U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS LOUISIANA’S PLAN TO REDUCE UNNECESSARY TESTING AND IMPROVE THE OVERALL QUALITY OF ASSESSMENTS

Department Works with Pilot Districts to Create Model Assessment System; Provide All Districts with Guidance

BATON ROUGE, La. – In case you missed it, the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) recently highlighted Louisiana’s steps to reduce the number of unnecessary tests and improving the overall quality of the state’s assessments. For an excerpt from the USDOE’s post, please read below.

Testing Action Plan: State and District Profiles by U.S. Department of Education

“The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) is taking a number of steps to support districts in reducing unnecessary testing and improve the quality of their assessments. LDOE is working with five pilot districts to create model assessment systems, and is providing all districts with guidance on reducing unnecessary assessments, along with direct and individualized coaching. These efforts have reduced unnecessary testing in many districts; the State plans to conduct a second round of audits with districts in the coming months to identify additional areas for future support.

‘Our collaboration with the LDOE on our district assessment system has been invaluable. Through this project, we have gained insight by conducting focus groups and surveys with administrators, teachers, and students to learn how we can strengthen assessments and provide effective feedback,’ said Stephen Zafirau of St. John the Baptist Parish Public Schools. “Many of our efforts leading into the next school year will focus on revising our assessment framework and effectively communicating to school administrators and classroom teachers the purpose and value of formative and summative assessments. We are currently planning to focus district professional development efforts on how our assessments can be used to set goals, plan instruction, and address student instructional needs.”

To read the story in its entirety, please click https://sites.ed.gov/progress/2016/04/testing-action-plan-state-and-district-profiles-4/

Contact Julie Folse at 985-438-1179 or lacanadvocates3@gmail.com to register!
One of the most confusing aspects for families of children with disabilities is the concept of deductibles and how that plays into cost-sharing. Many parents will choose plans with lower deductibles, but this may mean there is also a level of fewer benefits, which could be particularly problematic for children with special health care needs.

**What is a Deductible?**

According to Healthcare.gov, the deductible is “[T]he amount you owe for covered health care services before your health insurance plan begins to pay.” For example, if the plan’s deductible is $500, that’s how much you would have to pay before insurance kicks in.

Please note that there can be either individual or family deductibles under the plan. (Each individual deductible generally will be lower than a family deductible for a similar plan.) If you have an individual (“embedded”) deductible, each individual would have to reach that deductible before his or her healthcare costs would be covered. If it’s a family (“aggregate”), deductible, that means that the deductible amount would have to be spent across all family members before their healthcare costs would be covered. It may be necessary to call an insurance plan to find out what type of deductible it has.

While it may sound better to have one family deductible this is NOT necessarily better when it is expected that one family member – such as a child with special health care needs – will have higher health care costs than other family members. For example, if there is a family deductible of $2,000, then insurance coverage won’t apply for any family member until the family has spent that much out of pocket. But if each family member has a $500 deductible, then insurance coverage will be applied for an individual family member once his or costs have reached the deductible. (See blog post from the Georgetown Center on Health Insurance Reform at [http://chirblog.org/embedded-deductibles-and-how-they-work/](http://chirblog.org/embedded-deductibles-and-how-they-work/).)

**What Families Need to Know**

Deductibles are only part of total health costs. Parents must also consider premiums (cost of buying the insurance policy) as well as out-of-pocket costs, including copays (see Resources.) Families can also save money by using “in-network” providers, which means health care providers that participate with their plan and agree to accept the payment amount provided by the insurer.

Key things for parents of children with special needs need to keep in mind about deductibles are:

- There is no deductible for preventive services.
- Some plans offer other (non-preventive) services without a deductible, although any copayments will still apply. Examples include visits to a primary care provider and some specialists (e.g. mental health), and/or prescriptions. To find out which services are covered without a deductible, go to healthcare.gov, pick a plan, and click on “costs for medical care.” An even more detailed list is available on the plan “Summary of Benefits and Coverage.”
- When choosing a plan, families can look at services without a deductible along with premiums and other out-of-pocket costs. During open enrollment, there is an “Out-of-Pocket Costs” tool on Healthcare.gov which estimates premiums,
deductibles, and copays for the year.


- It is important to find out whether a plan has a family deductible or individual deductibles for each family member, and then figure out which is likely to be more advantageous for them. (If the type of deductible is not indicated on healthcare.gov, it will be necessary to call the insurance company to get that information.)

Understanding deductibles and other cost-savings is a key issue for families of children with special needs. By examining how deductibles work, and not just picking the lowest-deductible plan, parents will get the best coverage for their child with special healthcare needs at the most affordable cost.

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.
Getting Kids With Special Needs Ready for Adulthood

By Christina Elston

Avremel Mayer has Down syndrome – and an independent streak. When he was a teenager, a yellow school bus picked him up each morning for the trip to Fairfax High. He had convinced his parents to let him wait for the bus on his own. One day, he decided the school bus was coming too late. “He walked to the corner, picked up the [city] bus to Fairfax Avenue and told the driver that he wanted to go to Fairfax High,” says Avremel’s father, David. “The bus driver told him the number [of the next bus to take], and after that, he was taking it every morning.” His parents didn’t find this out until an aide at the school told them how terrific it was that Avremel was taking public transportation on his own.

“He’s pleasantly surprised us in every aspect of his life,” says David of his son, who is now 30, lives in a group home and has a job helping the activities director at an assisted-living facility. But that doesn’t mean the Mayer family didn’t plan for Avremel’s transition to adulthood.

If you are the parent of a child with special needs, you should be planning, too. You Can’t Start Too Early

Parents can start building the skills their kids will need from an early age. Teach your child simple living skills such as making the bed with what Lela Rondeau, coordinator of the LAUSD Office of Transition Services, calls a “backward plan.” Make the bed almost all the way, then have your child do the last step. Next time, leave two steps for your child to finish, and continue this way until he or she is making the bed completely. At the grocery store, give your child responsibility for gathering one or two items on the list, or pay in cash and ask your child to count the change. The key is to work these exercises into your daily routine. “Any area where we can build independence for a child is a win,” Rondeau says.

AbilityFirst is one of many programs in the area that helps young adults with special needs learn job skills. PHOTO COURTESY ABILITY FIRST

And if your child has behavior problems, tackle those now. They might not seem like a big deal if your child is 4 or 5 years old, but no one wants an adult employee who routinely melts down or throws tantrums. “No employer’s going to take a child in unless that behavior is under control,” says Wayne Fogelson, principal of the Miller Career and Transition Center, which provides employment-based training for LAUSD students ages 18-22 with special needs.

To read more click here http://www.laparent.com/getting-kids-with-special-needs-ready-for-adulthood/
Join Us for a Transition Academy

Tuesday, May 24, 2016
9:30 am-2:30 pm
At North Branch Library
4130 W Park Ave, Gray, LA 70359

What are my child’s options after high school?
How do I prepare for life after high school?
If you have child with a disability and need these questions answer then this is the training for you!!

Contact Julie Folse at 985-447-4461 or jfolse@blfhf.org to register.
** Lunch will be provided**
This story can fit 175-225 words. If your newsletter is folded and mailed, this story will appear on the back. So, it's a good idea to make it easy to read at a glance.

A question and answer session is a good way to quickly capture the attention of readers. You can either compile questions that you’ve received since the last edition or you can summarize some generic questions that are frequently asked about your organization.

A listing of names and titles of managers in your organization is a good way to give your newsletter a personal touch. If your organization is small, you may want to list the names of all employees. If you have any prices of standard products or services, you can include a listing of those here. You may want to refer your readers to any other forms of communication that you’ve created for your organization.

You can also use this space to remind readers to mark their calendars for a regular event, such as a breakfast meeting for vendors every third Tuesday of the month, or a biannual charity auction. If space is available, this is a good place to insert a clip art image or some other graphic.

**Back Page Story Headline**

Your Organization

This would be a good place to insert a short paragraph about your organization. It might include the purpose of the organization, its mission, founding date, and a brief history. You could also include a brief list of the types of products, services, or programs your organization offers, the geographic area covered (for example, western U.S. or European markets), and a profile of the types of customers or members served. It would also be useful to include a contact name for readers who want more information about the organization.

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**PRESENTS**

**2016 Education Conference**

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April 20, 2016

9:30 am - 3:30 pm

Envie Restaurant

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**Please join us for our annual Education Conference**

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**Please RSVP**

Renee’ Frye

(985)447-4461 or 1(800)331-5570

Or

Register at blfhf.org
Note Your Calendars!!

What you need to know about the Legislative Process.
Thursday, April 7, 2016
10:00 am - Noon
Terrebonne Library in Gray
To Register go to:
https://www.eventbrite.com/e/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-legislative-process-tickets-22805746792

Upside Downs Launch Party
April 11th, 2016
6:00pm-9:00pm
Kampachi Japanese Steakhouse
418 Canal Blvd. Thibodaux, La. 70301

The Next Level Summit
“Successful Pathways for Transition Students”
April 21st, 2016
8:30am-2:30pm
Houma Municipal Auditorium
880 Verret St. Houma, La. 70360
Register at http://www.blfhf.org/event/transition-summit/or with Michelle Jones at (985)873-2054

Safe and Sound Emergency Personnel Training
6:00pm-8:00pm
April 21st, 2016 @ Terrebonne Parish Library in Gray, La.
For more information or to register please visit Baupwautism.org under events.

National Deaf Rights Rally
4:00am-5:00pm
May 4th, 2016
Louisiana State Capital
*please meet on the capital steps*
Find Family to Family Health Information Center on Facebook, Twitter!

Bayou Land Families Helping Families is home to the Louisiana Family to Family Health Information Center (LA F2FHIC), a statewide program funded through the HRSA Maternal Child Health Program. The LA F2FHIC assists families of children and youth, ages 0-26 with any type of special health care need or disability. Join us on Facebook for information on the latest meetings, support groups, information and updates! **AND, CHECK THE F2FHIC FACEBOOK PAGE DURING EMERGENCIES FOR IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS!!**

Facebook: Laftofhic Kidscomplexneeds
Twitter: @laf2fhicBLFHF

Bayou Land Families Helping Families

Bayou Land Families Helping Families is a 501c-3, non-profit resource center serving families of individuals with disabilities and special health care needs, their families and the professionals who serve them. Donations are tax deductible.

Bayou Land Families Helping Families is also home to Louisiana Family Voices, Louisiana’s chapter of the national group Family Voices. Family Voices and the Louisiana Family Voices advocate for families of children and youth with special health care needs and disabilities.