



Mardi Gras Tips for Parents and Caregivers

With Mardi Gras quickly approaching, attending parades and other Mardi Gras events can provide challenges for parents and caregivers of children with autism and other developmental delays. Here are a few tips for parents and caregivers that want to participate with their children in Carnival Season:

- Attending parades can be stressful for any family, so it's crucial to plan. Try to find a parking place and area where you'll be standing figured out ahead of time to avoid last-minute uncertainties.
- If your child has difficulties with changes to his/her schedule, give your child a "heads up" about the upcoming parade by using a calendar to mark the days until the parade.
- Help your child know what to expect by reading a book about parades, watching parades on TV or the internet, or making your own story with computer pictures or descriptions your child understands.
- Set expectations by communicating the plan with the entire family ahead of time. Outline the timeline and rules that need to be followed while at the parades. Some children benefit by having a written or picture sequence of parade day events to use as a checklist.
- Pack the necessities. Even though parades are going on, your child might not be interested in them. Pack favorite snacks, toys, puzzles, books, and games to provide your child with other preferred activities during the parade.
- Since parades tend to last a long time, bring a chair or wagon, so your child can sit and rest. Know your child's limits and your own. A successful 20-minute parade experience is much more memorable and enjoyable than a longer one that ends in distress for you or your child.
- If loud noises are difficult, bring noise-canceling headphones or earplugs for when the marching bands play.
- Since some children can impulsively bolt from a safe setting to explore something of interest or remove themselves from a situation, be aware of your child's wandering cues and have a "buddy" to help keep eyes on your child.
- Always have an exit strategy ready to go and practice it. Look for parking that allows easy access and/or a quiet place nearby to retreat if needed. Consider a plan to stay a shorter time and leave before any challenging behaviors occur.
- **The most important tip: reinforce your child's desired behaviors throughout the planning, preparation, and parade experience; notice and be lavish in your praise and attention when your child is doing well. Celebrate the small successes!**

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Be on the lookout for a 2024 Caregiver Survey – the survey was emailed to families and a copy sent home with your child. *Please* complete the survey and give us your feedback! Completed surveys can be returned in your child's backpack or emailed to Alexa at agautreaux@tc-aba.com **THANK YOU!**

IN PERSON GROUP MEETINGS

Houma 2/9 8:30am Holiday Family Event: Be on the lookout for the flyer!

Thibodaux 2/6 and 2/7 8:30am Holiday Family Event: Be on the lookout for the email and flyer with your child's date!

Baton Rouge Pre-K 2/14 Group Meeting 1:00pm

Baton Rouge SLA 2/14 Group Meeting 8:45am

Lafayette 2/9 1:00 Family Mardi Gras Parade- Be on the lookout for the flyer!

Lafayette 2/21 Group Meeting 1:00pm

Hammond 2/6 Group Meeting 1:30

Touchstone ABA Will be closed Monday and Tuesday, February 12th and 13th

ONLINE GROUP MEETINGS

Houma/Thib/ALL NOLA/Laf Online 2/8 9:30am and 12:00noon, and 6:00pm via ZOOM. **Please RSVP to Alexa @ agautreaux@tc-aba.com** to get the ZOOM link

Dr. Carmen Broussard Online Series for all families:

2/1 9:00am Sibling Supports

2/8 12:00noon Addressing Sexuality

Dr. Broussard's online sessions are held via TEAMS, contact Alexa at agautreaux@tc-aba.com to register.

Group sessions are open to any Touchstone parent or other legal guardian. Other caregivers may attend *with* parents/guardians. Individual sessions can be conducted at the centers, in the home, or in the community, and address your child's specific needs.

Join Us!

Caregiver Collaboration Support Team:

Houma/Thibodaux/NOLA- Paula White at pgwhite@tc-aba.com

Baton Rouge/Lafayette/Hammond- Mary Johnson at mjohnson@tc-aba.com

Janice Huber at jhuber@tc-aba.com

Carmen Broussard at cbroussard@tc-aba.com