"It's Who We Are... It's What We Do"

Assisting and strengthening individuals with disabilities and their families through a coordinated network of resources, services and supports.

*** PARISHES WE SERVE ***
Acadia, Evangeline, Iberia, Lafayette, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary and Vermilion Parishes

WORDS FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Laci Polotzola

As I reflect over the past year, I have shared so many different emotions with the families we serve. Just witnessing and feeling what our families have to face each day and knowing that our agency played a part in connecting them to the proper resources and/or helped them in any way, makes my heart full.

This holiday season brings excitement, joy and hope in believing in miracles. I believe 2019 will definitely bring a sense of rejuvenation in all aspects of our agency. Thank you for allowing my staff and I to be a part of your family.

Laci Polotzola
What does the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council do?

The Council engages in **advocacy, systems change, and capacity building** activities that contribute to a coordinated, individual and family-centered, individual 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, be productive, and be integrated and included in all facets of community life. To build capacity and effect systems change, Councils are charged with carrying out specific activities in the **Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act**:

- To Organize and Enlist Others to Influence
- To Empower
- To Change Public Attitudes
- To Advocate and Influence
- To Demonstrate Innovation
- To Provide Training and Technical Assistance
- To Redesign the System
- To Remove Barriers
- To Educate Policy Makers
- To Educate the Public
- To Develop & Support Coalitions
- To Outreach

The Council has four committees to address the objectives in the Council’s Five Year Plan and functions of the Council:

- **Executive Committee** – takes immediate action when necessary, makes policy and other recommendations to the full Council, and evaluates the performance of the Executive Director.
- **Self Determination/Community Inclusion Committee** – monitors plan activities that fall under the areas of Community Supports and Advocacy and Leadership Development.
- **Education/Employment Committee** – monitors plan activities that fall under the areas of Education and Early Intervention, Employment, and Child Care.
- **Act 378 Sub-Committee** – oversees implementation of the Community and Family
As the end of the year is approaching quite rapidly, we can certainly look back and appreciate the positive effects of our advocacy even after the long drawn out special sessions we encountered this past Legislative Session. While we continue to celebrate our success, it is important to get involved and prepared as we plan our upcoming Legislative Roundtable and personal visits with our legislators.

Why is it important for me to attend the Annual Legislative Roundtable?

Roundtables provide you the opportunity to:
- Meet with legislators in your area
- Get current information on state issues
- Increase your ability to be an effective advocate
- Learn techniques for sharing your personal story to encourage positive changes

Both attending the Annual Legislative Roundtable and Legislative Visits are very important towards positive systems change and offer loads of opportunity. Please contact me if you are interested in visiting your personal legislator and I will make sure to include you on the visit. Also, don’t forget to RSVP for the Roundtable. Looking forward to another successful year! Thank you all for all you do!

Save the Date

Wednesday, February 13, 2019
9:30 am - 12:00 pm
St. Barnabas Episcopal Church
400 Camellia Blvd.
Lafayette, LA 70503
RSVP to Jamie Duplechaine
337-984-3458 / 504-909-5607
jduplechaine@lacanadvocates.org

If you are interested in finding out more information about Families Helping Families of Acadiana and the services we provide, please call our office and we will be more than happy to schedule a meeting with you! We are striving to educate EVERYONE in the community about the services we offer, as well as express the importance of inclusion and empowering individuals with disabilities.

Upcoming Events...
Free Smoke Alarms and Alert Equipment for Lafayette Residents with a Hearing Impairment*

*Who Is Eligible?*
City of Lafayette Residents of all ages with a documented disability of:

- deaf
- hard of hearing
- hearing impairment

To qualify, applicants must have a professional attest to their disability as part of their completed application.

How Do You Apply?
Submit your application online at: www.lafayette-la.gov/FireDepartment
- or-
Complete the application found at your local fire department and send to Lafayette Fire Department’s Fire Prevention Division by mail, fax, or email.

Program available while supplies last.

The LFD Fire Prevention Division has been awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to install smoke alarms and alert equipment in the homes of individuals with a hearing impairment.*

**Program Features:**
- Installation of smoke alarms and alert equipment in the home
- Equipment will include a bed shaker and very loud, low-frequency bedside alert signal; and, in some homes, a strobe light to alert individuals who are deaf in the event of a fire
- Help with planning a home fire drill
- Assistance with a home safety survey to prevent fires, burns, falls, and other common home injuries

**Lafayette Fire Department’s Fire Prevention Division**
2100 Jefferson St. Bldg. 8 / Lafayette, LA 70501
**Phone:** 337-291-8704  **Fax:** 337-291-5531
**Email:** FireSafety@lafayette-la.gov
Are you a parent/caregiver with behavioral health concerns for your child or youth? These networking meetings will provide parents/caregivers across the state an opportunity to gather and share information and resources related to behavioral health services, and to increase their support networks. In addition to seeking solutions for concerns, participants will be able to share any successful experiences or barriers they may be experiencing.

**CONFERENCE CALL INFO:**
Phone Number: (641)715-3273 / Access Number: 546755#
Lafayette Parents: FREE Know Your Rights Special Education Law Training

Do you have a student with a disability (or one you suspect may have a disability) who is struggling at school and want to learn more about your family’s rights to obtain the services and supports they need?

COPAA is pleased to offer a FREE parent training for parents of students with disabilities, including a Q & A, where you can ask questions about specific situations facing your child.

When: Saturday, January 19, 11am – 3pm
Where: AOC Community Media, 101 Jefferson Street, Lafayette, 70501
For More Information & Free Registration, visit: www.copaa.org/signup/COPAAParentTrainingLafayette

Presenters: Missy Alexander, David Jefferson, Shenika Medlock experienced special education advocates who are members of COPAA’s Executive Board Directors.

If you attend the parent training, you receive a coupon to attend COPAA’s Annual Conference in New Orleans from March 8th to the 10th for $50 (a $350 value). See https://www.copaa.org/page/2019conference and click on Agenda to see the program.

The New Orleans Public Library is not a sponsor, nor does it endorse any practices or points of view of the sponsors of this program.
SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS WORKSHOP
JAN 30TH@1:30PM
Lafayette Main Public Library
301 W. Congress St. Lafayette, LA 70501

REGISTER TODAY!
RSVP @ https://benefits-ssa.eventbrite.com
OR BY PHONE: (337) 984-3458
If any other accommodations are needed please let us know when you register

Our workshop will provide valuable information about:
Benefits available to individuals with disabilities and how to qualify for them.
How to apply for benefits and what to do if denied.
How to work and receive benefits.
How to resolve any problems related to benefits.

Presentation by: Lafayette Social Security Administration
The Lagniappe Club

WE AREN’T DIFFERENT
WE JUST ALL HAVE A LITTLE EXTRA

The Lagniappe club offers an opportunity for adults with disabilities to get out and enjoy activities in their community.

When: 1st Wednesday of each month. Where: TBA

For more information
Call our office: (337)984-3458

Join the Facebook group: FHF Acadiana The Lagniappe Club
Or follow us on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/FHFAcadiana/

COME JOIN US EVERY FIRST WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH FOR A NIGHT OF FUN!
**The Affect Project**

A social group for teens with chronic illnesses and/or disabilities. We have food, fun, and new friends! You can bring an old friend too!

Meet: 3rd Saturday of every other month / Location & Time: TBA

For more Information:
Call: (337) 984-3458

Check out our Facebook Page: The Affect Project
Go to our Website: https://www.fhfacadiana.org
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overwhelmed?</th>
<th>Stressed?</th>
<th>Need to Vent?</th>
<th>Need Support?</th>
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<td>Would you like someone to talk to about the joys and challenges of raising and/or caring for a child with special needs?</td>
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<td>Would you like to learn information about advocacy and resources for you and your family?</td>
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<td>Would you like to increase awareness and acceptance in your community?</td>
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If you answered yes to at least one of the questions, we invite you to attend our FHF of Acadiana Parent Support Group…

3rd Saturday of every other month
Location/Time TBA
For more information and/or to RSVP, please contact us:
337-984-3458
info@fhfacadiana.org
DDC Relationship and Intimacy

Mission Statement
The Louisiana Statewide Interagency Coordinating Council (LA-SICC) works in collaboration with the Louisiana Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities, in an advisory capacity, to design and oversee the implementation of a family-centered, community-based, comprehensive, interagency system for infants and toddlers (birth through two years of age) who are eligible for Early Steps and their families. Our goal is to advise and assist the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), as the Lead Agency, in the monitoring and evaluation of this system to ensure that families are supported and the potential of each child is maximized.

Overview
The legislation for infants and toddlers with special needs and their families, Part C of the
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), calls for a comprehensive system of coordinated early intervention services. In Louisiana, this system is called **Early Steps: Louisiana’s Early Intervention System**. Early Steps is an interagency effort administered through LDH in conjunction with LA-SICC.

Experience has shown that families with young children with special needs frequently require a range of services which cannot be provided entirely by a single agency. Intervening with coordinated health, social, and educational services during the first three years of life increases developmental and educational gains for the child, improves family function, and reduces the costs of special care later in life.

In drafting the original legislation, Congress recognized the need for a group outside of the Lead Agency to “advise and assist” in the development of this comprehensive system of coordinated early intervention services. LA-SICC is required by statute to be appointed by the Governor and is an important participant in the development and implementation of such a system. LA-SICC is an independent board that operates within the Office of the Governor.

**Click here for upcoming meetings of LA-SICC.**

**Purpose**

Our purpose is to advise and assist LDH in the performance of its responsibilities as the Lead Agency, particularly in regard to the following:

- Identification of the sources of fiscal and other support for early intervention services
- Assignment of financial responsibility to the appropriate agency
- Promotion of interagency agreements

LA-SICC also advises and assists LDH in the preparation of applications, the transition of infants and toddlers to preschool or other appropriate services, and the preparation and submission of an annual report to the governor. We also update federal authorities on the status of **Early Steps: Louisiana’s Early Intervention System**.

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The mission of the Acadiana Area Human Services District (AAHSD) is to increase public awareness of and to provide access for individuals with behavioral health and developmental disabilities to integrated community based services while promoting wellness, recovery and independence through education and the choice of a broad range of programmatic and community resources. To this end, a comprehensive system of care is offered which provides research-based prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery support services to citizens of Acadia, Evangeline, Iberia, Lafayette, St. Landry, St. Martin and Vermilion parishes, directly and through community collaborations.

For More Information: 337-262-5610

**NOW RECRUITING PARENTS**

**REGION 4 REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Please fill out the nomination form below and email it to: troy.abshire@la.gov
Role and Responsibility of Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) Members:

- Provide public input into the regional planning process
- Review and comment on regulations proposed by the office and on the proposed regional plans and budgets.
- Collaborate with the regional office to develop consumer awareness plans for the region to provide for public dissemination of information regarding the services available through the regional office. Such plans shall provide for public dissemination of information regarding the services available through each regional office.
Click LEAP CONNECT GUIDE to review the guide developed by Louisiana Department of Education relevant to LEAP Connect.

We want parents to be fully prepared for the rest of the school year. We can help by arming them with as much knowledge as possible.
From the Louisiana Department of Education:
Resources for Parents of Students with Disabilities

From Understood.org:
Partnering with Your Child's School

Empowering Your Child
https://www.understood.org/en/friends-feelings/empowering-your-child

From Wrightslaw:
Parental Protections
https://www.wrightslaw.com/info/protections.index.htm

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

A RESOURCE FOR LOUISIANA PARENTS ABOUT NEW STATE EDUCATION LAWS ENACTED IN 2018

**ACT 696**

Act 696 requires all school districts to create policies for allowing behavioral health service providers in schools during the school day by January 2019. Public schools shall not prohibit a behavioral health provider from providing behavioral health services to a student at school during school hours if the student's parent or legal guardian requests such services from the provider. For more information visit


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Louisiana F2FHIC
FAMILY to FAMILY
Health Information Center
January 8, 2019
10:00 am – 11:00 am
Accommodations vs Modifications
Meeting after meeting, parents and teachers use the words “accommodation” and “modification” almost interchangeably when discussing IEPs and student needs. If understood and used correctly, these words can greatly impact the success of a child’s

Building Healthy Relationships
One of the most important life skills we can teach our children is how to build healthy relationships with others. This is the foundation for healthy sexual relationships. The American Academy Of Pediatrics (AAP) provides helpful information:

Characteristics of Healthy Relationships
- **Respect:** Take the time to listen to find out what the other person is thinking. One person does not control the other.
- **Common Interests:** Share ideas and activities that both people enjoy. It isn’t necessary that ALL interests and hobbies are in common.
- **Life outside the Relationship:** It is good to have friends outside the relationship—and be okay with that.
- **Settling Disagreements Agreeably:** No two people agree on everything. An important sign of a healthy relationship is the ability to settle disagreements respectfully—and recognizing the right to disagree.

Characteristics of Unhealthy Relationships
Just as it is important to recognize healthy relationships, it is also important to recognize signs that the relationship is not healthy.

- **Lack of Respect:** One person dismisses the ideas and feelings of the other.
- **Holding Back:** One partner discourages the other from succeeding in school or sports.
- **Controlling Behavior:** One partner insists on knowing everything the other is doing.
- **Laying Blame:** One partner blames the other for anything that goes wrong.
- **Continual Jealousy:** Jealousy is a normal feeling, but when it becomes constant, it can damage a good relationship.

For more information on healthy relationships, go to:

UPCOMING WEBINARS

WE ALL HAVE A STORY TO TELL

SIP-N-CHAT

We are looking for families to share their stories. If you would like to be interviewed and/or you would like more information, please contact our office.

Take a moment to watch our past videos on various rare disorders and companies who’s resources help families throughout the state.
Access videos:
educational program. Get answers to these questions and more:
How can accommodations and modifications help my child in the general education classroom? How is it included in IEP and which accommodations are provided for state testing?
Co-Sponsor: Families Helping Families of Acadiana
Presenter: Jessica Rodrigue, FHF of GNO
Audience: Parents, Caregivers, and Professionals of School-Aged Children/Students.
To register, click on the link below. After registering you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

Accommodations vs. Modifications

Children's Special Health Services (CSHS)
The CSHS program is the principle public agency ensuring that children and youth who have special health care needs in Louisiana have access to health care services designed to minimize their disabilities and maximize their probabilities of enjoying independent and self-sufficient lives.
Children and youth who have special health care needs are those who have or are at increased risk for a chronic physical, developmental, behavioral or emotional condition and who also require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that most children or youth require.
Currently in Louisiana, there are more than 207,000 children and youth who have special health care needs. This is about 19 percent of all Louisiana children and youth.

For information: Rose Viltz
337-262-5616 Ext. 123

Let's Recap

“It takes a Village” Spooktacular Event
We partnered with Aetna Better Health of Louisiana and LARC Acadian Village to present “It takes a Village” Spooktacular Event. Everyone had a BLAST...

Christmas Extravaganza
We partnered with with Acadiana Area Human Services District & Lafayette Parks & Recreation to host "It's a Christmas Extravaganza"
We had many exciting activities, pictures with Santa and fun for all.

ACT 378 & THE IMPORTANCE OF ADVOCACY TRAINING
We provided information for our families to learn about Home and Community Based Services, Advocating for Systemic Change, Acadiana Human Services District and much more...

Thanks to all the Vendors, Presenters and Attendees for making this a successful event! If you've missed one of our training, workshops and/or events, please call our office.
Click here for Volunteer Form...

Volunteering can help you put existing skills to work and can bring you closer to your community.

If you would like to donate, please contact our office to make arrangements for delivery.

If you are in need of medical supplies, please call our office for availability.

AROUND THE STATE....

Governor’s Office of Disability Affairs
Newsletter November 2018
http://gov.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/newsroom/detail/1565

THANK YOU.... THANK YOU!

Families Helping Families of Acadiana would like to thank Mr. Bob Miller, Waitr COO for collaborating with our agency for the “Share Thanksgiving” initiative. Our agency was able to summit names of over 60 families to receive a hot meal for the Thanksgiving Holiday. That in itself is a true blessing!

Here's How You Can Donate:
Paypal
Website

MEET THE STAFF

Laci Polotzola
Executive Director

Annette Fruge'
Information & Referral Specialist
Administrative Assistant

Venice Roberts
Information/Referral Specialist

Chaney Guidry
Information/Referral Specialist
Adult Program Coordinator

Deborah Fontenot
Community Outreach Specialist
Early Steps

Nicole Flores
Education Liaison

Rose Viltz
Again, WE SAY THANK YOU to everyone that played a part in providing such a Thanksgiving Blessing!

THANK YOU!
Batch 13 Biscuits & Bowls
On every 13th of the month, Batch 13 Biscuits & Bowls donated 13% of its sales to Families Helping Families of Acadiana for the quarter!

Our office will be closed at noon December 21, 2018 - January 2, 2019.
We will resume regular business hours January 3, 2019 at 8 am.

From Our Family to Yours
Have a Merry Christmas
&
Happy New Year!!!

Welcome New Board Members
With the start of the new year underway, we are honored to welcome two new board members to our Board of Directors. Each individual brings valuable experience and expertise, as well as a passion for our community.

Harlon Cowsar, II
Alvada Willis
Micah Moscovis
Renee Carlson

Nicole Dejean
Chair

Vernesia Roy
Secretary

Micah Moscovis
Member
Thank you...
We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the hard work that you put in during your time here. It was a pleasure to work with each of you, and we sincerely hope that your experiences at our agency were both engaging and insightful.

UL Intern
Taylor Fontenot

Community Service Worker
Todd Fontenot

Exiting Board Members
Thank you for your service...

On behalf of Families Helping Families of Acadiana Executive Director and Staff, we would like to thank you for your time, dedication, and commitment. We wish you all the best...

Cindy Guidry
Mechelle Roberthon
Alice Landry
Errolyn Robinson

Alvada Willis
Member

Renee Carlson
Member

Harlon Cowsar, II
Member

Shana Boutte
Member

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