



Family Advocacy Toolkit

The **Family Advocacy Toolkit** serves as a practical blueprint for low-income families, relative caregivers, and parent advocates navigating systemic legal, educational, and safety-net structures within **Washington Parish** and **LDH Region 9**.

1. Legal Guardianship, Custody & Kinship Care Advocacy

When grandparents, relatives, or foster families step in to stabilize a household, navigating legal authority is critical to secure medical and educational rights.

- **Temporary Guardianship & Social Security:** If you are a relative caregiver, the **Social Security Administration (SSA)** will accept valid court-ordered temporary guardianship, legal custody, or a designated *Representative Payee* status to manage a child's SSI benefits [Bogalusa Field Office: **1-888-748-7678**].
- **Louisiana DCFS Transitional & Special Board Payments:** Relative caretakers or foster parents managing youth in transitional living placements can access specialized financial support. Request **Form 527 (Youth Transitional Living Placement)** from the local **Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)** to access Level D special board payments for high-need or stabilizing youth [Bogalusa DCFS: **1-888-524-3578**].
- **Southeast Louisiana Legal Services (SLLS):** Call **1-800-491-4515** to access free, civil legal aid. SLLS represents low-income families in custody disputes, kinship guardianship petitions, housing evictions, and public benefit denials across the Northshore.



¶ 2. Educational Advocacy & Special Education (IEP) Rights

Navigating school systems requires active enforcement of federal and state educational mandates for low-income and disabled youth.

- **Northshore Families Helping Families (NFHF):** Call 985-875-0511. Request a direct consultation with an **Education Liaison**. They will join you at school meetings to translate clinical evaluations (Form 1508) into actionable **Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)** or **504 Accommodations Plans**.
- **Disability Rights Louisiana (DRLA):** Call 1-800-960-7705 if a local school district is failing to provide a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) or violating a student's safety and behavior rights. DRLA provides systemic legal intervention for students in low-income brackets.

¶ 3. Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) & Specialized Family Care

Navigating behavioral health networks for developmental stabilization requires leveraging specific state plan protections.

- **Medicaid ABA Therapy Access:** Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is covered under the Medicaid EPSDT mandate for children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Families can access certified local therapy groups by contacting their Medicaid Managed Care Organization (MCO) to issue a prior authorization network check.
- **Florida Parishes Human Services Authority (FPHSA):** Call 985-543-4730. Request the *Individual and Family Support (IFS)* coordinator. This program funds adaptive equipment, specialized child care, and crisis respite care for



families whose income cannot cover specialized behavioral or physical modifications.

▮ 4. Crisis Intervention & Economic Stabilization Hubs

- **The Taxpayer Advocate Service (TAS):** Call 1-877-777-4778 if your family is facing severe economic hardship due to an IRS tax delay, frozen Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC), or child tax credit issues. TAS acts as an independent watchdog inside the IRS to fast-track low-income resolution files.
- **United Way Prosperity Center:** Located at 432 Avenue U, Bogalusa [985-244-6588]. This walk-in location provides immediate family budgeting counseling, asset-building workshops, and connections to local emergency relief funds.