



Questions and Answers

from

The 15th Annual Family Café

Featuring

The Governor's Summit on Disabilities

June 7-9, 2013

The Hilton Orlando

Orlando, Florida

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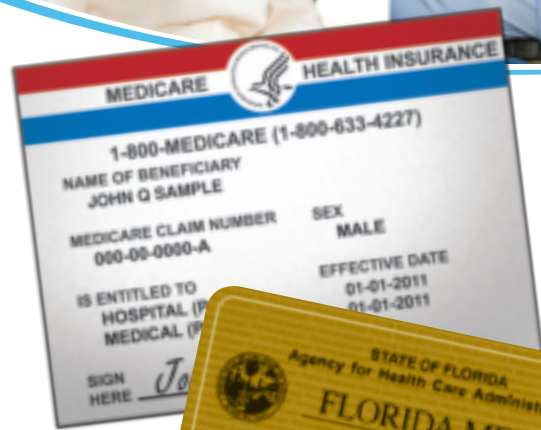
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Welcome to The Family Café Questions and Answers Book for 2013!

Navigating the service delivery system and finding resources has always been a challenge for persons with disabilities and their families. For fifteen years, The Family Café has been there to help. Since 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 primary place where that mission has been realized is at our signature event, The Annual Family Café. Thanks in large part to the support of premier sponsor WellCare, this year's 15th Annual Family Café attracted 7,038 registered attendees, and exposed them to 170 classroom size sessions on a wide array of disability-related topics. It also included a series of three keynote addresses, with a discussion on the connections between disability, chronic illness and nutrition; a live animal demonstration by representatives of the animal park Gatorland; and a screening of the film *Defining Beauty*, a thought-provoking documentary about five entrants in the 2010 Ms. Wheelchair Pageant. The 15th Annual Family Café also featured a full Exhibit Hall, complete with an Employment Expo where attendees could receive job search coaching, as well as many self-advocate owned micro-enterprises.

The Family Café was pleased to return to its tradition of hosting Florida's Governor at The Annual Summit on Disabilities. This year, the Summit provided a platform for Governor Rick Scott to address the state's disability policies before an audience of families and self-advocates. He was joined by State Senator Bill Galvano, Chair of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education, and David McNichols, parent advocate and State President of WellCare of Florida.

Of course, The Family Café recognizes that no matter how informative The Annual Family Café is, it can't answer every family's questions in three short days. That's why we have always helped families to engage with the agencies that serve them through "Pink Cards." At The 15th Annual Family Café, attendees shared their questions and comments by filling out Pink Cards. The Family Café in turn obtained written responses from the relevant State Agencies. The end result is **The Family Café Questions and Answers Book**.

This book has been designed as a resource to address the concerns of Floridians with disabilities and their families. Although every situation is unique, The Family Café Questions and Answers Book can serve as a quick reference guide and a great 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 16th Annual Family Café, June 6-8, 2014, at 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, on Facebook at Facebook.com/TheFamilyCafeFL and on Twitter @TheFamilyCafe!

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The Family Café

My power chair stopped working at Family Café. Maybe, if possible, there could be someone at the next event that could offer minor fixes for loose connections on power chairs and scooters.

Thanks for that suggestion. One of our exhibitors, Custom Mobility, has offered this type of service at their booth in the Exhibit Hall in previous years. If you come back to The Annual Family Café in 2014, we would suggest that you plan on visiting their booth for the mobility service you describe. Additionally, you could visit the Colonial Medical scooter and wheelchair rental table, or seek out other mobility companies in the Exhibit Hall that may be able to help you.

Does Family Café have things like this in other states?

The Annual Family Café is the largest statewide cross-disability event of its kind in the nation. At this time, The Family Café does not host an annual event in any other state other than Florida. That said, the organization has developed more of a national presence in recent years, with the advent of its CAFÉ Technical Assistance Center for adult mental health, which is funded through a federal grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and serves a national audience. (See www.cafetacenter.net for more information on this program.) The Family Café will continue to study ways to expand its scope in the coming years.

Additional resources for siblings and for senior citizen population. Thank you!

Thanks for those valuable suggestions. We have had many requests for sessions designed for the siblings of children with disabilities, and our Planning Committee will seek out qualified presenters to lead sessions on this topic in 2014. We have also made an effort to include information for individuals with disabilities of all ages, and The Family Café will continue to plan sessions for the aging population for The 16th Annual Family Café next year.

Please include some information on issues of adopted children, especially those with behavioral issues, including dealing with behavior in adult children with mental illness. I need suggestions on how to handle those behaviors.

Thanks for your suggestions. Adoption of children with special needs can definitely bring about unique issues, and our Planning Committee will investigate ways to address this at The 16th Annual Family Café. As Florida's grantee for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Statewide Family Network for Children's Mental Health program, The Family Café is committed to helping families of children with mental health needs find the services and supports they require. This year's event included a

mental health track with multiple sessions on the topic. Next year's Annual Family Café is sure to once again include plenty of information on mental health.

Youth Summit—how does my daughter get on the Board?

The Florida Youth Council is a group of young leaders with disabilities that promote advocacy, independence and leadership development among their peers statewide. Their Annual Youth Summit, which is held each August, brings together youth with disabilities from throughout Florida for training and networking. To learn more about the FYC and how to apply for membership, visit <http://floridayouthcouncil.com/> or contact Youth Advisor Alex Brown at abrown@familycafe.net.

With the mom meeting, can it be more organized? I got some information, but everybody was talking at one time.

Thanks for your feedback. It is up to each presenter at The Annual Family Café to manage the dynamics in the sessions they present. The Family Café provides the platform for presenters to share their knowledge with attendees, but does not become directly involved with the planning and organization of each individual session. We will certainly share your feedback with the presenter from the session you mentioned.

The only suggestion I have is if lectures could be 30 minutes then repeat the second 30 minutes, so we can get to more than one an hour.

Thanks for that suggestion. The Annual Family Café has a lot of information available, and it can be difficult to decide what session to attend in a given time slot. On occasion The Family Café does arrange for especially popular sessions to be repeated. You might also consider splitting up in the event that there are multiple sessions you wish to attend, with one family member attending one session and another attending a different one. Also, please bear in mind that it's perfectly appropriate for you to contact the presenter of any session that you missed that addresses a topic you would like to know more about. We include the contact information of every presenter in the event program, and we encourage you to use it to contact those presenters if you have a question about something you missed. If you no longer have your program, you can find it online in the Publications section of FamilyCafe.net.

Why are there not more reps for deaf/hard of hearing? Why doesn't cochlear have a rep here?

The Family Café makes every effort to include resources for as many types of disabilities as possible at The Annual Family Café. For those that are hard of hearing, we provide complimentary sign language interpreters that are available at the Sign Language Interpreters desk throughout the event. If there are specific agencies or providers that serve people with hearing issues that you would like to see as presenters or exhibitors at

The Annual Family Café, we encourage you to contact them to ask them to participate. You can also share the names of agencies and providers with us, and we can reach out to them to invite their participation.

Why don't kids have breakout sessions to help parents?

The Family Café offers a number of activities during The Annual Family Café that are specifically designed for children. For example, Saturday at The 15th Annual Family Café included a two hour performance by a children's story teller, as well as an arts and crafts room sponsored by VSA Arts. For older children and youth, The Family Café offers a track of youth sessions designed to engage young people on relevant transition issues. It should also be noted that The Annual Family Café is a family-friendly event, and children are certainly welcome. In cases where it is difficult for a parent to attend a session with their child or children, many families choose to split up, with one adult attending breakout sessions while another cares for the children.

I think there should be more question and answer sessions with politicians at the event. There should be breakout sessions with politicians.

Thank you for your suggestion. The Family Café has always been committed to connecting individuals with disabilities and their families with the elected leaders and policy makers that make the decisions that profoundly impact them. It is our intent to foster a productive dialogue, so the elected officials and policy makers in attendance can hear directly from their constituents, while our attendees can gain an enhanced perspective on the policy-making process. The Family Café always invites a range of elected officials and policy makers, including Florida's Governor and relevant State Agency heads. It would certainly be ideal if they were available for extensive dialogue with attendees, but unfortunately the time they have available to participate can be limited. Nonetheless The Family Café will continue to encourage dialogue between people with disabilities and their family members and policy-making officials in the coming years.

Why do so many breakout sessions happen at the same time?

With 170 sessions over the course of The Annual Family Café, scheduling can be a real challenge. To simplify the process, The Family Café schedules breakout sessions in seven different time slots over Friday and Saturday. Having sessions in time slots allows for the scheduling of performances between sessions, as well as keynote addresses intended for all attendees. Were sessions to be staggered with different starting times, it would become much more difficult to schedule performances, keynotes, and The Annual Summit on Disabilities. With the potential overlap of sessions, it would also make it more likely that two sessions an individual attendee might want to attend would interfere with each other, and there could also be issues with attendees moving between sessions while they were being presented. While it can be difficult to choose just one session to attend in each time slot, the current system offers the best solution to the challenge of presenting all of the information The Annual Family Café brings together in a logical fashion.

The WellCare man was probably the nicest man here, and the most helpful. Thank you for all your help.

The Family Café was fortunate to have WellCare as its Premier Sponsor at The 15th Annual Family Café. As part of their involvement in the event, parent advocate and State President of WellCare of Florida David McNichols addressed attendees at The Annual Summit on Disabilities, and shared his own experiences parenting a child with a disability. The Family Café is grateful for WellCare's support, and hopes to continue to partner with them in the future.

We need more dyslexia seminars. There were none this year!

Thank you for your suggestion. The Family Café strives to include information and resources on as many disability-related topics as possible. Unfortunately, it can sometimes be difficult to address every topic or concern that may interest attendees. We will certainly share your suggestion for additional sessions on dyslexia with our Planning Committee, and hopefully they will be able to identify a presenter to address this topic in 2014.

Encourage host facility to arrange halls/passageways seating to accommodate the handicapped and family members. Realize it is a fine line between enough seating and seating that interferes with traffic flow but more seating is needed.

Thanks for your feedback. The Family Café definitely understands the need to arrange ballrooms and session rooms in such a way that they are accessible for all attendees, including those in power chairs and scooters. The Family Café works closely with hotel convention staff to make sure that there is sufficient room to allow access for all of our attendees. If you ever have an issue with accessibility at the event, please contact a representative of The Family Café so the issue can be addressed. Thank you for all of your positive feedback, and we will look forward to seeing you again in 2014!

- 1. Why don't speakers make use of microphones?**
- 2. Why don't presenters provide handouts of their presentations?**
- 3. Why aren't there extra notes pages on The Family Café handbook?**
- 4. Why doesn't The Family Café develop a website where paid conference attendees can access/download presentations, network, socialize, post questions/suggestions/experiences/lessons learned/recommendations, etc.?**
- 5. Why are most of the presentations geared to parents/children; become more inclusive/informative by including siblings who are taking care of their younger/older special (IDD) siblings?**
- 6. Why are some sessions addressed at youth only? My sibling is an adult, however, she is still a special needs (IDD) individual with a child level**

cognitive level. I have heard and seen several speakers/signs, which state, "know me before you judge me." Practice what we preach!

Thanks for your questions! Breakout sessions do not use sound amplification due to the relatively small size of the rooms in which they are held, combined with the expense of providing A/V for 170 individual sessions. Decisions regarding handouts are made by individual presenters. If you would like a handout of a particular presentation, we encourage you to contact the presenter directly. Contact information for all presenters can be found in the event program, which is available online in the Publications section of familycafe.net. The lack of "Notes" pages in the event program is a result of the fact that this year's program reached the maximum page length possible for the type of binding process used in production. The Family Café does operate a site through which people can share information, suggestions and experiences. It is part of The Family Café's Change Agent Network program. We encourage you to check it out at cannow.org. As for sibling-themed breakout sessions, this topic area has been suggested by multiple attendees, and our Planning Committee will work to identify quality presenters to host sibling sessions at The 16th Annual Family Café in 2014. The youth sessions to which you refer are hosted by the Florida Youth Council, which is The Family Café's youth leadership development program. As this group is age limited to individuals between the ages of 15 and 30, some of the sessions it hosts at The Annual Family Café are developed with that specific audience in mind.

I realize we get a 15% discount on some of the food, drinks, etc., but why is it only 15%? The food prices are astronomical.

As a general practice, The Family Café negotiates with the host hotel to provide more economical food and beverage options for our attendees. Hotels rely on food and beverage concessions as an important revenue stream, and it can therefore be challenging to convince them to offer reduced price options to Family Café attendees. That said, we will continue to aggressively negotiate with all future host hotels to get the most economical food and beverage options that we can.

Has Family Café considered having child care during sessions so the presentations are not as disruptive?

The Family Café has offered Respite care in the past, but eliminated this service as it served a very small number of attendees for a large cost. As many children in attendance at the event have disabilities, any child care provided would have to involve qualified personnel, which can be quite costly to hire.

The Annual Family Café is a family-friendly event, and we welcome all family members. It's true that it can be difficult to attend a session with a child, and many families deal with this challenge by having one adult attend sessions, while the other provides child care. Dividing the duties in this manner allows families to get the most out of sessions and keynotes while still meeting their child care needs.

Do you have to be a Florida resident to attend The Family Café and Summit?

No, you do not have to be a Florida resident to attend The Annual Family Café. However you must be a Florida resident to receive financial assistance.

The parking situation is not fair. I was told that the \$6.50 charge for parking was for the day. I was also told that the pass could be validated if we go out for lunch or dinner, and not pay another fee for parking. I am being charged \$6.50 every time I leave and come back to the hotel. I am not staying at the hotel. Everyone has to be on the same page. I can't afford to pay these prices.

Unfortunately the parking situation at the Hilton Orlando is somewhat unique, in that the hotel is an equal partner in owning the parking facility along with another company. In its negotiations with the Hilton, The Family Café was able to convince the Hilton to eliminate their parking fee. However, as the Hilton is half owner of the parking facility, it can only eliminate its half of the parking fee. The other half still must be paid to the other part owner of the facility. As a result, there is no way for The Family Café to arrange for its attendees to avoid paying that 50% of the parking cost. That said, you should not have to pay for parking more than once in a given day, per The Family Café's agreement with the Hilton Orlando. If this situation occurs again, please contact Family Café staff to rectify it.

Have you ever invited clergy for special workshops or info on including families living with disabilities? They mostly mean well, but lack the correct or accurate information/perception on disabilities. Examples: "diagnosis is an evil report," "all kids...," " he doesn't look like...," accessibility issues, sensory concerns, so many myths and just wrong ideas.

Thanks for raising the issue of the perception of people with disabilities in religious institutions. The Family Café has not made a specific effort to address this issue, but we will certainly share your observation with The Family Café Planning Committee and discuss ways to address it.

Why can't there be more funding available for conferences? The vendors should be made to stay until Sunday afternoon! Several left when I could have gone back at a time when it's not so busy.

The Family Café does its utmost to obtain as much funding for The Annual Family Café as possible, including aggressively pursuing private sponsorships, State Agency support and paying exhibitors. The Family Café encourages all exhibitors to attend the event for its entire duration, but some choose to depart the Exhibit Hall on Sunday morning. Unfortunately, beyond asking them to stay through the afternoon, there is little that The Family Café can do to control how long they stay.

The popular topics need to have more than one session, or the presenters need to have handouts available when we contact them.

We understand that it can be difficult to choose what session to attend in a given time slot, when there are so many excellent choices available. In the past The Family Café has asked presenters to repeat certain popular sessions, but doing so means that one less session can be included. That presents a challenge in the planning process, as we would like to address as many disability topics as possible.

If there is a session you missed about which you would like more information, we encourage you to contact the presenter directly. You can find contact information for every presenter in the event program, which is available in the Publications section of familycafe.net.

Can we include microwaves in the room contracts for the hotel? For children with special diets (extreme diets), the restaurant here can't possibly accommodate and we need microwaves.

Although the rooms at the Hilton Orlando do not have microwaves, the hotel did provide microwaves for attendees' use in two different locations in the hotel. It is likely that similar arrangements will be made for The 16th Annual Family Café in 2014.

When The Annual Café was held at Coronado Springs, on Disney property, food was supplied and all things were run better, having food without being charged high Hilton prices for a dry sandwich. Why the change? Going backwards!

The Family Café left the Coronado Springs hotel when its contract ended and was not renewed in 2011. As a general practice, The Family Café negotiates with the host hotel to provide more economical food and beverage options for our attendees. Hotels rely on food and beverage concessions as an important revenue stream, and it can therefore be challenging to convince them to offer reduced price options to Family Café attendees. That said, we will continue to aggressively negotiate with all future host hotels to get the most economical food and beverage options that we can.

Gatorland makes tons of money. Gatorland should be gracious enough to give all families attending The Annual Family Café comp'd admission for Saturday only between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Both children and adults would really appreciate an offer like that! Your badge would provide for entry for that day.

Thank you for that suggestion. Gatorland did provide a number of door prizes, including complimentary admissions to their park. Should we have Gatorland participate in The Annual Family Café again in future we will share your suggestion with them.

Can you bring in more specialists on Chronic Fatigue Syndromes (CFS) and EBV—Epstein-Barr Virus?

Thanks for your feedback. We will share your desire for additional sessions on Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Epstein-Barr Virus with our Planning Committee.

Is there any way to get the information from sessions you couldn't make because you were attending another?

If you would like a handout of a particular presentation, we encourage you to contact the presenter directly. Contact information for all presenters can be found in the event program, which is available online in the Publications section of familycafe.net.

Can you form a group of individuals/organizations that assesses the child, discovers issues and provides assistance obtaining resources? Seems to be many, many, many organizations but not an entire agency that knows the organizations well enough to make the connections simply (one form for many resources).

That is an excellent observation. The system of care for children with disabilities could certainly benefit from additional integration. The Family Café came into existence largely to fulfill the role you suggest, of bringing many resources and organizations together in a single location so families could identify which were most appropriate to their needs. At this time, The Family Café is the closest thing to what you describe in Florida. Hopefully the public benefit system will adopt a similar approach to connecting individuals with resources across multiple agencies through a single intake form at some point in the future.

We need more elevator signs. Also, if you could put signs at the end of the rows of meeting rooms telling what is down each hall.

Thanks for that suggestion! We will share your observations about the need for additional signs with our Planning Committee.

Why is the Employment Expo only one day, given that employment is so important?

Because of the number of organizations involved in the Employment Expo and the fact that participants needed to staff their booths with paid employees, most Expo participants preferred to attend on a weekday. The Family Café did invite all participants to return on Saturday, and several of them did so. Ideally, Employment Expo participants at The 16th Annual Family Café will stay on hand throughout the weekend.

How many members are on The Florida Youth Council?

The FYC currently has 9 members. If you are interested in becoming involved, visit <http://floridayouthcouncil.com/> or contact Youth Advisor Alex Brown at abrown@familycafe.net.

Is any organization able to have a booth in the exhibit hall (criteria)?

Yes! There are two ways organizations can participate in the Exhibit Hall. Any organization can purchase an exhibit space. The Family Café also offers free exhibit space to micro-enterprises, which are small businesses that are owned by individuals with disabilities, employ five or fewer people and have annual revenue of less than \$35,000. The Exhibitor and Micro-Enterprise forms are available on familycafe.net.

While I know it's probably not possible to video record each presentation and put it on the website, is it possible to get the PowerPoint presentations and post them as PDF files for access and reference throughout the year?

You are correct in saying that it would be prohibitively expensive and logistically difficult to video record every session at The Annual Family Café. The Family Café has not undertaken the project of housing PowerPoint presentations from every session at its event, as that would involve a large amount of additional work. The best way to get information about sessions you missed is to contact the presenter directly. Contact information for all presenters can be found in the event program, which is available online in the Publications section of familycafe.net.

How do we provide for and make more successful my son with Asperger's, his future needs and information availability to ensure his ability to care for himself? (What programs, agencies, etc.?)

We would encourage you to contact the CARD Center. You can find them online at autism.fsu.edu.

Why weren't there more activities for teens? I would love to meet other teens, but it seemed like we didn't have any opportunities. Meet for basketball, volleyball, etc.

The Family Café and The Family Café Planning Committee are aware of the need to address youth issues at The Annual Family Café. The main way this has been addressed has been through the track of youth sessions at the event, many of which are presented by the Florida Youth Council. The Saturday night entertainment also provides an informal setting for all attendees, including youth, to interact. Your suggestion for the event to include additional ways for young people to connect in an informal setting is a good one, and we will share it with our Planning Committee.

Why did Dan Marino not show up? Miami is a few hours away, couldn't he drive?

It was disappointing that Dan Marino wasn't able to appear at The 15th Annual Family Café due to travel related issues. According to his office, issues with his aircraft and storms in south Florida prevented him from flying, and at that point it was too late to drive to Orlando. He has stated his desire to come to next year's Annual Family Café instead, and we will certainly extend an invitation from him to appear at The 16th Annual Family Café.

Why is it only a weekend event? Thank you!

The Annual Family Café has always been scheduled on a weekend in the early summer to make it as convenient as possible for families to attend. The reasoning behind the scheduling has to do with the fact that many families are unable to travel during the week due to work. Additionally, the event is scheduled to take place when school is out of session, but before it gets too far into summer when families tend to schedule vacations. The dates for The 16th Annual Family Café are June 6-8, 2014. We hope to see you there!

How to volunteer or offer services (i.e. expo)?

The answer to this question depends on the type of volunteering you have in mind. The Family Café offers every attendee the opportunity to volunteer to help at the registration desk, as a room monitor or as a language interpreter through our registration process. We also solicit volunteers to help with the bag stuffing process that occurs on the Thursday evening before The Annual Family Café opens. If you have a different type of volunteering in mind, or a service you would like to offer attendees at The 16th Annual Family Café, please share your idea with us in an email to info@familycafe.net, and we will present your idea to our Planning Committee.

Linda Carter should speak/motivate at The Summit.

Thanks for that suggestion. As you know, Linda was the recipient of our Silver Spoon Award this year, and she has been a wonderful presenter and active volunteer at The Annual Family Café for a number of years. We will share your suggestion for inviting her to deliver a keynote address with our Planning Committee.

Can we have microphones for breakout sessions? It's hard to hear.

Due to our limited A/V budget, The Family Café is not able to provide sound amplification for the 170 breakout sessions that are typically included in The Annual Family Café.

Is there going to be more stuff for siblings? Why don't siblings have a say in The Family Café? If so, what?

The Family Café has received many requests for sibling sessions at the event, and our Planning Committee is making an effort to provide sessions that will meet this growing need. The 15th Annual Family Café did include one session specifically for siblings. Based on the level of interest, it is likely that activities in this area will be expanded in 2014.

I wonder if there are going to be more play areas for kids. It's hard to keep 'em interested when you're in a conference.

The Family Café offers a number of activities during The Annual Family Café that are specifically designed for children. For example, Saturday at The 15th Annual Family Café included a two hour performance by a children's story teller, as well as an arts and crafts room sponsored by VSA Arts. For older children and youth, The Family Café offers a track of youth sessions designed to engage young people on relevant transition issues. It should also be noted that The Annual Family Café is a family-friendly event, and children are certainly welcome. In cases where it is difficult for a parent to attend a session with their child or children, many families choose to split up, with one adult attending breakout sessions while another cares for the children.

Please note that all activities at The Family Café require parental supervision, as child care is not provided.

Why did the photographer leave when the Governor left when they said we could have a photo and we waited in line?

The Governor travels with his own photographer. The Family Café is not able to determine how long the Governor will stay at the event when he appears. We're sorry that you didn't get a chance for a picture. Hopefully he will join us again in 2014, and you will be able to get a photo then.

I would love to see the President involved even if it's just 30 minutes or the First Lady.

The Family Café invites a large number of elected officials to The Annual Family Café each year, including the President, First Lady, and Florida's entire Congressional delegation. Hopefully the President or First Lady will take us up on our invitation at some point in the future!

Could we have more nutrition sessions?

Thanks for that suggestion. The Family Café was pleased to host nationally recognized health and nutrition expert Dr. Pam Popper for one of our keynote presentations this year.

Health and nutrition are important issues for people with disabilities and/or chronic illnesses, and our Planning Committee will continue to seek out qualified presenters to address this topic in coming years.

Could there be respite care available in the future?

The Family Café has offered Respite care in the past, but eliminated this service as it served a very small number of attendees for a large cost. As many children in attendance at the event have disabilities, any child care provided would have to involve qualified personnel, which can be quite costly to hire.

The Executive Office of the Governor

Mr. Governor, during your address you specifically mentioned several things: "Everyone wants to do good things," and "Together we can do things, etc." What, specifically, are these "things," and how have you specifically fostered their advance during the last two years, and how do you specifically plan, as Governor, to help them in your next two years in office?

I ran for Governor because I wanted to provide each and every Floridian with the opportunity to find a job and pursue their version of the American dream.

- In the four years before I took office, Florida lost 832,000 jobs, unemployment more than tripled – from 3.5% to 11.1%, and state debt increased by \$5.2 billion.
- Since I took office, we have supported the creation of nearly 370,000 private sector jobs. Florida's unemployment rate has declined to 7.1 percent, well below the national average of 7.4%.
- Florida also experienced the 2nd biggest drop in unemployment in the nation.

These economic successes have created even more opportunities for many individuals to realize their potential, including individuals with disabilities. By being more efficient with taxpayer dollars and bringing in more revenue as a result of an improved economy, we recently were able to bring individuals off of the APD waiting list for the first time in eight years. By continuing to provide individuals opportunities to do good things, we will continue to foster an environment in Florida that will lead to more jobs and opportunities for Florida families, including individuals with disabilities.

For Governor Rick Scott/Senator Bill Galvano: My question is: when will everyone be off the disability list and get services?

By being more efficient with taxpayer dollars and bringing in more revenue as a result of an improved economy, we recently were able to bring individuals off of the APD waiting list for the first time in eight years. By continuing to provide individuals opportunities to do good things, we will continue to foster an environment in Florida that will lead to more jobs and opportunities for Florida families, including individuals with disabilities.

I encourage you to also work with your local APD office. They may be able to help you find additional community resources and additional supports.

My comment is: Thank you so much for caring about disability. I appreciate it very much for supporting all disabilities.

It is my pleasure. I am committed to providing all Florida families with greater opportunities.

When are you going to complete appointing the Family Care Council members?

I am very happy to report that 74 new people were appointed to various Family Care Councils around the state. My appointments office is charged with making thousands of appointments throughout the state. Although this process takes time, my office is committed to making sure all FCCs have a vital and active membership.

I hope I will see Rick Scott. I love him so much.

Thanks for coming. I enjoyed seeing you and all the wonderful attendees of the Family Café.

I would like to see more of the Governor.

It was great to see you. I look forward to supporting Family Café in the future.

It's about time Governor Rick Scott decided to join us. We hope to see his support and presence again next year.

It was an honor to attend and be a part of The Family Café. I look forward to working with Family Café in the future.

Why does it take so long for the Governor to sign the applications for FCC membership?

I am very happy to report that 74 new people were appointed to various Family Care Councils around the state. Although this process takes time, my office is committed to make sure all FCCs have a vital and active membership.

Do you think if Senator Galvano could make it to speak, that maybe a little more Senators could come? Do you think the House people could come and speak as well on their thoughts on disabilities? Thank you Governor Scott for speaking.

I want to thank Senator Galvano for his support and I encourage all members of the Florida Legislature to support this wonderful event.

Thank you, Governor Scott.

Thanks for having me at this year's Family Café. I hope to see you at this event next year.

As a voter and interested citizen, I will be watching and informing others on your performance. I look forward to seeing committed public servants. To all our politicians: with all the demands our state has on our funds from the immigrants to other health issues, besides the disabled, how committed are each one of you so the needs of the ones who face a life with a disability in meeting their need to become productive and as healthy as possible citizens? Would therapy needs be terminated because of age, as opposed to accomplishments?

Great question. I ran for Governor because I wanted to provide each and every Floridian with the opportunity to find a job and pursue their version of the American dream.

- In the four years before I took office, Florida lost 832,000 jobs, unemployment more than tripled – from 3.5% to 11.1%, and state debt increased by \$5.2 billion.
- Since I took office, we have supported the creation of nearly 370,000 private sector jobs. Florida’s unemployment rate has declined to 7.1 percent, well below the national average of 7.4%.
- Florida also experienced the 2nd biggest drop in unemployment in the nation.

These economic successes have created even more opportunities for many individuals to realize their potential, including individuals with disabilities. By being more efficient with taxpayer dollars and bringing in more revenue as a result of an improved economy, we recently were able to bring individuals off of the APD waiting list for the first time in eight years. By continuing to provide individuals opportunities to do good things, we will continue to foster an environment in Florida that will lead to more jobs and opportunities for Florida families, including individuals with disabilities.

Thank you for showing us you care! It means a lot to everyone in the room. Hope to see you next year. I would not miss this event ever!! This is home, safe and warm for all of us to be!

It was my pleasure and an honor to attend The Family Café. I hope to attend this event in the future.

Thank you for showing us you care . . . better late than never. We trust The Family Café, and if you trust them, then they are family too!

Thanks for your support. Family Café was a wonderful event and I am so happy that I had the opportunity to be a part of it.

Thank you for taking the time to speak tonight to us all. It meant a lot! You should speak at next year’s Annual Family Café. I like how you looked so comfortable. We have not seen this since Governor Bush. Jeb was our hero! You are a GOOD second place hero.

I hope to attend Family Café in the future. Thank you so much for having me.

You could learn a lot from attending more Annual Family Café events. We trust them.

Thank you. I hope to attend Family Café in the future.

Governor Scott, Thank you for coming and talking with us. We have missed you. So glad you decided to join us. There is always room for you here. We are all family.

It was my pleasure. Thank you for your kind words and I hope to see you again at this event.

Thank you Governor!

It was an honor to attend this year's Family Café. Thanks for having me.

The Agency for Health Care Administration

AHCA needs to get a Medicare/Medicaid waiver for DD clients.

There is currently a Florida Medicaid waiver for individuals with Developmental Disabilities. It is called the Developmental Disabilities Individual Budgeting (iBudget) Waiver, and it is operated by the Agency for Person with Disabilities under the administration of the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) as the state Medicaid agency. Please contact the Agency for Persons with Disabilities at 1-866-273-2273 or www.apdcares.org for more information regarding the iBudget Waiver.

How often can a person get their power wheelchair replaced?

Florida Medicaid replaces an enrolled recipient's wheelchair once every five years if it is medically necessary to do so. There are some exceptions to this process for children. Repairs to recipient's existing wheelchairs are also covered. For more information on durable medical equipment covered by Florida Medicaid, please contact your local Medicaid Area Office. Contact information is available at the end of this document.

How do we replace a wheelchair, if the child outgrows it before 5 years, through Medicare?

Please contact Medicare at 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) to ask about their wheelchair coverage policy.

Florida Medicaid does take into consideration a child's growth when reviewing requests for a new wheelchair within the five year limit. Should you wish the Agency to look into this matter further, please contact your local Medicaid Area Office. Contact information is available at the end of this document.

Can having private insurance affect the parents' income level for a child (younger than 18) on Social Security Disability?

The Social Security Administration (SSA) is responsible for determinations regarding Social Security Disability. Please contact SSA at 1-800-772-1213 or visit www.ssa.gov for information about Social Security Disability benefits.

Is there anything that is covered on the Med Waiver other than consumable products?

Each Medicaid home and community-based services waiver provides specific services tailored to the population served by the waiver. Please view the Florida Medicaid

Summary of Services booklet at http://ahca.myflorida.com/medicaid_for information about Medicaid waivers and a listing of covered services.

Should you have further questions, please contact your local Medicaid Area Office. Contact information is available at the end of this document.

Why can't we take Med Waiver with us if we decide to move to another state?

The Medicaid program is jointly funded with federal and state funds, and administered separately by each state. Medicaid eligibility requirements and services vary from state to state. Eligibility for Medicaid and Medicaid services in the State of Florida does not guarantee eligibility or receipt of the same services in another state. If you decide to move to another state, you will need to apply for Medicaid benefits in that particular state.

Presently there are very few doctors and specialists that are Medicaid providers. This lack of available physicians places the population at risk. Florida has an infinite number of Medicare providers because of the characteristics of our population. The state of Florida needs to utilize Medicare for the D.D. population, to ensure the population has access to medical care.

The Agency is in the process of implementing the Statewide Medicaid Managed Care (SMMC) program. Under the SMMC program managed care plans are required to maintain adequate provider networks to serve their enrollees.

In addition, access to specialty health care is a nationwide challenge. The demand for specialists increases as medical knowledge expands. Even people with comprehensive private health care coverage find that many specialists are not taking new patients.

It is also important to understand that within the fee-for-service (FFS) Medicaid system the state 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.

Florida Medicaid area offices assist Medicaid recipients with locating providers who accept Medicaid.

What is the un-Affordable Care Act going to do to the disabled community? What's it really going to cost, without the liberal spin?

Information about the health reform legislation is available through several Web sites. The federal administration has posted an official government site about health reform, called HealthCare.gov. That site can be accessed through the following link: <http://www.healthcare.gov/>.

The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, a health policy foundation, also maintains information regarding the health reform on their website. That information can be

accessed through the following link: <http://healthreform.kff.org/>. Each site can provide information about implementation timelines and key provisions relating to state programs and private insurance.

How is Obamacare going to affect people with disabilities?

Information about the health reform legislation is available through several Web sites. The federal administration has posted an official government site about health reform, called HealthCare.gov. That site can be accessed through the following link: <http://www.healthcare.gov/>.

The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, a health policy foundation, also maintains information regarding the health reform on their website. That information can be accessed through the following link: <http://healthreform.kff.org/>. Each site can provide information about implementation timelines and key provisions relating to state programs and private insurance.

How can I get Medicaid or another program to help pay for an oversized stroller? Or are there other sources?

Florida Medicaid reviews requests for recipient strollers. Please contact your local Medicaid area office for further assistance in submitting a request. Contact information for your area office is available at the end of this document. Home and community-based services waivers may also cover strollers. If enrolled in a waiver, please work with your waiver support coordinator or case manager.

With all the government waste, why can't this money go to very needed service, like Med Waiver, Medicaid, etc.?

In order to effectively address your question, the Agency will need a more specific inquiry that is Medicaid related. Please contact Virginia Hardcastle, Medicaid Health Care Program Analyst for the developmental disabilities waiver program at Virginia.Hardcastle@ahca.myflorida.com. Virginia should be able to address many of your questions related to both Medicaid and the waiver programs.

When you say you're going to fund more to Med Waiver, will it only be for people who qualify for crisis, or will it be doing something for people on the wait list?

Funds were appropriated during the 2013 Legislative Session to help move people off the Agency for Persons with Disabilities waitlist for the iBudget Waiver. For more information regarding priority placements onto the waiver, please contact the Agency for Persons with Disabilities at 1-866-273-2273 or www.apdcares.org.

My autistic daughter (16-years-old) is on the HCB waiver and gets Medicaid. What is the difference between Medicaid and Medicare? Should she get both? I don't understand the difference.

Medicaid and Medicare are two separate government-funded health care programs. Medicare pays for medical bills from trust funds which those covered have paid into. Medicare serves people over 65 primarily, whatever their income; and serves younger disabled people and dialysis patients. Patients pay part of costs through deductibles for hospital and other costs. Small monthly premiums are required for non-hospital coverage. Medicare is a federal program. It is basically the same everywhere in the United States and is run by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, an agency of the federal government.

Medicaid is an assistance program. Medical bills are paid from federal, state and local tax funds. It serves low-income people of every age who meet certain criteria. Patients usually pay no part of costs for covered medical expenses. A small co-payment is sometimes required. Medicaid is a federal-state program. The individuals covered and the services covered vary from state to state. It is run by state and local governments within federal guidelines.

Please contact the Florida Agency for Healthcare Administration at 1-888-419-3456 or visit www.ahca.myflorida.com for questions about Florida Medicaid and for Medicare questions call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) or www.medicare.gov.

Families in Florida are struggling. Having a child with a disability in Florida means that most of us have to choose between making more money (by working more hours, perhaps) or making less money in order for our child to qualify for SSI and therefore be eligible for Medicaid. Does it not make more sense economically to ensure that our families/children receive full Medicaid benefits based on diagnosis, rather than income, so that parents who want to work, who can work, actually do work without worrying about losing Medicaid?

We are sorry to hear that you are struggling. Medicaid is a program of coverage for low income individuals. To qualify for Medicaid, individuals must meet all eligibility criteria and have income and resources within the Medicaid coverage group standards. Medicaid eligibility in Florida is determined either by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or the Social Security Administration for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients. When an individual is no longer eligible for SSI payments, the DCF will review the individual's circumstances to determine if he or she may qualify for any other Medicaid coverage group. For children who qualify for care in a nursing facility or institutional care facility for the developmentally disabled or for a home and community based services waiver, only the child's income, not the family income, is considered when qualifying for Medicaid.

Please contact DCF at 1-866-762-2237 or <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/access-florida-food-medical-assistance-cash> for additional information about Medicaid eligibility.

When my son got on the waiver, the “blessing” was qualifying for Medicaid. His Medicaid issues and meds were the hardest part for us. Why not instead of waivering people, just qualify more for Medicaid?

The federal government requires each state to cover certain mandatory groups of people in the Medicaid program. These categories include children, pregnant women, very low-income parents, the elderly, and people who are blind or disabled. States have the option to increase the federal income limits to allow more people to qualify for Medicaid, however that decision is ultimately made by the Florida Legislature.

In order to more effectively address your question, the Agency will need a more specific inquiry that is Medicaid related. Please contact Virginia Hardcastle, Medicaid Health Care Program Analyst for the developmental services waiver program at Virginia.Hardcastle@ahca.myflorida.com. Virginia should be able to address many of your questions related to both Medicaid and the waiver programs.

Why does it take so long to get services under the Cystic Fibrosis waiver? I understand being told that “there are no providers in your area,” but also feel two years is too long to get answers.

The Florida Department of Health (DOH) is the state agency that operates the Adult Cystic Fibrosis Waiver. DOH actively recruits providers for the ACF waiver. Should you need assistance with finding a provider in a particular area of the state, please visit: <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/demo/BrainSC> or contact DOH at 850-245-4444.

So here we are many years later, and we still have problems getting Xopenex for Cystic Fibrosis. While we currently are getting this breathing medicine, we still have problems and delays with the required “prior authorization,” resulting in prescription gaps. There should be only a one-time authorization needed, not one every 6 or so months, especially for Cystic Fibrosis.

We are sorry to hear you are having trouble receiving medication. Please contact your local AHCA area office to address specific prior authorization issues. You can find contact information for the area Medicaid offices on the Agency for Health Care Administration’s Web site at <http://ahca.myflorida.com/contact>.

Why do they cut Medicaid at 18 and cancel them out at 19? Paperwork over and over again.

Medicaid eligibility in Florida is determined either by the Social Security Administration (SSA) for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients or by the Department of Children and Families (DCF). For specific questions about Medicaid eligibility, please contact SSA at 1-800-772-1213 or www.ssa.gov. To contact DCF call 1-866-762-2237 or

visit DCF ACCESS at <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/access-florida-food-medical-assistance-cash>.

How do I get on the Med Waiver list?

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) operates the Developmental Disabilities Individual Budgeting (iBudget) Waiver and maintains the waitlist for the waiver. You may apply for waiver services by submitting an Application for Services to your local APD office. Applications may be submitted by mail or hand delivery and must include an original signature. You can obtain an application and find the address of your local APD office by visiting <http://apd.myflorida.com/customers/application/> or calling 1-866-273-2273.

What resources are available for assistance with home wheelchair ramps?

Ramps are not a covered service under Florida's State Plan Medicaid. However, if you are enrolled in a Medicaid waiver program, contact your waiver support coordinator or case manager to determine if this item is available through the waiver. For more information on Medicaid covered services please consult the Medicaid Summary of Services booklet at <http://ahca.myflorida.com/medicaid>.

My son has a rare genetic disease. His medical expenses are extremely high. Last year my insurance was billed for over \$750,000. We have Medicaid to cover what his insurance does not pay. Still, we have to pay a big part of his medical costs from our limited budget. My question: Why do parents of children with high medical bills have to live in poverty? Help me!

We are sorry to hear about your son's condition. Medicaid is the payer of last resort, and covers costs of applicable covered services that remain unpaid after a recipient's primary insurer has made payment. Except for a few specific groups of Medicaid recipients, for example, dual eligible recipients (qualified for both Medicare and Medicaid) that meet certain eligibility requirements, Medicaid does not pay premiums, deductibles, co-pays or co-insurance required by the recipient's primary insurer.

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) maintains a Resource Directory as an informational service to help individuals with disabilities and their families learn about available resources and organizations in their respective areas. The directory is accessible via APD's website at: <http://resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory/>.

Area Office	Counties in Area	Phone / Fax	Address
Area Office 1	Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton	Phone 850-595-2300 Toll Free: 1-800-303-2422 Fax:850-595-5717	160 Governmental Center Room 510 Pensacola, FL 32502
Area Office 2A	Bay, Gulf, Franklin, Holmes, Jackson, Washington	Phone: 850-767-3400 Toll Free: 1-800-226-7690 Fax:850-747-5456	651 W. 14 th Street, Suite K Panama City, FL 32401
Area Office 2B	Calhoun, Gadsden, Jefferson, Liberty, Leon, Madison, Taylor, Wakulla	Phone:850-412-4002 Toll Free:1-800-248-2243 Fax Numbers: Provider Relations:850-921-0394 Consumer Relations: 850-921-6215	2727 Mahan Drive, MS #42 Tallahassee, FL 32308
Area Office 3A	Alachua, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Putnam, Suwannee, Union	Phone:386-462-6200 Toll Free:1-800-803-3245 Fax:386-418-5370	14101 NW Hwy 441 Suite 600 Alachua, FL 32615
Area Office 3B	Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Marion, Sumter	Phone:352-840-5720 Toll Free:1-877-724-2358 Fax:352-620-3076	2441 W. Silver Springs Blvd Ocala, FL 34475
Area Office 4	Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, St. Johns, Volusia	Phone: 904-798-4200 Toll Free: 1-800-273-5880 Fax:904-353-2198	921 N. Davis St. Bldg. A Suite 160 Jacksonville, FL 32209
Area Office 5	Pasco, Pinellas	Phone:727-552-1900 Toll Free:1-800-299-4844	525 Mirror Lake Drive, N Suite 510 St. Petersburg, FL 33701

		Fax:727-552-1216	
Area Office 6	Hardee, Highlands, Hillsborough, Manatee, Polk	Phone:813-350-4800 Toll Free:1-800-226-2316 Fax:813-673-4592	6800 N. Dale Mabry Hwy Suite 220 Tampa, FL 33614
Area Office 7	Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Brevard	Phone:407-420-2500 Toll Free:1-877-254-1055 Fax: 407-245-0847	400 W. Robinson St. Suite S 309 Orlando, FL 32801
Area Office 8	Charlotte, Collier, De Soto, Glades, Hendry, Lee, Sarasota	Phone:239-335-1300 Toll Free:1-800-226-6735 Fax:239-338-2642	2295 Victoria Ave. Suite 309 Fort Myers, FL 33901
Area Office 9	Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee, Palm Beach, St. Lucie	Phone:561-712-4400 Toll Free:1-800-226-5082 Fax:561-616-1545	1655 Palm Beach Lakes Blvd. Suite 300 W. Palm Beach, FL 33401
Area Office 10	Broward	Phone:954-958-6500 Toll Free:1-866-875-9131 Fax:954-202-3220	1400 W. Commercial Blvd. Suite 110 Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33309
Area Office 11	Miami-Dade, Monroe	Phone:305-593-3000 Toll Free:1-800-953-0555 Fax:305-499-2022	8333 Northwest 53rd Street, Suite 200 Doral, Florida 33166

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities

Why is the Medicaid Support Waiver list so long? Is it first come, first served, or is it based on criteria of disability? Are there any services available while waiting?

APD's Medicaid waiver is funded by money allocated to us by the legislature. This past legislative session, Governor Rick Scott recommended \$36 million to help enroll additional individuals to the waiver and the Florida Legislature agreed and appropriated the funding. This is the first waiting list funding that has been allocated to APD for approximately eight years. The Legislature also adopted the Governor's recommendation to provide \$500,000 for supported employment services for individuals on the waiting list to help them obtain and maintain jobs and internships.

The waiting list is not first come, first served. APD has seven categories including crisis, children in the Welfare system, intensive needs, caregiver over 70, under age 21, age 21 and older, and transition from school. There are some services available while waiting.

APD also has an online resource directory with thousands of community based resources. You can visit the directory at www.apdcares.org/resourcedirectory. There may be some funding available for temporary or one-time services. Please contact the state support coordinator at your regional office to assist you in arranging services.

Can I get services when I am 18 and need help with living?

There are various resources to help individuals with disabilities. The APD Resource Directory is one place you can look by visiting www.apdcares.org/resourcedirectory. If you are eligible and wish to live independently when you turn 18, APD has services that would assist you with living on your own, but also has a waiting list for individuals not enrolled in the waiver program. For additional information, you may contact the APD office in your area at 239-338-1355.

I need a new wheelchair to get to work. I am a client of your agency, APD, but you refuse my request and suggest that I go to a hearing. Why do I need a hearing, when it is obvious that I need a new chair? I want to work.

If APD cannot provide this service, there are other potential alternatives. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (known as VR), is specifically funded for the purposes of assisting people with disabilities to go to work. This assistance includes financial help with purchasing necessary accommodations such as a wheelchair, or assistance with the cost of modifying a vehicle, among other expenses. If you need to purchase a wheelchair in order to obtain employment or to continue working, you need to know that Vocational Rehabilitation is charged with reviewing such requests and providing such assistance when appropriate. Please contact the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in your local

area to request an appointment with a VR counselor for assistance with purchasing the wheelchair needed in order to enable you to work.

I would like to see the funding that was taken from the disability waiver go back up because the person that was working is not working with the pay cut, they did a good job. This caused them to get different job.

Director Barbara Palmer has started workgroups to look at different areas that need improvement at APD. One of these workgroups called Thriving Providers/Businesses will be evaluating provider rates.

Why when calling APD in Tallahassee, when the representative and parent are on the telephone, some of the APD staff refuse to listen to anything the parent is saying and only listens to the rep.? They are a team and even HIPAA law will speak to the parent with permission. This attitude needs to be changed for the benefit of the consumer.

The Consumer Directed Care Plus (CDC+) program is unique in that the consumer is considered by the IRS as the employer of record of a small household business. In accordance with state and federal regulations, the CDC+ representative is responsible for recruiting, hiring and discharging workers, determining worker duties, scheduling and supervising workers, determining the amount paid for services, supports or items, scheduling when services are provided, reviewing and approving timesheets and invoices (among other things). They act on the consumer's behalf under a signed agreement. They're responsible for managing all the financial responsibilities of the program and overseeing the services received on the consumer's behalf. Because of the flexibility afforded by the program, family members can be hired as employees for their loved one in CDC+. As employees, they must handle all matters related to CDC+ with the consumer (considered the employer of record) or their CDC+ representative. The representative, in turn, must handle all CDC+ related matters for the consumer.

I hear that they now have a new APD waiver called supported employment for 200 people. This is good because work is one of the most difficult areas to navigate, and there are those not on full waiver who could benefit from supported employment. Is this 200 person supported employment waiver just for people on the full waiver wait list? Or are people with a disability, who could benefit from long-term help above and beyond what VR provides, eligible even if they do not meet criteria for ICF/ID-DD level of care?

Unfortunately, the information that you have received is not totally accurate. There is not a new APD waiver. The project that you are referencing is a one-time allocation of funding from the Legislature for the agency to spend in Fiscal Year 2013-2014, (from July 1, 2013 until June 30, 2014). The Legislature requires that use of the funding (a total of \$500,000) must be limited to assisting people who are currently on the APD waiting list. Specifically this means that the funds will be focused on people who want to work and are

currently on APD's waiting list. APD is focusing on funding the supported employment services for people aged 18-24, but will also assist others who may be older if needed and if funding is available. To answer your specific question regarding eligibility for the funding, yes, in order to be eligible for the allocated funding, a person first must be eligible for APD services and be on the APD waiting list.

We went on to CDC+ a few years back and the money went down to \$1,064 a month. Next, it went down to \$490 a month. In July it is going to less than \$7,000 for the whole year. Is there someone who can come in and restore our budget and help us get what we need? The only consultant available in Collier County has not been able to help.

The CDC+ monthly budget is based on the cost of services that a consumer has been approved to receive under the Developmental Disabilities Home and Community-Based Services (DD/HCBS) waiver. As you already know, APD completed its transition of all their consumers (including CDC+) into the iBudget waiver effective July 1, 2013. If your budget was reduced effective July 1 as a result of your transition to iBudget, you have due process rights. You should have received a notice dated May 1, 2013. If you requested a hearing within the required timeframes, your previous budget should have been restored. Please contact your APD Region waiver coordinator for additional information.

There was more money allocated, and my plan services were cut! Why?

Governor Rick Scott recommended \$36 million to help enroll additional individuals to the waiver and the Florida Legislature agreed and appropriated the funding. This money is specifically to go for some of the 22,000 families on the waiver waiting list. Please work with your waiver support coordinator and your local APD office to discuss the specific service cuts that you experienced.

My service coordinator is terrible. Can I get a new one?

You can change waiver support coordinators at any time. Please call the regional office that serves your county and request a list of support coordinators in your area. The contact information for our regional offices can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/region/>.

How can I get my services upped? I need more services, more consumable medical supplies, such as catheters, diapers, etc.

Please work with your support coordinator to explore community resources and, if determined you can request funding for additional services. After consulting with you, your support coordinator will forward your request for supplemental funding to the local APD office.

Thank you for allocating more money for services, but cutting funds for current people being served is not good.

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities is required to authorize services in accordance with state and federal rules and regulations. The agency strives to implement changes in law with minimal impact to consumers receiving services. Sometimes the agency is required to reduce funds to comply with the law. However, individuals have the right to request a hearing if they believe that funds were reduced in error. Additionally, we encourage Waiver Support Coordinators to assist individuals in identifying alternate services and funding sources to minimize the impact if funding is reduced.

My son has finished high school. His budget through APD is extremely small. He is used to socializing with others. I was told that there is no money for him to go for Adult Day Training. I feel that it is necessary for him to go. Is there any way his budget could be increased?

There is a mechanism, supplemental funding, based on a significant change in a person's life that can increase your APD iBudget to meet the changing needs of an APD client. Your waiver support coordinator can initiate this process and can help you work with your local APD field office. With the iBudget Florida program, your son can move his funding around to fit his needs, as long as his health and safety needs are met. This can include Adult Day Training after the completion of High School. Please contact your waiver support coordinator and local APD field office for assistance.

My son has been on the waiver wait list for 6 years now. My other son has received services under "emergency" for that same amount of time. How do I get help for my waiting son who has recently declined in school behaviorally and academically? My insurance will cover some "behavior and psychological" help, but there are no providers in my area. I have seen services help children and you can see the results of help vs. no help within my family alone. The son with services is on A/B honor roll and is maintaining a part-time job. Thank you tax payers for supporting him. Now I need it for my other son before it's too late.

If your second son is school age, he may be eligible for services, including behavior analysis under Medicaid State Plan. Also, if your son's behavior has been escalating he may either be a candidate for "emergency funding" or you may want to request the APD Field Office submit a Crisis Application on your behalf to access Waiver funding.

If your child is in a group home or supported living apartment situation, what happens when they reach 70+ years old? Do they go to nursing homes or stay where they are?

Individuals who receive services through the Agency for Persons with Disabilities have a choice in where they choose to live, regardless of their age. Individuals who reach the

age of 70 are not required to go into nursing homes. At any stage of life, the agency encourages individuals to work with their families and providers to choose a living setting that best meets their needs.

Home accessibility assistance—wheelchair ramp, widen/replace 32” of front entry door.

Corner Construction Services, Inc. specializes in ADA home accessibility and barrier-free living environments, offers disability services such as ramps, planners and retrofit, along with free estimates and guaranteed warranty. Visit their website at www.cornerconstruction.net or call 904-797-3677.

Volusia Medical Supply provides a variety of products for people with disabilities at a discounted rate. Please visit their website at www.volusiamedicalsupply.com or call them at 1-866-956-2025.

Disability Solutions for Independent Living, Inc. provides home modification for people with disabilities. Visit their website at www.dsil.org or call them at 386-255-1812.

ElderSource serves as the focal point to which elders, disabled adults, their caregivers and the general public can turn for information, referral, assistance and answers related to disabilities and aging issues. Visit their website at www.myeldersource.org or call 1-888-242-4464.

Discount Wheelchair Ramps provides a variety of wheelchair ramps at a discounted price. www.discounttramps.com or call 1-888-865-3431.

Ramps.org provides a list of community programs that assist in providing ramps to the elderly and the disabled. Please visit www.ramps.org/projects-florida.htm or call 1-877-312-6989.

Mobility Freedom specializes in all types of wheelchair vans. Visit their website at www.mobilityfreedom.com or call at 386-428-6677.

Department of Elder Affairs was created to provide choices, promote independence and enables older Floridians to remain in their community's for a lifetime. Please visit www.elderaffairs.state.fl.us or call 850-414-2000 or email information@elderaffairs.org For more services in your area, please check out APD's new online community resource directory. www.apdcares.org/resourcedirectory

Please explain the new way group home funds will be offered with iBudget. My son's support coordinator said there are no more group home funds.

The implementation of iBudget has not changed how much group homes are paid for the care they provide to residents. Funding for residential care and the approval of specific

waiver services will still be based upon how much support each individual person requires on a daily basis.

Where can handicapped/wheelchair accessible playground equipment be purchased? Where can I find the guidelines for an accessible playground?

Boundless Playgrounds is an organization that develops truly inclusive playgrounds, regardless of abilities. The Boundless Playgrounds office can be reached at 423-648-5619, or visit their website at www.boundlessplaygrounds.org

State of Play has accessible swings, seats, and platforms to accommodate juveniles and adults with special needs. See their products at www.aaastateofplay.com/handicap-accessible or call them at 1-877-826-2776.

Playgrounds for Everyone is an online directory that has accessible playgrounds throughout the Nation. Users can search playgrounds by zip codes to get a list of accessible playgrounds near them. Visit www.apps.npr.org/playgrounds/

The website below has ADA standards for public playgrounds for them to be considered accessible.

www.gametime.com/images/uploads/general_docs/ADA-Checklist.pdf

Why are children with Down Syndrome not able to access mental health services? All agencies have said “we are not able to work with Down Syndrome; they cannot make judgment calls.”

APD works closely with the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA), and community providers in helping to secure supports (such as mental health services) which are necessary to ensure the health and safety of the individuals we serve.

The APD Resource Directory (which may be accessed via the following link to the Agency’s website: <http://resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory/>) includes contact information for mental health providers throughout the state (who are willing and able to work with individuals with Down Syndrome and other types of developmental disabilities).

For additional assistance, we would encourage you to contact your local APD office. Contact information may be accessed by clicking on the following link: <http://apd.myflorida.com/region/>

When is the state going to give CDC+ clients back their 8% and lessen the 4%?

The Consumer Directed Care Plus (CDC+) program is an approved 1915j Medicaid State Plan Option that includes the current discount rate. This is required in order to continue to demonstrate cost neutrality of the CDC+ program. The iBudget implementation

continues the current practice of the 8% discount of the waiver services for enrollment in the Consumer Directed Care Plus program.

Providers and QSI, etc. should have some form of state issued ID to come into my home so I know they are real.

It is good practice to ask for positive identification from anyone you do not know before allowing them to enter your home. A QSI employee is issued an APD state identification badge. The QSI employee should be able to show you their identification badge as positive identification. Service providers are not state employees. They are not issued a state identification badge. However, some providers who work for an agency or business may have an identification badge issued by their employer. Additionally, a state issued driver's license or identification card and/or an authorized provider letter are other options to request for positive identification.

Why are mental health clients with typical abilities on the Disability waiver?

The APD serves individuals with dual diagnosis, meaning they have a mental health diagnosis and have been determined to have a confirmed diagnosis of one of the following developmental disabilities as defined in Rules 65G-4.014, 4.015, 4.016 and 4.017, F.A.C.:

- (a) Autism,
- (b) Cerebral palsy,
- (c) Mental retardation or intellectual disability,
- (d) Prader-Willi syndrome,
- (e) Spina Bifida,
- (f) Down Syndrome, or
- (g) Children between 3 and 5 years of age who are at high risk of later diagnosis of one of the disabilities listed above.

Providers should have ID's. Often, the agency sends a provider to my house that I have never met. I would like to know that they have been vetted by APD.

There is currently no requirement that service providers carry ID badges. However, in order to ensure your personal safety, we would encourage you to contact the agencies which provide services to you or your family member. Those agencies should be able to give you the names of their employees (so that you will know who is safe to let into your home). Please keep in mind that all employees used by agency providers must successfully complete all background screening as required by state law.

When can I expect my 8% back from CDC+? This figure is no longer necessary for fiscal neutrality.

The Consumer Directed Care Plus (CDC+) program is an approved 1915j Medicaid State Plan Option that includes the current discount rate. This is required in order to continue to demonstrate cost neutrality of the CDC+ program. The iBudget implementation

continues the current practice of the 8% discount of the waiver services for enrollment in the Consumer Directed Care Plus program.

When can I expect APD to reduce the 4% fee to 2%? Presently, I am paying an 8% administration fee, 4% line item in a budget, and an additional 4% reduction from before budget.

The Consumer Directed Care Plus (CDC+) program is an approved 1915j Medicaid State Plan Option that includes the current discount rate. This is required in order to continue to demonstrate cost neutrality of the CDC+ program. The iBudget implementation continues the current practice of the 8% discount of the waiver services for enrollment in the Consumer Directed Care Plus program.

Why do some counties offer and have more help to the disabled than others? All should have help and info for all disabled persons.

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) relies on providers around the state to provide needed services to individuals with developmental disabilities. APD enrolls new providers around the state daily. Unfortunately, in more rural areas there is a smaller population of people able to provide the service. APD is aware of the struggle to find providers in rural parts of the State and is looking at new ways to encourage enrollment of new providers for APD.

If you are having a difficult time finding a provider, please contact your local APD office. You can also visit www.apdcares.org/resourcedirectory to look at the new resource directory to find community programs in your area.

Why have we lost services since a few years ago? Now that there is money, why can't we get some back?

Governor Rick Scott recommended \$36 million to help enroll additional individuals to the waiver and the Florida Legislature agreed and appropriated the funding. This money is specified to go to some of the 22,000 families on the waiver waiting list. Please work with your waiver support coordinator and your local APD office to discuss the specific services that you lost and how your current iBudget may be used to move funds around to best suit your needs.

How can my daughter get assisted residential housing without a Medicaid waiver? She is on "the list," but needs appropriate housing now.

There are various community resources to help individuals with disabilities. We encourage you to look at the APD Resource Directory by visiting www.apdcares.org/resourcedirectory. If your daughter is on the waiting list and needs emergency residential services, she may be eligible for crisis enrollment on the waiver if

she is homeless, a danger to herself or others or her caregiver is unable to provide care. To apply for crisis enrollment and for information about non-waiver resources in your area, you may contact your local APD office at 813-233-4354.

Since the state of Florida is experiencing profits, is there a possibility that next year APD will get more funding to get more folks off the wait list?

Governor Rick Scott recommended \$36 million to help enroll additional individuals to the waiver and the Florida Legislature agreed and appropriated the funding. Future funding decisions for the wait list will continue to be made within the context of available funds.

Will APD provide electronic information (like Therap) before 2014 for providers to be compliant with federal law?

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities has been awarded \$1.5 million by the Florida Legislature to begin developing a client data management system in fiscal year 2013 - 2014. The agency is currently completing an Invitation to Negotiate for vendors.

How much of the \$36,000,000 will be allocated to persons with disabilities?

During the 2013 Legislative session, Governor Rick Scott recommended and the Florida Legislature approved a \$36 million dollar appropriation to enroll individuals from the APD waitlist to the APD Medicaid Waiver. Currently, APD has offered 757 individuals with intensive needs and 190 children in the welfare system enrollment on the Medicaid Waiver. As of October 15, 2013, over 95% of individuals that accepted Waiver enrollment are enrolled onto the Waiver and are beginning to receive services. The funds allocated are not being used to enroll individuals that are accepted to the Waiver through the current Crisis process. The Crisis and Cost Plan Amendment Request (CPAR) process remains the same and is funded through a different allocation. APD is working diligently to continue to make additional Medicaid Waiver enrollment offers to more people with critical needs identified through the QSI and QSI addendum questions until all appropriated funds are budgeted for individuals new on the Waiver. The \$36 million dollar appropriation will be allocated to persons with developmental disabilities. If you feel that your information needs to be updated to more accurately reflect your current situation, please contact your local APD office. To find your local APD office contact information, please visit www.apdcares.org. Future funding decisions for the wait list will continue to be made within the context of available funds.

We have all heard about the additional \$36 million to reduce the waiting list. I would like to know how much money has been cut from the iBudget this fiscal year.

Governor Rick Scott recommended \$36 million to help enroll additional individuals to the waiver and the Florida Legislature agreed and appropriated the funding. APD was then

able to address the needs of some of the 22,000 families on the Home and Community Based Waiver waiting list. No monies have been cut affecting the current waiver/iBudget.

Can I get on the Med waiver (or my child)? I mean get on Med waiver quicker if he is an adopted special needs child. I was led to believe foster children were moved up the waiting list quicker.

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities can enroll individuals who are in crisis situations onto the waiver. This includes individuals who are homeless, a danger to themselves or others, or their caregiver is unable to provide care. If you believe that your child meets this criteria, we encourage you to contact the local APD office for assistance. Additionally, Florida law was changed in recent years to prioritize those individuals waiting for enrollment. The first priority is individuals who are determined to be in a crisis situation. The second category includes children who are from the child welfare system with an open case in the Department of Children and Family Services' statewide automated child welfare information system.

Without the Med waiver, when my child reaches adulthood, what services are available? I was able to get several brochures and hope questions will be answered.

The Medicaid waiver program offers a number of services geared specifically towards adults with developmental disabilities. Some of these services include adult dental care, companion, supported employment, supported living, and adult day training services. A complete list of Medicaid waiver services (along with the age limitations for each service) may be found within the Medicaid waiver handbook via the following link:
<http://apd.myflorida.com/waiver/hcbs/>

You may also click on the following link for a complete listing of available APD brochures for additional information: <http://apd.myflorida.com/publications/>

Finally, we would encourage you to work closely with your child's waiver support coordinator to discuss accessing the various options that are available as your child transitions into adulthood.

Why does the Med waiver take so long? I have been on the waiting list almost 7 years.

Governor Rick Scott recommended \$36 million to help enroll additional individuals to the waiver and the Florida Legislature agreed and appropriated the funding. This is the first funding that has been allocated to APD's waiting list for approximately eight years. Future funding decisions for the wait list will continue to be made within the context of available funds.

A great presentation by the Director of APD. Nice to see them again at the event willing to help folks to navigate the system. Thanks!

Director Barbara Palmer is committed to making APD better for our customers and our families. Thank you for your kind comment!

How long will I have to wait on this waiting list?

There is no set amount of time individuals wait on the waiting list. As the legislature allocates funding to APD, we can enroll people from the waiting list onto the waiver.

Seriously, all I want is to live the best life that I can, I do not want to be a burden on society. I am going to college, but need the services and supports through my therapies and medical needs (consumables that you guys keep cutting).

We wish you great success with your educational endeavors. There are various organizations that can assist you in meeting your needs while you go to college. Individuals who are under 21 and eligible for Medicaid can receive medically necessary therapies through Medicaid State Plan. Individuals enrolled on the iBudget Waiver and over 21 may receive therapies through the waiver program. Additional resources can be found by visiting the APD Resource Directory online at www.apdcares.org/resourcedirectory.

What is the role of the Family Care Council? I never heard of them and want to know what they do for families.

In 1993, the Florida Legislature created the Family Care Councils (FCC) giving self-advocates and families a voice in the decisions affecting the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities. FCC members are volunteer advocates appointed to serve by the governor. Councils are comprised of individuals with developmental disabilities, parents, siblings, and court-appointed guardians. The councils' primary functions are to:

- assist in providing information and outreach to self-advocates and families;
- review the effectiveness of the APD and make recommendations with respect to implementation;
- advise the APD administrators on the community and family support systems in their area; and
- meet and share information with other area FCCs.

Many council members network with various committees, initiatives and task forces throughout the state on behalf of individuals with developmental disabilities. Through the Family Care Council Florida (FCCF), representatives of each council meet quarterly to educate and discuss common concerns while working together to represent individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, as a united voice. Additional

information about the FCCs, including valuable resources, FCCF publications, and upcoming conferences/events are available on their web site at www.fccflorida.org.

What are the criteria for Autism Spectrum Disorder?

The APD Eligibility Rule (65G-4.014, F.A.C.) includes the following criteria for Autism:
65G-4.014 Eligibility for Agency Services – Definitions.

(1) Autism means a condition which meets the requirements of Section 393.063, F.S., that the condition is:

- (a) Pervasive, meaning always present and without interruption;
- (b) Neurologically based, meaning that the condition is not the result of physical impairment;
- (c) A developmental disability with age of onset during infancy or childhood;
- (d) With extended duration, meaning that the condition reasonably can be expected to continue indefinitely into the future;
- (e) Causes severe learning disorders resulting in both severe communication disorders affecting both verbal and nonverbal skills, and severe behavior disorders. Autism is characterized by an individual evidencing at least six of the following twelve features from the following subparts 1 and 2, with at least one feature from subpart 2:
 - 1. Severe communication disorders, which may include:
 - a. A delay in, or total lack of, the development of spoken language (not accompanied by an attempt to compensate through alternative modes of communication such as gesture or mime);
 - b. Stereotyped and repetitive use of language or idiosyncratic language;
 - c. For those applicants with speech, marked impairment in the use of multiple nonverbal behaviors such as eye-to-eye gaze, facial expression, body postures, and gestures to regulate social interaction;
 - d. Failure to develop peer relationships appropriate to developmental level;
 - e. A lack of spontaneous seeking to share enjoyment, interests, or achievements with other people (e.g., by a lack of showing, bringing, pointing out objects of interest, or achievements to others);
 - f. Lack of social or emotional reciprocity;
 - g. Marked impairment in the ability to initiate or sustain a conversation with others in individuals with adequate speech; or
 - h. Impaired imaginative ability evidenced by a lack of varied, spontaneous make-believe play or social imitative play appropriate to developmental level.
 - 2. Severe behavior disorders, which are restricted, repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests, and activities which may include:
 - a. Encompassing preoccupation with one or more stereotyped and restricted patterns of interest that is abnormal either in intensity or focus;
 - b. Apparently inflexible adherence to specific, nonfunctional routines or rituals
 - c. Stereotyped and repetitive motor mannerisms (e.g., hand or finger flapping or twisting, or complex whole-body movements); or
 - d. Persistent preoccupation with parts of objects.

What can I do? I cannot afford meds or treatment. My son is 23 and has ADHD, ODD, OCD, Bipolar, severe depression, and PNES "seizures." We have applied for disability 3 times and have been denied. We now have an attorney and were again denied. That makes 4 times.

If your son is already an APD client you may wish to contact his Support Coordinator or your APD Region Field Office.

If your son has been served by the Department of Children and Families – Mental Health program in the past, you may wish to call them at 1-866-273-2273.

You should also know that many drug companies have a program to offer low or no cost medication for those in need.

Lastly, United Way offers community resources by zip code or city here at <http://www.referweb.net/211CommunityResources/>.

My 4.5-year-old son has developmental delays. As a result, one parent is the full-time caregiver. I am the only one working. We have one other child. As a result, additionally, we live in the poverty bracket. What are you doing to help these families receive more aid or government assistance, etc.? Also, have you considered helping parents of these children receive financial aid/assistance to go back to school to earn a career or technical certificate? This would help these families live better.

APD is bound by the state statutes that created the agency. Our funding is allocated specifically to provide health and safety services to individuals with developmental disabilities which includes: spina bifida, cerebral palsy, autism, Down Syndrome, Prader-Willi syndrome, and intellectual disabilities. There may be other agencies or community organizations that assist family members.

Address the need for cameras in all group homes for disabled adults who cannot fend for themselves to prevent rape, mental and physical abuse.

Video cameras are permitted to be used in group homes in Florida as long as consent is first obtained from the residents or their guardians and that privacy rights (particularly in bedrooms and bathrooms) are respected. At times, the use of video monitoring has been effective in preventing and detecting abuse and neglect involving the residents of those homes. Although video monitoring is allowed, it is currently not a requirement (since some individuals/guardians do not wish to be monitored).

I am a 37-year-old male on autism spectrum. I am very nice and not a behavior problem. I am bored at home. Where can I go to have some fun and make friends? My mom takes me to Disney World a lot, but I would like friends.

Tianvica Riding Academy, Inc. is a center in which people with special needs experience the rewarding benefits of equine-assisted activities and therapies. Whether it's a five-year-old with Down Syndrome, a 45-year-old recovering from a spinal cord injury, a senior citizen recovering from a stroke or a teenager struggling with depression, research shows that individuals of all ages who participate in EAAT can experience physical and emotional rewards. For individuals with emotional challenges, the unique relationship formed with the horse can lead to increased confidence, patience and self-esteem. Visit their website at www.tianvica.org or call 1-888-548-2972.

Autism Society of Greater Orlando provides information and social opportunities to families of children with Autism. They have many different events and activities for people with Autism. By visiting their website you can see a list of all the activities they offer throughout the year www.asgo.org or call 407-855-0235

Family Care Council Area 14 was established in 1993 by Florida Statute to advise the Agency for Persons with Disabilities on the needs of self-advocates and their families. Please email Manyvone Champavannarath for more information at Manyvone.champavannarath@apdcares.org or call 1-800-470-8101.

Florida Lions Camp is a private non-profit, inclusive camp established and dedicated to serving the needs of youth of varying ability levels, and adults with physical and developmental challenges. Their goal is to offer recreational/leisure opportunities for campers through a diversity of experiences that allow campers to play, learn and grow together regardless of their ability levels or challenges. Please visit their website at www.lioncampsfl.org or call 863-696-1948.

Special Olympics provides year round sports training and competition in a variety of Olympic type sports for persons eight years of age and older with intellectual disabilities, giving them opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics Florida athletes, and the community. Visit their website at www.specialolympicspolk.org or call 863-934-0261.

Ability Online is a family-friendly monitored electronic messaging system that enables children and adolescents with disabilities to share experiences and information. Ability Online is a free monitored & secure online community that welcomes kids, teens and young adults of all abilities. Find a friend and be a friend to someone just like you! Visit their website at www.abilityonline.org

e-Buddies promotes social inclusion online for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In e-buddies, people with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities, such as autism and Down Syndrome, come together online to form friendships in a community that celebrates their diversity of character and abilities. Anyone can be an e-buddy. Visit their website at www.ebuddies.org or call 202-568-8010.

Wrong Planet is the web community designed for individuals with Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, ADHD, PDDs, and other neurological differences. Visit their website at www.wrongplanet.net

For more services in your area, please check out APD's new online community resource directory: www.apdcares.org/resourcedirectory

What social activities (bowling, dances, etc.) are there for 37-year-old male in Polk or Lake or Orange counties?

Tianvica Riding Academy, Inc. is a center in which people with special needs experience the rewarding benefits of equine-assisted activities and therapies. Whether it's a five-year-old with Down Syndrome, a 45-year-old recovering from a spinal cord injury, a senior citizen recovering from a stroke or a teenager struggling with depression, research shows that individuals of all ages who participate in EAAT can experience physical and emotional rewards. For individuals with emotional challenges, the unique relationship formed with the horse can lead to increased confidence, patience and self-esteem. Visit their website at www.tianvica.org or call 1-888-548-2972.

Best Buddies mission is to establish a global volunteer movement that creates opportunity for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Visit www.bestbuddiesflorida.org or call 407-367-4354

Autism Society of Greater Orlando provides information and social opportunities to families of children with Autism. They have many different events and activities for people with Autism. By visiting their website you can see a list of the activities they offer throughout the year www.asgo.org or call 407-855-0235

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Special Olympics Polk County provides year round sports training and competition in a variety of Olympic type sports for persons eight years of age and older with intellectual disabilities, giving them the opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics Florida athletes, and the community. Visit their website at www.specialolympicspolk.org or call 863-934-0261.

For more services in your area, please check out APD's new online community resource directory. www.apdcares.org/resourcedirectory

How to get things to assist children with autism for gymnastics. Also, something to identify who they are if lost.

My Gym All Stars is a class that is offered once a week for children with Autism. This class is designed for children who need assistance with following our program in the form of an adult shadowing them on the floor. These children may be diagnosed with Asperger's or Autism, or just may not be ready to participate in our independent classes. Learn more at www.mygym.com/orlando or call 407-644-2595

American Medical ID provides bracelets, necklaces, and key chains that can be engraved with medical conditions, address, name, or other information that is imperative to your child's safety. Visit their website at www.americanmedical-id.com or call 1-800-363-5985.

Safety Tat was invented by a Baltimore mom of three kids. Safety Tat is a fun and colorful temporary safety child ID tattoo that's uniquely offered either customized with your mobile phone number or blank so you can write in your cell phone number on them. Visit their website at www.safetytat.com or call them at 1-877-240-5379.

For more services in your area, please check out APD's new online community resource directory. www.apdcares.org/resourcedirectory

Are there any supported living complexes (like Arc Village) in the future for Polk/Lake/Orange/Osceola counties?

Noah's Ark of Central Florida currently has five supported-living homes that fourteen residents call "home" and live independently from their caregivers. The Villages at Noah's Landing is an emerging inclusive community that will provide 200 residents with a safe place to live, work, learn, and play while offering its residents the opportunity for maximum community integration. Although there is not an exact date of when this project will be implemented, constituents can contact Noah's Ark of Central Florida at 863-687-0804, email them at admin@NoahsArkFlorida.org, or visit their website at www.noahsarkflorida.org, for more information.

You may also contact the Family Care Council at 1-800-470-8101.

What networks can we access to find help with housing for an adult with disabilities? She just needs help with medicine, morning and evening, and help cooking meals, but not eating or transportation.

As a starting point, we recommend visiting the APD Resource Director online at www.apdcares.org/resourcedirectory. Additionally, you may wish to contact your local APD office. To find your local APD office contact information, please visit www.apdcares.org.

I want to move out on my own. How can I do that?

There are various housing options for individuals with disabilities within Florida. As a starting point, we recommend visiting the APD Resource Director online at www.apdcares.org/resourcedirectory. Additionally, you may wish to contact your local

APD office. To find your local APD office contact information, please visit www.apdcares.org.

How do you set up a trust to provide for your disabled loved one so they are taken care of after you (their provider) pass away? I have heard that certain types of trusts can affect SSI eligibility. What type of trust is best in this type of situation? How is the trust executed, and does a trust have to go through probate?

While APD cannot give legal advice, we realize the importance of establishing a trust and ensuring the maintenance of your loved one's benefits. We offer two resources for this, www.floridalawhelp.org and www.floridabar.org. Both of these organizations can assist you with all your questions concerning trusts and SSI.

Why are programs like the Marino Campus only for those under 28? Can older clients who did not have access to those things when young not benefit from such independence training?

The Dan Marino Foundation, which runs the Marino Campus, is a private, non-profit 501c3 organization as determined by the IRS and can make decisions regarding the age ranges of the individuals to whom they offer various services.

Yes, older clients can benefit from independence training. Similar training can be accessed through programs such as Vocational Rehabilitation.

You can locate the Vocational Rehabilitation office nearest you at:
<http://www.rehabworks.org/>

The state of Florida wait list. It was stated that the state is getting better with this. How much better? Governor Scott gave \$39 million for disabilities. How does this help the list? I feel we will continue to not get any impact on this.

During the 2013 Legislative session, Governor Rick Scott recommended and the Florida Legislature approved a \$36 million dollar appropriation to enroll individuals from the APD waitlist to the APD Medicaid Waiver. Currently, APD has offered 757 individuals with intensive needs and 190 children in the welfare system enrollment on the Medicaid Waiver. As of October 15, 2013, over 95% of individuals that accepted Waiver enrollment are enrolled onto the Waiver and are beginning to receive services. The funds allocated are not being used to enroll individuals that are accepted to the Waiver through the current Crisis process. The Crisis and Cost Plan Amendment Request (CPAR) process remains the same and is funded through a different allocation. APD is working diligently to continue to make additional Medicaid Waiver enrollment offers to more people with critical needs identified through the QSI and QSI addendum questions until all appropriated funds are budgeted for individuals new on the Waiver. If you feel that your information needs to be updated to more accurately reflect your current situation, please contact your local

APD office. To find your local APD office contact information, please visit www.apdcares.org.

I need to get off the waitlist! How about getting rid of service coordinators for the families who do not need their help and using those funds for the ones of us who are waiting so very long for services.

At this time, Waiver Support Coordination is a requirement for the waiver program. However, individuals who need less assistance can opt to use Limited Support Coordination, which provides the service at a decreased rate.

Everyone in your agency tells me something different each time I ask someone. I think you need communication training. It is not my fault that no one knows what is going on at the agency.

We apologize and are sorry you have been having difficulty getting your questions answered. Please email APD.Info@apdcares.org with your questions and we can work on getting a satisfactory answer for you.

I am confused as to my iBudget from my CDC. She did not explain it well.

The CDC+ budget will be derived from the iBudget allocation amount once it is established. If you are currently on CDC+ you will continue to manage your CDC+ budget the same way you do now.

When requesting a hearing, please make the paperwork a bit easier to read and complete. Speak regular English please.

The Agency truly appreciates your recommendation and is most sympathetic to your concern. Federal and State Laws provide standard language for APD to use in the Notice of Administrative Hearing Rights, but our General Counsel's Office has been consulted and will look at ways to simplify this information. The Area/Field staff in your region welcomes the opportunity to assist further, so I encourage you to contact the area/field office for help with questions and clarification on the paperwork.

What are the services that your agency provides? I have a teenage son with a disorder and no one ever told me about you all.

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) serves more than 50,000 Floridians with Autism, Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, Spina Bifida, Intellectual disabilities and Prader-Willi syndrome. The Agency for Persons with Disabilities works in partnership with local communities and private providers to assist people who have developmental disabilities and their families. APD also provides assistance in identifying the needs of people with

developmental disabilities for supports and services. The agency supports persons with developmental disabilities in living, learning, and working in their communities

What does the 8% cover on the iBudget? Confused.

In accordance with the self-direction model established in section 1915(j) of the Medicaid State Plan Amendment, consumers who volunteer to participate in the Consumer Directed Care Plus (CDC+) Program agree to exchange the total budget of their current approved Medicaid waiver cost plan for a smaller budget that has greater flexibility. The 8% reduction stays on the waiver for use by other waiver consumers and the 4% Administrative Fee is used to pay for the functions of the Fiscal / Employer Agent.

Department of Children and Families

Why won't DCF investigate the restraint and seclusion of ESE students in the school district by school staff?

If you believe you know or have reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been abused, abandoned, neglected, or exploited, you should contact the Florida Abuse Hotline. The Hotline Counselor will determine if the information provided meets legal requirements to accept a report for investigation.

There are four ways to make a report:

By telephone – 1-800-96ABUSE (1-800-962-2873)

By fax – 1-800-914-0004

By TDD – 1-800-453-5145

Web reporting – <https://reportabuse.dcf.state.fl.us>

If you have already called the Florida Abuse Hotline regarding this issue and the Hotline Counselor told you the information provided did not meet the legal requirements to accept the report for investigation, you can still report your concerns to the Florida Department of Education. Attached is a guide on "Procedures for Filing a State Complaint" to the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services.

More information on policies and procedures for the restraint and seclusion of ESE students can be found on the Florida Department of Education's website at: <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/ese-home.asp> and <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/ppd.asp>

Why won't DCF investigate when a student is dehydrated and collapses from heat stroke in school for neglect?

If you have already called the Florida Abuse Hotline regarding this issue and the Hotline Counselor told you the information provided did not meet the legal requirements to accept the report for investigation, you still can report your concerns to the Florida Department of Education at <http://www.fldoe.org>.

Why won't DCF accept complaints of bullying as neglect against school staff who do nothing to stop bullying?

If you have already called the Florida Abuse Hotline regarding this issue and the Hotline Counselor told you the information provided did not meet the legal requirements to accept the report for investigation, you still can report your concerns to the child's school.

The document "How to Talk with Educators at Your Child's School About Bullying: Tips for Parents of Bullied Children" is provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human

Services and is available on the Florida Department of Education's website at:
<http://www.fldoe.org/safeschools/bullying.asp>.

Why are children with Down Syndrome not able to access mental health services? All agencies have said "we are not able to work with Down Syndrome; they cannot make judgment calls."

Children with Down Syndrome (DS) are able to access mental health services. In Florida, DS is classified as a developmental disability. Inquiries regarding children with DS should be directed to the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD). As a component of an iBudget, a consumer could self-direct mental health services as a component of their spending plan. The website address for APD is <http://apd.myflorida.com>, or you may call toll-free at 1-800-APD-CARES (1-800-273-2273).

I would like some information on issues of adopted children, especially those with issues. Dealing with behavior with adult mentally ill children. Suggestions on how to handle those behaviors.

For information regarding resources available for help with adopted children please visit the Explore Adoption website at www.adoptflorida.org. This website has links and information to help support adoptive families.

Information regarding mental illness may be found by visiting the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) website at <http://www.nami.org/>. This resource provides information about mental illness and guidance on locating NAMI State Organizations and local Affiliates. Additional information about mental health services in Florida may be found on the Department's website at <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/mental-health>.

Educational paraprofessionals and other non-certified support staff that work with youth or people with mental health or physical challenges should be required to conduct themselves to the same ethical standards as certified personnel. Present laws need to be revised to include this provision.

Currently, the Florida Certification Board sets the standards and certifies professionals and para-professionals who are required in Florida Statutes to be certified. They can assist you in reviewing the current standards and laws regarding these professionals and advise you regarding the process of formulating and revising the Administrative Rules and Florida Statutes governing these professions. Their website is at <http://www.flcertificationboard.org/>.

How can I find a peer specialist?

A peer specialist may be found by calling the 24-hour Mental Health Access Line at 1-800-945-1355. You may also visit the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) website at <http://www.nami.org/>. There you will find information about mental illness and resources for locating NAMI State Organizations and local Affiliates.

Additionally, the Florida 2-1-1 Association provides referral information by trained professionals and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Florida 2-1-1 may be reached by dialing "2-1-1" from either a landline or cell phone, or by visiting the 2-1-1 website at <http://www.211florida.org/>.

What is the System of Care Grant? How does it impact Florida and the families you serve? Please tell me more. . .

The System of Care Grant is a federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grant that provides the Department with funding to better coordinate the Mental Health systems in the state. The goal is to enhance and increase support services, system involvement and advocacy. Specifically, this grant provides training for providers to implement research supported interventions such as wraparound, a social marketing campaign to decrease the stigma associated with mental health and substance use disorders, and an evaluation process for continuous quality improvement.

Will the ACA make a difference in the mental health services available to me and my family?

The implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) has not been finalized at this time. However, the inclusion of behavioral health parity has a significant impact on mental health services. More information regarding ACA may be found on the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services website at <http://www.hhs.gov/opa/affordable-care-act/index.html>.

Tell me how to adopt a child, especially one with special health care needs.

All prospective adoptive parents, except relatives, are required to attend and successfully complete approved adoptive parent training. The training takes about 21-25 hours over a span of several weeks. The primary goal of training is for prospective adoptive parents to conduct a self-assessment of their family after learning about the effects of the trauma our foster children experience and the current and expected adoption challenges ahead. After completing adoptive parent training and determining that your family has the needed strengths to be an adoptive parent, a home study is completed, including references and a complete background check. The approved home study is used for match staffing, when all available children and all approved home studies are discussed to determine if a match is possible. If a match is considered to be possible, the family is contacted and some of the child's information is provided for the family to consider. If the family continues to be interested, more family and medical history of the child is documented. Prior to the first meeting with the child, all of the family and medical history

of the child is provided to the family. A child with special health needs requires the adoptive parent to become knowledgeable about the current and projected health care needs of the child, assess the needed resources in the local area and determine the support network needed to nurture and care for a child with special health needs 24/7. A transition plan is developed after a prospective adoptive family has been matched with a child in order to slowly transition the child from his/her current caregiver to the adoptive parents. The length of time needed for a transition plan varies and is totally dependent on how the child is adjusting as to when the child may actually move in with the adoptive family.

How do I report abuse of a family member without the entire family that I have hating me?

There are four ways to make a report:

- By telephone – 1-800-96ABUSE (1-800-962-2873)
- By fax – 1-800-914-0004
- By TDD – 1-800-453-5145
- Web reporting – <https://reportabuse.dcf.state.fl.us>

You do not have to give your name in order to make a report. Providing your name, however, is helpful in the event a protective investigator needs to ask you more questions or seek clarification about the information you provided to the Hotline Counselor.

The names of reporters are held confidential and, under Florida Statutory requirements, should not be released to the individuals the report is about.

Florida Abuse Hotline Counselors will not acknowledge the existence of any report, will not acknowledge that they have previously spoken to a particular caller, nor will they release any information provided by a caller or any information contained in a report. No reports are released by the Abuse Hotline other than to those persons specifically authorized under Chapters 39 and 415, F.S.

Hopefully, this information helps; however, if you have any additional questions, please send us an email or visit our website at:
<http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/abuse-hotline/howtoreport>

How do I apply for food stamps? And how do I report food stamp fraud?

You may apply for food assistance (food stamps) online at:
<http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/> or by completing a paper application. A paper application is available online at: <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/access-florida-food-medical-assistance-cash> or you can call our Statewide Call Center at 1-866-762-2237, Florida Relay 711 or TTY 1-800-955-8771, or write to the ACCESS Central Mail Center, Post Office Box 5200, Tallahassee, FL 32314-5200, and a paper application will be mailed. The online application is available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Auxiliary

aids and services are available for clients or companions who are deaf or hard of hearing, or any type of aid needed to apply for assistance through your local service center.

To report food assistance fraud, call 1-866-762-2237, Florida Relay 711 or TTY 1-800-955-8771, or submit a report online at:

<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/access/ReportFraud/MainForm.aspx>.

I am soon to be homeless and need to control my bipolar behaviors. I need help. Can you help me? I do not want to go to the police for services. My city always refers me to the cops! Why?

Treatment options for individuals with mental health disorders vary depending on where you live. Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) assists adults who are suffering from serious mental illness, or serious mental illness and a substance use disorder (co-occurring disorder), and are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless. There are PATH sites throughout the state. To find one near you please refer to <http://pathprogram.samhsa.gov/Super/Path/Grantees.aspx>.

For referral information in your area, please contact the appropriate behavioral health Managing Entity:

Suncoast Region: Central Florida Behavioral Health
(813) 740-4811
719 South US Highway 301
Tampa, FL 33619

Southern Region: South Florida Behavioral Health
(305) 774-3616
7205 Corporate Center Drive, Ste 200
Miami, Florida 33126

Northeast Region: Lutheran Services Florida, Inc.
(904) 448-5995
4615 Philips Highway
Jacksonville, FL 32207

Northwest Region: Big Bend Community-Based Care
(850) 410-1020
525 N. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Central Florida Region: Central Florida Cares Health System
(407) 985-3560
707 Mendham Blvd, Suite 104
Orlando, FL 32825

Southeast Region: Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network
(561) 203-2485

140 Intracoastal Pointe Drive, Suite 211
Jupiter, FL 33477

Broward: Broward Behavioral Health Coalition
(954) 873-8488
1926 Harrison Street
Hollywood, FL 33020

Additionally, the Florida 2-1-1 Association provides referral information by trained professionals and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Florida 2-1-1 may be reached by dialing "2-1-1", or via the website at <http://www.211florida.org/>.

Why has funding for mental health services, support, and proactive remediation been cut, while funding for punitive treatment of special needs individuals has been increased? These funding priorities need to be corrected.

The Department will continue to work with the community and the Legislature to ensure that our most vulnerable citizens are protected and respected and that funding priorities are aligned with our mission and values.

When will cops treat the mentally ill appropriately? When will the stigma be erased from Jacksonville (Duval County) police force? When will they start treating the mentally ill appropriately? Family member threatened to kill herself. Cops came to our home, and I had her on the ground. I tried to get her cell phone to get her case manager and the cop lied and said I chest-butted him but what really happened was he chest-butted me and I landed on the floor and was arrested.

In the event that assistance is needed by local law enforcement, a Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) trained officer should be requested. CIT is an effective police response program designed for first responders who handle crisis calls involving persons with mental illnesses, including those with co-occurring substance use disorders. CIT emphasizes a partnership between law enforcement, the behavioral health treatment system, mental health advocacy groups, and consumers of mental health services and their families. Below is the contact information for the CIT trained officer in the Jacksonville area:

Captain Andrea Smith
(904) 630-5842
Andrea.Smith@jaxsheriff.org

Why don't you reach out to the families that you serve? I mean add them to councils or invite them to your offices so you can hear how we are trying to make it, even though we are trying.

Foster and adoptive parents are encouraged to attend their local foster and/or adoptive parent support group meetings. These meetings are conducted monthly and there is an agency liaison attached to the support group for the purpose of providing educational opportunities for the support group meetings, with local speakers of interest and to learn of the concerns and service needs of adoptive parents. Several workgroups in the last year have included adoptive parents.

How do I find resources or child care services for my child with special needs?

There are several avenues to explore when looking for child care services for your child.

The statewide Child Care Resource and Referral Network is dedicated to helping families find answers to their questions regarding how to identify quality child care and early education programs and how to locate a provider that meets their family's needs.

You can access Child Care Resource and Referral services by calling the State CCR&R Network Office at 1-866-357-3239 toll-free or at the link below.

http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/OEL_CCRR_Networks.html

Each local area also has an early learning coalition that works with family resources for quality care. Their contact information may be found at

http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/OEL_Coalitions_Map.html

You can work with your local Early Steps programs - <http://www.cms-kids.com/families/families.html> as well as the Central Directory, which provides statewide information and referral services for families of children who have disabilities and special health care needs or who are at risk for developmental delays. The Central Directory operates a national toll-free number 1-800-654-4440, maintains a statewide database, promotes advocacy, public awareness and education.

Lastly, the Department of Children and Families also has a comprehensive list of child care programs that can be searched by county and types of services. This information may be found at <http://dcfsanswrite.state.fl.us/Childcare/provider/>

I hope this information is helpful in locating services to best meet the needs of your child and your family.

Do you have rehab centers available to assist those families who need help with a loved one?

The Florida 2-1-1 Association provides referral information by trained professionals and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Florida 2-1-1 may be reached by dialing "2-1-1" from either a landline or cell phone, or the website at <http://www.211florida.org/>.

For referral information in your area, please contact the appropriate behavioral health Managing Entity:

Suncoast Region: Central Florida Behavioral Health
(813) 740-4811
719 South US Highway 301
Tampa, FL 33619

Southern Region: South Florida Behavioral Health
(305) 774-3616
7205 Corporate Center Drive, Ste 200
Miami, Florida 33126

Northeast Region: Lutheran Services Florida, Inc.
(904) 448-5995
4615 Philips Highway
Jacksonville, FL 32207

Northwest Region: Big Bend Community-Based Care
(850) 410-1020
525 N. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Central Florida Region: Central Florida Cares Health System
(407) 985-3560
707 Mendham Blvd, Suite 104
Orlando, FL 32825

Southeast Region: Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network
(561) 203-2485
140 Intracoastal Pointe Drive, Suite 211
Jupiter, FL 33477

Broward: Broward Behavioral Health Coalition
(954) 873-8488
1926 Harrison Street
Hollywood, FL 33020

Where can I find services for my teenage son with multiple issues, from mental health to juvenile justice arrests? There is nothing in my community and everyone knows him, and he is a handful and getting worse due to lack of treatment centers.

The Florida 2-1-1 Association provides referral information by trained professionals and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Florida 2-1-1 may be reached by dialing "2-1-1" from either a landline or cell phone, or the website at: <http://www.211florida.org/>.

For referral information in your area, please contact the appropriate behavioral health Managing Entity:

Suncoast Region: Central Florida Behavioral Health
(813) 740-4811
719 South US Highway 301
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(305) 774-3616
7205 Corporate Center Drive, Ste 200
Miami, Florida 33126

Northeast Region: Lutheran Services Florida, Inc.
(904) 448-5995
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(954) 873-8488
1926 Harrison Street
Hollywood, FL 33020

I am afraid that my son will be sent to prison. He does not want to act this way, there is nothing in our area to help him. We are overwhelmed and feel so helpless. Is there a treatment center that will take teenagers? I do not want him to live too far from home.

For referral information in your area, please contact the appropriate behavioral health Managing Entity:

Suncoast Region: Central Florida Behavioral Health
(813) 740-4811
719 South US Highway 301

Tampa, FL 33619

Southern Region: South Florida Behavioral Health
(305) 774-3616
7205 Corporate Center Drive, Ste 200
Miami, Florida 33126

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Hollywood, FL 33020

How do I get assistance for my family? I have lost my job, do not have a home computer and no one answers the hotline.

You can complete an online application at any location that has a computer with internet access (example, Libraries) or you can visit a DCF service center or Community Partner Agency for assistance in completing an application. A listing of local DCF service centers is available at: <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/access-florida-food-medical-assistance-cash/locate-service-center-your-area>. You can locate a Community Partner Agency at: <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/access/CPSLookup/search.aspx>.

If you do not have a computer and lack transportation you can contact our Statewide Call Center at 1-866-762-2237, Florida Relay 711, or TTY 1-800-955-8771, or write to ACCESS Central Mail Center, Post Office Box 5200, Tallahassee, FL 32314-5200, and request a paper application or other reasonable accommodation. Auxiliary aids and services are available for clients or companions who are deaf or hard of hearing, or any type of aid needed to apply for assistance through your local service center.

Can you help with housing issues?

The state Office on Homelessness has offices at the Department of Children and Families in Tallahassee. Our staff manages a federal grant that provides money to homeless shelters and to organizations in Florida who help homeless individuals and families. These funds are not available to the general public, but only to organizations that deal with the general public.

Recently, the Office on Homelessness has been developing the guidelines for a new grant that will be available to HUD Homeless Continuum of Care lead agencies. The lead agencies who are awarded these grant funds will be able to assist families in their local communities who are facing eviction or foreclosure or who cannot pay their utility bills. This money will be available by January 2014.

Our office also provides administrative services to the state Council on Homelessness. The Council works on homeless policy and services in Florida and makes policy recommendations to the Governor each year in an annual report.

Here is a link to our website.

<http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/homelessness>

How do I apply for assistance with medical needs and food stamps?

The online ACCESS application is a joint public assistance application used to apply for food assistance, Medicaid and cash assistance. You may apply for assistance online at: <http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/> or by completing a paper application. A paper application is available online at: <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/access-florida-food-medical-assistance-cash> or you can call our Statewide Call Center at 1-866-762-2237, Florida Relay 711, or TTY 1-800-955-8771, or write to ACCESS Central Mail Center, Post Office Box 5200, Tallahassee, FL 32314-5200, and a paper application will be mailed. The online application is available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Auxiliary aids and services are available for clients or companions who are deaf or hard of hearing, or any type of aid needed to apply for assistance through your local service center.

I am in the foster care program. I am only 25. Been here forever it seems. Need help to get back into college. Will you help?

Young adults between the ages of 18-22 that have aged out of the foster care system may be eligible to receive assistance and services and educational stipend payments in support of transitioning towards independence. Former foster care young adults between the ages of 18-27 may be eligible to be exempted for paying tuition and fees at Florida public vocational programs, community colleges and four year colleges and universities. A young adult must contact their local Community Based Care agency to determine eligibility and availability of services.

What type of legal aid do you provide families who want to become a guardian for a child? We have a loving heart and an open home.

The Department of Children and Families does not offer legal assistance or advice. The issue of guardianship that you mention is a legal matter that needs to be handled by a family law attorney. If you do not have the money to hire an attorney, free legal assistance is available in every county in Florida. These links will take you to websites that either offer or can help you find free legal assistance. You may also want to contact the Clerk of the Court in your county.

<http://www.floridabar.org/tfb/TFBConsum.nsf/840090C16EEDAF0085256B61000928DC/A99E4C9F07844AC385256FF90073D012>

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

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

What type of services do you offer kids like me with issues? I want to get involved. Don't want my mental issues to stop me.

For information regarding mental health services in your area and possible ways to get involved, please contact the following behavioral health Managing Entity provider:

South Florida Behavioral Health
(305) 774-3616
7205 Corporate Center Drive, Suite 200
Miami, Florida 33126

Another resource for adolescent mental health issues is Families and Communities Empowered for Success (FACES). FACES is a system of care initiative specifically targeted to youth involvement. Services provided by FACES include:

- Coordination with other service agencies;
- Meaningful involvement of youth and family in treatment planning;
- Youth-centered services that are culturally competent and age appropriate; and,
- An array of services focused on the person's mental health treatment and other supportive services needed to maintain residence in the community.

Also, Youth M.O.V.E (Motivating Others through Voices of Experience) is a youth organization that advocates support and improves behavioral health services by promoting positive change in the system of care. Youth M.O.V.E. is a sister organization to FACES. Youth M.O.V.E. information may be found at <http://fofmiami.org/move/en2/about-us.html>.

Department of Education

Where can I find out what accommodations a school has to make to make the school accessible for wheelchairs and how to take action?

Among other things, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ensures access to buildings for people with disabilities. The ADA Standards establish design requirements for the construction and alteration of facilities subject to the law. These enforceable standards apply to places of public accommodation, commercial facilities and state and local government facilities.

In Florida, the State Requirements for Educational Facilities 2012 (SREF) were incorporated into Florida Building Code Chapter 423 to provide the standard "Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities: Building Elements Designed for Children's Use; Final Rule." This standard is to be applied to public school facilities in accordance with Florida Building Code Section 423.4.4. These standards can be found at the following link: <http://www.fldoe.org/edfacil/pdf/srefrule12.pdf>.

Should you have concerns regarding the accessibility at your child's school you may contact your school district's facilities department or the Florida Department of Education's Office of Educational Facilities at 850-245-0494 to discuss your concerns.

It is vital to fight for accommodations throughout primary and secondary school. My autistic, ADD-mood disordered challenged son: 8th grade.

In Florida, all students with disabilities have the opportunity to work toward grade-level academic standards. Students with disabilities may use accommodations during instruction and assessment. Accommodations meet the individual student needs and ensure equal access to the academic content standards.

For more information on accommodations, please visit Accommodations Assisting Students with Disabilities document at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/accomm-educator.pdf>.

In addition, you may also want to review the guide titled Selecting Accommodations: Guidance for Individual Educational Plan Teams which is available at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/SelectingAccommodations.pdf>.

What are the criteria for Autism Spectrum Disorder?

According to Florida State Board of Education Rule 6A-6.03023, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is defined to be a range of pervasive developmental disorders that adversely affects a student's functioning, and results in the need for special education and related services. ASD is characterized by an uneven developmental profile and a pattern of qualitative impairments in social interaction,

communication and the presence of restricted, repetitive, and/or stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests or activities. These characteristics may manifest in a variety of combinations and range from mild to severe. ASD may include Autistic Disorder, Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified, Asperger's Disorder or other related pervasive developmental disorders.

More information on determination of ASD may be found at <https://www.flrules.org/gateway/ruleNo.asp?id=6A-6.03023>.

Does the state have plans to develop a universal anti-bullying policy for public schools in Florida? I feel that the development of a zero-tolerance policy would significantly benefit the disabled population of our public schools, allowing students to remain in school instead of homeschooling decisions made out of fear for the safety of our children.

Florida's bullying law (s. 1006.147, Florida Statutes [F.S.]) requires each school district to develop and adopt a policy prohibiting bullying and harassment, incorporating 14 specific components which are specified within the statute. In addition, the law requires the FDOE to create a model policy to serve as a guide for districts as they develop their own. Furthermore, FDOE must approve and certify that each district's policy is in substantial conformity with the model policy. Districts found to not comply with these expectations risk losing their annual Safe Schools Funds.

It is important to understand that in Florida, the responsibility of operating, controlling, and supervising the public schools rests with the district school board and school superintendent. This is referred to as "local control," and it places decision-making in the hands of those closest to the students. The role of the Florida Department of Education is to provide leadership, support and contact information for local school district officials who can best address local-level concerns. For this reason, policies are made at the local level by the district school board, superintendent, and schools themselves.

For more information, contact the Florida Department of Education's Office of Safe Schools at 850-245-0847.

How do you get your IEP team to understand what you want vs. what is easiest for them?

State Board of Education Rule 6A-6.02028 (3)(c.)7., F.A.C., requires that Individual Educational Plan (IEP) teams consider the student's strengths, preferences, and interests. It is important that all parties stay focused on what the student needs. Every school district in the state of Florida is required to provide a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to students with disabilities who have been determined eligible for services under the requirements of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The IEP team determines the services necessary to provide FAPE to students with disabilities. All members of the IEP team help determine 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. Services for the student are determined by student need, not by eligibility label. A member of the IEP team, including the student's teacher, has a right to request that the team reconvene to review or revise the IEP if they feel progress in the general education curriculum and/or toward the student's annual goals is limited or if they feel that any components of the IEP are not appropriate to meet the student's needs. As part of the IEP team meeting, discussion regarding all needs, including the possible need for reevaluation, should occur.

Additionally, IEP teams must begin the process of identifying the transition services needs of students with disabilities by:

- Including consideration of the student's need for instruction or the provision of information in the area of self-determination.
- Assisting the student to be able to actively and effectively participate in IEP team meetings and self-advocate beginning no later than age 14.

Therefore, a student with a disability may wish to inform their teacher prior to the IEP team meeting that they would like the opportunity to self-advocate during the meeting by expressing their strengths, preferences, and interests. The student may also wish to bring an IEP team meeting "help sheet" to the meeting that includes important information such as their postsecondary goals; their strengths, preferences and interests; their needs; and any other information they feel the team needs to know about them.

There is a website developed just for students and families called FYI Transition. You may link to that website at <http://fyitransition.org/> and find an array of resources. You may also want to learn more about the Florida Youth Leadership Forum. This is a leadership training opportunity for students with disabilities that is held each summer. For more information, go to <http://www.abletrust.org/y/f/>.

Why don't the schools in Florida do what they are supposed to do?

The Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, in carrying out its roles of leadership, resource allocation, technical assistance, monitoring, and evaluation, is required to oversee the performance of district school boards in the enforcement of all exceptional student education laws and rules (sections 1001.03(8), 1003.571 and 1008.32, F.S.).

If you feel a school is not providing a free appropriate public education, you are encouraged to work together with the school and district to resolve issues regarding a student's exceptional student education (ESE) needs. When these types of concerns or disagreements regarding a student's exceptional educational needs arise, it is helpful for the parent to immediately speak with the student's teacher, guidance counselor, staffing specialist or school principal. If the parent is still unable to resolve the concerns, he or she may contact the district's ESE office. Many school districts have procedures in place to assist families in resolving disputes. In addition, parents may contact the Bureau of

Exceptional Education and Student Services to discuss the following administrative remedies:

- Mediation
- State Complaint
- Due Process Hearing Request

A child undergoes evaluations to determine his or her needs, and then prior to an IEP being modified, the child then moves to another district. The first district refuses to write services (IEP) for the new year, and new school district refuses to consider evaluations. As a result, all current goals are dropped, and one new goal unrelated to the others is written. Shouldn't their new district either continue the goals in the existing IEP or write a new one with the evaluations taken into account?

State Board of Education Rule 6A-6.0334, F.A.C., addresses students transferring to another school district within Florida. If an exceptional education student who had an individual educational plan or educational plan (EP) that was in effect in a previous Florida school district transfers to a new Florida school district and enrolls in a new school, the new Florida school district (in consultation with the parents) must provide a free appropriate public education to the student, which includes services comparable to those described in the child's IEP or EP from the previous Florida school district, until the new Florida school district either:

- (a) Adopts the child's IEP or EP from the previous school district; or
- (b) Develops, adopts and implements a new IEP or EP that meets the applicable requirements of Rules 6A-6.03011 through 6A-6.0361, F.A.C.

There are 67 school districts, plus virtual schools. None of them are in compliance with IDEA 2004. The Department of Education has no control to enforce IDEA 2004. Can you order the Department of Education to enforce IDEA 2004 so that the children of Florida have the same rights as children in the other 49 states?

The Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, in carrying out its roles of leadership, resource allocation, technical assistance, monitoring and evaluation, is required to oversee the performance of district school boards in the enforcement of all exceptional student education laws and rules (sections 1001.03(8), 1003.571 and 1008.32, F.S.). One purpose of IDEA is to assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities. In accordance with IDEA, BEESS is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of the Act and the educational requirements of the state are implemented (34 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] §300.149(a)(1) and (2)).

In fulfilling this requirement, BEESS monitors ESE programs that district school boards provide in accordance with sections 1001.42, 1003.57 and 1003.573, F.S. Through these

monitoring activities, BEESS examines and evaluates procedures, records and ESE services; provides information and assistance to school districts; and otherwise assists school districts in operating effectively and efficiently. The monitoring system is designed to emphasize improved educational outcomes for students while ensuring compliance with applicable federal laws and regulations and state statutes and rules.

The School Board is supposed to provide all the procedural safeguards that will be used in a due process hearing. Florida now does due process hearings under Florida Civil Law and not IDEA 2004 procedural safeguards. The School Board refuses to give the Florida Civil Law to parents. Why can't we have the Civil Law provided to parents? Why is Florida refusing to comply with IDEA 2004 due process procedural safeguards?

Due process hearings are conducted in compliance with the IDEA. The requirement to comply with IDEA is included in the contract between the Department of Education and the State of Florida Division of Administrative Hearings (DOAH). It is important to know that many districts and families resolve issues associated with a due process request through a resolution or mediation process. Therefore, many requests that are filed do not result in any hearing or final order.

More information on procedural safeguards and due process can be found on the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services' website located at the following link: <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/resolution.asp>.

Parents have a right to a free transcript of their due process hearing. Why are school districts refusing to provide free transcripts? Why are the administrative law judges (ALJs) refusing to send copies of the transcripts to file in the Department of Education?

The DOE is not aware of cases in which districts refused to provide transcripts free of charge to parents. You may wish to contact the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services at 850-245-0476 if there are circumstances when a parent is not provided free transcripts regarding their due process case. DOAH provides copies of transcripts regarding IDEA due process cases to the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services.

Administrative law judges don't enforce and/or know IDEA 2004 law and regulations. Can we replace ALJs with hearing officers who are trained and have to pass tests to become a hearing officer? Can we have a 2nd tier of a "regional associate" who can rule over due process hearing decisions, who can do a final decision, so that if we end up with a biased hearing officer/ALJ, we have a second review?

Administrative law judges (ALJ) receive training from DOE, outside experts and both school and parent advocates. The decision of an ALJ is appealable in the appropriate state circuit court or in the District Court of Appeal for a student who is gifted.

To contact the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, please call 850-245-0476.

Can a district tell a parent that they don't have to provide behavioral services and then direct a parent to obtain it themselves and pay for it themselves?

All decisions regarding whether a student needs any ESE services would be an IEP team decision. If the IEP team makes the determination that a student needs to receive any ESE service(s), the district would be responsible for providing that service(s). If a parent feels that their child is being denied FAPE, they may contact the ESE Director for their district. ESE Director contact information can be found at [http://data.fldoe.org/ese/contacts/default.cfm?action=show List&ListID=18](http://data.fldoe.org/ese/contacts/default.cfm?action=show>List&ListID=18).

A parent may contact BEESS to discuss and provide permission for BEESS personnel to contact the district ESE Director on their behalf at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/> and/or to utilize dispute resolution procedures, described in the following link: <https://www.fldoe.org/ese/resolution.asp>.

Who makes the determination for children to be able to take the FCAT or not and simply graduate with a completion certificate?

All students with disabilities participate in the statewide assessment program. Students may participate with or without accommodations depending on the student's IEP. If a student is unable to pass the FCAT, given all allowable accommodations, the student may then be eligible for a waiver of the FCAT results, which is determined by the IEP team.

Students whose demonstrated cognitive ability prevents them from completing the required coursework and achieving the state standards and who require extensive direct instruction to accomplish and transfer the skills and competencies needed for domestic, community living, leisure, and vocational activities may participate in the state standardized assessment program by taking the Florida Alternate Assessment.

At the Legislative Advocacy 2013 session at 4:30 on Friday, we were told over 100 children are in nursing homes. Are those children receiving any education services? Do those children have IEPs? Are those children receiving related services, for example: Spanish, Occupational and Physical Therapy?

All children with disabilities, beginning at age three, are entitled to a free appropriate education regardless of their residence. School districts and agencies should work together to ensure that the student's educational needs are being met. If a student

residing in a nursing home has a disability or qualifies under the hospital homebound program, then services, including an IEP, will be provided.

I know educational laws. My daughter was denied accommodations in her high school. Even the principal was apologetic for the mistake. But I'm tired of the paperwork to get change guaranteed. I have three children with IEPs, and I work full-time. It's a job to maintain and keep up with what each child needs. Each of my children have fallen victim of non-educated inclusion teachers, and it affects each of their futures, and by the time you as a parent notice the injustice, it's too late. I've used parent advocates, but each of my kids needs an IEP coordinator from start to transitions. Can we, or do we, have guardians to follow them through the system? If not, can we start one? I've seen so many parents that need support. Starting over with new people every year is a waste of my precious time. See following question.

Frustrated at the lack of supports for families in the IEP process, which is still very overwhelming and confusing for many parents/caregivers. How can they find more resources to help?

Supports for families are a very important part of the IEP process and are available at the district, region and state level.

At the district level, an ESE parent liaison is available to assist parents with exceptional education questions and concerns. To find the contact in your area, access the parent liaison contact list at <http://data.fldoe.org/ease/contacts/default.cfm?action=showList&ListID=10>.

Regionally, both the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) and the federally funded parent centers offer support services to parents and families of students with disabilities.

FDLRS has 19 regional centers that provide 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. Parent services include assistance in the development of family friendly programs, training and support for services for children with disabilities, and the support of partnerships between schools and parents to support student achievement. For more information on parent services in your area, contact your local FDLRS Associate Center. To access the FDLRS directory, please visit the following link: <http://www.fdlrs.org/>.

Florida has four federally funded parent centers. The focus of these centers is to assist families in understanding special and general education laws and evidence-based practices, and to actively participate in planning and decision-making about supports and services for early intervention, education and transition to adult life for students with disabilities. You can find the contact information for these centers at the following link: <http://www.parentcenternetwork.org/region3/parentcenters.html>.

At the state level, BEESS' Bureau Resource and Information Center (BRIC) provides parents, educators, and other Floridians with access to information about exceptional student education, student services, juvenile justice education, early intervention, parent and professional partnerships and many other topics. Materials from BRIC can be accessed on the web at <http://www.fl DOE.org/ese/clerhome.asp>. [A Parent's Introduction to Exceptional Education in Florida](#) may be particularly useful when navigating the ESE process. This publication is available at <http://www.fl DOE.org/ese/pdf/ESEParent.pdf>.

I would like to learn more about education options other than public school options.

In Florida, K-12 students and parents are afforded the right to educational choice. These choices include public school, private school and home school.

Public school choice includes eight different program areas:

- A Business Community (ABC) Schools- A public school within a business
- Controlled open enrollment
- Voluntary public school choice
- Florida Virtual School
- Charter schools
- Magnet schools
- Military family school choice
- Other public school options - includes the Elementary and Secondary Act Waiver (ESEA) flexibility waiver and supplemental educational services

For private school choice, the Florida Department of Education compiles a directory of current Florida private schools that are in operation. This directory is available at the school choice web site at <http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/information/PrivateSchoolDirectory/Default.aspx?prgm type=0>. In addition, DOE offers several scholarship programs available to current and prospective private school students. These include:

- McKay Scholarship
- Florida Tax Credit Scholarship
- Opportunity Scholarships

The McKay scholarship in particular provides the ability for parents of children with disabilities to choose a private school of their choice or to transfer to another public school that better fits their child's needs.

Home education is a parent-directed educational option that satisfies the requirement for regular school attendance. Florida laws protecting home education became effective in 1985. Parents have the freedom to determine their child's educational path and the plan for reaching their goals. Students have the opportunity to explore and learn at their own pace, in any location or at any time. Home education students are able to enter

institutions of higher learning and are eligible to participate in the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program.

For more information about any of the school choice options listed above, please contact the Florida Department of Education's Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice at 1-800-447-1636 or visit their website at <http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/default.asp>.

Are more things available for speech and language services?

There is no requirement that a student be eligible under a given category in order to receive specific services through their IEP. Speech and language services are not just limited to those students who have been determined eligible as speech and/or language impaired. The IEP team, based on the needs of the student in the educational setting, may determine that speech or language services are needed as related services. The IEP must include a description of how the student's disability affects the student's involvement and progress in the general curriculum and a statement of annual goals (and short-term objectives or benchmarks, if required) designed to meet the student's needs resulting from the disability. Depending on how the disability affects the student's involvement and progress in the general curriculum, the IEP team may determine that the student would benefit from additional services such as (but not limited to) assistive technology, support for reading and math, specific accommodations or additional time in therapy. However, all supports and services are determined by the IEP team.

Why don't the accommodations and modifications listed on a 504 Plan have the same legal protections that an IEP is afforded? The guidelines given at these meetings are little more than a single sheet of paper and are non-specific. Parents seem to have little recourse if their 504 Plan is not enforced.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a federal civil rights statute that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. Both Section 504 and IDEA provide legal protections for eligible students. Differences in the specificity of procedural safeguards reflect differences in language in implementing regulations. In contrast to extensive procedural safeguards under IDEA, Section 504 regulations simply require a system of procedural safeguards that includes notice, an opportunity for the parents to examine relevant records, an impartial hearing and a review procedure (34 CFR 104.36).

The accommodations identified on a 504 Plan are legally binding, and the 504 procedural safeguards include an impartial hearing with the opportunity for participation by the parent or guardian and representation by counsel. Parents disagreeing with the identification, evaluation and/or accommodations have several options available under Section 504, including: 1) filing a complaint or grievance through the district's discrimination complaint procedure and 2) requesting a hearing before an impartial hearing officer. Should a parent disagree with the identification, evaluation or placement decision of a 504 team or the decision of a 504 hearing officer, the parent may appeal to

state court or federal court or file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, at OCR.Atlanta@ed.gov.

I would love to see more about education information for the “invisible” illnesses, especially regarding legal rights for these students. Example: gifted children with learning disabilities who need accommodations.

Hidden disabilities are physical or mental impairments that are not readily apparent to others, or disabilities that may have gone undiagnosed. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects the rights of students with obvious and hidden disabilities when the disability results in a substantial limitation of a major life activity or bodily function. See the Office for Civil Rights brochure, *The Civil Rights of Students with Hidden Disabilities Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/hq5269.html>.

When a parent suspects that his or her child has a hidden or undiagnosed disability, the parent has a right to request that the school conduct an evaluation to determine whether the student meets eligibility under the IDEA or Section 504. In order to receive accommodations, a student with a hidden disability would need to meet the eligibility criteria for IDEA or Section 504. Gifted students with a learning disability may be eligible for accommodations under Section 504 if there is evidence of a substantial limitation in learning or may also be eligible for services under IDEA if they do not achieve adequately, based on chronological age or state-approved, grade-level standards and demonstrate the need for specially designed instruction. In both IDEA and Section 504, the analysis of impairment is made relative to grade-level standards, not the student’s ability level.

Federal disability laws prohibit disability-based discrimination in accelerated programs. Students who meet the criteria established for all students to participate in advanced coursework (Honors courses, Advanced Placement courses, International Baccalaureate courses, etc.) are entitled to participate in advanced-level courses with related aids and services or accommodations, including accessible instructional materials (AIM), which are indicated on the student’s IEP.

How to control ADHD in schools?

Students who exhibit difficulties related to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) may be referred to a school-based team to develop academic and/or behavioral interventions and supports that address the primary symptoms of ADHD (i.e., inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity). The purpose of interventions and supports is to mitigate the functional impact of ADHD on school performance, academic attainment and social interaction rather than to control ADHD. Interventions and supports are individually determined based on student need and may include task modification, adult monitoring/prompts, home-school communication systems and self-monitoring interventions that target on-task behavior, work completion and self-control.

Depending on the functional impact, students with ADHD may be eligible for special education and services under IDEA or for a free appropriate public education under Section 504. Eligible students receive an individual plan designed to address their needs.

Although behavioral interventions in combination with medication are generally accepted as treatment for ADHD, section 1006.0625, F.S., prohibits public school teachers or other school personnel from attempting to compel parents to require that a student take medication. A student's medical care is a matter between the student, the student's parent and a competent health care professional chosen by the parent.

If the state has a surplus, why do teachers' salary raises depend on students' performance? It is difficult, as it is, to make and motivate typical students to learn and dedicate themselves to learning; how can a teacher that dedicates his/her time to teach special needs students get a raise if their performance is limited? Where did this idea come from, and how fair is it?

The decision to use student performance data in teacher evaluations was made by the Florida Legislature. Student performance data used for the teacher evaluation system is about what students accomplish in a school year compared to what was expected to be accomplished. Whatever growth is expected of each individual student is the basis for teacher evaluation and performance pay. This expected growth takes into account a student's previous performance on standardized assessment. In other words, a student who scored a '1' the previous year would not necessarily be expected to score a '3' the subsequent year. However, it would be expected that the student make a learning gain.

In terms of "fairness," each teacher's evaluation is impacted by actual growth compared to expected growth of the students they teach. Although expected growth measures vary for different types of students, the same growth measures apply to teachers with similar students. Understanding the growth measures used in each district is a local responsibility. Teachers of students with special needs should confer with school and district leaders to ensure clear understanding of the district's assessment measures, including the expected versus actual growth measures for different types of students, and their impact on evaluation decisions. Teachers of students with special needs should also learn more about value-added models (VAM) which are designed to mitigate the influence of differences among the entering classes so that schools and educators do not have advantages or disadvantages simply as a result of the students who attend a school or are assigned to a class. Florida's value-added model for FCAT accounts for student characteristics, classroom characteristics and school characteristics, including prior student achievement (the strongest predictor of performance), student attendance, class size, English Language Learner status and disability status. Furthermore, the VAM is strongly supported by research, such as the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) study conducted by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. It is important to also remember that in Florida only 50% of a teacher's evaluation comes from measurements of student learning growth, and the other percentage stems from teacher observations and other data measures of effective teaching.

The level of state funding to support public education and state policy on how the available funding is allocated are separate issues. Neither spending shortfalls nor surpluses are a reason not to pursue improved educational progress for all of Florida's students.

As a teacher who works with those with disabilities, juvenile detainees, and ESOL (English as a Second Language)/ELL (English Language Learners), I will never get merit pay or other financial raises or recognition. Last Friday, 2,000 teachers were absent in my district. The substitute positions that couldn't be filled that day were for working with the above children because of the challenges they present (in exchange for only \$9.53/hr. with limited appreciation). The full-time teachers for these students feel equally under-compensated and under-appreciated. This has been reinforced by the recent teacher raises being only designated for those who have students who are capable of impressing the administrators and public. As a result, many teachers have told me they will teach elsewhere. What is our government going to do to create incentives for teachers to work with the most challenging students?

Incentives are not the same thing as performance pay. Incentives focus on attracting people to do a difficult task and are typically a district-level decision based on local conditions. Performance pay focuses on how well a particular individual did with specific measurable or observable aspects of the job. It is based on requirements of state law and guided by state legislation that is focused on student results and any relevant provisions in district labor contracts. For the legislative requirements, the significance of student results are based on what was expected for each teacher's students compared to what was achieved. The expectations are not the same for all students, and factors that impact the difficulty of the learning process are typically considered in estimating the expected growth of each student in what is known as a value-added model. These factors can include student characteristics, classroom characteristics and school characteristics, including prior student achievement (the strongest predictor of performance), student attendance, class size, English Language Learner status and disability status. Value-added models "level the playing field" by accounting for differences in the proficiency and characteristics of students assigned to educators. Value-added models are designed to mitigate the influence of differences among the entering classes so that schools and educators do not have advantages or disadvantages simply as a result of the students who attend a school or are assigned to a class. Therefore, teachers of students who may be more challenging to teach have the same opportunities as all teachers to demonstrate student growth based on projections of expected growth. The use of value-added models is strongly supported by research on measuring teacher effectiveness.

I would like to know why I am too old for dual enrollment. I am 21 years old.

There is no age limit for dual enrollment. However, students must meet all dual-enrollment requirements in order to participate. Additional information can be found at <http://www.fldoe.org/articulation/pdf/dualenrollfaqs.pdf>.

I wish for high school be until age 25 in the state of Florida and not 22.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, a federal law, requires that states provide a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment to students with disabilities until they reach their 22nd birthday. Florida law is consistent with the federal law and provides for educational services until age 22 or until the student obtains a standard diploma.

Changes to this requirement would require changes to the state law.

Why is the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) permitting all 67 school districts to push 18-year-old ESE students to leave school with “special diplomas,” to graduate with their peers, when they have a right to stay in school until 21 or 22 years old?

Why do the school districts approach 18-year-old ESE students and tell them they can leave school now that they are 18 years old when they have not met the requirements for a regular high school diploma?

School districts are force-graduating ESE students, claiming they meet minimum requirements. What can a parent do when the school district does a forced graduation and puts the student out of the high school?

ESE students who graduate in the state of Florida with a completion certificate do not qualify for financial aid to attend a career or technical certificate. ESE kids usually have so many other expenses that they cannot afford to attend a school to learn a trade. What are you doing to help these kids?

The IDEA, a federal law, requires that states provide a FAPE in the least restrictive environment to students with disabilities until they reach their 22nd birthday. Florida law is consistent with the federal law and provides for educational services until 22 or until the student obtains a standard diploma. Districts cannot award a student a standard diploma unless they meet all of the graduation requirements, which are set in accordance with state law. Details can be found on the Department of Education’s website at <http://www.fldoe.org/bii/studentpro/grad-require.asp>.

Students with disabilities under the age of 22 who have not received a standard diploma, including those who have received a special diploma, have a variety of options. School districts are encouraged to provide an array of options and settings in which specially designed instruction and services are offered to students with disabilities. Settings may include high schools, adult education and career/technical centers, community colleges, universities and other sites in the community.

Students and parents are encouraged to begin discussions about graduation and career options very early through the transition IEP meeting process, which begins in Florida during the year in which the student will turn 14. This provides time for the student to

explore all options and choose the one that will best work for them. These discussions should include options for financial assistance for career and technical programs.

Parents who believe that their child is not receiving FAPE are encouraged to work with their school district to resolve any issues. Many school districts have procedures in place to assist families in resolving disputes. In addition, parents may contact the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services to discuss the following administrative remedies:

- Mediation
- State Complaint
- Due Process Hearing Request

Does the IEP follow a child when they go to college? If my child takes a break after high school, will he lose his IEP? Can a student get special accommodations on PSAT, SAT, etc. college exams?

Will my son's IEP follow him through college if he takes a break after high school, or will he lose it?

The IEP ends when a student leaves the public school system. At that time, a summary of performance (SOP) should be provided to the student from the school. The SOP outlines the student's academic achievement and functional performance. Students can provide a copy of their SOP and IEP to their postsecondary institution for information purposes. However, colleges are under no obligation to provide the services outlined on the IEP. Most will require a recent evaluation to determine the level of accommodations that the student will require.

It is important to note that moving from high school to college means moving away from the IDEA and being covered by the ADA, which provides a very different level of protection. Students must self-identify as having a disability and take an active role in determining what accommodations they need. Students should contact the disability office at their chosen postsecondary institution well in advance of beginning their studies to learn what will be required of them and what they can expect from the college.

Accommodations for the scholastic aptitude test (SAT) are available. Details can be found at <https://sat.collegeboard.org/register/for-students-with-disabilities>.

The state setting a goal of 4 years or less has resulted in school districts refusing to do 5, 6, 7 plus year planned high school programs. How can a parent and student fight the school to accept the student who wants a 5, 6, 7 plus year planned high school program?

The federal uniform graduation rate, which the federal government requires Florida to use in our Annual Performance Report, is based on the number of students who graduate from high school in four years. The Florida Department of Education also calculates a

graduation rate based on students with disabilities who complete high school and earn a standard diploma, no matter how long it took them to do so.

The IDEA, a federal law, requires that states provide a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment to students with disabilities until they reach their 22nd birthday. Florida law is consistent with the federal law and provides for educational services until 22 or until the student obtains a standard diploma.

One of the reasons for attending Family Café was that I was hoping to find more information about financial assistance for individuals with disabilities looking to continue their college education at the graduate level. So, do you know of any such resources available to us?

Yes. Florida's Office of Student Financial Assistance, which can be accessed at <http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/>, provides a wealth of general information on financial assistance. There are also many resources specific to students with disabilities. Project 10 provides a fairly comprehensive listing of resources which can be accessed at <http://www.project10.info/FinancialResources.php>. Additional listings are available from the Health Resource Center, National Youth Transition Center, Online Clearinghouse on Postsecondary Education for individuals with disability at <http://www.heath.gwu.edu/> and Disabled World at <http://www.disabled-world.com/disability/education/scholarships/>.

I would like to know if students who become communicative and therefore are able to be reevaluated for different degree options after they have already begun high school could change their diploma track.

A student with a disability may change from pursuing a special diploma to pursuing a standard diploma. This decision, made by the IEP team, would need to be carefully evaluated and take into consideration that the student may need more than four years to earn the standard diploma and that FAPE is available until the age of 22.

For more information, contact the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services at 850-245-0476.

What are the laws about ESE school student bussing for door-to-door if the IEP requires? Why am I fighting such a crazy battle? I would like to have resolution before school starts again in August.

The IDEA requires school districts to make reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure access to a free and appropriate public education, based on the student's disability(ies). Those accommodations include ensuring that transportation is not a barrier to education, if the student is eligible. There are instances when a student with disabilities does need door-to-door services, but the district cannot physically and/or safely get the school bus to the residence. In that case the district, with the support of the IEP team, should engage in reasonable discussions regarding an alternative plan to implement the IEP. If no alternative plan can be put in place, then the district must

provide transportation from the closest possible location to the student's residence. Any accommodations placed into a student's IEP **must** be directly related to the student's disability(ies) and cannot be added solely as a convenience to the school, transportation services or parent.

When a district is required to offer three virtual public options, would FLVS (as the state option) count as one, or do they need to provide three others?

The Florida Virtual School (FLVS), at the state level, does not count as one of the options unless the district has a contract with FLVS to serve district students through a district virtual instruction program. The three options must be provided by the district. These options may be provided by the district directly or through a contract or agreement with FLVS, another district, a private provider or a virtual charter school.

For more information, contact the Florida Virtual School office at 850-245-9617.

Can a student be placed (in a virtual public program) in a higher level course? Can a placement test be used for these cases, or must they continue at grade level, regardless of their actual levels?

Student progression or acceleration is determined by district policies. Virtual students are district public school students and are subject to the district's student progression plan like other public school students in the district.

How many electives must districts offer for virtual public options?

Full-time virtual programs must offer enough electives so that students are able to meet promotion and progression requirements. The electives offered may vary for different part-time or full-time programs being offered in the districts. Districts can offer any course that is listed in the Course Code Directory.

When a child with an IEP is in a particular virtual program, does "stay put" mean that program, or just any virtual public program, even if different than the one the child has been in for several years?

It is a district's decision as to which virtual program the district contracts with each year. We recommend that you contact the student's IEP team for clarity or the Florida Virtual School office at 850-245-9617.

Why don't virtual public school students get yearbooks or graduation ceremonies?

Some districts do have graduation ceremonies for students enrolled in their full-time virtual schools. More districts are doing this each year as enrollments in full-time district virtual schools grow. Please contact your district virtual school liaison for specific information. A list of contacts can be found at <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/virtualschools/pdf/DVIPWebContacts.pdf>

For more information, contact the Florida Virtual School office at 850-245-9617.

If a child has an accommodation for a scribe and his parent, who is the learning coach, is also disabled and would also have an accommodation of having a scribe if she went back to school, would a district have to consider this in providing an alternate accommodation?

Accommodations are put in place based on the need of the student as decided by the IEP team. We encourage you to contact your area Florida Virtual School liaison for specific information. A list of contacts can be found at <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/virtual-schools/pdf/DVIPWebContacts.pdf>

For additional information, contact the Florida Virtual School office at 850-245-9617.

Why can't virtual public school students participate in spelling/math/ geography bees and other similar competitions? Why not intramurals? Why not other clubs, (i.e. science club, debate clubs, etc.)?

Virtual schools can and do provide extracurricular activities for their students. In addition, virtual students can participate in extracurricular activities offered at their zoned district school if not offered by their virtual school and if they meet the conduct and academic criteria to participate in extracurricular activities. Please contact your district virtual liaison for more information or the Florida Virtual School office at 850-245-9617.

If a child has an IEP with an accommodation for word processor for school/homework, does the school have to provide one to the student at home (virtual public student)?

If the IEP specifies equipment is necessary, it should be provided. This should be addressed with the IEP team. For more specific information, you may contact the Florida Virtual School office at 850-245-9617.

I am upset that a school district is sharing out-of-date, inaccurate, and disparaging information to parents about a virtual public provider.

Districts in Florida are local educational agencies (LEAs) that report to a district superintendent and district school board. Complaints of this nature should be brought to the attention of the superintendent and district school board.

Does a school district meet the requirements of offering three virtual public options if they cover different grades (one is K-5 and two are 6-12) but are based off the same provider? All are FVS, but using different names for the program.

Some providers have more than one option under their umbrella. For example, a district franchise is a different option than Florida Virtual School Full-Time. In addition, some of the options can be part-time. Therefore, districts do not need to offer three full-time and three part-time options. They have to offer three options in total.

Why don't children in virtual public school ever get on Honor/High Honor Roll? My son has had straight A's for years and has never been recognized.

Student recognition falls under the purview of local schools. Please share your concerns with your district virtual liaison.

Districts seem to be able to drop virtual providers whenever they like, and it is done without adequate warning and without ever asking parents.

If a district drops a virtual public program, why can't parents have any say in keeping the program or picking it up through another district (student has IEP with virtual public K-12 placement)?

All public schools fall under the authority of local school districts. The district can decide whether to use contracted services for their schools or provide the services themselves. This is true for district virtual schools and programs as well. Districts select providers based on district needs and provider qualifications and may choose to continue or not continue with a provider based on the district's changing needs and their experience with the provider. If you are unhappy with a district decision, it is recommended that you contact your district superintendent and local school board members.

For more information, contact the Florida Virtual School office at 850-245-9617.

Do districts have to write complete IEPs for public virtual ESE students or only what the district will provide themselves?

This depends upon the type of virtual school program the student is enrolled in. For full-time Florida Virtual School students, FLVS is responsible for providing ESE services.

For part-time virtual school students within a district, services depend on what is listed within the district and virtual school contract. However, the district is ultimately responsible.

Department of Health

Why won't WIC approve PediaSure for preemies? They give families checks for baby food and things that have milk in it, they go by full-term babies, even with doctor's orders.

Formulas are approved for a WIC client based on the infant/child's medical condition, diagnosis from the health care provider, composition of the formula requested, length, weight, and age of the infant/child, and USDA regulations.

There are formulas specifically designed for premature babies. Other types of formulas would be approved only when there are other medical reasons why the specific formula is needed for a premature infant/child.

PediaSure can be given to clients that have a specific need for this formula. Possible indications for PediaSure may include: children aged 1 to 10 years old who require extra nutrition, such as for recovery from trauma or severe illness, pre- and post-surgery, and for tube feedings. Per USDA regulations, formulas cannot be approved for WIC clients only for weight gain.

Formulas not designated for premature babies, like PediaSure, are not automatically approved for a premature infant/child. Further information would be needed regarding the specific health and medical issues of the premature infant/child to determine whether a formula would or would not be approved.

Where can I get free or low-cost dental cleansing for my 37-year-old son on the autism spectrum?

The Public Health Dental Program maintains a listing of possible dental resources. The following web site provides a listing of possible dental resources in the state of Florida: <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/family/dental/resources/index.html>.

You can use these lists as resources in locating the provider that can best meet your specific needs.

I loved the Parent room by the Family Resource Specialist at CMS. Lori told me to let you all know how much fun it was and how much I learned. Thank you all!

That is wonderful. Thank you!

How does my family go about getting the new health care? And how will this impact my kids' services through CMS?

If a child is enrolled in Florida KidCare (Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program), and the child remains clinically and financially eligible, the child may remain with the Children's Medical Services (CMS) Network. The new health law does not change services or benefits offered through the Children's Medical Services Network.

To learn more about the new health law or the federally facilitated marketplace, please visit www.healthcare.gov or call the federally facilitated marketplace toll-free at 1-800-318-2596. (TTY/TDD technology: 1-888-871-6594).

Besides CMS where do I go for services for my soon to be 4 year old? We are leaving the Early Steps program and need direction

For children over the age of three, please contact your local school district or Florida's Central Directory at 1-800-654-4440 for more information on available services.

Can the Health Department provide me birth control? I have insurance, but the cost is way too high.

The Florida Department of Health has family planning or birth control services available in all 67 counties. Family planning services include access to birth control methods and supplies, as well as screening for breast and cervical cancer and high blood pressure, and testing for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV. Education and counseling is also provided to assist with preventing disease and improving health, such as eating healthy food and exercising regularly to have a healthy weight.

The cost of birth control services is based on a sliding scale fee according to your income and family size, and you will be asked to provide information about any insurance you have also.

If you would like to receive family planning birth control services, please contact your local health department, and they will be able to assist you with obtaining an appointment and determining the cost.

I have a spinal cord injury and there used to be someone from the agency here to present on these types of injuries. I hope they return as I need services/support/networking, etc. to get me through this.

The Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program (BSCIP) is a program at the Florida Department of Health. Thank you for suggesting a return presentation. We will attempt to coordinate that with the BSCIP Program for a future Family Café.

Do you have a central resource bank? I would like to be able to access what is available in my area without having to call a million people. You need to have

one number to call. Your website does not have a central number, and the website is NOT user friendly at all.

Thank you for the suggestion. By sending an email to CMS_Central_Office@doh.state.fl.us, your question will be directed to the CMS Representative in your area that can best answer. On the Children's Medical Services website, there are local area office numbers which can be found here: http://www.cms-kids.com/home/contact/area_offices.html. The Florida Department of Health's external website is undergoing a redesign project, which will make the navigation of the site more user-friendly. Currently, a listing of area office phone numbers can be found here: <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/chdsitelist.htm>

If a service dog bites someone, do I have to report the bite? We have shots for him.

Contact your local county health department to find out about how your county handles dog bites. You can find the complete listing here: <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/chdsitelist.htm>

I just learned about CMS and the program that they have for babies. Thank you! My child was just diagnosed with multiple conditions and we never heard of CMS. What a wonderful program. Sign me up!

Thank you.

This is my first time coming to the Leadership pre conference event! It was wonderful. Lori told me that you funded the opportunity. I just want you to know how awesome she was. Thank you!

Glad you enjoyed it! Thank you.

You had a great speaker who talked about Emergency and Disaster Preparedness. Something we never think that much about, but should. Wonderful presentation.

Thank you for attending.

We need to know more about healthy eating and food prep. Nice to know that the state supports us all to have a healthier lifestyle.

Thank you!

What about CMS? I heard you were cutting back on my services? Why?

Children younger than twenty one years of age who have a chronic and serious physical, developmental, behavioral or emotional condition and qualify for Medicaid (Title XIX) or CHIP (Title XXI) receive the Medicaid benefit package, and additional benefits to include early intervention services, respite services, genetic testing, genetic and nutritional counseling, and parent support services, if determined to be medically necessary. Children who do not qualify financially for Medicaid or Title XXI but who are unable to access, due to lack of providers or lack of financial resources, may receive specialized services that are medically necessary or essential family support services, and these families shall participate financially in the cost of care based on a sliding fee scale established by the department.

Can anyone get their child immunizations done at the health departments? Does it have a cost? We do not have quality health insurance and they make us pay out of pocket first and then reimburse at a much lower rate than my doctor charges us.

Yes, any parent/guardian can take their children between the ages of 0-18 years to a county health department and receive needed immunizations free of charge.

What is Healthy Start? How come no one ever referred me to them or even told me about them? I am confused.

Healthy Start is a program to provide extra support to pregnant women and their babies who are at high risk of poor health outcomes. This may include a mom with a health problem such as diabetes, high blood pressure, or some other serious illness, or a baby born too soon, too small, or with a health problem. This extra support may be referrals to other social service agencies or being assigned a care coordinator who would be available to help with getting medical care. Healthy Start care coordinators may also provide education on nutrition, breastfeeding, childbirth education, parenting, or smoking cessation.

Pregnant women are given a risk screening at their prenatal provider and women who score six or more points are referred into the Healthy Start Program. If no one told you about the program when you went to your prenatal appointments, it may be because you are healthy and did not have a score of six or more on the screening tool.

Even if their moms were not in Healthy Start, babies may also be referred to Healthy Start if they are born too soon, too small, or have a serious health problem. These families also receive care coordination to ensure the baby gets the best possible care and support. Healthy Start services may continue until the baby reaches three years old.

How can I get WIC and food stamps for my child?

WIC is a supplemental nutrition program for pregnant women and young children (less than 5 years of age) who have a low or moderate income and have a nutritional or medical reason for being on the program. We provide a select group of nutritious foods (milk, eggs, cheese, cereal, juice, whole grains, fruits and vegetables), provide nutritional counseling and education, and work closely with health care. Most of the WIC clinics are located in the county health department.

You can visit the WIC web site, www.Floridawic.org, to learn more about WIC services in Florida. See the section on "How Do I Apply for WIC" and click on the link for "find the local phone number in the list." You will find the telephone number for your local WIC agency next to the name of the county where you live. Alternatively, you can call WIC's statewide toll free number at 1-800-342-3556 to find out the number to the program in your county. The county will tell you what you need to bring to WIC, make you an appointment and answer your questions.

Food Stamps new name is SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). In Florida it is called the Food Assistance Program. You can go to the website at <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/ess/> to apply for food assistance online or call the ACCESS Florida Information Line at 1-866-762-2237.

Will the services change with managed care? What entity will be the provider? Will we have a choice?

Children's Medical Services (CMS) will continue to serve eligible Medicaid-enrolled children under Medicaid managed care. CMS will also continue to provide the Medicaid benefit package. Families of children with special health care needs will continue to have a choice of plans, including CMS, if the child meets our clinical eligibility criteria. These criteria are unchanged from the current system of care.

What is KidCare up to after the session? What changes were made to the program? This program makes a lot of changes.

There were no substantive changes to the Florida KidCare program as a result of the 2013 legislative session.

It was nice to hear from the Surgeon General. Nice speech. I got to talk with him after and he has a lot of great ideas. Hope he attends again. Good job!

Thank you so much for attending!

The Division of Emergency Management

Thank you for having someone talk to us about disasters, hurricanes and flooding. I am worried about sinkholes. My neighbors in our area had a sink hole in their backyard. This is scary!

Sinkholes can be very scary. They are Florida's answer to California's earthquakes. The best thing you can do is to have an emergency plan to help prepare yourself and family for that "Just in Case Moment."

Hurricane season is here and now I have a plan. Thanks to Linda Carter, I also have a way to use simple things around the house to help me get by if needed. Awesome!

I am glad Linda was able to assist you. You can also visit the below listed sites. They can provide you with invaluable information on how to "Make a Plan" to help prepare yourself and your family for a disaster. Remember, you cannot just plan for a hurricane. Florida is affected each year by wildfires, train derailments, hazardous material spills, and floods, just to name a few. This plan should help prepare you for other potential crises that could affect your neighborhood or city. You can go to your local county Emergency Management Agency to complete the "Special Needs" Registry Application. The Florida Division of Emergency Management has great information at www.floridadisaster.org (in the top right hand corner click on "Get a Plan") as well as <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Hurricane/Hurricanefactsheet.html>, the Florida Department of Health's Bureau of Preparedness and Response information on emergency preparedness. If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact me, Bryan Vaughan, Statewide Disabilities Coordinator at (850) 488-5763.

The weather seems to be on the news every day. I know how important it is. I was struck by lightning in grade school. The whole field was hit and we were scared and injured, but all of us survived. You cannot mess with Mother Nature.

You are so right. Mother Nature can teach us hard lessons. As a kid, I witnessed a good friend get struck by lightning as he went back to get his baseball glove after a summer vacation sandlot game. It has stayed with me for over 40 years. We must all take precautions and make plans. Hopefully, we will never have to use them, but if we do, they are there.

You need to have weather updates with a sign language interpreter available on the TV screen. We cannot hear the weather updates.

We urge our citizens to tune into the National Weather Service for critical weather information. The Division of Emergency Management only provides secondary weather

info. We do use Sign Language Interpreters during all of our briefings during a major weather event.

Let's hope we do not get hit by a hurricane or tropical storm this year. I am worried about the marine life and how this weather will affect their habitats. We had enough damage with the oil spills in the panhandle area. Our marine life is hurting.

You are absolutely correct. Our precious marine life needs our help.

Where can I learn more about disaster preparedness? Are you working with the Red Cross?

Yes, we regularly work with a number of agencies including the Red Cross. These sites can provide you with invaluable information on how to "Make a Plan" to help prepare yourself and your family for a disaster. Remember, you cannot just plan for a hurricane. Florida is affected each year by wildfires, train derailments, hazardous material spills, and floods, just to name a few. This plan should help prepare you for other potential crises that could affect your neighborhood or city. You can go to your local county Emergency Management Agency to complete the "Special Needs" Registry Application. The Florida Division of Emergency Management has great information at www.floridadisaster.org (in the top right hand corner click on "Get a Plan") as well as <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Hurricane/Hurricanefactsheet.html>, the Florida Department of Health's Bureau of Preparedness and Response information on emergency preparedness. If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact me, Bryan Vaughan, Statewide Disabilities Coordinator at (850) 488-5763.

You need to work directly with my support coordinator from APD. When we were in Miami with Hurricane Andrew we lost everything. I do not want to lose it all again. I must remain prepared. My coordinator told me that she does not work with the agencies that do emergency prep.

I am very sorry you suffered such a horrendous loss due to Hurricane Andrew. I too have lost everything twice, once due to a flood, then to Hurricane Ivan. I know your pain. But living in Florida, we have to be vigilant. APD requires your support coordinator to ensure you have an "Emergency Plan." This plan is not just for hurricanes but for other potential crises that could affect your neighborhood or city. You can also go to your local county Emergency Management Agency to complete the "Special Needs" Registry Application. The Florida Division of Emergency Management has great information at www.floridadisaster.org (in the top right hand corner click on "Get a Plan") as well as <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Hurricane/Hurricanefactsheet.html>, the Florida Department of Health's Bureau of Preparedness of Response information on emergency preparedness. If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact me, Bryan Vaughan, Statewide Disabilities Coordinator at (850) 488-5763.

What is the Special Registry? How do I get on it?

It is a statutorily mandated service provided by your local county Emergency Management Agency to enable persons with disabilities or other Access or Functional Needs to provide their county first responders with information to enable better service to our citizens and to ensure all persons are cared for in a disaster.

Why do we have sinkholes? How come you cannot prepare for one?

That is a GREAT question with a pretty technical answer, but this is my view. I view sinkholes as the "Florida" equal to California's earthquakes. Because the type of rock making up most of Florida is soft, and with all of the rain we get, the rock underground is washed away, creating "underground holes." When the underground hole gets too big, you see a sinkhole.

Where do I learn about an emergency shelter? Who do I notify about my needs in case of a pending emergency or disaster? The hospital knows me.

Your local county Emergency Management Agency is mandated to register you on the Special Needs Registry. Check with them to get you registered. The below sites can provide you with invaluable information on how to "Make a Plan" to help prepare yourself and your family for a disaster. Remember, you cannot just plan for a hurricane. Florida is affected each year by wildfires, train derailments, hazardous material spills, and floods, just to name a few. This plan should help prepare you for other potential crises that could affect your neighborhood or city. You can go to your local county Emergency Management Agency to complete the "Special Needs" Registry Application. The Florida Division of Emergency Management has great information at www.floridadisaster.org (in the top right hand corner click on "Get a Plan") as well as <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Hurricane/Hurricanefactsheet.html>, the Florida Department of Health's Bureau of Preparedness and Response information on emergency preparedness. If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact me, Bryan Vaughan, Statewide Disabilities Coordinator at (850) 488-5763.

How long does hurricane season last? Why does a hurricane come to Florida? We should learn more about being prepared in school.

Hurricane season starts June 1st and goes through the end of November each year. Florida has a long history of being hit by hurricanes. Early Spanish explorers faced several very bad hurricanes causing them to flee settlements, including the first settlement in Pensacola. You absolutely should learn about being prepared in school. Some school districts do a good job of teaching emergency preparedness, but others will be doing more.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

I would like to learn more about agencies that can assist me with employment and training.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is a federal-state program that helps people who have physical or mental disabilities get or keep a job. VR is committed to helping people with disabilities find meaningful careers. We work with a variety of state and private entities to provide customers with services they need to go to work.

In addition to the general customer employment program (<http://www.rehabworks.org/customers.shtml>), VR has additional specific programs (<http://www.rehabworks.org/programs.shtml>) designed to help eligible people with disabilities become employed.

Examples of VR Services:

- Medical and Psychological Assessment
- Vocational Evaluation and Planning
- Career Counseling and Guidance
- Training and Education After High School
- Job-Site Assessment and Accommodations
- Job Placement
- Job Coaching
- On-the-Job Training
- Supported Employment
- Assistive Technology and Devices
- Time-Limited Medical and/or Psychological Treatment

You may wish to visit VR online at www.RehabWorks.org or call our toll free telephone number 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information regarding eligibility and for a local office near you. You can find a list of VR offices at the VR Office Directory (http://www.rehabworks.org/office_directory.shtml).

The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity also provides a great variety of employment services and information about getting to work. Please check their web site known as "Employ Florida Marketplace" at <http://www.floridajobs.org/job-seekers-community-services/job-search-and-career-planning/job-search-resources>.

These resources will help you research job openings, create a great resume, apply for jobs, and research labor market trends. Use this online resource to search for jobs that match your skills. Get advice about your resume, apply for jobs, and research careers.

Florida's Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) also provides employment services for people with developmental disabilities who are receiving Home and Community Based Services waiver services, and thanks to additional funding provided by the Florida Legislature this session, they are also able to assist some customers who are on their wait

list. For more information about APD programs and services, please visit the APD web site at <http://apd.myflorida.com/> or use the contact information provided below.

State Office
Agency for Persons with Disabilities
4030 Esplanade Way, Suite 380
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0950

Phone: (850) 488-4257
Toll-Free: 1-866-APD-CARES (1-866-273-2273)
Fax: (850) 922-6456
Email: APD.info@apdcares.org

What are some ways or places that a person like me can get a job? Who do I talk to for help?

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You may wish to visit VR online at www.RehabWorks.org or call our toll free telephone number 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information regarding eligibility and for a local office near you. You can find a list of VR offices at the VR Office Directory (http://www.rehabworks.org/office_directory.shtml).

My son has autism. He functions very low academically. He is currently on the Alternative Assessment instead of FCAT. Are there any vocational/career options open to him with a special diploma?

You may wish to visit VR online at www.RehabWorks.org or call our toll free telephone number 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information regarding eligibility and for a local office near you. You can find a list of VR offices at the VR Office Directory (http://www.rehabworks.org/office_directory.shtml). VR has counselors specifically trained to assist customers with autism and can provide guidance with vocational goals.

School personnel should also provide this information as part of your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) process. The Department of Education's Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services administers programs for students with disabilities. Additionally, the bureau coordinates student services throughout the state and participates in multiple inter-agency efforts designed to strengthen the quality and variety of services available to students with special needs.

For further information about services available through the school system you may contact the bureau by calling (850) 245-0475 or by emailing Monica.Verra-Tirado@fldoe.org

How can my son get services from Vocational Rehabilitation? What are the requirements? How do I connect to someone who can help my son? He graduates from high school this 2014 school year.

How can I get my school to bring up services from VR? What is transition placement?

VR's School to Work (transition) Program assists youth ages 16 to 22 in preparing to enter the workforce. VR Staff works closely with the student's school transition counselors to help make this a smooth process. The information provided below answers some of the "Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)" about the program.

What is VR School to Work Transition?

The School to Work Transition program helps students train for a job, continue their education, and/or work after leaving high school. We are here to help you in your transition from high school to the working world, whether it's to find a job directly after high school, or continue your secondary education to pursue your career goal. We help students who want to work become better prepared for life after high school and find meaningful careers.

VR is confidential so you can work towards your dream job with your transition counselor and no one needs to know. Your counselor will help you develop the tools to sell your strong points to employers. We want you to succeed!

What does School to Work Transition offer?

- Financial assistance for training and education
- A checklist of goals and activities that help you move from school to adult life
- A focus on **your** needs, preferences and interests
- Counseling and job training to help prepare you for employment and life after school
- Living skills training and an outline of possible career choices
- Guidance and assistance through the hiring process until you are employed

Who should be referred to VR?

- All Students or young people with disabilities should be encouraged to apply for VR services
- Students who have an Individual Educational Plan (IEP)
- Students who have a 504 Plan
- Students or young people who don't need academic or physical accommodations in high school, but may need them later
- Students thinking about dropping out of high school

Who qualifies for the School to Work Transition program?

- Students 16 to 22 years old who are still in high school
- Individuals 16 years old and older who have exited high school

When should you apply?

- You should apply at least two years prior to finishing high school, which means:
 - either at the end of your sophomore year or early in your junior year, or
 - two to three years before graduation or exit for students staying until age 22
- At age 16 and older, if you are or will be involved in a community work experience

What happens after you qualify for transition services?

First, you will receive an updated evaluation, which can help you get academic accommodations in college, if you need them. Then, you and your counselor will discuss what careers would be a good fit for you. Depending on your career goal, VR may provide you with financial help for tuition and books so you can pursue a training program to get that good job.

How do you apply?

Visit VR online at www.RehabWorks.org, call our toll free telephone number 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) or fill out a customer application and bring it to the VR office nearest you. You can find a list of VR offices at the VR Office Directory (http://www.rehabworks.org/office_directory.shtml).

I am having a difficult time trying to get my daughter services for employment. She has multiple issues from her physical and mental health needs. She wants to work, but her counselor only profiles her to do nail tech work. She wants to go to computer skill building school at the ITT Tech Institute. How can we make the VR counselor work with us?

Your daughter may want to ask her counselor to make an appointment for her to meet with the vocational evaluator to make sure she is on the right career path. She may also contact the counselor's supervisor to discuss other options. She can always contact the VR Ombudsman's Office and they will be glad to assist her in resolving her customer service needs. This is an impartial service available to VR customers who have questions, concerns, or believe they may have been treated unfairly. The Ombudsman receives, investigates, and assists in resolving complaints. She may contact an Ombudsman by calling toll-free 1-866-515-3692 (Voice/TDD) or email ombudsman@vr.fldoe.org.

Please include a phone number and the best way to be contacted in the email.

How do I apply for VR? I want to work!

Visit VR online at www.RehabWorks.org or call our toll free telephone number 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information regarding eligibility and for a local office near you. You can find a list of VR offices at the VR Office Directory (http://www.rehabworks.org/office_directory.shtml).

Is there an age limit for VR services? The presenter said I should have gotten involved with VR before I graduated from High School. I am 32 years old now, and just am getting my behavior and my life together. I want to go to school to be an auto mechanic.

There are no age limits for the program other than high school transition services, which typically begin at age 16. Visit VR online at www.RehabWorks.org or call our toll free telephone number 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information regarding eligibility and for a local office near you. You can find a list of VR offices at the VR Office Directory (http://www.rehabworks.org/office_directory.shtml).

How can I learn to drive a car? I need an adaptive vehicle and driving license to go to work.

Visit VR online at www.RehabWorks.org or call our toll free telephone number 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information regarding eligibility, services and for a local office near you. You can find a list of VR offices at the VR Office Directory (http://www.rehabworks.org/office_directory.shtml).

What is a job placement specialist? And how do they differ from a VR Counselor?

The primary responsibilities of a job placement specialist are helping clients find and keep competitive employment in community settings that are consistent with their vocational goals. They also help customers think about long-term employment goals, work history, and strengths. Vocational rehabilitation counselors help individuals with disabilities gain and maintain employment. Specifically, a vocational rehabilitation counselor helps in five distinct steps.

First, the counselor assesses the individual's strengths and weaknesses as well as the individual's vocational interests. Second, the counselor and client identify an individualized plan of employment. Such a plan may include educational and medical components as well as useful assistive technology. Third, the counselor and client address any issues identified in the plan that must occur prior to a specific job search. For example, this will be the time to receive instruction on how to use public transportation or use an assistive technology device.

Fourth, the counselor helps the client get a job. The counselor may use a pool of existing job placements that encourage applicants with disabilities. Alternately, the counselor may assist in providing services to a new potential employer regarding the specific client's disability. Finally, the counselor helps address any issues that might come up during employment to ensure job maintenance and stability.

Do you work with veterans? Or family members of the Vet? Do they have to have a disability to receive services?

Yes! VR does work with veterans and anyone with a disability that meets the eligibility criteria. Visit VR online at www.RehabWorks.org or call our toll free telephone number 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information regarding eligibility and for a local office near you. You can find a list of VR offices at the VR Office Directory (http://www.rehabworks.org/office_directory.shtml).

Do you work with APD and DCF? I am an adoptive mother who needs services for her child.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is a federal-state program that helps people who have physical or mental disabilities get or keep a job. VR is committed to helping people with disabilities find meaningful careers. We work with a variety of state and private entities, including APD and DCF, to provide customers with services they need to go to work.

Visit VR online at www.RehabWorks.org or call our toll free telephone number 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information regarding eligibility and for a local office near you. You can find a list of VR offices at the VR Office Directory (http://www.rehabworks.org/office_directory.shtml).

Does VR have a website? I cannot find you on the internet.

Visit VR online at www.RehabWorks.org or call our toll free telephone number 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information regarding eligibility and for a local office near you. You can find a list of VR offices at the VR Office Directory (http://www.rehabworks.org/office_directory.shtml).

Do I need to be on Medicaid to get your placement services? I want to work, I just need help!

No, you do not have to be a Medicaid recipient in order to qualify for VR services. Visit VR online at www.RehabWorks.org or call our toll free telephone number 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information regarding eligibility and for a local office near you. You can find a list of VR offices at the VR Office Directory (http://www.rehabworks.org/office_directory.shtml).



The 15th Annual Family Café Report Card

Attendees at the 15th 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 2013, along with grades from the five previous years.

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
I would give the Annual Family Café location a...	B	A-	A-	A	A-	A-
I would rate the hotel's accessibility a...	B	A-	A	A-	B+	A-
I would give the organization of the Annual Family Café a...	B	A-	A	A	B+	A
I would rate the choices for breakout sessions and their ability to meet the needs of different interests a...	A-	A-	A	B+	B+	A-
Overall, I would give The 15 th Annual Family Café a...	B	A-	A	B+	A-	A

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

- As a result of attending the 15th Annual Family Café, I am able/will be able to. . .

- In general, the most helpful to me was...
- I thought we could have more of...
- I thought we could use less of...
- I am interested in finding 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 15th Annual Family Café, I am able/will be able to. . .

- Get in touch with groups and experts outside of my local circle
- Be more educated about my son
- Learn to budget better and be more independent
- Help my daughter and son-in-law with my grandson's disabilities
- Share resources and knowledge with parents in my county
- Advocate more
- Better understand my child's IEP and our rights
- Get more connections for internships, I'm majoring in OT
- Gain knowledge and meet people with new ideas
- More access to state agencies
- Have new ideas
- Seek resources
- Know that there is hope for my granddaughter and daughter. Also know that patience brings success

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

- Guardianship information and trust information
- Informative seminars and helpful speakers
- Exhibitor hall
- How to be more independent and being able to socialize with friends
- Location
- Assistive technology
- The staff
- Learning about Medicaid waiver
- The Florida Youth Council session about college
- Meeting others in the same struggles as my family
- Delegate roundtable on mental health
- The incredible efforts and attitudes of the volunteers

I thought we could have had more of...

- Organization during registration

- Many of the same sessions twice
- Cheaper food, and more variety of good sessions; they all seemed to be at the same time slot
- Sessions dealing with living on your own
- How to keep you marriage strong when you have a child with a disability who is time-and resources-consuming
- A bit more time in the exhibit hall to visit the vendors – you either had to miss lunch, a keynote, or a breakout session. By Sunday a number of the vendors had already left
- Kid friendly activities
- Mental illness sessions, specifically bi-polar
- Things for my young teen to go to and be with other high functioning children. A nice dress up dance or a nice gathering just for them, so they can sit and talk
- Peer specialist sessions
- People to show us where to go

I thought we could use less of...

- Empty vendor booths
- Too much talking on Saturday morning, not enough time for critters
- Breaks and less talking
- Loud music in the hallways; one per hallway is plenty, especially for those with sensory issues
- Sessions
- Everything, there was just too much to choose from
- Parking fees
- Transition to adulthood sessions. There are still parents of young kids 10-18 years old
- Aggressive and barking service animals
- Sessions done by average individuals rather than by experts
- Keynotes not related to disabilities
- Entertainment at the same time of sessions

I am interested in finding more about...

- Sensory reaction as it affects special needs and feeding
- Companies wanting to hire persons with disabilities
- GED and relationships
- Adult services – healthcare and supported employment
- Medicaid benefits
- More legal info
- Social Security availability – changes to, as well as, legal issues
- CDC+

- Occupational therapy
- The current research being done to discover the cause of the autism epidemic
- A doctor's perspective and experiences treating and/or diagnosing Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
- Group home treatment for kids with disabilities
- Parent networking
- The new iBudget
- The couponing and getting involved
- Successful people with disabilities

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

- Video tape sessions. You can sell them
- Repeat sessions
- Play area for kids
- Very much appreciate the Thursday pre conference sessions. Please keep doing this
- Have registration open all day Friday. Closing it for keynote on Friday morning caused tie ups for those that arrived during keynotes
- Linda Carter addressing/speaking/motivating during the Summit
- That you just continue to provide this indispensable 3-day event
- Sessions on understanding healthcare reform
- Life skills, workforce, independent living skills and opportunity
- Ensure that the topics of the sessions are a little more diverse in each time slot
- Have more info on the Affordable Care Act
- Please keep participants in line during presentations. I am here for the presenters, not the audience who share their stories

**Join Us For
The 16th Annual
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June 6-8, 2014
At The Hilton Orlando**



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