



J. LOPEZ

Navigating the System is No Easy Task

I have been connected with the best agency ever. I was told this is who you need to call to guide you with all your current needs. You see my son was just diagnosed with autism, a disability I know nothing about. I was told it was crucial that my child goes to school as soon as possible. We just moved to this parish and have no family or friends with children in the area.

So I did some research and went to the nearest school to get my child enrolled in the preschool setting, however, the classes were full. But there was an opening at a school in another district but transportation was not provided. I enrolled my child out of the district and of course, my car finally decided to retire, which meant no transportation, no school.

I remembered Children's Hospital Autism Clinic gave me a contact name and number to call for resources, support, and guidance. I made the call to Laura Nata with Families Helping Families of

Jefferson and right away we were so encouraged by the end of the call. She provided us with all resources that can be helpful to my child with autism.

Because of the language barrier, she quickly did referrals, made appointments, and did follow-ups. She began with the task of getting my child back at his district school and did accomplish the task with transportation.

Because of his new diagnosis, she requested on my behalf an interim IEP for services at school, while they began an evaluation at no cost to me. Second, she made a referral to the local OCDD office and gave me the information on the purpose of the agency, and the available services, and helped prepared me with all the necessary documents to bring to my appointment. Next, she informed me of other state and federal resources for children with disabilities, where to apply via the internet and in person. It was music to my ears to find out there is an autism support group in the area. She shared several websites on autism and provided us with reading materials and books in our native language.

What seemed so confusing to navigate, so distant to reach is all falling in place. Thanks to Ms. Nata for her advocacy efforts, her knowledge, and the personal time given to us. We are very thankful for Families Helping Families.

J. Lopez