"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

"My first few months as Executive Director have been so exciting. I have been blessed to learn from my colleagues, network with our partners and build relationships with families we serve. Over the last few months, I have been interviewed multiple times and the question of 'WHAT DOES FAMILIES HELPING FAMILIES OF ACADIANA DO?' is always on top of the list. I am very passionate about what we do and, well, sometimes I can get caught up in this moment... videos usually get edited because I answer this with too many details. I feel it would meet the 2-3minute requirement if I said what we don't do. :)

When thinking about what we do, one story always comes to mind as an example. I received a call from a mom who was at the end of her rope and had no idea where to turn. After many attempts to find help over the past years, she said she was ready to give up but someone told her to call us so she wanted to give it one last shot. She was lost, confused and didn't know where to go next. We talked well over an hour discussing their situation, we went through the different resources and services available and how they can help her..."
son. At the end of the call, she was crying (happy tears) and said 'thank you for taking the time to explain what the programs do and how they can help my son. I feel like I may have heard about some of these programs before but I didn't understand the importance. I have some hope again'.

Most of our families are overwhelmed with medical appointments and struggling to just simply make it through the day. Our families need support and guidance or just reassurance that they are on the right track. We come into contact with families at all stages of life from birth to adulthood. Most of the time we are there at the start of the journey but there are also times we are there to help the journey continue.

_The bitter sweet moments are when the children (of the parents who reached out to you for help previously) are now contacting you for help with transitioning into adulthood._

_Thank you Acadiana for allowing me to serve as Executive Director of Families Helping Families of Acadiana."

"Rise above the storm and you will find the sunshine." Mario Fernández

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE**

**SUMMERTIME**

"Summertime is always the best of what might be."

Charles Bowden

Team Participation
By: Jamie Duplechine

I have said, “Thank You!” numerous times to my team members for putting forth time and effort to call, email/write, and attend Yellow Shirt Days and it is because I cannot thank you enough. We are a team with a vast array of backgrounds, stories, disabilities, but we are all moving forward and working toward making positive changes for the greater good of the disability community. Participating does several things – not only for yourself but for others as well. By calling/emailing your legislators, this helps to promote personal growth within yourself as you are learning more about what you and/or your child needs. This helps build relationships with your legislators and a team of people who need similar services. You create a great support system through the team for yourself, your children, family members, and friends. You also create an example for individuals with disabilities around you who may have
never thought that they had a voice. Again, I want to thank all of those who have participated throughout the year and in the past, but I also want to encourage those of you who are new members to get involved. It is important for us to support each other and participate together as a team…

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Throughout the summer months we plan to really expand our outreach! Although we only service Individuals with disabilities and their families, 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. 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!

New Staff Member
EarlySteps
Community Outreach Specialist

WELCOME...
Deborah Fontenot

"Deb", as she likes to be called, is a wife and mother of three adventurous boys. One of which, who is diagnosed with Fragile X. Deb and her family has gone through the EarlySteps process and is very familiar with the aspect of the EarlySteps program. Deb is eager to serve families in Region 4.

The Paper Chase: Managing Your Child's Documents Under the IDEA
by Robert K. Crabtree, Esq.
Source: [http://www.fetaweb.com/03/paperchase.crabtree.htm](http://www.fetaweb.com/03/paperchase.crabtree.htm)

If you've got kids with special educational needs, you can be overwhelmed by the paperwork in no time at all. From the beginning of school to the time your child either graduates or "ages out" of entitlement to special ed services, the accumulation of IEP's, evaluations, progress reports, correspondence, notes, journals, samples of your child's work, and medical records, will fill several drawers of a file cabinet or take up most of your shelf space.
You might be tempted to throw out papers when they get out of hand, but this may be a mistake. Even the oldest documents in your child's history can sometimes help you make a case for increased or different services under IDEA. Make sure you understand the relative importance of different documents and organize them sensibly.

Here are some guidelines to help you manage them.

Which Documents Are Keepers?
Here's a list of the different documents that you'll see over the course of your child's special needs education. You should keep them all!

1. Individualized Educational Programs (IEP's) and other official service plans. In addition to IEP's, you may have Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP). These are
service plans that govern early intervention programs for kids before they're old enough to receive special education services, or plans that are written by agencies other than the local school system (such as a department of mental health or mental retardation).

2. Evaluations by the school system and by independent evaluators. Depending on your child, these will include educational, psychological and/or neuropsychological, speech and language, occupational therapy, and physical therapy evaluations.

3. Medical records. You probably don't need to keep all medical records with your child's IDEA documents. Keep only those that relate to the disability or disabilities that affect his ability to learn or to access school programs and facilities. As with any other kind of document, when in doubt, keep it!

4. Progress reports and report cards. These are the formal documents where the school system periodically describes how your child is doing.

5. Standardized test results. School systems often administer standardized tests (such as the California Achievement Tests) to all students. These tests can provide a helpful comparison to the progress reports written by your child's teachers.

6. Notes on your child's behavior or progress. These will include notes from you to the teacher, from the teacher to you, or journal entries between you and your child's service providers. Sometimes notes from a concerned teacher tell a different story than the formal report the teacher develops at the request of her supervisor when the TEAM convenes.

7. Correspondence. Save any correspondence between you and teachers, special education administrators, TEAM chairpersons, and evaluators. Don't forget emails -- print them out and include them in your correspondence file. Also save correspondence from the school system that's addressed to you or to all special education parents describing issues that affect your child. This may include letters describing new programs, changes in programs or services, school system policies for children with special education needs, or budget issues.

Note: Do you use certified mail, return receipt requested, when you send letters or notices to the school system? Sometimes this is necessary, but more often, this just adds unnecessary delay to the delivery of the letter or notice. It's better to hand-deliver the document and ask for a receipt. Remember that in most courts and administrative forums, a letter mailed in ordinary first-class mail is presumed to have been delivered within three days of its mailing.

8. Notes from conversations and meetings with school personnel, evaluators, the child's TEAM, or other interactions relating to your child's program or needs. Be certain to take excellent notes at key meetings or, better yet, bring someone with you whose only task is to take notes (especially at TEAM meetings). These notes can help enormously when, months later, you try to remember exactly what various people said or what agreements were reached.

Note: Should you tape TEAM meetings? Do you have the right to tape them? The answer to both questions is "probably not." Under the laws pertaining to discrimination on the basis of handicap, you may have the right to tape a meeting if it's necessary to accommodate a disability (for example, if one or both parents have a language processing disorder). You may also have the right to tape a meeting if it's conducted in a language other than the parents' first language. Generally, the right to tape a meeting hasn't been determined to exist under IDEA. Ordinarily, if you ask in advance to tape a TEAM meeting, the school system should let you as a courtesy, and will usually tape the meeting also. You need to consider, however, that having a tape recorder may inhibit the participants and create a feeling of hostility at the meeting. Again, it's usually better if someone takes excellent notes.

9. Documents relating to discipline and/or behavioral concerns. These include notices
of detention and suspension (both in and out of school), letters describing the concerns of
service providers or school administrators about behavior, records of behavioral
assessments, and records of behavioral plans for addressing behavioral issues.

10. **Formal notices of meetings scheduled to discuss your child.** When you get a notice
like this, jot down the date you received it. Sometimes the question of whether a school
system has met time requirements is important under IDEA. (It is sometimes a good idea
to keep copies of the envelopes in which such notices arrive. Check the date of the notice
or letter and the date of the postmark. It could be significant if the postmark is later than
the date on the notice.)

11. **Samples of schoolwork.** You don't need to keep every scrap of writing or drawing
that your child produces, but it can be helpful to keep examples each year. You can
compare these to show how much progress he's made in different academic areas.

12. **Invoices and cancelled checks.** Save the ones from services that you provide for your
child's educational development. For example, if you hire a speech and language
pathologist for an hour of therapy each week to supplement the school system's services,
keep a record of any payment. Eventually, you can seek reimbursement for this expense.
(You must be able to prove that it was necessary because the school's services weren't
allowing your child to progress effectively.)

13. **Public documents.** These help explain how your school system works with children
like yours. They include newspaper articles featuring special education administrators,
school committee members, or superintendents talking about reorganizing special
education programs, cutting expenses, or new teaching approaches.
Remember that except in rare cases, you don't need to keep drafts of any documents.
The drafts may lead to confusion if you ever need to seek services for your child
through the due process system. This is one area where you can and most often
should lighten your document load.

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**Upcoming Events...**

**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:**

[www.fhfacadiana.org](http://www.fhfacadiana.org)

[www.facebook.com/fhfacadiana](http://www.facebook.com/fhfacadiana)
Region 4 Tour

Our Region 4 Tour was a BIG Success!!!

Thanks to the following parishes; Acadia, Evangline, Iberia, St. Landry, St. Martin and Vermillion who graciously invited us within their community to meet with them to learn about what we do.

Housing Seminar

Our 1st Housing Seminar was a HUGE Success!!!

Thanks to all the Presenters and Attendees. Our families were able to learn more about Homeownership and Financial Independence.

We look forward to providing more information on these topics and others like it in the future.

Families Helping Families of Acadiana

“Lagniappe Club”

Harlon Cowser II, Adult Programs Coordinator

Families Helping Families of Acadiana Adult Programs Coordinator, Harlon Cowser II, and Jamie N. Duplechine, Region 4 LACAN Leader, have partnered to form Families Helping Families of Acadiana new group called the Lagniappe Club. The Lagniappe Club is an opportunity for adults with disabilities and their families to get out and have a little fun. The term
Lagniappe is an Acadian French word that implies a little gift of something extra that brings joy or good will. The Lagniappe Club’s objective is quite simple... “To offer opportunities for adults with disabilities and their families to participate in community activities while sharing in the friendship and fellowship of others”.

The Lagniappe Club’s first activity was held at Johnston Street Java Coffee House on May 16th from 5:30 PM until 6:30 PM. The staff of Johnston Street Java was excellent, and the activity was a great success. Attendees of the activity, Coffee and Conversation, had a very nice time visiting with each other while enjoying the delicious coffees, sandwiches, and pastries sold at the location. Everyone shared stories and laughter, and all said that they would be looking forward to the next activity.

The second Lagniappe Club Activity was held at BJ’s Pizza House on West Congress Street. This activity, Dining Out at BJ’s Pizza House, occurred on June 6 from 5:30 PM until 7:00 PM. The activity was a lot of fun and the food was very good. The staff of BJ’s was great and, once again, the conversation was terrific. Several new people attended, and it was very fun getting to know each other. People talked about movies, books, their families, cooking, and many other topics but there was much laughter and excitement about the new recreational club.

Future ideas for the group include dining out, going to the movies, bowling, swimming, picnics in the park, and dances. Another idea that has been talked about a lot has been the notion of creating a Lagniappe Book Club. The interest and excitement from the people attending
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

and the comments that they have shared with us demonstrate over and over that people with disabilities love to participate in their community. The Lagniappe Club provides opportunities to do just that. Individuals are responsible for the costs included with their participation in the activities but there are no dues and there is no cost for inclusion. Details about all future activities will be posted on social media and shared by Families Helping Families of Acadiana. We hope that everyone will be able to come out and share these good times with us. The Lagniappe Club belongs to all of those who take part in it and the types of activities that we schedule are the ideas of our participants. Please come out to the Lagniappe Club Activities and enjoy the friendship and fellowship. Everyone will enjoy getting to know you and we can all let the good times roll.

The Lagniappe Club will meet every 1st Thursday of the month. The next activity of the Lagniappe Club will be held on July 5, 2018 starting at 5:30 pm at BJ’s Restaurant and Brewhouse, 4511 Ambassador Caffrey Pkwy, Lafayette, La.
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: 337-262-5616

NOW RECRUITING REGION 4 REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS
Please contact Troy Abshire troy.abshire@la.gov

At our regularly scheduled board meeting this past Tuesday, June 19, 2018, we met with board candidate Desiree Provost, and we successfully voted for her to join our board. Please, let’s welcome Desiree! She brings many years of Human Resources knowledge and experience, and we are excited about how she can use those talents for the betterment of Families Helping Families of Acadiana.

Mechelle Roberthon
Chair

Alice Landry
Co-Chair
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.

Here's How You Can Donate:

Paypal
Website

Copays, Coinsurance, & Deductibles-Oh My!

What the Insurance Jargon Means for Families
All families should know what the insurance “jargon” means, and how it affects them, especially since medical debt is the leading cause of bankruptcy (source: Families USA).

What Do These Terms Mean?
There are many different financial terms related to insurance which affect how much it will cost families.

Premiums
The amount paid to the health insurance plan for coverage -- usually paid monthly.
*Note:* Families may also be eligible for free or low-cost coverage if eligible for Medicaid/CHIP (Children’s Health Insurance Program.) Individuals under age 30 may also be eligible for “catastrophic” plans that have fewer benefits at a reduced cost (lower premiums).

Deductible
The amount families have to pay before the insurance will start paying. Usually there is a deductible each year. Sometimes it covers the whole family; sometimes each person has a separate deductible.
Copays
A fixed amount paid by a patient per health service, such as a $20 copay for one doctor visit. Sometimes the payment is higher for specialists or out-of-network providers.

Coinsurance
The percentage paid by families for a health service, such as 20% of the doctor’s bill. The coinsurance is usually higher for out-of-network providers.

Note: Plans must cover a portion of 10 Essential Health Benefits, and there is no deductible, copay or coinsurance for preventive services (such as well-child visits and immunizations), as these are supposed to be free if provided by an in-network provider. (See http://www.hhs.gov/healthcare/facts/factsheets/2010/07/preventive-services-list.html.)

Out-of-pocket Costs
The total of the deductible, copays, and coinsurance that a person pays. The ACA sets out-of-pocket maximums. Once the maximum has been reached, the insurance plan must pay all costs. See https://www.healthcare.gov/choose-a-plan/out-of-pocket-costs/.

Out-of-Pocket Maximum (Limit)
The most families pay before the insurance pays 100% for a covered service.

Note: Lifetime and annual limits on the amount the insurer will pay have been eliminated by the Affordable Care Act.

Cost-Sharing Reductions
The ACA allows people with “Silver” level plans purchased on a health insurance exchange to get help paying their out-of-pocket costs if they are below 250% of the Federal Poverty Level. See https://www.healthcare.gov/lower-costs/save-on-out-of-pocket-costs/.

Allowed Amount or Allowable Charge
The maximum that the insurance will pay for a given service, which is the amount that the insurance company will use to calculate its percentage of the charges. For example, the doctor may charge $120 for a visit, but if the insurance company allows only $100 for the visit and pays 80% of the allowed amount, the amount paid by the insurance company would be $80 (80% of $100) instead of $96 (80% of $120).

Balance Billing
The difference between the provider’s charge and the allowed amount that families pay if they don’t use a “preferred” (in-network) provider. This could add up to more than the stated coinsurance amount. (See above, “Allowed Amount.”)

Explanation of Benefits (EOB)
The document sent by the insurance company to the insured showing how much it paid for a health service.

How families can verify if the bill is correct and what to pay?
Did you know that up to 80% of medical bills are wrong (source: Consumer Reports)? Once families understand the insurance language, they can examine their medical bills for accuracy. Some tips are:

· Is the bill “itemized?”
This means it lists all services provided.

· Is the identifying information correct?
It needs to include the provider’s name and contact information, including tax id.
Does the bill have the correct codes?
The insurance company looks for both an ICD9 code (diagnosis) and CPT code (treatment.)

Does the bill match up to the Explanation of Benefits (EOB) from the insurer?
The EOB will have the date of service, amount billed, covered amount, and balance due.

Families need to be able to understand the language of health insurance to successfully navigate the system. In addition, they can use this knowledge to look at the insurance itself (premiums, copays, tax credits, etc.) as well as verifying that medical bills are correct. In this way, parents can reduce costs and protect their family financially.

This tip sheet is based on an ACA blog authored by Lauren Agoratus, M.A. Lauren is the parent of a child with multiple disabilities who serves as the Coordinator for Family Voices-NJ and as the southern coordinator in her the New Jersey Family-to-Family Health Information Center, both housed at the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN) at www.spanadvocacy.org. More of Lauren’s tips about the ACA can be found on the website of the Family Voices National Center for Family/Professional Partnerships: http://www.fv-ncfpp.org/.

RESOURCES
Open Enrollment
Healthcare.gov: https://www.healthcare.gov/
Reducing Costs
Healthcare.gov: https://www.healthcare.gov/lower-costs/
Getting Help
Family Voices State Contacts: http://www.familyvoices.org/states
Family-to-Family Health Information Centers: http://www.fv-ncfpp.org/f2fhic/find-a-f2f-hic/

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