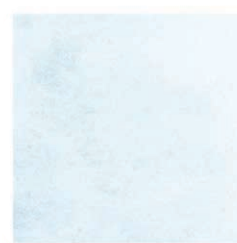


# Key Providers & Organizations in the Capital Region

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The following is an alphabetical sampling of key service providers and advocacy organizations located in the Capital Region that are actively serving individuals with an ASD diagnosis and their families. The list is not an attempt to create a comprehensive inventory of all service providers and advocacy organizations in the Capital Region. Rather, it is a listing of significant organizations identified through this assessment project.



### **Early Intervention**

Abilities is a 30 year old company that offers comprehensive pediatric therapy services. Abilities provides specialized speech and occupational therapy to rehabilitate, remediate, or facilitate motor, play, social, emotional, sensory processing, feeding, and language skills throughout childhood and into young adulthood. Academic instruction is also available in both individual and small group sessions to facilitate academic success.

Abilities employs a client-centered approach in all aspects of therapy and works closely with every family to understand each child's strengths and weaknesses. Abilities understands the importance of this individualized and client-centered approach, especially for children with ASD, and tailors a therapy program that is best fit for each child. Abilities accepts private pay and private and commercial insurance.

For more information, visit [www.abilitiesinfo.com](http://www.abilitiesinfo.com).



### **Early Intervention, Ongoing Therapeutic Support**

Access to Better Communication (ABC) opened nearly 20 years ago as a general pediatric speech language pathology group. They work with children and adults ages two - 20 and involve parents in the program through parent training. ABC focuses on speech and language development, functional communication, and social communication/cognition. ABC offers individual and group (Social Compass groups) sessions for children on the spectrum to improve in this area. In the past, they have offered ABA therapy and are actively looking for a BCBA therapist to offer this service. ABC accepts private pay and private and commercial insurance.

For more information, visit [www.abclouisiana.com](http://www.abclouisiana.com).



## **Early Intervention, Pre-K-12 Education, Adult Transition, and Social Interaction**

Established in the 1950s by a group of parents, the Arc Baton Rouge is one of the largest nonprofit providers in South Louisiana of programs, services, and supports for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, such as ASD, Asperger's syndrome, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, fetal alcohol syndrome (FASD), and similar conditions and the families of individuals with one of these conditions. The mission is to improve the lives of these individuals through advocacy, services, and support. The Arc Baton Rouge service area includes eight parishes: East and West Baton Rouge, Ascension, Livingston, Iberville, Pointe Coupee, East and West Feliciana.

The Arc Baton Rouge provides early intervention for infants and toddlers, transition support for students exiting high school, skills training, vocational and employment support for adults, respite services for caregivers, supported living/socialization, and inclusive sports and recreation.

Early Intervention services are offered to children from birth to three years of age who are eligible for the EarlySteps Program (*EarlySteps is described in greater detail later in the **State Support Services** section of this report*). The team consists of parents, support providers, and primary providers, such as physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, special instructors, and social workers. They travel to the home or child care facility and work with the child in his or her natural environment. The Children's Services program also includes training and technical assistance, family support projects, and school-age support.

The Arc's School to Community Transition program is funded by the Louisiana Office of Workforce Development and includes services that prepare high school juniors and seniors for a successful transition

from school to workforce or continuing education. The Employment Solutions program provides skills training, vocational support, and direct employment opportunities through a variety of business ventures and entrepreneurial activities. Arc support staff works with employers to place workers in jobs that best fit their interests and abilities. Additional services include job coaching, task and work force analysis, and job carving – identifying job tasks appropriate for an individual.

The Arc's downtown Baton Rouge facility is being re-purposed to facilitate skills training, internships, and arts-related entrepreneurship for Louisiana Rehabilitation Services clients. Work training opportunities will include baking, cake decorating, food service, and retail clerk activities.

Supported Living services include in-home respite care, center-based respite care, and independent living supports. The Arc fosters self-advocacy, wellness, socialization, and community inclusion as key components of this program.

Inclusive Recreation includes five different sports leagues, in partnership with BREC, and is open to persons with and without disabilities ages three and up. Games are non-competitive and "everybody plays." Other inclusive recreational activities offered include art classes, ceramics, cooking, and sewing.

Eligibility and funding differ depending on the program accessed and age of the client and can include state funded programs like EarlySteps and DHH state waivers, and private pay.

For more information, visit the Arc online at [www.arcbatonrouge.org](http://www.arcbatonrouge.org) or contact them by email at [info@arcbatonrouge.org](mailto:info@arcbatonrouge.org).



### *Navigator, Advocacy*

The Autism Society – Louisiana, an affiliate of the Autism Society of America, is a coalition of regional chapters with the mission to provide advocacy, information, and support to individuals with autism and their families and to promote lifelong opportunities in order that they may be fully included in their communities. Autism Society – Louisiana’s services include advocating for appropriate services and opportunities for people with ASD and providing educational conferences and workshops to educate families and professionals on current trends related to the diagnosis. Additionally, Autism Society – Louisiana provides families access to a toll-free 1-800 number that provides support and assistance to address individual needs and refers callers to the Autism Society chapter in their area (1-800-955-3760). They also provide a Resource Guide that families can use as a reference when locating services near them.

For more information, visit  
[www.lastateautism.org](http://www.lastateautism.org).



### *Navigator, Advocacy*

Autism Speaks is the world’s leading science and advocacy organization, dedicated to funding research into the causes, prevention, treatments, and a cure for autism; increasing awareness of autism spectrum disorders; and advocating for the needs of individuals with autism and their families. Autism Speaks provides funding support for research along the entire research continuum – from discovery to dissemination – for innovative projects that could significantly improve the lives of individuals with autism. Through their Autism Treatment Network (ATN), Autism Speaks collaborates with hospitals and academic institutions to develop evidence-based protocols and standards of care for the most challenging autism-related conditions. Additionally, Autism Speaks educates individuals with autism, their families, and professionals by providing “Tool Kits” that cover topics including diagnosis, locating providers, housing and independent living, transition planning, and employment. Through Autism Votes, the organization’s advocacy arm, Autism Speaks works to maximize support and funding for autism research, surveillance, awareness, services, and advocates at the federal, state, and local levels for insurance reform that maximizes coverage of evidence-based treatments.

For more information, visit  
[www.autismspeaks.org](http://www.autismspeaks.org).



### ***Early Intervention, Ongoing Therapeutic Support***

Autism Spectrum Therapies (AST) is a private provider network with service locations throughout the United States. AST's services are designed to serve three basic principles. These principles include individualization, therapy is customized to meet the needs and goals of each client; family focus, such that the entire family is supported and included in therapy; and the natural environment, where services are provided in a natural setting. AST integrates social skills into their ABA programs. Their programs are available for children and adults. AST accepts private pay, Medicaid, and private and commercial insurance.

For more information, visit <http://www.autismtherapies.com/>.



## **PEDIATRIC NEUROLOGY**

### ***Early Diagnosis***

The pediatric neurologists at the Baton Rouge Clinic use advanced evaluation and imaging technologies to analyze a child's brain anatomy and its electrical activity. By utilizing an array of sophisticated diagnostic tools and genetic testing, the physicians at the clinic are able to diagnose and define many childhood disorders, including ASD, which leads toward more effective methods of treatment. The clinic currently staffs two pediatric neurologists who complete full evaluations on ASD.

For more information, visit <https://batonrougeclinic.worldsecuresystems.com/pediatric-neurology>.



**Baton Rouge General**

A Community of Caring

## **PEDIATRIC REHABILITATION AND THERAPY**

### ***Early Intervention, Ongoing Therapeutic Support***

The Baton Rouge General Pediatric Rehab Center, currently located on the Mid City campus, offers physical, occupational, and speech therapy services to children from birth – 18 years of age. With years of experience and advanced certifications in pediatrics, the therapists work with children of all ages and abilities. Their programs help children and parents learn basic developmental skills such as eating, dressing, walking, writing, and communicating. The Center offers a unique, team approach to sensory integration and processing and assisting children in developing language and social skills. They also offer specialized skills that may require adaptive equipment, orthotics, or assistive technology. They personalize the child's program to fit his or her individual needs and personality. Together, their team of therapists work to maximize each child's potential. The Baton Rouge General is committed to creating exceptional experiences and value for the people they serve through health and healing. Baton Rouge General accepts commercial and private insurances, private pay, and Medicaid.

For more information, please visit [www.brgeneral.org/services/pediatrics](http://www.brgeneral.org/services/pediatrics).



### **Early Intervention, Ongoing Therapeutic Support**

Behavioral Intervention Group (BIG) is a private organization established in 2007 that consists of a group of dedicated therapists aimed at providing the skills, teaching environments, and learning opportunities necessary to improve the quality of life for children with ASD and other developmental disorders. Students from the Nicholls State University Applied Behavior Analysis program also participate in BIG programs as a practicum site.

BIG offers a therapeutic approach based on the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)<sup>18</sup> therapy using the Comprehensive Application of Behavior Analysis to Schooling (CABAS<sup>®</sup>) methodology. Utilizing ABA therapy, BIG offers intensive behavior management programs and directs treatment at reducing significant maladaptive behaviors while helping children acquire necessary replacements and adaptive behaviors. Throughout the process – under the direction of an assigned behavior analyst who closely supervises and coordinates a child's program – BIG provides a highly individualized curriculum of behavioral instruction and training, continually optimized to meet each child's changing needs as they progress.

Following CABAS<sup>®</sup> methodology, BIG takes a highly research-driven and individualized approach to early intervention as each therapist closely tracks the progress of each child's plan using a range of metrics.

The organization also conducts Teacher Performance Rate and Accuracy Scales (TPRAs) through frequent observations of teaching sessions by supervising staff to ensure that therapists are teaching correctly and efficiently and that children are learning the skill that is being taught. BIG is currently seeking accreditation as a CABAS<sup>®</sup> model program and seeks to become the first CABAS<sup>®</sup> approved site in Louisiana.

BIG also has Pre-K and kindergarten classrooms (Accelerated Independent Learner classrooms) and works with schools to transition kids into an education setting. BIG currently accepts children up to approximately eight years old. Enrolled children attend full-time, Monday through Friday.

BIG accepts private and commercial health insurance and private pay. It currently serves approximately 50 children, but is capable of accepting up to 100 children at its current location.

For more information, visit [www.big-br.com](http://www.big-br.com).

18 Please see page 116 for a detailed explanation of ABA therapy.





### ***Social Interaction, Recreation***

BREC is an East Baton Rouge Parish government agency that operates public park and recreation facilities and programs throughout East Baton Rouge Parish. BREC's mission is to contribute to a healthier, more vibrant community by providing exceptional parks, open spaces, and recreational experiences for all of East Baton Rouge Parish. BREC offers programming developed specifically to benefit non-traditional park users and under-served communities such as teenagers, children, and residents with disabilities, residents without transportation and those who live in play deserts, and low-income residents.

In the summer, BREC offers eight weeks of daily, non-residential, inclusive camps with a low staff to child ratio. Additionally, BREC offers Camp Sunshine which is an exclusive camp serving approximately 75 children per week with disabilities. Each weekly session of Camp Sunshine is broken down by age with a very low staff to child ratio. BREC performs leisure/ability assessments on each child that participates in their programs to gauge functionality and determine what supports they will need to succeed in the program. BREC partners with the Arc Baton Rouge who provide aides for children on waiver programs requiring this assistance by covering camp-related costs of having an aide accompany the child (i.e., admissions fees) for those children participating in inclusive camps. The camp costs \$90 per week regardless of a child's ability level.

Year round programing includes:

- Themed Sunshine Socials that attract a range of 150 - 200 attendees each month; a \$5 donation benefitting Families Helping Families of Greater Baton Rouge is required for admission,
- Seasonal inclusive sports partnering with the Arc Baton Rouge, \$10 per player, to include soccer, basketball, pickleball, kickball, and volleyball that can accommodate up to 60 participants each, and
- Adult Interactive days offering field trips, self-defense classes, karaoke, and electronic fitness games, among other activities. Each day can accommodate up to 8 - 10 participants and range in costs from no cost to \$22.

For more information about BREC programs, contact John Lopez or Kendall Aguillard at 225-272-9200 or visit <http://www.brec.org/>.





## **BRIDGES LEARNING SOLUTIONS, INC.**

### ***Ongoing Therapeutic Support***

Bridges Learning Solutions, Inc. is a for-profit organization that provides intensive Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services for a population of students that is grossly underserved in our community. Located on the campus of Greater Baton Rouge Hope Academy, Bridges currently serves students through age 13 who emit behaviors that hinder their participation in more typical classroom settings. As part of the program, students receive highly individualized 1:1 and 2:1 ABA therapy in a clinic-based setting with direct access to school-based therapy provided on site. Students have opportunities to socialize with peers on campus throughout the day as the program implements personalized strategies to increase socially significant behaviors.

Bridges uses a streamlined process to continually monitor and measure students' progress toward transition to a less restrictive setting based on acquisition of the prerequisite skills necessary for success. Since the doors opened in August 2015, Bridges students have met twice as many short- and long-term objectives as were achieved in previous years in a more typical classroom setting. Bridges provides a comprehensive approach to learning,

utilizing evidence-based treatments and curricula that include academics, communication, self-management, school, and self-sufficiency skills, as well as gross and fine motor skills instruction.

As students acquire new skills and interests, their parents receive group and individualized training to implement and measure the success of programming at home. The clinic recognizes the important role of parents as students' first teachers and strives to develop a home to school relationship that fully supports students' overall success. As Bridges grows as a clinic, it looks forward to creating and maintaining lifelong relationships with the families in the community.

Bridges currently accepts Medicaid, private and commercial insurance, and private pay. While the majority of Bridges clients are Hope Academy students, the clinic accepts clients who are not Hope Academy students.

For more information, visit [www.bridgeslearningsolutions.com](http://www.bridgeslearningsolutions.com) or contact Jenny Cronier, M.Ed., LBA, BCBA, CABAS® Teacher 1 at [jcronier@bridgeslearningsolutions.com](mailto:jcronier@bridgeslearningsolutions.com).



### ***Early Intervention to Adulthood***

Butterfly Effects is a private provider network with service locations throughout the United States, including in East and West Baton Rouge Parishes. Butterfly Effects' service model uses Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) to affect a desired change in a child's behavior. Board Certified Behavior Analysts at Butterfly Effects work with children, their families, caregivers, and teachers to develop treatment goals; engage and teach children utilizing ABA; record behaviors, antecedents, and consequences so that teachers and support staff can learn how to prevent and understand what reinforces are most effective; work with families, caregivers, and teachers so they can apply ABA therapy in a consistent and ongoing basis; and continue to evaluate and adapt therapy approaches as necessary. Butterfly Effects' support staff will coordinate with psychologists, pediatricians, and other direct care providers as requested by the family and frequently participate in school-held IEP reviews and behavioral plan meetings. Team members have 24/7 access to progress notes. Butterfly Effects accepts private pay, Medicaid, and private and commercial insurance.

For more information, visit [www.butterflyeffects.com](http://www.butterflyeffects.com).



### ***Early Diagnosis, Early Intervention, Ongoing Therapeutic Support, Navigator, Financial Support, Adult Services***

Capital Area Human Services District is a multi-parish State agency established to direct the operation and management of public, community-based programs and services relative to mental health, developmental disabilities, and addictive disorders services for Ascension, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Iberville, Pointe Coupee, West Baton Rouge, and West Feliciana parishes. CAHSD serves as the single point of entry for the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD). CAHSD provides services in the areas of Adult Behavioral Health, Child/Adolescent Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Support Services for Adult Behavioral Health. Services specific to Developmental Disabilities include diagnosis and evaluation, crisis assessment, financial support through the Flexible Family Fund, family support, residential placement services, respite services, services coordination, waiver certification, and habilitation/vocational contract services. CAHSD provides early intervention services such as Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy through the Accelerated Supports for a Child's Evolving Neurodevelopment (ASCEND) program and other therapy services for clients ages 2 to 5 years. CAHSD is currently serving six clients daily from 7:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. CAHSD's model utilizes private/commercial health insurance, Healthy Louisiana (Medicaid managed care, formerly called Bayou Health), and private pay.

For more information, visit [www.cahsd.org](http://www.cahsd.org).



### ***Early Intervention to Adulthood***

CARD is among the world's oldest and largest providers of evidence-based autism treatment using the principles and procedures of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). CARD provides ABA-based therapy at over 40 locations throughout the United States, including a location in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. CARD Baton Rouge currently serves children, adolescents, and adults diagnosed with ASD. CARD offers a flexible service delivery model that includes school, community, home, and clinic-based intervention services, seven days a week from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Plans for expansion are being developed. CARD accepts private and commercial health insurance, Healthy Louisiana (Medicaid managed care, formerly called Bayou Health), and private pay.

For more information, visit  
[www.batonrouge.centerforautism.com](http://www.batonrouge.centerforautism.com).



### ***Early Diagnosis, Early Intervention, and Social Interaction***

Chesney Center Therapies (CCT) is a private therapy clinic offering individualized physical therapy and occupational therapy for children as well as speech therapy for children and adults. They focus on providing excellent therapeutic services to their patients and families by empowering them with skills and strategies that will provide the greatest potential for a full, productive life. Family members are active participants in the therapy sessions in an effort to facilitate carryover of treatment goals into daily routines.

In addition to individualized therapy sessions, CCT offers screenings and evaluations for ASD as well as social groups where social skills are mediated by a speech-language pathologist through games and interactive activities. Chesney Center Therapies was founded by Shelley Chesney, M.S., CCC-SLP, LSLS Cert AVT, whose specialty is working with individuals with hearing loss. She is currently the only LSLS Certified Auditory-Verbal Therapist in the state of Louisiana. Chesney Center Therapies accepts private pay and is in-network with all major private health insurance companies.

For more information, visit  
[www.ChesneyCenterTherapies.com](http://www.ChesneyCenterTherapies.com).





## Education

The Diocesan Department of Special Education was established in 1962 as a way to provide academic services to K-12 students who were otherwise unable to attend regular education classes. In recognition of a need to provide greater accessibility to families of special-needs students, planning to incorporate services at already established Catholic Schools in the Baton Rouge Diocese began in the 2012-2013 school year.

Expansion of services from the traditionally one-site model officially began with the 2015-2016 school year. Catholic Schools in the Baton Rouge Diocese consists of 30 primary and secondary schools spread across eight south Louisiana civil parishes. The first year of expansion brought services to six school sites with eight classrooms/labs. The mission of the department is to utilize the Rigor Relevance Framework® in a unique way to address the specific learning goals of the students it serves. In an atmosphere of Catholic Faith Formation, the program seeks to prepare students for their roles as Disciples of Christ and contributing members of a diverse society. Current programming includes classes specific to Autism; classes for Intellectual and Other Exceptionalities; and lab services (for regular education students) to address Dyslexia.

Classes for students with exceptionalities are considered part of the non-public, accredited, special education “school” established in the summer of 2015 by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). As such, students are considered enrolled in the special education “school” and not at the host (Catholic School) site.

Lab services, such as Dyslexia labs, for regular education students are provided in conjunction with a student’s regular education programming. Lab students are enrolled in the host (Catholic School) site and simply pay an additional fee to the Special Education Department for any lab services.

Services specific to Autism include classrooms with class sizes of four to six students, depending on the students’ overall functioning. Student-specific programming drives instructional practices.

For more information, please visit: [www.csobr.org](http://www.csobr.org).



## Adult Transition

COEA, located in Gonzales, Louisiana, was founded in 1964 by a group of parents of children with developmental disabilities. The concerned parents came together in an effort to find an alternate route for educating their children and to develop meaningful activities for them to be a part of. The group quickly grew into a thriving agency, well known as the primary resource for families in need of support for their child or family member with developmental disabilities. As the oldest and largest nonprofit agency based in Ascension Parish, COEA is continually striving to meet the needs of persons with disabilities by expanding and improving services.

The Arc of East Ascension's mission is to enhance the quality of life for persons with disabilities and their families through services and advocacy that support choice, independence, and dignity. The vision of the Arc of East Ascension is to see a future for people with disabilities that is all-inclusive and ensures a quality of life through education, employment, family/community involvement, housing, recreation, and access to services.

COEA is dedicated to providing the highest standards of excellence in service provision for individuals with developmental disabilities and the elderly throughout the community. The organization

is committed to developing and expanding both progressive and enabling opportunities, educating, advising, and counseling individuals and/or families in the identification of issues pertaining to developmental disabilities and, when appropriate, resolving such issues and problems, educating the public through an information and referral process, identifying, utilizing, and cooperating with community resources to facilitate and maximize a common purpose and directive, and encouraging and developing diverse citizen relationships.

COEA's Diversified Employment Services prepare workers in basic work skills and attitudes, including job responsibilities, safety, attendance, punctuality, and work ethics. COEA provides assistance in training workers until they fully meet performance standards for typical full or part-time positions. COEA provides employees who perform consistently and with the highest quality of work possible.

Programs offered by COEA include adult day training programs, supported independent living, respite, supported employment services, and advocacy services.

For more information, visit <http://www.coeathearc.com/>.



## **THE DUNHAM SCHOOL MCKAY ACADEMIC CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE**

### **Pre-K-12 Education**

The Dunham School is a private, Pre-K through grade 12 Christian school located in Baton Rouge with the goal of “Educating the Mind and Heart for Christ.” The Dunham School provides students with a college-preparatory education accompanied by a Christian framework. To meet the needs of students with learning differences, the McKay Academic Center for Excellence provides a place where students who learn differently can receive the support they need to progress academically. The McKay Center offers services including advanced learning and college placement, tutoring, academic support services (including shadow-support, classroom accommodations, and testing accommodations), academic coaching, reading remediation, individualized and small group courses, and compensation classes.

Compensation classes are designed to meet the needs of students who require a more comprehensive, specialized learning environment. These classes provide appropriate, individualized academic services in a prescribed manner so as to move students to more participation in the traditional classroom, as their individual progress allows. These classes are staffed by a lead teacher and an assistant teacher. They have limited enrollment and are appropriate for students with a variety of learning challenges (such as language-based learning differences, high functioning Autism, Sensory Integration Disorder, Pervasive Developmental Delays, and other similar diagnoses).

McKay Center services are billed to insurance providers in addition to normal tuition and are available to students who have received a psycho-educational evaluation and/or approval by the administration.

For more information, visit [www.dunhamschool.org](http://www.dunhamschool.org) or call (225) 767-7097, extension 307.



### **Early Intervention**

Head Start is a federally funded program focused on providing educational and other services for children from birth to age five who live in poverty. The focus of Head Start services is to assess and promote early childhood development. Program service areas include education, nutrition, physical health, family services, parental empowerment, disability services, fatherhood initiative, grandparents raising grandchildren, and transportation.

In East Baton Rouge Parish, the Head Start program is administered by the City of Baton Rouge/Parish of East Baton Rouge. The program serves approximately 1,500 children each year through 14 Head Start Centers. Head Start reserves 10% of funded slots for children with disabilities and works closely with community agencies to provide services that meet the needs of these children. Ninety teachers are currently part of the Head Start Program, 15 of whom hold Associate’s degrees, 50 hold Bachelor’s degrees, and 25 hold Master’s degrees.

To enroll in the program, a child must live in East Baton Rouge Parish, must be six months to three years old for Early Head Start or three or four years old for Head Start, and the family must meet the federal income eligibility requirements. Services are available to eligible families without charge.

For more information, visit [www.brgov.com/dept/headstart/](http://www.brgov.com/dept/headstart/).



### **Early Intervention**

The Emerge Center for Communication, Behavior, and Development opened in 2014. The Emerge Center, formerly the Baton Rouge Speech and Hearing Foundation founded in 1960, is a nonprofit therapeutic center that provides comprehensive services for children with autism and other communication challenges ages 18 months to seven years old. The Emerge Center uses a team focused therapeutic model to provide many of the services children with autism need under one roof. The focus on the family starts at the intake process which is coordinated by a social worker and families are a part of the team throughout the treatment process.

The Emerge Center offers multiple unique therapy and education programs for children with autism, including full time and part time therapy programs. The Emerge multidisciplinary treatment model includes Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), speech language therapy, and occupational therapy. In 2014, Emerge added a Therapeutic Educational program which now includes two unique classrooms led by highly trained special educators. Students in the Emerge Kindergarten have the opportunity to receive

on-site therapy services including speech therapy, occupational therapy, and ABA. The Emerge Center's psychology department, audiology department, and social work department provide a well-rounded treatment team able to address behavior, social, and emotional challenges for children with ASD and their families.

Emerge's state-of-the-art building was designed with the needs of the clients in mind. Nine group speech therapy rooms, a cafeteria, small and large group and individual ABA spaces, and a full indoor/ outdoor Occupational Therapy gym are part of the Emerge Center's specially designed facility. Parents can also benefit from parent support groups or find resources in the Emerge Lending Library and Resource Room. A large-scale conference and training center is also available for in-house and external trainings, conferences, and meetings. The Emerge Center accepts Medicaid, private and commercial insurance, and private pay for services.

For more information visit [www.emergela.org](http://www.emergela.org).







### ***Advocacy, Navigator, Social Interaction, Recreation, Professional Development***

Families Helping Families (FHF) of Greater Baton Rouge is a nonprofit organization with the mission to provide the individualized services, information, and support needed to positively enhance the independence, productivity, and integration of persons with disabilities into the community. Accepting all ages and all disabilities, FHF provides all its services free of charge to families. As a family-driven resource center for individuals with disabilities and their families, FHF provides information and referral services, education and training, and parent-to-parent support. FHF provides unbiased and factual support, information, and referral by sharing resources to individuals with disabilities to guide them to services that they otherwise would not have known were available to them.

Through its Resource Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders program (RCASD), FHF offers one-to-one support, family-oriented education, referrals, and various communication software assisting children with social and verbal communication. The RCASD works to raise awareness, acceptance, and inclusion of those having ASD in the community through the

annual Active for Autism 5k Run/Walk and Fun Fest and various presentations at schools and in the community. FHF supports inclusive education by supplying resources, workshops, and presentations to empower parents to become advocates for their children receiving education services.

Transitional services for school to higher education or school to work are also offered through FHF programs. Guiding parents through individual education plans, behavioral issues, and other learning disabilities, FHF staff advocates can work with parent/teacher relationships and help ensure a positive learning environment. FHF also offers a parent-2-parent program that links “experienced” families to new families to share information about disabilities and provide emotional support.

To connect with FHF, call the office at 225-216-7474, email [info@fhfgbr.org](mailto:info@fhfgbr.org), or visit [www.fhfgbr.org](http://www.fhfgbr.org). Interested individuals can also text “FHFGBR” to the number 22828 to sign up for weekly e-blast with upcoming events.



### Adult Transition

The Frances Center (FCCE) is a private, nonprofit vocational and academic center in Baton Rouge with a mission to serve the community as a catalyst in the employment and continued education of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). FCCE provides supported self-employment to help adults choose a career path in a flexible environment. The Center offers tutoring and educational opportunities for those continuing academic pursuits.

The Frances Center opened in 2012 as the pilot program for the ABiliMall Model of Supported Self-Employment, which is an integrated self-employment support system for adults with disabilities. FCCE is a multi-vendor mall with booth stores and continuing education/personal development classes for our vendors. This combination provides an integrated approach to exploring careers, building workplace skills, and creating life-literacy with emphasis on functional reading and applied mathematical skills. FCCE's goal is to provide a work environment rich in self-determination opportunities. They encourage self-directed choices and dignity of risk with a belief in natural consequences to further participants' personal and vocational growth more effectively than the traditional process of "teach, model, do".

Through this innovative program design, FCCE will meet their goals by implementing these features:

- A focus on self-determination as the foundation of the path to self-sufficiency,
- A work environment that accentuates individual preferences and accommodates personal needs linked to ones' life circumstances,
- A model of self-employment that focuses on the need for supports, such as financing, skills training in specific tasks, and assistive technology,
- The placement of the person, not the market, first to ensure commitment to the employment process,
- The empowerment of individuals through self-employment to establish partnerships with businesses and private individuals to benefit their interests,
- The creation of an avenue for increasing individual wealth for individuals recognizing self-employment as the only substantial option available under the Social Security and Medicaid/Medicare systems to accumulate personal wealth, and
- The provision of continuing educational opportunities utilizing systematic instructional techniques to master the most common skills required for success in the workplace and assist those clients that desire so in the pursuit of completion of secondary educational goals through the completion of the HiSET equivalency program.

Currently, client capacity is restricted only by the ability to fund and staff personnel that are qualified to teach our population. With current staff, the Frances Center can comfortably accommodate 20-25 clients.

For further information, please visit [www.francescenter.com](http://www.francescenter.com) or contact Dr. M. Jo Monroe at 225-755-0990 or in person at 2575 O'Neal Lane in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.



## Adult Transition

Gateway Transition Center, Inc. (GTC) is a nonprofit organization in the Greater Baton Rouge area, founded by Steve and Sharon Whitlow in 2014, focused on helping young adults with ASD and their families transition out of high school and into the “adult world”. Careful planning with an Advisory Board of local therapists, educators, and parents, along with consultations with and visits to model programs in other states, and a review of research-supported practices in the field of transition, led to the creation of GTC’s model of programs, which were launched in Fall 2015. GTC believes its model could be replicated across the Capital Region and beyond to meet community needs.

GTC offers a comprehensive and individualized three-tiered program to prepare young adults with ASD ages 18 to 26 to meet their fullest potential:

1. The **Day Program** at GTC helps young adults with ASD develop fundamental social, pre-vocational, and life skills needed to live, work, and thrive through community-based one-on-one and small group training. GTC is currently accepting applicants for the Day Program. The current capacity for the Day Program is ten participants.
2. **Gateway Ink** is a social enterprise screen printing business that serves as a job training program for young adults with ASD. Participants earn a real paycheck and learn social skills that are transferrable to jobs in the community. Gateway Ink also includes small-group training focused on money management and job-related social skills. GTC is currently accepting applicants for Gateway Ink. The current capacity for Gateway Ink is ten participants.

3. GTC is currently developing its **Vocational Track** program, which will help young adults with ASD to gain meaningful employment in the community, which includes support for post-secondary education and training, engagement of employers to create job opportunities, job placement, and ongoing job coach services in supported employment.

GTC also offers a program for high school students and their families, called **Transitioning Together**. Parents learn about services in the community for adults with ASD, and the students have an opportunity for social interaction and thinking about their futures in a safe environment. Transitioning Together consists of two 1-hour family sessions and eight 1.5 hour-group sessions over the course of eight weeks.

GTC is committed to making its services accessible to all eligible participants, regardless of their ability to pay. Through the generosity of donors and grants from local foundations, GTC is able to keep fees as low as possible and to offer scholarships to those in financial need. GTC is also exploring opportunities to partner with Louisiana Rehabilitative Services and Medicaid waiver programs for funding in the future.

For more information about GTC programs or to schedule a tour of the facilities, visit the GTC website at [www.gtcbr.org](http://www.gtcbr.org) or contact Cassie Dinecola, LMSW, Executive Director, at 225-384-6338 or [cassie.dinecola@gtcbr.org](mailto:cassie.dinecola@gtcbr.org).



### **Pre-K-12 Education**

Greater Baton Rouge Hope Academy is a nonprofit 501(c)3 non-public school established in 2007 that accepts students who learn differently. These include mild/moderate learning challenges, ASD, ADHD, learning disabilities, dyslexia, Down Syndrome, and more typical learners on grade level who benefit from a low pupil/teacher ratio.

Hope Academy includes Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade classes working toward a state-approved high school diploma and older special needs students not pursuing high school diplomas, through age 21. Hope Academy's climate is one of inclusion, encouragement, positive relationships, and recognition of accomplishments.

Hope Academy's instructional curriculum is as unique as its learners. A sound, flexible diagnostic-prescriptive approach is utilized, with proven research-based methods and materials adapted to meet individual needs, allowing the program to be designed to fit the child, rather than forcing the child to fit a program. Every child has a learning plan which allows progression on their unique level and pace. Academic, social, and behavioral objectives, benchmarks, and anticipated timelines are set for each student.

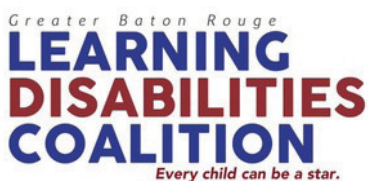
Low staff/student ratios are coupled with small group and one-on-one instruction. Many students with learning and developmental challenges have trouble with relationships, reading social cues and distinguishing between appropriate and inappropriate behavior, reading facial expressions, and understanding language nuance. Social skills programs embedded daily in the classroom provide students with greater confidence in social situations.

An intramural sports program, clubs, dances, and other activities enhance the social skills and self-worth of Hope Academy students. Many students coming to Hope Academy have been marginalized in previous experiences and excluded from many activities. Hope Academy strives for student participation in all activities. The combination of specialized academics, social skills training, and participation in extracurricular activities results in feelings of acceptance, happy demeanors, friendships, and most importantly, success. Hope Academy pairs with several local universities in a coordinated effort to serve all of its students.

The Hope Academy financial model relies upon tuition, but Hope Academy also participates in the Louisiana Student Scholarship for Education Excellence Program and the School Choice Scholarship for Students with Certain Exceptionalities.

Hope Academy currently serves approximately 155 students residing in up to ten parishes within the state.

For more information, visit <http://hopeacademybr.org/>.



Louisiana Developmental  
Disabilities Council

### ***Navigator, Professional Development***

Greater Baton Rouge Learning Disabilities Coalition (GBRLDC) is a nonprofit group of parents and professionals who work together to help children with learning disabilities in the Greater Baton Rouge Area. GBRLDC has the mission to improve the lives and education of individuals with learning disabilities, provide professional development for helping professionals working with people and families coping with learning disabilities, provide resource information for parents of children with learning disabilities, provide networking opportunities for parents and professionals interested in helping people with learning disabilities, promote learning disability awareness within the community, provide and maintain online resources for the community, and educate volunteers working with children and adults with learning disabilities. GBRLDC hosts an annual conference that serves as a community resource to increase academic success for children with learning disabilities. The annual conference is free of charge to parents and teachers but offers low-cost continuing education credits to professionals.

More information about GBRLDC can be found online at [www.gbrldc.org](http://www.gbrldc.org).

### ***Advocacy, Navigator***

The Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council (LADDC) is an organization of persons with developmental disabilities, parents, advocates, professionals, and representatives from public and private agencies who are appointed by the Governor to develop and implement a five-year plan to address the needs of persons with disabilities. LADDC has the mission to lead and promote advocacy, capacity building, and systemic change to improve the quality of life for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. The current Five Year Plan, effective from Federal Fiscal Year 2012 through Federal Fiscal Year 2016, contains goals that focus on the following areas: quality assurance, community supports, health, education, employment, recreation, and child care.

For more information about LADDC and its work, visit [www.laddc.org](http://www.laddc.org).



### **Early Intervention**

The McMains Children's Developmental Center is a nonprofit, multi-disciplinary, pediatric outpatient clinic providing a comprehensive range of diagnostic, treatment, and rehabilitation services to children ages 0 to 18. Opened in 1954, the Center works with children with cerebral palsy and other motor delays, mild to severe speech and language problems, sensory processing disorders, fine motor delays, autism, ADHD and learning disabilities, and children with Down, Rett, Jaubert, and Charge syndromes. McMains staff include licensed professional physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech/language pathologists, educational therapists, and social workers as well as a medical psychologist and volunteer pediatricians and orthopedists. The McMains Center incorporates a comprehensive, integrated, holistic approach to service delivery by wrapping its core therapies with ancillary services such as augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), assistive technology assessment, and daily living skills and training. Beyond clinical offerings, the McMains Center also offers an adapted bike program, an adapted gardening program, an annual summer arts camp for children with disabilities and their siblings, and an annual family-centered adapted canoe trip. McMains accepts private pay, private and commercial insurance, and Medicaid.

For more information, visit [www.mcmainscdc.org](http://www.mcmainscdc.org).



### **Early Intervention to Adulthood**

NeuroTherapy Specialists, Inc. is an outpatient rehabilitation facility that has been providing physical, occupational, and speech therapy to Baton Rouge and surrounding communities since 1988. NeuroTherapy uses a team-based approach where therapists and families work together to design a treatment plan that best meets a child's needs. Summer programs and social groups are offered which are supervised by a therapist to encourage appropriate social interaction. The facility accepts private pay and commercial and private insurance.

For more information, visit [www.neurotherapyspecialists.net](http://www.neurotherapyspecialists.net).



### ***Early Intervention to Adulthood***

One Step At A Time opened in 2010 and offers behavioral interventions, including ABA therapy, to all age groups in individual and group settings. One Step At A Time also provides contracted services to schools, districts, and educational programs including evaluations, group and individual therapy, as well as the development and implementation of Behavior Intervention Plans.

Daniel L. NoackLeSage, M.A., is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst and Licensed Behavior Analyst working in the Greater Baton Rouge and surrounding areas. He primarily offers behavior analytic based intervention, therapy, consultation, and personnel development training via his practice, One Step At A Time Behavioral Services, LLC. Currently, Mr. NoackLeSage is working with several education programs in Baton Rouge and the South Louisiana region. Aside from his work in these areas, he also extends his practice towards various realms such as employee performance, community programs, and health and fitness benefits.

The mission of One Step At A Time Behavioral Services, LLC revolves around effective, efficient, and rewarding services for all members of the community, regardless of age and ability. By constantly evolving and progressing forward in an attempt to achieve meaningful results, the organization can better serve the individuals, families, and groups seeking behavioral services in their lives. By providing services that are flexible to the needs to both the individual and group, the possibilities of progress are endless when creating lasting change that is appropriate, purposeful, and beneficial for everyone involved. One Step At A Time Behavioral Services, LLC currently only accepts private pay.

For more information, visit [www.onestepatatimebehavioral.com](http://www.onestepatatimebehavioral.com) or contact Daniel L. NoackLeSage, M.A., BCBA, LBA via telephone (225-975-2924) or via email at [onestepbehavior@gmail.com](mailto:onestepbehavior@gmail.com).





## PEDIATRIC DEVELOPMENT AND THERAPY CENTER

### *Early Diagnosis, Early Intervention*

Our Lady of the Lake Pediatric Development and Therapy Center has grown significantly over the past five years and utilizes a multi-disciplinary approach in the assessment and management of pediatric developmental disabilities, including ASD. Led by a developmental pediatrician, the team consists of twenty health professionals including physical therapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy, social work, psychology, and nursing. The team coordinates the care of children with developmental disabilities, including ASD and thoroughly evaluates and supports patients medically, physically, emotionally, and socially. Currently, the center serves as the only neurodevelopmental center of its type in Louisiana and sees patients from throughout Louisiana as well as Mississippi and Alabama. Additionally, through its therapy and medical services, it continues to provide long-term care to numerous children in the Baton Rouge Area.

Recent innovations in services include the Infant/Toddler Clinic where occupational and speech therapy work with the developmental pediatrician to assess children zero to three years of age. Through this team, more infants and toddlers with complex medical needs and developmental delays can be diagnosed and treated sooner. This includes an increased number of children with concerns for Autism – facilitating early diagnosis and intervention which is essential for this population. Other innovations including feeding assessments both for sensory and motor issues including fiber optic endoscopy to evaluate for swallowing disorders. Thus, the Center continues to expand its role as a major regional destination site for children of varied ages and conditions.

The Center is currently developing plans for a significant presence on the new Our Lady of the Lake Children's Hospital campus with the hope of attracting additional pediatric specialists to the Baton Rouge area including pediatric neurology. This neurodevelopmental center will further integrate medical specialists from the children's hospital with the current team to better address the multiple medical issues that affect children with ASD and developmental disorders. Through this unique approach, additional therapies and interventions are made more effective through the management of medical disorders that exacerbate behavioral and developmental problems.

Towards the end of increasing the number of pediatric specialists available, the Center will add a second developmental pediatrician in the summer of 2016. This will increase the number of patients with ASD who can be seen. Currently, the capacity per developmental pediatrician is 100 new patient evaluations per year with 200 patients per physician seen annually in follow-up visits. 100 patients with ASD are also seen weekly for therapy by the staff.

For more information, visit [www.ololphysiciangroup.com/pediatricdevelopmentandtherapy](http://www.ololphysiciangroup.com/pediatricdevelopmentandtherapy) or call at (225) 765-6346.



## PORT CITY ENTERPRISES

### *Adult Transition*

Port City Enterprises is a nonprofit organization that provides vocational training opportunities, supported community living options, and habilitation services to persons with developmental disabilities. The organization's philosophy is to enable persons with disabilities to live and work as independently as possible by providing necessary support for an individual to maintain his or her placement of residence and/or employment. Services are designed to assist individuals in acquiring, retaining, and/or improving skills in a safe environment. In order to be admitted to Port City Enterprises an individual must be 22 or older, live in the geographical services area, and have a primary diagnosis of mental retardation or developmental disability as defined by the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities. Port City Enterprises receives funding from several agencies including: Capital Area Human Services District, Capital Area United Way, Title XIX Group Homes, Medicaid and other private funding sources. An individual approach to community based services is utilized in both the Supported Employment and Supported Community Living programs. Initial assessments are carefully conducted to ensure the individual's desires, wants, and preferences as well as, the individual's skills and abilities and needs for supports necessary to reach and to maintain the highest level of independent functioning. Port City Enterprises primarily serves individuals in East and West Baton Rouge Parishes, Iberville, and Pointe Coupee parishes.

For more information, visit [www.portcityenterprises.org](http://www.portcityenterprises.org).

## St. Lillian ACADEMY

### *Early Intervention, Pre-K-12 Education*

St. Lillian Academy (SLA) is a nonprofit, non-denominational Christian school in Baton Rouge that serves children who have communication and learning challenges. SLA accepts students who are struggling in their current education setting as well as students with diagnoses such as ASD, Down syndrome, apraxia, communication disorders, and attention and focus issues. Student ages are three and older.

This school offers a unique team-based method of classroom teaching and therapeutic support. SLA serves as a "wellness" program for the child and family by using a whole child approach to education. Through collaborative efforts with supporting partners and agencies, SLA aims to provide a comprehensive, consistent program that provides a predictable environment for the students to take risks and learn new skills.

Excellence in Speech Pathology, LLC (ESP) is the outpatient provider for speech, occupational and physical therapy services. ESP is an outpatient clinic housed on the campus of the school. 90% of SLA students receive all of their therapy at the school. SLA also provides behavioral support through consultation with Daniel NoackLeSage, M.A., LBA, of One Step At a Time Behavior.

The SLA financial model utilizes tuition, which covers academic programming and in-school behavioral supports. ESP therapy services (speech, occupational and physical therapy) are billable therapy services through out-of-pocket pay or medical insurance billing.

SLA currently serves 30 children and is in the process of expanding capacity to 50 children.

For more information, visit [www.stlillian.org/home](http://www.stlillian.org/home).



## UNLOCKING AUTISM

### Advocacy

Unlocking Autism (UA) was formed in February 1999 in Baton Rouge to raise awareness about Autism Spectrum Disorder and bring the ASD community's issues from individual homes to the forefront of national dialogue. Since establishment, UA's founding principle has been to focus on unity within the autism community. To this day, UA strives to bridge gaps collaboratively with every organization within the autism and broader disability community for the purposes of improving the lives of individuals on the spectrum across the lifespan. They have always welcomed all of those living with or touched by autism regardless of their opinions on causes, therapies, and treatments because they recognize that everyone's experience is different. They connect and assemble groups for the greater good.

UA's mission is to form strong bonds in the autism community through a spirit of service while equipping individuals living with autism, and those in their circle of care, with necessary tools to build a brighter future for the community as a whole. UA believes God's promise that everyone living with autism has a hope and a future and that strong faith combined with action will ignite the power of our whole community for effective change.

UA seeks to:

- Educate individuals about pending legislation and existing laws.
- Teach whole person care methods, including biomedical treatments and behavioral therapies.
- Assist parents of newly diagnosed children, or newly diagnosed adults, by providing support through a 24-hour hotline.

- Raise funds for research projects that integrate gene-environment interaction with a focus on biomedical treatment protocols.
- Work to increase society's ability to work with and understand people with autism.
- Help those on the autism spectrum reach their greatest potential in leading fulfilling and productive lives in relationships, society, and employment.
- Educate parents, and prospective parents, on the importance of environmental factors to the developing brains of children both born and unborn.
- Works to preserve personal health choice with regard to treatment and medical procedures.
- Integrate the community in cross-collaborative efforts to bring about change more rapidly.

UA has hosted the nation's only 24/7 Autism Hotline since inception which can be accessed by calling 1-866-366-3361. UA has held local, state, and national grassroots policy development conferences, as well as hosting national rallies and marches in Washington, DC for autism since 2000. Since 1999, UA has served hundreds of thousands of families and individuals living with autism across the spectrum, across the lifespan, and across socioeconomic lines. They are not bound by geographic borders.

For more information please visit [www.unlockingautism.org](http://www.unlockingautism.org) and [www.thepowerofonemarch.org](http://www.thepowerofonemarch.org).



## Adult Transition

VOAGBR is a locally-managed affiliate of Volunteers of America, one of the nation's oldest, largest, and most comprehensive human services organizations. Established in Baton Rouge in 1921, VOAGBR currently provides services to a 19-parish area in South Louisiana, including the Greater Baton Rouge, Lafayette, and Lake Charles areas. The organization takes a person-centered approach and works to address both urgent and ongoing needs, with the goal of helping each individual and family become as healthy and self-reliant as possible. VOAGBR's vision is to engage the energy and spirit of the people of South Louisiana, to care for our neighbors who need help today, and to build healthier, more compassionate communities for tomorrow.

Areas of focus in the Capital Area include promoting self-sufficiency for the homeless, strengthening families, serving veterans, caring for the elderly, fostering independence in individuals with disabilities, empowering individuals with HIV/AIDS, and supporting positive development for children and youth.

Residential Services provide 24-hour support and supervision to residents in a family-like atmosphere. Supported Living Services assist people with daily living skills within the family home or by helping them develop the necessary life skills to live successfully in their own home. A Pre-Vocational Day Program provides education and training so program participants can gain a skill set, earn supplemental income, achieve a level of self-sufficiency, and build relationships in their community.

Behavioral health services for children and families include a therapeutic group home, intensive case-management services, and outpatient counseling. VOAGBR offers several affordable housing options across south Louisiana for adults living with severe and persistent behavioral health issues.

VOAGBR is the designated Child Care Resource and Referral agency for 17 parishes in South Louisiana and provides support for child care providers through training and on-site technical assistance and serves as a referral source for parents looking for local child care services, including services for children with disabilities.

VOAGBR's housing programs assist homeless individuals and families with obtaining permanent affordable housing, with a special focus on individuals with behavioral health issues or other disabilities. The Drop-in Center also provides case management as well as a place for homeless individuals to do their laundry, shower, receive mail, and use the telephone.

For more information, go to [www.voagbr.org](http://www.voagbr.org) or email [info@voagbr.org](mailto:info@voagbr.org).



### **Early Intervention**

Woman's Center for Wellness has several programs in which they integrate clients who have an ASD diagnosis. These programs include: Swimstrong, summer school readiness (handwriting, letter recognition, etc.), one-on-one occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech therapy for infants to adults, audiologists, and nutritionists onsite. If appropriate, patients are also treated in a full size warm water therapy pool. Each of their potential clients participates in an intake evaluation, though they refer out for a formal DSM diagnosis. The Center currently serves 150 pediatric clients with seven therapists and primarily receives referrals from neurologists and pediatricians.

For more information, visit [www.womans.org/locations/maps/womans-center-for-wellness](http://www.womans.org/locations/maps/womans-center-for-wellness).

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The resources outlined demonstrate the wealth of available services to families in our community. Baton Rouge has benefited from the numerous organizations who have successfully implemented programs to address many of the needs in our community. However, the overwhelming sentiment from families interviewed throughout this process is that the resources do not currently fill all of the needs across the lifespan. Through this report, we identify the necessary resources at each stage throughout a lifetime and recommend new resources in the areas in which we are lacking.



