

Advocating Daily



EDUCATING AND EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Fall 2016

Director's Corner

National Disability Employment Awareness Month!

As you may have already seen or heard, October is **National Disability Employment Awareness Month**. At Families Helping Families SELA we recognize that the Disability Community is significantly affected by unemployment in the United States. Our Career Symposium program focuses on preparing youth with disabilities for the transition to adulthood and employment. This is just one way that FHF SELA is dedicated to empowering youth with disabilities, but that is enough about us.

There are many ways that **YOU** can get involved in spreading awareness, if you are an ally or interested in self advocacy. There are also resources available if you are living with a disability and looking for employment. Call our office and we would be happy to help you find the resources you need.

-Aisha Johnson



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MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

**LRS SERVICES
Workshop**

Date: October 18, 2016
Time: 10:00 a.m.-12:00p.m.

Location: Algiers Regional Library
3014 Holiday Dr.
New Orleans, LA 70131



Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) assists persons with disabilities in their desire to obtain or maintain employment and/or achieve independence in their communities by providing rehabilitation services and working cooperatively with business and other community resources. This workshop will provide a comprehensive overview of services provided by LRS with an emphasis on Vocational Rehab services

To Register go to <http://lrsservices.eventbrite.com> or

This workshop is made possible through a

Food provided by **care Reconcile** New Orleans



ANNOUNCEMENTS

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hol·i·day sea·son

noun

the period of time where your kids are off from school but you're not off from work, including such festivals such as Christmas and New Years.

Don't Worry, We have the Kids all wrapped up!

The Loft @ NORDC Treme Center Will Be Hosting A Holiday Camp
December 27-30, 2016 | January 3-6, 2017 | Tues-Fri, 8am- 3pm

900 N. Villere Street, NOLA 70116 | Boys and Girls | Open to Ages 4-12

YOUR KIDS WILL LOVE IT!!!!

☆ Reading ☆ Math ☆ Arts & Crafts ☆ Character Development

☆ Physical Activity ☆ Free Breakfast & Lunch Served Daily

☆ 1 Field Trip Per Week ☆ Camp T-Shirt Provided ☆ Drop & Shop Night

COST: \$30 Registration Fee | \$45 Per Week

REGISTRATION

Treme Center - 900 N. Villere St, NOLA 70116

Saturday, October 15, 22, 29 | 10am-12pm

Limited Slots Available !!!!

For more information, contact
Nanette Nelson @ 504-708-8890 or
theloftnonprofit@gmail.com



Now Green!

FHF-SELA is now publishing our newsletter online only! For a paper letter please call us today!

504-943-0343

FHF-SELA receives partial funding from Metropolitan Human Services District, the State Department of Education, the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council, Family to Family Health Information Center, Amerigroup, Xerox Corporation, LSU Health Science Center, and Early Steps.



Services and Programs

FHF of SELA is a 501(c)3 non-profit resource center for individuals with disabilities and their families. For more information about the services and programs we provide, please call 504-943-0343.

Services

Information and Referral

- Information and referral for evaluations, medical services, Medicare, Medicaid, and Crisis Intervention
- Information on community programs, services and opportunities
- Educational materials, publications and disability-friendly apps.
- Internet and personal resources across all three parishes

Education and Training

- Workshops on caregivers, transition, education, IEP/504, school and family partnerships, communication, healthcare, advocacy and more
- Register for our latest workshops online or by calling 504-943-0343

Peer-to-Peer Support

- Continuous information, guidance and support from our employees who are parents, siblings and self-advocates.

Our Vision.

We envision a region where people with disabilities live and are **fully included** in school, work and recreational activities.

Our Mission

Families Helping Families of Southeast Louisiana's mission is to **educate and empower** individuals with disabilities, their families, professionals and communities by providing resource, training and family-to-family support.

Programs

ALL AGES

- **LA Citizens for Action Now (LaCAN)** - A statewide grassroots network for individuals and families advocating for service system supporting individuals with disabilities to live in their own homes rather than a facility.

0 - 3

- **Early Steps Community Outreach Specialist** - The specialist visits hospitals and clinics with information about Early Steps for hospitals, clinics and directly to parents who have children who may exhibit developmental delay

4 - 14

- **Education Advocate** - Funded by the State Department of Education, advocates for all students in regular education and community settings to ensure full and valued membership in society. Provides workshops, presentations, and one-to-one support. Advocates for children to be educated in the Least Restrictive Environment and educates parents on being their child's advocate.
- **The Prism Project of Greater NOLA: Roux-Roux Productions (TPP of GNO)**- A performing arts program for children with and without special needs. TPP of GNO teaches children dance, music and theater, creating an original performance.

15 - 22

- **Career Symposium** - A multi-faceted workshop for students with disabilities, their families and teachers to better prepare students with disabilities to have meaningful careers after high school.
- **Transition Advocate** - funded by the State Department of Education. Trains, educates and empowers families and professionals to develop Individualized Transition Plans.

22 +

- **People First of NOLA** - An adult advocacy group for individuals with disabilities

Chaired by FHF SELA's president of the board, Donnica Conway-Strawader, more than 100 supporters including well-known community, civic and business leaders gathered at the Jones Walker Law Firm on Thursday, Oct. 6 to celebrate our inaugural Champion awardees. Long-time supporters and new friends joined together at the unique venue to celebrate the work our champions has done in the disability community and to learn about the importance of quality of life for individuals with disabilities and raised more than \$25,000.00 for Families Helping Families SELA.



Affordable Care Act (ACA):

How Families of Children with Special Needs Can File Insurance Complaints

A recent blog post from the National Disability Navigator Resource Collaborative mentioned that families who had concerns about their insurance claims can file complaints. The blog also mentioned that Community Catalyst has new tools for consumers on how to do this. The tools can be found in the “Resources” section at the end of this post.

What are Consumer Complaints

It is important for families to know and understand they can appeal or file complaints when an insurance claim is denied. **Only 1/3 of families appeal denials of insurance claims, even though half the time the denial is reversed in the favor of the consumer on the first try.** Generally, a family must file an “internal appeal” with the insurance company before filing a complaint with an outside agency.

Sometimes, payment for a service is denied even though that service is supposed to be covered by the plan. Therefore, it is important to make sure that a denial is consistent with the plan’s benefits, as spelled out in the Summary of Benefits and Coverage for that plan. Some other examples of inappropriate denials are those for benefits required by law, including “Essential Health Benefits (EHBs) covered by plans sold in the health insurance marketplaces,” surprise out-of-network bills (see our previous blog <http://www.fv-ncfpp.org/blog/what-families-can-do-avoid-surprise-medical-bills/>), and mental health services that should be provided on par with other types of benefits.

Many families were previously uninsured and so are unfamiliar with how the insurance claims process works. Therefore, navigators and advocates need to make them aware of their right to appeal, and help consumers with the process.

In general, families may find help with internal appeals, contact their state Department of Insurance (DOI), or for mental health parity, contact the state Attorney General (AG). Private insurers may be covered under ERISA, enforced by the federal Department of Labor., Public insurers are covered under the Centers for Medicaid/Medicare (CMS), and discrimination complaints can be filed with the Office of Civil Rights (see the “Resources” section below.)

Mental Health Discrimination

A special note is needed about fairness in coverage for mental illness. Too often the term healthcare is only thought of as applicable to physical conditions. Despite increased access to healthcare and knowledge that most mental illnesses are biologically based, there is still discrimination in this area.

Under federal law, however, insurance plans that cover mental health services must provide them on par with medical and surgical services. This is known as mental health parity, and means that requirements and restrictions regarding mental health services – such as copays, visit limits, and prior authorization -- must be the same as those applied to services for physical conditions. co-pays, annual visits, prior (Note that the Affordable Care Act requires non- grandfathered health plans in the individual and small group markets to cover mental health and substance use disorder services, including behavioral health treatment, but other plans, such as large employer plans, do not necessarily have to cover these services.)

Here again, consumers may need to contact their state Department of Insurance or Attorney General's office for enforcement of the mental health parity law. A recent publication on how to access mental health coverage notes that key areas of concern are financial considerations, such as co-payments, and access to care, such as a requirement to get referrals.

Filing a Complaint: Step by Step

Here are steps for consumer complaints:

- Δ identify the issue - raise awareness of the ability to file
- Δ collect information – medical bills, insurance handbook, denied claim, doctor's note
- Δ check to see if the service should have been covered by the plan by checking the plan's Summary of Benefits and Coverage
- Δ exhaust internal appeals - there are consumer groups that can assist with this process (see "Links for appeals/complaints contacts," in the "Resources" section below.)
- Δ If necessary, file complaint with DOI, CMS, AG

Advocacy Concerns

Here's what advocates can do to improve the process:

1. raise awareness on the complaints process for all stakeholders, including families
2. advocate to simplify the complaints process
3. collect data on consumer complaints and share with policymakers.
4. identify additional areas of concern, e.g., addressing health disparities, enforcement of the mental health parity law.

Resources: Community Catalyst Consumer Complaints Toolkit:

<http://www.communitycatalyst.org/resources/tools/consumer-complaints-toolkit>

Mental Health Parity Factsheet:

<http://www.nationaldisabilitynavigator.org/wp-content/uploads/Materials/Fact-Sheet-7-Mental-Health-and-Substance-Abuse-Parity.pdf>

Civil Rights and Disability Discrimination Factsheet:

http://www.nationaldisabilitynavigator.org/wp-content/uploads/Materials/Fact-Sheet-11-ADA_504.pdf

Consumer Rights and Protections:

<https://www.healthcare.gov/health-care-law-protections/rights-and-protections/>

The Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act:

https://www.cms.gov/ccio/programs-and-initiatives/other-insurance-protections/mhpaea_factsheet.html

Health Financing:

<http://www.samhsa.gov/health-financing>

Links:

Help for consumers – appeals:

- <https://consumersunion.org/insurance-complaint-tool/>
- <https://www.paritytrack.org/get-support-for-mental-health-claims>

State Departments of Insurance:

http://www.naic.org/state_web_map.htm

State Attorney General offices: <http://www.naag.org/naag/attorneys-general/whos-my-ag.php>

ERISA (Employee Retirement Income Security Act – private plans)

- <http://www.dol.gov/ebsa/publications/filingbenefitsclaim.html> how to
- <https://www.askebsa.dol.gov/Webintake/Home.aspx>

form CMS (Centers for Medicaid/Medicare Services) – public plans

- (877)267-2323, ex. 6-1565 or email phig@cms.hhs.gov
- <https://www.cms.gov/ccio/resources/consumer-assistance-grants/#statelisting>

OCR (Federal Department of Health and Human Services Office on Civil Rights) – discrimination:

- <http://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/filing-a-complaint/complaint-process/index.html>

Family Voices National Center for Family/Professional Partnerships

3701 San Mateo Blvd. NE, Suite 103, Albuquerque, NM 87110 • 505-872-4774 • www.familyvoices.org • www.fv-ncfpp.org

This tip sheet was developed with funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)/Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB)/ Division of Services for Children with Special Health Needs (DSCSHN), through cooperative agreement# U40MC00149.



Ask the Advocate

How can I help my child advocate for themselves in their first job?

A young adult with a learning disability looks forward to the chance to take on responsibility, make decisions and build interpersonal communication just like any traditional prospective hire. As always, one of the decisions a candidate or new employee must make is disclosure of disability to an employer. Others can provide help and support when it comes to making the decision. Parents especially, because of how well they know their child and understand the disability, can help more than anyone else.

When someone discloses a disability in school, their performance can be judged fairly and others can provide more support if needed. Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) might have goals to teach self-advocacy, a factor that can lead to success.

However, jobs don't have IEPs, and few managers know how to deal with learning issues.

This self-advocacy issue is a big crossroads. Asking the candidate if he/she needs help with the disclosure decision can make it easier for them to make the decision in each situation. Here are some pros and cons to consider when helping candidates:

Pros:

Accommodations in the workplace: The ADA requires that employers provide reasonable accommodation, but here, these laws can help only if the candidate speaks out. This could even require documentation to activate these laws. Human resources may be the best place to start rather than the hiring manager themselves.

Return on human investment for the employer: Subsidies and tax breaks can be earned through hiring these candidates, so this could shine well on hiring officers as well as HR.

Learning solutions for the future: Fair judgement of job performance can be determined by the employer, so resources, like job coaches, can help the candidate. A coach can provide on-site support and other resources that can help them succeed in the workplace in their young working history.

Cons:

Concerns about being given less responsibility: Someone may worry that they won't be trusted to take on important projects if they tell their boss about their disability. They may also be concerned that disclosing their disability could lead to being passed over for a promotion or a raise.

Confidentiality issues: Someone may worry that if they tell their employer, word will get out and fellow coworkers will know about their disability. Human resources officers know that information about a worker's disabilities must remain private and that employers can get in trouble for breaking that rule. If a new worker lets fellow employees know about the disability, this becomes information that can be known by other employees.

Know rights at work and how anti-discrimination laws are designed to prevent an employer from doing these kinds of things. As you're helping your child think about how to disclose their disability, you can give them other advice on how to make their first job a good experience. If they are finishing high school or college, you can also take steps to ease their transition into the working world.

Families Helping Families of SELA Lunch & Learn Webinar

Functional Behavior Assessments and Behavior Interventions Plans

Tuesday October 25, 2016

12:00 PM-1:00 PM

Participants will learn about the FBA Process, behavior plans and goals that can be built into a child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP)



In Partnership with:



Registration URL:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7024867028322144514>

Webinar ID: 166-748-691

Or call our office at 504-943-0343





Office Closures

Our offices will be closed on the following dates:

November 24th & 25th

December 19th - January 1st

Wait a minute! You mean I can really still get my high school diploma even though I've been out of school for 5 years?

Louisiana Act 303 allows adults who had IEP's at graduation time to petition their school districts for their diplomas if they were denied a high school diploma solely for failing to meet the exit examination requirements.

Call your local Families Helping Families Center for more information.

Do You need your High School Diploma?

If you did not obtain it from 1997-present you may be eligible.

Former student Eligibility

- ◆ ***Must have had a disability, except those gifted or talented***
- ◆ ***Completed all graduation requirements (Carnegie Credits)***
- ◆ ***Denied graduation for failing to meet exit examination requirements***

For more information Contact us at 504-943-0343

Save the Date!

Nov. 15th

“Parent Talk: Communicating Your Child’s Strengths and Needs To Professionals”

10:00 a.m.-12:00 P.m.

Dec. 13th

“Collaborative Advocacy Efforts”



The MHSD Regional Advisory Committee is made up of self-advocates, parents, providers, and other agencies striving to improve Dev. Disability services. If you are interested in being a part of this great team. Please fill

Nomination Form

*Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD)
Metropolitan Human Services District Regional Advisory Committee (RAC)*

Region: MHSD	Date Completed: _____
Name of Nominee: _____	
Street Address: _____	
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____	
Email Address: _____	
Daytime Phone: (____) _____ Fax Number: (____) _____	
Parish of Residence: _____ Parish of Work: _____	
Recommended by: _____	

The purpose of collecting the following information is to assist in the selection of members who can best represent the region's population. You are not obligated to provide this information.

Racial/Ethnic Group: White/Caucasian Black/African American Hispanic Other: _____

Gender: Male Female

If selected, I will serve as a: ___ Individual with a developmental disability ___ Parent of an individual with a developmental disability who lives at home. ___ Parent of an individual with a developmental disability who lives in a group/community home or apartment. ___ Parent of an individual with a developmental disability who lives in a state operated developmental center. ___ Representative of an advocacy organization Name: _____ ___ Public Provider Name: _____ ___ Private Provider (non-profit) Name: _____ ___ Other Name: _____
--

Please tell about any experiences you have had that are relevant to serve on this committee. Also, please describe what you hope to accomplish by serving. You may attach additional sheets, if necessary. _____

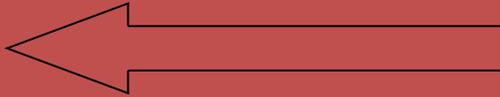
Signature of Nominee: _____

I give permission for my name and email address to be posted on the OCDD RAC/SAC websites _____(please initial)

**Note: An individual with a developmental disability and/or their parent(s) must check this box to indicate a need for assistance to participate in meetings. <input type="checkbox"/> Accommodations needed: _____
--

**INTERESTED IN BEING ON MHSD'S
REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE?**

Fill this out and get it back to us.



Are you registered to vote?

The last day to register is October 11th.

You can go to vote.gov to register online.

Early voting will occur October 25th –November 1st.



The next RICC Meeting will be on October 28th at the Algiers Regional Library, 3014 Holiday Drive New Orleans 70131 from 12pm-2:30pm. Parents and providers of Early Steps should attend. If you have any questions please call Tomorrow Fondal at 504-943-0343.

Thank You To Our Supporters

FHF of SELA is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. We rely on contracts with organizations, partnerships with community groups, grants and private donations. Through these incredible organizations and people, FHF of SELA is able to provide free services and programming to families and professionals across Orleans, Plaquemines and St. Bernard Parishes. It is all thanks to these supporters and the anonymous donors that enable our organization to assist thousands of families across the Greater New Orleans region achieve education and empowerment.

MAJOR DONORS

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GRANTS

The Davis-Molony Fund
The Frost Foundation
The Louisiana Bar Foundation
The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival and Foundation, Inc.
Xerox Corporation
Valero Foundation

Make a Donation Today!

Your donations could help families of individuals with special needs connect with accurate resources, provide recreational opportunities to children with special needs, teach parents or individuals with disabilities self-advocacy skills, or provide a student with a disability the means to achieve their dream career.

For Example:

\$5 connects families without internet to accurate resources

\$10 provides a student with a disability tools for their career

\$30 covers the cost of participating in The Prism Project of Greater NOLA

\$72 enables two adults with disabilities to become empowered self-advocates

\$150 allows a child with special needs to attend summer camp

Thank you for your support!

All donations are tax-deductible

You can make a donation online by clicking **Donate** at www.fhfsela.org

Scan the QR Reader

OR

Mail in your donation with the form below to
Families Helping Families of Southeast Louisiana
7240 Crowder Blvd. Suite 200
New Orleans, LA 70127



Yes, I would like to donate and learn more about Families Helping Families of Southeast Louisiana!

Name: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____ City, State, Zip: _____

Email: _____ Parish: _____

Relationship: Parent Sibling Self-Advocate Professional Family Member Donor

Please add me to your mailing list: Yes No

I would like to donate:

\$5 \$10 \$30 \$72 \$150 Other _____

I would like to volunteer or apply for an internship: Yes No

I would like information about: _____



On behalf of LaCAN...The DD Council's two grassroots advocacy networks, Louisiana Citizens for Action Now! (LaCAN) and Louisiana Together Educating All Children (LaTEACH), have united to form one powerful advocacy network! The new LaCAN – Louisiana Council's Advocacy Network – will bring together advocates to speak out for systems change in home and community-based services, employment, and education. The current LaCAN Facebook page has been updated with our new logo and will continue to share all our advocacy news & alerts. Be sure to like the LaCAN page at www.facebook.com/lacanadvocates.

If you have any questions about this merger, please contact the council office at, 1-800-450-8108, or
email: info@lacanadvocates.org web: www.lacanadvocates.org

Thank you for your continued involvement in the Council's grassroots advocacy efforts. Together we are making a difference!

Coming in October 2016...



one, powerful, united, grassroots advocacy network

Oct. 19
4:30-6

Monster Meet n' Greet

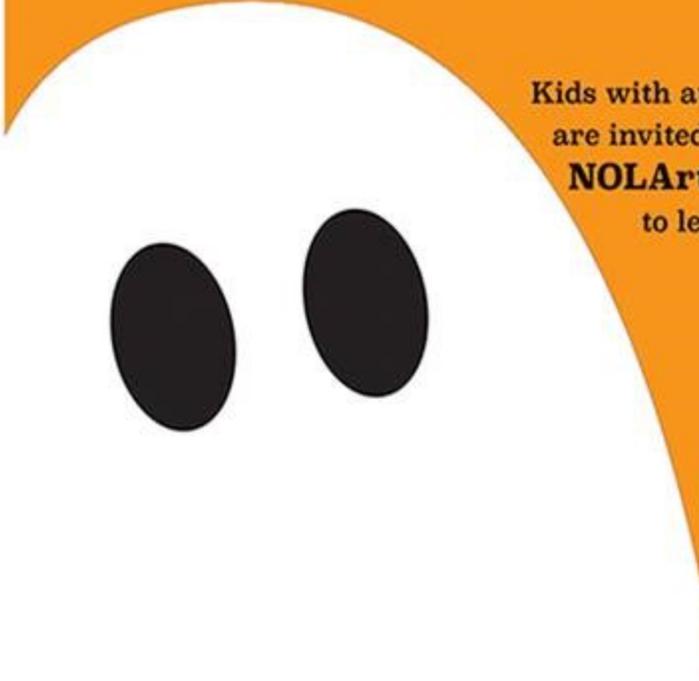
FREE!

Kids with autism and their families are invited to a free social hour at **NOLArts Learning Center** to learn about art and music groups and services

live music!
face painting!
arts and crafts!
games!
treats and prizes!

1215 Prytania St.
Suite 424

RSVP required
nolartslearningcenter@gmail



PF Meetings March 2016-December 2016

Month	Tuesday	Month	Tuesday
March	<u>15</u>	August	<u>16</u>
April	<u>19</u>	September	<u>20</u>
May	<u>17</u>	October	<u>18</u>
June	<u>21</u>	November	<u>15</u>
July	<u>19</u>	December	<u>20</u>



People First of NOLA meetings are held every 3rd Tuesday of the month, 4:30-6PM.
The meetings are held at:
Ashe Cultural Center
1712 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd, NOLA 70113

People First of NOLA

If you are an adult with a developmental disability and want to learn self-advocacy skills, come join People First of NOLA!

People First of NOLA is...

- A self-advocacy group run by people with disabilities, for people with disabilities
- Where people learn to speak up for themselves about decisions they make
- Where members can connect with others in the community, nation and world
- Where members learn about their rights and responsibilities as citizens of the US





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7240 Crowder Blvd.
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New Orleans, LA 70127

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1-877-243-7352
Fax: 504-940-3242
E-mail: info@fhfsela.org
Website: www.fhfsela.org

Help us **Go Green** today! Opt out of a paper newsletter and receive our education and trainings faster!

LIKE us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/FHFofSELA follow us on Twitter @FHFofSELA & Pinterest FHFSELA to stay up-to-date on all exciting events, articles of interest, links to other advocacy groups, information on trainings and more!





**Still Waiting
for Waiver Services?**

Join LaCAN NOW!

LaCAN (Louisiana Citizens for Action Now) is a statewide grassroots network of individuals and families who have worked together since 1988 advocating for a system that supports individuals to live in their own homes rather than having to move to a facility to receive needed services.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE! JOIN LACAN!

WWW.LACANADVOCATES.ORG

**MAKE A DIFFERENCE!
JOIN LACAN!**



Don't miss another important event or that much-needed information again! We are excited to offer information via text messaging!

Text FHFSELA to 313131 and receive all our information once a week via text messaging!



What is LadisAbility Talk?

It's a Facebook group from Louisiana Parent Training and Information Center/Families Helping Families of Jefferson to help families of people with disabilities and their advocates in Louisiana share information, resources, and support.

What's a talk list?

It is a way for Facebook users to be in a group with others who have similar interests.

Who should join?

Parents of children with disabilities, self-advocates, and advocates for people with disabilities in Louisiana.

How do I join? Just search LaDisability Talk on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1128575273840846/>

FREE—FREE—FREE