

Our Experience with Operation House Call

By: Andrea Chauvin

We have been participating in Operation House Call for about a year and it's been a wonderful experience. About once a month, one to three pediatric residents come to our home to engage in conversation about life with Autism. The visit is scheduled based on



the convenience of our family. Before our first visit, we received a list of potential questions that would likely be asked. For the most part, each team is looking to have those same questions answered through conversations. They are very interested in the early signs of Autism and the process that families experience to obtain the initial diagnosis. The residents asked about our current concerns and plans for the future. We often discuss how our basic pediatric appointments were simply seeking out treatment for our son when he was sick and that often, Autism life was rarely discussed. It is never viewed as a complaint, it is just that the sole purpose of the visits were to treat ailments.

Additionally, we talk about our support system, which is typically other Autism families and agencies and resources that we have secured and encourage the residents to do what they can to refer parents to agencies for help. We expose them to waiver services, support groups, respite care, diets and therapies. We share simple stories like how a handicapped accessible tag has been a life-saver when living life with a child with public meltdowns. We have tried to educate them on the signs of a family who is totally exhausted due to the behind-the-scenes life which includes children with high-energy, regular meltdowns, endless potty training, strangers and extended family with unsolicited parenting advice, daycare and school challenges, IEPs, etc.. The residents have been able to see first hand, our extra locks on the exterior doors, alarms on windows and bedrooms and other measures we have had to take to keep our son safe. They have learned about many of the school system challenges we have



FHF of Jefferson
201 Evans Road
Building One, Suite 100
Harahan, LA 70123
504.888.9111
504.888.0246 (fax)
www.fhfjefferson.org



Like us on Facebook:
[Facebook.com/
Fhfjefferson](https://www.facebook.com/Fhfjefferson)



Follow us on twitter:
[Twitter.com/
FHFofJefferson](https://www.twitter.com/FHFofJefferson)

faced and just how exhausting advocating can be, just to get the mere basics of what our son needs. We have discussed obstacles when shopping, traveling, dining out and socializing with his peers and our own. These are discussions that do not take place in a typical pediatric visit. We have stressed the importance to not only referring parents for support, but actually following up to ensure that it happens. We have admitted to at some point early on, we sat with a stack of papers with referral numbers, but too overwhelmed to even make a call. Making the residents aware of just how challenging the journey is seems to have given them a sensitivity to not only families affected by Autism, but disabilities in general. It also brings awareness of just how much our child with Autism is loved and that we would do anything to help him along.

Honestly, it is a wonderful experience to participate in Operation House Call. When the residents leave, we feel that we have given them an awareness to reach out to families affected with Autism. We stress the concept of treating the family, not just the child. We hope that educating them can make a difference in securing support for families much sooner.

Operation House Call is currently seeking new families. The only requirement is you have a child with a disability. This is a great opportunity for you to give valuable input to future doctors and how they care for children with disabilities.

To sign up as a new family, contact Angela Shockley at Angelashockley@la.gov.



FHF of Jefferson
201 Evans Road
Building One, Suite 100
Harahan, LA 70123
504.888.9111
504.888.0246 (fax)
www.fhfjefferson.org



Like us on Facebook:
[Facebook.com/
Fhfjefferson](https://www.facebook.com/Fhfjefferson)



Follow us on twitter:
[Twitter.com/
FHFofJefferson](https://twitter.com/FHFofJefferson)

Changing Lives. Every Day.