

Addressing A Community Need

According to the American Community Survey (ACS), there are approximately 115,000 individuals living in Shelby County who have at least one disability. In addition, at least 9,000 of those individuals are under the age of 18. The range of disabilities that affect this population is vast and the needs of each person are specific and cannot be generalized. In the past several years, Memphis Area Legal Services, Inc. (MALS) has dedicated resources to addressing the issues related to special education law for a select group of clients.

MALS received a capacity building grant through the University of Memphis' Strengthening Communities Initiative. The grant funded the Partnership for Educational Advocacy and Parity (PEAP). It is described in more detail in this brochure.

As the PEAP program has progressed, the staff has been able to create a dialogue among parents, and professionals who specialize in special education and disability issues, and community organizations and activists. These discussions have revealed that the need to educate and empower goes far beyond just engendering a basic understanding of the IEP process and pairing parents with informed advocates.

Children who have one or more disabilities need a host of supports and services that are often fragmented among different public and nonprofit agencies. Identifying and accessing these resources can be "Herculean" tasks for the most educated and affluent families within Shelby County. Therefore, a new type of real-time, technology-based resource was deemed necessary to help parents/caregivers make good decisions with their relevant information. That is the basis for LifePlan.



RESOURCE CENTER
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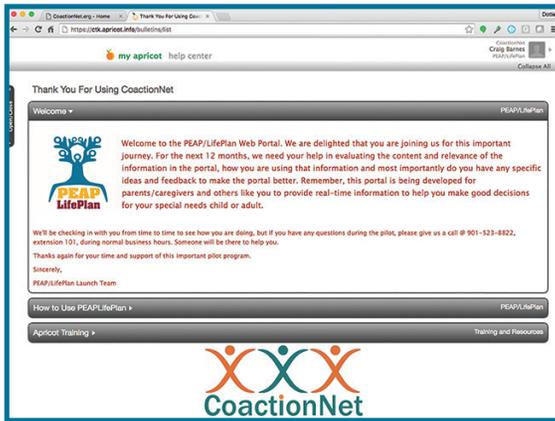
IN COLLABORATION WITH:

- **Memphis Area Legal Services** •
- **University of Memphis Dept. of Social Work** •
- **UT Boling Center for Developmental Disabilities** •
- **Arc of the Mid-South** •
- **Shelby Residential Vocational Services** •



WHAT IS PEAP/LIFEPLAN?

The Partnership for Educational Advocacy and Parity (PEAP) believes that empowering parents through education on the special education process will strengthen our community. By helping parents learn how to effectively advocate for their child, from assessment and evaluation to the implementation of an IEP or 504 Plan, children will benefit from an appropriate education. PEAP's mission is to provide parents with step-by-step guidance through all phases of the special education process. This is accomplished by conducting training sessions and creating the Special Education Resource Center. In the training sessions, parents and lay advocates are provided with the basic knowledge to navigate through the process.



To compliment PEAP and provide real-time information support to parents, the LifePlan Web Portal was developed and is currently in a pilot phase.

Specifically, the Portal contains:

- List of community resources
- Special education and disability law information
- Additional information about a LifePlan Guide of Information
- Series of key questions to build an individual profile of interests and needs
- Notifications about tailored email alerts tied to specific profile information.

HOW DOES THE PORTAL WORK?



With the LifePlan Portal, families can utilize up-to-date resources and customized life-planning information that's tailored to each individual's distinct profile. The Portal's logic matches resources to individual's needs, informing them of specific opportunities and allowing for parents/caregivers to plan ahead based on their needs – that is so critical and will make the planning process a better experience.

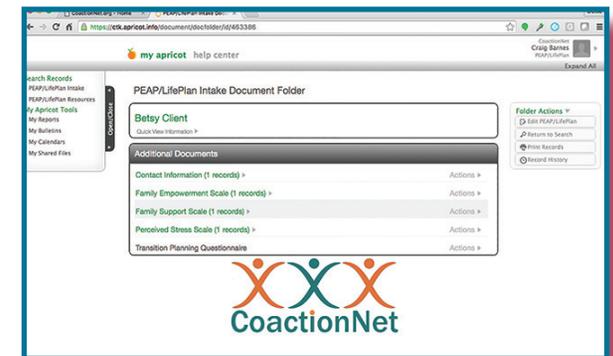


WHY IS THE PORTAL IMPORTANT TO OUR COMMUNITY?

After recent extensive state-wide research, it was determined that a community resource like the PEAP/LifePlan Web Portal was needed. The primary reasons were:

- Rate of autism continues to climb
- Number of individuals waiting for disability services is increasing
- Our state is strapped for funds.

That is why we have launched a 1-year Pilot Program.



It is hoped that results from the Pilot Program will:

- Help organizers and researchers better understand the connection between technology, individuals with special needs and case management
- Better document motivations on behaviors, interests and challenges for the target population
- Provide good insights into key influencers on the decision-making process
- Create positive outcomes that hope to improve the quality of life for each individual in the pilot
- Support the need for a statewide solution.

Please contact us at 901-523-8822, ext. 101, to learn more about this pilot program, how you can get involved, and the opportunity to financially support this important effort.*

**Some age and income restrictions may apply.*