Supporting Your Child with a Disability



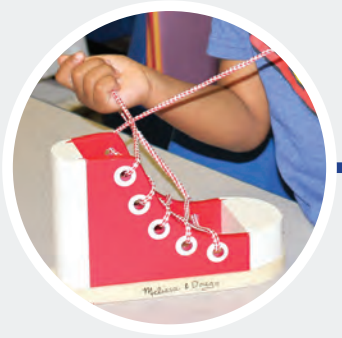
Early intervention, crisis intervention, and long-term services.



AGES 0-3: Connect with Early Steps Louisiana's early intervention program (866-327-5978).

No diagnosis or doctor's referral is required — any parent can request a free evaluation.

- Contact your regional System Point of Entry (SPOE) — this is the single point of contact to start
- SPOE gathers information and schedules a screening/evaluation
- If eligible, the team develops an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) with your family. Services happen in the child's everyday setting (home, child care, etc.).



Ages 3+: How the School System Supports Your Child

- Schools have an ongoing legal duty ("Child Find") to identify children who may need special education
- A parent can request an evaluation in writing at any time — a simple letter to the school works
- Once you give written consent, the school has up to 60 business days to complete the evaluation
- If your child qualifies, the school holds an IEP meeting (generally within 30 school days) to build an Individualized Education Program
- Some children don't need an IEP but benefit from accommodations — in Louisiana this is called a 504 Plan / Individual Accommodation Plan (IAP)

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Know Your Rights

- IDEA (federal special education law) guarantees eligible children a free, appropriate public education
- Section 504 protects students with disabilities from discrimination and can provide classroom accommodations even without an IEP
- ADA protects children with disabilities more broadly — in child care programs, public spaces, and community life, not just school
- You'll receive a "Procedural Safeguards" notice explaining your rights — you can bring a support person to any meeting and can disagree with a decision



Medicaid Waivers & Ongoing Support

- Waiver programs (New Opportunities Waiver, Children's Choice Waiver, Supports Waiver) can help pay for therapies, respite care, equipment, and home modifications for children with developmental disabilities
- The entry point for all of them is the same: contact your local Human Services District/Authority and ask to be placed on the Request for Services Registry (RFSR) — the date you register becomes your "protected date," so it's worth doing early even before you know which waiver fits
- Because there can be a wait, families are also screened for urgency of need (SUN) to prioritize higher-need cases



Free, One-On-One Help

Families Helping Families (FHF) — Louisiana's statewide network of parent-run resource centers, with a regional office covering every parish VOA serves.

- Offering free information, referrals, and peer support from parents who've navigated the same systems.

Families Helping Familes Network Locator

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