



ADVOCACY ALERT

March 6, 2009

Hello there ~

I would like to introduce myself. I am Amy Nichols, an educator with the Epilepsy Foundation of Louisiana. I live in Shreveport and oversee services in the northern parishes. Recently I have been asked to keep up with the Advocacy program at the state and federal levels, a task that I'm actually excited about because politics and government have always interested me and there's no time like the present to keep a close eye on the government.

So, where to begin.....The Epilepsy Foundation has always been a strong advocate for people with epilepsy. We have been active in Congress, the Executive branch, and the courts focusing attention on the needs of those with epilepsy. Priorities for the Foundation include: the availability of affordable quality health care, the search for the cure, and the protection of civil rights for people with epilepsy. The Epilepsy Foundation has taken a stand on many positions concerning people with epilepsy. Some of these issues are Universal Protocols and Better Seizure Management Training for First Responders, Administration of Medication and Other Treatments in Schools, Daycare and Camps, HealthCare Reform, Driver Licensing and a Statement on Mandatory Substitution.

Currently in Louisiana, the Foundation is working to clarify the process of drug interchange. While small changes in medication type or dosage normally will have little to no effect on patients with other types of medical conditions, substitutions can have a significant impact on patients with epilepsy including serious side effects and breakthrough seizures. Last year, the Louisiana Foundation introduced the Epilepsy Patient Protection Bill requiring a pharmacist to notify the patient and physician when substituting an epilepsy medication. The bill did not make it out of the Senate Health & Welfare committee but that was last year and we intend to try again.

I will be addressing different issues throughout the year in these Email Blast to keep you all informed. At the Epilepsy Foundation, we believe that by raising the level of awareness and teaching the general public about epilepsy, we can help reduce the fear and stigma associated with the disorder.

Please let me know if there is anything you would like me to specifically write about or find out for you. You can email me at: amy@epilepsylouisiana.org

It is my desire to encourage you to get involved in the Foundation's grass roots advocacy for the rights of individuals with epilepsy in Louisiana.

Sincerely ~

Amy Nichols