



THE CNMI DESIGNATED PROTECTION & ADVOCACY SYSTEM:

Providing legally - based advocacy services on behalf of individuals with disabilities and their families

Advancing the understanding of and appreciation for P&A services and disability related issues

Enhancing the quality of P&A services and efficiency of the organizations operations

Posse

Charging through Barriers of Discrimination

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World Down Syndrome Day

By: **CLEO NENING**
Program Coordinator

March 21, 2022 is World Down Syndrome Day! In our lifetime, we may have seen one of them. A child with a flattened face and nose, almond shape eyes that slant upwards, small ears, and a short neck. They may even speak slower than other children. This is a child with Down Syndrome. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), 1 out of 700 babies are born with Down Syndrome, a condition in which a child has an extra chromosome. Down Syndrome is a type of developmental disability that can be diagnosed at birth.

For many new parents, having a child that has been

diagnosed with Down syndrome or other type of a developmental disability can be very scary. In order to prepare parents for their child with a disability, there are services that the child can receive. The Early Intervention program has a team of professionals that can assist a parent in understanding the child's disability. The goal of Early Intervention programs are to enhance and accelerate development by building on a child's strengths and by strengthening those areas that are weaker, in all areas of development. The Early Intervention program and their team meet and create what is called an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). This IFSP is a written plan of services offered to record family outcomes to assist the child.

Remember, an IFSP is a fluid plan, a plan that should be visited every year. When a family is referred to Early Intervention for services, a team will meet with the

parents to create a plan for their child. This team may consist of an Occupational Therapist, a Speech Therapist, a Physical therapist, a teacher, and family members. The team shares evaluations, concerns of the child, and they help the parent(s) navigate services for their child.

Join us in celebrating World Down Syndrome Day and together we can empower people around the world to advocate for full inclusion in society for people with Down Syndrome and for everyone

For more information on World Down Syndrome Day, please visit <https://www.worlddownsyndromeday.org/>. For more information early intervention services, please call the advocates of NMPASI at our office numbers (670) 235-7273/4, text message (670) 287-0652, or visit our website at www.nmpasi.org.

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Athletes with no talent **JUST ABILITY**



By: **LUIS MACARANAS**
Projects Specialist

Going back down memory lane have you ever notice that classmate that seem naturally talented in any sport. Like any sport they would play they would easily get selected and succeed in it. They will always be first to be pick on a team. I never believe that people are naturally talented, I feel that one must always put in the hard work to achieve success. People with down syndrome can attest to this, as it may be even harder just to be active in the sport. Down Syndrome is a genetic disorder cause when abnormal cell division results in an extra full or partial copy of chromosomes 21. Down syndrome symptoms may include mild to moderate short attention span, poor judgement, impulsive behavior, slow learning, and delayed language speech development. Coach Tim Notke said "Hard work beats talent when talent fails to work hard." Athletes with down syndrome did exactly that, they had to put in the extra hard work to become successful in their sport. Ill go over the success of Chris Nikic, Ben Heitmeyer,

and Stephanie Handojo that beat talent with hard work in their sport. So, who is Chris Nikic? Chris Nikic is a person with down syndrome. He was born in 1999 and grew up in Florida. He had an open-heart surgery when he was five months old, and was unable to walk or eat solid food until age five. Despite these challenges Nikic trained with Dan Grieb for four to eight hours each day for one year. In 2020 Nikic completed the Ironman Florida triathlon in which he completed in 16 hours 46 minutes 9 seconds, that included swimming 2.4- mile, cycle 112-mile and then running a marathon 26.22. This landed him to be place in the Guinness Book of World Record and the first person with down syndrome to complete an Ironman

triathlon. Next we have Ben Heitmeyer. he is an athlete with down syndrome. Ben competed in the Special Olympics. Ben cycled 12 miles, swam 750 meters and ran 3.1 miles which made him the first athlete with down syndrome to complete in the first triathlon in Special Olympics World Games History back in 2015. Finally, Stephanie Handojo is an athlete with down syndrome. Stephanie won numerous gold medals back in 2011 Special Olympic World Games in Athens and the 2013 Special Olympics Asia Pacific Games in Australia. When she not competing, Stephanie works with youth with and without intellectual disabilities to promote Special Olympics in school and communities. Stephanie has participated in more than 20 events as a Health Messenger and served as a Sargent Shriver International Global Messenger. Despite having odds stack a bit higher for Chris, Ben, and Stephanie due to down syndrome, they were very successful in what they did. The odds only made them

work harder in achieving on what they needed to do. Remember there is nothing you cannot achieve regardless of your ability or disability, put in the work. Hard work will always beat talent, when talent fails to work hard.



Children with Disabilities in Private Schools



By: **JEANNE RAYPHAND**
Legal Counsel

As most of us know by now, under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), students with disabilities have the right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE). The question is: do students with disabilities have the same rights if they are enrolled in private schools?

Some children are placed in private schools by their parents who do not believe FAPE has been provided by their local school district, and some children are placed in private schools by their school district as a means of providing FAPE.

The U.S. Department of Education has just released a question-and-answer document to provide guidance for a third category of children: those children placed in private school by their families without first enrolling them in public school and for whom FAPE is not an issue.

In this third category of children, federal officials say that:

[w]hile IDEA provides no individual entitlement to children with disabilities whose parents have placed them in a private school when FAPE is not at issue, the law does require that an LEA spend a proportionate amount of its IDEA Part B funds to provide equitable services to this group of children, which could include direct and/or indirect services

Questions and Answers on Serving Children with Disabilities Placed by Their Parents in Private Schools, OSEP QA 22-01 (Revised February 2022).

This question-and-answer documents provides detailed information and legal references regarding students with disabilities in private schools as well as those children with disabilities who are being home-schooled, and responsibilities of the local school system in locating, identifying, and evaluating all children with disabilities and services required to be provided.

For more information, go to Policy Guidance: Individuals with Disabilities Act sites [ed.gov/idea/policy-guidance/](https://www.ed.gov/idea/policy-guidance/) to obtain copy of the Questions and Answers on Serving Children With Disabilities Placed by Their Parents in Private Schools, OSEP QA 22-01 (Revised February 2022).

Problem Child

or a **Child with Problems?**



By: **SHARLEEN SABLAN**
Projects Specialist

“Some kids are just naughty.” People either say this with a shrug of the shoulders and a little laugh or with jaws clenched and nostrils flaring. Kids go through phases. Toddlers go through terrible twos. Big kids experience first crushes and heartbreaks. Teens and young adults battle with finding their identities while learning to be independent. We can all understand that these phases can take a toll on a kid. Between the ups and downs, the whirlwind of emotions, and the chaos of it all, how can we tell whether we have a problem child or a child with problems? When do we stop thinking kids are just acting up and when do we start asking if they need help?

According to Mental Health America, “Children’s mental health problems are real, common and treatable. Although one in five children has a diagnosable mental health problem, nearly two-thirds of them get little or no help.”

The following signs may indicate the need for professional help:

Decline in school performance

Poor grades despite strong efforts

Constant worry or anxiety

Repeated refusal to go to school or to take part in normal activities

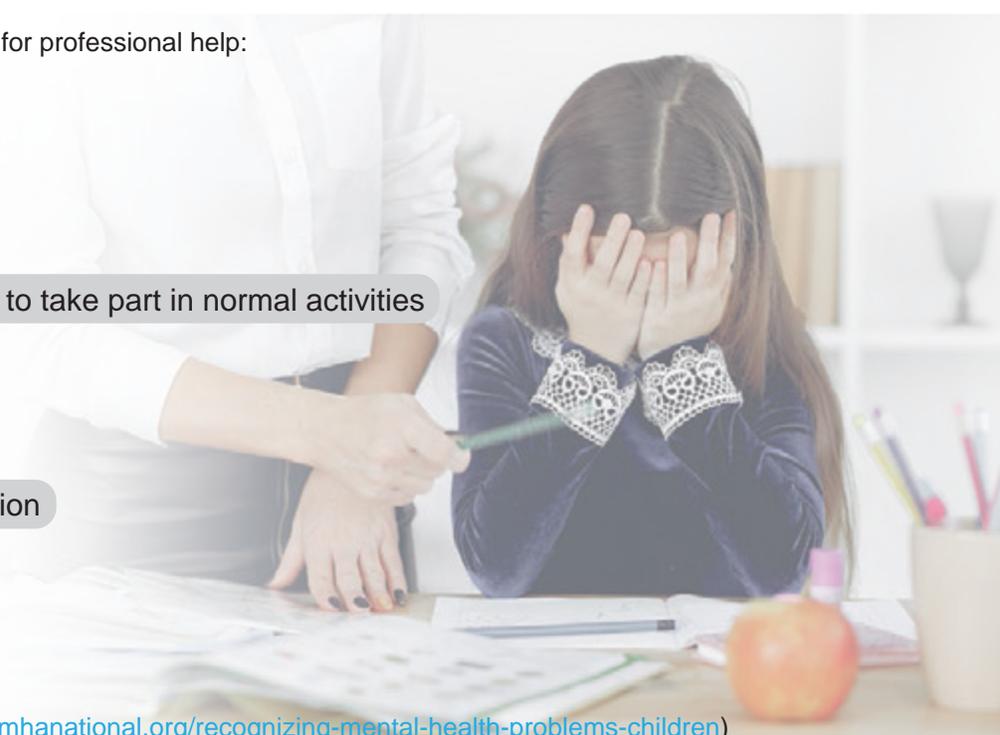
Hyperactivity or fidgeting

Persistent nightmares

Persistent disobedience or aggression

Frequent temper tantrums

Depression, sadness or irritability



(From: Mental Health America, <https://www.mhanational.org/recognizing-mental-health-problems-children>)

Whether a child is acting up because of a phase their going through or reaching out for help for a deeper issue, remember to be patient and kind. We’ve all been there. They are, after all, just kids. If you feel that you or someone you know has been discriminated against because of a mental illness, please contact the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI) program at the Northern Marianas Protection & Advocacy Systems, Inc. (NMPASI) at 670-235-7273/4 or visit us on the web at www.nmpasi.org, www.facebook.com/NMPASI, and follow us on Instagram @nmpasi670.

You can find more information on Children’s Mental Health Matters here:



5 IEP Meeting TIPS for Parents!



By: **SHANIAH ALVAREZ**
Client Advocate

What is an IEP? It is an Individualized Education Plan. It is a plan or program developed to ensure that a student between ages 3 to 21 years old with a disability needing specialized instruction receives FAPE: Free Appropriate Public Education. This plan creates an opportunity for parents, general education teachers, special education teachers, school administrators, related services personnel, and the student to work together to improve and provide free appropriate education to the student with this need. If you are a parent of a child with a disability and you are concerned about their educational progress, you can request an evaluation from the school to determine if your child qualifies for an IEP. In order for an IEP to begin, the parent must sign a consent form for the child to be evaluated. Once the parent signs, the clock begins, and the school has 60 days to determine if the child needs special education services. Once the school decides that an IEP is needed, the team

will hold an initial meeting to develop the contents of your child's IEP with you – this will be about their educational goals as well as accommodations/modifications to meet their needs in school.

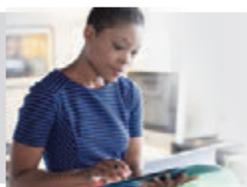
Here are some important tips that can help parents feel more prepared before, during, and after an IEP meeting!

1. Make sure you understand why your child qualifies for an IEP. Understand the findings in the evaluation and why an IEP is recommended. Sit down with the school professionals involved in completing the evaluation and ask them to go over it with you, so you have a better understanding of the findings. It will help hone in on issues, best practices, and more. This is where a parent can assist in evaluations by sharing information on their child to better understand some of the student's issues. <https://educationandbehavior.com/iep-meeting-tips-for-parents/>



2. Learn about special education laws! It is important to know your rights as a parent with a child who has an IEP. Look for reputable sources. This can help you navigate decisions on the IEP and ask the right questions during the meeting. Advocates from the Northern Marianas Protection & Advocacy Systems, Inc (NMPASI) can provide information and technical assistance in understanding Special Education Law to help parents better advocate for services for their child. <https://educationandbehavior.com/iep-meeting-tips-for-parents/>

3. Make a list of questions you want to ask before going into the IEP meeting. This will help you ensure that you discuss all the important topics you want to address to guarantee your child is receiving the best service for their specific needs. Sample questions that can help are, "How are the IEP goals being monitored and implemented? How will I receive updates on my child's progress? If the school goes into remote learning, how will my child receive his/her IEP services?" <https://educationandbehavior.com/iep-meeting-tips-for-parents/>



4. Keep well-organized records of your child's documents related to their IEP. When you keep copies of these important documents, you keep track of their progress, needs, goals, services, and any other relevant information. This helps better prepare you for the next IEP meeting. <https://specialednews.com/top-iep-tips-for-parents/>

5. Provide a list of your child's strengths, areas of improvement, and learning styles. This list can help the school understand your child's behavior, strengths, and challenges better. It also helps you and the school work together to keep improving strengths, work on challenges, and implement the best learning style suited for your child at home and at school. You know your child best. Share that! <https://www.smartkidswithld.org/getting-help/the-abcs-of-ieps/iep-meeting-6-tips-parents/>



For more information or assistance, contact the Northern Marianas Protection & Advocacy Systems Inc (NMPASI) at 670-235-7273 (voice), (670) 285-0652 via text message or visit us online at www.nmpasi.org For more information, also see Special Education Program Rules and Regulations, NMIAC 60-50-001 et seq.

The Evolvement of the Manual Wheelchair



By: **JOHN CABRERA**
Client Advocate

The manual wheelchairs are one of the most common types of assistive technology medically used today. The manual wheelchairs have come a long way since the first creation. There is doubt about who invented the first wheelchair. As a wheelchair user (As a person that uses a wheelchair) I've seen the evolvement of the "manual wheelchair". Manual wheelchair by definition is one that is driven by the user pushing on bars that surround the wheels. The most common type of wheelchair features has a 24" rear-wheel used to steer and (2) front caster wheels. Most traditional manual wheelchairs range from 10-20 pounds and are usually bulky with no disassemble features.

The manual wheelchair has evolved into a more self-sufficient assistive technology from the 1st generation manual wheelchairs. The most advance feature of today's manual wheelchair I would say is the lightweight. Traditional wheelchair could weight up to 20 pounds or more depending on the weight limit of the chair. Now adays wheelchair users have the option to choose from a lightweight frame and parts usually made from aluminum or sometimes carbon fiber material. Aluminum chairs range from 7-10 pounds depending on additional accessories if any. Today's wheelchair has so many accessories to choose options unlike the traditional chairs. You have the choice of (2) two types of pneumatic tires. (1) solid (hard rubber) and (2) air knobby thread also for off road terrain. Personally, I chose solid rubber so it never gets flat. Other fancy accessories are 0 inch to 6-inch cambers which make the large wheels slant to a certain degree for mobility and making sharp turns without tipping sideways. Other features of today's manual wheelchairs are the ability to disassemble. In the past wheelchair didn't have to option to collapse or disassemble making it hard to transport. Tires have the feature to be snap on or off, making loading easier. Back support is able to fold up or down for storing. You now have the option to choose the color of the chair unlike the traditional chair which only came in steel. Rims can be spokes or fiberglass like material. Also, seat cushions are more advance now to prevent pressure sores.



Today you see many types of manual wheelchairs around the world. In paralympic games and in everyday society helping individuals with physical disabilities be more independent and productive contributors to their society. NMPASI is the CNMI designated organization that protects the civil, legal, and human rights of people with disabilities. For more information on our programs and services, please contact NMPASI at our office numbers (670) 235-7273/4, text message (670) 287-0652, or visit our website at www.nmpasi.org., and follow us on Instagram @nmpasi670.

THE IMPACT OF ISOLATION ON MENTAL HEALTH AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



By: **TIAVA TO'OMATA**
Program Aide

Recently, I became a part of an ever-growing local statistic. Not just any statistic, but that statistic that we all hope not to be a part of these days. After being confirmed positive for COVID-19 with two antigen test results, and the full 9 yards of symptoms, I was ordered to quarantine and isolate myself at the government quarantine site for 10 days, as per the protocols at the time. It was a whirlwind of a day; having to inform my employer, my family, those I had come in close contact with, deal with packing, briefings and all—I finally sat down in my designated room, facing the only person I had for these next 10 days: myself.

It is not an easy task transitioning from one lifestyle to another one, even if it be just temporarily. I had gone from being out 15 hours a day to staying in just one place... for what seemed like forever. I found myself feeling restless. I was constantly searching for distractions and trying to convince myself that this is not as bad as people make it seem. I ate my words in my first 48 hours. The deafening silence in my room late at night as I tried to sleep overwhelmed me with feelings of loneliness, self-doubt, and quite honestly, fear. I was afraid of being alone and doubted that I could go the whole way before cracking under the pressure that isolation forces you to feel.

Admittedly, I did crack and experienced a rollercoaster of emotions that I never knew I kept within me. The walls of the room felt confining and I couldn't help but wish that we (the isolated individuals) could've at least had 15 minutes to go out and get some fresh air, or take a walk around the building or by the beach. Something to get us out and feel the sun, the air, the wind... to feel something other than the feelings that overwhelm us when we're alone.

At the Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems Inc., otherwise known as NMPASI, we serve to protect the civil, legal and human rights of individuals with disabilities. One of our programs specifically is catered towards the protection and advocacy for individuals with mental illness (PAIMI program). With mental health conditions increasing worldwide, about 13% globally according the World Health Organization, it is apparent that we need to continue to advocate for proper mental health services and resources for our people, especially those who have current existing mental health needs. When a person qualifies for our program, I've seen our advocates go above and beyond to ensure that services are being administered for our clients and if not, then the appropriate steps towards a resolution are taken. Every situation, every case, is dealt with in its own specific manner, as no one client who seeks our services is ever the same. Regardless, solutions are made, resolutions are found, and our clients' rights are clarified and protected. It is a sight to see and I'm grateful to be a part of that journey.

I admire all those who work in the field of mental health, whether it be as frontliners or behind the scenes folk; it is not an easy task carrying the load of

another. But maybe that's just what we need more of. During my isolation period, despite the numerous "get well soon" messages and positive affirmations I received, I still had those lingering feelings creep up on me every so often and I let them take their course. However, I'm grateful to those who allowed me to share this insecure and sensitive part of myself with them. Thank you for helping me bear my load. It is important to hold on to those genuine acts of concern and meaningful interactions from others, whether it be big or small. It got me through and made me excited to seek my freedom from isolation and utilize it, perhaps more responsibly this time.

In short: stay positive, but test negative CNMI!

For more information about protection and advocacy services for individuals with mental illness, please contact NMPASI at our office numbers (670) 235-7273/4, text message (670) 287-0652, or visit our website at www.nmpasi.org.



NMPASI

 **MARCH IS DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AWARENESS MONTH** 

If you do not have a developmental disability, you might be wondering:
"How can I participate?"

One way you can participate during this campaign is by being a **Disability ALLY**.

An ally is a person who aligns themselves, speaks up, and advocates for a particular group's common interests and goals. Here are some effective ways you can be a Disability Ally to promote inclusion in your community:





A	L	L	Y
ACKNOWLEDGE	LEARN	LEVERAGE	YIELD
and respect every person's abilities and experiences.	and educate yourself on the diverse disabilities types	your influence to promote an inclusive and accessible space	the floor to people with disabilities to help identify and eliminate barriers

For more information on advocacy for individuals with disabilities, please contact NMPASI at 670-235-7273/4, text message (670) 287-0652, or visit our website at www.nmpasi.org



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"To protect the civil, legal, and human rights of individuals with disabilities"