



## Questions and Answers

*from*

### The 13th Annual Family Café

*Featuring*

**The Annual Summit on Disabilities**

June 3-5, 2011

Disney Coronado Springs Resort

Orlando, Florida



family

Safe

## **Welcome to The Family Café Questions and Answers Book for 2011!**

Navigating the service delivery system and finding the right resource has always been a challenge for persons with disabilities and their families. For thirteen years, The Family Café has been there to help. Since our founding in 1998, our mission has been to provide persons with disabilities and their families with information, training, support and opportunities to network with other families, professionals and public policy makers. The place where that mission has been realized is The Annual Family Café.

This year's 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Café, held June 3-5, 2011, brought together a wide array of resources and information, with over 160 breakout sessions, an expanded Exhibit Hall and a series of engaging keynote addresses. It featured nine separate "tracks," including a new one dedicated to military families, as well as a mental health track, which reflects The Family Café's efforts to address behavioral health through two SAMHSA grant programs: the Statewide Family Network, and the CAFÉ TAC national technical assistance center. We were also able to expose attendees to the possibilities of outdoor recreation for persons with disabilities, thanks to the assistance of partners like the Florida Disabled Outdoors Association.

As always, The Annual Family Café included the Annual Summit on Disabilities, which provides a venue for families to engage in dialogue with state policy makers. This year the summit was hosted by Chair of the House Appropriations Committee and the Joint Legislative Budget Commission, Representative Denise Grimsley, who was joined by Senate President Mike Haridopolis to offer a legislative perspective on the issues facing Floridians with disabilities.

The Family Café exists to be a hub of information, and to create a space for dialogue, so once again in 2011 we provided a means for families to share comments and questions through our "Pink Card" process. Attendees completed Pink Cards to express their thoughts to the Governor's office and other state agencies, and The Family Café in turn obtained written responses. The end result is this year's edition of **The Family Café Questions and Answers Book**.

This book has been designed as a resource to address some of the most pressing concerns of Floridians with disabilities and their families. Although every family's situation is unique, The Family Café Questions and Answers Book can serve as a quick reference guide and a starting point for anyone seeking information. If you need to know more than you can find here, we encourage you to contact the relevant state agency, and to make your needs known, and your voice heard!

We hope you will join us for The 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Café, which will be held June 15-17, 2012, at a new location, the Hilton Orlando. Until then, feed your need for information with The Family Café Questions and Answers Book! And remember, we are always available online at FamilyCafe.net, as well as on Facebook and Twitter!

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# The Family Café

**I was just diagnosed with Asperger's at age 57. How may I write a book about growing up like this, knowing I was different, not fitting in my whole life, with no support at all from anyone, not even my parents?**

Expressing yourself creatively is definitely a great way to share the disability experience and show your advocacy. As with most things, the best way is to go ahead and jump in, so just start writing! You may be able to find writing groups in your local community where you can share your work with other writers and get feedback. Eventually you will end up with a finished product that you can submit to publishers for consideration.

**Are there more conferences locally to attend for my family?**

At this time The Family Café's central event for families is The Annual Family Café. Next year's event will be held June 15-17 at the Hilton Orlando at 6001 Destination Pkwy in Orlando. At one point in our history The Family Café did host smaller local events, but we do not currently have funding for that program. We would encourage you to search out other resources in your community, such as your school district's ESE office, local FDLRS office, or health care providers in your area, to learn of any events being held in your area that might interest you.

**Years ago there was a siblings board my older children were on to discuss growing up with siblings with disabilities. Will there be this forum in the future?**

At previous events we have hosted a siblings session at The Annual Family Café as part of the Delegate Roundtable series. Family Café Delegates are volunteers that receive leadership training and connect us with communities around the state. While there was not a sibling roundtable in 2011, we will definitely share your suggestion to bring that session back, both with our Delegates and with our Planning Committee.

**Where can I obtain tax/accounting lawyers who are knowledgeable of the tax planning (for Miami-Dade)?**

Thanks for your question. The Family Café isn't available to make specific recommendations about products and services in your community. We would suggest that you refer to the presenters and exhibitors listed in our event program from The 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Café, which can be found in the Publications section of FamilyCafe.net. If none of them are in your area of fit your need, one of them may at least have a suggestion or recommendation for you. You can also get information about local lawyers from the Florida Bar Association, or your County Bar Association.

**What resources are available in Nassau County for VA Vets – retired military?**

Thanks for your question, and for your service as a veteran. The key point of contact for veterans is the Veterans Administration. They should be able to connect you with necessary services. There are also a range of resources available, which vary greatly depending on your specific need. Your county likely also has a Veterans Service Office, which should be able to connect you with the local resource you need.

**Are there any other workshops to dads other than the ones offered now?**

The Family Café recognizes the essential role that fathers play in families of children with disabilities. We have made a point of including multiple sessions for dads over the past several years, and will do so again in 2012. We will definitely share your enthusiasm for including more “dads” sessions with our Planning Committee.

**It would be nice to use a system like the FFDD News website (used to send legislators letters requesting advocacy) on Family Café website for 1. sending similar letters but also to 2. send thank you notes to the supporters of the conference. It shouldn't be difficult. Susan Goldstein seems like she would at least entertain the thought of sharing the web programming used to generate the letters with the Family Cafe.**

Thanks for that suggestion. Susan Goldstein is a member of The Family Café Board of Directors, and we are very familiar with the FFDD (Floridians for the Future of the Developmentally Disabled) and their website at [ffddnews.com](http://ffddnews.com). We have discussed the idea of creating an advocacy tool on our site to help families contact legislators. It's possible The Family Café will launch a similar online tool in future. We also very much appreciate your thanks for our sponsors. Although we don't have an automated way for you to express your appreciation directly to them, we would be happy to forward your thanks to our sponsors. Simply send an email to [info@familycafe.net](mailto:info@familycafe.net), and we will pass your message along.

**Where can you get a family dog trained to be a service dog?**

It is our understanding that the typical service dog is selected and trained from an early age. It may not be possible to train your current pet to become a service dog. For more specific information, we suggest you contact one of the presenters that discussed service dogs at The Annual Family Café, such as New Horizon Service Dogs at <http://www.newhorizonsservicedogs.org/>, Sunshine Service Dogs at [sunshinestateservicedogs@ gmail.com](mailto:sunshinestateservicedogs@gmail.com), or Service Dogs of Florida at <http://2012.servicedogsfl.org/>.

**Are our elected officials and the school system invited to attend The Family Café convention?**

Yes. The Family Café makes an effort to invite the Governor, every member of the Florida Legislature, and the head of every State Agency, including the Department of Education. Unfortunately not every individual we invite is able to attend, but we will continue to extend invitations to our event and make an effort to underscore the importance of Floridians with disabilities to every policy maker and state agency in 2012.

**Feedback: Your entire Autism track had purveyors of junk science promoting their own personal "cure." I find it irresponsible to give these people a forum. I come to be educated, not SOLD. Please do a better job getting credentials. The program had so many political extremist types.**

Thanks for your feedback. We definitely understand that Autism is a topic that draws many contradictory opinions and inspires impassioned reactions. Our Planning Committee is committed to including relevant, informative sessions in The Annual Family Café. To that end, the presentation proposal form has been modified for The 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Café, so potential presenters will be required to offer information about their qualifications and experience related to their proposed topic. This new practice should help us to ensure that only the most relevant and accurate information is shared at our event.

**When will I be notified for the registration period for the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Café?**

Registration for The 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Café will open online on Tuesday, February 14, 2012 at 9:00 am.

**When is the next session and can you do work shops around the state?**

The 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Café will be held June 15-17, 2012 at the Hilton Orlando, 6001 Destination Parkway in Orlando. At one point in its history, The Family Café did hold a number of local events in cities around the state. Unfortunately, the organization does not currently have funding to support that activity.

**The Family Café is a great place to meet other families that are going through the same struggles in life raising a child with special needs. You learn a lot from their experience.**

That's wonderful to hear! One of the reasons The Family Café came into existence was to give families a time and place to network with other families face-to-face. It's great to learn that that idea is working for families like yours.

**The Café is a great event every year. We hook up with our friends from all over the state.**

That's wonderful to hear. One of the central ideas behind The Annual Family Café is giving people with disabilities and their families an occasion to network with each other and form positive peer relationships. We hope you visit us again next year!

**Could we possibly get some nutritionists to do a session?**

Thanks for your suggestion. The Family Café Planning Committee definitely values diet and nutrition as an important topic to include in our event. In 2010, we actually devoted our Sunday keynote to a presentation of the film *Forks Over Knives*, which explored the connections between diet, disease and health. We will certainly continue to address this area in future Annual Family Cafés.

**Where will the conference be held next year?**

The 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Café will be held at the Hilton Orlando, which is located at 6001 Destination Parkway in Orlando. You can visit the hotel's web site for a preview at <http://www.thehiltonorlando.com/>.

**I know a lot of people would love to see an expansion of adaptive sports.**

Thanks for your suggestion. Through a partnership with our friends at the Florida Disabled Outdoors Association, we have been able to include multiple adaptive recreation demonstrations, activities and sessions over the last several years. With new facilities at the Hilton Orlando in 2012, the adaptive sports and recreation demonstrations will definitely look a little different, but we will doubtlessly continue our partnership with FDOA to make adaptive sports a part of The 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Café.

**How can I get on the Youth Council?**

You can reach the Florida Youth Council by contacting our Youth Advisor, Alex Brown, at [abrown@familycafe.net](mailto:abrown@familycafe.net). It may also be helpful to check out the Frequently Asked Questions section of the FYC website at [http://floridayouthcouncil.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=9&Itemid=8](http://floridayouthcouncil.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9&Itemid=8).

**It was awesome! Thank you. See you next year! Can I bring more of my friends from the Marian Center?**

Thanks so much for your compliments! We definitely encourage you to bring your friends with you next year. Online registration will open on Tuesday, February 14, 2012 at 9:00 am.



**Comment: Why would you let the two speakers on Saturday morning promote the worst piece of legislation in our country's history, not only the content, but how it was done. I'm sure all they did to pass this takeover was indeed unconstitutional. (God bless America)**

The Family Café does not exist to “promote” any political viewpoint, piece of legislation, or ideological viewpoint. We invited qualified experts to discuss the Affordable Care Act at our event for the sole purpose of providing accurate information to our attendees. Regardless of any individual’s feelings about the Affordable Care Act, the methods of its passage or its constitutionality, the fact remains that it is an existing law that will impact Floridians with disabilities and their families, and it is The Family Café’s mission to share accurate, timely information about any such significant legislation.

**Since there are many good classes at once you guys should record the classes and make it so people can listen to them if they went to a different class. I think that will be cool.**

We agree, it would be cool to record every session for future viewing. Unfortunately there is a significant cost related to that level of audio visual support at the event, and we don’t currently have the resources for that. If there are sessions that you missed, we would encourage you to contact the presenters of those sessions. They will likely be able to share their presentations with you electronically, and direct you to additional resources.

**I think having classes for kids about their disability would be cool. I would be able to learn about my disability. I'm 14 turning 15 on June 23, 2011. That would be interesting.**

Thank you for that suggestion. Hopefully you were able to attend some of the sessions presented by members of the Florida Youth Council, which explored the youth disability experience. If you’d like to learn more about the FYC, please check out their website at [floridayouthcouncil.com](http://floridayouthcouncil.com).

**Why not more local and state representatives in attendance? How do I get involved?**

The Family Café makes it a point to invite every member of the State Legislature to The Annual Family Café, as well as representatives from the Office of the Governor, various State Agencies and Florida’s US Congressional Delegation. Unfortunately, many of them choose not to attend.

We would definitely welcome your getting involved in The Family Café. We would encourage you to become a part of CAN, our Change Agent Network. This group of Family Café attendees stays engaged in disability issues throughout the year. You can learn more about CAN online at <http://www.cannow.org/>. The Family Café also appreciates the help of volunteers during the event, and we encourage you to sign up as a volunteer when you register for The 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Café.

**If you would like a hand with proof reading please give me a call. I have a full-time job, but would gladly give up a couple of evenings to proof the program for you. Let me know.**

Thanks very much for volunteering your time and talents. We will contact you if we have a need for help.

**Will there be more military information next year?**

With the large number of returning veterans in Florida, The Family Café has made it a priority to support those families. We included a Military Track at this year's event, and also had a number of exhibitors representing military family organizations. Our Planning Committee will definitely look to add more information for veterans and their families in The 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Café in 2012.

**Why is there not another way to get financial help to attend the conference?**

The Family Café does everything it can to find funds to support the Financial Assistance program. Unfortunately, the demand for assistance far outstrips our ability to provide help. We would encourage families to seek additional sources of funding in their community, such as school ESE programs, district FDLRS offices (<http://www.fdlrs.org/>) and the Florida Inclusion Network (<http://www.floridainclusionnetwork.com/>). You may also have luck with local churches or community organizations.

**My question: I would like to see some sibling workshops for the ages from 8 years old to 18 years old.**

Thanks for your suggestion. The Family Café has included sibling sessions in past years, and it's likely The Family Café Planning Committee will elect to provide a forum for siblings to share concerns and experiences at The 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Café.

**Can/would Family Café determine the cost of creating an end of conference CD/DVD of and create CD/DVD's for sale?**

Thanks for that suggestion. Over the years we have received multiple requests to record various parts of the event. Generally speaking, we have not been able to cover the cost of recording our many sessions and producing DVD's. We will ask The Family Café Planning Committee to revisit the possibility of recording portions of the event and making DVD's available for sale for The 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Café.

**I found the sessions to be very informative. A wide variety of topics. Arts and crafts for the kids were great.**

Thanks very much for your compliments! It can be a challenge to strike the right balance in terms of including something for everyone, and we're happy to hear that you enjoyed the variety. We are also glad to learn that you enjoyed the arts and crafts session, which was generously sponsored by our friends at VSA Arts. Hopefully they will be able to provide a similar session next year.

**How are families who have a child with a disability made aware of this great resource called Family Café?**

Despite the lack of resources for a genuine marketing campaign, The Family Café has managed to survive for fourteen years largely through the support of the families that attend our events. We do rely on partners from the Florida Department of Education and other State Agencies to help us reach families, but the real backbone of our success is word of mouth. We encourage everyone to help us by sharing information about The Annual Family Café among families in communities throughout the state, so we can continue to reach additional families and provide them with the information, networking and support they need to flourish. We also encourage you to join our Facebook group and follow us on Twitter.

**I feel it would be better if your first keynote session started at 5:00 p.m. instead of 6:00 p.m. That way, if the speaker ran over a few minutes, people would still have time to eat before it's too late. Contact the WWE and invite some of the wrestlers to come and learn. This may help get more support. Especially if they are here for the dance.**

Thanks for your suggestions, which we will share with our Planning Committee. It can be difficult to squeeze everything into the available time, and we do our best to leave enough space in the schedule for families to have meals and take care of other needs.

We have often invited a range of athletes and celebrities to attend The Annual Family Café, and have had limited success. Nonetheless we will share your idea about inviting professional wrestlers with the Planning Committee.

**Need more space and need a bigger room for us because of my room. It's small I need microwave for our food please. We need more thanks.**

Next year, The Annual Family Café will be held at a new location, the Hilton Orlando. We encourage you to make reservations early, and direct your requests regarding your room to the hotel staff. You can reach the Hilton Orlando at 407-313-4300 or online at <http://www.thehiltonorlando.com>.

**Could you have classes for 8-12 age groups? This way it could teach them how to answer questions about their disabilities.**

Thanks for that suggestion. We don't currently have any sessions that directly address youth in the 8-12 age group, although we do have several sessions hosted by the Florida Youth Council that are intended to generate peer discussion. Past events have also included round table sessions for siblings, which to some extent involved the age group you describe. We will definitely pass along your recommendation to our Planning Committee.

**I would like to get more involved in The Family Café.**

We would definitely welcome your getting involved in The Family Café. We would encourage you to become a part of CAN, our Change Agent Network. This group of Family Café attendees stays engaged in disability issues throughout the year. You can learn more about CAN online at <http://www.cannow.org/>. The Family Café also appreciates the help of volunteers during the event, and we encourage you to sign up as a volunteer when you register for The 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Café. Finally, please join us on Facebook and Twitter, so you'll be connect with us online year round.

**How do you choose your presenters? Can you send a little bio before Conference?**

The Family Café begins the process of finding presenters in September, with the release of its Presenter Proposal form. All interested parties are invited to submit proposals for consideration by The Family Café Planning Committee. The Planning Committee, which is made up of representatives from partner organizations, state agencies, and other stakeholders, selects sessions for inclusion in The Annual Family Café at a face-to-face day-long meeting in January. This year, the Planning Committee has requested that each proposal include a brief statement describing the presenter's experience and expertise on their topic. If and how that information will be shared with attendees has yet to be determined.

**Very positive sessions. The weekend was a blessing. I hope you come back to Coronado next year. Loved hearing Peggy Hoyt, the Streaters (all three sessions), and Richard and Elizabeth Albertson. What does Café stand for? Is it an acronym for something? I though I heard Lori on opening session say it was an acronym but registration desk didn't know. I looked on website, but couldn't find it.**

Thanks for your compliments! We will pass along your positive feedback to the presenters you mentioned. Next year's Annual Family Café will be held at the Hilton Orlando at 6001 Destination Pkwy in Orlando. We're sure you'll love it. To answer your question about "Café," yes, it is an acronym for the values that guide our organization: Collaboration, Advocacy, Friendship and Empowerment.

**Loved your "Lucky" 13th Family Café again this year. Been coming since these meetings started 13 years ago. Our daughter with Down Syndrome is 18-years-old now. Your yearly information is priceless to all that attend. Thanks Florida for supporting the families with disabilities!**

Thanks so much for your compliments! We're very happy that our event has been so important for your family over the years. We do all we can to support families like yours.

**Can you make information available for us when we go to one presentation but there is another topic which is important but we cannot be at both presentations? Either on DVD or print-out would be good.**

Thanks for that suggestion. Over the years we have received multiple requests to record various parts of the event. Generally speaking, we have not been able to cover the cost of recording our many sessions and producing DVD's. We will ask The Family Café Planning Committee to revisit the possibility of recording portions of the event and making DVD's available for sale for The 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Café. Another suggestion would be to directly contact the presenters of the sessions you missed. Their contact information is available in the event program, which can be found in the Publications section of [www.familycafe.net](http://www.familycafe.net).

**Is there a reason why there are no sibling workshops anymore?**

At previous events we have hosted a siblings session at The Annual Family Café as part of the Delegate Roundtable series. Family Café Delegates are volunteers that receive leadership training and connect us with communities around the state. While there was not a sibling roundtable in 2011, we will definitely share your suggestion to bring that session back, both with our Delegates and with our Planning Committee.

**I would like to have more information on some of the sessions we were not able to attend since some sessions are concurrent with others. Understand that space and time are limited, however to be able to get more information on other sessions would be greatly appreciated! Also I noticed not everyone takes attendance. They should as to be able to invite the more popular presenter back. Thank you very much!**

If there are sessions that you would have like to have attended but were unable to, we encourage you to directly contact the presenters of the sessions you missed. Their contact information is available in the event program, which can be found in the Publications section of [familycafe.net](http://familycafe.net). As for taking attendance, that's not something we have done in previous years, primarily because of the amount of work and organization that would be involved. We do have a general sense of what sessions are popular, and make an effort to invite those presenters to return.

**We need to promote more mental health services. I like the track of mental health at this event. We need to show services/availability of vendors in the exhibit hall area. There are a lot of good ideas.**

Thanks for that feedback! The Family Café is dedicated to serving persons with all types of disabilities, including behavioral health needs. We currently hold a pair of grants from SAMHSA, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. One funds the Statewide Family Network here in Florida, and the other is a national technical assistance center for adult mental health called the CAFÉ TA Center. Given that, we will certainly continue to emphasize behavioral health in future.

# The Executive Office of the Governor

## **How you gonna help get the economy get better?**

Getting Florida back to work is the best way to turn Florida's economy around. That's why I am working hard every day with lawmakers, businesses and Floridians to make Florida the No. 1 place to start, grow or bring a business. We are seeing signs we are on the right track. Florida's unemployment rate has dropped from 12 percent in December 2010 to 10.7 in August 2011.

From January to August, Florida gained 71,600 jobs, and we are on track to reach 100,000 new jobs this year, and 700,000 jobs in seven years. Although Florida is heading in the right direction, we still have a long way to go.

## **How do you help people with disabilities?**

During the 2011 Legislative Session, Legislators and I were able to identify funds that could be used to cover the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD's) deficit.

I have also recently created the Governor's Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities. According to the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, people with disabilities have been disproportionately affected by the recent downturn in the economy. Between October 2008 and June 2011, the rate of job loss among workers with disabilities exceeded that of workers without disabilities by nine percent. The commission will identify strategies to close this gap.

## **The governor has made many public professions about providing/creating jobs. If this is so, they why has he discounted people with disabilities as a way to decrease the jobless rate?**

I am working to turn Florida's economy around so that every Floridian who wants a job can get one. To help achieve this goal, I recently created the Governor's Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities. According to the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, people with disabilities have been disproportionately affected by the recent downturn in the economy. Between October 2008 and June 2011, the rate of job loss among workers with disabilities exceeded that of workers without disabilities by nine percent. The commission will identify strategies to close this gap.

## **How can we get the governor to realize that spending is not the problem? Under-funding is the problem.**

During the fiscal year that ended in June, we learned that APD had an unprecedented \$174 million budget shortfall and was likely to run out of cash early in May. That budget

situation meant APD was likely to be unable to pay for needed services for the remainder of the fiscal year. Fortunately, working with House and Senate leadership, we were able to secure an additional appropriation for APD's Medicaid waiver to cover its deficit for the year so that services would not have to be discontinued.

As Governor, I am committed to ensuring our state provides the necessary services to the most vulnerable among us in the most effective and cost-effective way possible. At the same time, I am committed to working with the Legislature to ensure adequate funding for those services, while also making sure they do not overburden taxpayers. By working together, I believe we can achieve our ultimate goal, which is to ensure that APD is able to pay for the needed services and not have to discontinue services due to a budget shortfall.

### **Where was the governor?**

Unfortunately, because of scheduling restraints, I was not able to attend the conference or event. It is my hope that I may be able to attend the Family Café Event in the future.

Please feel free to contact me and my staff. You can find my contact information online at <http://www.flgov.com/contact-gov-scott>, or call me at (850) 488-7146.



# The Agency for Health Care Administration

**How do I apply for help for my newborn son with Down syndrome? My friends tell me it could be years before he gets help. I do not have quality insurance, only 30 days on Medicaid. Need help. Just heard of this event. I live in Orlando. He was born at Arnold Palmer's Children's Hospital. They sent me here—need help!**

Children's Medical Services (CMS) is a collection of special programs for eligible children with special needs. They have a variety of services for expecting mothers, newborn babies, infants and toddlers, school-aged children, adolescents and young adults. All of their services are provided by qualified physicians, nurses, social workers and other health care providers around the state. Through family-centered programs, they help to coordinate services so your child gets the care he or she needs.

One of the programs available through CMS to children who have a diagnosis of Down syndrome is the Early Steps Program. This is Florida's early intervention system that offers services to eligible infants and toddlers (birth to 36 months) with significant delays or a condition likely to result in a developmental delay. Early Intervention is provided to support families and caregivers in developing the competence and confidence to help their child learn and develop.

Early Steps services are based on Early Steps evaluations, a family's concerns, resources, and goals. Early Steps uses a Team Based Primary Service Provider approach which aims to empower each eligible family by providing a comprehensive team of professionals from the beginning of services, through transition to other programs.

The Florida Department of Health oversees Children's Medical Services. You can find contact and program specific information on this Web site: [www.cms-kids.com](http://www.cms-kids.com)

**Does Florida have a "one stop" for statewide service needs? One agency that can serve as a funnel for programs that you could qualify for?**

In regard to service needs provided by the State of Florida specific to the disabled, referral services are provided by the Agency for Persons with Disabilities. To speak with a disability specialist, call 1-866-APD-CARES (1-866-273-2273).

In regard to other public assistance provided by the state of Florida, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) is responsible for determining public assistance eligibility and ongoing case management of food assistance, temporary cash assistance, and Medicaid.

To contact DCF, please visit the following website <http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/> or call 1-866-76ACCESS (1-866-762-2237).

The Social Security Administration also determines eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). SSI is a federal program which makes monthly payments to people who have low income and few resources and are age 65 or older, blind; or disabled. Individuals in Florida determined eligible for SSI are automatically eligible for Florida Medicaid.

To apply for SSI benefits, please visit SSA's website at <http://www.ssa.gov/ssi/> or call 1-800-772-1213.

### **Why are the needs of the disabled in Florida not prioritized?**

Florida Medicaid offers several Medicaid Waivers for persons with disabilities. For more information about the different Medicaid Waivers, the services offered and eligibility criteria, please visit [www.ahca.myflorida.com](http://www.ahca.myflorida.com), then click on Medicaid. Currently, there is a wait list for individuals who qualify for the Developmental Disabilities Medicaid Waiver. The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) supports persons with developmental disabilities in living, learning, and working in their communities. APD also manages the wait list for the Developmental Disabilities Medicaid Waiver.

For more information regarding services available for persons with developmental disabilities and available funding for the DD Medicaid Waiver wait list, you may contact APD by calling the toll-free number: 1-866-273-2273 or visit the APD website: [www.apd.myflorida.com](http://www.apd.myflorida.com). The Florida Legislature determines the criteria for individuals who qualify for the DD Medicaid Waiver wait list. You may find the DD Medicaid Waiver wait list criteria in Chapter 393.065, Florida Statutes. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) provides services to assist persons with disabilities in the workplace. You may contact VR by calling 1-800-451-4327 or visit the VR website: [www.rehabworks.org](http://www.rehabworks.org).

### **Why is it so hard to get some help to pay for speech with Medicaid?**

All medically necessary physical therapy, occupational therapy, respiratory therapy and speech-language pathology services are covered for children ages 0-20.

Therapy services must be determined medically necessary, as determined by Medicaid, which may require time to collect enough information before services are approved and can begin.

### **Why is there such a difference in the amount of money paid for services between for profits and non-profits when the services provided are the same?**

The Medicaid program is funded by state and federal funds. Florida Medicaid sets the rates to all providers for services. Under the Developmental Disabilities Medicaid Waivers, there are agency and non-agency rates and some rates are individually negotiated. For more detailed information about Florida Medicaid covered services, you may contact your Area Medicaid Office for Citrus County toll-free at 1-877-724-2358.

**With budget cuts throughout the state affecting all persons with disabilities— young and old—what is the prognosis for the future of our most precious population?**

Please be assured it is a priority of the Governor to provide services to those who need them most.

During each Legislative Session the Legislature authorizes the spending of public money for the following year.

For information about the budget, and information on proposed issues for inclusion in the budget for 2012-2013, visit <http://floridafiscalportal.state.fl.us/>. This website contains a collection of documents detailing the fiscal status of the State of Florida. The documents include Legislative Budget Requests, Governor’s Budget Recommendations, House and Senate Appropriations Bills and a variety of other fiscal publications. Please click the following link to view the Florida Fiscal Portal: <http://floridafiscalportal.state.fl.us/>

The Florida Legislature has the responsibility of passing a state budget that is within projected revenues. This balanced budget requirement is contained in the Florida Constitution. When revenues decline it is the responsibility of the Legislature to either increase revenues or decrease spending. During the past Legislative session many state programs experienced reductions to their budgets due to declining revenues.

You can find your local Senator by visiting this web site:  
<http://www.flsenate.gov/Senators/Find>

You can locate your local Representative by visiting the following website:  
<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/default.aspx>

In looking towards the future, the importance of your advocacy and support will be invaluable. One way to advocate on behalf of individuals with disabilities is to contact your local House and Senate representatives to let them know of your needs and your concerns regarding the future of both young and old individuals with disabilities.

**When will Florida implement the planning for the ACA?**

The State of Florida, along with numerous other states, has filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act. In light of this ongoing legal challenge, Florida is not currently implementing or planning for the Affordable Care Act.

**We need assistance with getting respite services for my autistic son.**

We encourage you to contact one of the Centers for Autism and Related Disabilities at: [www.card.ufl.edu](http://www.card.ufl.edu)

[www.ucf-card.org](http://www.ucf-card.org)  
[www.coe.fau.edu/card](http://www.coe.fau.edu/card)  
<http://autism.fsu.edu/>  
<http://www.coe.fau.edu/centersandprograms/card/default.aspx>

These centers offer great information regarding available resources. You can also contact your local Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) office, which oversees programs and services for individuals with a diagnosis of autism. APD's information is located at [www.apdcares.org](http://www.apdcares.org)

**Why can't some of these medical supply companies have some control over the charges for equipment and toys – the prices are outrageous – a lot not even covered by insurance unless it is a medical necessity. You pay 3,4,5 or even more times the price for a toy because it has a switch on it. Why?!?!?**

Medical supply companies' charges are not regulated by the Agency for Health Care Administration. The medical supply industry however, is highly competitive, so you may be able to find lower prices by checking with different companies, shopping online, or negotiating for a better deal.

**I was hoping for some information about head injury programs or support systems. My injury happened when I was 12, therefore I have never had help in any way. I am now 45.**

The Brain Injury Association of Florida (BIAF) offers information and referral for programs that conduct support groups and provide education about head injuries. Resource Facilitation Coordinators affiliated with BIAF's Traumatic Brain Injury Resource Center can be contacted by calling BIAF's toll free helpline at 1-800-992-3442 or visiting their website at [www.byyourside.org](http://www.byyourside.org)

BIAF also coordinates a Jamboree program annually where brain injury survivors and their caregivers meet at a designated location in Florida to provide support and share information with each other.

Home and community-based services are provided through Medicaid waiver programs. These services can assist individuals with activities of daily living or provide other supports which will help the individual to remain in his/her own home. The Traumatic Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Medicaid waiver provides services to individuals who have sustained an injury from an external source. More information about this waiver, including how to apply, can be located at [www.doh.state.fl.us/demo/BrainSC/index.html](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/demo/BrainSC/index.html) Click on Medicaid Waiver Programs.

**Where can I get some information on getting assistance and help providing funding, as I'm in need of a ramp/railing. Also I would like to get info for myself**

**in getting hearing aid to maintain my employment at Disney. I would like to Daven Port in next year Family Café.**

The Social Security Administration (SSA) determines eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Recipients of SSI are automatically eligible for Medicaid. You may contact the SSA by calling 1-800-772-1213 or visit the SSA website: [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov).

The Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) determines eligibility for low-income children and families, aged persons, disabled persons, and persons seeking institutional care. You may contact DCF by calling 1-866-762-2237 or visit the DCF Website: [www.myflorida.com/accessflorida](http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida).

The Agency for Health Care Administration administers Florida Medicaid. You may contact your Area Medicaid Office for Polk County by calling the toll-free number at 1-800-226-2316 for more details about covered services.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) provides services to assist persons with disabilities, including providing hearing services, in the workplace. You may contact VR by calling 1-800-451-4327 or visit the VR website: [www.rehabworks.org](http://www.rehabworks.org).

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) supports persons with developmental disabilities in living, learning, and working in their communities. You may contact your local APD Area Office for Polk County by calling 863-413-3360 or visit the APD website: [www.apd.myflorida.com](http://www.apd.myflorida.com).

The Family Café plans the location of the annual event. You may contact The Family Café by calling 1-888-309-2233 or visit the website: [www.FamilyCafe.net](http://www.FamilyCafe.net).

**I can't find much on juvenile rheumatoid arthritis. If you could help with info that would be great! All our doctor does is manage pain. My daughter doesn't like the way the meds make her feel!**

The Florida Department of Health website at <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Family/arthritis/index.html> has general information regarding arthritis and links to other sites where you may learn more about juvenile arthritis.

Your daughter's physician is a valuable resource and should be made aware of how her medicines are making her feel. There may be alternate therapies available, and her physician can be instrumental in developing a treatment plan specific to your daughter. Sometimes a referral to another physician or available therapies will be needed.

**1. How do we advocate regarding Affordable Healthcare Act when Florida isn't participating? Do we ask the same questions? Has anyone asked how "not participating" will affect our families? 2. Many challenges with children at Family Café involve a need for "a safe play place to run and expend energy." Is this a possibility? 3. Why aren't drugstores providing alternative labeling for the**

**visually impaired? Isn't this required by Federal law? If you make a call to 10 pharmacies all will say they don't but maybe only one will actually ask their supervisor. The print is small and this is a danger to personal health if supports aren't available.**

Questions two and three were referred back to the Family Café for reassignment. The first question should be addressed by the Family Café and the second should be referred to DOH as they license and regulate pharmacies.

The State of Florida, along with numerous other states, has filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act. In light of this ongoing legal challenge, Florida is not currently implementing the Affordable Care Act.

### **Could we have some input on diabetes (juvenile diabetes)?**

The Florida Department of Health's, Florida Diabetes Prevention and Control Program (DPCP) has a terrific website at <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/family/dcp/index.html>. The DPCP's mission is to promote the highest standards available for the care, management and treatment of diabetes, including prevention of complications. Their phone number is (850) 245-4330 or you may e-mail them at [diabetes@doh.state.fl.us](mailto:diabetes@doh.state.fl.us). On this web page there are resource links listing terrific programs having to do with diabetes, including juvenile diabetes. Don't forget that your health care provider can be an excellence resource, or you may wish to contact your local county public health department for information. For a list of county public health departments go to <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/chdsitelist.htm>.

### **With the changes to health care, and Florida insistent on fighting it, what should a family like mine who is dependent on health insurance do to prepare for the future?**

The State of Florida, along with numerous other states, has filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act. In light of this ongoing legal challenge, Florida is not currently implementing the Affordable Care Act.

You can view general information relating to medical resources nationwide by visiting the following site: <http://www.healthcare.gov/>.

### **I want to apply for the waiver for my son. How do I do this, we have Medicaid Plan now . . . and Medicare?**

There are a variety of Waivers that are operated by a number of state agencies. You did not mention the age of your son or the specific disability so we are providing you with a list of state agencies in Florida that you can contact regarding waivers.

- The Agency for Persons with Disabilities: [www.apdcares.org](http://www.apdcares.org)
- The Department of Elder Affairs: [www.elderaffairs.state.fl.us](http://www.elderaffairs.state.fl.us)
- The Department of Health for Brain and Spinal Cord Injury: [www.doh.state.fl.us](http://www.doh.state.fl.us)

You can also contact your local Medicaid office for additional information.

**When my daughter turns 18 will she lose her CMS Health Insurance? What insurance will she have?**

When individuals turn 21 years of age, they are no longer eligible to receive services through Children’s Medical Services (CMS). Prior to turning 21, the Children’s Medical Services Case Coordinator should provide all individuals or their responsible family member with information on health care options available to adults and make any applicable referrals.

If you have questions about what Medicaid services are available to adults, please contact your CMS Case Coordinator. You may also contact your local Medicaid Area Office to learn more about Medicaid services. Please select the following Web address to locate the Medicaid office in your area of the state:

<http://ahca.myflorida.com/Medicaid/index.shtml#10>

**Once you’re on Med Waiver, why can’t it be transferred from state-to-state?**

Medicaid and Medicaid Waivers are state-specific programs that do not allow funds to follow the person from state to state. Each state’s waivers have specific qualifications and eligibility criteria, so an individual eligible for the Developmental Disabilities Waiver in Florida may not be eligible for a similar waiver in another state.

**My son needs a hearing aid. How do we go about securing one? Medicare does not pay for some reason. What are my options?**

If your son has Florida Medicaid coverage your Medicaid area office can assist you with locating a hearing aid provider.

If your son does not have Medicaid coverage, Medicaid eligibility in Florida is determined by the Department of Children and Families (DCF). DCF determines Medicaid eligibility for:

- Low income families with children
- Children only
- Pregnant women
- Non-citizens with medical emergencies
- Aged and/or disabled individuals **not** currently receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

The Social Security Administration determines eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). SSI is a federal program that makes monthly payments to people who have low income and few resources and are age 65 or older, blind; or disabled. Individuals in Florida determined eligible for SSI are automatically eligible for Florida Medicaid. The SSI beneficiary must meet certain federal disclosure requirements, such as information on any other insurance coverage, for their Medicaid eligibility to be activated.

To apply for Medicaid benefits through DCF please visit their website at <http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/> or call 1-866-76ACCESS (1-866-762-2237). To apply for SSI benefits, please visit SSA's website at <http://www.ssa.gov/ssi/> or call 1-800-772-1213.

**Medicaid and Medicare are too important to “mess with”—do not alter our services.**

Medicaid is the state and federal partnership that provides health coverage for selected categories of people with low incomes. Its purpose is to improve the health of people who might otherwise go without medical care for themselves and their children. Medicaid is different in every state.

The Federal Government has rules relating to the Medicaid program that outline mandatory services that state Medicaid programs must provide. In addition, the Florida Legislature has outlined services that Medicaid must provide that are not mandated by the Federal Government. The services are called optional services. The Florida Legislature would have to pass a bill or provide funding to include the coverage of additional optional services or to no longer require coverage of optional services.

Medicare is a federal health insurance program for people who are age 65 or older or disabled. Medicare is administered by the federal Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Any changes to the Medicare program would be initiated by US Congress and the President.

**I urge you to stop the expansion of Medicaid Managed Care—it is troubling in our area. I am worried about the families like mine who rely on Medicaid services for survival.**

As you may know, House Bill (HB) 7107, relating to Medicaid Managed Care, was passed by the Florida Legislature on May 6, 2011, and signed by Governor Scott on June 2, 2011. The bill requires the Agency for Health Care Administration (Agency) to implement the Statewide Medicaid Managed Care (SMMC) program. The SMMC program has two key components: the Managed Medical Assistance program and the Long Term Care Managed Care program. No services will be eliminated under the program and no one will lose eligibility for services.

The Agency is required to begin implementation of the Long-term Care Managed Care program by July 1, 2012, with full implementation by October 13, 2013, and to begin



implementation of the Managed Medical Assistance program by January 1, 2013, with full implementation by October 1, 2014.

HB 7107 also requires that Managed care plans cover at a minimum, a certain amount of services. HB 7107 can be viewed through the following link:  
<http://flhouse.gov/Sections/Documents/loaddoc.aspx?FileName=h7107er.docx&DocumentType=Bill&BillNumber=7107&Session=2011>

In addition, details regarding future public meetings, the timeline for procurements, plan selection and contracting, and plan network requirements are not yet available. As more information becomes available it will be posted on the Agency's Statewide Medicaid Managed Care website. This website can be accessed through the following link:  
[http://ahca.myflorida.com/Medicaid/statewide\\_mc/index.shtml](http://ahca.myflorida.com/Medicaid/statewide_mc/index.shtml)

### **What do you do for health insurance when you outgrow CMS?**

When individuals turn 21 years of age, they are no longer eligible to receive services through Children's Medical Services (CMS). Prior to turning 21, the Children's Medical Services Case Coordinator should provide all individuals or their responsible family member with information on health care options available to adults and make any applicable referrals.

If you have questions about what Medicaid services are available to adults, please contact your CMS Case Coordinator. You may also contact your local Medicaid Area Office to learn more about Medicaid services by calling the following toll-free number at 1-800-226-6735.

### **Will the healthcare reform and/or Medicaid reform help eliminate or reduce the Med-waiver (Medicaid) wait list?**

Recipients enrolled in the Developmentally Disabled waiver are excluded from enrollment into the Managed Medical Assistance program of the new Statewide Medicaid Managed Care program. The Legislation that created it did not provide additional funding or create additional "slots" for recipients to receive home and community-based services.

As more information becomes available it will be posted on the Agency's Statewide Medicaid Managed Care website. This website can be accessed through the following link:  
[http://ahca.myflorida.com/Medicaid/statewide\\_mc/index.shtml](http://ahca.myflorida.com/Medicaid/statewide_mc/index.shtml)

### **My son has been approved for Medicaid but we have not gotten his card. Therefore, he has not received all services. What shall I do? I have called the 1-800 number several times. Thank you.**

A temporary card can be printed from the recipient's ACCESS account, which can be accessed through the following link <https://myaccessaccount.dcf.state.fl.us/Login.aspx> . If

you do not have an ACCESS account, you can register to create one through the link above.

In general, permanent gold Medicaid cards are issued for each individual who is eligible for Medicaid. The Medicaid card should be presented to medical providers when medical care is being requested. If necessary in the future, a replacement card can be obtained by calling the Department of Children and Families at 1-866-762-2237.

**I want to know re: Medicaid eligibility: How is it someone who is disabled/family of 4 with one disabled child, income \$3000/mo gross, cannot get any Medicaid services due to too high income and must wait 24 months for Medicare? How can I take care of me and my son without taking care of me?**

The Social Security Administration (SSA) determines eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Recipients of SSI are automatically eligible for Medicaid. You may contact the SSA by calling 1-800-772-1213 or visit the SSA website: [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov).

The Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) determines Medicaid eligibility for low-income children and families, aged persons, disabled persons, and persons seeking institutional care. If you have questions about eligibility, you may contact DCF by calling 1-866-762-2237 or visit the DCF Website: [www.myflorida.com/accessflorida](http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida).

**Why does Medicaid take over two weeks to approve home I.V. medication/antibiotic therapy for my son with Cystic Fibrosis? Yet Medicaid will approve E.R. visits and a 2-week in-hospital stay with no problem! How is this cost effective?**

When an individual is in need of home I.V. medication/antibiotic therapy, a physician's referral for the therapy should be sent to the home health agency that will administer the treatment. The home health agency obtains approval for Medicaid to fund the treatment by submitting patient information to a review organization under contract with Medicaid. Presently, eQ Health Solutions is the organization conducting the reviews. When all the required documents are submitted timely by the home health agency, the review and approval process should be completed within 2 business days. Should delays in the review process occur, a Medicaid recipient can contact their Medicaid Area office to request assistance with getting the process completed. The Medicaid Area office for Belleair Bluffs is located in St. Petersburg and you can call toll-free at 1-800-299-4844.

**I would like to know more about what to do to get Medicaid services, in particular dental, for my son who was denied.**

The Agency for Health Care Administration is the designated single state agency for Medicaid in Florida, and is responsible for administering the program. However, Medicaid eligibility in Florida is determined either by the Department of Children and Families (DCF). DCF determines Medicaid eligibility for:

- Low income families with children
- Children only
- Pregnant women
- Non-citizens with medical emergencies
- Aged and/or disabled individuals **not** currently receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

The Social Security Administration determines eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). SSI is a federal program which makes monthly payments to people who have low income and few resources and are age 65 or older, blind; or disabled. Individuals in Florida determined eligible for SSI are automatically eligible for Florida Medicaid. The SSI beneficiary must meet certain federal disclosure requirements, such as information on any other insurance coverage, for their Medicaid eligibility to be activated.

To apply for Medicaid benefits through DCF please visit their website at <http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/> or call 1-866-76ACCESS (1-866-762-2237). To apply for SSI benefits, please visit SSA's website at <http://www.ssa.gov/ssi/> or call 1-800-772-1213.

If your son is currently Medicaid eligible, Medicaid covers a wide range of dental services for children age 20 and below and certain dental services for adults age 21 and above. Please contact the Medicaid office located in your area for more information about Medicaid and the services we cover.

**I need to know if I can find Health insurance when my wife does not work because of health issues but is not on disability and we own property and some our kids work that live with us. I received \$1025 a month income (SSI). I pay over \$600.00 a month for health insurance. Is there any program I can find that will help me get health insurance?**

In March of 2010, Congress passed legislation which law created a new program – the Pre-Existing Condition Insurance Plan -- to make health insurance available to you if you have been denied coverage by private insurance companies because of a pre-existing condition.

The program provides a health coverage option for individuals who have been without health coverage for at least six months, who have a pre-existing condition or have been denied health coverage because of a health condition, and who are a U.S. citizen or reside here legally.

Additional information is available through the following link: <https://www.pcip.gov/>

In addition, below is a link to a listing of alternative medical resources available throughout the state separated by county. Through this listing you may be able to find local resources that can assist you you're your medical needs.

[http://ahca.myflorida.com/Medicaid/pdf/files/alternative\\_medica\\_resources\\_july\\_2010.pdf](http://ahca.myflorida.com/Medicaid/pdf/files/alternative_medica_resources_july_2010.pdf)

## **Medicaid for all disabled? Why not?**

Florida Medicaid offers several Medicaid Waivers for persons with disabilities. For more information about the different Medicaid Waivers, the services offered and eligibility criteria, please visit [www.ahca.myflorida.com](http://www.ahca.myflorida.com), then click on Medicaid. Currently, there is a wait list for individuals who qualify for the Developmental Disabilities Medicaid Waiver. The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) supports persons with developmental disabilities in living, learning, and working in their communities. APD also manages the wait list for the Developmental Disabilities Medicaid Waiver. For more information regarding services available for persons with developmental disabilities and available funding for the DD Medicaid Waiver wait list, you may contact APD by calling the toll-free number: 1-866-273-2273 or visit the APD website: [www.apd.myflorida.com](http://www.apd.myflorida.com).

The United States Congress is the governing body responsible for federal legislation and a portion of the budget that provides for federal Medicaid funding. If you are interested in advocating for Medicaid for all disabled, you may contact your United States Representative and Senator. For a list of delegates please refer to:

<http://www.house.gov/>  
<http://www.senate.gov/>

**There is a very big need for therapists in Highlands County (Sebring area). I was wondering what I could do or where to start to help my child and several other children get the therapist they need. Especially O.T. Also, I am very thankful to be able to attend a wonderful event. Thank you to everyone for all the hard work.**

Individuals who are enrolled in Medicaid may need assistance with locating a Medicaid provider. If an individual is enrolled in a Medicaid managed care plan (HMO, PSN, or MPN), they can call their plan to assist with locating a provider. Managed care plans are required to have a network of providers, including specialists.

If an individual is enrolled in fee-for-service Medicaid or Medipass it is important to understand that Medicaid can enroll Medicaid providers, but has no authority to require enrolled providers to accept a certain number of Medicaid clients or to accept new Medicaid clients. The Agency for Health Care Administration has 13 area Medicaid offices located throughout the state. If you are enrolled in fee-for-service or MediPass, the area offices can assist with locating medical professionals who provide services to Medicaid recipients.

## **How will managed care affect my services and my support coordinator?**

Certain populations have different requirements for participation in the Statewide Medicaid Managed Care (SMMC) program. For example, recipients enrolled in the Developmentally Disabled waiver are excluded from enrollment into the Managed Medical Assistance program.

Recipients enrolled in the Assisted Living for the Elderly, Aged/Disabled Adult, Adult Day Health Care, Consumer-Directed Care Plus Program, PACE, Nursing Home Diversion, and Channeling waivers are required to enroll in the Long Term Care Managed Care program. Recipients of these waivers will have a care coordinator assigned through their health plan.

Additional information relating to the SMMC program can be found at the following website: [http://ahca.myflorida.com/Medicaid/statewide\\_mc/index.shtml](http://ahca.myflorida.com/Medicaid/statewide_mc/index.shtml)

**How can we get Medicaid to pay for a car seat that is for a child with special needs, 12-years-old, soon to be 13? It is a law everyone is to be properly restrained in a motor vehicle. So how can we get help to get a car seat?**

Florida Medicaid covers medically necessary equipment intended for use in the recipient's place of residence. For more information, please contact your local Medicaid Area Office.

**Tell us more about the Health Care exchanges? And how come Florida is pushing against implementing health care exchanges? What? Why?**

Health Insurance Exchanges are part of the Affordable Care Act. The State of Florida, along with numerous other states, has filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act. In light of this ongoing legal challenge, Florida is not currently implementing the Affordable Care Act.

Additional information regarding health insurance exchanges can be found at: <http://www.healthcare.gov/law/provisions/exchanges/index.html>

**Dental coverage is a non-existent coverage. No one pays the rate. Where are the dentists? We can never find coverage.**

Medicaid covers a wide range of dental services for children age 20 and below and certain dental services for adults age 21 and above. The Medicaid dental program recently received legislative funding to increase reimbursement for dental procedures provided to children ages 0 to 20. For a list of dentists who participate in the Medicaid dental program, please visit the Agency for Health Care Administration Web site at <http://ahca.myflorida.com>. Click on the **Medicaid** tab, and then the **Area Offices** tab. Next, click on the county where you live. Scroll down the page to the "Area Office Information" link and click on Dental Providers.

During the 2011 Legislative Session, \$56,171,086 in additional funding was provided to increase reimbursement for Medicaid covered dental services to children. This additional funding provided for a 48.63% increase in reimbursement rates for these services. The increase only applies to dental services provided to children ages 21 and younger and went into effect July 1, 2011.

### **What is the process for obtaining a Medicaid waiver for adults?**

Florida Medicaid has several Waivers for adults with disabilities. For more information about the different Medicaid Waivers and eligibility criteria, please visit [www.ahca.myflorida.com](http://www.ahca.myflorida.com), then click on Medicaid.

### **What happens to the middle class if we lose Medicaid coverage? Private insurance is not an affordable option for those who are medically fragile.**

You can view general information relating to medical resources nationwide by visiting the following site: <http://www.healthcare.gov/>.

In addition, below is a link to a listing of alternative medical resources available throughout the state separated by county. Through this listing you may be able to find local resources that can assist you you're your medical needs.

[http://ahca.myflorida.com/Medicaid/pdf/files/alternative\\_medica\\_resources\\_july\\_2010.pdf](http://ahca.myflorida.com/Medicaid/pdf/files/alternative_medica_resources_july_2010.pdf)

**I am a single dad with three kids – two college students and a 22-year-old daughter with severe disabilities. I work hard to support my family with no support from their mother or Medicare. We have been on the waiting list for services for 7 years. Because of this I pay out of pocket for daytime care for my daughter just so I can work. Care is very expensive . I have no idea how the government I pay tolls and taxes to expects a working parent to survive with no assistance. The managed care problems are exorbitant and inefficient. The agencies charge ridiculous prices for private pay. The waiting list is wrong. It is unfair, arbitrary, and unjust. When will the waiting list be eliminated and funding provided so my daughter can get the care she needs without destroying our family's financial future? WHEN?**

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) manages the wait list for individuals who qualify for services under the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Medicaid Waiver. For more information regarding the DD Medicaid Waiver wait list, you may contact APD by calling the toll-free number: 1-866-273-2273 or visit the APD website: [www.apd.myflorida.com](http://www.apd.myflorida.com). The Florida Legislature determines the criteria for individuals who qualify for the DD Medicaid Waiver wait list.

You can find your local Senator by visiting this web site:  
<http://www.flsenate.gov/Senators/Find>

You can locate your local Representative by visiting the following website:  
<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/default.aspx>

## **When will the legislature see that we ALL matter!! We vote—believe it or not!**

As a Floridian, one of your greatest responsibilities is to help elect the legislators who represent you and the state's more than 18 million other residents. But your role in the democratic process of government does not end at the polls. By sharing your opinions and ideas with your representatives and senators in Tallahassee, you help them decide what to do about the issues and pending legislation that affect us all.

You can find your local Senator by visiting this web site:  
<http://www.flsenate.gov/Senators/Find>

You can locate your local Representative by visiting the following website:  
<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/default.aspx>

## **I am still looking for bedding options for a 4-year-old cp/legally blind child. He has already broken one wooden crib. We receive Medicaid**

Florida Medicaid does cover safety enclosures for qualified children. For more information, please contact your local Medicaid Area Office. The Area office for the Hernando county area is located in Ocala and you can call toll free at 1-877-724-2358. Ask to speak with a medical equipment specialist.

## **How do I get equipment not covered by insurance, i.e. communication board? Cannot afford one.**

Community organizations such as non-profits and churches can sometimes assist with these purchases. If you have not applied for Medicaid, you may wish to do so. If you qualify, Medicaid covers many devices, equipment, and supplies that insurance does not cover. Contact the Department of Children and Families ACCESS Florida program at <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/access/> to see if you qualify for Medicaid or other public assistance.

In addition, below is a link to a listing of alternative medical resources available throughout the state separated by county. Through this listing you may be able to find local resources that can assist you with your medical needs.  
[http://ahca.myflorida.com/Medicaid/pdf/alternative\\_medical\\_resources\\_july\\_2010.pdf](http://ahca.myflorida.com/Medicaid/pdf/alternative_medical_resources_july_2010.pdf)

# The Agency for Persons with Disabilities

## **Does Florida have a “one stop” for statewide service needs? One agency that can serve as a funnel for programs that you could qualify for?**

Unfortunately, Florida does not have a one stop shop agency where you can go to qualify for services. However, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities has a database on agencies and non-profits around the state that may be able to provide services to individuals in a certain area. They can link you with agencies that can provide particular services to a particular disability. APD can be reached at (866) 273-2273.

## **Will the Scott administration’s budget cuts affect my support coordination services?**

Your waiver support coordinator will be able to assist you as he/she has always done. APD is replacing the tier system with the iBudget Florida. iBudget Florida will allow individuals on the waiver to have more control over which services they receive and, in some cases, more types of services to choose from. iBudget Florida will benefit both you and APD. The iBudget Florida system will help APD spend exactly the amount of funds the Legislature gives it for waiver services. iBudget is still in the beginning stage and is not completely implemented everywhere in Florida. iBudget Florida is being implemented in phases. The last phase will be implemented April 2012. For more information and when iBudget will be available in your area, go to the iBudget website at <http://apd.myflorida.com/ibudget/> and take a look at the APD iBudget Florida schedule.

## **How do we share our problems with the APD to the legislature? We need to have an agency that will effectively advocate to policymakers for us.**

We encourage you can contact your local legislator to share your concerns on different issues, including APD. You can find your local legislators by going online to the Florida Senate website, [www.flsenate.gov](http://www.flsenate.gov), and the Florida House website, [www.myfloridahouse.gov](http://www.myfloridahouse.gov). Unfortunately, there is not one specific agency that can advocate for all persons with disabilities with legislators. You may wish to do a search online for agencies that can advocate for your specific disability or call us at (866) 273-2273 for the agencies that advocate for your specific disability.

## **I have Cerebral Palsy—how can I get a wheel chair van when I haven’t money for one?**

Unfortunately, there is no resource for a free wheelchair van. However, you may wish to contact the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST). Their mission is to improve the quality of life for all Floridians with disabilities through advocacy and



awareness activities that increase access to and acquisition of assistive services and technology. You can call them toll free at 1-888-788-9216 or go to their website, [www.faast.org](http://www.faast.org). You may also want to look at [www.disableddealer.com](http://www.disableddealer.com) for better deals on a van in your area. This is a magazine that lists classified ads for new and pre-owned accessible vans, scooters, wheelchairs, homes and RV's.

**When you put in a complaint to an EEOC for discrimination on disability who do you call if they don't respond right away?**

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is a Federal Commission. If you have filed a complaint in your local EEOC office with no response, you can contact your investigator directly or call 1-866-408-8075 to check your charge/complaint status. If you would like to contact the national office to file another complaint, they can be reached at 1-800-669-4000.

**Why aren't these conferences mandatory for everyone who works with children with special needs?**

Due to funding limitations, each agency has to make its own determination on which, if any, conferences its employees may attend.

**What resources are available to a newly physically disabled adult, with regard to home/vehicle modifications?**

Unfortunately, there is not one place where you can find all resources available to you in Florida. You may wish to contact the Florida Association of Centers for Independent Living (FACIL) office to find your local Center for Independent Living. Your local Center for Independent Living may be able to connect you with resources regarding home/vehicle modifications in your area. You may get the information for your local Center for Independent Living by visiting [floridacils.org/](http://floridacils.org/) on the web or calling toll-free 1-866-575-6044.

**Need to know how to allow funding to be made available for transportation in rural Brevard County. Now that the space program has been de-funded, there is a great need for transportation and new businesses.**

The Brevard County bus service is Space Coast Area Transit. Space Coast Area Transit receives funding from several sources including federal and state level funding. You can contact them to discuss transportation concerns in the rural Brevard area at (321) 635-

7815. You may also want to contact the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged. You can contact them at 1-800-983-2435 or online at <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/ctd/>.

You can get in contact with your local County Commissioners to discuss your concerns about the business environment in Brevard. Your County Commission Office can be reached at (321) 633-2000.

**Why is there such a difference in the amount of money paid for services between for profits and non-profits when the services provided are the same?**

The rates that APD pays providers, for the same service, are the same. There is no difference between the rates that are paid to profit or to non-profit agencies. If you have questions regarding the provider rates, contact your local APD area office to clarify any concerns you may have. Your local APD office contact information can be found on the APD website at <http://apdcares.org/area/>.

**Is there a website for resources for jobs for persons with disabilities?**

There is not a specific website for job resources. However, the Governor has recently signed an Executive Order for the Florida Commission on Jobs for Persons with Disabilities. This Commission will identify barriers in state and local programs that hinder employment for persons with disabilities. They will then recommend changes to Florida laws, policies and procedures that can help remove those barriers and increase employment and job opportunities for persons with disabilities. They do not have a website yet, but you may wish to visit the Governor's website at <http://www.flgov.com/> or call his office at 850-488-7146 for further information on this commission.

**I want to know about current law suits for disabilities people against the state agency.**

As with any state agency, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities is occasionally subject to litigation. This litigation may include administrative complaints against licensed group homes, disputes over service allocations, or disputes regarding federal Medicaid regulations.

If you need legal assistance or have a legal question, it is recommended that you consult an attorney. If you cannot afford to pay for an attorney, you may want to contact a local legal aid organization or an organization that advocates for individuals with developmental disabilities.

**We need assistance with getting respite services for my autistic son.**

Your local APD area office can assist you with getting the services your son needs. If your son is currently on the APD waiting list, or receiving services through APD, you will need to work with your Waiver Support Coordinator to assist you with the necessary services. You should contact your local APD area office if your son is not receiving services or not on the waiting list. Your local APD area office can assist you with the application process to get on the APD waiting list. You can find your local area office on the APD Area Office website, <http://apdcares.org/area/> or by calling 1-866-273-2273. Another good resource would be your local center for Autism Related Disorders which are run through the colleges and universities.

**How do I get equipment not covered by insurance, i.e. communication board? Cannot afford one.**

For assistance on getting equipment not covered by insurance, you can contact the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST). Their mission is to improve the quality of life for all Floridians with disabilities through advocacy and awareness activities that increase access to and acquisition of assistive services and technology. FAAST has worked with thousands of individuals with, and without disabilities. You can contact FAAST at 1-888-788-9216 for possible resources.

**Is there a way we could find out more information on the background of adopted children?**

The Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) manages the Florida Adoption program. For information on the program, available children, adoption process, or background information on a child, you will need to contact the DCF Adoption Program. The DCF Adoption Program can be contacted at 1-800-96-ADOPT (1800-962-3678) or online at <http://adoptflorida.org/index.html>.

**For those of us on the Med Waiver waiting list, are there other funding sources for respite care since most of us can't afford to hire someone so we can have the break we need to be a better parent?**

Improving services to people on the waiting list continues to be one of the top strategic objectives for the agency. Each year, the number of individuals who can be added to the waiver is contingent upon the funding authorized by the Florida legislature. As funding becomes available, APD will enroll people from the waiting list. You can work with your

waiver support coordinator to connect you to resources within your community that may be able to provide services to you while you are waiting for services through APD. If you do not know how to contact your waiver support coordinator you can contact your local area office. Your local area office contact information can be found on the APD website at <http://apdcares.org/area/>.

### **How we be more informed on new/updated information?**

This is a wonderful question. The APD has a monthly newsletter that we email out every month. This newsletter provides you with updates about the agency, comments from the APD Director, upcoming events and stories from around the state. To subscribe to the Champion newsletter, visit our website at <http://apd.myflorida.com/news/newsletters/>. Scroll to the bottom of the web page and enter your email address if you wish to receive the newsletter.

**I want to know about housing and the rules regarding communities for the developmentally disabled. We were under the impression that the state was revising the how but there was no information at the Café about the house. We have many children who have had help, services who are the forgotten in between. They need a place to reside with somebody in case they need direction or help but not on a daily basis. Thank you for all you do!**

Two years ago, a law was passed which described a new residential option for individuals with developmental disabilities called "planned residential communities." A planned residential community is defined and described (Within Section 419.001 of Florida Statutes as "...a local government-approved, planned unit development that is under unified control, is planned and developed as a whole, has a minimum gross lot area of 8 acres, and has amenities that are designed to serve residents with a developmental disability as defined in s. 393.063 but that shall also provide housing options for other individuals. The community shall provide choices with regard to housing arrangements, support providers, and activities. The residents' freedom of movement within and outside the community may not be restricted. For the purposes of this paragraph, local government approval must be based on criteria that include, but are not limited to, compliance with appropriate land use, zoning, and building codes. A planned residential community may contain two or more community residential homes that are contiguous to one another. A planned residential community may not be located within a 10-mile radius of any other planned residential community" Essentially, the new law allows for a denser concentration of licensed homes than was previously permitted (as long as such homes are located within a planned residential community). As of this date, no planned residential communities are actually in operation (although the Agency is aware of some such programs which are in various stages of development and implementation).

Deciding where (and with whom) to live is considered one of the most important decisions we can make in life. Fortunately, there are a number of different residential options available for persons with developmental disabilities here in Florida. Many individuals choose to live in homes or apartments where various services and supports are provided to them in order to allow them to live as independently as possible. There are also approximately 1,600 licensed homes which serve individuals who choose to live within those types of settings. The four main types of APD licensed-homes are foster care facilities, group homes, residential habilitation centers, and comprehensive transitional education programs. In addition, individuals receiving services from our program also live in other settings (such as Assisted Living Facilities and Intermediate Care Facilities for the Developmentally Disabled) which are licensed by other state agencies.

We encourage you to contact your local APD office for additional information on the availability of placement options or other services that may be available for children with developmental disabilities. APD area office contact information is available on our agency's website via the following link: <http://apd.myflorida.com/area/>

**There is a very big need for therapists in Highlands County (Sebring area). I was wondering what I could do or where to start to help my child and several other children get the therapist they need. Especially O.T. Also, I am very thankful to be able to attend a wonderful event. Thank you to everyone for all the hard work.**

You can contact your local APD area office, or work with your waiver support coordinator, to get in contact with a therapist in your area. Your area contact information can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/area/> or by calling 1-866-272-2273.

If you are a therapist and are currently wanting to become an APD provider, contact the enrollment office in your local area. The provider enrollment office will be able to assist you in completing the proper paperwork and required training. Each area controls its own training schedule.

**Wanted more info on Spina Bifida and what services I can secure from APD.**

You can contact your local Spina Bifida Association Chapter of Central Florida for information on Spina Bifida. They can be reached at (407) 248-9210 or online at [www.spinabifidaassociation.org](http://www.spinabifidaassociation.org). For services available in your area through APD, contact your local area office. Your area office contact information can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/area/> or at 1-866-272-2273.

**Thank you for having more topics for adults with disabilities. Please have more. We need more information on 1. Traumatic Brain Injury, 2. Veteran issues, 3. Group homes/housing solutions for the disabled--resources from all over the place not just Orlando, 4. More resources for adults with disabilities.**

Thank you for your inquiry to the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD). The APD serves individuals with developmental disabilities as defined in Florida Statutes, Chapter 393. This includes individuals who have cerebral palsy, spina bifida, autism, intellectual disabilities, Prader-Willi syndrome, Down syndrome and very young children who are at high risk for having a developmental disability. 1.) For information on traumatic brain injuries, contact the Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program. They can be reached toll-free at 1-866-875-5660. 2.) For information on Veteran issues, contact the Florida Department of Veteran Affairs toll-free at 1-800-955-8770 or [www.floridavets.org](http://www.floridavets.org). 3.) For housing solutions for persons with disabilities, contact the Florida Association of Centers for Independent Living (FACIL) toll-free at 1-866-575-6004. You may also want to contact the Florida Housing Search toll-free at 1-877-428-8844 or <http://www.floridahousingsearch.org/>. 4.) For more resources for adults with disabilities, you can contact the Family Network on Disabilities Florida toll-free at 1-800-825-5736. You can also contact the APD toll-free at 1-866-272-2273.

**My son has been on the Medicaid Wavier wait list for 10 years—since he was 2. His needs increase, his health decreases, and still no movement up the list. Can you tell me where we stand? With all the changes (financially) I do not see how long we can maintain this quality of life for him. We are fearful.**

Each year, the number of individuals who can be added to the waiver is contingent upon the funding authorized by the Florida legislature. As funding becomes available, the agency will enroll people from the waiting list. During recent years, APD has received several budget reductions. APD received \$810 million for the Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver for 2011/2012. APD customers received \$930 million worth of services during the 2010/2011 fiscal year. The Florida Legislature has mandated that APD bring its Medicaid waiver spending within its appropriation. At this time, it is expected that enrollment may be limited to crisis cases, based on available funding. Crisis is defined as the individual being a danger to self or others, homeless, or their caregiver is unable to provide care. If you feel your situation is a crisis, please contact your area office and request that a Crisis Identification Tool be completed. Your local area office contact information can be found on the APD website at <http://apdcares.org/area/>.

**Please do not reduce my services from the Medicaid waiver. Leave my tier alone.**

The tier system is not being adjusted at this time. APD is replacing the tier system with the iBudget Florida system. iBudget Florida will allow individuals on the waiver to have more control over which services they receive and, in some cases, more types of services to choose from. iBudget is still in the beginning stage and is not completely implemented everywhere in Florida. iBudget Florida is being implemented in phases. The last phase will be implemented April 2012. For more information on when iBudget will be available in your area, go to the iBudget website at <http://apd.myflorida.com/ibudget/> and take a look at the APD iBudget Florida schedule.

**Will the healthcare reform and/or Medicaid reform help eliminate or reduce the Med-waiver (Medicaid) wait list?**

The waiting list will not be eliminated based on Medicaid reform. Each year, the number of individuals who can be added to the waiver is contingent upon the funding authorized by the Florida Legislature. As funding becomes available, the agency will enroll people from the waiting list. During recent years, APD has received several budget reductions. APD received \$810 million for the Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver for 2011/2012. APD customers received \$930 million worth of services during the 2010/2011 fiscal year. The Florida Legislature has mandated that APD bring its Medicaid waiver spending within its appropriation. At this time, it is expected that enrollment may be limited to crisis cases, based on available funding. Crisis is defined as the individual being a danger to self or others, homeless, or their caregiver is unable to provide care. If you feel your situation is a crisis, please contact your area office and request that a Crisis Identification Tool be completed. Your local area office contact information can be found on the APD website at <http://apdcares.org/area/>.

**I would like to know more about what to do to get Medicaid services, in particular dental, for my son who was denied.**

Your local APD area office and waiver support coordinator can assist you with getting connected with additional services in your area. Your waiver support coordinator will look into which supports are needed, including dental, and connect you with the appropriate services. If you do not know who your waiver support coordinator is, you can contact your local APD area office. You can find your local area office on our website at <http://apdcares.org/area/> or by calling 1-866-273-2273.

If you have questions regarding Medicaid, you can contact your local Department of Children and Families (DCF) office. You can find your local office on their website at <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/> or by calling 1-866-762-2237.

**How come we cannot live in places of our choice with whom we want to live with—without state (APD) interference? If I want to live in a group home, family home, or residential placement, it should be my choice—NOT YOURS!**

Thank you for your question. You are correct. In general, you are allowed to choose where and with whom you live. However, in some cases, there are a few exceptions. Some exceptions include court ordered placement or for safety reasons. Work with your waiver support coordinator to get the living arrangement that works best for you. If you do not know who your waiver support coordinator is, you can contact your local area office. Your local area office contact information can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/area/>.

**I use an electric wheelchair and have limited use of my hands. I want to attend a university a few hours away in Tallahassee. Will APD find a PCA to help me live independently at college?**

This is a great question. There are many factors that go into account when determining services provided by APD. We would love to get additional information to answer your question better. You can contact your local area office to provide APD with additional information. You can find your local area office on our website at <http://apdcares.org/area/>.

You may also find it helpful to contact the Florida Association for Centers of Independent Living (FACIL) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) with the Florida Department of Education. The FACIL can get you in contact with your local Center for Independent Living. Their toll-free number is 1-866-575-6004. The VR works with people who have physical or mental disabilities to prepare for, gain or retain employment. They can be contacted at 1-800-451-4327.

**Will my APD services still be in place if I one day decide to get married?**

Marital Status has no impact on APD services. However, waiver services are contingent upon Medicaid eligibility. Marital status may change your annual income and impact your Medicaid eligibility. For information on the impact marriage may have on your Medicaid eligibility, contact your local Department for Children and Families (DCF). You can find your local office on their website at <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/> or by calling 1-866-762-2237.



**I have noticed the APD has had a hard time keeping a director. Why is this? It seems to me that in order for an agency like APD to begin to fix their financial issue, stable leadership would be needed.**

Thank you so much for your question. The director of the Agency for Person with Disabilities (APD) is first appointed by the governor. Once the governor has appointed a director, the Florida Legislature must then also approve of the new director. This is called confirmation. Stable leadership is very important to the success of APD and the control of waiver expenditures. Governor Rick Scott has recently appointed Michael Hansen as director of APD. Director Hansen has over 30 years of experience with Health and Human services policy and budgeting. We are in high hopes that the legislature will approve of his appointment.

**What services will be available with all the reductions within the Agency for Persons with Disabilities? Providers are leaving and much needed services are needed. Who is in charge at APD and how can I reach him/her?**

This is a great question. Through all of the changes made with APD, services have not been removed. As you are aware, APD has received several budget reductions. APD received \$810 million for the Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver for 2011/2012. APD customers received \$930 million worth of services during the 2010/2011 fiscal year. The Florida Legislature has mandated that APD bring its Medicaid waiver spending within its appropriation. A series of stakeholder meetings were held to identify options to bring the agency's obligations to within its appropriation. The agency is developing its plan based on stakeholder input. It is the intent of stakeholders and APD to keep all services. The health and safety of individuals receiving services are APD's top priorities.

APD has recently been appointed a new director by the Florida Governor, Rick Scott. The new APD director is Michael Hansen. If you would like to contact Director Hansen you can send him an email at [APD\\_Director@apd.fl.us](mailto:APD_Director@apd.fl.us) or mail a letter at 4030 Esplanade Way, Suite 380, Tallahassee, FL 32399.

**Why are the services in different areas so limiting? Florida services for APD change from county-to-county. Why isn't my cost plan or support plan acceptable in my county within the state?**

APD has over 10,000 providers throughout the state of Florida. APD works in partnership with local providers within the community. Each community may differ slightly based on the providers within a particular area. Your cost plan is based on your individual needs

and transfers to any location within Florida. Although providers may change, your services within your cost plan are available to you. If you are in need of a particular service, work with your support coordinator to obtain the appropriate services. If you are unaware of who your support coordinator is, you can contact your local area office. You can find your local area office contact information on the APD website at <http://apdcares.org/area/>.

**How many years will my son have to wait on a “list” for much-needed services? It has been 8 years now! With no hope in sight!!!**

Each year, the number of individuals who can be added to the waiver is contingent upon the funding authorized by the Florida Legislature. As funding becomes available, the agency will enroll people from the waiting list. During recent years, APD has received several budget reductions. APD received \$810 million for the Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver for 2011/2012. APD customers received \$930 million worth of services during the 2010/2011 fiscal year. The Florida Legislature has mandated that APD bring its Medicaid waiver spending within its appropriation. At this time, it is expected that enrollment may be limited to crisis cases, based on available funding. Crisis is defined as the individual being a danger to self or others, homeless, or their caregiver is unable to provide care. If you feel your situation is a crisis, please contact your area office and request that a Crisis Identification Tool be completed. Your local area office contact information can be found on the APD website at <http://apdcares.org/area/>.

**We have been on the wait list for services for years and years—when can we expect to be placed on the final list for services?**

Each year, the number of individuals who can be added to the waiver is contingent upon the funding authorized by the Florida Legislature. As funding becomes available, the agency will enroll people from the waiting list. During recent years, APD has received several budget reductions. APD received \$810 million for the Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver for 2011/2012. APD customers received \$930 million worth of services during the 2010/2011 fiscal year. The Florida Legislature has mandated that APD bring its Medicaid waiver spending within its appropriation. At this time, it is expected that enrollment may be limited to crisis cases, based on available funding. Crisis is defined as the individual being a danger to self or others, homeless, or their caregiver is unable to provide care. If you feel your situation is a crisis, please contact your area office and request that a Crisis Identification Tool be completed. Your local area office contact information can be found on the APD website at <http://apdcares.org/area/>.

**Why is the wait list so long?**

Each year, the number of individuals who can be added to the waiver is contingent upon the funding authorized by the Florida Legislature. As funding becomes available, the agency will enroll people from the waiting list. During recent years, APD has received several budget reductions. APD received \$810 million for the Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver for 2011/2012. APD customers received \$930 million worth of services during the 2010/2011 fiscal year. The Florida Legislature has mandated that APD bring its Medicaid waiver spending within its appropriation. At this time, it is expected that enrollment may be limited to crisis cases, based on available funding. Crisis is defined as the individual being a danger to self or others, homeless, or their caregiver is unable to provide care. If you feel your situation is a crisis, please contact your area office and request that a Crisis Identification Tool be completed. Your local area office contact information can be found on the APD website at <http://apdcares.org/area/>.

**I am a single dad with three kids – two college students and a 22-year-old daughter with severe disabilities. I work hard to support my family with no support from their mother or Medicare. We have been on the waiting list for services for 7 years. Because of this I pay out of pocket for daytime care for my daughter just so I can work. Care is very expensive . I have no idea how the government I pay tolls and taxes to expects a working parent to survive with no assistance. The managed care problems are exorbitant and inefficient. The agencies charge ridiculous prices for private pay. The waiting list is wrong. It is unfair, arbitrary, and unjust. When will the waiting list be eliminated and funding provided so my daughter can get the care she needs without destroying our family's financial future? WHEN?**

You should contact your waiver support coordinator to address your concerns. Your waiver support coordinator will be able to get you in contact with other agencies within your community that may be able to assist you and your daughter with services while she is waiting for services from APD.

Each year, the number of individuals who can be added to the waiver is contingent upon the funding authorized by the Florida Legislature. As funding becomes available, the agency will enroll people from the waiting list. During recent years, APD has received several budget reductions. APD received \$810 million for the Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver for 2011/2012. APD customers received \$930 million worth of services during the 2010/2011 fiscal year. The Florida Legislature has mandated that APD bring its Medicaid waiver spending within its appropriation. At this time, it is expected that enrollment may be limited to crisis cases, based on available funding. Crisis is defined as the individual being a danger to self or others, homeless, or their caregiver is unable to provide care. If you feel your situation is a crisis, please contact your area office and

request that a Crisis Identification Tool be completed. Your local area office contact information can be found on the APD website at <http://apdcares.org/area/>.

### **How can we get on the CDC+ Waiver?**

To be eligible for the Consumer Directed Care Plus (CDC+) program, a participant must already receive services from APD through one of the Medicaid Developmental Disabilities/Home and Community-Based Services waivers. Enrollment materials in CDC+ program can be requested by calling our toll-free CDC+ customer service line at 1-866-761-7043. If you are not receiving APD Medicaid Developmental Disabilities/Home and Community-Based waiver services and are on the waiting list, you may not apply to CDC+.

If you are not on the waiting list to receive services through the APD Medwaiver, you will need to apply at your local area office. Your local area office will be able to determine your eligibility, answer any questions you may have and connect you with resources within your community. You can download an application for services on the APD website at <http://apdcares.org/customers/application/>. You can also find your local APD area office on our website at <http://apdcares.org/area/>.

### **Why is there a freeze on cost plans? When can we get the iBudget going? We heard how it was going to help us—what happened?**

The agency serves nearly 30,000 Floridians with developmental disabilities throughout the state with the funding from the Developmental Disabilities Medicaid HCBS waiver. The waiver budget for Fiscal Year 2011-2012 is \$810 million with the agency projecting service expenditures to be \$930 million this year. As you can see, this exceeds the amount appropriated by the Florida Legislature by about \$120 million. State law requires that APD develop a plan to reduce waiver spending and bring its waiver spending within the appropriated amount. The cost plan freeze was placed for all waiver recipients to ensure there is no increase to waiver services, unless in a crisis situation. Crisis is defined as the individual being a danger to self or others, homeless, or their caregiver is unable to provide care. If you feel your situation is a crisis, please contact your area office and request that a Crisis Identification Tool be completed. Your local area office contact information can be found on the APD website at <http://apdcares.org/area/>.

APD is replacing the tier system with the iBudget Florida system. iBudget is still in the beginning stage and is not completely implemented everywhere in Florida. iBudget Florida will allow individuals on the waiver to have more control over which services they receive. For more information and when iBudget will be available in your area, go to the iBudget website at <http://apd.myflorida.com/ibudget/> and take a look at the APD iBudget Florida schedule.

### **When will the iBudget become available in all counties in Florida?**

APD is replacing the tier system with the iBudget Florida system. iBudget Florida will allow individuals on the waiver to have more control over which services they receive. iBudget is still in the beginning stage and is not completely implemented everywhere in Florida. iBudget Florida is being implemented in phases. The last phase will be implemented April 2012. For more information and when iBudget will be available in your area, go to the iBudget website at <http://apd.myflorida.com/ibudget/> and take a look at the APD iBudget Florida schedule.

### **Why did you use only four people for the pilot group for iBudget when there are so many varying situations out there? Four is such a small test group.**

APD is replacing the tier system with the iBudget Florida system. iBudget Florida will allow individuals on the waiver to have more control over which services they receive. iBudget is still in the beginning stage and is not completely implemented everywhere in Florida. iBudget Florida is being implemented in phases. The last phase will be implemented April 2012. For more information and when iBudget will be available in your area, go to the iBudget website at <http://apd.myflorida.com/ibudget/> and take a look at the APD iBudget Florida schedule.

### **I want to be totally independent and not lose my Medicaid and burden others regarding my work status. Do not want to lose my APD Medicaid.**

APD recognizes that the general public is not aware of special rules that are in place that allow people with disabilities to earn more money, build assets and still maintain certain benefits. FBIRN is a network of state agency staff that is trained to facilitate people with disabilities to connect with the "right person" (federal and state workers who are certified to provide benefits assistance.) Each area office has a benefits planner that can work with you. You can get your area office contact information on the APD website at <http://apdcares.org/area/>.

### **Are dental services ever going to be available to everyone again? I am on tier 4.**

APD is replacing the tier system with the iBudget Florida system. iBudget Florida will allow individuals on the waiver to have more control over which services they receive and, in some cases, more types of services to choose from like dental. iBudget is still in the beginning stage and is not completely implemented everywhere in Florida. iBudget Florida is being implemented in phases. The last phase will be implemented April 2012. For more

information and when iBudget will be available in your area, go to the iBudget website at <http://apd.myflorida.com/ibudget/> and take a look at the APD iBudget Florida schedule.

### **Once you're on Med Waiver, why can't it be transferred from state to state?**

The Federal government approves each state's Medicaid waivers. It is up to each state to determine eligibility, coverage of services, funding, etc. Because each state administers the Medicaid waivers on their own terms and conditions, the waivers are not exactly the same. Someone who may be eligible and receiving services in the state of New York through a similar Medicaid waiver may not be eligible in the state of Florida. Medicaid waiver services are administered to residents of that particular state. When someone moves from state-to-state, they need to apply for residency before they apply for services. For additional services about APD's Medicaid waivers and eligibility, contact your local APD area office. You can find your local area office contact information on the APD website at <http://apdcares.org/area/>.

### **When will iBudget be available in all of Florida?**

APD is replacing the tier system with the iBudget Florida system. iBudget Florida will allow individuals on the waiver to have more control over which services they receive. iBudget is still in the beginning stage and is not completely implemented everywhere in Florida. iBudget Florida is being implemented in phases. The last phase will be implemented April 2012. For more information and when iBudget will be available in your area, go to the iBudget website at <http://apd.myflorida.com/ibudget/> and take a look at the APD iBudget Florida schedule.

### **When we see the new iBudget? Lots of talk—no timelines or schedules.**

APD is replacing the tier system with the iBudget Florida system. iBudget Florida will allow individuals on the waiver to have more control over which services they receive. iBudget is still in the beginning stage and is not completely implemented everywhere in Florida. iBudget Florida is being implemented in phases. The last phase will be implemented April 2012. For more information and when iBudget will be available in your area, go to the iBudget website at <http://apd.myflorida.com/ibudget/> and take a look at the APD iBudget Florida schedule.

### **I want to apply for the waiver for my son. How do I do this?**

To receive services through the APD Medwaiver, you will need to apply at your local area office. Your local area office will be able to determine your son's eligibility, answer any questions you may have and connect you with resources within your community. You can download an application for services on the APD website at <http://apdcares.org/customers/application/>. You can also find your local APD area office on our website at <http://apdcares.org/area/>.

Each year, the number of individuals who can be added to the waiver is contingent upon the funding authorized by the Florida Legislature. As funding becomes available, the agency will enroll people from the waiting list. During recent years, APD has received several budget reductions. APD received \$810 million for the Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver for 2011/2012. APD customers received \$930 million worth of services during the 2010/2011 fiscal year. The Florida Legislature has mandated that APD bring its Medicaid waiver spending within its appropriation. At this time, it is expected that enrollment may be limited to crisis cases, based on available funding. Crisis is defined as the individual being a danger to self or others, homeless, or their caregiver is unable to provide care. If you feel your situation is a crisis, please contact your area office and request that a Crisis Identification Tool be completed.

### **Is there a website for resources for jobs for persons with disabilities?**

There is not a specific website for job resources. However, the governor has recently signed an Executive Order for the Florida Commission on Jobs for Persons with Disabilities. This commission will identify barriers in state and local programs that hinder employment for persons with disabilities. Its members will then recommend changes to Florida laws, policies, and procedures that can help remove those barriers and increase employment and job opportunities for persons with disabilities. They do not have a website yet, but you may wish to visit the governor's website at <http://www.flgov.com/> or call his office at 850-488-7146 for further information on this commission.

### **Why is it so hard to get some help to pay for speech?**

If the individual in need of speech therapy is under the age of 21, the Medicaid State Plan should pay for the therapy. To get information on the Medicaid State Plan, please contact your local Medicaid office. Your local Medicaid office can be found on the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) website at <http://ahca.myflorida.com/Medicaid/index.shtml#10>, or by calling (850) 412-4000. If the individual is over the age of 21, speech therapy must be demonstrated as medically necessary for Medicaid, or Medicaid waiver, to cover the expense. If you are receiving Medicaid waiver services through APD and would like information on if speech therapy is

deemed medically necessary for you, contact your waiver support coordinator or your local area office. Your local area office contact information can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/area/>.

### **Why are the needs of the disabled in Florida not prioritized?**

Each year, the number of individuals who can be added to the waiver is contingent upon the funding authorized by the Florida Legislature. As you are aware, the economic climate is not the best throughout the United States. Budget reductions have had impacts in every state. Florida has not been exempt from this truth. Florida Governor Rick Scott and the Legislature are working diligently to ensure the best possible outcome for the state of Florida. The Legislature has several committees that oversee different topics, including topics that APD covers. APD is working hard with stakeholders and Legislators to ensure the best possible outcome each legislative session.

### **What social/recreational activities are available in four corners area of Davenport Florida? Is there transportation to and from activities elsewhere?**

Each area in Florida has different social and recreational activities. To find out what kind of activities are in your area, contact your local County Commissioners. The Polk County Commissioners can be reached at (863) 534-6000.

The Medicaid waiver pays for transportation to and from a recipient's waiver services. If you are not receiving services through one of the APD Medicaid Waivers, you can contact your local area office to determine if you are eligible and get assistance with the application process. You can find your local area office contact information on the APD website at <http://apd.myflorida.com/area/>. You can also contact your local county commissioners to put you in contact with transportation options in your area.

### **When you put in a complaint to an APD or EEOC for discrimination on disability who do you call if they don't respond right away?**

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is a Federal Commission. If you have filed a complaint in your local EEOC office with no response, you can contact your investigator directly or call 1-866-408-8075 to check your charge/complaint status. If you would like to contact the national office to file another complaint, they can be reached at 1-800-669-4000.



**With budget cuts throughout the state affecting all persons with disabilities — young and old — what is the prognosis for the future of our most precious population?**

A series of stakeholder meetings were held to identify options to bring the agency's obligations to within its appropriation. The agency is developing its plan based on stakeholder input to bring the waiver expenditures within appropriation so APD can continue to provide service. If you have any questions about the changes being made, please contact your local area office. Your area office contact information can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/area/>.

**What resources are available in Nassau County for VA Vets – retired military?**

For information on resources for veterans, contact your local Veterans Affairs (VA) office. The local VA office for Nassau County can be reached at (904) 548-4670. You can also visit the United States Department of Veterans Affairs on-line to get a list of toll-free numbers useful to Veterans. Their website is <http://www.va.gov/>.

**Where can I find more sensory ideas on the web?**

Thank you for your question. One good place to find sensory ideas is [www.autisminspiration.com/](http://www.autisminspiration.com/). You may also wish to look at [www.earlylearningactivities.com](http://www.earlylearningactivities.com) and [www.prekinders.com](http://www.prekinders.com). In addition, you may wish to do a web search through a search engine for further resources.

**When will a bill pass for self-insured employers to cover additional services for Autism?**

APD does not regulate or pass bills related to self-insured employers. You can contact your local Legislators to ask further questions about possible legislation. You can find your local Legislators and their contact information online at <http://www.leg.state.fl.us>. Here you will find links to the Florida Senate and the Florida House. Select one of the links to search for the person in that particular chamber that represents your district. You can search for your Legislators by your mailing address or zip code.

**In the Orlando area, there's been a lot of discussion about the bidding process for a new Para-transit contract. However, it seems regardless of which company has the contract, elements of the service improves, but none of them seem to**

**take responsibility or provide concessions when mistakes are made. How can we hold Para transit services tangibly accountable when we miss appointments or are late for work?**

You have raised a great question. The Central Florida Regional Transportation Authority is LYNX. You can contact them and file a formal complain that they will investigate. They can be reached at (407) 841-2279. By selecting option 3, you will speak to a representative that will take your concerns and assign it to an employee for investigation. You can also visit them online at <http://www.golynx.com>.

**I noticed that there were many more older parents (grandparents?) particularly than in past years. Grandparents raising children with disabilities under the APD. The workshops were excellent as usual. I learned a lot. Thank you.**

That is a great observation. There are many reasons why older generations are in the role of parents/caregivers. One factor to take in consideration is the increase in families waiting longer to have children. Another possibility is grandparents taking on the parent role for various reasons. Some reasons may include aiding parents while they are working, incarceration of a child's parent, parental death, abandonment, etc. Caregivers are so valuable, no matter which age. We are thrilled to hear the event was so wonderful.

**How will managed care affect my services and my support coordinator?**

Your waiver support coordinator will be able to assist you as he/she has always done. APD is replacing the tier system with the iBudget Florida system as a way to accommodate managed care. iBudget Florida will allow individuals on the waiver to have more control over which services they receive. iBudget is still in the beginning stage and is not completely implemented everywhere in Florida. iBudget Florida is being implemented in phases. The last phase will be implemented April 2012. For more information and when iBudget will be available in your area, go to the iBudget website at <http://apd.myflorida.com/ibudget/> and take a look at the APD iBudget Florida schedule.

**We are the caregivers of our granddaughter. She has expressed her desire to live at home with us. Agency for Persons with Disabilities has not given us much help. How can we get more help? She is 20 years old with cp.**

If your granddaughter is receiveing services through APD or is on the waiting list for services, you can contact your waiver support coordinator. If you are not satisfied with your waiver support coordinator, you have the right to change. You will need to contact

your local area office to change your waiver support coordinator. If you are still having a difficult time contacting your local area office, you can contact APD main office at 1-866-272-2273 or email at [APD\\_Info@apd.state.fl.us](mailto:APD_Info@apd.state.fl.us).

**Is there a newsletter or information source on new or current events inside the APD?**

This is a wonderful question. The APD has a monthly newsletter that we email out every month. This newsletter provides you with updates about the agency, comments from the APD Director, upcoming events and stories from around the state. To subscribe to the Champion newsletter, visit our website at <http://apd.myflorida.com/news/newsletters/>. Scroll to the bottom of the web page and enter your email address if you wish to receive the newsletter.

**Where can I get some information on getting assistance in help providing funding need of ramp/railing. Also would like to get info for myself in getting hearing aid to maintain my employment at Disney? I would like to Daven Port in next year Family Café.**

You can contact the Florida Association of Centers for Independent Living (FACIL) to get in contact with your local Center for Independent Living. FACIL can be reached at 1-866-575-6004. Your local Center for Independent Living can get you in contact with resources that may be able to assist you with funding for a needed ramp/railing. You can contact HEAR NOW program at 1-800-648-4327 for possible hearing aid support. Another resource to assist you with a hearing aid to keep your employment would be the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). You can reach VR at 1-800-451-4327.

**How do you join the Family Care Council (FCC)? I have been on their website and it is very confusing to and the membership. Is it free?**

The Family Care Council Florida (FCCF) advocates, educates and empowers individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, partnering with the APD to bring quality services to individuals for dignity and choice. It is free to join FCCF. To become a member, contact your local FCCF office. You can find their contact information on the APD website at <http://apdcare.org/family-care-council.htm>.

**More Down Syndrome education programs for parents in Osceola County.**

To get more information on Down syndrome, you can contact the Down Syndrome Association of Central Florida. They can provide you information, upcoming events, monthly meetings and resources that may be of some help to you and your family. You can contact them at (407) 478-5621 or online at <http://www.dsacf.org/>. Another resource that can assist you with resources, scholarship programs, and events, you can contact the Down Syndrome Foundation of Florida. Their phone number is (407) 538-3537, and their website is <http://www.dsfflorida.org>.

### **When will actuators be put on all doors everywhere?**

There is not a mandate for actuators to be on all doors in the state of Florida. If you have experienced an issue with a particular location in your city, you may wish to bring it to the attention of your City Commission. The Lake Mary City Commission can be reached at (407) 585-1423. You can also contact the Florida Commission on Human Relations (FCHR) at 1-800-342-8170.

### **Why can't some of these medical supply companies have some control over the charges for equipment and toys – the prices are outrageous – a lot not even covered by insurance unless it is a medical necessity. You pay 3,4,5 or even more times the price for a toy because it has a switch on it. Why?!?!?**

Unfortunately, there is no company that regulates the price of toys. There is a higher price of production with particular toys and/or materials that are designed for individuals with disabilities. Because production costs are often more expensive, the retail cost of the toy is also more expensive.

A helpful resource that informs parents of a child with a disability of new therapies, parenting advice, education information and new technologies that make everyday living easier is Exceptional Parent Magazine. One of the APD employees has found this magazine to be a valuable resource. You can subscribe to this magazine at <http://www.eparent.com/>. There is a small fee to subscribe, but the subscription is valid for a year.

### **When will the legislature see that we ALL matter!! We vote—believe it or not!**

Each year, the number of individuals who can be added to the waiver is contingent upon the funding authorized by the Florida Legislature. As you are aware, the economic climate is not the best throughout the United States. Budget reductions have had impacts in every state. Florida has not been exempt from this truth. Florida Governor Rick Scott and the

Legislature are working diligently to ensure the best possible outcome for the state of Florida. The Legislature has several committees that oversee different topics, including topics that APD covers. APD is working hard with stakeholders and Legislators to ensure the best possible outcome each legislative session.

**How do I find out about FREE items for special needs for us on the med waiver?**

Your local APD area office and waiver support coordinator can assist you with getting connected with additional services in your area. Your waiver support coordinator will look into which supports are needed and connect you with the appropriate services. If you do not know who your waiver support coordinator is, you can contact your local APD area office. You can find your local area office on our website at <http://apdcares.org/area/> or by calling 1-866-273-2273.

**Is there any protection in place for the following? I was sued and won the lawsuit. I now have to sell my home to pay my lawyer. Is there a law in place to keep someone who cares for a disabled individual having to displace that individual after winning a lawsuit?**

This answer includes legal advice that APD is not authorized to give. We recommend you speak with a lawyer to get legal advice. You may want to discuss the possibility of seeking attorney's fees with the attorney representing you. It may be helpful to contact your Florida Legal Services, Inc. office.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) may have a program that you can qualify for. HUD has several programs that range from low income housing, rental assistance, to avoiding foreclosure. You can contact HUD at 1(202) 708-1112 or online at <http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD>.

**More information on independent living for those of us on the waiver . . . it is much needed.**

Your local APD area office and waiver support coordinator can help you with finding additional information about independent living. If you do not know who your waiver support coordinator is, contact your local area office. You can find your local area office on the APD Area Office website, <http://apdcares.org/area/> or by calling 1-866-273-2273.

Your local Center for Independent Living can also provide you with support and recourses within your community that can be helpful in your search for additional information. To contact your local Center for Independent Living, you can call the Florida Association of

Centers for Independent Living (FACIL) at 1-866-575-6004, or online at <http://floridacils.org/index.html>.

# Department of Children and Families

**Why is mental health not classified as a disability in my community? My school recognizes my needs; however, my town does not see my health concerns as a “real” issue. They see me as a problem to be fixed only. What services are available for me?**

The Department’s Central Region Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program Office oversees publically-funded mental health services in Highlands County and can link individuals to a variety of community providers, depending on the age and needs of the individual.

The Department’s website (<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/>) also provides a way to locate DCF-funded providers by city, county or region, along with links to other resources that may be of assistance. The provider locator link is available at <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/samh/help.shtml>.

**Is there a way we could find out more information on the background of adopted children?**

Once an adoption case manager has determined that an adoptive family is the best match for a foster child who is available for adoption and an adoptive placement is anticipated, full disclosure of the information in our records must be made available to the adoptive parents prior to placement. This is to make sure that the family has assessed themselves as having the strengths to meet the needs of the child. The exceptions to full disclosure include identifying information about the birth family such as names, social security numbers and addresses. Although full disclosure is required, some records have limited family and medical history about the birth family because the family was uncooperative or fled and limited contact occurred between the agency and birth family members.

**My son was diagnosed late at age 7 1/2 with Autism Spectrum Disorder. This past January at age 11 he got sent to a medical Intake Behavioral Hospital due to some issues he was having threatening suicide. Well, there they changed his diagnosis to just having ADHD. How can I get the proper diagnosis as I have been going through a lot of red tape with evals, schools telling me he has not got what he has been diagnosed with. It is very frustrating as a parent of adopted children with limited information on biological backgrounds.**

There are a number of providers that can assist with evaluations and assessment. The Department’s website (<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/>) provides a way to locate DCF-funded providers by city, county or region, along with links to other resources that may be of assistance. The provider locator link is available at <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/samh/help.shtml>.

**I would like to know how to get involved with the community based systems of care. What are the strategies of this system? How many systems of care does Florida have? How long will they last? What’s the role of families?**

“Systems of Care” (SOC) is an organizational philosophy and framework reshaping the delivery of services and supports to children and youth with a serious emotional disturbance and their families. SOC projects involve increased collaboration among government and private agencies, providers, and families receiving community-based services. SOC projects seek to expand the array of community-based services and improve access to coordinated services. SOC projects promote integrated, evidence-based, culturally and linguistically competent services.

SOC planning and expansion initiatives are supported by grants awarded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), a branch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

In Florida, there are the five (5) current federally funded SOC expansion sites: Sarasota, Miami-Dade, Seminole County and Orange counties and the City of Jacksonville. Three (3) Florida sites are considered “graduated” grantees, having completed expansion initiatives and developed SOC approaches in their communities: Hillsborough County and the cities of West Palm Beach and Fort Lauderdale.

The Department was recently awarded an SOC Planning grant to develop short and long-term strategic plans for statewide expansion. This project will establish two (2) new SOC planning sites as well as engage the existing eight (8) sites, along with an array of stakeholders, in a statewide expansion planning initiative. The new planning sites are Pasco and Pinellas counties and the Department’s combined Circuits 2 and 14 (which runs from Jefferson County west to Bay County and north to the Georgia and Alabama borders).

Timelines for each SOC project vary depending on project type and the original award date. SOC planning projects are awarded for one (1) year while SOC expansion awards generally support six (6) year projects.

<b>SOC Grantee</b>	<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Project Duration</b>
DCF Headquarters SAMH Program Office	Statewide SOC Planning; Circuit 2 and 14 Expansion and Circuit 6 System of Care Collaborative (C6-SOCC) Pasco/Pinellas Expansion	September, 2012
Seminole County	Families and Communities Together in Seminole (FACTS) Project	September, 2016
Orange County	Orange County Children's SOC Project	September, 2015



DCF Southern Region SAMH Program Office	Miami-Dade Wraparound Project (MDWP)	September, 2015
City of Jacksonville	Jacksonville's Fostering System of Care Initiative (SOI)	September, 2016
Sarasota County Health Department	Sarasota Early Childhood Mental Health Partnership	September, 2011 (approved for a no-cost extension into 2012)

**I want to adopt—we have three children, and one with a severe disability—he is medically fragile and is a blessing to us all. We want to adopt another child who will benefit from a loving family. What is the process?**

You can call the Adoption Information Center's toll free number at 1-800-96ADOPT and explain your interest and need for information about the adoption process. The staff will send you a packet of information regarding adoption of children from the foster care system. Please also request the staff person's name and telephone number who conducts the adoptive parent training and/or conducts Orientation Classes for your county. Thank you for your question and interest in learning more about the adoption process.

**Is there a way a person can find out the biological background of a potential adopted child?**

Once an adoption case manager has determined that an adoptive family is the best match for a foster child who is available for adoption and an adoptive placement is anticipated, full disclosure of the information in our records must be made available to the adoptive parents prior to placement. This is to make sure that the family has assessed themselves as having the strengths to meet the needs of the child. The exceptions to full disclosure include identifying information about the birth family such as names, social security numbers and addresses. Although full disclosure is required, some records have limited family and medical history about the birth family because the family was uncooperative or fled and limited contact occurred between the agency staff and birth family members.

**How come it takes so long to "determine" if you are qualified to receive services? It is simple—you have a disability or not—simple process that takes DCF Determination months to complete. Ugh!!**

When a person under age 65 applies for Medicaid and says they have a disability but their disability has not been determined by the Social Security Administration (i.e., not currently receiving or have received Social Security Disability Insurance or Supplemental Security Income), the Department of Children and Families (DCF) must request their disability determination before Medicaid can be approved. The disability determination is made by the Department of Health, Division of Disability Determination (DDD). After

receiving an application where a disability decision is required, DCF conducts a disability interview with the applicant to gather medical information and release forms. The amount of time it takes for the interview to be held and for the applicant to return the signed release forms can add to the time needed to determine eligibility.

After the interview is completed, DCF sends electronically to DDD the information collected during the disability interview, and the release form(s). If the applicant does not possess and give DCF medical records following the interview, DDD must request the medical records from the various physicians, hospitals, clinics, and other medical providers. Receiving the medical records from the providers may take weeks and may prolong the time it takes for DDD to make the determination.

After DDD determines whether the applicant is disabled, the information is transmitted electronically to DCF. If all other information DCF requested from the applicant has been provided, DCF can then determine eligibility for Medicaid. DCF's time standard (based on federal regulations) for completing a disability-related Medicaid application is 90 days, however, that time may be shorten or lengthened by several factors, some of which are indicated above.

### **How do you apply for SSI/Food Stamps at DCF?**

You may apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) at any Florida location for the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA). The SSA website (<http://www.ssa.gov/>) includes a link to locate local offices by zip code at <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps6z/FOLO/fo001.jsp> and a nationwide toll-free number at 1-800-772-1213.

When you get approved for SSI, and have previously told SSA that you also want Food Assistance, SSA sends DCF an update and we automatically open up a Food Assistance case through the SUNCAP Program. SUNCAP is only available to individuals who are at least 18 years old, living alone, have no earned income, and receiving at least one cent in SSI benefits. You do not have to file a separate Food Assistance Program application when you receive SSI and qualify for SUNCAP.

If you want to apply for food assistance without applying for SSI, or while you are waiting for your SSI decision, visit the Department of Children and Families website at <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/access/> and check Food Assistance Program on the benefits selection screen.

### **One of my friends applied for SSI for her disabled child who is 10 and was told she could not get it because she has a 401(k) plan at her work. Is this true?**

SSI is not administered by the Department of Children and Families. It is administered by the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA). The SSA website (<http://www.ssa.gov/>) includes a link to locate local offices by zip code at <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps6z/FOLO/fo001.jsp> and a nationwide toll-free number at 1-800-772-1213.

**If you work 8 months why does it affect your SSI child's benefits?**

SSI is not administered by the Department of Children and Families. It is administered by the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA). The SSA website (<http://www.ssa.gov/>) includes a link to locate local offices by zip code at <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps6z/FOLO/fo001.jsp> and a nationwide toll-free number at 1-800-772-1213.

**How do I get SSI to see my daughter as a family of one, so she can receive SSI? They are seeing my income as too much, so they give us nothing.**

SSI is not administered by the Department of Children and Families. It is administered by the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA). The SSA website (<http://www.ssa.gov/>) includes a link to locate local offices by zip code at <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps6z/FOLO/fo001.jsp> and a nationwide toll-free number at 1-800-772-1213.

**How do I start with SSI?**

SSI is not administered by the Department of Children and Families. It is administered by the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA). The SSA website (<http://www.ssa.gov/>) includes a link to locate local offices by zip code at <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps6z/FOLO/fo001.jsp> and a nationwide toll-free number at 1-800-772-1213.

**As a guardian how would I plan for a "living will" so that all of the doctors would know?**

This question should be referred to the Department of Elderly Affairs, the Agency for Health Care Administration, and the Department of Health. Those agencies are responsible for public education on end-of-life care and health care advance directives under Chapter 765, Florida Statutes.

# Department of Education

**Tell me more about Disability History and Awareness Weeks. I just heard about this from the youth track—how exciting!**

In 2008, the Florida legislature created section 1003.4205, Florida Statutes, (F.S.) *Disability History and Awareness Instruction*. This statute requires district school boards to designate the first two weeks in October as “Disability History and Awareness Weeks.” During these two weeks, district school boards **may** provide disability history and awareness instruction in public schools.

The purpose of the instruction is to expand students’ knowledge, understanding, and awareness of individuals with disabilities, disability history, and the history of the disability rights movement. It is recommended that the instruction be integrated into the existing school curriculum. Qualified school personnel or knowledgeable guest speakers may deliver the instruction, with a focus on including individuals with disabilities as instructors.

Additional information can be found on the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) website at <http://www.fldoe.org/ease/history.asp>

## **Where do the state’s lottery funds go?**

Lottery funds are provided as enhancement funds for school districts as determined by the legislature, based on the Florida Education Finance Program allocation. Prior to the receipt of lottery funds, districts must establish policies and procedures describing the type of expenditures that lottery funds will cover. Some examples of district initiatives that are funded with lottery dollars that would reach exceptional student education (ESE) classrooms include the following:

- Class size reduction
- Mentoring/student assistance initiatives
- Assistance to low performing schools
- School and instructional enhancements
- Public school technology
- Supplemental academic instruction
- Professional development for teachers

To see how much a specific district receives from the Florida Lottery, go to <http://www.flottery.com/lottery/edu/edu.html>.

**We home educate our child, but would like our son to join soccer and baseball activities with public school students. Can we get him on a school’s team? He is going into middle school and could use the socialization (and he is a great athlete).**

Yes. Section 1006.15, F.S., requires that home education students be given the same opportunity to participate in “interscholastic extracurricular activities” as public school students. The law prohibits any requirements that would make participation less accessible for home education students. The law also allows for home education students to develop an agreement to participate in “interscholastic extracurricular activities” at a nonpublic school.

Section 1006.20, F.S., designated the Florida High School Activities Association as the governing organization for athletics. If athletics are offered in grades 6–12 in a program this association governs, the athletic program must be made available upon request to home education students at that grade level. Section 1006.15, F.S., states that public schools may not belong to any governing organization that discriminates against an eligible home education student.

To participate in interscholastic extracurricular activities, a student must have the required 2.0 or better grade point average in academic courses. This applies to both public and home education students. The law allows for a method of evaluation of the student’s progress to be agreed upon by the parent and the principal. The evaluation may be based on a teacher’s review of the student’s work, grades earned through correspondence or at a postsecondary school, standardized test scores, or other method as allowed by s. 1002.41, F.S.

Districts may establish policies for participation that apply to all students, such as evidence of required immunizations and medical clearance for sports activities and auditions. However, the district may not enact policies that would apply different standards to home education students or make it more difficult for them to participate. Additional information can be found at the FDOE website at [http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/information/home\\_education/FAQs.asp](http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/information/home_education/FAQs.asp).

**Is an individual educational plan (IEP) meeting supposed to be done every year?**

Yes. At least once every 12 months, the IEP team must meet to talk about a student’s progress and to develop a new IEP. However, because a student’s needs may change at any time, the IEP may also be revised at other times. The IEP team generally makes

changes to the IEP at an IEP team meeting. However, sometimes the parent(s) and the school district may agree that the IEP can be changed without a meeting. Whenever changes are made to the IEP, the changes agreed to must be documented in writing. Parents may request a copy of the revised or amended IEP.

Additional information about ESE and IEPs can be found at the FDOE website at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pubxhome.asp>

**I would like to get the McKay Scholarship for my child. I am interested, but do not know how to sign up. What are the next steps for me?**

The John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program, commonly known as the McKay Scholarship Program, allows parents of students with disabilities to choose the best academic environment for their children. This scholarship program provides funding that facilitates the opportunity for a student to attend a participating private school or transfer to another public school. Eligible students include students with disabilities who have an IEP or section 504 plan and who were enrolled and reported for funding by a Florida school district.

The application process may be done online. It is important that you do not withdraw your child from public school prior to providing notice of intent to apply for a McKay Scholarship as it could interfere with your eligibility for the scholarship. Prior to taking any action, please visit <http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/McKay/> or call the FDOE Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice at (800) 447-1636.

**Why is the McKay Scholarship not available for students who are home educated?**

The eligibility requirements for McKay Scholarships were determined by legislation. Currently, section 1002.39 (3), F.S., states a student is not eligible for a John M. McKay Scholarship while he or she is participating in a home education program.

**Why do some students get more money from the McKay Scholarship program than others? I know several who have "less" disability than my child who get more money.**

The funding amount is determined by the student's matrix rating, school district, and grade. A Matrix of Services, which is a document used to determine the cost factor for selected exceptional education students, is completed using information found in the

student's IEP and the matrix rating reflects the frequency and intensity of special services that are provided to the student.

### **Is college tuition paid for special needs children who were adopted?**

Florida's children adopted from foster care are eligible for free tuition at any state university, community college, or vocational school in Florida. Information on adopting a child in Florida can be found at <http://adoptflorida.org/about3.shtml>.

### **My 4½-year-old son is nonverbal and needs some help to learn to talk, yet the IEP team did not enroll him in speech therapy. What can I do?**

It is possible that the IEP team proposed support in communication skills in some other way. For example, the IEP may have goals related to communication to be addressed in the prekindergarten classroom. We encourage you to talk with your son's teacher to see how she supports communication development in the classroom. You may also want to contact your school district's Speech/Language coordinator to discuss your concerns. The contact information for the Speech/Language coordinator for your district is at the FDOE website at <http://data.fldoe.org/ese/contacts/>. In addition, you may want to request that the IEP team reconvene if you feel that the IEP does not meet your child's needs.

### **Where can I find out more about the Higher Education Opportunity Act?**

The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) was enacted on August 14, 2008, and reauthorized the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended. Provisions impacting students with disabilities include the following:

- Students with intellectual disabilities became eligible to receive Pell Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant Program funds, and Federal Work Study opportunities
- A new program was developed to expand the number of postsecondary programs for students with intellectual disabilities
- A National Technical Assistance Center at the Department of Education was established to support all efforts to enhance the participation of students with disabilities in higher education

More postsecondary education opportunities are becoming available for students with disabilities. The <http://www.ThinkCollege.net> website includes a searchable database of postsecondary education programs that support youth with intellectual disabilities.

Information on the HEOA can be found at the U.S. Department of Education website at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/leg/hea08/index.html>.

**How can I get a communication board or other device? Insurance does not cover the communication board and we cannot afford to purchase one.**

Some types of equipment, including many communication boards, are considered assistive technology. Assistive technology is technology individuals with disabilities use to perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible. During the IEP meeting, the team must consider if the student requires assistive technology devices or services. If the IEP team determines the need for an assistive technology device, the school is required to provide that device without cost to the parent. Contact your school to ask for an IEP meeting and request an assistive technology evaluation regarding communication needs. Effective July 1, 2011, if an IEP team makes a recommendation for a student with a disability to receive an assistive technology assessment, that assessment must be completed within 60 school days.

**Where can I find more information about sensory processing disorders on the Web?**

You can find education-based sensory ideas on the Web in many places. Begin by searching the Web for sensory processing disorder (SPD). The SPD website, <http://www.sensory-processing-disorder.com>, has pages designed for each sensory area.

**I would like to see more information about technology (such as the iPad) at next year's Family Café conference.**

We will look into providing workshops on educational technology during the 2012 Family Café. Meanwhile, you can find additional information regarding technology at these websites:

<http://www.fdlrs.org/technology.html>

<http://www.ataccess.org/>

<http://www.closingthegap.com/>

<http://home.nas.net/~galambos/tech.htm>

<http://www.ldresources.com/>

<http://www.maineite.org/index.php/news/36-general-news/146-apps-for-ipadipod-and-students-with-disabilities>



## **Are there more early intervention providers besides Early Steps or the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) for children not in school?**

Yes. In addition to Early Steps services provided through FDLRS, early intervention services are available for children not in school as described in the following programs:

- **Early Head Start/Head Start** – Head Start is a federally funded child development program for children from birth to school age. Early Head Start serves children from birth to age three; Head Start serves children from three to five years; and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start serves children from six weeks old to school age. Of the participating families, 90 percent must have incomes at or below the poverty guidelines. Head Start is mandated to provide 10 percent of available enrollment to children with disabilities. Head Start programs provide comprehensive education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to children. Additional information regarding these programs and services may be found at <http://www.floridaheadstart.org/about%20us.html>.
- **Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities** – The school districts' disabilities programs provide special education and related services to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities, three through five years of age. This program is part of the exceptional student education program offered through all 67 counties (school districts) in Florida. Special education services are provided to eligible children at no cost to the family. Children may be served in public schools or public or private community based programs. Additional information regarding exceptional student education may be found at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/ese-home.asp>.
- **Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education** – The VPK Education Program is designed to prepare four-year-old children for kindergarten and to build a foundation for their educational success. VPK is free to all Florida's four-year-olds born on or before September 1 of each year. Children may receive services from public and private providers during the school year program for 540 hours or during the summer program for 300 hours. Additional VPK information may be found at [http://www.floridajobs.org/earlylearning/OEL\\_CCRR\\_VPKProgram.html](http://www.floridajobs.org/earlylearning/OEL_CCRR_VPKProgram.html) and <http://www.fldoe.org/earlylearning/legislative.asp>.

The following resources may also be of assistance:

- **The Florida Directory of Early Childhood Services** (Florida's Central Directory) – This directory provides information and referral on disabilities and special health care needs for families, service coordinators, and other professionals who work with children with special needs. The Florida Central Directory maintains a database that contains a wide range of information on community services, counseling, diagnosis/evaluation, early intervention services, education and training, equipment, medical screening, special education services, support groups, and therapies for children and youth, birth to 21 years of age. For more information,

please call the Florida Central Directory at (800) 654-4440 or visit the website at <http://www.centraldirectory.org>.

- **The Office of Early Learning (OEL)** – The OEL is dedicated to ensuring the accessibility, affordability, and quality of early learning services for Florida’s children and families.
  - The Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Network provides assistance to families in the identification of quality child care and early education programs and how to locate a provider who meets their family’s needs. Each local CCR&R office can provide creative financial assistance options and community resources that may ease a financial burden. To access Child Care Resource and Referral services, call (866) 357-3239 toll free or visit the website at [http://www.floridajobs.org/earlylearning/OEL\\_CCRN\\_Network.html](http://www.floridajobs.org/earlylearning/OEL_CCRN_Network.html).
  - The School Readiness program offers qualified financial assistance for child care through a variety of services. Child care services include extended-day, extended-year, and school-age care to support parents in becoming financially self-sufficient. The School Readiness program takes into account the level of physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development of a child, involves parents as their child’s first teacher, prepares children to become ready for school, and provides parents with information on child development and other topics of interest. Each School Readiness program provides a developmental screening for children and referrals to specific health and educational specialists. Additional program information may be found at [http://www.floridajobs.org/earlylearning/OEL\\_CCRN\\_SRPrograms.html](http://www.floridajobs.org/earlylearning/OEL_CCRN_SRPrograms.html).

### **Will budget cuts restrict community-based instruction (CBI)?**

As you probably know, CBI is an instructional method that promotes teaching and using academic and functional skills in the student’s natural environment. The IEP team generally makes the decision to use this instructional method. If CBI is included as a component of the student’s IEP, the district is obligated to implement it. Transportation must be provided if it is needed to implement the specialized instruction or services contained in the IEP.

### **Is there a research-based program for teaching sex education on a high school level?**

The following are a few links concerning sexual health education for exceptional students:

- <http://www.etr.org/recapp/index.cfm?fuseaction=pages.TopicsInBriefDetail&pageID=45&PageTypeID=1>
- [http://www.fldoe.org/bii/cshp/Education/HIV\\_STD/instructional.asp](http://www.fldoe.org/bii/cshp/Education/HIV_STD/instructional.asp)

## **Has there been any research done to quantify the benefit for students participating in the inclusion model of education?**

Much research has been done on the inclusion model, and it has been found that generally students with disabilities benefit from an inclusion model in education. When inclusion is implemented properly, it can be a huge benefit to students with disabilities, including those with intellectual disabilities. Numerous studies have noted the growth in these students both academically and socially. With more students with disabilities included in general classes, the trend data show an overall increase in their Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) scores in grades 3–10 in Reading and Math. The percentage of students with disabilities scoring at level 3 or higher on FCAT Reading has increased by 14 percent since 2001, and the number scoring at level 1 has decreased by 21 percent. The percentage of students with disabilities scoring at level 3 or higher on FCAT Math has increased by 19 percent since 2001, and the number scoring at level 1 has decreased by 25 percent.

IDEA clearly states that one of the purposes of special education and related and supplemental services is to enable the student to make progress in the general education curriculum and participate with other children with and without disabilities. The IEP team determines the services necessary to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to students with disabilities. The IEP team determines the annual goals, special education and related services, supplementary aids, appropriate accommodations, placement, and other components designed to meet the unique needs of the student based on the effect of the disability. Parents have the right to request that the IEP team review or revise the IEP if they believe their child is not progressing, or if they think that any components of the IEP are not appropriate to their child's needs.

If you have concerns about the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom, contact the Florida Inclusion Network (FIN), a project supported by the Department of Education. FIN provides consultation, information, and support to educators, families, and community members resulting from the inclusion of all students. You can find your local FIN facilitator online at <http://www.floridainclusionnetwork.com/>.

## **Why is a student retained at the third grade when they do not pass the FCAT?**

The federal No Child Left Behind Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) create high expectations for all students, including students with disabilities. In keeping with these initiatives, s. 1008.25, F.S., requires that, in order to be promoted from the third grade, students must meet specific performance levels on the FCAT. The

third grade retention requirement is intended to ensure that students have the prerequisite skills needed for them to be successful in the next grade. You may access more information on this policy at <http://www.flbsi.org/schoolimprove/studentprogression/thirdgradeprog.htm>. Another resource that contains important information about reading requirements, skills, and good cause exemptions to the third grade retention requirement is the Department of Education 2011 *Read to Learn* document located at <http://www.justreadflorida.com/pdf/2011ReadToLearnFinal.pdf>.

The goal of the legislature is to have every student reading at or above grade level. The purpose of retention is to give third graders who have reading deficiencies more time and the additional intensive remedial instruction they need to learn to read proficiently. Reading deficiencies, regardless of the cause, must be addressed before the student can be expected to move on to the more difficult work of the higher grades. IDEA also states that the education of students with disabilities can be made more effective by having high expectations and ensuring them access to the general curriculum as appropriate. If students are promoted without learning to read, they cannot access the curriculum offered to them.

The U.S. Department of Education recently published the toolkit *Assessing Students with Disabilities*, which contains a Question and Answer document that may address some of your concerns, such as, "Why should students with disabilities be tested and included in accountability systems?" and "Is it fair to make students with disabilities take a test that they cannot pass?" The complete toolkit is available at <http://www.osepideasthatwork.org/toolkit/index.asp>, and the Question and Answer document is available at <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/speced/toolkit/faqs.doc>.

**My child has been diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome. I am having difficulties working with his ESE teacher. Where should I go within FDOE to get help?**

FDOE strongly encourages all parents of students with disabilities to work at the local level with school and district administrators to resolve issues with specific teachers. If you are unable to resolve the issues with your child's teacher at the school level, contact your local ESE director. A list of ESE directors is provided at <http://data.fldoe.org/ease/contacts/default.cfm?action=showList&ListID=18>. If additional assistance is needed, the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, Instructional Support/Services program specialists are listed at: <http://www.fldoe.org/ease/developmentservices.asp> and can be contacted at (850) 245-0478.

If you are still unable to resolve your concerns you may use one of the following administrative remedies – mediation, state complaint, or due process hearing. Additional information about these administrative remedies can be found at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/resolution.asp>.

Regarding autism spectrum disorder (ASD), there is a list of district coordinators at <http://data.fldoe.org/ese/contacts/default.cfm?action=showList&ListID=1>. In addition, parents may want to contact their local Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD). CARD is a statewide network that provides information, support, and training to individuals with autism, families, and professionals regarding a variety of issues related to ASD. A wealth of information, including contact information, is available at <http://www.coe.fau.edu/centersandprograms/card/CARDSites.aspx>

**What happened to schools having a school nurse on hand to assist students with their medical needs? Too often they just call Mom/Dad first without any sort of triage. If a qualified nurse were on the staff, then we could feel at ease when we drop off our children in the mornings.**

Current Florida law (s. 381.0056, F.S.) requires county health departments and local school districts to collaboratively develop an annual school health services plan. Each school health services plan describes local strategies and responsibilities for implementing activities that promote the health of Florida’s students and support academic success. Policies and procedures for school health services, including employment of school nursing personnel, are developed and implemented at the local level.

ESE directors work with local principals and administrative district staff to provide services based on the needs of the students with disabilities assigned to individual schools. If you feel that your child’s medical needs are not being met, request that your child’s IEP team reconvene to discuss your concerns.

**I cannot get the school to write an IEP for my 8-year-old daughter who has Asperger’s syndrome. She is very bright but does not socialize with others well, has become a disturbance in class, and is now identified as a behavior problem. How can I get the school to assist so she can learn?**

If your child is having difficulty in school, the classroom teacher will try in many ways to help her be more successful. You and the teacher may meet to try to solve the problem together. If the situation does not improve, you or the teacher may ask for help from a team of people at the school. You, as a parent, are considered part of that team.

This team will help by planning and implementing *interventions* that are most likely to help your child, such as special teaching or behavior management strategies. When a child's behavior interferes with learning, the team must consider the use of positive behavior supports and interventions. You may be asked to attend meetings or help in other ways. Your child's response to the interventions will be monitored and decisions will be made, with you, about changing, decreasing, or increasing the intensity of the interventions. This process is called *problem solving*. The information the team gathers and uses to decide how well the interventions are working is called *response to intervention* (RtI) data. Problem solving is an ongoing process to find the instructional strategies that work best for your child.

There may come a time during the problem solving process using RtI data when the team feels that your child is not making enough progress or the intensity of support your child needs leads the team to suspect that she might need special education and related services. At that time, the team may suggest additional evaluation for special education. This is called a *referral*.

A referral is a request to conduct evaluation procedures to determine if a child is eligible for special education and related services. The team decides which specific evaluation procedures will be used and included in the referral. As a parent, you may request a referral for an individual evaluation at any time. We encourage parents to make their request in writing.

No matter who refers your child for evaluation (you or the school's team), you should be told when the referral was made and why. If you make the referral yourself, write down the name of the person to whom you talked and the date. It is best to ask for the referral in writing and keep a copy.

If school staff decide not to evaluate your child for special education, they will give you a written notice telling you:

- Why they are not going to evaluate your child (for example, because you and the school have evidence that the interventions implemented are working and can be continued through general education resources)
- Any other options they considered and why they did not choose those other options
- How you can get help understanding the notice and the evaluation process
- How you can get a copy of your procedural safeguards

Some students with disabilities do not qualify for ESE because they do not need the specially designed instruction and related services. Some students will qualify for a 504 plan. Additional information about 504 plans is provided at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pubxhome.asp>. Also, an online tutorial is available at <http://sss.usf.edu/504tutorial/index.html>.

If there have been no interventions nor a referral for evaluations concerning your child's behavioral issues, we encourage you to put in a request for a problem solving team meeting to seek help for your child. If the school does not respond in the way we have described above, and you suspect that your child has a disability, you may want to request an evaluation for your child due to increasing behavioral issues. Put your request in writing to the school principal and copy the ESE director for your local school district. The contact information for ESE directors is available at <http://data.fldoe.org/ease/contacts/>. This will start a process of problem solving and interventions.

### **As a young adult, what can I do to get better exceptional student education services for myself in school?**

Every student with a disability who is eligible for and needs ESE services will have an individual educational plan. An IEP is a written plan that tells you, your parent, the teachers, and other school staff which ESE services will be provided to you. Rule 6A-6.03028(h)4., Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), states the IEP must include:

...a statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services, based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable, to be provided to the student, or on behalf of the student, and a statement of the classroom accommodations, modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided for the student to advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals; to be involved and progress in the general curriculum; to participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities; and to be educated and participate with other students with disabilities and nondisabled students...

The IEP is a document that reflects the IEP team's decisions. It is the written tool to communicate these decisions to teachers and others who will work with you.

It is important for you to be an active participant in your IEP team meetings. You need to learn as much about the IEP process as possible. Additional information about IEP is provided at <http://www.fldoe.org/ease/pubxhome.asp> or you may connect with the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System Associate Center that serves your area at <http://www.fdlrs.org>.

You may ask about self-determination training in your school or connect with the Florida Youth Council. Information about the Florida Youth Council is available at [http://familycafe.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=section&id=17&Itemid=81](http://familycafe.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&id=17&Itemid=81).

## **What vocational training or colleges are there for young adults with attention deficit hyperactivity disorders (ADHD) and developmental delays?**

Students with disabilities may select any program for which they are qualified. They should carefully review standards and requirements for the program and institution in which they are interested to ensure that they will be able to be successful. Campus visits, which include visits to the disability services office, can be helpful in locating an environment that best meets a student's interests and needs. In addition, although all institutions have a legal obligation to provide appropriate services, certain colleges or technical centers may be able to provide better services than others due to their size or location (Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Additional resources concerning postsecondary education are on the Project 10: Transition Education Network website at <http://www.project10.info/>.

The direct link to Florida's Career and Technical Centers is <http://data.fldoe.org/workforce/contacts/default.cfm?action=showList&ListID=8>

The direct link to Florida Colleges' Disability Services is <http://data.fldoe.org/workforce/contacts/default.cfm?action=showList&ListID=40>

Moreover, Florida has a number of Transition Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities into Higher Education (TPSID), located at various state universities. Information can be found on the Florida Consortium website at <http://fltpsid.info/>

## **Why aren't programs like Project 10: Transition Education Network, or other similar programs, available in small counties?**

Project 10 is a statewide program. There are five Project 10 representatives, each covering an area of the state. To find out more about Project 10 and to locate the representative who serves your county, go to <http://www.project10.info/Contact.php>.

## **Why can't I graduate with a general education diploma?**

The IEP team, including the student's parent and the student beginning at age 16 or younger, determines the diploma selection for students with disabilities served in ESE. The decision is reviewed annually and revised if determined necessary. Information on requirements for a standard diploma are on the FACTS.org website at the following link:



[http://facts23.facts.org/florida/facts/Home\\_Page/High\\_School\\_Students/High\\_School\\_101/Graduation\\_Requirements](http://facts23.facts.org/florida/facts/Home_Page/High_School_Students/High_School_101/Graduation_Requirements).

Please note that the graduation requirements for a standard diploma are different based on the year the student entered the 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

Some seniors with disabilities may be eligible for an FCAT waiver. These students must have met all requirements for graduation with a standard diploma except for passing the FCAT. The senior must have taken the Grade 10 FCAT with appropriate allowable accommodations at least twice, once in grade 10 and once in grade 11.

It should be noted that students with disabilities who have an IEP may have End-of - Course (EOC) assessment results waived for the purpose of determining the student's course grade and credit. The student must have taken the EOC assessment with appropriate allowable accommodations at least once, and have demonstrated, as determined by the IEP team, achievement of the course standards.

Another option for some students is the College Placement Test (CPT)-Eligible certificate of completion. This is a certificate awarded to students who have completed all requirements for the standard high school diploma, including a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale, except for passage of the state approved graduation test or the attainment of a concordant score on an alternate assessment. Students who receive a CPT-Eligible certificate of completion may take the CPT and be admitted to remedial or credit courses at a state community college, as appropriate.

**I finally graduated from high school. What now? I want to go to school, but I need 24/7 care. I cannot find assistance options for me to attend the university of my choice, and there are no community colleges around for me to attend. What can I do?**

We encourage you to contact the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVR) concerning your needs for personal care assistance to continue with postsecondary education. You can learn more about DVR and the office nearest you at the DVR website at <http://www.rehabworks.org/index.shtml>.

You may also want to contact the Centers for Independent Living (CIL) program in your area. The CILs are consumer-controlled, not for profit local organizations that provide at least four core services – information and referral, independent living skills training, individual and systems advocacy, and peer counseling to persons with significant disabilities. There may be a peer counselor available who has already dealt with some of the issues you are struggling with and they may be able to offer some strategies that may work for you.

The Family Network on Disabilities offers the tutorial *The Road to Successful Transition*, which is available at <http://www.fndfl.org/Tutorials.asp>.

You may wish to visit the Project 10: Transition Education Network website to learn about other resources and scholarships that may assist you with your postsecondary options. The website is <http://www.project10.info/PostsecondaryEducation.php>.

### **Do all schools offer parent services? How can I learn more about parent services?**

Although not every school has a parent liaison, each school and local FDLRS center has parent liaisons. You can locate the parent liaison for your district at <http://data.fldoe.org/ese/contacts> and information about FDLRS is at <http://www.fdlrs.org>.

### **When will the legislature see that we ALL matter!! We vote—believe it or not!**

This is an issue of self-advocacy and visibility. One way to increase your visibility is to participate in the Friday night Annual Summit on Disabilities at Family Café. However, communicating with legislators is not a one time a year event.

There are several ways to learn about effectively communicating with your legislators. The Family Network on Disabilities offers a tutorial, *Making Your Case*, concerning communication with legislators. Additional information about the tutorial is available at <http://www.fndfl.org/Tutorials.asp>. The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council offers an annual program, *Partners in Policymaking*, at <http://www.fddc.org/news/pip-information>. The Family Café offers the Change Agent Network (CAN). For more information about CAN, go to [http://familycafe.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=frontpage&Itemid=88](http://familycafe.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=frontpage&Itemid=88).

### **Why is there no mandatory training for school bus operators and attendants so they understand better how to work with children who have autism or bipolar disabilities?**

The Florida School Bus Operator’s Curriculum does address exceptional student education, disabilities, and situations that are common in school transportation. Additionally, Rule 6A-6.03028(7)(c), F.A.C., indicates the IEP should include:

...a statement of the specially designed instruction and related services and supplementary aids and services to be provided to the student...modifications or support for school personnel that will be provided to the student to advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals...

It is important for you, as the parent, to be an active participant in your child's IEP team meetings. It is there that you can bring up needs that your child has during the school day, including the time they spends on the bus. If the bus operator, aides, or teachers need support through training to better help your child that issue needs to be addressed within the IEP. Additional information about IEPs is provided at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pubxhome.asp> or you can connect with the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System Associate Center that serves your area (<http://www.fdlrs.org>).

### **Why aren't these conferences mandatory for everyone who works with children with special needs?**

Teachers in Florida are required to complete professional development to renew their teaching certificates. School districts have developed professional development systems that provide teachers with opportunities to complete these recertification requirements through in-service training. Teachers also participate in other professional development activities such as conferences, which they attend to be more effective in the classroom. While no conferences in Florida are mandated, you are encouraged to urge the ESE teachers in your child's school to participate in Family Café and/or other similar events.

### **I want the following items added to the procedural safeguards:**

- **How to write an Order of Protection**
- **How to fight deposition demands of a school attorney**
- **How to do depositions**
- **How to get, fill out, and serve subpoena duces tecum**
- **How parents can get notification by Division of Administrative Hearings of the identity of the assigned administrative law judge**

The *Notice of Procedural Safeguards for Parents of Students with Disabilities* currently meets the requirements of Rule 6A-6.03311, F.A.C., *Procedural Safeguards and Due Process Procedures for Parents and Students with Disabilities*. The requirements ensure that the procedural safeguards include information related to prior written notice, parental consent, access to education records, the availability of mediation, the opportunity to present and resolve complaints through the state complaint and due process hearing procedures, independent educational evaluations, procedures for students who are subject to placement in an interim alternative educational setting, due process hearings and

student's placement pending a hearing request, requirements for disclosure of evaluation results and recommendations, civil actions, and attorney's fees. The intent of the current content of the procedural safeguards or parental rights is to ensure that parents have the opportunity to be partners in the educational decisions regarding their children. In addition, the procedural safeguards provide a full explanation of the provisions described above in Rules 6A-6.03011 through 6A-6.0361, F.A.C.

The procedural safeguards document is not considered to be the appropriate avenue to include information regarding deposition demands or subpoenas as these are issues that may be addressed procedurally with an administrative law judge (ALJ) based on the individual due process hearing case. Information regarding subpoenaing a witness or objecting to a subpoena may be found on the State of Florida Division of Administrative Hearings (DOAH) website at <http://www.doah.state.fl.us>, in the section entitled, *Representing Yourself before the Division of Administrative Hearings*. In order to obtain the name of an ALJ assigned to a due process hearing case, individual cases can be searched at DOAH's website included above. Uniform rules of procedure for DOAH hearings are also posted on DOAH's website. Parents and/or advocates who are acting as a parent's qualified representative may wish to become familiar with the procedures, and with Florida Appellate law. In the event that further legal counsel is necessary, interested parties may wish to seek legal representation. Districts have an obligation to provide information regarding low-cost legal counsel to parents; other information for legal support may be accessed at <http://www.floridabar.org/>. Staff from school district exceptional student education programs, FDOE's Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, and DOAH, are available to answer any questions regarding due process hearing procedures.

Disability Rights Florida, the federally mandated protection and advocacy system in Florida, is also a resource for parents. Information can be found at <http://www.disabilityrightsflorida.org/>.

**The BEESS Clearinghouse Information Center material in the exhibit hall was not only helpful with resources, but they also helped my entire community. Thank you, FDOE staff.**

The Clearinghouse has a new name. It is now the BEESS Resource and Information Center (BRIC). We are updating materials and information on the website at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/clerhome.asp>. Additional good news is that the staff members who assisted you are still with BRIC. Thank you for the kind words about their work.

**I am very happy to see staff from FDOE at The Family Café every year. They were very helpful again this year.**

Thank you. We understand that parent involvement is critical to children's success in school and community. We believe that all children can learn with the appropriate supports. FDOE efforts to help sponsor Family Café is just one of the ways we try to help families find the resources they need so they can be as effective as possible in their children's education.

# Department of Health

**Why can't some of these medical supply companies have some control over the charges for equipment and toys – the prices are outrageous – a lot not even covered by insurance unless it's a medical necessity. You pay 3,4,5 or even more times the price for a toy because it has a switch on it. Why?!?!?**

State agencies do not determine prices for medical equipment, so the Department of Health cannot control these costs. However insurance companies can negotiate reimbursement rates for items covered by insurance.

Medical equipment can be very expensive, especially if it is not covered by insurance. Many of the Centers for Independent Living in Florida have loan programs for medical equipment. You can contact the Florida Centers for Independent Living at (866) 575-6004 or visit the Website at <http://floridacils.org/>.

The Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST) is another organization that will loan technology devices for people to try, and keep as long as the equipment is necessary. You may contact FAAST at (888) 788-9216 or visit the website at <http://www.faast.org/>.

## **What do you do for health insurance when you outgrow CMS?**

The Florida Health and Transition Services (FloridaHATS) initiative provides information about insurance options. Please visit the website ([www.floridahats.org](http://www.floridahats.org)). The Website includes a pdf of the brochure "Just the Facts: The 411 on Health Insurance for Young Adults Ages 18-30 in Florida". The website for that brochure is [http://www.floridahats.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/JUST-THE-FACTS\\_Final\\_October2010.pdf](http://www.floridahats.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/JUST-THE-FACTS_Final_October2010.pdf). The brochure includes information about different types of health insurance coverage options and explains who is eligible.

If your child is enrolled in Children's Medical Services, the nurse care coordinator and others involved in your child's care will assist with your child's transition from pediatric to adolescent/young adult systems of care. This includes providing assistance with exploring appropriate health insurance options.

**I was hoping for some information about head injury programs or support systems. My injury happened when I was 12, therefore I have never had help in any way. I am now 45.**

For assistance with resources available to assist people affected by brain injury, please contact the Brain Injury Association of Florida at (800) 392-3442. The website is <http://www.byyourside.org/>. The Brain Injury Association of Florida will help you find

resources such as support groups, and community organizations to provide support and assistance.

The Florida Department of Health Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program (BSCIP) provides assistance for individuals who are affected by moderate to severe brain or spinal cord injury. To find out more about the program or to see if you might qualify for services you may call (800) 342-0778, or visit the Website <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/demo/BrainSC/index.html>.

### **More Down Syndrome education programs for parents in Osceola County.**

Early Steps does not organize training events for families, but I encourage you to check out the National Down Syndrome Society website <http://www.ndss.org/>, under the Education, Development and Community Life link for training opportunities, as well as the Down Syndrome Association of Central Florida, <http://www.dsacf.org/>, Upcoming Events page.

**There is a very big need for therapists in Highlands County (Sebring area). I was wondering what I could do or where to start to help my child and several other children get the therapist they need. Especially O.T. Also, I am very thankful to be able to attend a wonderful event. Thank you to everyone for all the hard work.**

Early Steps serves families with children birth to age three who have developmental disabilities or delays. After a referral is made, Early Steps will provide a screening and/or evaluation to determine if the child is eligible. If eligible, a team, including the family, determines the services needed and Early Steps will pay for any of those services that your insurance company does not cover. Therapies might be a part of the services determined to be necessary to meet the outcomes that the family chooses to work on in Early Steps. You can see a video of what a typical Early Steps service would look like on the Early Steps website at the link below. The local school system can pay for educationally appropriate services for children after the age of three, which may include therapies. To make a referral to either Early Steps or school system services, call the Florida Directory of Early Childhood Services at 800-656-4440. [http://www.cms-kids.com/families/early\\_steps/early\\_steps.html](http://www.cms-kids.com/families/early_steps/early_steps.html)

### **As a guardian how would I plan for a "living will" so that all of the doctors would know?**

Free copies of Living Wills and Designation of Health Care Surrogate forms are available on-line at the Florida Senate Website Archive ([http://archive.flsenate.gov/cgi-bin/View\\_Page.pl?File=index.html&Directory=Welcome/living\\_will/&Tab=welcome&Submenu=1&Location=App](http://archive.flsenate.gov/cgi-bin/View_Page.pl?File=index.html&Directory=Welcome/living_will/&Tab=welcome&Submenu=1&Location=App)) That web page provides links to free pdf forms for Living Wills, Designation of Health Care Surrogate, and related information. Once a form is completed,

it you may provide copies to physicians, hospitals, and other health care providers. The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC) also provides information about future planning for family members and legal guardians. You may contact the FDDC at (800) 580-7801. The FDDC Website is <http://www.fddc.org/>.

**I can't find much on juvenile rheumatoid arthritis. If you could help with info that would be great! All our doctor does is manage pain. My daughter doesn't like the way the meds make her feel!**

The website for the Florida Chapter of the Arthritis Foundation is <http://www.arthritis.org/chapters/florida/>. The National Arthritis Foundation Website is <http://www.arthritis.org/index.php>. Go to <http://www.arthritis.org/juvenile-arthritis.php> for information for children with arthritis. The contact phone number for the Florida Chapter of the Arthritis Foundation is (800) 672-0882.

Your doctor or other health care professional may also be able to provide you with information about local support groups and current treatment protocols.

**Is there a way a person can find out the biological background of a potential adopted child?**

Adoption Specialists attempt to obtain as much information as possible about a child's background including medical information about the child and members of the biological family. The Adoption Specialist will share this information with potential adoptive parents during the appropriate time during the adoption process.

The following Website provides detailed information about the adoption process in Florida: <http://adoptflorida.org/about1.shtml>. You may also call Florida's Adoption Information Center at (800) 962-3678

**Could we have some input on diabetes (juvenile diabetes)?**

The University of Florida Division of Pediatric Endocrinology administers a diabetes educational Website. The Website provides education, activities, and information about diabetes camps in Florida. The Website is <http://fite.peds.ufl.edu/diabetes.html>. You, or the child will need to log in and create an account, and it is free. The site contains useful information for adults and kids.

You may also contact the Children's Medical Services office in your area to find out about area support groups for children and families with special health care needs including diabetes. You can locate the Children's Medical Services area office in your area at [http://www.cms-kids.com/home/contact/area\\_offices.html](http://www.cms-kids.com/home/contact/area_offices.html), or call (850) 245-4200 for assistance.



You can also find a lot of information and join the Kids Advocacy Network at the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation Website  
[http://advocacy.jdrf.org/index.cfm?page\\_id=109185](http://advocacy.jdrf.org/index.cfm?page_id=109185)

**Thank you for having more topics for adults with disabilities. Please have more! We need more information on 1. Traumatic Brain Injury, 2. Veteran issues, 3. Group homes/housing solutions for the disabled – resources from all over the place not just Orlando, 4. More resources for adults with disabilities.**

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) administers programs to assist individuals with disabilities. You may call (866) 273-2273 or visit the Website  
<http://apd.myflorida.com/contacts/>

The Florida Department of Health Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program provides assistance for people who have sustained a moderate to severe traumatic brain and spinal cord injury. For information please call (800) 342-0778 or visit the Website  
<http://www.doh.state.fl.us/demo/BrainSC/index.html>. This Website also provides information for veterans who sustain traumatic brain injuries.

The Centers for Independent Living also provide assistance for people with disabilities. You can contact the Florida Centers for Independent Living at (866) 575-6004 or visit the Website at <http://floridacils.org/>

Operation Homefront is another resource for veterans in Florida. The contact phone number is (888) 390-0843. The Website address for Florida is  
<http://www.operationhomefront.net/florida/default.aspx>

**I want to adopt—we have three children, and one with a severe disability—he is medically fragile and is a blessing to us all. We want to adopt another child who will benefit from a loving family. What is the process?**

The following Website provides detailed information about the adoption process in Florida: <http://adoptflorida.org/about1.shtml>. You may also call Florida's Adoption Information Center at (800) 962-3678.

**Is there a way we could find out more information on the background of adopted children?**

Adoption Specialists attempt to gather as much information as possible about a child's history including biological relatives' medical history. This information is provided to adoptive families at the appropriate time during the adoption process. Information about adoption in Florida is available at <http://adoptflorida.org/about1.shtml>, or call Florida's Adoption Information Center at (800) 962-3678.

**My son was diagnosed late at age 7 1/2 with Autism Spectrum Disorder. This past January at age 11 he got sent to a medical Intake Behavioral Hospital due to some issues he was having threatening suicide. Well, there they changed his diagnosis to just having ADHD. How can I get the proper diagnosis as I have been going through a lot of red tape with evals, schools telling me he has not go what he has been diagnosed with. It is very frustrating as a parent of adopted children with limited information on biological backgrounds.**

The Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) provides information, training, and support to districts and families, in order to promote effective parent participation in the education of children who are exceptional and/or have special needs. To find help in your area you can go to the website

<http://www.fdlrs.org/parentservices.html>, or call:

Kathy Burton

Florida Department of Education

phone: (850) 245-0478

EMail: [Kathy.Burton@fldoe.org](mailto:Kathy.Burton@fldoe.org)

The following CHADD (Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) Website also provides information about resources including support groups for parents and others affected by ADHD:

[http://www.chadd.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Chapter\\_Search\\_Display1&state=fl](http://www.chadd.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Chapter_Search_Display1&state=fl) or call (800) 233-4050.

### **When my daughter turns 18 will she lose her CMS Health Insurance? What insurance will she have?**

If your daughter is currently eligible for Medicaid it is possible that she will have to reapply for Medicaid before age 18, depending on your situation.

The Florida Health and Transition Services (FloridaHATS) initiative provides information about insurance options. Please visit the website ([www.floridahats.org](http://www.floridahats.org)). The Website includes a pdf of the brochure "Just the Facts: The 411 on Health Insurance for Young Adults Ages 18-30 in Florida". The website for that brochure is [http://www.floridahats.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/JUST-THE-FACTS\\_Final\\_October2010.pdf](http://www.floridahats.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/JUST-THE-FACTS_Final_October2010.pdf). The brochure includes information about different types of health insurance coverage options and explains who is eligible.

If your child is enrolled in Children's Medical Services, the nurse care coordinator and others involved in your child's care will assist with your child's transition from pediatric to adolescent/young adult systems of care. This includes providing assistance with exploring appropriate health insurance options. In some cases, clients may remain eligible for Children's Medical Services up to age 21, so if your child no longer qualifies for Medicaid at age 18, she may qualify for Safety Net services through Children's Medical Services.

**How do I sign up for CMS services? We hope to qualify for the services, just do not know if I just show up or is there an online application?**

Please call CMS at (850) 245-4200 for information on your local area CMS office or visit online at:

[http://www.cms-kids.com/home/contact/area\\_offices.html](http://www.cms-kids.com/home/contact/area_offices.html)

The CMS area office enrollment staff will determine if you or your child are eligible for services and assist with enrollment. There is not an online application process.

**How do I sign up for CMS services? We hope to qualify for the services, just do not know if I just show up or is there an online application?**

Please call CMS at (850) 245-4200 for information on your local area CMS office or visit online at:

[http://www.cms-kids.com/home/contact/area\\_offices.html](http://www.cms-kids.com/home/contact/area_offices.html)

The CMS area office enrollment staff will determine if you or your child are eligible for services and assist with enrollment. There is not an online application process.

**I would like to see something on diabetes in kids. My doctor doesn't speak on my level. A peer group would be nice!**

The University of Florida Division of Pediatric Endocrinology administers a diabetes educational Website. The Website also provides education, activities and information about diabetes camps in Florida. The Website is <http://fite.peds.ufl.edu/diabetes.html>. You, or the child will need to log in and create an account but it is free. The site contains useful information for adults and kids.

You may also contact the Children's Medical Services office in your area to find out about area support groups for children and families with special health care needs including diabetes. You can locate the Children's Medical Services area office in your area at [http://www.cms-kids.com/home/contact/area\\_offices.html](http://www.cms-kids.com/home/contact/area_offices.html), or call (850) 245-4200 for assistance.

You can also find a lot of information and join the Kids Advocacy Network at the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation Website [http://advocacy.jdrf.org/index.cfm?page\\_id=109185](http://advocacy.jdrf.org/index.cfm?page_id=109185).

**What about having a sibling class? What about information on genetic syndromes?**

Thank you for the suggestion, the annual conference committee will review this request.

The following Website from the University of Kansas lists support groups and resources for rare and genetic disorders: <http://www.kumc.edu/gec/support/>.

### **Could we have some input on diabetes (juvenile diabetes)?**

The University of Florida Division of Pediatric Endocrinology administers a diabetes educational Website. The Website also provides education, activities and information about diabetes camps in Florida. The Website is <http://fite.peds.ufl.edu/diabetes.html>. You, or the child will need to log in and create an account, and it is free. The site contains useful information for adults and kids.

You may also contact the Children's Medical Services office in your area to find out about area support groups for children and families with special health care needs including diabetes. You can locate the Children's Medical Services area office in your area at [http://www.cms-kids.com/home/contact/area\\_offices.html](http://www.cms-kids.com/home/contact/area_offices.html), or call (850) 245-4200 for assistance.

You can also find a lot of information and join the Kids Advocacy Network at the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation Website [http://advocacy.jdrf.org/index.cfm?page\\_id=109185](http://advocacy.jdrf.org/index.cfm?page_id=109185)

### **Are there more early interventions besides Early Steps or FDLRS for children not in school?**

Services for children 3 to 5 vary by local community. I encourage you to call the Florida Directory of Early Childhood Services at 800-656-4440 who maintain a listing or resources for children with special needs and disabilities by county You can also access this information on their website and search for services in your local area at the link below. <http://www.refersoftware.com/fdecs/>

**How do we advocate regarding Affordable Healthcare Act when Florida isn't participating? Do we ask the same questions? Has anyone asked how "not participating" will affect our families? 2. many challenges with children at Family Café involve a need for "a safe play place to run and expend energy." Is this a possibility? 3. Why aren't drugstores providing alternative labeling for the visually impaired? Isn't this required by Federal law? If you make a call to 10 pharmacies all will say they don't but maybe only one will actually ask their supervisor. The print is small and this is a danger to personal health if supports aren't available.**

Thank you for your comments.

1) We recommend that you contact your legislator, or Governor Scott regarding the Affordable Care Act. You can find your local state representatives, and senator at the following Website:

<http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Welcome/index.cfm?CFID=57773385&CFTOKEN=34249716>.

You may contact Governor Scott at <http://www.flgov.com/contact/>, or call the Governor's office at (850) 488-7146.

2) Thank you for your suggestion about having more space for children to play at the annual conference. The Family Café annual conference planning committee will do its best to accommodate your request.

3) We contacted the Florida Pharmacy Association regarding labeling of pharmaceuticals for people who are visually impaired. There are no federal or state laws requiring special labels, and most pharmacies do not have the software to print special labels. Thank you for bringing this to our attention and we did notify the Florida Pharmacy Association and asked them to consider this issue.

# Division of Emergency Management

**How can Emergency Management work closer to the Red Cross? In our area they do not coordinate (Green Cove Springs). At least not for the group homes.**

County Offices of Emergency Management are encouraged to work with all stakeholders including the Red Cross. Group homes are required to have an emergency plan. Group home supervisors should work closely with their local emergency management office to ensure their plans are adequate.

**Are disaster shelters or schools prepared in case of an emergency for a child on a ventilator? What if the power stays out for over 72 hours? My back-up is only a hospital over 45 minutes from home—the rest of my family could not come with us. We would have to split up—there has got to be a better plan. I live in Naples with my husband and 3 kids (the youngest on a ventilator).**

Generally if a school is not designated as a "Special Needs Shelter" it will not have guaranteed back up power. The best course of action is to register on your local "Special Needs Registry". If you have internet access, go to:

[www.colliergov.net/Index.aspx?page=1844](http://www.colliergov.net/Index.aspx?page=1844)

If you do not have internet access, call: (239)-252-3600 or (239)-252-3636

**You know we are not prepared and it has been many years since Florida has had a hurricane that provided us with the "fear." How can we promote preparedness—is the state prepared for a hurricane hitting and hurting those with special health care needs. Will someone be there?**

While we have not been impacted by a major hurricane for some time, efforts have been ongoing to provide information, education, and training to individuals, emergency managers, and shelter managers on this very subject.

**When will the legislature see that we ALL matter!! We vote—believe it or not! We need to be prepared to respond to the lack of preparation they have to all disasters! Man or mother nature made.**

The Division of Emergency Management and each of our County Partners across the state make up one of the most robust state emergency management organizations in the country. We take an All-Hazards approach to all of our preparation and planning, which enables us to be prepared at all times and for all circumstances.

**We talk a lot of being prepared. But what available shelters are out there for us to use? Who knows where they are located? My schools are not prepared to accept the disabled there, that is for sure.**

All shelters are required to accept people with disabilities. However, if the person with a disability has a medical condition which would exceed the shelter's capability to provide sufficient care another sheltering option may be in order. A suggestion is to work with your local emergency management and shelter managers to ensure access to your shelters.

**What happened to the local Home Depots having a tax break week for the purchasing of hurricane supplies?**

Any Tax Holidays are determined and approved by the Legislature. Please contact your local representative to inquire about any scheduled or upcoming Tax Holidays.

**Are we prepared to respond to attack in our water, sewer and air systems?**

The Division of Emergency Management takes an All-Hazards approach to planning and preparations for any potential disaster, this includes working with all of our state and local partners across Florida to assess needs and protect our critical infrastructure, such as water, sewer, an air systems.

**The lady who spoke on the simple items needed to prepared your own disaster kit was awesome! Thank you Linda**

Linda Carter provided very useful information on being prepared on a low budget.

**We do not have response systems for the elderly or disabled, and I remember after Hurricane Andrew we taught students in schools about disaster planning. We do not do this anymore. We have become overly confident.**

You can address this with your local school board or with your local Office of Emergency Management. Miami-Dade's emergency management office contact information is: 305-513-7700 or [www.MiamiDade.gov/OEM](http://www.MiamiDade.gov/OEM)

**We should create more options for families to become prepared . . . more public service announcements and we should all develop a plan. Thank you for your time! I heard the message.**

Thank you for your suggestions. We are encouraging everyone to "Get A Plan." Emergency preparedness begins with the individual.

**Will the shelters be prepared for me? I need a vent and 24/7 care. I do not want to be separated from my family. I hear that we should make a plan, but I rely on so many others for my plan to be successful. This is extremely stressful for me. I cannot go long distances off electrical power, even with battery backup. Not a hospital either. I want to stay with my family in case of an emergency. All five of us together. My mom needs to be with me**

You should be sure you are on your county's "Special Needs Registry." If you are served by a Home Healthcare agency you may already be registered but you should check to be sure. Columbia county's "Special Needs Shelter" and general population shelter are located in the same building and emergency backup power will be available. Contact your local emergency management office for more details.



# Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

**I have recently lost my job and am now having trouble getting a new one. Who would be the best agency to help me get a new job?**

If you are residing in Florida, you may be eligible for services provided by the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Visit us online at [www.RehabWorks.org](http://www.RehabWorks.org) or call 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information.

You may also wish to contact the Agency for Workforce Innovation for job-related services they provide at [www.employflorida.com](http://www.employflorida.com) .

**I am a 14-year-old. I want to be a doctor, OBGYN or a vet. Taking care of animals, I have Cerebral Palsy. How do I find out how to go about doing this? I love to work—I am a take-charge kind of gal, my mom says.**

You may be eligible for services provided by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Visit us online at [www.RehabWorks.org](http://www.RehabWorks.org) or call 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information.

**Is there a website for resources for jobs for persons with disabilities?**

There is not a website that is specifically designed for jobs for persons with disabilities. However, you may be eligible for services provided by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Visit us online at [www.RehabWorks.org](http://www.RehabWorks.org) or call 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information.

In addition, you may contact the Agency for Workforce Innovation for job-related services they provide at [www.employflorida.com](http://www.employflorida.com) .

You may also wish to speak with a disability specialist at the Agency for Persons with Disabilities by calling 1-866-APD-CARES (1-866-273-2273) for additional resources that may be available.

**I am going to college in the fall (hopefully), at least I want to; however, much needed services/aids are not provided by the university system. Why? Why can't I have an aid with me in the dorm?**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 (of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act) provide requirements and guidance for postsecondary institutions in regards to the rights of students with disabilities and responsibilities for accommodation. The ADA and Section

504 do not require the provision of personal services/personal care attendants as an accommodation. Students are responsible to provide for that service, if needed.

You may be eligible for services provided by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Visit us online at [www.RehabWorks.org](http://www.RehabWorks.org) or call 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information.

**What do I do when I graduate from school? Because my mom does not know. This place is fun! I would really like to work here someday.**

From your question we cannot tell your age. If you are 16 or older, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation may be able to help you with transition from school to work. Visit us online at [www.RehabWorks.org](http://www.RehabWorks.org) or call 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information.

You may also wish to contact the Agency for Workforce Innovation for job-related services they provide at [www.employflorida.com](http://www.employflorida.com) .

**This is our first time. We enjoyed it very much. What we were able to attend was very informative. I am a mother of two autistic children. I am looking for independent living- life skills support for a recent high school graduate. I am having a hard time finding resources for her. She is very high-function, but needs help in life skills and being independent on own. I we disappointed that autism was treated as equal as the others. Autism is a silent disability and we came here to feel supported and felt there was not any for us. We did feel that because she was not physical, there was not a place.**

Your daughter may be eligible for services provided by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Visit VR online at [www.RehabWorks.org](http://www.RehabWorks.org) or call 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information.

You may also contact the Self Reliance, Inc. Center for Independent Living in Tampa, FL by calling 813-375-3965. This center provides life skills training to individuals with disabilities that can range from budgeting and management of personal finances, to rights as a voter, how to look for and keep employment, how to write a resume, accessing transportation or developing self-advocacy skills. These skill trainings are performed either on a one-to-one basis or in a group setting.

**Why doesn't the school system work closer with Vocational Rehabilitation? We were never told about VR or Social Security while our daughter was in school.**

It is unfortunate that you did not receive the information sooner. In order to assist students with disabilities, VR coordinates with local and state work groups to assist school staff, families and students in their efforts to obtain and share needed information.

From your question it appears that your daughter is no longer in school. However, she may be eligible for services provided by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Visit us online at [www.RehabWorks.org](http://www.RehabWorks.org) or call 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information.

She may also want to contact the Agency for Workforce Innovation for job-related services they provide at [www.employflorida.com](http://www.employflorida.com)

**I think I am eligible for DVR (Vocational Rehabilitation) services. How do I sign up for VR?**

Visit VR online at [www.RehabWorks.org](http://www.RehabWorks.org) or call 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information regarding eligibility and for an office near you.

**Our family is having a very hard time with our VR counselor. Why is the process to get another counselor so difficult?**

We are sorry to hear you are having problems with your counselor. You may ask to speak to your counselor's supervisor or contact the VR Ombudsman's Office at our toll free telephone number, 1-800-515-3692 (Voice/TDD). The VR Ombudsman will assist you in resolving your client-services needs.

**What resources are available to a newly physically disabled adult, with regard to home/vehicle modifications?**

You may be eligible for services provided by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation if you have employment as a goal. Services may include home/vehicle modifications if appropriate. Visit us online at [www.RehabWorks.org](http://www.RehabWorks.org) or call 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information.

**Need to know how to allow funding to be made available for transportation in rural Brevard County. Now that the space program has been de-funded, there is a great need for transportation and new businesses.**

The State of Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged CTD is an independent commission housed administratively within the Florida Department of Transportation. Their mission is to ensure the availability of efficient, cost-effective, and quality transportation services for transportation disadvantaged persons. You may contact them at the following link:  
<http://www.dot.state.fl.us/CTD/programinfo/publicrelations/ctdhelpline.htm> with any questions you might have.

**Why is there such a difference in the amount of money paid for services between for profits and non-profits when the services provided are the same?**

Vocational Rehabilitation contracts with non-profit organizations for employment related services and all are paid equally for services. We do not contract with for-profit entities and do not know what they would charge for any similar service.

**What programs (are available) for vocation/college for DD/ADHD children?**

From your question we do not know the ages of the children you mention. If a child is 16 or older, Vocational Rehabilitation may be able to help them with transition from school to work. Visit us online at [www.RehabWorks.org](http://www.RehabWorks.org) or call 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information.

You may also speak with a disability specialist at the Agency for Persons with Disabilities by calling 1-866-APD-CARES (1-866-273-2273) for additional resources that may be available.



## The 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Café Report Card

Attendees at the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Café were given the opportunity to grade their experience on the following scale:

**A**=Excellent **B**=Very Good **C**=OK **D**=Not So Good **E**=Poor

The table below displays average grades for 2011, along with grades from the five previous years.

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
I would give the Annual Family Café Location a...	B+	B	B	A-	A-	A
I would rate the hotel's accessibility a...	B+	C+	B	A-	A	A-
I would give the organization of the Annual Family Café a...	B+	B	B	A-	A	A
I would rate the choices for breakout sessions and their ability to meet the needs of different interests a...	B	B	A-	A-	A	B+
Overall, I would give The 13 <sup>th</sup> Annual Family Café a...	B+	B	B	A-	A	B+

Attendees also had the opportunity to respond to a series of subjective questions about the event:

- As a result of attending The 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Café, I am able/will be able to...
- In general, the most helpful to me was...
- I thought we could have had more of...
- I thought we could have had less of...
- I am interested in finding out more about...
- I would like to suggest for future Annual Family Café events...

Here is a sample of their responses:

**As a result of attending The 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Café, I am able/will be able to...**

- Make contact with specific agencies
- Navigate the med wavier, provide more resources to my family and get an aid dog for my son
- Advocate better
- how to act and stand up for my sister
- Work on reaching the goals I set for our family
- Cope with my children's needs better
- Have a better understanding knowledge of the agencies, support groups in my county
- Plan more completely for my child's future
- Help my child and plan for his future
- Find better resources for help, things I was not aware of
- To be a stronger leader, help others as well as my children get the extra medical support
- Tell my daughter she can go to college!!
- Help my husband better understand his son
- Be empowered to help my family members with disabilities as well as others in my community
- To understand that there are more people out there that are in the same or worse situation
- Network with an entirely new group of people

***In general, the most helpful to me was. . .***

- Meeting new people
- The leadership workshop of Thursday
- Information on StingRAY and other post-secondary programs
- Legal and financial information/obstacles/requirements
- The Exhibitor Hall because I could talk with everyone at my own pace
- Speaking with various agency representatives; Family Café reps; conference attendees
- Networking with other parents to find needed resources and equipment
- How independent people with disability are
- The Youth Council sessions
- Hearing the people with disabilities workshop
- Learning how to advocate properly
- The friendliness of all attending the conference
- The inclusion of military issues is marvelous

***I thought we could have more of. . .***

- Social interactivity for teens and young adults

- More complex and detailed seminars on financial planning/services through the government in light of changes
- Sibling workshops
- The Family Café (twice a year)
- Night time classes
- Fishing
- Any things that kids can do
- Times for person of disability to have special times to socialize
- Hands on activities for the kids
- Vendors, more time for the outdoor activities more information and vendors for the younger children
- Resources for individual issues; instead of in general
- Repeat of some session that are done early on Friday

***I thought we could use less of...***

- Vendors selling products
- Business stuff, more fun with family
- The classes that speaks to the adults and more for youth
- Noise: it is very loud for some of the children
- Nothing, I'm sure it was all important to someone
- Legislative speakers
- Really long speeches
- Sessions—just too many good sessions going on at the same time
- The entertainment in the halls was too much for my child with autism

***I am interested in finding more about...***

- Telling people about who I am; advocacy in the community
- College and a special diploma
- Getting proper diagnosis on adopted children especially when we don't know much of the background
- The Florida Youth Council
- Self-advocates for people with disabilities
- Independent living, transitional life skills
- Networking with parents with similar issues
- Basic info that differentiates a regular high school diploma as an ESE diploma
- Programs that could help with families of disabled children
- Disability rights
- Marriage strengthening
- Not-for-profit business by individuals
- Help for younger people with disabilities
- Homeschool rights and opportunities as it relates to disabilities

***I would like to suggest for future Annual Family Café events...***

- Massagers, pamper room!
- Break for lunch and dinner and access to affordable meals in time to get back to events
- Event with governor here and Q&A session
- Class for siblings of children with a disability
- Have opportunities for people from the same county to break out and connect better... better roundtable discussion; better breakout groups
- This conference is so valuable. It has changed our lives and has helped our family in so many ways. Our son will be graduating with honors next year. We can contribute his success to the skills we have learned at The Family Café
- Make it go longer into the evening—8 pm so we can get to more breakout sessions
- More mom/dad forums to give direction/support/assistance
- Have at least 3 vendors from each FL county
- Have at least one room if possible for people who get sensory overload. Not in hallway where there's a lot of noise
- Information and help to expand social opportunities for local groups. Help to pull resources from areas of the state with more to offer young adults
- Adaptive sports
- Breakout sessions on Sunday
- More activities for teens/young adults
- How to run for office. Or workshops for writing to legislators
- Bigger dance floor









**SEE YOU NEXT YEAR**

at

**The 14th Annual Family Café**



**June 15-17, 2012**

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**Orlando, Florida**



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