



## WINTER NEWSLETTER

DEC • JAN • FEB • MAR

### PARISHES WE SERVE

Acadia • Evangeline • Iberia • Lafayette  
St. Landry • St. Martin • Vermilion

Throughout history, families have been turning to other families that have dealt with similar struggles, and it is within our nature to do so. Families Helping Families has been developed to aid families in the search for the support, information, and resources that can help them. A very powerful bond and commitment exists between families who share like circumstances and travel a similar path. An informed, educated, and supported family raises a strong, nourished, and capable child with a bright and successful future. We believe access to this kind of support and resources should be available to everyone who needs it, and Families Helping Families is here to help.

[WEBSITE](#)

### Contact Information

100 Benman Road  
Lafayette, LA 70506

**Phone:** 337.984.3458

**Fax:** 337.984.3468

**Email:** [info@fhfacadiana.org](mailto:info@fhfacadiana.org)

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

### Office Hours

MONDAY - THURSDAY

8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

FRIDAY

8:00 AM - 12:00 PM



## 2025 / 2026 CALENDAR OF DISABILITY-RELATED DATES

### December

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**03:** International Day of Persons with Disabilities

**10:** International Human Rights Day

### January

- National Birth Defects Prevention Month

**04:** World Braille Day

**24:** Moebius Syndrome Awareness Day (Global)

**25:** World Leprosy Day

### February

- American Heart Association Month (US)
- Turner Syndrome Awareness Month (US)

**02:** Rheumatoid Arthritis Awareness Day (US)

**04:** World Cancer Day

**09:** International Epilepsy Day

**14:** Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Day (US)

**22:** National Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day

**27:** Anosmia Awareness Day (Global)

**28:** Rare Disease Day (Global)

### March

- Cerebral Palsy Awareness Month (US)

**01:** International Wheelchair Day

- Developmental Disabilities (DD) Awareness Month (US)
- Essential Tremor Month (Global)
- Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month (US)
- Trisomy Awareness Month (US)

- **03:** World Hearing Day
- **18:** National Trisomy 18 Awareness Day
- **21:** World Down Syndrome Day
- **24:** World Tuberculosis Day
- **25:** National Cerebral Palsy Awareness Day
- **26:** Purple Day for Epilepsy (Global)

# UPCOMING TRAININGS

**Monday**  
**December 8, 2025**  
**@ 11:00 AM - 12:00**  
**PM**

**REGISTER**

REGISTER NOW  
<https://tinyurl.com/120825Intro2WorkPt1>

## KEY RESOURCES AND SKILLS TO ENSURE CAREER PLANNING SUCCESS

In this introduction to the 4-part series, we will learn the critical role families and professionals can play to support youth and young adults with exceptionalities in learning work and career readiness skills for successful employment.

👉 **Karen Scallan, FHF of GNO**  
👉 **Brenda Bares, FHF Acadiana**  
📅 **Monday, December 8, 2025**  
⌚ **11:00 AM - 12:00 PM**



**Wednesday**  
**December 10, 2025**  
**@ 12:00 PM**

## FASD 101 Webinar

December 10, 2025 | @ 12:00 PM | Via Zoom

By the end of the session, you will:

- Understand the brain differences in FASD and the impacts to learning & health.
- Explore practices in the field to support prevention, policy, awareness, and family support.
- Understand best practices and supports for the home, school, and community environments.

Register Today! — <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/ffdb16iYQ0C9UKPxhF02Ew>

Krista James

Amy Ward



LSU Health  
NEW ORLEANS  
School of Allied Health Professions  
Human Development Center

**REGISTER**

If there is a topic (or topics) that you would like to know more about, please email us with your request(s).

**SUMBIT REQUEST**

## REQUEST A TRAINING



## UPCOMING DATES





**Coffee & COMMUNITY**  
FAMILIES HELPING FAMILIES OF ACADIANA

Our mission is to assist and strengthen individuals with disabilities and their families through a coordinated network of resources, services and supports.

Families Helping Families of Acadiana is located in Lafayette, Louisiana and we offer:

- Peer Support
- Information & Referral
- Advocacy
- Education & Training

We understand that it may be difficult for many families to come to our office. So, we are coming to you!

We travel to each parish in Region 4. While there, we visit and enjoy local coffee shops. But, most of all, we get a chance to sit and talk to you!

**COME HAVE COFFEE WITH US!**

**REGION 4**

ACADIA      EVANGELINE  
IBERIA      LAFAYETTE  
ST. LANDRY      ST. MARTIN  
VERMILION

Please continue to check your email and/or the FHFOA Facebook Page for future dates and locations.

## Breakfast With Santa

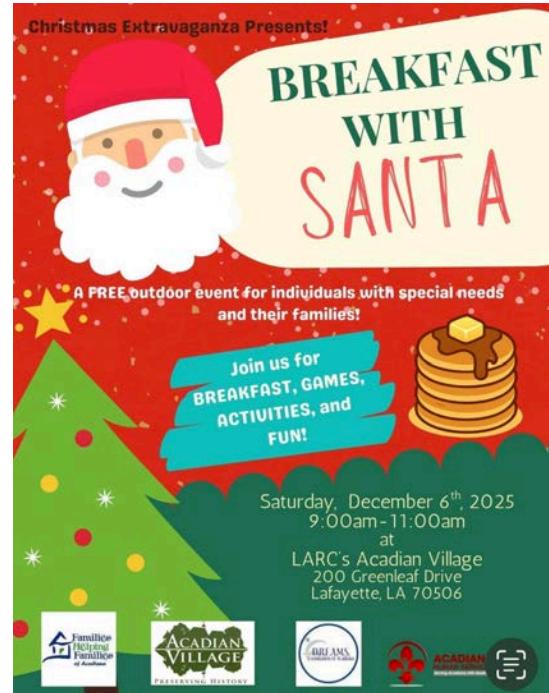
Saturday, December 6, 2025

@ 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM

• LARC's Acadian Village  
200 Greenleaf Drive | Lafayette, LA 70506

Join us for a jolly good time at our Breakfast with Santa event and get ready to sleigh the season with us! 🎄 🎅

**In Partnership With:** LARC's Acadian Village, Acadiana Area Human Services District, D.R.E.A.M.S. Foundation of Acadiana, & Families Helping Families of Acadiana



## **Speak Up. Stand Up. Disability Advocacy Summit**

When the world feels scary, your voice matters more than ever! Join self-advocates from across Louisiana at the Speak Up Stand Up Summit — a space to connect, learn, and stand stronger together.

 Virtual Meetings: January 2026

**REGISTER**

**YouTube Video**

**FaceBook Video**



## **OCDD Informational Summit**

Wednesday, January 20, 2026

@ 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

📍 L'Auberge Hotel & Casino (2nd Floor Ballroom)  
777 L'Auberge Ave. | Baton Rouge, LA 70820

Come learn about OCDD programs and services and connect with people with developmental disabilities, families, caregivers, providers, lawmakers, and community partners from across Louisiana.

Need to stay overnight? OCDD has set aside hotel rooms until January 5, 2026 — more information about lodging is available when you register.

**Sign Up By  
January 7, 2026!**

**REGISTER**

# UPDATES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

## New Partnership Equals New Possibilities!

FHFOA is now working with Louisiana's Disability Assessment & Coordination Entity (DACE) to strengthen disaster planning and recovery for people with disabilities — ensuring no one is left behind.

**The Disability Assessment & Coordination Entity**

**What is DACE?**

- We are here to help the disability community prepare for and recover from disasters.
- We are a bridge between emergency management and the disability community.

**PREPARE**  
We provide emergency preparedness trainings, meetings, and outreach in all regions of the state. Everything we do is to meet the unique needs of the disability community.

**RECOVER**  
When disaster does strike, we meet survivors where they are — often in shelters or impacted areas — to help with recovery by connecting them to resources and support.

**Who should be involved?**  
People with disabilities and their families, organizations who support the disability community, local government, and emergency management professionals.

**Why is this important?**  
People with disabilities are 2-4 times more likely to be seriously hurt or lose their lives in disasters. Many face barriers to evacuation, shelter access, communication, and medical care. We help ensure no one gets left behind.

**HELPLINE:**  
337.331.2534

**EMAIL:**  
[info@disability-access-solutions.com](mailto:info@disability-access-solutions.com)

**WEBSITE:**  
[disability-access-solutions.com](http://disability-access-solutions.com)



LOUISIANA  
YOUTH  
LEADERSHIP  
FORUM

## Save The Dates!

2026 LAYLF Session Tentatively Set For:  
July 8th – 11th

- Delegate Applications Opening in December
- Staff Applications Opening in January •



## What's New?

**Easier to Navigate:** Find meeting dates, current projects, publications, and advocacy news in just a few clicks.

**Works on All Devices:** You can use the site on your phone, tablet, or computer.

**The Louisiana  
Developmental Disabilities  
Council (LaDDC)  
has a brand-new look for  
their website!**

**More Accessible:** The site works better with screen readers and is easier for everyone to read and use.

**Plain Language:** Each section explains information in clear, easy-to-understand terms.

## OFFICE CLOSURES



**December 19, 2025  
through  
January 2, 2026**

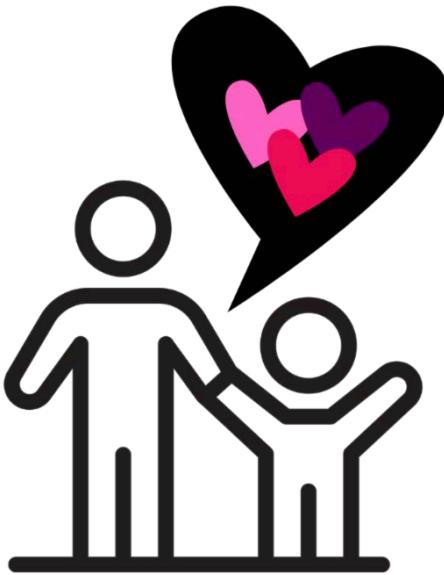


**Monday  
January 19, 2026**



**Monday & Tuesday  
February 16 & 17**

## SUPPORT



**Parents,  
do you need someone  
to talk to?**

**We're here to listen!**

*Please call our office to  
schedule an appointment.*

**CALL US**

Every family is different, that is why we offer one-on-one individualized parent support. These sessions can be held in person, phone or virtually.

Families Helping Families of Acadiana provides a comfortable, nonjudgmental, and confidential environment that will allow you to be at ease when confiding with us.



## Group Support

*Please continue to check  
our website and/or all our  
social media platforms for  
scheduled dates.*

**WEBSITE**

We offer a welcoming, supportive space where families can come together. A variety of topics are explored, and everyone is encouraged to share, connect, and feel a true sense of belonging.

All are welcome!

**Donate online  
TODAY**



## In The Community



**St. Landry Abilities  
Resource Fair**



## Family Tree Mental Health Retreat



## 2025 Acadiana Opportunity Job Fair



**Brenda Bares attending the Children's Cabinet Advisory Panel Meeting.**



## Usher Syndrome in Louisiana – 5th Symposium in Lafayette



## Affiliated Blind of Louisiana (ABL) 2025 State Convention



## Trunk 'R' Treats





## Treats at the Village





## Evangeline Parish Community Lagniappe: Parent Summit



LOUISIANA  
**YOUTH  
LEADERSHIP  
FORUM**

[WEBSITE](#)

### Camp is...

- focused on leadership, self-determination, and empowerment.
- hosted on a college campus during the summer.
- 100% free to those who attend, including lodging and food.
- accepting campers with an ADA-defined disability, which is inclusive of mental health conditions and neurodivergence.
- accredited through the American Camp Association, meaning we follow national best practices when it comes to safety and quality in camping.

**2025 Alumni Event:**



# LaCAN

LOUISIANA COUNCIL'S ADVOCACY NETWORK

[JOIN LaCAN](#)

Linking lawmakers,  
individuals with  
disabilities, and  
family members to  
make positive change  
in systems serving  
people with  
disabilities.

- LaCAN (Louisiana Council's Advocacy Network) furthers the Council's mission by advocating for policies and systems that support inclusion everywhere

people learn, work, live, and play.

- LaCAN advocates for service systems that support children and adults with disabilities to live in their own homes and be fully-included and participating members of their local schools and communities.
- LaCAN provides information and support to individuals wishing to effectively advocate for systems change in the areas of home and community-based services, education, and employment.
- Regional LaCAN teams include individuals with disabilities, their family members, and professionals. These members are notified by email or phone when communication with state agency officials, legislators or the Governor is necessary.

## Guiding Principles

- Children, regardless of the severity of their disability, need families and enduring relationships with adults in a nurturing home environment to develop to their fullest potential.
- Adults with developmental disabilities should be afforded the opportunity to make decisions for themselves, live in typical homes and communities, and exercise their full rights and responsibilities as citizens.
- People with developmental disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disability, should have the opportunity and support needed to gain and maintain competitive, integrated, individualized employment.
- All students, with or without disabilities, should be provided the same opportunities to be educated in neighborhood schools as their sisters, brothers, friends, and neighbors.
- All students, with or without disabilities, should be provided with the support to learn together effectively, involving family, school, and community.

## Benefits to Membership

**You can help improve the systems that serve individuals with developmental disabilities by joining the LaCAN and participating in its advocacy efforts.**

**\* There are no dues or fees to join, and your activity level is up to you. \***

Here are just a few of the benefits to joining LaCAN:

Connection	Information	Training	Support
Become a part of a regional team of advocates.	Receive current information on proposed policy changes and how those changes may affect you and others.	Learn skills to effectively advocate for systems change.	Receive assistance from a regional LaCAN Leader who will link you with your policymakers and support your advocacy efforts.

EMAIL

## Partners in Policymaking (PIP) 2025 Reunion



# MEET THE TEAM



**Todd Fontenot**  
Financial Manager,  
Information & Referral Specialist



**Nicole Flores**  
Executive Director



**Susie Dupont**  
Accounts Manager



**Brenda Bares**  
Education Liaison



**Danielle Ledet**  
Education Liaison,  
Information & Referral Specialist



**Nicole DeJean**  
Special Projects



**Lillian DeJean**  
Louisiana Youth Leadership  
Forum Coordinator



**Harlon Cowsar, II**  
Adult Program Coordinator,  
Referral Specialist

**Month of February**  
**AnnMarie Bihm**  
&  
**Nicole Flores**

**Month of March**  
**Harlon Cowsar II**

*Happy  
Work  
Anniversary*

*Thank you for all your hard  
work and dedication!*

## **Month of January**

**AnnMarie Bihm  
&  
Lillian DeJean**

## **Month of February**

**Brenda Bares**

## **Month of March**

**Todd Fontenot**

## *Meet Our* **BOARD** *of* **DIRECTORS**



**Terrell Bergeron**

Chair



**Kisha Levy**

Vice-Chair



**Jessica Ledy**

Secretary



**Rebecca Fruge'**

Treasurer



**Denise Auzenne**

Member

*Photo  
Coming  
Soon!*



**Cherelle L. Williams**

Member

*Photo  
Coming  
Soon!*



**Angie LaBorde**

Member

*Photo  
Coming  
Soon!*

**Carmen Cetnar**

Member

**Paul Ganuchea**

Member

**Jessica Ranken**

Member

## Community Partners

**232 HELP**



Court Appointed Special Advocates  
FOR CHILDREN

CASA OF ST. LANDRY-EVANGELINE, INC.



THE FAMILY TREE  
INFORMATION, EDUCATION & COUNSELING CENTER

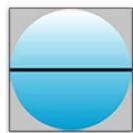
**Macaroni KID®**  
BY CertifiKID

 **MAGNOLIA**  
SPECIAL NEEDS PLANNING

 **Nurse-Family  
Partnership**  
Helping First-Time Parents Succeed®

 **PEDIA TRUST**  
Day Care for Medically Fragile Children

 **Save the Children®**



Affiliated Blind  
of Louisiana  
TRAINING CENTER



## Programs Supported Through Our Center



LOUISIANA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL



[CONTACT](#)



## The Families Helping Families Network

The Families Helping Families Networks are individual, non-profit, family-driven resource centers. We are a group of families, who through our own experiences, promote advocacy and are committed to reaching other families who have members with disabilities. The term "disability" includes physical, mental, emotional, behavioral, and/or academic needs.

**Please see  
below to find  
the FHF Center  
located in your**

Our FHF Centers are directed and staffed by parents, self-advocates, or family members of individuals with disabilities. Our Centers provide education and trainings, peer support, and information and referrals as part of their free services.

**region or area  
of the state.**

## **Region 1 & 10**

Jefferson Parish & the State of Louisiana

### **Families Helping Families of Greater New Orleans (FHF of GNO)**

700 Hickory Avenue, Harahan, LA 70123  
504.888.9111 or 1.800.766.7736 (Toll-Free)  
504.353.2350 (Fax)  
[www.fhfogno.org](http://www.fhfogno.org)

## **Region 2**

Ascension, East & West Baton Rouge,  
East & West Feliciana, Iberville, Pointe Coupee

### **Families Helping Families of Greater Baton Rouge**

2356 Drusilla Lane, Baton Rouge, LA 70809  
225.216.7474 or 1.866.216.7474 (Toll-Free)  
225.216.7977 (Fax)  
[www.fhfgbr.org](http://www.fhfgbr.org)

## **Region 3**

Assumption, Lafourche, St. Charles,  
St. James, St. John, St. Mary, Terrebonne

### **Bayou Land Families Helping Families**

286 Highway 3185, Thibodaux, LA 70301  
985.447.4461 or 1.800.331.5570 (Toll-Free)  
985.447.7988 (Fax)  
[www.blhf.org](http://www.blhf.org)

## **Region 4**

Acadia, Evangeline, Iberia, Lafayette, St. Landry, St. Martin,  
Vermilion

### **Families Helping Families of Acadiana**

100 Benman Road, Lafayette, LA 70506  
337.984.3458 or 1.855.984.3458 (Toll-Free)  
337.984.3468 (Fax)  
[www.fhfacadiana.org](http://www.fhfacadiana.org)

## **Region 5**

Allen, Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, Jefferson Davis

### **Families Helping Families of Southwest Louisiana**

324 West Hale Street, Lake Charles, LA 70601

337.436.2570 or 1.800.894.6558 (Toll-Free)

337.4362578 (Fax)

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

## **Region 6**

Avoyelles, Concordia, Catahoula,  
Grant, LaSalle, Rapides, Vernon, Winn

### **Families Helping Families at the Crossroads of La.**

2840 Military Highway, Suite A, Pineville, LA 71360

318.641.7373 or 1.800.259.7200 (Toll-Free)

318.640.4299 (Fax)

[www.familieshelpingfamilies.net](http://www.familieshelpingfamilies.net)

## **Region 7**

Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Claiborne, Desoto,  
Lincoln, Natchitoches, Red River, Sabine, Webster

### **Families Helping Families Region 7**

215 Bobbie Street, Suite 100, Bossier City, LA 71112

318.226.4541 or 1.877.226.4541 (Toll-Free)

318.742.7260 (Fax)

[www.fhfregion7.com](http://www.fhfregion7.com)

## **Region 8**

Caldwell, East & West Carroll, Franklin, Jackson, Lincoln,  
Madison, Morehouse, Ouachita, Richland, Tensas, Union

### **Families Helping Families of Northeast Louisiana**

5200 Northeast Road, Monroe, LA 71203

318.361.0487 or 1.888.300.1320 (Toll-Free)

318.361.0417 (Fax)

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

## **Region 9**

Livingston, St. Helena, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Washington

### **Northshore Families Helping Families**

108 Highland Park Plaza, Covington, LA 70433

985.875.0511 or 1.800.383.8700 (Toll-Free)

985.875.9979 (Fax)  
[www.fhfnorthshore.org](http://www.fhfnorthshore.org)



Families Helping Families of Acadiana | 100 Benman Road | Lafayette, LA 70506 US

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