, Suite 250

Shreveport, LA 71104

CONTACT

For more information or to RSVP

Ester Drakes/Education Specialist

edrakes@fhfregion7.com

318/226-4541



The Impact of the 2018 Legislative Sessions on Individuals with Disabilities and their Families

June 29, 2018

Since January, individuals with developmental disabilities and their families went through an emotional hell, not knowing if services they need to remain in their homes, or in many cases, literally survive, would be reduced or eliminated. They painstakingly pled with legislators through the regular and THREE special legislative sessions to "fix the fiscal cliff" and prioritize services for individuals with disabilities and their families. In the end, advocacy worked, and all services for people with developmental disabilities were not only spared from cuts, but gains were made. Funding for 650 additional waiver slots for those in the most urgent need and two waiver rate increases were included in the approved budget (more details below). While the results are great, disability advocates are finding it difficult to celebrate. They are emotionally and physically exhausted from having to beg the Legislature to protect their services from cuts year after year after year! With the revenue-raising measures passed this year, those treks to the Capitol to plead will hopefully be a thing of the past. But one thing is clear - LaCAN advocates (in recognizable yellow shirts!) have a collective voice with a powerful and effective message that resonates with legislators. Advocacy does work!

Fixing the Cliff: Compromise on Needed Revenue was Elusive

Faced with an astounding \$1 Billion looming deficit, Governor Edwards' proposed state budget for Fiscal Year 19 (FY19) cut the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) over \$650 Million in state general funds (resulting in \$2.4 Billion of cuts when federal matching funds are included). The result would have been catastrophic reductions or elimination of numerous services for people with developmental disabilities. On March 5th, the first Special Session called to address the fiscal cliff ended after the Legislature failed to agree on a plan to address the state's budget shortfall.

The magnitude of Louisiana's budget crisis was slightly decreased during the Regular Session when additional revenue was recognized by the Revenue Estimating Conference, reducing the shortfall to \$648 Million. Despite this reduction, LDH still faced massive cuts and had an obligation to notify tens of thousands of Medicaid enrollees their eligibility would end July 1st if funding was not restored. Advocates sent a resounding message to the Legislature that cutting these services would result in homelessness, unemployment, loss of

independence, and even death. The Legislature responded by passing a budget that fully funded LDH, sending a clear message that people with disabilities and healthcare were a priority. However, nearly all other state departments were cut by 24% leading to the Governor's veto of what he called a "catastrophic budget."

A second Special Session to once again try and fix the ongoing budget crisis was a marginal success in that a budget was passed fully funding LDH again. However, legislators failed to pass major revenue-raising measures needed to fix the state's fiscal cliff beginning July 1st (only \$87 Million was raised). Fortunately, during the third Special Session, legislators were able to compromise on a plan to raise nearly \$500 Million in revenue. With this additional revenue, the state will be able to ensure funding for other priorities including higher education, TOPS, SNAP, and public safety.

Results in Home and Community Based Supports

In May, the Revenue Estimating Conference recognized revenue in excess of the Official Forecast resulting in a deposit of \$19.9 Million in the New Opportunities Waiver (NOW) Fund. [Act 665 \(SB347\)](#) by Senator Sharon Hewitt expanded the purpose of the NOW Fund allowing it to be used for all home and community based waiver slots for individuals with DD and to improve the capacity of the state to meet the varying and complex needs of people with developmental disabilities. Act 665 also requires LDH to consult with the DD Council to develop a plan on the use of monies in the fund. \$12.1 Million from the fund was appropriated in HB1 to fund the following in FY19:

- 650 additional mixed waiver slots for people in the most urgent need;
- Complex needs rate in the NOW for people with complex medical and/or behavioral needs;
- Increase Individual and Family Support (IFS) night rate to \$11 in the NOW.

Any unused dollars remain in the fund for appropriation in future years.

The 627 waiver slots funded last year were used to meet the needs of all individuals on the waiting list who have been screened and determined to have an emergent need, and some individuals with an urgent need. With these additional 650 slots, all those remaining in urgent need will receive a waiver offer, with enough remaining capacity to serve those whose needs change throughout the year.

The increase in the IFS night rate and the availability of a complex needs rate to serve people with complex needs will bring some relief to home and community based providers whose rates were cut years ago.

Education Issues

Behavioral practices were once again the focus of education advocacy in the Legislature for parents of children with disabilities. Advocates expressed a desire for the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) to develop a plan for

supporting schools and communities with implementing best practices in addressing student behavior. Senator Jack Donahue, who has previously taken leadership roles related to behavior issues in schools, filed [SB345](#) which would have required LDOE to develop such a plan in collaboration with the Advisory Council on Student Behavior and Discipline (ACSBD). Senator Donahue did not move this bill forward due to school leaders indicating LDOE already had a statewide plan for behavioral support; however, LDOE later acknowledged the plan presented was not a statewide plan, but expectations for each regional consortia of school systems. Continued advocacy is needed to ensure a statewide plan specifying LDOE's commitment and role in providing support to schools in best practices with addressing student behavior is developed and implemented.

Senator Wesley Bishop expanded the membership of ACSBD by adding five new members with the passage of [Act 600 \(SB465\)](#) , and charged ACSBD with providing a written report of recommended changes to state laws, policies, and regulations directly to the Senate Committee on Education and House Committee on Education by February 15, 2019.

With the passage of [Act 696 \(HB766\)](#) by Representative Vincent Pierre, schools will be required to allow behavioral health providers to serve students at school during school hours if the student's parent requests such services from the behavioral health provider. The parent will be responsible for costs associated with such services, and outside behavioral service providers must comply with the terms of a student's Individualized Education Plan, Individualized Accommodation Plan, Section 504 Plan, Behavior Management Plan, or Individualized Health Plan.

Other legislative instruments related to behavior (i.e., [SB298](#) , [SB301](#) , and [SB303](#) , all by Senator John Milkovich) threatened to allow any school personnel to remove students from a school campus, allow the use of force and physical restraint, and involve law enforcement and courts in everything from removing students from campus to determining placement and program decisions in response to student behavioral challenges. These instruments did not pass after legislators heard advocates' concerns regarding practices presented in these instruments being inconsistent with federal law related to rights and processes for determining programs and placement of children with disabilities.

Other Bills of Interest

[Act 455 \(HB199\)](#) by Representative Pat Smith creates the Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) Task Force to develop framework for assessing children who are deaf or hard of hearing to determine language skills and ensure kindergarten readiness.

[Act 492 \(HB14\)](#) by Representative Pat Smith seeks to address staff shortages in schools by allowing retired interpreters, educational transliterators, and certified educators of the hearing impaired to be rehired in positions covered by the Teachers' Retirement System of Louisiana.

[Act 660 \(SB310\)](#) by Senator Dan Claitor requires the state treasurer to withhold 25 percent of the state funds budgeted for state travel by the Department of Education in any year LDOE fails to collect and report data related to students with disabilities as required by law.

[Act 263 \(HB79\)](#) by Representative Sherman Mack makes it a crime to abuse persons with infirmities through electronic means.

[Act 424 \(HB198\)](#) by Representative Scott Simon makes distribution of funds from the Traumatic Head and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund a source of last resort after Medicare and Medicaid sources have been expended. Previously the use of this fund was a last resort after private and governmental sources were expended.

[Act 596 \(HB281\)](#) by Representative Kirk Talbot allows residents of nursing homes to install and use monitoring devices in the residents' rooms.

[Act 549 \(HB389\)](#) by Representative Gary Carter increases the punishment for the crime of sexual battery committed on victims who have disabilities.

[Act 164 \(HB395\)](#) by Representative Franklin Foil establishes the standard of good cause for a court of law to modify or terminate a decree of tutorship.

[Act 495 \(HB474\)](#) by Representative Pat Smith requires additional training for peace officers including techniques for face-to-face communications with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

[Act 496 \(HB627\)](#) by Representative Rodney Lyons allows physicians to recommend treatment with medical marijuana for multiple conditions associated with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

[Act 528 \(SB265\)](#) by Senator J.P. Morell requires multi-story courthouses have at least one-half of all elevators in working service and be accessible by ADA Standards at all times.

[Act 240 \(SB331\)](#) by Senator Yvonne Colomb extends the renewal period for an accessible hang tag for individuals with mobility needs from four to ten years.

[Act 246 \(SB472\)](#) by Senator Ronnie Johns creates an "Autism" special prestige license plate and requires annual royalties from the plate to be forwarded to the Autism Society - Louisiana State Chapter, Inc. (LSAC).

Contact Us

LaDDC News is the electronic newsletter for the LA Developmental Disabilities Council. If there are any questions about the information above, contact the Council by replying to this email, or calling the toll free number listed below:

phone: 1-800-450-8108
email: info@laddc.org
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**Louisiana Developmental
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Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council's Mission

To ensure all individuals with disabilities benefit from supports and opportunities in their communities so they achieve quality of life in conformance with their wishes.

Through the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act Congress funds and authorizes the Developmental Disabilities Council to conduct advocacy, capacity building and systems change activities. The Council's efforts are designed to promote the increased self-determination, independence, productivity, integration and inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in their communities.

The Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC) is made up of people from every region of the state who are appointed by the governor to develop and implement a five year plan to address the needs of persons with developmental disabilities. Membership includes persons with developmental disabilities, parents and representatives from public and private agencies. Several members rotate off the Council each year in October and nominations for new members are always welcomed.

You may contact the DDC by calling 1.800.450.8101 or visit their website: www.laddc.org

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