



The Louisiana Legislature Is Back In Session: Now Is The Time For Your Voice To Be Heard! (Self-Advocacy)

By Steven Nguyen

Self-Advocacy is one of the most important skills that one must learn throughout life. So, what exactly is self-advocacy? It's about understanding your strengths and weaknesses, identifying your personal goals, knowing what your legal rights and responsibilities are and communicating your needs and wants to others.

If you're a person with a developmental disability and rely on services that keep you happy, healthy and independent;

now is the time to get informed, take action and share your story. After all, who understands our needs better than we do? As you're probably well aware, the state's budget is not in great shape right now and hasn't been in quite some time. Tough decisions will have to be made, and people will be affected. How many and by how much remains to be seen. The regular session will convene on Monday, April 10, 2017, at noon. It will end no later than 6 PM on June 8, 2017.

How do you get involved, you ask? The Louisiana Council's Advocacy Network, known as LaCAN for short, is a great place to start. LaCAN is a grassroots advocacy movement that advocates on behalf of home and community-based waivers (i.e. New Opportunity Waivers, Children's Choice Waiver, Supports Waiver, Residential Options Waivers, etc.) education and employment.

You can sign up to be on their mailing list to keep up with upcoming events and receive action alerts. Action alerts keep you informed of things being discussed in Baton Rouge, at the Capitol, and when you have the opportunity to share your story with your legislative members. Another benefit of being a LaCAN member is that each region has their own leader. This person is tasked with helping facilitate in-person meetings with your local legislative representatives, planning

regional activities, and helping you share your story. To find your regional LaCAN leader, please visit <http://www.laddc.org/content.cfm?id=599>. If you aren't sure who your legislative members are, please visit <https://www.legis.la.gov/legis/FindMyLegislators.aspx>.

People First of Louisiana is another local organization that can help you in your journey toward self-advocacy. This organization is a self-advocacy group run by individuals with disabilities for individuals with disabilities. To find your local chapter, please visit <http://www.peoplefirstla.org/>.

I'll close with one of my favorite quotes by Gandhi, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." Together, we can do our part to make Louisiana a great place to live, work, and play; today and every day!



Changing Lives Every Day.