



I WANT YOU!

The Family Café CHANGE AGENT NETWORK THEY NEED YOU!

Early Session this Year

The Change Agent Network offers an opportunity for advocates and change agents to work collaboratively to transform the system by: combining abilities, skills, ideas, and talents; standing together for meaningful system reform measures; taking the lead in our communities and neighborhoods; sharing Information to help families become effective players within their communities; developing statewide networks to organize and discuss the issues that are most important to families and persons with disabilities; and creating a united position on critical disability policy issues.

Don't forget, the 2022 Florida Legislative Session begins early this year! This year's session will begin on January 11th and end on May 11th.

In 2018, a change was made to the Florida Constitution requiring that the 60-day legislative session begin in January after a non-election year, and March when the general election took place the previous November. The legislature would have preferred to simply change the start date to January in perpetuity, however, it became clear that newly elected freshman legislators need the extra time to organize their offices, hire staff, and go through a detailed orientation process in order to be up to speed by the first day of the legislative session. Hence, the rotating start date.



Due to the January start, the interim committee meetings will begin earlier as well. Interim committee meetings are where the work of creating new legislation and determining priorities begins, so it's important for advocates to know about them!

Here is the schedule for the remainder of the year and leading up to session:

- September 20-24, 2021: Interim Committee Week 1
- September 30, 2021: State agencies submit Long Range Program Plans
- October 11-15, 2021: Interim Committee Week 2
- October 18-22, 2021: Interim Committee Week 3
- November 1-5, 2021: Interim Committee Week 4



November 15-19, 2021:	Interim Committee Week 5
Nov. 29 - Dec. 3, 2021:	Interim Committee Week 6
December 3, 2021:	Deadline for submitting requests for drafts of general bills and joint resolutions, including requests for companion bills.
January 11, 2022:	First Day of Regular Session
March 11, 2022:	Last Day of Regular Session (60 th day)



Advocacy Summit Postponed

As you may have heard, The Family Café has been working in conjunction with the Florida Developmental Disability Council to organize a two-and-a-half-day event for experienced advocates that will be a “deep dive” into the issues of housing and transportation as they relate to individuals with disabilities and their families. This regionally focused Advocacy Summit has been planned to feature leading experts to provide a comprehensive overview of each subject area. With this valuable information and expertise, attendees will develop “regional plans” that will empower advocates to make an impact not only in Tallahassee, but in their respective regions of Florida and local communities.

Unfortunately, due to the recent increase in coronavirus cases in Florida, The Family Café and the FDDC have determined it to be in the best interest of all to postpone the event which was originally scheduled to be held in September of this year. We are working with the hotel to select a date in 2022 that will allow us to host a safe and productive in-person Advocacy Summit.

Regardless of when the Advocacy Summit is held, we remain committed to building the voice of Florida’s advocacy community, and doing so in a way that reflects the experiences and priorities of people with disabilities and their families.



If you have participated in prior advocacy training through Partners in Policymaking, the Family Care Council, Florida SAN’D, or the DD Network Cadre, and would like more information about the Advocacy Summit, please email Joe McCann at jmc-cann@familycafe.net.

Support the Long Overdue Pay Increase for Direct Support Providers



One of the most important disability issues the Florida Legislature needs to address this year is the woefully inadequate rate of pay for direct support providers and workers. Once upon a time, few disagreed that these individuals deserved an annual rate increase and a higher level of income. Nonetheless, as legislative sessions passed, direct support providers were overlooked time and time again in favor of more “pressing” fiscal matters.

The failure to responsibly deal with this challenge has now become a dire situation in which many Floridians served by the Home and Community Based Waiver are finding it difficult (and in many cases impossible) to employ and retain capable caregivers. Many direct care workers have simply left the field in favor of employment that will allow them to support themselves. This should not be a decision that dedicated providers should have to make.

This will likely be one of the most discussed issues in this year’s legislative session. The Governor has indicated his support for a solution, and we need all hands on deck to deliver the message to the legislature.

Here are a few talking points from our friends at the Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities:

- In 2020 the Legislature passed a rate increase for iBudget services but it was unfortunately vetoed by the Governor when he had to make difficult budget cuts at the start of Covid-19. We needed a rate increase before Covid-19 and now are in a situation which is entirely unsustainable.
- Since March 2021, APD began tracking group home and Adult Day Training (ADT) closures. At the end of July 2021, there have been 91 group home closures and 14 ADT closures.
- This year state-run facilities received a pay increase to get their employees to \$13 an hour, and are potentially moving to \$14 next year. This has created an incentive for employees to leave direct service organizations to work for state-run facilities. Providers have no mechanism to compete since they are funded 100% by Medicaid.
- Florida’s minimum wage will increase from \$8.65 to \$10.00 on September 30, 2021 and will move to \$11.00 on September 30, 2022. This is a 25% increase that will have to be absorbed by provider agencies.
- Remaining on the current path will make the Legislature’s 2021 goal of reducing the APD waiting list untenable. Providers are not able to accept more individuals who are in desperate need of services until they are reimbursed at an adequate level.

Please contact your Senator and Representative and tell them you support the Rate Increase for Direct Service Workers. As always, the most important tool we have in our toolbox is our story! If you are one of the many impacted individuals or families, please share that story.

Don't Forget to Submit those Presentation Proposal Forms

The Family Cafe is currently seeking presentation proposals for The 24th Annual Family Cafe, which will be held on May 27-29, 2022 in Orlando!

The Annual Family Cafe brings together thousands of people with disabilities and their family members for three days of education, training, and networking each year. The more than 200 breakout sessions on the agenda form the backbone of the event, and we rely on the knowledge and expertise of our presenters to make the event a success.

We're currently looking for presenters that are willing to share what they know about topics of interest to people with disabilities with attendees at The 24th Annual Family Cafe. If you or someone you know is interested in presenting, we want to hear from you!

You can [find the online Presentation Proposal Form here](#).

If you prefer, you can also [download the Presentation Proposal Form here](#).

Know someone that would make a great addition to next year's agenda? Please feel free to share this invitation with anyone in your network that might be interested in making a presentation!

Presentation proposals are due by Friday, January 7, 2022.





SEE YOU NEXT YEAR!

at the

24TH ANNUAL
Family CAFÉ

May 27 - 29, 2022

Hyatt Regency Orlando
9801 International Drive
Orlando, Florida



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