

The 16th Annual
Family Café



Sweet 16

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

from

The 16th Annual Family Café

Featuring

The Governor's Summit on Disabilities

June 6-8, 2014

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Welcome to The Family Café Questions and Answers Book for 2014!

Navigating the service delivery system and finding resources has always been a challenge for persons with disabilities and their families. For over sixteen 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 16th Annual Family Café attracted 8,997 registered attendees, and exposed them to 180 classroom size sessions on a wide array of disability-related topics. It also included a series of keynote addresses and special events, with a discussion of public health with Florida Surgeon General John Armstrong, an appearance by NFL legend Dan Marino, The 16th Annual Governor's Summit, and an entertaining talk with self-advocate comedian Zach Anner. The 16th 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 host 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.

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 16th 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 17th Annual Family Café, June 5-7, 2015, at the Caribe Royale. Online registration opens Friday, February 13th. 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

We attended two sessions put on by Linda Carter. She is awesome and we felt we learned a lot from each session.

Thanks for the positive feedback! Linda Carter has been a wonderful volunteer and presenter at our event for many years, sharing information on advocacy and disaster preparedness. She received our Silver Spoon Award for her work with The Family Café in 2013.

Everything was really good at this Family Café event. Thanks to all!

Thanks very much! We work hard throughout the year to put together an informative, entertaining event. It's great to hear that you enjoyed it. Hopefully you can join us again next year!

Have some sessions repeated!

Thanks for that suggestion. In past years, The Family Café has planned for certain popular sessions to occur more than once during the event. At the same time, there are many sessions worthy of inclusion, and our Planning Committee has a desire to include as wide a range of topics as possible. We therefore have to balance the need to make popular sessions available in more than one time slot with our desire to address as many topics as we can. If there is a session you weren't able to attend, we encourage you to contact the presenter or their organization directly for information. We include the contact information for every presenter in our program so families will be able to reach out for information on session they may have missed.

Why don't they have the Arc Village booth anymore?

Each year, The Family Café invites every past exhibitor to attend again. It is up to individual vendors to determine whether or not they choose to have a booth in our Exhibit Hall. If you would like to see Arc Village on hand at The 17th Annual Family Café, we would encourage you to contact them and urge them to attend. Potential exhibitors can find information on our Exhibit Hall on our website at www.FamilyCafe.net.

Send me more information about becoming involved with your Family Café 2015 volunteer in function.

Thanks so much for your willingness to volunteer! Volunteers are an essential part of The Annual Family Café, and play an essential role in making the event happen. We recruit volunteers through our registration process. If you are interested in volunteering at the

event, simply mark your registration form in the appropriate place, and we will contact you with details before the event.

I am so thankful we could come to Family Café. My daughter is a single mother to four chosen (adopted) children. All have medical needy situations. She was selected to visit Family Café at no cost. For this we thank the sponsors and God for a chance to learn so much about the situations we face every day. Family Café does so very much for people like us. The guest speakers were well prepared and very friendly to all! Thank you!

It's wonderful to hear that your family had such a positive experience at The Annual Family Café! We make an effort to connect families like yours with training, information and networking opportunities at the minimum possible cost. That's why there's no registration fee for families, and it's also why we offer financial assistance to cover hotel costs through a lottery process. Hopefully you will be able to join us again in 2015!

I thoroughly enjoyed Family Café Sweet Sixteen. Plan to attend #17 next year.

Thanks very much! It's great to hear that you enjoyed The Annual Family Café, and we hope you will be able to make it there again in 2015.

Will you have more next year on business technology?

The Family Café has made an effort to include information related to both business and technology at The Annual Family Café in recent years. There have been multiple sessions on the use of assistive technology for persons with disabilities. We have also made an effort to include the business community, both through sponsor participation and as part of our Employment Expo. Technology certainly offers a means for people with disabilities to participate in the workforce and business community, and we will continue to highlight innovative ways for people with disabilities to engage with those opportunities.

Awesome job!

Thanks very much! We're glad you enjoyed The 16th Annual Family Café. Hopefully you will be able to join us again next year.

Thank you so much! The conference is getting better every year.

You're very welcome! The Family Café Planning Committee does its best to improve and enhance the event every year. If you have suggestions on how we can do better, please let us know!

I've been having trouble keeping my toddler calm during the workshops. Could we have some play area for kids to play while other parents attend the workshops?

Thanks for that suggestion. At one time The Annual Family Café did offer limited respite care, but that was eliminated as it served a very small number of families and a relatively high expense. While we understand the need for child care, providing it would come with a cost that The Family Café's limited budget cannot accommodate currently. Many families resolve this issue by having one family member attend a given session, while another provides child care. We include child-friendly events, such as arts and crafts, to give families options. That said, The Annual Family Café is a family-friendly event, and we sincerely hope that needing to bring your child to a session will not discourage you from participating.

Very interested in music therapy and would like to know if you could have a session that was more about the music itself and less of the hard to hear and difficult to understand videos of an interview.

Thanks for that suggestion. We will be sure to share your desire for one or more music therapy sessions with our Planning Committee.

We attended the Disability Rights Attorney's session on assistive technology. There were several parents who interrupted so much with personal questions and scenarios, the poor presenter could barely give her presentation. Perhaps a need for an "Ask a Professional" kind of Q&A session(s)?

Thanks for your feedback. We understand your frustration. Each presenter at The Annual Family Café is independent, and it is up to them to manage the atmosphere in their individual sessions. If there's something you feel you missed, we would encourage you to contact the presenter directly. The contact information for each presenter can be found in the program, which is on our website at www.FamilyCafe.net.

My first year attending with my wife who usually comes with her friends. I was totally surprised at what is available for people with impairments.

We're glad that you were able to join us! Hopefully you will be able to attend again in 2015.

Thank you again for the variety of workshops. I like the icons that tell the type of coverage (i.e. stork, youth, etc.). Some of the workshops were geared toward newly diagnosed and we ended up attending these by mistake. Perhaps there could be an icon for these workshops geared for new or less experienced.

Thanks for that suggestion. The idea of having workshops organized by level as you described has been discussed by our Planning Committee in previous years, but they eventually decided that implementing such a system would be too complex for a three-day event. Nonetheless we will take your suggestion to the Planning Committee for their consideration.

If we know someone who may like to speak, who do we contact?

If you know of a potential presenter or keynote speaker, you can let us know about them by sending an email to info@familycafe.net, or calling our office toll-free at 888-309-2233.

I live in a rural county. I have been coming to Family Café for all but 1 year. How can I spread the word to families with disabilities and adults with disabilities about this conference? We have a high number of people with disabilities in our county. I am willing to help.

Thanks for your willingness to get more involved with The Family Café. There are several ways that you could help to spread the word. If you would be willing to share our registration brochure in your county, we would be happy to provide you with copies to distribute. You might also consider reaching out to your school district, to contact families of students with disabilities. Word of mouth is also a powerful tool, so simply talking to people in your local area about the event can make a difference.

Can you have some activities for teenagers?

Thanks for that suggestion. The Annual Family Café includes a Youth Track, with sessions designed for young people with disabilities. If you would like to know more about the resources The Family Café has available for youth, we would encourage you to contact our Florida Youth Council. You can find them online at floridayouthcouncil.com.

I would like to know if sessions could be offered CEU's for professionals attending.

Thanks for that suggestion. Unfortunately due to the logistical challenges that come with offering CEU's The Family Café doesn't have the infrastructure or capacity to offer that option at this time.

The Family Café was an incredible experience and I got to network with Staar Fields, Dan Marino, Governor Scott, Senator Galvano, and many more. Looking forward to attending next year's Family Café and the Youth Summit in August!

Thanks very much! We're glad you had such a positive experience at The 16th Annual Family Café, and we very much hope you can join us again next year!

Do you like dogs?

Yes! We love dogs. That's why we've included sessions on service dogs and had service dogs organizations participate in our Exhibit Hall. We're hoping to have more canine friends on hand next year!

Thanks for a great time!

You're very welcome! Please join us again next year!

First time here was a good time. Very informative.

We're always pleased to welcome new people into our "family!" Please come again next year!

I am requesting info about The Café. Please place on mailing list. Thank you!

If you registered for The 16th Annual Family Café, your email address will be added to our database and you will receive information from The Family Café through our list serve. You can also sign up for our mailing list through our website at www.FamilyCafe.net.

Thank you so much for the assistance with the hotel. I thought The 16th Annual Café was terrific and all your breakout sessions met many needs of the people attending. I was not aware of Dan Marino, the father of a son with autism, had done so much for families and individuals with disabilities. I truly enjoyed the whole weekend. Thank you!

You're very welcome! We do our best to bring families to The Annual Family Café at minimal cost, and it's great to hear that our Financial Assistance program has made a difference for you and your family. We hope you attend again next year.

Could they have more job interviews for persons with disabilities, opportunities to get hired, at The Family Café?

Thanks for that suggestion. The Family Café includes the Employment Expo in our Exhibit Hall to connect our attendees with potential employers and guidance on how to go about seeking employment. It's up to the individual participants as to whether or not they conduct actual job interviews on-site. That said, we certainly plan on hosting the

Employment Expo once again in 2015. Hopefully you will be able to join us and take advantage of the job-seeking resources available there.

How early can you register for next year? Can we get a notification in advance?

Everyone that attends The Annual Family Café is added to our electronic mailing list, and will receive multiple announcements regarding registration via email. We also mail registration brochures to all attendees of the previous year's event. Online registration for The 17th Annual Family Café will open on Friday, February 13th. Registrations made by mail or fax can be submitted prior to that date.

We thank you for all of your hard work to make this happen for all of us. As a team we go together. I would love to work with your team in the future. Thank you.

Thanks very much! We always welcome volunteers. If you are interested in helping with The Annual Family Café, simply note your willingness to volunteer by checking the relevant box on the registration form.

Why are there no sessions for caring for parents with disabilities? You know for children who take care or continue to care for their mom/dad, etc. with disabilities.

Caring for elderly family members with disabilities is certainly an issue worthy of attention. We will share your desire for a session on caring for parents with disabilities with our Planning Committee.

The Agency for Health Care Administration

I have to go to my primary care doctor for a confirmation or authorization for my daughter to see a specialist. How can I get the authorization if they never call or send an authorization to the specialist office? That is a wasted trip and she can't see the doctor.

Please contact the Florida Medicaid Recipient & Provider Helpline at 1 (877) 254-1055. The helpline staff will be happy to assist you with any questions or issues you have regarding Medicaid providers and Florida Managed Medical Assistance programs.

Why does our state deny Medicaid to people who make low wages? Do you think it's fair? It is so painful to watch so many suffer every day, who could benefit from the Medicaid expansion.

Eligibility criteria for Medicaid are established by federal and state laws and regulations. The Legislature would have to pass a bill authorizing the expansion of eligibility under Florida Medicaid. The Legislature has not passed such legislation.

Why does the Cystic Fibrosis waiver not get the same funding as many other waivers? It doesn't seem fair. We need more funding and shouldn't have to wait a year for services and medical supplies.

The Florida Legislature is responsible for appropriating funding for all Medicaid services including home and community based services waivers. If you need additional assistance with receiving services, please contact the Department of Health at 850-245-4444 or at health@flhealth.gov.

Once a person with a DD diagnosis turns 22 in the state of Florida, can he or she apply for Medicare?

The Social Security Administration (SSA) is the agency responsible for determining Medicare eligibility. Their publication, EN-05-10026, Benefits for Children with Disabilities, contains information regarding eligibility for Medicare. You can find that publication at <http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10026.pdf>. SSA's toll-free number is 1-800-772-1213. They can answer specific questions from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday.

If there is not a Medicaid vendor within 50 miles of my home, am I able to utilize vendors of my choice and have Medicaid reimburse?

If you are enrolled in a Medicaid managed care plan, the plan must meet specific standards or the distance enrollees must travel to see providers. You will need to go to providers in the plan's network unless you get specific authorization from the plan to go to

an out of network provider. If you are in fee-for-service Medicaid you may go to any provider enrolled in Florida Medicaid.

Right now I receive personal supports and life skills services through the Medicaid Waiver. I work part-time and I live on my own with a roommate who also has a disability and receives waiver supports, but does not provide physical support to me. If my living situation were to change, and I moved in with a non-disabled roommate, would my waiver services be cut off/reduced?

Based on the information you provided, it appears that you may be on the iBudget Waiver in a supportive living arrangement. Please talk with your Support Coordinator about your options or contact the Agency for Persons with Disabilities at 850-488-4257.

How do SSI and Medicaid work when children with disabilities reach adult age?

The Social Security Administration (SSA) is the agency responsible for determining SSI eligibility. Their publication EN-05-10026, Benefits for Children with Disabilities, contains information regarding eligibility for SSI when a child reaches adulthood. You can find that publication at <http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10026.pdf>.

SSA's toll-free number is 1-800-772-1213. They can answer specific questions from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday.

My concern is about Medicaid/health insurance for children with a disability. Why is it that a child with a disability can't get Medicaid/health insurance for free? Why is the parents' income used to determine if the child can get Medicaid? I feel that if a child has a disability, his/her parents' income shouldn't matter. If the services are there for them, they should be allowed to use the services that are there for them.

Federal laws and regulations specify whose income must be counted in determining eligibility for Medicaid. In most instances, a parent's income is counted in determining whether or not a child is eligible for Medicaid. The amount of income counted can affect whether the child is eligible for Medicaid or a health insurance program and whether or not a premium may be required.

The Children's Health Insurance Programs (Healthy Kids, MediKids and Title XXI Children's Medical Services Network) are for children who do not qualify for Medicaid due to the family's income. The income limit is 200% of the federal poverty level (\$3,975/month for a family of 4) and because of federal and state regulations, the family income is also used to determine eligibility for these programs. These programs do offer comprehensive coverage for a low monthly family premium of \$15 or \$20 per month. For families with higher income, the MediKids and Healthy Kids programs offer Full Pay coverage. The cost for children ages one through four is \$196 per month per child for MediKids coverage and for children ages five through 18, the cost is \$153 per month per child for Healthy Kids. To apply for assistance through the Children's Health Insurance

Programs please visit the Florida KidCare website located at <http://www.floridahealth.gov/AlternateSites/KidCare/index.html>.

I'm a mother who works and my earnings are \$23,000 annually. The SSI of my child has stopped due to my income. Now I would like to enroll my son in a special school, in which I will pay out of pocket and it's hard for me. I'm asking to please take this into consideration. If I will only receive his SSI I can pay for his tuition. Why does my son's SSI stop or get reduced only because I work?

Eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is determined by the Social Security Administration. If you have questions regarding whether or not the cost of a special school for your son can be taken into consideration, you will need to contact them. Their toll-free number is 1-800-772-1213. They can answer specific questions from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday.

My son is 8-years-old and has cerebral palsy. Until recently, he was receiving occupational, physical, and speech therapy. But we are Capital Health Plan members and were recently (in April) informed that Camden's therapy visits have been exhausted for the year. In our efforts to find insurance coverage for his therapy, we learned that children with the diagnosis of autism are protected by a federal mandate to receive therapy services by HMOs. Why is it that my son, simply because he has the wrong label, cannot receive the services he so desperately needs, and what do you plan to do to remedy this injustice?

Florida Medicaid reimburses medically necessary therapy services to Medicaid eligible recipients under the age of 21. Unfortunately Medicaid cannot address coverage policies for other insurance carriers/plans.

The HMO (new Medicaid) at the present time stinks! They are not prepared. They can't tell you if your child's doctors will work or not. This also goes for pharmacy and medical supply companies. CMS Network doesn't know this for their network either. Who knows? I have spent hours on this.

Details regarding providers enrolled in each MMA plan's network, including primary care providers (PCP), are available to recipients required to enroll in the MMA program through choice counseling materials and the choice counseling website. When choosing an MMA plan, recipients will have an opportunity to review the providers in each plan's network and to select the plan that has the providers that are important to them. Each recipient who does not choose an MMA plan will be assigned to a plan based on a number of factors. In addition, the choice counselors can assist enrollees in choosing a plan that has most of the enrollee's providers in their network. Recipients can contact Choice Counseling at 1-877-711-3662, to make managed care choices.

How come Medicaid won't make payments to the specialist our child needs for narcolepsy? The hospital is eating the expense.

Florida Medicaid covers all medically necessary services for recipients under the age of 21, including services provided by physician specialists. If you need assistance finding a provider, please contact your managed care plan if you are enrolled in managed care. If you are enrolled in fee-for-service Medicaid, please contact the Florida Medicaid Recipient & Provider Helpline at 1 (877) 254-1055.

Can we get information on how to get the gold card for Medicaid?

The Department of Children and Families provides Medicaid cards. For a replacement card, call the toll-free number (866) 762-2237.

If you were just approved for Medicaid, it can take two to three weeks to receive the card. Those on Medicaid can print a temporary Medicaid card from their MyACCESS Account.

What dentists accept Medicaid and provide services for children with disabilities.

If you are enrolled in a managed care plan, please contact your plan for a list of network providers. If you are in fee-for-service Medicaid, please contact the Florida Medicaid Recipient & Provider Helpline at 1 (877) 254-1055.

Some states chose to have individuals that are disabled receive Medicare when they turn 18. The states do not have the requirement that an individual who is disabled prior to 18 or have a parent who is deceased or disabled. Because of the abundance of Medicare providers in this state it would be cost effective to include, as opposed to maintaining a separate Medicaid system.

Not all states offer the same Medicaid coverage. States are allowed to set their own rules regarding Medicaid coverage as long as they stay within federal guidelines.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) is the agency responsible for determining Medicare eligibility. Their publication, EN-05-10026, Benefits for Children with Disabilities, contains information regarding eligibility for Medicare. You can find that publication at <http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10026.pdf>. SSA's toll-free number is 1-800-772-1213. They can answer specific questions from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday.

For individuals that meet HCBW eligibility, can we legislate 18 and under are eligible for Medicaid without having a HCBW slot available to assist family to receive needed services?

To be eligible for any of Florida's home and community based waiver programs, you must meet Medicaid and waiver eligibility guidelines. Florida's HCBS waivers can only serve up

to the number of recipients specified in the specific waiver and approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Why can't the people on the wait list qualify for Medicaid as an individual before getting the waiver? That was the godsend and would cut the wait list a lot. We need medical first and foremost.

Eligibility criteria for Medicaid are established by federal and state laws and regulations. If you would like to speak to someone about general Medicaid eligibility requirements and whether you qualify, please contact the Department of Children and Families (DCF) at 1-866-762-2237.

Why when I turn 21 do I lose most of my benefits, such as dental (most important) and vision care?

An individual must meet specific requirements in order to be eligible for Medicaid. Each group has specific age, income and asset limit requirements. Persons may be eligible for full or limited Medicaid benefits. At age 21 you will be considered an adult, and will become eligible under a different group that has different benefits. Under the Florida Medicaid program children may access services that differ from adult services. This is why the benefits you are eligible to receive will change when you reach your 21st birthday.

If you have additional questions you may contact the Florida Medicaid Recipient & Provider Helpline at 1 (877) 254-1055.

Cannot find a urologist for my son who has Medipass. Looking for over a year! They don't take it! Help please!

If you are enrolled in a managed care plan, please contact your plan for a list of network providers, or contact the Florida Medicaid Recipient & Provider Helpline at 1 (877) 254-1055.

Why did the MMA Exemptions not expand to young adults with Cystic Fibrosis Waiver and only the Developmental Disabilities waiver?

Our kids with CF should not have to choose a plan! This is causing a hardship for everyone involved! We feel discriminated against. Many kids now are losing pharmacy use, nursing care, our doctors, etc. We now have to change a lot of services.

Florida law requires that most Medicaid recipients receive covered services through the Managed Medical Assistance component of the Statewide Medicaid Managed Care program. Chapter 409 of the Florida Statutes lists the populations that are exempt and voluntary from enrollment under the MMA program.

For additional information about recipients who are exempt or voluntary, please review the Agency's Statewide Medicaid Managed Care Managed Medical Assistance Exemption Criteria guidance statement located at:
http://ahca.myflorida.com/medicaid/statewide_mc/pdf/Guidance_Statements/SMMC_Guidance_Statement_Exemptions_2014-04-30.pdf.

Why is it so hard for a family in small cities to speak to someone concerning our benefits if a problem arises? It's hell trying to get through the 800 numbers (to the agencies) DCFS to speak with someone to schedule an apt. Even online, the system is very limited with personal questions and concerns. And no walk-ins will be seen in the offices in Daytona, my nearest location. This results in missed benefits and setback doctor visits. Please help with this issue. There is no local office.

We apologize that you are having problems getting through to a staff member at the Department's Customer Call Center to inquire about your case. The Automated Response Unit (ARU) is designed to provide customers with updated information about their case and provide callers an opportunity to speak to a call agent if additional information is needed. Call volume varies during the day, with the busiest time between the hours of 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM and the least busy time between 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM. You may also view detailed information about your case by accessing your MyAccount, which is available at: <http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/>. This site is available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. You may also locate a community partner by entering your zip code at: <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/access/CPSLookup/search.aspx>. These partner agencies help the Department by providing access to public assistance benefits in local communities.

There is also an online form for the Department of Children and Families at <http://www.myflfamilies.com/contact>. We invite you to provide any problems you may be experiencing directly to DCF through this avenue.

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities

Who in the APD do I send our petition to, to recognize Arthogyposis as a permanent disability in the state of Florida?

Please send your petition to APD Chief of Staff, Michael Ayers, at 4030 Esplanade Way, Tallahassee FL 32399. Additionally, APD provides services to individuals who have developmental disabilities in accordance with Florida Statutes Chapter 393. We encourage you to contact your local legislators with your petition to recognize Arthogyposis as a permanent disability. Information for your local legislators can be found online at <http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/> and <http://www.flsenate.gov/>.

Is there a system in place for young disabled adults who have gone through the Florida school system but are children of illegals that are now ready for the workforce or independent living? Are there services such as work, medical, housing, etc.?

APD serves individuals who have autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, intellectual disabilities, Prader-Willi syndrome, spina bifida, and young children 3-5, who are at high risk of a developmental disability. To be eligible for APD services you must be a US citizen or have a USCIS/INS number issued by the US Department of Homeland Security, a Florida resident, and have been given a diagnosis of one of the above disabilities prior to the age of 18. Individuals who feel they may qualify for APD services should contact the APD Regional Office that serves their county of residence. Contact information can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/region/>.

Individuals with disabilities who are interested in working may want to contact Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) at 1-800-451-4327.

What is available for adults with autism after age 22?

Individuals who have one of APD's six developmental disabilities may qualify for APD services. Currently the agency has a waiting list for waiver services, however limited services may still be available while waiting. To apply for services the individual or their guardian should call the APD Regional Office that serves their county of residence. The office that serves Hillsborough County can be reached at (813) 233-4300.

The application for APD services can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/customers/application/> and can be mailed or hand-delivered to the APD Regional Office that serves your county.

You may also want to direct this individual or their guardian to our online Resource Directory located at <http://resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory/>. You can search thousands of community resources on the local, state, and federal levels.

Will we ever be able to get funding for more community living facilities in Manatee/Sarasota area?

APD's mission is to assist individuals with developmental disabilities throughout the state to help them live, learn, and work in their communities. While APD does not build and manage community living facilities, it does license and monitor Medicaid waiver providers who want to offer residential services to APD customers. Members of the community who are interested in becoming providers should contact the APD Regional Office that serves their county. Contact information for all offices can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/region/>.

Understanding Disability/Social Security: How does APD work with both of these programs?

There are five Certified Work Incentive Coordinators across Florida. These people help individuals with disabilities who are working and receiving assistance through the Social Security Administration to manage their benefits. Work incentives make it possible for people with disabilities receiving SSI and/or SSDI to work and still receive monthly benefits. Contact information for the Certified Work Incentive Coordinators can be found at <http://apdcares.org/brochures/Keep%20your%20benefits2014.pdf>.

Is the state looking into getting more funding for the med waiver so more families can come off the wait list?

APD's mission is to help individuals with developmental disabilities in living, learning, and working in their communities. Over the past two legislative sessions, the Governor has recommended and the legislature has approved \$56 million to enroll individuals from the waiting list to the waiver. As the economy continues to improve, it is our goal to serve as many Floridians as possible with the funding the agency is appropriated.

Is there a list or website of service providers?

Delmarva operates an online provider search, which can be found at <http://www.flddresources.org/ProviderSearch.aspx>.

You may also want to visit APD's online Resource Directory at <http://resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory/> which lists many of our providers, as well as thousands of additional community resources.

Is there a list of group homes to choose from?

Your APD Regional Office can provide you with group home choices in your area. Contact information for the APD Regions can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/region/>.

You may also want to use the online provider search mentioned above at <http://www.flddresources.org/ProviderSearch.aspx>.

What advances have been made for the middle-aged individual with recent physical disability—i.e. provision of household help, modification of home—to enable them to function within the community?

APD serves individuals with developmental disabilities which includes autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, intellectual disabilities, Prader-Will syndrome, and spina bifida which are diagnosed before the age of 18. You may wish to contact the Florida Association of Centers for Independent Living (FACIL). Your local center may be able to connect you with resources for home modifications. Please call FACIL's toll-free number 1-866-575-6004 for more information.

More APD information. How to get more information on Medicaid.

There are a number of ways to receive information about APD including:

- Our website, <http://apdcares.org/>
- Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/APDCares>
- Twitter, @FloridaAPD
- Pinterest, <http://www.pinterest.com/apdcares/>
- Our blog, <http://apdcares.wordpress.com/>
- YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/user/apdwebteam>
- Subscribe to our monthly newsletter, The Champion at <http://apdcares.org/champion/>
- Become a part of your local Family Care Council, <http://apdcares.org/fcc/>
- Submit questions to the agency at apd.info@apdcares.org
- Contact the Regional Office that serves your county at <http://apdcares.org/region/>
- General Medicaid questions can be answered by the Agency for Health Care Administration by phone 1-888-419-3456 or online at <http://ahca.myflorida.com/>.

After navigating to the site, please click on the Medicaid tab at the top of the screen for more detailed information.

Currently our son receives SSI benefits. But, if our income goes up in the slightest, he loses benefits. Is there a way to get benefits for him not associated with our income? I do not want to lose my APD services.

There are five Certified Work Incentive Coordinators across Florida. These people help individuals with disabilities who are working and receiving assistance through the Social Security Administration to manage their benefits. Work incentives make it possible for people with disabilities receiving SSI and/or SSDI to work and still receive monthly benefits. Contact information for the Certified Work Incentive Coordinators can be found at <http://apdcares.org/brochures/> in the brochure *Keeping Your Disability Benefits While Working*.

Is there home help with cleaning through Medicare for elderly people with a walker that are not listed as disabled but need help? We receive APD waiver services now. Need help. What is the contact information for setting that up?

For more information on available services through Medicare, please contact the Medicare office at 1-800-633-4227.

You may also want to contact the Department of Elder Affairs for more information on available services and programs in your area. You can reach their office at 1-800-963-5337.

Why do services change when a person turns 21 with in the waiver?

The APD Medicaid waiver is the payer of last resort. Medicaid state plan provides a wide array of services to individuals under the age of 21. This means until age 21, needs that can be met through other funding sources, such as Medicaid state plan, will be used first before APD funds are expended. Once an individual turns 21, APD is often able to cover some of the services that are no longer available through Medicaid state plan.

Can a parent who is also the representative be reimbursed for transportation to seasonal camps (mileage) and other appointments in the CDC+ program?

Per the Developmental Disabilities Medicaid Waivers Consumer-Directed Care Plus Program Coverage, Limitations, and Reimbursement Handbook, (CDC+ Handbook) page 4-35, Limitations and Special Conditions for Seasonal Camp do not allow for the coverage of transportation costs to or from a seasonal camp.

Information regarding Transportation services can be found on pages 4-42 through 4-44 of the CDC+ Handbook, and states in part that:

Transportation services are the provision of rides to and from the Consumer's home and community-based services, enabling the Consumer to receive the supports and services identified on the Purchasing Plan, when such services cannot be accessed through natural (i.e., unpaid) supports.

Transportation services funded through CDC+ shall be used only for Consumers who have no other means to get to a service identified on the Purchasing Plan. Family members, neighbors, or friends who already transport the Consumer, or who are capable of transporting the Consumer at no cost to the APD, shall be encouraged to continue their support of the Consumer. Consumers who are capable of using the fixed route public transit system to access services on their Purchasing Plan shall be encouraged to use that method of transportation.

How do you request or get qualified for more money from the CDC+ budget, as my almost 16-year-old gets older and needs more than the \$955 a month we have been getting?

We encourage you to work with the CDC + Consultant to arrange services to meet your son's needs. Florida Statutes allow the Agency to increase budgets in very limited circumstances through the Significant Additional Needs Process. This includes the following criteria:

1. An extraordinary need that would place the health and safety of the client, the client's caregiver, or the public in immediate, serious jeopardy unless the increase is approved. An extraordinary need may include, but is not limited to: a. A documented history of significant, potentially life-threatening behaviors, such as recent attempts at suicide, arson, nonconsensual sexual behavior, or self-injurious behavior requiring medical attention; b. A complex medical condition that requires active intervention by a licensed nurse on an ongoing basis that cannot be taught or delegated to a non-licensed person; c. A chronic comorbid condition. As used in this subparagraph, the term "comorbid condition" means a medical condition existing simultaneously but independently with another medical condition in a patient; or d. A need for total physical assistance with activities such as eating, bathing, toileting, grooming, and personal hygiene.
2. A significant need for one-time or temporary support or services that, if not provided, would place the health and safety of the client, the client's caregiver, or the public in serious jeopardy, unless the increase is approved. A significant need may include, but is not limited to, the provision of environmental modifications, durable medical equipment, services to address the temporary loss of support from a caregiver, or special services or treatment for a serious temporary condition when the service or treatment is expected to ameliorate the underlying condition. As used in this subparagraph, the term "temporary" means a period of fewer than 12 continuous months. However, the presence of such significant need for one-time or temporary supports or services alone does not warrant an increase in the amount of funds allocated to a client's iBudget as determined by the algorithm.
3. A significant increase in the need for services after the beginning of the service plan year that would place the health and safety of the client, the client's caregiver, or the public in serious jeopardy because of substantial changes in the client's circumstances, including, but not limited to, permanent or long-term loss or incapacity of a caregiver, loss of services authorized under the state Medicaid plan due to a change in age, or a significant change in medical or functional status which requires the provision of additional services on a permanent or long-term basis that cannot be accommodated within the client's current iBudget.

If the criteria are met, services must be medically necessary and allowable within waiver coverages and limitations. If you feel that your son has an unmet need, please work with the CDC+ Consultant and Region office to assist with this process.

Why does my PCA rate change when I turn 21? I need someone to help me eat and someone to change me when I am out in the community. I cannot find qualified employees.

Personal Care Assistance (PCA) is a service that is provided through Medicaid state plan, which is administered through the Agency for Health Care Administration, to individuals until they are 21. APD's Medicaid waiver and Medicaid state plan have different rates for PCA. Please work with your waiver support coordinator and inform them of any changes in your health or living situation that may not yet be documented in your QSI or support plan. The local APD office and your waiver support coordinator can assist you in finding an appropriate provider for needed services.

Why are providers allowed to change in different titles? Why are providers in CDC+ not available to the participants? Why don't they teach and share more with participants about the cost plans? Why are providers allowed to use more than one NPI number and provider numbers. The public wants to know what is being changed under their name.

For purposes of the Consumer-Directed Care Plus Program (CDC+) the term "provider" includes all types of service providers in the program including:

- A Consumer or Representative employed caregiver for whom the Consumer is the employer of record; also referred to as a directly hired employee; and
- A person licensed or otherwise permitted to render services eligible for payment under this program for which the Consumer is not the employer of record; referred to as an Agency, Vendor, or an Independent Contractor. DD waiver enrolled providers may also be hired by the CDC+ Consumer or Representative as an Agency, Vendor, or Independent Contractor following the CDC+ provider enrollment process.

CDC+ Provider ID numbers are assigned by CDC+ upon the review and processing of completed hiring paperwork submitted to APD by the Consumer/Representative via their Consultant. CDC+ employers can share copies of the background screening clearance letter with other potential CDC+ employers.

National Provider Identifier (NPI) numbers are not assigned by the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, but by the National Plan and Provider Enumeration System (NPPES). For more information about NPI numbers visit NPPES' website at <https://nppes.cms.hhs.gov/> or visit the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services at <http://www.cms.gov/>.

Consultants are to work with their consumers to provide them with all necessary budget information upon each renewal or change to the Cost Plan. Cost Plans for each Consumer should be reviewed annually based on the results of the support planning process to reflect current needs and situations.

I am not working because my son is blind/mute, has cerebral palsy and epilepsy. My husband has a heart condition and epilepsy. My son is 23. My husband is 66. I would like to know if there is a process within APD that gives funds to a person that has to stay home to be a caregiver. If my husband was to have a seizure or a heart attack then my son wouldn't be able to get help due to being nonverbal. That is why I have had to stay home.

If your son is currently receiving APD Medicaid waiver services, you can contact your local APD office or his Waiver Support Coordinator about electing to participate in the Consumer Directed Care Plus (CDC+) program. CDC+ allows more flexibility and self-direction for supports and services. The local office that serves Sebring can be reached at (863) 413-3360.

As parents of a child with special needs, it would lighten our burden to see the qualification process become less complicated for both DCF services and APD waiver services.

APD certainly understands that applying for APD services can sometimes be a complex process. State law requires APD to follow certain processes and procedures to establish eligibility for individuals to receive APD Medicaid waiver services. Your best resource for information is your local APD office. Contact information for our local offices can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/region/>. If you have specific suggestions to improve the application process please send them to our agency email apd.info@apdcares.org.

Does APD have waiver requirements listed for families to know if they qualify for the HCBS waiver at The Family Café?

General eligibility information can be found on APD's website, <http://apdcares.org/customers/application/>. All individuals are unique and so are their circumstances. Your best option for learning about APD's eligibility requirements and the application process is to contact the Regional Office that serves your county of residence.

How can parents learn of the different services available for their disabled child who receives services with APD? Does the state provide such information? (group homes, sheltered workshops, etc.?)

APD has a brochure, Guide to Services, online at <http://apdcares.org/brochures/> that lists the different services provided through its waiver.

For more detailed information, please contact the local office that serves your area.

You can also search for providers through the online provider search located at <http://www.flddresources.org/ProviderSearch.aspx>.

My son just transitioned out of school. He is on the med waiver list but has no services. All the programs available for pay take his entire SSI. I'd like to know what more can be done to help all the adults on the waiting list. We need help and programs to put our adults in during the day so they don't just sit at home and waste away. Please help!

Please contact your local area office and ask to speak with a state support coordinator. They may be able to assist your son in finding meaningful day activities.

You may also want to search APD's online Resource Directory for local, state, and federal community resources that may be available at low or no cost. You can access the Resource Directory at <http://resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory/>.

It's been some years since I applied for med waiver/wait list for my son. I filed twice with lots of supporting documents, yet I've heard nothing from APD. I have seen none of the improvements touted. The person handling this has been

of absolutely no assistance whatsoever. My son is now almost 16. The lack of communication and action is most frustrating.

Questions involving applying for APD services and eligibility requirements can be directed to the local office. Contact information for all offices can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/region/>.

I would appreciate it if someone from APD who is knowledgeable about the wheelchair acquisition procedures could call me. I have taught wheelchair dancing at Pyramid for seven years. A better knowledge of what goes into fitting a wheelchair to an individual would help me help my students.

Acquiring a wheelchair can often take months. Wheelchairs are typically not standard, but are customized to meet the needs of the individual. In general, the acquisition process begins with a referral from a health insurance provider or an agency provider like APD or Vocational Rehabilitation. Most chairs are designed to meet the individual's needs in the home; alternate uses such as recreation and work may require extra features that would be the financial responsibility of the individual. The fitting is done in collaboration with physical and occupational therapists.

You may want to explore grant opportunities to get some wheelchairs donated to Pyramid that could be used for wheelchair dancing classes. The Christopher Reeves Foundation has supported dance programs in the past and may be a helpful resource. You may also be able to find certified wheelchair vendors in *NewMobility* magazine.

How can we legislate an awareness day/week for 22Q11.2 Deletion syndrome (aka VCFS, DiGeorge, CTFA and others)? It is the second most common genetic syndrome, Down syndrome is first. It is present in almost 1:2000 live births and has over 186 known effects from cardiac, palate, learning delays, mental health, etc. We should be served under APD.

As defined in Florida Statutes Chapter 393, APD provides waiver services to individuals who have one or more of the following six developmental disabilities; autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, intellectual disabilities, Prader-Willi syndrome, and spina bifida. We encourage you to contact your local legislators to advocate for 22Q11.2 Deletion Syndrome. Information for your local legislators can be found online at <http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/> and <http://www.flsenate.gov/>.

Thank you for the supported living program. It has been wonderful for my two adult daughters' independence. I am wondering if the personal support helpers will get a raise in pay—it is very hard to find really reliable workers with the low pay agencies can give workers. Thank you APD!

Thriving providers and businesses is one of APD Director Barbara Palmer's top agency priorities. The agency is in the process of reviewing current provider rates and regulatory

requirements to enable our providers to serve customers with the highest standards of health and safety.

What records should we keep and how should we keep them (i.e. school, doctor, legal, etc.) for continuation of our APD services? My service coordinator is not helpful.

Your local APD office will be able to tell you what documentation is required. The local office can also provide you with a list of waiver support coordinators if you wish to change your provider.

How can you help me to develop more from others in the outside world? I am on the waitlist for APD services.

The waiver support coordinator at your local office can assist you in finding needed services. You can also search our online Resource Directory at <http://resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory/>. It contains thousands of local, state, and federal community resources.

How early should people start asking for services for their child with special needs, so I can receive services under the APD waiver?

APD has received additional funding for the past two years to enroll individuals from the critical needs category on the waiting list to the waiver. As funding becomes available, the agency will enroll individuals from the waiting list. You can apply at any time by submitting the application for services to the local office by mail or in person. The application is located on our website at <http://apdcares.org/customers/application/>.

If you feel your child is in a crisis situation which is defined as an individual who is a danger to themselves or others, is homeless or on the verge of homelessness, or the caregiver is not able to provide care, please contact the local office immediately.

How do we get funding for a wheelchair van? We get APD services and Medicaid. Is there a place to find parent friendly explanations of things in the process of legislation?

You may wish to contact your Waiver Support Coordinator for assistance in securing community resources to help with purchasing and/or modifying a van. Additionally, they can assist in determining if Medicaid or waiver funds can be requested.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (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 assistance with the cost of modifying a vehicle, among other expenses. You can contact VR at 1-800-451-4327.

APD provides a legislative wrap-up report online at <http://apdcares.org/publications/legislative/> which highlights the bills that impact APD and its customers. All

Legislative bills can be reviewed online at <http://www.flsenate.gov/> and <http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/>.

Need info on caring for disabled parents being cared for by adult child. We are on the waitlist for everything.

If you feel that your family may be in a crisis situation, which is defined as an individual who is a danger to themselves or others, is homeless or on the verge of homelessness, or the caregiver is not able to provide care, please contact the local office immediately.

You may also want to contact the Department of Elder Affairs at 1-800-963-5337 or the Department of Children and Families at (904) 723-2000 for more information on their available programs for individuals with disabilities.

Where can I get a copy of the ADA regulations concerning handicapped accessible bathrooms? We are a member of the FCC for APD.

ADA standards and regulations can be found online at <http://www.ada.gov/>. By clicking on the Design Standards tab you can access a link to the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design.

Where do you go to find affordable housing in Miami under APD waiver or CDC+ services?

APD's Medicaid waiver provides a variety of supports to live in your own home. Please contact your CDC+ consultant and your local APD office for assistance in finding the best living situation for your needs.

Are services available for my son when he turns 18 for APD? What services will they be? We are looking and need to secure services.

APD does currently have a waiting list for services which is prioritized based on several different criteria. We have received funding from the Governor and the Legislature for the past two years to offer enrollment to the individuals in the critical needs categories. You can contact the state support coordinator at your local office to assist with needed services.

APD has been approached several times about CDC+ and the 8% they take to keep us fiscally neutral. Now that that's no longer an issue, why are they still keeping money from my child?

The CDC+ program has not changed with the implementation of iBudget. The budget is still adjusted by 8% to ensure the program's cost neutrality as required by federal law.

The tip of the explosion of individuals with autism is coming of age, combined with every other disability the numbers are staggering. What incentives are being put in place to ensure that all individuals, differently abled or otherwise, are given employment and meaningful opportunities for housing? APD services are needed.

Governor Rick Scott and APD Director Barbara Palmer both feel that all individuals with developmental disabilities that want to work should have opportunities to find jobs. Over the past two years the Governor has recommended and Legislature has allocated \$1 million for employment services.

Any individual with a disability who is interested in employment can contact Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) at 1-800-451-4327. VR provides assessments and job coaching to assist people in preparing for, gaining, and maintaining employment. Eligible individuals with developmental disabilities may also receive follow-along job coaching through APD.

When your adult child is abused at an ADT program and nothing happens, and they continue to run their business, what about the family? This hurts me daily.

APD has a zero tolerance policy on abuse, neglect, and exploitation of individuals with developmental disabilities. Please contact your local office immediately to report any known or suspected abuse. The abuse hotline is also available 24 hours a day and can be reached at 1-800-962-2873. APD and the abuse hotline work together to ensure that all reports are thoroughly investigated to ensure the individual's health and safety.

As an older sister to a special needs brother, I learned this weekend that I have no family rights under APD. Why is that? Who knows him better than I do? We are family, the only family.

In general, if an individual is a competent adult then they are responsible for making decisions and directing their own care. The level of family involvement in their care is up to the individual. Siblings and other family members can be a great support system. If a guardian has been appointed they are entrusted to make decisions on the individual's behalf. More information about decision making options can be found in our online brochure at <http://apdcares.org/brochures/>.

What are the process and the resource locations for choosing guardian/special needs trust for our unique family member who currently receives service from APD? A challenge yes!

There are several guardianship and decision making options available to individuals with developmental disabilities. They may choose to make their own decisions with varying degrees of assistance from APD and family members, or a court may decide they are

unable to make their own decisions and some or all of their decision-making rights are transferred to a guardian.

Please reference APD's Decision Making Options brochure for more information at <http://apdcares.org/brochures/>.

For legal advice on guardianship and arranging a special needs trust please contact www.floridalawhelp.org or www.floridabar.org.

What happened to The ARC Village in Jacksonville? Is there a waiting list yet? Do they provide services for the state?

For more information on the status of The Arc Village please visit their information page online at <http://www.arcjacksonville.org/village-on-hodges-planned-community/> or contact them by telephone at (904) 355-0155. They are a provider of APD services.

What are the options for a child of 18, and what are the benefits and limits to guardianship and other legal options for the caregiver of a person with Down syndrome as they reach adulthood? They currently receive APD services. Who in APD is available to talk with to provide assistance in getting things up and running for care of my daughter when she turns 18? Do we need a will or special needs trust, guardianship, or other options? We receive APD services now.

There are several guardianship and decision-making options available to individuals with developmental disabilities. They may choose to make their own decisions with varying degrees of assistance from APD and family members, or a court may decide they are unable to make their own decisions and some or all their decision making rights are transferred to a guardian.

Please reference APD's Decision Making Options brochure for more information at <http://apdcares.org/brochures/>.

For legal advice on guardianship and arranging a trust please contact www.floridalawhelp.org or www.floridabar.org.

Is there anything within APD that I need to do legally to continue to be the legal guardian over my non-verbal and non-mobile child? If so, how would you go about doing it?

Please contact the local office that serves your county for more information on required paperwork or information that may be needed by APD regarding the guardianship of your child.

For legal concerns about maintaining guardianship of your child please contact www.floridalawhelp.org or www.floridabar.org.

APD is allocated a bunch of dollars each year from the Legislature. We are constantly told that it is not enough. People are on the waitlist for, could be most of their lives. I mean, if I did the simple math, you folks at APD should be

servicing more people. Last year, I heard from my representative that APD had a surplus. I only hope that he was incorrect with his statement. I mean, I rally for the Agency every year. I call, I come to Tallahassee and walk the hallways for the ARC. Now, if you have a surplus and are not using every dollar correctly or properly, I am going to stop being an advocate for your Agency. Please tell me that I am wrong.

In accordance with state law, APD must stay within its appropriated budget. Each person who is enrolled in the waiver has individual needs that require a unique blend of services which results in individual budgets of varying amounts. APD is mandated to provide each person a budget that meets their health and safety needs, and must also create a sustainable system for the future. APD is currently serving more than 30,000 individuals through APD's Medicaid waiver and several thousand individuals on the waiting list using general revenue funding.

The FCC's are a waste of time and money from the APD. I remember when the vision and mission of the FCC was clear. When we as families worked tirelessly for their place in Florida statue. Either support their original mission or allow them to cease to exist. What you have now is simply a joke!

The FCCs are statutorily charged "...to advise the agency, to develop a plan for the delivery of family support services within the local area, and to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of services and support provided under the plan."(Chapter 393.502(7), F.S.).

The agency values input from individuals with developmental disabilities, family members, and friends. The primary functions of the FCC's is to assist in providing information and outreach to families, review the effectiveness of service programs and make recommendations with respect to program implementation, advise the APD with respect to policy issues relevant to the community and family support system in the local area, and to meet and share information with other FCC's.

FCC members are volunteer advocates appointed to serve by the governor. Governor Scott is committed to strengthening the Family Care Councils through his appointment of 99 members since November 2012. As the councils continue to develop and expand throughout their communities, historical FCC members have served as mentors to the new appointees, as well as the revitalized councils. For additional information on how you can assist in mentoring or to become a part of the Family Care Councils, call 1-800-470-8101.

Please tell me where all the money goes for APD. It should be on your website where every dollar is spent. What % goes to administration, providers and the care that they provide, and services? I bet we would be surprised on how much support goes to providers, and how much lack of support goes directly to families. Why do the district offices get so much of the available funds for administration?

All Florida state agencies are required to follow the Sunshine Law. The Sunshine Law provides public access to government meetings and records. APD has several reports available on our website regarding financial data for the agency. The reports can be found at <http://apdcares.org/publications/reports/>. If the reports located at this website do not answer your questions, you may make a public record request at any time. APD's public records contact information can be found online at <http://apd.myflorida.com/publications/legal/>.

Thank you to the APD for attending and supporting the event. I do like to hear from the Director, not with the Governor. I like to hear her talk to us. I do believe she cares!

APD Director Barbara Palmer enjoys attending The Family Café and talking with our customers, families, providers, and other stakeholders. The Director and APD staff are thankful to Governor Scott and the Legislature for their continued support in our mission to serve Floridians with developmental disabilities.

I think you should coordinate between DCF and VR better. APD needs the help from its sister agencies. Families need you to talk with each other.

APD is constantly striving to find better ways to work with other agencies. We understand that our customers often have complex needs that require the cooperation of more than one agency. We appreciate your thoughts and feedback. Any comments or suggestions regarding this or other matters may be submitted to our agency email at APD.Info@apdcares.org.

What does a crisis consist of to finally get off the waitlist? Do I have to die first? How can I get off the waitlist? There are thousands and thousands in front of me. There are not enough providers who are skilled and trained and who can pass the background check (so sad) to provide the much needed services for our family.

Individuals are enrolled in the waiver from the waiting list as funding becomes available. The waiting list is prioritized based on severity of need rather than length of waiting time. If you feel that you are in a crisis situation, which is defined as an individual who is a danger to themselves or others, is homeless or on the verge of homelessness, or the caregiver is not able to provide care please contact your local office immediately. Contact information for our local offices can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/region/>.

Community resources may be available in the meantime. Please visit APD's online resource directory to search thousands of federal, state, and local resources in your area. You can access the directory at <http://resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory/>.

Thank you for getting the Governor to speak on behalf of APD and the families it serves. Now, can he spend more on securing funds for us? I would vote for him then!

APD is so thankful to Governor Scott and the Legislature for their continued support of our agency and the commitment to serve Floridians with developmental disabilities. Over the last two years Governor Scott has recommended and the Legislature has allocated \$56 million in additional funding to enroll individuals with critical needs from the waiting list to the waiver. Governor Scott is committed to serving individuals with disabilities and providing them as many opportunities as possible.

Have people man the exhibitor booth for both the FCC and APD. Went three times and not a soul around. Materials were dated also. Help us help ourselves.

APD updated and reprinted all agency brochures prior to The Family Café event. Current materials were available at the booth. If you need APD brochures, you can find them online at <http://apdcares.org/publications/brochures.htm> or by contacting the Regional Office that serves your county. They are happy to send printed copies of any APD brochure you request. Contact information for Regional Offices can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/region/>.

Why is it taking so many years for children to be approved for the Med Waiver? My son has been on the waiting list for 12 years.

APD annually serves over 30,000 Floridians with developmental disabilities. Individuals are enrolled to the waiver as funding becomes available. If you feel as though you are in a crisis situation, which is defined as an individual who is a danger to themselves or others, is homeless or on the verge of homelessness, or the caregiver is not able to provide care, please contact the local office immediately.

The APD Medicaid waiver is the payer of last resort. Medicaid state plan provides a wide array of services to individuals under the age of 21. This means until age 21, needs that can be met through other funding sources, such as Medicaid state plan, will be used first before APD funds are expended. Once an individual turns 21, APD is often able to cover some of the services that are no longer available through Medicaid state plan.

The Governor's letter in the program states that the state did away with half of the waitlist . . . this is false! What about the 21,000 that are not receiving services?

Regarding the waiting list, Governor Rick Scott's June 6 welcome letter that was published in the Family Café program said, "We are able to offer services to more than half of the individuals on the waiting list – approximately 1,600 individuals – who have critical needs." The waiting list has several categories of individuals who are waiting. The money did not reduce the entire waiting list by half, but it offered enrollment to about 1,600 (half

of the individuals) in the critical needs category. As of July 1, all individuals in categories three and four (critical needs) have been offered enrollment on the APD Medicaid waiver.

**How much funding was given to the wait list for services last year? How much allocated for this year? And how can we double that amount for next year?
Thank you for what you've done so far.**

The Governor's 2013-14 budget included \$36 million to enroll individuals from the waiting list to the waiver. About half the individuals with critical needs were offered enrollment as a result. The Governor's budget this year included another \$20 million to offer enrollment to the remaining individuals in the critical needs category. As of July 1, all individuals in the critical needs have been offered enrollment on the APD Medicaid waiver.

We encourage you to contact your local legislators to share your concerns and ideas for APD's funding next year. Information for your local legislators can be found online at <http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/> and <http://www.flsenate.gov/>.

CareerSource Florida and the Department of Economic Opportunity

What is CareerSource?

CareerSource Florida is a statewide network of career development professionals who work directly for Florida employers to find, develop and keep qualified talent. We also invest in programs to help businesses identify and cultivate our state's talent pool so that prospective employees have the skills and experience companies seek.

Together, we connect employers with qualified, skilled talent and Floridians with employment and career development opportunities to achieve economic prosperity. The CareerSource Florida System includes: CareerSource Florida, a business-led statewide workforce investment board that provides policy oversight and designs strategies to address critical statewide workforce needs. The board consists of business, education and government leaders appointed largely by the Governor. Two members each are appointed by the Florida Senate and the Florida House of Representatives.

Learn more about CareerSource here: <http://careersourceflorida.com/about-careersource-florida/>

Find an office in your area here <http://www.floridajobs.org/onestop/onestopdir/onestopdirlist.asp>

Who does CareerSource serve? What state agency are they in?

American Job Center Networks (named CareerSource in Florida) allows citizens to research the status of unemployment benefits, assess their skills, prepare resumes, research and compare training opportunities, explore the regional labor market and search and apply for jobs.

There is no charge to people using the resources and services available through CareerSource. The services provided are developed through grant-funded programs to the states; each state's program is funded through Unemployment Insurance taxes paid by employers.

Florida Department of Economic Opportunity located in Tallahassee, FL. DEO website: www.floridajobs.org. Here you will find information about workforce programs, community development opportunities, and economic development initiatives and programs.

DEO Vision and Mission: In collaboration with our partners, DEO assists the Governor in advancing Florida's economy by championing the state's economic development vision and by administering state and federal programs and initiatives to help visitors, citizens, businesses, and communities.

We desire to know about employment for teenagers who are 15-16 years old, specifically with Publix Super Market.

For Publix Supermarkets please see the information from the website located at <http://corporate.publix.com/careers/stores/how-to-apply>:

First, take a look at the job description chart to familiarize yourself with more than 15 different choices. Then check out the Store Locator to determine the Publix store where you would most like to work. When you've decided which positions interest you and which Publix is the most convenient, check out our Critical Openings. These are only a sample of the openings in our stores, but they are the ones we are working hardest to fill immediately. Armed with that information, go to the store of your choice and look for the Job Application Center (JAC). The JAC, as we call it, is a kiosk usually located at the front of the store.

You must apply in person to be considered for any non-management position in our stores. The JAC allows you to apply for as many positions as you want, regardless of whether there is an opening at the store where you apply. That's because managers at nearby Publix stores — where there may be openings — can view your application. Therefore, you don't need to submit an application at any other Publix. Once you've finished applying, stop by the Customer Service desk to ask for a manager and briefly share why you would make a great Publix associate.

Any information on workplace discrimination and opportunities.

Opportunities can be located at: www.employflorida.com.

The human resource department at any place of employment will be able to provide you with the contact information to address workplace discrimination.

Not happy that state career agency person said if you have a hidden disability, don't disclose it (to my daughter with ADHD/Asperger's).

Disclosing a disability to an employer is always a personal decision and solely up to the person who is applying or working in the job. Several factors can be considered when making the decision.

More information available at Job Accommodation Network (JAN) here <http://askjan.org/topics/discl.htm> including:

- [Advising Youth with Disabilities on Disclosure: Tips for Service Providers](#) - ODEP Publication
- [Disability Disclosure and Interviewing Techniques for Persons with Disabilities](#) - JAN Consultants' Corner
- [Dos and Don'ts of Disclosure](#) - JAN Effective Accommodation Practices Series [Audio Version](#)
- [Youth, Disclosure, and the Workplace Why, When, What, and How](#) - ODEP Publication
- [The 411 on Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities](#) - National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth Publication

What job resources are available to students in high school (i.e. job internships)?

Florida High School High Tech (HSHT) is designed to provide high school students with all types of disabilities the opportunity to explore jobs or postsecondary education leading to technology-related careers. HSHT links youth to a broad range of academic, career development, and experiential resources and experiences that will enable them to meet the demands of the 21st century workforce. HSHT is a community-based partnership made up of students, parents, businesses, educators and rehabilitation professionals. It has been shown to reduce the high school dropout rate and increase the overall self-esteem of participating students. Programs include:

- **Employment:** Paid summer internship opportunities that provide on-the-job experiences in high tech environments.
- **Corporate and Educational Site visits:** Students explore the corporate business environment, and learn job tasks in a variety of industries with a focus on technology. They also visit local Colleges, Universities, and Technical Schools to obtain information about the admissions process.
- **Mentoring:** Disabled and non-disabled professionals in high tech fields serve as career advisors to students.
- **Job Shadowing:** Students spend time observing professionals at work in careers of their interest.
- **Workshops & Training:** Featuring independent living skills development, career exploration, resume development, career planning, specialized computer training, and job search skills and instruction.

Read more about Florida High School High Tech programs here:

<http://www.abletrust.org/hsht/>

How are you going to help the people with disabilities get access to better education and better training for careers in high paying jobs while trying to educate the public on their ignorance about people with disabilities?

Each CareerSource region has Business Consultants who work directly with employers to provide knowledge, tools and resources about hiring and working with people with disabilities. Many regions partner with Equal Employment Opportunity Commissions (EEOC) and Offices of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) to provide training to employers through meetings and workshop activities.

Many CareerSource regional offices work in partnership with the US Business Leadership Network[®] (USBLN[®]), a national non-profit that helps business drive performance by leveraging disability inclusion in the workplace, supply chain, and marketplace. Learn more and find a USBLN chapter in your area here <http://www.usbln.org/>.

Where are the opportunities for full-time work after graduating from college? I now have a BS degree in Information Technology, but every job I apply for requires 2-5 years experience in that field. How do I get an opportunity to prove myself when I can't get my foot in the door? In addition, they are requiring

experience in .NET and C# and I was never given the opportunity to take those courses at FSU. I just graduated last month. Why isn't FSU required to keep up and offer courses that will be required to get a job?

- Intern Match website: <https://www.internmatch.com/s/it-internships/florida>
- Internships.com website:
<http://www.internships.com/search/posts?Keywords=Information+Technology&Location=Florida>

Florida State University can answer your questions about providing curriculum to meet employer's needs and internship opportunities, contact information here:
<http://internships.fsu.edu/howtofind.html>

Why are there little to no services for young disabled adults (i.e. job training) in the Gadsden County and Leon County area? Why does it seem that everything is down in South or Central Florida?

The CareerSource network is operational throughout the State. CareerSource Capital Region serves Leon and Gadsden counties. Gadsden County is (850) 875-4040 and the Leon County location's phone number is (850) 922-0023.

The tip of the explosion of individuals with autism is coming of age, combined with every other disability the numbers are staggering. What incentives are being put in place to ensure that all individuals, differently abled or otherwise, are given employment and meaningful opportunities?

- A. The governor's Executive Order 13-284, Reaffirming Commitment to Employment for Floridians with Disabilities mandates development of an interagency cooperative agreement between key Florida agencies and organizations. Required partners include the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD); the Florida Department of Education (FDOE), Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Division of Blind Services, and Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEES); the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) and Workforce Florida Inc. boards; the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF), Substance Abuse and Mental Health (SAMH) Program; and the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc. (FDDC).
- B. Regarding the Employment First Initiative, Gov. Scott defines employment "integrated employment, including supported employment, customized employment, and self-employment, where an individual is paid by an employer at minimum wage or greater or receives earnings through one's self-employment business, fully integrated in the community workforce, with a goal of maximum self-sufficiency."
- C. People who receive Social Security Administration Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) payments and healthcare (Medicaid/Medicare) may take advantage of Work Incentives. What is a Work Incentive? Special rules make it possible for people with disabilities receiving Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to work and still receive monthly payments and Medicare or Medicaid. Social Security calls these rules "work

incentives." Learn more about the many incentives provided by SSA here:
<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/generalinfo.htm#work>

The Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) projects work with SSA beneficiaries with disabilities on job placement, benefits planning, and career development. By working with a WIPA, SSA beneficiaries will be better equipped to make informed choices about work. Each WIPA is staffed with Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWICs) to:

- ✓ Provide work incentives planning and assistance;
- ✓ Help beneficiaries and their families determine eligibility for Federal or State work incentives programs;
- ✓ Refer beneficiaries with disabilities to appropriate Employment Networks or State VR agencies based on individual needs and impairment types;
- ✓ Provide general information about potential employer-based or federally subsidized health benefits coverage available to beneficiaries once they enter the workforce; and
- ✓ Inform beneficiaries with disabilities of further protection and advocacy services available to them.

Find a Work Incentives Planning and Assistance office in your area here:

<http://www.fmqai.com/library/attachment-library/WIPA1.pdf>

How do I get a job working with race cars or monster trucks? I have autism, and I really like monster trucks!

Contact a career specialist at CareerSource Heartland to find out about the opportunities in your area and the qualifications for those jobs.

Thank you for the sessions on employment and the growing Employment Expo are of the Exhibit Hall. How do we find out about the employment options after the event in our area? I talked with the men at the area, but do not remember everything they told me. I hope that they return next year. Need more handouts at the booth area . . . and the van areas. Thank you.

First locate the career center in your area. Go to www.servicelocator.org and type in your zip code. After you find the center you'd like to work with, go and sit down with a career specialist who can talk with you about the opportunities in your area.

Let's grow the employment area of the conference. The unemployment rate is too high for individuals with disabilities: over 80% in Florida. We need help to lower this rate. Why doesn't the state hire individuals with disabilities? I am serious. How many folks in CareerSource have disabilities? Got to practice what we preach.

Employ Florida Marketplace (EFM) is the statewide labor exchange for job-seekers and employers. EFM and other available employment portals can be accessed at www.employflorida.com.

People First is the State of Florida's self-service, secure, web-based Human Resource information system. State of Florida job vacancies can be viewed at the following link: <https://peoplefirst.myflorida.com>

How can I access the online portal for employment?

Employ Florida Marketplace (EFM) is the statewide labor exchange for job-seekers and employers. EFM and other available employment portals can be accessed at www.employflorida.com.

What employers are you all working with in Florida to increase jobs for the disabled? I mean, outside of food, filth, and maid services? Real jobs!

Each region works with the employers in their geographic location. Contact the center in your area by going to www.servicelocator.org and typing in your zip code. Find the center you'd like to work with and contact them about opportunities in your area in your skill set. You may also qualify for training opportunities. We match employers with job seekers who have the skills they need regardless of a person's disability.

You all should work with Disney. They need help in employing us with disabilities. Universal also. They like us behind the scenes.

The CareerSource network have extensive partnerships with the business community across the State. Workforce services are available to job-seekers and employers statewide. Job seekers and employers can locate the closest CareerSource center at: www.servicelocator.org.

I would love to work for your agency. How do I apply? I am qualified.

The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity is a state agency. You can access employment vacancies for State agencies at: <https://peoplefirst.myflorida.com>.

I have been working at Walmart for almost ten years in November. I love sharing my accomplishments with other people that asked "how do you do it with a disability?" I always say Governor Rick Scott and Senator Galvano for people with disabilities are my number one reasons.

Thank you for sharing your employment experience.

Department of Children and Families

I have an adopted daughter who is blind, has cerebral palsy, brain damage, VP shunt, is tube-fed, and confined to a wheel chair. She is now 15-years-old and I receive an adoption subsidy that we live on as I am unable to work with caring for her and my elderly mother, and the subsidy will stop at age 18. What do I do to receive help at that time?

It is important for you to make application for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for your daughter within 60 days before her 18th birthday. It may be necessary for you to provide documentation along with the application, but usually the names of her doctors are sufficient in order for her doctors to be contacted if verification is needed. Approval or disapproval of the application must be completed within 60 days of the submission of the application. When approved, the SSI is effective from the date of application or the month after the child's 18th birthday. With approval of the SSI application, SSI Medicaid will be implemented.

If your daughter was born on the first day of her birth month, a maintenance adoption subsidy will not be paid for that month and therefore the subsidy will actually be terminated the month before her 18th birthday. Except for a child's birthday on the first day of the month, the maintenance adoption subsidy payments will be terminated at the end of the child's 18th birthday.

It may be necessary for you to be appointed as the "Representative Payee" for your daughter's SSI benefits. The staff at the Agency for Persons with Disabilities and your local Social Security Office can assist you with the steps of the process. Online application for SSI can be made at <http://www.ssa.gov/disabilityssi/ssi.html> and questions about services should be made to Agency for Persons with Disabilities at apd.myflorida.com.

A lot of times I deal with stress, depression, and sometimes anger. Is it good to cry, talk to someone or pray about happiness? I have viewed your website at DCF and I find it very confusing and hard to navigate. I need local services to help me through the troubling times.

When dealing with stress, depression, or anger, it is always good to reach out and ask for help. The department contracts for behavioral health services through regional systems of care called Managing Entities (MEs).

In addition to the ME, you can also contact Florida 211 by dialing 211. Florida 211 is a statewide system that provides trained professionals available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to assist callers in identifying and connecting with health and human service programs in their community. Information is provided about services and supports that meet a variety of needs including food, housing, employment, health care, mental health and substance abuse services, crisis counseling and more.

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) may also be of assistance to you, as it provides peer support groups and information about services and supports in your community. Please visit <http://www.nami.org/> or call (800) 950-NAMI to find your local NAMI chapter.

We appreciate your feedback regarding the department's website and are actively working to make it more user-friendly. The department's web development department has just finished a series of changes to the main menu in order to make the options clearer for users. We always welcome feedback and recommendations, so if there are additional comments you would like to share, please email them to webmaster@dcf.state.fl.us.

When your adult child is abused at an ADT program and nothing happens, they continue to run their business, what about the family? This hurts me daily.

The Florida Department of Children and Families, Adult Protective Investigations, is charged with investigating and protecting vulnerable adults, and looks to identify the specific person(s) responsible for the abuse/neglect, but has no authority to shut down a facility or program.

When a vulnerable adult is abused or neglected in an Adult Day Treatment (ADT) program, the Adult Protective Investigator notifies the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), which is the state agency charged with licensing the program, as well as law enforcement and the State Attorney's office. Law enforcement and the State Attorney's office will investigate as to whether criminal charges are brought against the specific staff member(s) found responsible.

APD, as the licensing authority for the program, will determine the appropriate actions to take regarding the program and its employees.

Tonier Cain was great! Trauma needs to be addressed, especially in our children within our foster care system who have been removed due to abuse and neglect. Those children are on Medicaid and services for these kids are limited and the wait lists are long. What is the state doing to provide more money for psychiatric services through Medicaid so there are more Medicaid providers for these trauma victims?

The Department understands the critical importance of addressing trauma and the impact that traumatic experiences can have on one's physical, mental, and social health. In 2009, the department brought Tonier Cain to Florida in an effort to raise awareness among agency partners, key stakeholders, and advocacy and consumer groups about the impact of trauma, with the goal of implementing trauma informed care statewide. Since 2009, Ms. Cain has returned to Florida several times to support efforts to implement trauma informed care across the system of care, which continues to this day.

There are a number of initiatives occurring in Florida to ensure trauma informed care continues as a priority. These include, but are not limited to:

- the development of courses for child care and child welfare professionals;
- a statewide Trauma Informed Care workgroup with key state agencies and stakeholders;
- local trauma informed care workgroups in many local communities around the state; grants and technical assistance that support the implementation and expansion of best and evidenced based practices that are trauma informed; and

- partnerships among state agencies and key stakeholders to provide training opportunities around the state.

In relation to Medicaid funded psychiatric services that are trauma informed, the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) is the lead agency that manages the Medicaid behavioral health system of care. The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) at the federal level approves the state plan outlining the minimum benefit package, parity, which is still being figured out at the national level. The department partners closely with AHCA and other state agencies serving children and families to increase awareness of trauma informed care, to increase access to trauma informed services, and to implement requirements for trauma specific screening, assessment and treatment services in residential and community based treatment settings.

State agencies, key stakeholders, consumers, and service providers continue in partnership to expand access to services and supports that are trauma informed through interagency agreements, the updating of policy and service requirements to include trauma informed practices, training and technical assistance, and the statewide and local trauma informed workgroups. The department is dedicated to protecting the most vulnerable and will continue to work to ensure the needs of the children of Florida are met, which includes promoting a system of care that is trauma informed.

The Department of Children and Families needs an ombudsman program. We get lost in the system. We need someone to help us navigate the often challenging administration and programs offered for our loved ones. This system is too confusing.

The department contracts for behavioral health services through regional systems of care called Managing Entities (MEs). Each of the MEs has a consumer advocate, required by contract. In recognition of this important role, the department is hiring a Recovery Specialist to coordinate the 7 consumer advocate positions at the MEs.

For a list of MEs statewide, go to: <http://myflfamilies.com/service-programs/mental-health/circuit-forensic-coordinators>.

I know my mom is a “drug addict.” She does not know that I know she shops for doctors who provide her with pills. She believes that it is okay to take them all because she is going through a job loss and believes she needs to numb the pain. What gets me is that all these doctors know she must be using and they do not care. I feel like calling them up and complaining. We need free services for good people to access without losing their self-respect. I want my mom back to where she was!

There are a number of services available in your area that can help your mom and you during this challenging time. To get information about the services available in your community, please contact Florida 211 by dialing 211. Florida 211 is a statewide system that provides trained professionals 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to assist callers in identifying and connecting with health and human service programs in their community.

In addition, the department contracts with managing entities across the state to manage the regional system for behavioral health needs. For a list of MEs statewide, go to: <http://myflfamilies.com/service-programs/mental-health/circuit-forensic-coordinators>.

I want to adopt a child, yet I am having such a hard time doing so. Coming here makes me think that having a child with special health care needs to adopt would be wonderful. I am so excited! How do I go about this process? Need to research it more!

Thank you for your interest in wanting to adopt children from foster care who cannot safely return home to their birth family and need a permanent family who can nurture and help them achieve their potential.

Please visit the website, www.MyFLFamilies.com/SpecialHeart, for information about local contacts, materials and the community partners who are helping with recruitment efforts. You may also contact Florida's Adoption Information Center at 1-800-96ADOPT if you have specific questions.

Briefly, the process begins with completion of the required adoptive parent training and ends with obtaining an approved adoptive parent home study. Generally, this process takes about nine months. As soon as you have an approved adoptive parent home study, it is helpful to attend one or more monthly meetings of your local adoptive parent support group in order to meet adoptive families who have already adopted a child from foster care. The local support group information will be provided to you as part of the adoptive parent training or it can be found under "Local Resources" on our website at www.adoptflorida.org.

What is the process to apply for Social Security and Food Stamps? Who do I contact? Never saw a session on how to apply for benefits.

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 Customer Call Center at (866) 762-2237 to have a paper application mailed to you. The online application is available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

Applications for Social Security benefits must be filed with the Social Security Administration. You may file an application online for Social Security Retirement benefits at: <https://secure.ssa.gov/iClaim/rib>, and for Social Security Disability benefits at: <https://secure.ssa.gov/iClaim/dib>. Online disability applications are limited to individuals age 18 or older who are not currently receiving benefits on their own Social Security record and who haven't been denied disability benefits in the last 60 days. Individuals wishing to apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) must schedule an appointment with a local Social Security office to file an application. To schedule an appointment, call 1-800-722-1213 between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., Monday through Friday or contact your local Social Security office. Find local social security offices at: <https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp>.

Note: Applicants approved for SSI may be automatically certified for food assistance (food stamps) under Florida’s SUNCAP program.

Where can I find information on Mental Health and Substance Abuse? Where can I find local programs? Do you have a toll free line? I cannot find help on the website. Very confusing website.

The department does not have a toll free line; however, the department contracts with local managing entities across the state to manage the regional system for behavioral health needs that can provide information about services in your area. To locate information about mental health and substance abuse services in your community on the department’s website, follow the directions below.

1. Place your cursor over the “Services” tab on the top left side of the DCF home page and a drop-down menu will appear. (www.myflfamilies.com)
2. From the drop-down menu, click on “Mental Health” or “Substance Abuse”
3. Click on “Get Help” on the left side of the page and enter your county to locate the Managing Entity serving your area

In addition to the managing entities, Florida 211 provides a statewide toll-free number to access information about services in your community. Florida 211 is a statewide system that provides trained professionals 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to assist callers in identifying and connecting with health and human service programs in their community. Information is provided about services and supports that meet a variety of needs including food, housing, employment, health care, mental health and substance abuse services, crisis counseling and more.

The department needed to have someone in the Exhibit hall who was able to assist with the basic Medicaid, Food Stamps and Child Welfare program questions. In the past, ACCESS was present to assist. This year I did not see anyone from DCF. Sad!

Thank you for your comment. In the future, we will ensure staff from our Economic Self-Sufficiency Program Office are present to address questions.

How can I find child care for my son? He has significant issues that are not physical in nature . . . we need a trained teacher and behavioral professional. He is 4 and needs to be with others, and I need to work to support our newly divorced family. Trying to do better, but cannot find resources for our child care needs.

The department website provides information to assist parents and caregivers to choose quality child care providers, and offers a provider search to locate them. To access this information on the department’s website, please follow the instructions below:

1. Place your cursor over the “services” tab on the top left of the home page and a drop-down menu will appear. (www.myflfamilies.com)
2. Click on “Child Care”

3. Click on "For Families" on the left side of the page to access information about services in your area
You may also contact the Child Care Program Office in Tallahassee at (850) 488-4900.

Another resource that may be able to assist you in identifying childcare that includes behavioral health professionals is the Early Learning Coalition in your area.

Please do away with the automated response lines. They do not help. You get disconnected or put on hold, or if you do not have the information really quickly, or tap the wrong number you are placed in a holding pattern that lasts for days and days. Can't you get a live person who knows the services on line to assist with questions? This is so frustrating. And now I am complaining on paper . . . URGH!!!

Due to the large number of calls received by our Customer Call Center, the department must utilize automated response lines to handle the call volume. This system ensures callers who need to speak with a customer service representative to resolve a problem do so as quickly as possible. The automated response system notifies callers of alternatives to waiting to speak to a representative when needing to report changes, inquire into case status or obtain verifications of benefits by directing them to their "My ACCESS Accounts" to obtain this information.

The procedure for background screening is expensive and time consuming! It needs to be streamlined.

Thank you for your comment from regarding background screening. Level 2 background checks are required for those persons working with vulnerable populations that the department serves. The Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) and the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) have a fee schedule for completion of the criminal history checks. In addition, each live scan service provider has the ability to set their price for the cost of completing and submitting the fingerprints electronically to FDLE. These fees vary by provider. There are some live scan service providers that charge a minimal fee above the FDLE and FBI fee. The department has a listing on our website with the cost of the screening listed for most live scan providers. You can view the live scan providers in your area on our website at www.dcfbackgroundscreening.com.

Later this year, the department plans to begin participating in the Clearinghouse. This will allow for the retention of fingerprints and limit the number of times an individual will be required to be fingerprinted if he or she is required to be screened for numerous agencies.

Do all child care workers get trained in providing care to our little ones? What is the licensing process?

Yes, Florida Statutes and Florida Administrative Code require all personnel employed in child care facilities to successfully complete 40 hours of introductory training as evidenced by the passage of a competency exam.

Child care personnel must begin training within 90 days of employment in the child care industry and successfully complete training within 12 months from the date training begins.

The 40-hour Introductory Child Care Training requirement is divided into two parts. Part I consists of 30 hours of training developed by the department, identified below:

- Child Care Facility Rules and Regulations;
- Health, Safety, and Nutrition;
- Identifying and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect;
- Child Growth and Development; and
- Behavioral Observation and Screening

Part II consists of 10 hours of training that includes a selection from the department's specialized training courses:

- Infant and Toddler Appropriate Practices (10 hours),
- Preschool Appropriate Practices (10 hours),
- School-Age Appropriate Practices (10 hours),
- Special Needs Appropriate Practices (10 hours),
- Basic Guidance and Discipline (5 hours online),
- Early Literacy for Children Age Birth to Three (5 hours online),
- Early Childhood Computer Learning Centers (5 hours online), or
- Emergent Literacy for Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) Instructors (5 hours online)

Personnel working in child care facilities must also complete early literacy training within 12 months of date of employment in the child care industry.

For family day care homes, prior to caring for children, operators and substitutes must successfully complete the Department of Children and Families' 30-hour Family Child Care training as evidenced by the passage of a competency exam. In addition, they must complete a single five-hour course in early literacy and language development of children ages birth through five years.

Personnel working in child care facilities, as well as operators of family day care homes are also required to complete an additional 10 hours of in-service training each year.

What is the licensing process?

For child care facilities, the owner must submit an application and provide documentation to the Department of Children and Families that all requirements as to background screening, training, fire safety inspection and other minimum health and safety requirements have been met. The owner must also provide documentation that the individual who will be the onsite director has a Director Credential that verifies the individual in charge of day-to-day operations has both the education and work experience to effectively manage the child care operations.

In addition to verifying all the required documentation, department licensing staff conduct an onsite inspection of the facility to verify compliance with all minimum standards outlined in the Florida Administrative Code and ensure the health and safety of

the children who will be in care. When all licensing requirements are met, the department issues a license that must be renewed on an annual basis.

Once the license is issued, child care licensing staff conduct 3 onsite inspections annually to verify ongoing compliance with the rules and regulations.

The licensing process for family day care homes is much the same, wherein licensing staff verify the home meets all training, background screening, and health and safety standards outlined in the Florida Administrative Code before issuing an annual license. The department's licensing staff conduct two unannounced licensing inspections during the licensing year to ensure ongoing compliance with the rules and regulations.

For more information about the licensing and training requirements for child care programs in Florida, please visit the Office of Child Care Regulation and Background Screening website at www.myflorida.com/childcare.

Why do I not have any legal rights over my brother's care? Our parents have long passed and somehow he became a ward of the state. I want him to be in our lives, but the state will not allow this. Why? Who do I call or contact to help? I guess I will have to secure a lawyer, but why does the process have to be this way? I want to take care of him!

It is admirable that you are advocating for your brother's care and would like to take care of him. Unfortunately, the circumstances related to your brother's situation are unclear from your question; therefore, it is difficult to answer specifically. However, the following resources may be of assistance to you in determining next steps.

1. Disability Rights Florida was founded in 1977 as the statewide designated protection and advocacy system for individuals with disabilities in the State of Florida. Disability Rights Florida is a nonprofit organization that has authority and responsibility under eight federal grants. Their services are free and confidential. Toll free number: (800) 342-0823
2. Florida Legal Aid Services: Florida Legal Services, Inc. (FLS) is a nonprofit organization founded in 1973 to provide civil legal assistance to indigent persons who would not otherwise have the means to obtain a lawyer. You can contact the FLS in Tallahassee at (850) 385-7900 for a referral to your local office, or find it online at the following link:
<http://www.floridalegal.org/Directory/July2014Directory.pdf>

Department of Education

IDEA states that once a parent requests their child to be evaluated for a disability and signs consent, the school has 7 business days to do those evaluations. It also states that states can adopt a different timeline as long as it is shorter or within the window dictated by federal law. Why does Florida say they have 60 school days to do evaluations? This is not within the original timeline in IDEA. It extends the process one full month.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) allows states to create their own timeline for evaluations. Section 300.301(c)(1)(i)-(ii) of Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) states:

“Procedures for initial evaluation. The initial evaluation -- (1) (i) Must be conducted within 60 days of receiving parental consent for the evaluation; or (ii) If the State establishes a timeframe within which the evaluation must be conducted, within that timeframe; and (2) Must consist of procedures -- (i) To determine if the child is a child with a disability under Sec. 300.8; and (ii) To determine the educational needs of the child.”

At this time, State Board of Education Rule 6A-6.0331, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.) allows sixty (60) school days (cumulative) that the student is in attendance after the school district’s receipt of parental consent for the evaluation. For prekindergarten children, initial evaluations must be completed within sixty (60) school days after the school district’s receipt of parental consent for evaluation.

Where can a General Education teacher get trained (hands-on) to work with inclusion students?

There are numerous training opportunities for general education teachers to learn more about how to best educate students with disabilities in inclusive environments. Many training opportunities are online, so teachers can complete them at times most convenient for their schedules. For instance, the Teaching Students with Disabilities Module is a 20-hour module that provides educators with information about the foundations of exceptional student education (ESE) in Florida, the provision of services and appropriate instructional practices for students with disabilities. The module can be accessed at <http://www.pda-ese.org>.

Additional hands-on training opportunities are available through the district’s ESE staff. Teachers can access local resources by contacting their local ESE director (<http://data.fl DOE.org/ese/contacts/default.cfm?action=showList&ListID=18>). Both the Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System (also known as FDLRS) and the Florida Inclusion Network (also known as FIN) provide training to teachers. You may access the FDLRS website at <http://www.fdlrs.org/>. More information on FIN’s services may be found at their website: <http://www.floridainclusionnetwork.com>.

Is there a program where the parents, General Education teachers, and ESE teachers have a partnership to co-plan together?

Parents are encouraged to be active members of their student’s individual educational plan (IEP) team, but at this time we are unaware of any programs that involve parents in the curriculum-planning process. Many schools structure their master schedule to allow general education teachers to plan instruction with ESE teachers. This is best practice when these teachers are working together to support the needs of students with disabilities.

My son who has cerebral palsy has just completed high school through the Pass program. The school took his communication device away because it was their property. I was told by another parent that this is not supposed to happen. I called the school and now I have to sign a property pass so my son can have the device for one year while we try to apply for one from Medicaid. Could you please let me and other parents know what the procedure is in this case?

In accordance with section 1003.575, Florida Statutes (F.S.), upon parental or student request, the district may transfer assistive technology to the postsecondary setting. The transfer must follow the appropriate interagency agreement procedures, with the receiving agency documenting support of the equipment. Guidance for school districts and IEP teams for the inclusion of transition and transfer of assistive technology devices can be found at <http://info.fl DOE.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-6801/dps-2013-65.pdf>.

As long as we have Administrative Law Judges for Due Process hearings, can we have them required to learn and to enforce IDEA laws and regulations?

According to 34 CFR §300.511(c), a hearing officer must possess knowledge of, and the ability to understand the IDEA, federal and state regulations pertaining to IDEA and legal interpretation of IDEA by federal and state courts. Administrative law judges (ALJs) are provided professional development opportunities, which include IDEA updates. This training is provided by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE), outside experts, and both school and parent attorneys. In addition, ALJs participate in other training opportunities related to their responsibilities.

Why are “ALJs” not enforcing rights to transcripts of due process hearings?

In accordance with 34 CFR §300.512(a)(4) and Rule 6A-6.03311, F.A.C, any party to a due process hearing has the right to obtain written, or, at the option of the parents, electronic verbatim record of the hearing, at no cost to the parents. The FDOE is not aware of cases in which ALJs are not enforcing rights to transcripts of due process hearings. You may wish to contact the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEES) at 850-245-0475 if there are circumstances when a parent is not provided a record of their due process case. The Division of Administrative Hearings

(DOAH) provides copies of transcripts regarding IDEA due process cases to the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services.

Why is response to intervention being required for 1-3 years before formal testing under IDEA for children K-3rd grade?

Either a parent or a school district may request an evaluation to determine if a student is a student with disability. There is no specific requirement on the amount of time interventions must be implemented prior to requesting an IDEA evaluation. Guidance from the BEESS and from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs has clarified that response to intervention cannot be used to delay or deny an evaluation for eligibility under the IDEA. The district has an obligation to request consent to conduct an evaluation whenever the district suspects that the student may be a student with a disability who needs special education. Parents have a right to request an initial evaluation at any time. When a parent requests an evaluation, the district must either obtain consent or provide written notice of refusal within 20 school days (6A-6.0331(3)(c), F.A.C.).

Response to intervention is one component of a multi-tiered system of supports, which is a broad framework used to efficiently deliver educational resources and services along a continuum of intensity based on students' academic and behavioral needs. When effectively implemented, this tiered system ensures that all students receive the needed support. The use of student response to instruction and intervention data over time helps identify students "suspected" of being a student with a disability and needing special education services. A parent brochure explaining response to intervention and special education evaluations is available on the Florida Response to Intervention website at <http://www.florida-rti.org/>.

Why is the reading program for 3rd graders who fail the FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test) not a science-based reading program?

There are requirements for the reading materials of students identified with a reading deficiency and who have been retained in third grade. The materials used for instruction should be a different curriculum from the year before. This change may be in supplemental and intervention materials. The reading program must be research based and proven successful for teaching the five components of reading. The materials that are used to teach areas of deficits as determined by diagnostic measure must also be research based. For further information on the requirements, read question A-5 of the Third Grade Student Progression technical assistance paper at <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-6310/TAPThirdGradeProgress.pdf>.

Why do school principals have a right to do their own counseling of a student with an IEP and behavior plan and do unlimited suspension for the entire school year and not be required to refer to the IEP to review and change the behavior plan or add services of more counseling to the IEP?

Rule 6A-6.02028 (3)(c.)7., F.A.C., requires that IEP teams consider the student's strengths, preferences and interests, and it is important that all parties stay focused on what the student needs. The IEP team determines the services necessary to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to students with disabilities and who will provide these services. Any member of the IEP team 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.

In addition, Rule 6A-6.03312, F.A.C., Discipline Procedures for Students with Disabilities, addresses the positive behavioral interventions and supports that must be considered to address behavior that is impeding student learning. Requirements for manifestation determination meetings to be held any time a student's placement has changed because the removal is for more than 10 consecutive school days, or there is a pattern of removals that cumulate to more than 10 school days in a school year, are also described in this rule. Behavior must be considered in the development of IEPs.

As part of the IEP team meeting, discussion regarding all needs, including the possible need for further behavioral supports, conducting functional behavioral assessments (FBAs) and the development or revision of behavioral intervention plans (BIPs), may occur. Information related to FBAs and BIPs may be found at <http://www.fldoe.org/ease/pdf/tap99-3.pdf>

Working with local school districts to resolve disagreements and concerns is an effective way to address needs. A list of district ESE directors to contact to begin these conversations may be found on the BEESS website at the following link: <http://data.fldoe.org/ease/contacts/>. Information on procedural safeguards and due process can be found at <http://www.fldoe.org/ease/resolution.asp>.

Why does in-school suspension not count toward the 10 days suspension before the requirement of having to do a Manifestation Determination hearing?

Example: 10-40 days of in-school suspension is OK because they are not out of school suspension.

Rule 6A-6.03312, F.A.C., Discipline Procedures for Students with Disabilities, addresses the requirements regarding out-of-school suspensions. In-school suspension requires students with an IEP to be provided with the supports and services needed to continue receiving a free and appropriate education while in in-school suspension. As long as these services are provided, the time in in-school suspension would not count towards the 10 days of suspension.

Rule 6A-6.02028 (3)(c.)7., F.A.C., requires that IEP teams consider students' strengths, preferences and interests. All members of the IEP team help determine the annual goals, special education and related positive behavioral interventions and supports that must be considered to address behavior that is impeding student learning. Behavior must be considered in the development of IEPs.

Any member of the IEP team has the 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 further behavioral supports,

the completion of FBAs and/or the development or revision of BIPs, may occur. Information related to FBAs and BIPs may be found at <http://www.fl DOE.org/ese/pdf/tap99-3.pdf>.

If you feel a school is not providing FAPE, you are encouraged to work together with the school and district to resolve issues regarding a student's ESE needs. Many school districts have procedures in place to assist families in resolving disputes. Additionally, 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.fl DOE.org/ese/> and to utilize dispute resolution procedures, described in the following link: <https://www.fl DOE.org/ese/resolution.asp>.

Why is dyslexia a medical term in Florida and not allowed on an IEP?

The current classification for dyslexia in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) is a specific learning disorder. Dyslexia is an alternative term used to refer to a pattern of reading difficulties characterized by problems with word recognition, decoding and spelling. In the IDEA and Florida's State Board of Education Rules, dyslexia is an "associated condition" included under the "specific learning disability" category (Rule 6A-6.03018 (1), F.A.C). Florida's rule and definition for a specific learning disability can be accessed at <https://www.flrules.org/gateway/ruleNo.asp?id=6A-6.03018>.

An IEP is an educational plan; therefore, the terminology in the IEP is consistent with the language of IDEA in identifying difficulties in phonics and word decoding (i.e., dyslexia) as a specific learning disability in the area of basic reading skills. Dyslexia is synonymous with a specific learning disability in the area of basic reading skills. Therefore, if the IEP addresses basic reading skills, it does address dyslexia.

Why do schools in Florida not require to pay for a medical doctor to diagnose dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a subtype of reading disability that falls within the category of a specific learning disability in IDEA. Because a specific learning disability is an educational classification for special education services, a medical diagnosis of dyslexia is not required for eligibility, nor is a medical diagnosis sufficient to determine eligibility, under federal or state criteria. School districts must follow state-established procedures to identify and evaluate students who are suspected of having a specific learning disability and need special education and related services because of the disability. If the criteria for a specific learning disability in Rule 6A-6.03018 are met, including the need for special education, a student is eligible to receive an IEP. Because eligibility is not based on a medical diagnosis, public schools are not obligated to pay for a medical evaluation when considering a specific learning disability. Under the IDEA, the IEP team has the authority to determine eligibility consistent with state-established criteria. If the student has a medical diagnosis, State Board of Education Rules require that the team making the eligibility determination consider this information; however, the medical diagnosis alone is insufficient to determine eligibility.

Why do we have so many children identified as developmentally delayed at over 9-12 years old?

Developmentally delayed (or DD, as it is commonly called) is defined as a child age three to five who is developing more slowly than their peers in a developmental area, such as self-help skills, communication, cognitive abilities, social or emotional skills or physical and motor development. In order to qualify for programs and services for students with developmental delays, a student must meet all the requirements listed in Rule 6A-6.03027, F.A.C. When students reach the age of six, they can no longer receive services under the exceptionality of DD and will be reevaluated to determine if they are eligible in another disability area.

Why are there no workshops on Due Process hearings, mediations, or IDEA 20014 law, regulations and case law?

Beginning in the fall of each year, the Family Café Planning Committee begins preparations for the next conference. This includes a request for conference presentation proposals as well as planning for requested trainings and tracks. Each year, several advocacy groups present on an array of topics and typically include tracks on exceptional education and the law. We will be sure to bring this request to the committee for the 17th Annual Family Café conference planning. One resource at the Central Florida Parent Center website that may be of assistance is a webinar that can be found at <http://www.cflparents.org/webinars/DispRes022813e.htm>.

Why is the state doing away with the special diploma?

During the 2014 session, legislation passed in Florida that repealed the special diploma law effective July 1, 2015. Beginning with ninth grade students in the 2014-15 school year, all students, including those with disabilities, will work toward a standard diploma. There will, however, be more than one course of study leading to the standard diploma, including an option for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

Florida DOE sends out presenters to high schools across Florida. It is supposed to be for all seniors. The presentation covers only students with 3-4 GPA's, Hispanic, and illegal aliens to go to college. Why are we promoting college to students here illegally and not to average or disabled students? Several parents, including myself, with students with IEPs were sent to this meeting by our school to get info on scholarships only to find our population is excluded. The same person does 10+ high schools with the same slide show. Why are our kids less important?

The Florida Department of Education, Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA), administers a variety of state-funded grants and scholarships to assist Florida students with the cost of their postsecondary education. Although some of the scholarship programs have specific eligibility requirements, they are for all students who qualify.

Outreach representatives do provide presentations for high schools students and families related to all types of financial aid (grants, scholarships, loans). For information related to the academic advisement programs in your child's school, we recommend that you contact the high school counseling department. For information related to state financial aid information, you may wish to contact the Office of Student Financial Assistance at 1-888-827-2004 or osfa@fldoe.org.

How can a student move from self-contained into the mainstream classroom setting?

The IEP team makes placement decisions, such as whether a student will be served in an ESE classroom or a general education classroom. Placement decisions can only be made after the development of the IEP. Consistent with IDEA, a student's placement in the general education classroom is the first option for consideration. If parents would like their child to receive services in the general education classroom, it would be advisable to discuss this with IEP team to see if a change in placement would better support the student's needs.

How do I become an advocate for students with ADHD in the school system?

You may wish to contact your school district ESE department to see what volunteer opportunities are available. In addition, regional Parent Training and Information Centers (PTI) offer training and guidance and may be able to assist you in pursuing your goal of becoming an advocate. You can find a list of PTIs at the following link <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/find-your-center/>.

As a sibling and also a teacher in early learning, what steps can I take to help in the early developmental stages?

It is important to have an understanding of developmental milestones as well as an understanding of the types of developmentally appropriate activities that promote positive preschool outcomes. The publication *Welcome to the World: An Overview of Your Growing Child* provides an overview of typical child development from birth to five years of age. This online resource also suggests activities that are appropriate for adults to do with a child at each developmental level. Please go to the following link for the publication and additional information: <http://www.fldoe.org/ease/pdf/grow5wel.pdf>.

As caregivers of young children, it is also vital that we understand that each area of development (social/emotional, cognitive, communication, gross motor and adaptive) are interdependent and that by providing a nurturing environment in which a child's overall health and well-being are nurtured, we encourage children to develop certain characteristics that will help them succeed in school and grow into caring, productive adults.

For questions or concerns about a child's development, the following resources are available:

- The Florida Directory of Early Childhood Services provides information regarding community services, early intervention and training. It also operates a national toll-free number (1-800-654-4440), maintains a statewide database, and provides advocacy, public awareness and education. For more information, please visit <http://www.centraldirectory.org/>.
- The Florida Department of Health, Children's Medical Services, Early Steps provides screenings, evaluations and early intervention services to children with disabilities birth through two years. For a list of local Early Steps contacts, please visit <http://www.floridahealth.gov/AlternateSites/CMS-Kids/home/contact/earlysteps.pdf>.
- Last, the Florida Diagnostic Learning and Resource System, Child Find in coordination with the school districts, locates children who are potentially eligible for services under the IDEA and links them with needed services. For more information please visit <http://www.fdlrs.org/child-find.html>.

How do we go about setting up Sibshops within the school system a bit closer to our area? Most that have taken place are far away from us.

The Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource Systems (FDLRS), an FDOE discretionary project, offers various trainings to teachers and parents throughout the school year. Trainings are specific to each district and based on the indicated need. Please contact the FDLRS Center within your school district for more information. Information for FDLRS contacts and centers can be found at <http://www.fdlrs.org>.

Does having a child on Disability qualify them for an IEP?

Having a medical diagnosis or receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) does not automatically qualify a child for special education, though in some cases a medical diagnosis is required to determine eligibility. To be eligible for special education, a child must meet the eligibility criteria for one or more of the areas of disability referenced in the State Board of Education Rules. Additional resources are provided below.

- Developing Quality Individual Educational Plans: A Guide for Personnel and Families <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/QualityIEPs.pdf>
- A Parent's Introduction to Exceptional Student Education <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/ESEParent.pdf>

This year students with paper geometry EOC's had a different testing date than the rest of the students. They did not have the benefit of study guides before the test. They got them after the test. Students were then pressured by teachers and students to tell them what's on the test so they can pass. I asked my daughter's school and was told I can get the 2015 test due dates in September and decide if it's worth the paper test accommodation to lose the study guide prep time. Why should we have to choose? That seems like a strong arm tactic to force kids with disabilities off paper tests. Why is Florida doing this? It seems illegal and immoral.

School districts are given a range of dates for each assessment. Each school district is assigned a paper-based test pickup date based on district size. It is the school district's responsibility to plan for those students needing the paper-based accommodation by organizing and informing classroom teachers of these dates so the classroom instruction will be available to all students. This coming year's assessment schedule is available at <http://info.fl DOE.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-7047/dps-2014-81a.pdf>.

My son will be 21 on July 8, 2014 and I would like to know how I can get him enrolled into The Dan Marino College or school? He has autism, but he is high-functioning, but needs supports in daily living in the real world.

The Dan Marino Campus in Fort Lauderdale, provides a collegiate experience for young adults, ages 18 to 28, with autism and other developmental disabilities. More information on the campus and how to apply for enrollment can be found at <http://marinocampus.org/> or by calling 854-530-5511.

Important concerns: state testing for profound mentally handicapped students (low/nd): I have been teaching this population for fifteen years. I've been involved with the testing procedures for severe students. But testing these students with computerized or paper/pen is crazy. Florida Alternative Assessment will be changed to computerized and cognitively they are not able to do this. My students are on participatory level of Access Points. The word participated means "assistance," not independent. Please help me with this issue. It's not fair to students and educators.

Federal regulations require that all students with disabilities participate in the statewide assessment program. As Florida transitions to computer-based assessments in the coming years, students with disabilities will still have the option of using a paper/pen assessment if they need it.

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability. School staff refuse to put dyslexia on the IEP. They say it is a medical term so it can't be diagnosed by school staff and put on the IEP. If a parent wants it on an IEP then the parent must pay a doctor to diagnose their child and then they still refuse to put it on the IEP because then they may have to provide an Orton Reading approach and they refuse to do that. How do we stop this practice that is a state-wide practice?

Dyslexia is an alternative term for a specific learning disability that is characterized by difficulties with accurate word recognition and decoding. When a parent requests an evaluation for dyslexia, the school should clarify that dyslexia is a type of learning disability. However, since this is an educational classification (i.e., diagnosis), the evaluations and the IEP will include specific learning disability, which is the educational term for dyslexia.

The IEP documents the services required to provide FAPE. The instructional and intervention supports identified on the IEP are based on student need and not the disability classification. The district has an obligation to provide FAPE but is not limited to a single approach in doing so. Adding “dyslexia” to the IEP does not guarantee a specific instructional modality nor change the appropriate instruction interventions or supports. If parents have relevant information from a doctor, it should be shared with the IEP team to be considered in the development of the IEP.

Change the Due Process hearing system to a two tier system like New York. Hearing officers not Administrative Law Judges. Regional associate to review Due Process hearing decisions.

We appreciate your concerns for our Florida due process hearing system. State responsibility for the structure of its due process hearing system is referenced in 34 CFR §300.511. Also, s. 1003.57(1)(c), F.S, establishes that due process hearings will be conducted by the Division of Administrative Hearings. The decision of the ALJ is final “except that any party aggrieved by the finding and decision rendered by the administrative law judge has the right to bring a civil action in the state circuit court.” Changes to the current due process system in Florida would require legislative action.

Some universities and colleges do not consider a standard diploma with waivers for FCAT or courses to be a “real diploma.” Access to eligibility for financial aid has been denied. Why?

A standard high school diploma is required for enrollment into associate degree programs offered in the Florida College System. Special diplomas allow one to participate in career and technical education courses and programs, but do not qualify a student for financial aid.

Under Senate Bill 850 that passed during the 2014 legislative session, special diplomas were repealed and no longer exist for incoming ninth grade students starting in 2014. Under this bill and related new Florida Statutes, the FDOE is currently developing administrative rules related to what constitutes a standard high school diploma for students with significant cognitive disabilities who are enrolled in access courses and assessed on the Florida Alternate Assessment.

If all Florida students will receive standard diplomas, where will allocations come from to support quality and authentic workforce preparation to include industry-level certifications?

Although all students with disabilities will work toward a standard diploma, there will be a specific course of study to a standard diploma open only to certain students with disabilities. These will include opportunities to gain life and employment skills, including industry certifications. One option will require that students gain paid work experience before they graduate.

How do the standard diploma changes impact teacher VAM (value-added model) scores?

The VAM scores are based on student progress on standardized assessments. The addition of an alternative course of study to a standard high school diploma should have no effect on standardized assessments.

How do the standard diploma changes impact school grades and the ability to stay in school until age 22?

Students with disabilities who enter ninth grade in the 2014-15 school year and thereafter will all work toward a standard diploma. Students with disabilities who complete all of their required coursework and graduate in four years may impact the grade of their school in a positive way.

According to 34 CFR §300.102(a)(3)(i), graduating with a standard high school diploma releases the school district from the obligation to provide any further instruction or other services to a student.

However, a student with a disability who meets the standard high school diploma requirements may defer receiving their diploma and continue to receive services if their IEP prescribes special education, transition planning, transition services and related services through 21 years of age. They may continue to receive the specified instruction and services until their 22nd birthday, or, at the discretion of the school district, until the end of the school semester or year in which the student turns 22, if they enroll in one or more of the following programs after the deferral:

- Accelerated college credit instruction;
- A collegiate high school program;
- Industry certification courses that lead to college credit. College credit does not need to be obtained;
- Courses necessary to satisfy the Scholar designation;
- A structured work-study or internship program;
- A pre-apprenticeship program.

We were disappointed with the Department of Education Commissioner. She did not speak about any number of children with disabilities. She spoke only about African American and Hispanic strides in education. The last time I checked, being African American or Hispanic is not a disability. My county is cutting programs for my child and I am here to find out information on what we need to do in providing an education for my child and the many other students and children with disabilities.

The commissioner spoke about the academic progress being made by all Florida students, including students with disabilities. In her comments, the commissioner highlighted Florida's national leadership in reducing the achievement gap for African-Americans and Hispanics and also acknowledged the significant achievement gains being made by Florida's students with disabilities. The celebration of the achievement of Florida's minority

students in no way implies a lack of interest or diminishes the FDOE's focus on outcomes for student with disabilities, many of whom are African-American and Hispanic.

Florida closely tracks the progress of students with disabilities and annually reports the results on the State Educational Agency (SEA) and Local Educational Agency (LEA) profiles at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/datapage.asp>. Each year, higher percentages of students with disabilities are demonstrating proficiency and graduating from high school with increasing rigor and expectations. The department's sponsorship and participation in The Family Café is one example of the importance the FDOE places on providing parents of students with disabilities access to resources and information to help improve both educational and life outcomes for their children.

Students with special needs, once they finish college, don't get assistance at any college/university when they need to take their tests in order to be enrolled to any class.

Each public college and university has a Services for Students with Disabilities coordinator who can assist with testing accommodations for students with disabilities. Please contact the Office of Admissions at the college or university and ask to speak to the coordinator.

In addition, students taking college entrance exams, such as the SAT, SAT Subject Tests, PSAT/NMSQT or AP exams, who may need accommodations, must first complete a request for accommodations. This request, once completed, must be approved by the College Board Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office. You can find more information on the approval process at the College Board's web site at <https://www.collegeboard.org/students-with-disabilities/request-accommodations/approval-overview>.

How can the school district of Florida get involved with our kids transitioning to college/university?

Students with disabilities in elementary and secondary school are covered by the IDEA. Assistance with transition is part of IDEA. At or before a student with a disability turns 14, their IEP team is required to start discussing transition and transition programs and services, appropriate transition assessments and goals, and possible referral to outside agencies, such as the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and/or the Agency for Persons with Disabilities. College students are covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which has eligibility requirements and services that differ from those under IDEA.

Students should contact the appropriate office at the college they plan to attend to discuss their needs and the college's requirements. A complete list of these offices at colleges can be found at <http://data.fldoe.org/workforce/contacts/default.cfm?action=showList&ListID=40>. Links to similar offices at the state universities can be found at <http://www.flbog.edu/forstudents/ati/disabilities.php>.

Can you tell the families what test the ESE students will take in 2014-2015 (alternate test)?

In the spring 2015, students who are assessed on alternate achievement standards will continue to be administered the Florida Alternate Assessment.

I just heard that students with disabilities will be allowed to receive a regular diploma. My son is 23 with cerebral palsy and for years my biggest frustrations were dealing with the school system, the lack of support and information. He is very smart, but because he could not pass the FCAT for math, he was given a special diploma. Not all careers depend on an extensive knowledge of Algebra or Calculus and that limits him from going into a college program. Why can't we design programs in college for disabled children that have now graduated with a special diploma and want more for their lives? It is upsetting to know that a Statistics or Algebra class is keeping people like my son and me from continuing their education.

Many students with disabilities obtain a standard diploma without passing the FCAT. The law provides for a waiver of the FCAT results if an IEP team believes that the FCAT is not a good measure of the student's knowledge of the subject and if the student can demonstrate in another way, such as through class work and class tests, that they have mastered the course content.

Several public colleges and universities in Florida offer special programs for students with intellectual disabilities who have earned a special diploma. Information on these programs can be found at <http://www.fltpsid.info/>. Most colleges and school district technical centers also offer many programs that do not require a standard high school diploma for entrance. Contact your local college or technical center directly to discuss options for your son.

Why is it that when children get into high school, the teachers ignore a child's IEP? The IEP is in place for a reason.

In the event that you feel your child's IEP is not being implemented correctly, it is helpful to first discuss your concerns with the child's teacher. If these attempts are unsuccessful, it is then recommended that you contact the school support staff (guidance counselor, staffing specialist and administration). You could also contact the district ESE director. In addition you may contact the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEES) at the FDOE for assistance with your concerns (850-245-0475).

Parent of students with disabilities are entitled to certain rights and protections under the IDEA. These rights, or procedural safeguards, are intended to ensure that parents have the opportunity to be a partner in the educational decisions made regarding their child. Procedural Safeguards can be found at <http://www.fldoe.org/ease/pdf/procedural.pdf>.

I am on an RTI. I am sure that I will need assistance when I begin college because I was never identified as an ESE student. I will not be able to get assistance that I will need. How can this be changed?

Response to Intervention (RtI) provides assistance to students who are having academic or behavioral issues. It does not replace proper identification of students with disabilities, as required by the IDEA. Colleges provide accommodations for students with disabilities under the ADA. Each college has an office that assists students under ADA, and the eligibility requirements and services are different than those under IDEA. Please contact that office at the college you plan to attend to discuss your needs and their requirements. A complete list of these offices is available at <http://data.fldoe.org/workforce/contacts/default.cfm?action=showList&ListID=40>.

Transition is becoming a topic that is asked more and more. What do parents do to get more information? What are effective outlets for parents to contact regarding transition?

Project 10: Transition Education Network, which you can access at www.project10.info/, can provide information to schools and parents on all aspects of transition to schools. In addition to the information on their website, Project 10 published the booklet *Transition Planning for Families: A Guide for Families*. This publication is currently being revised and the new version will be available early in 2015.

We would like to hear about the transition of young adults from 8 years on. Are the school systems teaching life skills and employment skills?

Transition discussion with students and their IEP team should begin by age 14, if not before. While in high school, courses such as self-determination, transition planning, personal and home skills, community and social living, career preparation, technology education and career placement are available to help prepare students for life and work. Most districts also offer programs for students ages 18-22 who have graduated with a special diploma and need additional assistance and experience in life skills and employment preparation and assistance.

Project 10: Transition Education Network, available at <http://www.project10.info/>, can provide you with information on all aspects of transition. In addition to the information on their website, they publish the booklet, *Transition Planning for Families: A Guide for Families*. This publication is currently being revised and the new version will be available early in 2015.

I would like to know if they would ever have a college where the children that didn't get a regular diploma can go. All of our children with disabilities can't get a regular diploma but can read, etc. and would love to have had the opportunity to have some college life in their lifetime, if they only get a certificate in something they like to do and they can get a job they can keep.

Several public colleges and universities in Florida offer special programs for students with intellectual disabilities who have earned a special diploma. Information on these programs can be found at <http://www.fltpsid.info/>. Most state colleges and school district technical

centers also offer some certificate programs that do not require a standard diploma. Contact them directly to discuss options.

Healthcare is a priority of the health administration/governor; however, our schools give highly processed foods and foods with sugar. Most breakfast items are cinnamon buns, pancakes/syrup, and pop tarts. Our district serves pancakes/syrup for lunch.

School cafeterias throughout the state of Florida operate according to regulations set forth by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program. It is a requirement that students are offered fruits, vegetables, proteins, whole grains and milk for each school meal in the amounts specific to their grade level. School meals are nutritionally analyzed to provide kids with nutrients in the amounts necessary for healthy growth and development and typically include products that are kid-friendly but lower in calories, sodium and fat. If you are concerned with the quality of school meals served in your school district and would like to discuss it further, please contact the Florida Department of Agriculture, the Division of Food, Nutrition and Wellness at 850-617-7400.

How is funding for ESE established in each district? How do parents help impact this funding? Why do we spend so much on new textbooks before new staff within ESE? I know they are different budgets, but how do we impact this? Is it state legislature, DOE, etc.?

IDEA funds are allocated to districts based on a federally mandated formula. State funding for public education, including services for students with disabilities, is established through the state legislative budget process. Services for ESE are funded primarily via the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) through the use of basic funding, an ESE Guaranteed Allocation and two weighted cost factors. You can advocate with your local legislators if there are changes that you feel should be made.

For further information regarding funding, visit <http://www.fldoe.org/fefp/pdf/fefpdist.pdf>.

When will our children be protected by procedural safeguards in public virtual education? When will our children be allowed to keep the virtual programs they are successful in without fear of the districts dropping them? When will our ESE children be evaluated and receive services and accommodations in their virtual school setting? School districts are under the belief that IEPs are only written and implemented in their brick and mortar classrooms—same with evaluations and behavior services, etc.

Public virtual education students are protected under the same IDEA procedural safeguards as students in the brick and mortar schools. Just as there are differences among various brick and mortar schools, there are differences in the various virtual programs that districts may select. Just as a student's IEP may be implemented in a

different brick and mortar school, a student's IEP may be implemented in a different virtual school.

Students in virtual education have the same rights to evaluation and reevaluation as students in the brick and mortar schools. Services and accommodations are determined by the IEP team. Sometimes a student's needs could indicate that virtual education is not appropriate, and a different type of service delivery is needed.

All students enrolled in full-time district virtual programs are required to take state assessments. In the event the virtual school does not have a physical location for them to take the assessments, it is the responsibility of the school district to provide a location. The district may choose to have them report to the school in their attendance zone, to another school in the district or to another location established by the district.

For additional information regarding Florida Public Virtual School guideline, please refer to <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/virtual-schools/pdf/DistrictVIP-FAQ.pdf>.

Did the Florida Alternative Assessment change this year? My son's score dropped four levels in reading and three levels in math.

No, the assessment has not changed; however, please note that as the student progresses from grade to grade, the grade level standards change. That being said, however, a drop of three or four levels is quite drastic and we would suggest that a conference with the teacher be scheduled to investigate further.

How will the new legislation affect testing for my son? He takes the Florida Alternative Assessment.

Some very exciting legislation was passed in the area of education this year. However, no specific action on the Florida Alternate Assessment resulted.

Please feel free to contact the bureau for more specific information regarding the Florida Alternative Assessment. Program specialists are available by phone between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday, at 850-245-0475.

How is the matrix figured on the McKay Scholarship?

The Matrix of Services is the document districts use to determine the district cost factor for McKay Scholarship students as well as for students receiving a high level of supports as related to their disability. The Matrix of Services is completed using information found in the student's IEP by an individual or group of individuals familiar with the student. It should reflect the special services to be provided to the student as documented by the IEP team.

In the matrix, five domains are used to group the types of services, and five levels are used to describe the nature and intensity of services within each domain. The total number of points, determined by adding together the scores for each domain and applicable special considerations points, results in a rating of Support Level 1 (251), Support Level 2 (252), Support Level 3 (253), Support Level 4 (254) or Support Level 5

(255). The matrix level determined by the district is then used in determining the scholarship amount for each participating student.

This is for DOE and Senator Galvano: Sometimes I feel like our teachers are just babysitters and all my son learns is other loud noises the other kids make. Some years he learns so much, unfortunately the bad too often outweigh the good years. He doesn't tell me but I know by what he says when he comes home. Why aren't some teachers especially ESE ones better trained and prepared?

All teachers are required to be certified for the course taught and highly qualified in their content area. Rule 6A-4.0051, F.A.C. was amended in 2013 to require that ALL teachers have one semester hour of college credit or 20 in-service points in teaching students with disabilities when renewing their certificate. In-service points must be awarded by a school district or other entity with an approved Florida Master In-service Plan (MIP).

The FDOE strives to be sure that every Florida teacher is prepared, developed, supported and supervised by educators who make teaching better. Oversight of these activities is provided through the FDOE Division of Educator Quality, which provides resources to school districts, universities and individuals to help ensure that the state's educational workforce is of the highest quality possible. Many resources regarding teacher quality are provided at <http://www.fldoe.org/Schools/k12links.asp#quality>.

Additionally, BEESS has a discretionary project, the Exceptional Student Education Tuition Support Project, which provides financial support to paraprofessionals enrolled in special education pre-service training programs; to ESE teachers earning an endorsement in autism, prekindergarten disabilities or severe/profound disabilities; and to speech-language teachers earning a master's degree in speech/language pathology. More information on the project is available at <http://www.florida-ese.org/tuitionsupport/>.

What steps do we need to take to get a dyslexia law in Florida like the one that Texas has for school aged children within DOE?

Florida Statutes and State Board of Education Rules currently include provisions that address the needs of students with reading difficulties such as dyslexia through the multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS), progress monitoring plans (PMP) and special education services for eligible students with dyslexia (i.e., specific learning disability). The MTSS and PMP use a similar process that states like Texas employ to meet the needs of students with dyslexia. However, Florida's MTSS and PMPs address all struggling readers and not just those identified as dyslexic.

Districts are mandated to implement an MTSS that addresses the academic (and behavioral) needs of students requiring additional support to be successful in the general education environment (Rule 6A-6.0331, F.A.C.). MTSS promotes early intervention in reading through universal screening, evidence-based interventions and ongoing progress monitoring. Starting in kindergarten, all students are screened to identify children exhibiting reading difficulties and ensure that these students are provided with evidence-based interventions matched to their need.

Section 1008.25(4), F.S., also mandates that a PMP is designed and implemented for students who fail to meet performance expectations as determined by the district. A

diagnostic assessment must be used to determine the nature of the student's reading difficulty, academic needs and strategies for appropriate intervention and instruction.

The definition of specific learning disabilities in the current Florida law includes dyslexia. Florida includes dyslexia in its definition of a specific learning disability in Rule 6A.6-03018, F.A.C., Exceptional Education Eligibility for Students with Specific Learning Disabilities, which can be accessed at <https://www.flrules.org/gateway/ruleNo.asp?id=6A-6.03018>. Students with dyslexia (i.e., deficits in basic reading skills including phonics and word decoding) who meet the eligibility criteria in the specific learning disabilities rule receive an IEP.

Individuals may contact their state senator or representative to communicate concerns with any current educational laws and suggest ideas for possible changes or additions to these laws.

I had struggles all year with the school regarding bus transportation. I tried all levels of school district, even had an advocate. I finally got so-so transportation in May. I don't feel like my son's needs were being met at all. I finally spoke with someone in Tallahassee before I even got that. I eventually contacted Senator Legg's office. They did nothing and said they don't mess with school policy.

Parents and school districts are encouraged to work together to resolve issues regarding a student's exceptional education. When parents are unable to resolve their concerns at the school level, we encourage them to contact the district's ESE office. There are instances when a parent feels that their concerns over their child's education are not being adequately addressed. When this occurs, the parent may contact BEESS to discuss these concerns. The bureau may be reached by phone at 850-245-0475.

What about the new legislation passed for APD under the DOE for providing educational services for the clients of APD? How is this going to work? Please explain the intent of the piece of legislation and why was it under APD not DOE?

Your question about new legislation regarding the provision of educational services by the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) appears to relate to the recently created Personal Learning Scholarship Account Program (PLSA). Eligibility for PLSA is based on APD eligibility categories rather than educational eligibility areas. Although this legislation started out with plans to have APD administer the program, the FDOE was finally given the responsibility for administration. PLSAs are administered by eligible nonprofit scholarship-funding organizations (SFO). Parents of eligible children submit applications to an SFO and, once approved, may use the accounts to purchase an array of services.

More information can be accessed at <http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/plsa/>.

Thank you for participating in this year's event. I get all my school issues solved when I attend. Thank you again this year Monica. You are very helpful as always. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me after your session.

BEES is pleased to be a part of the annual Family Café Conference. Families are a very important part of the education process. As stated in the bureau's mission, we are committed to the development of the unique gifts of each exceptional person, to ensure the achievement of each and every individual's extraordinary purpose by expanding opportunities through collaboration of families, professionals and communities who guarantee the highest expectations and individual success.

Department of Health

Dr. John Armstrong, Surgeon General and Secretary said that all people in Florida with a disability are entitled to a free pass to all state parks, which includes themselves and up to 8 people in their vehicle. Many of my child's friends have this state park pass card. When I took my child to Goldhead State park in Keystone Heights, FL, I was told by the park ranger that there is no such pass. He said there is only a pass for disabled vets. What are you doing to educate our state park rangers about this state law?

From April to July 2014, the Department of Health (FDOH) partnered with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and Get Outdoors Florida on a pilot project: Nature Play Prescription (NPP). The project provided a one-time, free entry into one of Florida's state parks for a child and his or her family or friends. The project is currently being evaluated by FDOH and FDEP for a possible extension. There is currently no free or discount program to state parks for children who have disabilities. There are two types of discounts for people who have disabilities as noted below:

- Free Lifetime Military Entrance Passes for honorably discharged United States veterans who have service-connected disabilities. The details of this are included in the existing response.
- A 50% discount on the base overnight camping fee for Florida citizens who are at least 65 years of age and Florida citizens who are 100% disabled. Recipients must provide proof of eligibility at the time of registration – i.e., provide proof of residency, proof of age and proof of disability—by showing several specified documents.

I am a client of CMS. My child has sensory disorders. Other than dance, what else is there that I could do to help him? You discussed better eating habits. His eating is different because he does not like certain textures of food, such as mashed potatoes, cheese, or certain meats. Healthy lifestyle and eating are problems. Help!

You will find valuable resources that will help children and adults to eat well, exercise regularly, and incorporate healthy habits into daily life at www.healthiestweightflorida.com. Also, ask your pediatrician about resources such as occupational therapy, dieticians or other therapeutic activities that will address your child's individual needs.

Loved the Early Steps Arts and Crafts session. Thank you for thinking of us!

We are glad you were able to participate.

I really enjoyed Dr. Armstrong's talk to us about our eating habits. Obesity is huge in Florida. Want to know more. You should have TV commercials about healthy eating lifestyles for all to view.

The Department regularly provides information on healthy habits and tips through our social media outlets. We encourage you to connect with us

- Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/FLDepartmentofHealth>
- Twitter <https://twitter.com/HealthyFla>, YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/user/fldoh>
- Pinterest <http://www.pinterest.com/HealthyFla/>
- Flickr <https://www.flickr.com/photos/healthyfla>.

We need to have more information in the hands of parents about near death drowning. My son is a survivor of a near death drowning and will be needing services his entire life now. We are grateful to still have him with us. However, he is not really with us. Sad.

It is good to know that your son survived the incident. We wish you and your family the best. We agree that information and education on this subject is essential. The Florida Department of Health, Injury Prevention Program has developed posters, brochures and WaterWatcher tags that are distributed as part of our child drowning prevention program, WaterProofFL. Please also visit our websites at <http://www.floridahealth.gov/prevention-safety-and-wellness/drowning-prevention/index.html> and <http://www.floridahealth.gov/alternatesites/waterprooffl/>.

I need another CMS caseworker. Can I get one? Ours is not nice.

We are sorry your care coordinator has not worked out for you. Please contact your local CMS Area Office and request to be transferred to another Care Coordinator. Go to http://www.floridahealth.gov/AlternateSites/CMS-Kids/home/contact/area_offices.html, click on your county and you will find contact information for the CMS Area Office that serves your area.

What trainings, if any, do you offer families who want to know more about genetic testing and compatibility? Is this something at Shands?

We suggest you talk with your health care provider and, if needed, request a referral to a genetic counselor for additional information. They can find a genetic counselor by visiting the National Society of Genetic Counselors website at: <http://www.nsgc.org/>.

How does one get into the Early Steps or CMS program? My doctor has never brought up the program to us. My daughter has Down syndrome.

The best resource available to help assist you with eligibility for our programs is your local CMS Area Office or Local Early Steps office. For CMS Area Office information, go to http://www.floridahealth.gov/AlternateSites/CMS-Kids/home/contact/area_offices.html, click on your county and you will find contact information for the CMS Area Office that serves your area.

To find contact information for Local Early Steps offices and counties served, go to <http://www.floridahealth.gov/AlternateSites/CMS-Kids/home/contact/earlysteps.pdf>.

Lori told me that you helped to support the pre-conference leadership training for families. Let me thank you! It was wonderful. I learned so very much and took so much from the training. Thank you again

We are happy you were able to participate.

They mentioned at one session about how the child was determined to have caught the flu. I always thought that anyone can get a flu shot from the county health departments. Is this not true? The mom said her son died from the flu. Anyone can get a simple vaccine. Such a tragedy. It could have been prevented and maybe it should be advertised that the public health folks can provide shots.

All children between birth and 18 years of age, eligible for the Vaccines For Children (VFC) program, can receive free immunizations, including flu vaccine, in our county health departments. Our county health departments also offer flu vaccine, for a fee, to adults.

What services are being provided by the CMS network?

CMS Network offers a variety of services for children with special health care needs. Please visit our website at www.cms-kids.com for details about these services and the many programs we offer as well. Select the Managed Medical Assistance tab on our website for a list of services provided by the CMS Network Specialty Plan effective August 1, 2014.

With the new managed care of Medicaid, will my services need to be changed? I am a satisfied parent of a child who gets seen by CMS and do not want to change. I know that there are not many of us who don't want to be in managed care (other than CMS). Please provide information on your website about these changes.

No, your services will not need to be changed. On August 1, 2014, the CMS Network Specialty Plan went live statewide, and as long as your child is currently enrolled in CMS, they will automatically transfer into the new plan and continue to receive services.

It is hurricane season and I always freak out! One, I have not been in any major storms and we just moved to the coast. How can I prepare my family better? Do you have some sort of public awareness campaign?

Don't panic – be prepared! There are several resources available to help you and your family prepare for emergencies. You can start by learning how to build your plan with the Florida Department of Health Prepare Yourself page at <http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/emergency-preparedness-and-response/prepare-yourself/index.html>. If you or a family member have medical needs which require assistance but don't have any place to evacuate to, you will also want to contact your local county emergency management office and ask to sign up for a Special Needs Shelter.

What is a Family Resource Specialist? I went to the Early Steps Playgroup Session today and loved it. I want to work with those ladies, they seem fun!

A Family Resource Specialist is a parent of a child who received early intervention services. They work with Local Early Steps and provide parent-to-parent support to families.

I did not see anyone at the exhibitor table. I went both days to try to talk about the services I need for my child. One day, the lady told me she wanted to go to lunch. Really?

Thank you for your comment. We will ensure the exhibitor table is staffed accordingly next year.

When my child turned three I was told that services would be given to another agency as she was no longer eligible for services within the program. However, no services were available for her. She now gets nothing. I do not have continual insurance for all the therapies she needs or used to get. They told me to wait until she starts school. That is in two years. We do not get APD services due to the wait list. So, in order to get my services, we need to qualify for CMS. We don't. But we might if we have to continually pay out of pocket for the insurance premiums. Who can help? Do you have a toll free line for me to talk with someone about what we need?

Please visit the following web site to learn about potential health benefit options and to complete an application for your child: <http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/>

This web site, which is administered by the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF), allows users to apply for health benefits and other types of assistance. If your child qualifies for Florida Medicaid, you will receive information directly from the DCF. If it appears that your child may qualify for the Florida KidCare children's health insurance program or benefits from the Federally-Facilitated Marketplace, your information will be transferred electronically to those programs for eligibility determination and follow-up.

I receive CMS services and have a wonderful nurse coordinator. She has been ours for the last 6 years. She always states how the service providers in our area are closing. Services needed are getting harder to find and the doctors are not taking CMS anymore. Why?

CMS is working to continue expanding the network of providers that are available throughout the state for our children and families that we serve. Many providers are still learning about the transition of Medicaid Managed Care and how it will impact their practices. CMS Network went live as a specialty plan option on August 1, so we anticipate that providers will begin taking CMS once again.

I am about to graduate from CMS. Why can't I stay with this program until I am 26 like the ACA has for other kids who do not have their own insurance yet?

Florida law only authorizes CMS to serve children and youth with special health care needs from birth to 21 years of age (s. 391.029 F.S.); however, we appreciate your interest in remaining with CMS.

CMS works in collaboration with Florida Health Transition Services (HATS) to ensure successful transition from pediatric to adult health care for all youth and young adults in Florida. Please work with your Care Coordinator and/or visit the Florida HATS website at <http://www.floridahats.org/> or call (813) 259-8604 for more information. Florida HATS has many resources available, including an insurance guide for young adults, a health services directory and additional informational guides to assist you in preparation for your health care transition.

What type of training does CMS or ES have for families to learn and create their own resources?

CMS Care Coordinators are an excellent resource to help families develop and coordinate their own resources, from patient-specific workbooks to community resources available in your area.

Reach out to your local CMS Area Office to see if they are currently offering educational opportunities and trainings during the day or after work hours for families. You will find contact information at http://www.floridahealth.gov/AlternateSites/CMS-Kids/home/contact/area_offices.html.

For the Early Steps program, contact a Family Resource Specialist at your local Early Steps office for current training availability. Contact information for the local Early Steps offices can be found at <http://www.floridahealth.gov/AlternateSites/CMS-Kids/home/contact/earlysteps.pdf>.

Years and years ago, the CMS supported the Parent Resource Organization or PRO to provide a family voice to the state office. A local input to provide a state impact of the voices of families. It was a great organization that provided a voice

for families. Then they were gone. Why? What happened and can you develop a voice like this again? Families need to be heard. We need to make an impact in the policy.

We recognize the importance of the family voice in Florida's Early Steps system and employ family members of children who received early intervention services both at the state and local Early Steps offices. For more information about your local Family Resource Specialist is, please visit http://www.floridahealth.gov/AlternateSites/CMS-Kids/families/early_steps/frs.html.

We never talk about the dangers of poor health or need for care for the family or men's health. There is also no one here to talk about smoking and the use of tobacco.

Thank you for your interest regarding tobacco use. Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death and disease in the United States and Florida. The Bureau of Tobacco Free Florida has important information regarding tobacco use and the resources to help you quit tobacco. Please visit www.tobaccofreeflorida.com.

If the Marijuana bill gets passed, how will the Department handle or promote the use of marijuana for health reasons? How will you regulate that it is only for medicinal purposes for those with severe seizures or autistic behaviors?

SB 1030 (Chapter Law 2014-157), the Compassionate Medical Cannabis Act of 2014, became law on June 17, 2014. It authorizes specified physicians to order low-THC cannabis for use by patients suffering from cancer or certain medical conditions that produce symptoms of seizures or severe and persistent muscle spasms. Absent one of these two conditions, autism behaviors would not be covered by the new law.

Division of Emergency Management

Where could I go to access direct information regarding possible hurricanes in my area?

For the most up to date information regarding current conditions, contact your local county emergency management office. You should monitor alerts on an All Hazards NOAA Weather Radio and heed all advisories. Visit FLGetAPlan.org for preparedness tips and information.

How can I access a listing of events that DEM will be participating in?

DEM participates in several events throughout the year. If you would like DEM to participate in your outreach event, you can contact our External Affairs team at dem-externalaffairs@em.myflorida.com. Follow us on social media at [@FLGetAPlan](https://twitter.com/FLGetAPlan), and [Facebook.com/FloridaDivisionofEmergencyManagement](https://www.facebook.com/FloridaDivisionofEmergencyManagement) for updates on outreach events, and visit FLGetAPlan.com and KidsGetAPlan.com for information and tips on how you can prepare. You can also contact your local county emergency management office to learn more about emergency management events in your area.

How closely does DEM work with FEMA?

The Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) works closely with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as well as local city and county emergency management offices and established voluntary organizations to help promote disaster preparedness in our communities and to coordinate response and recovery efforts in the event of an emergency.

In case of a weather emergency, what radio station would I need to listen to get update about the weather?

In the event of a weather emergency, tune in to your local news radio station for the latest updates. You should also monitor alerts from your All Hazards NOAA Weather Radio.

What do I do with my dog, Adrian, in case of an emergency? Particularly where could I find a list of pet friendly shelters?

It is important to develop a pet preparedness plan and disaster kit for Adrian before an emergency. Contact your local county emergency management office to learn more about pet-friendly shelters in your area. You should also consider staying in a pet friendly motel, or with friends or relatives who are willing to host Adrian. You can learn more about how to prepare your pet for an emergency by visiting: floridadisaster.org/petplan.htm

What are some basic items that should go into a disaster kit?

A disaster supply kit should include these items:

- Water – at least 1 gallon daily per person for 3-7 days
- Food – enough for at least 3-7 days, non-perishable food with consideration given to infants or those with strict diets,
- Flashlights with batteries
- Any medications you take regularly, enough for at least one week
- Important documents in a waterproof container, including copies of insurance cards, medical records, bank account numbers, credit card numbers, Social Security Cards, birth and marriage certificates, etc.
- Medically necessary items to include glasses, hearing aids and batteries

For more information about building a disaster supply kit and the Get A Plan, visit FLGetAPlan.com

I own my own business. What precaution should I take against an emergency concerning my business?

Before a disaster, it is important to ensure you have a plan for your business. Do you know how you would contact your employees, or what important papers you need? Use the Get A Plan, business tool at FLGetAPlan.com to plan what you would do in the event of a disaster.

If a storm does damage to my house and I am looking for someone to repair it, what type of certification should the repairman have?

Licensing is regulated by the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation. You can research the license status of an individual contractor or search for a specific type of licensed contractor in your area at <https://www.myfloridalicense.com/wl11.asp>.

It seems that sink holes are now an everyday experience in Florida. Makes you scared to park your car in a Wal-Mart parking lot.

Sinkholes are a fact of geography in Florida. The Division of Emergency Management has partnered with the Department of Environmental Protection and the Florida Geological Survey to study sinkholes in Florida, and potentially be able to better predict where and when a sinkhole will form. Know the early warning signs of sinkhole formation. If you see a sinkhole has formed, be sure to avoid the area and alert local authorities.

How many major storms do you think will “hit” our state this year?

Florida is the most hurricane-prone state in the nation. It is not a matter of “how many” storms may hit, but where and how severe, which is something forecasters cannot predict ahead of time. It only takes one storm to change the landscape of a community, and all Floridians should ensure they are prepared for that possibility, no matter how many storms are forecast.

Are all shelters prepared to serve those of us who are on ventilators? Or do we have to call and prearrange our care? If we need to call, who do we call, the Red Cross or 911/hospital?

Contact your local county emergency management office and complete an application for a special needs shelter to ensure any additional needs you have can be met during a disaster. Talk to your doctor, and be sure to have any extra equipment you may need on hand should you have to evacuate to a shelter.

Can I take my entire family and my dog to the shelter if needed?

Yes! A shelter should be a last resort, and if possible, plans should be made to stay with a family member or a friend outside of the impact area, or at a pet-friendly hotel.

If you are going to a shelter, make sure you determine which one fits your needs (pet-friendly if you need to bring your pet, a special needs shelter if you need additional assistance). You should also determine any assistance that you may need at a shelter or in an evacuation, and register with your local county emergency management office ahead of time to ensure your needs can be met.

Also, it is important to have a disaster supply kit for your home, and one you can take with you should you need to evacuate. Be sure to have basic necessities like food, water, and important documents, as well as any medications you take and additional supplies for medical devices, etc.

How do you locate the national weather service on the radio in a disaster?

The National Weather Service Broadcasts Alerts for your area via a NOAA All Hazards Weather Radio. You can find this radio at any local electronics store. Your local radio station is also a good source for important safety information for your community.

Is there a hot line that I can call for help following a disaster?

After a disaster, there are several sources you can use to get information and immediate help. Depending on the severity of the event, the State Emergency Response Team will activate the Florida Emergency Information Line. The Florida Emergency Information Line (FEIL) is a toll-free hotline activated at the time of an emergency to provide an additional resource for those in Florida to receive accurate and up-to-date information regarding an emergency or disaster situation impacting the State of Florida. The FEIL hotline is: 1-800-342-3557.

Several counties also support citizen information hotlines. Information about these hotlines can be found by contacting your local county emergency management office.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

When does VR visit the high schools to enroll the students?

VR coordinates with local school districts to assist students with disabilities and will typically begin visiting high schools in September. Through VR's School to Work Transition Program, eligible students with disabilities can receive seamless transition services from high school to an identified career path. VR provides Transition Brochures for the schools to share with students and families beginning at age 14.

For further information, visit us online at www.RehabWorks.org or call 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information.

How is VR going to help the people with disabilities get access to better education and better training for careers in high paying jobs while trying to educate the public on their ignorance about people with disabilities?

In addition to national campaigns that are underway, Florida is taking a broad approach to improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities by including all major state agencies and disability service organizations in planning for a relatively new initiative called Employment First. Florida's work will be focused on building capacity and sustainability, maximizing resources through systems coordination, and evaluating outcomes.

At the state level, an Employment Coalition with over 40 members has been meeting to work toward implementation of the Governor's Executive Order 13-284, which reaffirms the state's commitment to employment for Floridians with disabilities. This coalition includes representatives of the Department of Education's Divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation, Bureau of Exceptional Education Student Services, and Blind Services, as well as representatives of all major state agencies and disability service organizations. The coalition is also promoting recommendations from the 2012, 2013, and 2014 Governor's Commission for Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities Reports.

One of the recommendations in the 2013 report, which the Florida Legislature funded during the 2014 Legislative Session, was the creation of a Help Desk to assist employers to connect with people who have disabilities and are ready and able to get to work.

From the grassroots level, self-advocates tell us it is important to ensure that everyone's voice is heard – family, job developers, teachers, and self-advocates. Florida's Alliance for Full Participation, which is a grassroots level group working to improve employment outcomes, will ensure that everyone's voice is heard and is assisting with getting the message out in their communities about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. Moreover, the Employment First Grassroots Florida Group will reach broadly into the trenches of Florida via webinars. Our desired ultimate outcome is for Florida to have a better system that supports employment and self-sufficiency for all individuals with disabilities.

Additionally, VR provides guidance and counseling regarding career choices, needed training and education, and the return on the benefit of pursuing a high demand career that may have a higher salary. Individuals are provided information so they can make an informed choice about their career path. VR provides a variety of supports and services based on the individual and their needs and choices.

Where are the opportunities for full-time work after graduating from college? With the help of VR, I now have a BS degree in Information Technology, but every job I apply for requires 2-5 years' experience in that field. How do I get an opportunity to prove myself when I can't get my foot in the door? In addition, they are requiring experience in .NET and C# and I was never given the opportunity to take those courses at FSU. I just graduated last month. Why isn't FSU required to keep up and offer courses that will be required to get a job?

That is an excellent question and highlights an issue being faced by many graduates. Employers are requiring more experience of applicants than in years past. All students should be looking to round out their education with at least one semester participating in an internship or practicum (preferably paid). These experiences provide valuable employer references and often lead to a job offer. Certifications tend to be industry driven and are regularly updated. There are a multitude of certifications available, any number of which could be required by specific employers.

While a college or university may not provide certifications, many of the classes offered do prepare students to sit for certifications. I would encourage you to speak with your VR counselor about any additional training that is required to obtain an entry level position in the career you have selected on your Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). You should also consider part-time and temporary employment in your field of study as a way to increase your experience and provide an employer reference. Many full-time positions are offered to individuals who first worked on a part-time basis.

The Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) CareerSource Centers are also a good employment resource, as they have data and statistics on employment opportunities based upon education/experience.

Why are there little to no services for young disabled adults (i.e. job training) in the Gadsden County and Leon County area? Why does it seem that everything is down in South or Central Florida?

Larger counties (by population) do typically have more resources than medium or smaller sized counties. Larger counties are able to invest more in services as a result of having a larger tax base. VR is aware of the disparity and has taken steps to assure VR services are available statewide. The VR School to Work Transition Program has revised the Third Party Cooperative Arrangements so that all of Florida's school districts are provided the opportunity to participate. In addition, we are emphasizing the statewide use of On-the-Job Training work experiences through VR providers for youth with disabilities during the summer months.

I have a 27-year-old mentally challenged son who is looking for a job. Is VR an agency or a program that will help him get a job? He truly wants to work. Is there a program in place for higher learning for individuals who are slightly mentally challenged?

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

You may also wish to contact the Department of Economic Opportunity for job-related services they provide at www.employflorida.com.

We desire to know about employment for teenagers that are 15-16 years old, specifically with Publix Super Market.

There are various opportunities for youth to acquire work skills wherever you live. CareerSource covers every county in Florida, but the link for Broward County is www.careersourcebroward.com. You will see the Youth Services tab just below the CareerSource logo at the top of the page. Various services are available, including the Summer Youth Employment Program.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) may also be able to assist with an On-the-Job Training (OJT) experience over the summer months for youth with disabilities who are at least 16 years old. Please visit the VR website at www.rehabworks.org for information about the School to Work Transition Program.

Even if you are not in a summer work experience, it is important to be actively involved in your local community. Community connections or networking is the source of about half (50%) of all job offers. Some organizations that support the community include the Florida Disabled Outdoor Association at www.fdoa.org and the Boys and Girls Club of Broward at www.bgca.org. For information on camps for youth with disabilities, you may wish to conduct a "Google" search with the heading "camps for children with disabilities [insert county], FL." There are several really good programs. The links below will take you to a couple of them.

- http://www.sorefjcc.org/index.php?src=gendocs&ref=SpecialNeeds&category=About_Us
- http://www.ymcabroward.org/locations/childrens_advocacy_center/cac_after_school_programs

If you are only interested in Publix, critical job openings for Publix may be found on our Careers website and on our Careers Facebook page. If you're looking for an opportunity to work at a Publix store, here is advice pulled directly from the Publix website:

- Go to the Job Application Center kiosk in the Publix store where you most want to work. You will need 30-40 minutes to complete the application process. The JAC, as we call it, is usually at the front of the store. If you can't find it, any store associate can show you where it is.
- After applying, go to the Customer Service desk and ask to speak with a manager. Then briefly explain why you would make a great Publix associate. Ask what openings there are in the store, but please know that not every manager will know

about every opening in the store. If you want to, go speak to the manager in the department where you most want to work.

- Your application can be seen at other Publix stores in the area, so feel free to stop by some of those stores to talk with managers there about your interest in working for our company.
- You will only be called if a manager wants to interview you. We receive nearly 2 million applications per year for about 50,000 openings, so we unfortunately can't call everyone

The tip of the explosion of individuals with autism is coming of age, combined with every other disability the numbers are staggering. What incentives are being put in place to ensure that all individuals, differently abled or otherwise, are given employment and meaningful opportunities by VR?

VR only assists with services needed for employment. VR has been focused on using evidence-based programs and initiatives for building capacity and sustainability, maximizing resources through systems coordination, and evaluating outcomes to support individuals with disabilities. The Employment First state-level initiative is a collaborative effort to assure employment is provided as the first and preferred option for all individuals with disabilities.

VR has also been increasing provider capacity to deliver Discovery as a service for individuals who will require ongoing supports to obtain and maintain employment. Discovery is an alternative to traditional assessments, which don't typically provide helpful employment information for individuals with the most significant disabilities. Discovery focuses on where a person is at their best and uses that information as a basis for exploring employment that will be meaningful to the individual.

VR continues to build on its collaborative efforts with other agencies to support successful programs like Project SEARCH and our Third Party Cooperative Arrangements with the school districts and local business partners. VR also supports High School High Tech efforts to expose youth to a variety of careers that emphasize science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). VR will run the help desk for the new Disability Employment Portal housed at the Department of Economic Opportunity, which will serve to simplify the process for employers looking to hire individuals with disabilities. Please visit our website at www.rehabworks.org for additional information on how we are assisting individuals with disabilities achieve meaningful careers.

Please bring more sessions for young adult resources and organizations that will help with job skills training for young adults.

Thank you for your interest in job skills training for young adults. The Family Café works diligently with its national and state partners to bring sessions that are meaningful for families and youth. We will encourage our partners, like the Department of Economic Opportunity, Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Education, Agency for Persons with Disabilities, and the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council to collaboratively bring information on resources and organizations promoting Employment as the first and preferred option for youth to our very next Family Café.

How do I get a job working with race cars or monster trucks? I have autism, and I really like monster trucks!

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

You may also wish to contact the Department of Economic Opportunity for job-related services they provide at www.employflorida.com.

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

My son is receiving services from VR and just graduated from FSU with a BS degree in Information Technology. He was recently assigned a job coach but hasn't seen or figured out exactly what they are doing or supposed to be doing to help him get a job. He has just landed a part-time job at minimum wage, but his goal is for a full-time job in his degree field. What are you (the governor) doing specifically to ensure persons with disabilities are able to secure adequate full-time employment? By adequate I mean higher wages than minimum wage with a college degree.

The Governor's Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities was established on July 26, 2011, as a priority for Governor Rick Scott in recognition of the "abilities" of people with disabilities and the need to get them in the workforce. The commission's work and subsequent reports have led to support of several important employment focused initiatives. The Governor signed *Executive Order 13-284 Reaffirming Commitment to Employment for Floridians with Disabilities* on October 8, 2013.

The Order emphasizes a long term commitment to improve outcomes for individuals with disabilities in the State of Florida. Cooperation and collaboration of agencies providing services to individuals with disabilities was solidified through an Interagency Agreement signed by the Department of Economic Opportunity, Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Division of Blind Services, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, Department of Children and Families (Mental Health), Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Workforce Florida, Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, and the Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, which began July 1, 2014.

Both the Order and Interagency Agreement promote employment as the first and preferred option for individuals with disabilities, commonly referred to as Employment First. Other initiatives like the Department of Economic Opportunity's Disabilities Employment Portal are being deployed to provide employers and individuals a single point of contact for assistance in preparing for and obtaining employment in their preferred field. The Governor has also requested significant increases in several categories of education funding under the *It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget*, including additional funds for disability services, K-12 education, and for Florida's universities and colleges.

Your son's efforts to become employed in his field highlight an issue being faced by many graduates. Employers are requiring more experience of applicants than in years past. All students should be looking to round out their education with at least one semester participating in an internship or practicum (preferably paid). These experiences provide valuable employer references and often lead to a job offer. Certifications tend to be industry driven and are regularly updated. There are a multitude of certifications available, any number of which could be required by specific employers.

We would encourage your son to speak with his VR counselor about any additional training that is required to obtain an entry level position in the career he has selected on his Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). He should also consider part-time and temporary employment in his field of study as a way to increase his experience and provide an employer reference. Many full-time positions are offered to individuals who first worked on a part-time basis.

I am so happy to hear that VR got the funding they needed from the Legislature. This program is the best kept secret for those in need. We need to spread the good word of the good work you all at VR do! Thank you!

Thank you so much! We are always glad to hear that people are pleased with VR programs and services. Your support is greatly appreciated!

My caseworker is terrible. Thanks to the panel discussion at the event today, I learned that I can get another worker. I will fire my current worker and request another one. Hopefully they will be better.

We are sorry to hear that you need to change counselors. The relationship between you and your VR counselor is an important one. Please ask questions as you work with your counselor so that you understand every available option to you as you work towards your employment goals.

I never learned about VR in high school. It was never discussed at any IEP meetings. Not until I came to Family Café events did I hear about VR. My son has many needs and employment is our next big challenge. VR . . . look out here we come!

We are so glad you were able to learn about VR programs and services for your son. In order to assist students with disabilities, VR coordinates with local and state work groups to assist school staff, families and students in their efforts to obtain and share needed information. Through VR's School- to-Work Transition Program, eligible students with disabilities can receive seamless transition services from high school to an identified career path. VR provides Transition Brochures for the schools to share with students and families beginning at age 14.

For further information, visit us online at www.RehabWorks.org or call 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information.

How old do you have to be, between what ages to secure services from VR? I am a parent of a son with disabilities. We do have SSDI/SSI for our family, but are not getting served by APD. We are on the waitlist. How do we apply for VR?

Youth begin applying to VR at age 16 or older if participating in community-based work experiences while in high school. Other youth should apply two years before they plan to graduate or exit high school. Please visit us online at www.RehabWorks.org or call 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for information on how and where to apply for VR services.

I got to talk with the panel members after the VR session today. They were wonderful to talk with. I learned so much needed information and the resources were wonderful. The session was just too long. But I guess you needed to have two parts to learn so much.

Thank you so much! We are always glad to hear that people are pleased with VR programs and services. Your support is greatly appreciated!

Just because I am on a waitlist for APD services, does that mean I cannot apply for VR services?

No, definitely not! You should explore and use every available resource that will help you achieve independence and have a successful career. You may wish to contact your local VR office (info below) to find out if you are eligible for services.

You may be eligible for VR services if your goal is to become employed and:

- Your physical or mental disability interferes with your ability to become employed; and
- You need VR's help to find or keep a job

If you receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for your disability, you are presumed eligible for VR services if you plan to become employed.

VR is changing for the better! Love it!

Thank you so much! We are always glad to hear that people are pleased with VR programs and services. Your support is greatly appreciated!

How long can we receive VR services? Do you stay in the program forever? Once you leave and need services again, do you have to reapply?

After you have worked successfully at your job for at least 90 days, you and your VR counselor will discuss ending the counselor's active participation in your rehabilitation. Before doing that, however, it must be determined that you no longer need VR services. If

you need additional assistance to maintain your job, VR can provide post-employment services without the need to reapply.

If you are closed from the program and it is determined later that you need services, you may reapply. There is no limit to the number of times you may reapply.

All need to know about VR services, if they have a child in high school.

In order to assist students with disabilities, VR coordinates with local and state work groups to assist school staff, families and students in their efforts to obtain and share needed information. Through VR's School to Work Transition Program eligible students with disabilities can receive seamless transition services from high school to an identified career path. VR provides Transition Brochures for the schools to share with students and families beginning at age 14, and gets more involved with students who want VR services between age 16 and graduation.

For further information, visit us online at www.RehabWorks.org or call 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information.

My caseworker does not know about VR. Now I can inform her of the services provided by the program.

We are pleased that you were able to learn more about VR programs and services at the conference. If you or your caseworker would like to learn more, please visit the VR web site at rehabworks.org. We hope to see you next year!

May I suggest that you provide more sessions next year about the VR program?

Thank you for your suggestion. VR has regularly provided three (3) sessions which cover information on School to Work Transition, Supported Employment, and Ticket to Work programs. We are also developing a "Meet the VR Director" session for the next Family Café so you can learn more about VR's priorities, programs, and services. VR has and will continue to recommend that the sessions described above be offered at multiple times to assure family access. However, the final decision on the sessions offered is made by The Family Café Planning Committee.

If VR is a program under DOE, then why doesn't my IEP team know about them? Or why don't they allow them to come and participate in my child's IEP? It seems odd that one program does not know of the other. Maybe I will talk to the Commissioner about this one after her time on the stage.

Staff on the student's IEP team are aware of VR and other agencies that may provide transition services for youth. The IEP team makes a determination about when it is appropriate to invite agencies, with the parent or 18 year old student's permission. Schools should begin providing information about VR and other agencies by age 14 so that the parents and students can be part of the decision about when it would be

appropriate to invite an agency. The Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS) is developing resources and providing technical support for school districts so that this and other aspects of transition planning are achieved. You can find out more about BEESS supports and services at www.fldoe.org/ese or by calling 850-245-0475.

Thank you VR for the services you provide to my daughter in college. She needs the support/services that you provide. This is Florida's best program for youth who just need services to be totally independent or very independent for their adult years. You should have a youth component to your staff, a youth advisor . . . hire a youth.

That is an excellent suggestion. VR has 10 or more college students who receive counseling internships or practicums with our agency each year. Many of these students find the experience so rewarding that they seek employment with VR. VR regularly seeks advice from youth leadership organizations, and we benefit from the input of youth focus groups in developing VR products, like our transition brochures. During the last several years, we have made a concerted effort to have youth representation on the various state and local advisory councils and committees that serve youth. VR will continue to support the involvement of youth in agency efforts to engage and serve their peers.

Transition is becoming a topic that is asked more and more. What do parents do to get more information about VR and transition? What are effective outlets for parents to contact regarding the two?

Information about VR can be found on the websites of various organizations and agencies that provide assistance or support to youth and their families. The best place to go for information on VR is www.rehabworks.org, where you can review transition brochures, career planning and exploration resources, our Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), and other transition resources. Another site with transition information and resources is www.project10.info, where you will find various Florida Department of Education (DOE) publications and local resources which support youth with disabilities. In addition, DOE will be revising their website, www.fldoe.org, to make it easier to navigate and will be launching a family website in August 2014 that is designed to specifically support youth and families. Points of contact are listed on each website (e.g. the VR Office Directory) or by calling 1-800-451-4327 and asking to speak with the VR Transition Administrator.



The 16th Annual Family Café Report Card

Attendees at the 16th 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 2014, along with grades from the five previous years.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
I would give the Annual Family Café Location a...	A-	A-	A	A-	A-	A
I would rate the hotel's accessibility a...	A-	A	A-	B+	A-	A-
I would give the organization of the Annual Family Café a...	A-	A	A	B+	A	A
I would rate the choices for breakout sessions and their ability to meet the needs of different interests a...	A-	A	B+	B+	A-	A-
Overall, I would give The 16 th Annual Family Café a...	A-	A	B+	A-	A	A

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

- As a result of attending The 16th Annual Family Café, I am able/will be able to...
- In general, the most helpful to me was...
- I thought we could have had more of...
- I thought we could have had less of...
- I am interested in finding out more about...
- I would like to suggest for future Annual Family Café events...

Here is a sample of their responses:

As a result of attending the 14th Annual Family Café, I am able/will be able to. . .

- Bring info back to my colleagues and parents I assist in all areas
- Better advocate for my son with Autism
- Create a Special Needs Trust and implement a better IEP to meet my child's needs
- Explain better to the clients about the CDC+ program
- Network and get valuable information I will share in my county and community!
- Connect with the Department of Education with specific people and emails
- Be a better advocate for my child during the year and at his IEP meeting
- Better help my friend's children with special needs. I am also stronger and more empowered
- Breathe again
- Talk to my child's teacher and school personnel about what my child is learning
- Know who to contact when I need help
- Help my child at home with therapy
- Access more resources I didn't know about before
- Do better long-term planning for my adult child with disabilities
- I will be able to set up a third party special needs trust, and learn how to become a Guardian Advocate for my son
- Have a lot more knowledge to bring home for services/equipment/ideas to help raise my two children with disabilities
- I will be able to prepare for the job interview
- Understand family needs and challenges across all settings
- Get info on Medicaid
- Meet new families
- Learn about FDLRS
- Use more iPad apps for helping my son
- Better encourage my son to successful independence thanks to The Florida Youth Council
- Navigate the Social Security System more efficiently

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

- Just being in this environment. The world should be a Café. Helpful, nice, compassionate...
- Information on Vocational Rehab and ESE education
- The other parents (networking/connecting)
- Exhibit booth—learning about products and services I did not know about prior
- Information and contact with Mrs. Palmer from APD
- Delta air travel information
- The most helpful part was learning about the special needs trust
- Bilateral Stimulation presentation
- Trauma Care Information
- The mom chat and understanding why dads do/say what they do
- The breakout about CDC+
- Making friends
- The job interview questions
- The keynotes
- IEP class
- Financial seminar

- Updates on legislative actions
- Seeing people networking
- Learning how to cope with having a sibling that's disabled
- Financial Track
- Assistive technology and career options
- The Florida Youth Council
- iPad apps, learning about CDC+
- To reconnect and make new connections with people like us that know how we feel
- The expo in the exhibition hall, a lot of useful and fun information in there
- I really enjoyed Dan Marino and Tonier Cain. They were awesome
- Listening to the ESE State Director
- Florida Youth Council members, talking about Life After High School!
- Access to various agencies
- College transition
- Seminars on trusts, tax deductions
- Advocacy training
- I strategically picked sessions based on my family's needs so all the breakout sessions I chose were helpful to me

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

- Time with senators, legislative roundtable
- Family/sibling support
- Sessions for Spanish-speaking families
- More about autism
- Kid activities
- Information for billing on APD
- Sensory/ABA session
- Louder speakers in some classes, some people can't hear or understand all that's said
- Handouts of PowerPoints
- Dental screenings and referrals to dentists who will do the work on our kids
- A breakout session about ADHD and the symptoms
- Advice from attorneys that handle ADA cases, such as health surrogate, power of attorney, etc.
- Breakout sessions for kids
- Daycare/Respite so the parents could attend the sessions
- Room in the sessions . . . they were all so full
- Women's workshops
- Vendors with info for wheelchairs/adult strollers and recreational activities
- Dyslexia help, apps and techniques to overcome it
- Workshops on procedural safeguards, laws and regulations of IDEA 2004
- Have some focus on volunteerism and the impact on those with disabilities, both as recipients and participants
- Military families in attendance
- More places to change diapers for bigger children
- Care center for children. My son has ADHD and ODD and I would not be able to attend breakouts
- Governor Scott needs to speak longer and with more substance

- Spanish speakers and Spanish-language sessions
- Offer sessions twice . . . it was difficult to make sessions at each time slot because they overlapped
- Mini massages at a fair price
- Mental illness sessions
- Time with Governor, Senator, Commissioner of Education
- Networking opportunities, people talking about their life stories, and the success with their disability

I thought we could use less of. . .

- Walking distance
- Repeat sessions from year to year
- Loud music in halls
- Interruption of speakers
- Presenters reading their PowerPoints
- Some sessions of similar interest were at the same time; it would be nice to spread them out
- Expensive food – more choices to eat within the 30-45 minutes between sessions
- Hip hop music at dance, rated not for kids
- The sugar coating of reasons services are not provided and more solution-finding roundtable discussions
- Charging for parking. Many of us do not have extra money to feed our family, parking, gas, etc.

I am interested in finding more about. . .

- Living arrangements for people with disabilities living independently
- Guardianship and special needs trust
- Getting a job when I graduate
- Transition services
- iBudget, CDC+, Direction of APD, services
- Volunteers in mental healthcare in my county
- Resources for children after leaving school system at 22
- Companion/services animals—what they can be used for and help with
- The Dan Marino school or college for or about young adults with autism
- Breakout session about Family Café itself—origin and history
- ADHD and social interaction
- Living on my own
- The Med Waiver
- Life skills training for young adults transitioning
- How to be a part of the advisory board for IEP in my area
- Caring for disabled parents being cared for by adult child
- Enforcement of laws and regulations for IDEA 2004
- Fibromyalgia care and pain management
- Service/therapy dogs
- Being a sibling
- Financial info for those who don't qualify financially for Medicaid and SSI (funding for medical/AT devices)
- Military-related services

- Blind services for children
- My rights as a disabled person
- Sports for autism related issues
- Volunteering
- Limits of work for SSI
- Tech devices for people with needs
- Workplace discrimination/opportunities
- Senate Bill 850 explained in a parent-friendly way
- Wheelchair vans and funding for them
- Starting a business, entrepreneurship
- Tourette's
- Health care enrollment periods
- PTSD
- Having listening sessions where state and federal agencies can decide how to work together better
- Sign language
- Spanish resources

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

- More events to keep children occupied so parents can concentrate on obtaining pertinent information
- More places to rest in Exhibit Hall—long walk for some
- Microphones or louder speaking in classes so all can hear
- More lines to check in for those who pre-registered
- Too loud in hallway (groups singing) near exhibit hall
- Some games or activities that wheelchairs can participate in
- Wheelchair activities
- I would suggest lower cost for food or include some free food
- No parking fees
- More on Asperger's syndrome
- More visual signs and to know who could help with directing to the seminars or events
- Breakout sessions on guardianship
- Expo open at night
- Provide opportunities to get CEU's
- Extend time on Sunday (hotel)—or maybe extend Café time just to relax and meet others
- More breakout sessions on ADHD
- Respite care
- New location
- Companies willing to hire persons with disabilities
- More motivational speakers, especially for young adults, to give them hope for the future
- Child care with a fee so parents could concentrate on the sessions
- A dinner to celebrate together on Saturday with dancing
- Help for faith community—proper approaches and respect for persons with disabilities
- More lines to check in for those who pre-registered

- More focus on hearing impaired
- Maybe some of the best, most informative sessions could do another at a different time
- List classes alphabetically
- Service dog etiquette class for the public and any class about service dog rights for the disabled handlers
- More computers, laptops, tablets, apps
- Information on Dyslexia/SLD
- More groups to socialize to network with other families
- Class on parenting special needs child as a single parent
- Incorporate more social media (Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram) during the conference to make it more interactive
- Start speaker on Sunday at 10:00 and end conference by 12:00
- A hotel with microwaves in the rooms
- Town hall type meeting with Governor, Senators, Commissioner of DOE, etc.
- More hands-on activities (rock climbing wall was great!)
- Bungee jumping



**THEY
NEED
YOU!**

**I WANT
YOU!**

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