

The 17th Annual Family Café

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Questions & Answers from The 17th Annual Family Café

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Welcome to The Family Café Questions and Answers Book for 2015!

Navigating the service delivery system and finding resources has always been a challenge for persons with disabilities and their families. For over seventeen 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 17th Annual Family Café attracted 8,925 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 celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act featuring a screening of the film *Lives Worth Living*, a focus on employment with Walgreens' former Senior Vice President Randy Lewis, and a discussion of national disability issues with White House Office of Public Engagement Associate Director Maria Town. The 17th 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, led by Senator Bill Galvano. Senator Galvano offered insight into the 2015 Legislative Session and shared a legislative perspective on Florida's disability policy. Governor Scott recorded a message to share with all Family Café attendees. Representatives from various State Agencies were on hand to answer questions about their programs.

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 17th 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 18th Annual Family Café, June 10-12, 2016, at the Hyatt Regency Orlando. Online registration opens Monday, February 15th. 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

I just wanted to say that I learned a lot this weekend and I look forward to coming back next year and I wanted to thank everyone for everything they have done and all the hard work that went into planning this wonderful weekend.

You are very welcome! Nothing makes us happier than connecting people with disabilities and their family members with information, resources and networking opportunities. We will look forward to seeing you again in 2016!

More kids activities.

Thanks for your suggestion. Every year our Planning Committee makes an effort to include activities for kids in our agenda. This year we were able to host arts and crafts on Saturday afternoon, as well as interactive adaptive sports activities in the Exhibit Hall.

Please remember that The Annual Family Café is a family event, and children are welcomed throughout. That said, we will continue to strive to make The Annual Family Café fun and engaging for attendees of all ages.

Next year can you have more than one session on benefits and tax savings?

Thanks for your suggestion. The Annual Family Café includes an entire track of "Smart Money" sessions that address numerous aspects of financial planning, including benefits and tax savings. In choosing sessions for this track, the Planning Committee makes an effort to ensure that a wide variety of aspects of financial planning are addressed. They will take your request for more content on benefits and tax savings for 2016.

I would love to see the military sessions split up and not back-to-back. Great conference! See y'all next year!

Thanks for your suggestion. Each year The Annual Family Café includes a number of sessions grouped by subject area. By scheduling at least one session on each of the nine topic areas for which we host "tracks," we make it possible for attendees to concentrate on a particular area of knowledge that is most relevant to them.

The Annual Family Café includes tracks on Advocacy, Youth, Recreation, Employment, Mental Health, Military, Smart Money, Birth through Age Five, and Disaster Preparedness.

The 17th Annual Family Café included eight different Military track sessions across seven time slots. Of those, two were repeated. In making the schedule, it can be a challenge to accommodate the needs of presenters while making sure that each time slot includes session addressing a variety of topics.

I would like to know if The Family Café can get Tim Tebow from the Philadelphia Eagles to speak at our conference.

The Family Café Planning Committee works hard to identify interesting, engaging keynote speakers to appear at the event each year. Past speakers have included celebrity athletes with ties to our state, such as former Miami Dolphin great Dan Marino. Given his connection to Florida, it's possible that Tim Tebow might a good fit for our event. We will pass your suggestion along to the Planning Committee.

I would like to see if we could get a sensory room for kids to play in during the sessions.

Thanks for that suggestion. We understand that The Annual Family Café can create an overly stimulating atmosphere for individuals with high sensitivity. The Family Café Planning Committee will discuss your idea of designating a room for attendees with sensory issues. If one were to be made available, The Family Café would not be able to supply supervision or child care for those taking advantage of it.

We would like greater participation from all sides. The Family Café does a great job at getting the word out but more help is needed. Can we have more funding to get this to happen? Thanks to all.

The Family Café and its Planning Committee work hard throughout the year to attract participation and investment from a wide array of stakeholders. Bringing people and resources together is the cornerstone of what The Family Café does. If you have suggestions as to organizations that you feel should participate in the event, please let us know, and we will make an effort to reach out to them.

We also work throughout the year to find funding to bring as many families to The Annual Family Café as we can. We remain committed to connecting families with information and resources with as little financial impact to them as possible. That's

why there has never been a registration fee for individuals with disabilities and their family members to attend, and it's also why we secure as much funding as we can for our Financial Assistance program. If you have ideas about anyone that may be interested in supporting The Family Café financially, please connect them with our office.

Why is closing so much later than checkout?

The Annual Family Café has always come to a close on early Sunday afternoon, regardless of the location where it has been hosted. This schedule allows for a Sunday morning keynote, while affording attendees time to travel home on Sunday afternoon.

Every hotel has its own policies regarding checkout times. Many are willing to allow for a late checkout upon request. If you would like to leave your room after The Annual Family Café closes on Sunday afternoon, please contact the host hotel with your request directly.

It's so amazing to watch so many groups work together. You are a beautiful example of what inclusion means. I hope we can follow your model in my home state. Rock on Florida!

Thanks very much for your kind words! The Family Café has worked hard over its eighteen year history to bring together people of all disabilities with State Agencies, providers and partner organizations so attendees can learn from each other, identify resources and determine what best meet their needs. The Annual Family Café is the largest statewide event hosted by and for people with disabilities and their families in the nation. We would definitely support efforts in other states to create a similar sense of community and shared effort.

What does The Youth Council do to help Florida youth?

The Florida Youth Council is a group of youth and emerging leaders with disabilities that works to promote advocacy and engagement among their peers across Florida. This group exists to help its members develop leadership skills, while also encouraging them to connect with a wider audience of young people with disabilities, with the idea of growing a new generation of community leaders. The FYC engages in number of activities year-round. They publish their newsletter, *The Noodle*, on a monthly basis to share a youth perspective on life and disability. They participate in activities surrounding Disability History and Awareness Weeks each October, to help the state's students learn about the experiences and

contributions of people with disabilities. They also host their Annual Youth Summit each August, to bring together young people with disabilities from throughout Florida for information, training and networking. To learn more about the Florida Youth Council, visit their website at www.floridayouthcouncil.com.

Why don't you have more get-togethers for the siblings of those with special needs?

In recent years The Family Café has received multiple requests for additional sessions focusing on the experiences of siblings. The 17th Annual Family Café included three different sessions on sibling issues. As the Planning Committee seeks out presentations for next year's event, it will continue to search for presenters to address the audience of siblings of people with disabilities.

Who funds the complimentary rooms that are given to attendees?

The Family Café and its Planning Committee work throughout the year to gather funding to support the Financial Assistance program, which pays for accommodation for a select group of families chosen through a lottery process. The Family Café believes in the principle of making the resources it brings together available to families with minimal financial impact. That's why there is no registration fee for individuals with disabilities, and it's also the rationale behind the Financial Assistance program.

Funding for the Financial Assistance program is derived from a variety of sources. Event sponsors for The 17th Annual Family Café included AT&T, CareerSource Florida, Inc., Delta Airlines, Disability Rights Florida, the Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities, the Florida Department of Children and Families, the Florida Department of Education, the Florida Department of Education/Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Florida Division of Emergency Management, the Florida Department of Health/Children's Medical Services Network, the Florida Department of Health/Division of Emergency Preparedness and Community Support, the Florida Department of Health/Division of Community Health Promotions, the Family Care Council of Suncoast Region East, Magellan Health, Publix Super Markets Charities and The Health Insurance Store.

Why does The Family Café move hotels so often?

There are several reasons that the location of The Annual Family Café changes. It is typical for hotels to enter into contracts to host an event for two to three consecutive years. This allows for a level of familiarity with the event to develop

among hotel staff, while giving both parties a chance to eventually change things up. Once a multi-year contract with a hotel ends, it is unusual for a new one to be entered into. The Orlando area has many excellent locations capable of hosting The Annual Family Café, and the organization believes in giving its attendees the best experience possible. We are excited to have The 18th Annual Family Café planned for the newly-renovated Hyatt Regency Orlando, which will host the event through 2018.

I went to the youth session that talked about sensitivity toward people with disabilities. Very enlightening. I have worked with adults with disabilities for 15 years. Can they have a session for providers to have more compassion and sensitivity for the adults? Many do not want to meet the goal set up for them. Especially diabetics. How can we deal with this when I try so hard to have them meet goals but they want to eat junk and not exercise? This can be discouraging. I want to be successful in my work so they can have a better quality of life. I enjoy taking them out to explore the community. I would also like to see more sessions on supportive living for adults that have behavior issues. I love this conference and I appreciate all the info and support. So helpful.

Thanks for your positive feedback about The Annual Family Café. You have some excellent suggestions for sessions for the coming year, all of which will be shared with our Planning Committee. We agree that disability sensitivity is a topic deserving of attention, and will expand that issue beyond the Youth Track where it appeared this year. We are also interested in including more information on behavioral health and supported living. Hopefully you will be on hand to participate in those session in 2016!

I am wondering why we change the location of the conference so often. All of the locations have been nice.

Thank you so much for sponsoring me with the funds for the hotel. I've made it to every conference except one. You are getting better and better each year. I appreciate what Café members and volunteers do all year long to make this such a successful, helpful, supportive, and educational event for persons with disabilities and their families, providers, agencies, etc.

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It's great to hear that you have been able to attend The Annual Family Café multiple times. We try hard to make the event better from year to year, and to make sure it reflects the needs of Florida families. We're happy that our efforts have translated into a positive experience for you and your family. We hope to see you again in 2016!

This Summit was very informative. It allowed people and families with disabilities to obtain facts and needs for their family. How does The Family Café collaborate with organizations to make the Summit a success?

The Family Café is founded on the principles of Collaboration, Advocacy, Friendship and Empowerment. Those words form the acronym "CAFÉ" that gives the organization its name. The Family Café has always relied on the collaboration of multiple stakeholders to make The Annual Family Café a success. The organization was founded by families that saw a need for information, training and networking among families of people with disabilities that would allow them to learn about resources and how to access them. Fortunately, key partners in the State of Florida recognized the value of helping families to become better informed drivers of their own care, and were willing to invest in the idea. Over the years, The Annual Family Café has grown, steadily gaining momentum, and demonstrating the power of many diverse people and organizations working together to support people with disabilities and their families. As it has developed, additional agencies and organizations have become involved, and the event has developed into the remarkable collaborative effort that it is today!

Could there be a changing room at each end of the convention center or one in the middle for easier access?

Thanks for that suggestion. The Family Café always makes a changing room available to attendees at the event, and makes an effort to locate it in a convenient location. With The Annual Family Café moving to the Hyatt Regency Orlando in 2016, the layout of the space will be entirely new. We will make sure to place the changing room in a convenient location, and to inform attendees of its availability.

This was the best Family Café conference yet. You get better every year. I especially enjoyed the “alternative” healing/meditation track and the Youth Track. My son went to many youth sessions and was very inspired. I heard many wonderful comments about the Women’s Summit. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend this year because our son was still in school that day. If you do the Women’s Summit again next year, we will probably take him out early so I can attend. Thank you very much for all the hard work you do. Thank you even more for caring enough to do it for us year after year. Long live The Family Café!

Thanks very much! We’re glad you enjoyed The 17th Annual Family Café, and found so much of the content valuable. We hope to see you again next year!

Where is the epilepsy foundation here?

The Epilepsy Foundation of Florida did not participate in The 17th Annual Family Café. You can reach them online at <http://www.efof.org/>.

When is the next Family Café? This was our first year and we loved it!

Thank you! It’s great to welcome new families to The Family Café family! The 18th Annual Family Café will be held June 10-12, 2016 at the Hyatt Regency Orlando.

I just wanted to make a comment that this year’s Café was awesome. I enjoyed taking my son to the dance. Just to see him shake his head to the music was wonderful.

Thanks very much! We’re happy to hear that you enjoyed the event. It’s wonderful to know that Saturday evening’s entertainment was a highlight for you.

I want to come back next year. I had fun every day.

That’s great to hear! We hope you can join us again in 2016!

This year was awesome. I also thought the bags were a wonderful idea and so handy. I loved the sessions I went to. I learned a lot about different things. You guys are great. Just wish it would last a little longer.

I will take all the love and new information with me and will share the knowledge I gained with people in need to know.

Thanks for your positive feedback. It's our hope that everyone that attends is able to share what they learn with others in their communities when they return home, so it's great to hear that you plan on doing just that!

Will you have the same type of food setup on the conference floors? It was very convenient and enabled us to grab a quick meal between sessions.

As The Annual Family Café will be moving to the Hyatt Regency Orlando in 2016, so the layout of dining concessions will be somewhat different. That said, we are planning on making food available for purchase in a convenient location in the convention space.

We need respite/daycare for our special needs children and teens so parents can attend seminars undisturbed.

Thank you for that suggestion. The Family Café Planning Committee is currently examining the possibility of offering respite care at the event. Should we be able to find room in our budget to provide for the cost and identify a provider, we will make an announcement regarding respite and allow attendees an opportunity to request it well in advance of The 18th Annual Family Café.

Need to invite Real Foods Blends to next year's event. Realfoodsblends.com for tube fed children and adults.

Thank you for that suggestion. The Family Café is always looking for new vendors to appear in our Exhibit Hall, and we welcome recommendations from attendees.

Who pays for The Family Café Summit on Disabilities?

The Annual Family Café is funded through a combination of public and private resources. Organizations that helped fund The 17th Annual Family Café in 2015 included AT&T, CareerSource Florida, Inc., Delta Airlines, Disability Rights Florida, the Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities, the Florida Department of Children and Families, the Florida Department of Education, the Florida Department of Education/Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Florida Division of Emergency Management, the Florida Department of Health/Children's Medical Services

Network, the Florida Department of Health/Division of Emergency Preparedness and Community Support, the Florida Department of Health/Division of Community Health Promotions, the Family Care Council Suncoast Region East, Magellan Health, Publix Super Markets Charities, and The Health Insurance Store. Revenue generated through the sale of Exhibit Hall booth spaces and professional registrations also contribute to the cost of hosting the event.

Are there any study groups in Florida on the study of Alzheimer's in the adult Down syndrome population?

We are not aware of any group that is examining Alzheimer's in people with Down syndrome in Florida. We did find two articles that may help you in your research:

- "Researchers seek Alzheimer's clues in people with Down syndrome:"
<https://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers/features/researchers-seek-alzheimers-clues-people-down-syndrome>
- "Down syndrome and Alzheimer's Disease:"
<http://www.alz.org/dementia/down-syndrome-alzheimers-symptoms.asp>

More info and sessions on epilepsy please.

Thanks for that suggestion. We will make an effort to include more resources on epilepsy at The 18th Annual Family Café next year.

What is the outlook for provider rates increasing so we have better quality and less turnover?

Provider rates are set by the Florida Legislature. If you are concerned about this issue and how it impacts your family, we encourage you to contact your State Legislators to make your opinion known. You can reach your State Representative through <http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/> and your State Senator through <http://www.flsenate.gov/>.

What resources are available to single parents of teens with special needs?

The answer to this will depend on the area where you live, as different local areas have different services available. As your child is school-age, one place to start would be your school district's Exceptional Student Education (ESE) office. Another

resource is the Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System (FDLRS) office serving your area. FDLRS provides diagnostic, instructional, and technology support services to district exceptional education programs and families of students with disabilities. They can be found through <http://www.fdlrs.org/>.

What resources are available for non-profits in rural communities to help them create and fund services (transition, job training, and social skills)? Are there agencies that can help?

As The Family Café knows from experience, starting a non-profit organization is a challenge. It takes a lot of passion and perseverance. In terms of agencies that may be able to support you, we would suggest that you contact the Department of Economic Opportunity at <http://www.floridajobs.org/>. Their role is to support economic development across Florida, so they may have resources available to help new non-profits get off the ground. Another idea would be to contact local governments and chambers of commerce in the area you intend to serve. If you can successfully describe the value of your proposed organization, they may be willing to invest in it. Good luck!

Please include information on housing options and real world practices for renting and buying real estate and how to add accessible features and benefits to your home (small and big). I am a realtor and would gladly assist in a class with this info. Needed more on-site activities for children. Surprised there wasn't a showing of "Where Hope Grows."

Thanks for your suggestion. We agree that housing is an area where people require helpful information, and we will discuss the possibility of including a sessions on housing, real estate and home modifications to support independent living with our Planning Committee.

Thank you for your observation about the need for more activities for children. Every year our Planning Committee makes an effort to include activities for kids in our agenda. This year we were able to host arts and crafts on Saturday afternoon, as well as interactive adaptive sports activities in the Exhibit Hall.

Please remember that The Annual Family Café is a family event, and children are welcomed throughout. That said, we will continue to strive to make The Annual Family Café fun and engaging for attendees of all ages.

How can someone become an advocate in their local community?

Advocacy is an extremely important part of the disability story. Without advocates speaking out, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and many other major laws and policy changes would never have occurred, and people with disabilities would not be able to participate in an inclusive society that values their contributions. At its root, advocacy is really about sharing your story and making your voice heard. As with most things, the best way to get better at it is to do it a lot! Figure out what matters to you, and what changes you want to see in the world, and then share those thoughts with the people that have the power to do something about them. Speak with your mayor and city or county commissioners, your state legislators, your federal legislators and anyone else that is willing to listen. The more you speak, the stronger your voice will become, and the more impact your advocacy will have!

More adult CP info and APD services.

Thanks for your suggestions. We will share your desire for more information on cerebral palsy and APD services with our Planning Committee.

Please add as much information as possible on the new special needs trust that is coming into law, including information on how to set them up without a costly lawyer. I am finding I am able to do all the legal things myself with enough information. Thank you!

Thanks for your suggestion. The Family Café recognizes that financial planning is a pressing need for families of individuals with disabilities. That's why we include a Smart Money track comprised of sessions on financial planning and related issues in our agenda each year. Changes to laws governing special needs trusts are definitely of concern to Family Café attendees, and our Planning Committee will work to identify presenters qualified to discuss the issue to participate in The 18th Annual Family Café.

Does anyone know of a support group for children and families of ADHD and autism in Pinellas County?

We would suggest that you contact the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD) at USF. You can find them online at <http://card-usf.fmhi.usf.edu/resources/groups/pinellas.html>.

I was so happy to see Special Olympics here. They are such a big part of my life, so I was glad to see them represented here to share info to the state. Very happy to hear that they are working with APD.

We were also pleased to have Special Olympics on hand to share information about their programs. They do wonderful work, and we look forward to their participation in The 18th Annual Family Café in 2016.

Why does this state make it so difficult and expensive to have letters of guardianship when you have a child with disabilities? There's so much hardship and heartbreak that we can't afford the fees that all these lawyers want. It's all about money.

Guardianship can certainly be a complicated legal issue that requires significant resources to address. The Family Café has included multiple sessions on guardianship over the years, and we hope you were able to attend such sessions to get some of your questions answered. If not, we encourage you to reach out to the presenters from the guardianship sessions directly. You can find their contact information in the event program, which is online at <http://www.familycafe.net/images/stories/pdffiles/FamCafe2015WEB.pdf>.

Invite special needs support groups, such as: Parents Helping Parents Florida; Gigi's Playhouse – Gainesville; OaSN; Noah's Endeavor; and Special Touch Ministries – First Coast Chapter.

Thank you for those suggestions. We will contact the organizations you mentioned to see if they are interested in participating in The 18th Annual Family Café.

Is there anything in the works to change the law so that parents who have raised their children since birth do not have to make court appearances and pay big money to remain legal parents of their children after their 18th birthday? We receive services through APD.

The Family Café has included multiple sessions on guardianship over the years, and we hope you were able to attend such sessions to get some of your questions answered. If not, we encourage you to reach out to the presenters from the guardianship sessions directly. You can find their contact information in the event program, which is online at <http://www.familycafe.net/images/stories/pdffiles/FamCafe2015WEB.pdf>.

Laws governing guardianship and the processes that determine it are created by the Florida Legislature. If you are concerned about this issue and how it impacts your family, we encourage you to contact your State Legislators to make your opinion known. You can reach your State Representative through <http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/> and your State Senator through <http://www.flsenate.gov/>.

Please provide more food and microwaves.

Thanks for those suggestions. Some hotels provide microwaves in the room, while others do not. When our event is hosted at a property that does not provide in-room microwaves, we make a point of providing access to microwaves in a central location. In terms of food, we recognize that finding affordable dining options can be a challenge. Due to cost, The Family Café is unable to host any meals during the event. That said, we do work with the hotel to create a low-cost menu for our attendees. We're pleased to let you know that the Hyatt Regency, which will host The 18th Annual Family Café next year, will offer a 20% dining discount for our attendees.

How could I participate in Partners in Policymaking?

Partners in Policymaking is an advocacy and policy training program operated by the Florida Developmental Disability Council (FDDC). You can find information on the program on their website at <http://www.fddc.org/about/partners-in-policymaking>.

Bob Streater gave an outstanding workshop for veteran families. Have him do several workshops. He was very professional and inspirational. Thank you Mr. Streater.

Bob Streater is a long-time friend of The Family Café. We're happy to hear that you enjoyed his workshop. The Annual Family Café includes an entire track of sessions dedicated to military families, as we believe that addressing their needs is a central challenge in our state. Hopefully Bob will be able to host another session in our Military Track in 2016.

- (1) Must the convention hall be able to hang meat? It was so very cold! Going home with a head cold.**
- (2) This year's conference was spectacular. You guys have thought of everything.**

- (3) It might be helpful, economically, if we had a list of eateries near the hotel. Hotel food gets expensive. The Cafe24 had a bit of an inflexible menu.**
- (4) Does the Center(s) for Independent Living ever present at The Family Café? (High School High Tech; ABLE Trust) They do a great job in Gainesville. My son loves it!**

Thanks for those comments.

It can be hard to make the temperature in the meeting spaces comfortable for everyone. As the rooms tend to get warm once there are a large number of people in them, hotels will often make them cooler in advance of their being used. We will be in a new location next year, and we will do our best to make sure it's comfortable for everyone.

Thanks for your suggestion on dining options. We appreciate that finding affordable dining options can be a challenge. At next year's Annual Family Café, the Hyatt Regency will offer a 20% discount on dining for our attendees at several of their restaurants. We are also working with them to offer less expensive food for purchase in the event space. As the Hyatt is located on International Drive, there will be many dining options outside the hotel available.

Finally, yes, The Family Café does reach out to Centers for Independent Living to participate in The Annual Family Café. Different CIL's and the Able Trust have made presentations in past years, and we have had sessions on High School High Tech previously. Hopefully they will be able to participate again next year!

I have a son with septo-optic dysplasia syndrome, seizures, blind (both eyes) global developmental delay, autism spectrum and neurosensory integration disorder. What type of help is there for children with multiple disabilities? What type of classroom would be best for him? Who can help me review his IEP? Are there any grants for children like him?

It sounds like your there are a lot of issues going on with your son, and that can definitely be a challenge. Hopefully you were able to identify some resources at The Annual Family Café. We make an effort to include a lot of information on IEP's, as they are so important for families of children in the school system. There are also a number of organizations that serve individuals with specific disabilities. For example, The Family Café connects with CARD (Center for Autism and Related Disabilities) to support families of individuals with autism. When a family member has more than one disability, it can be more challenging to find the right resource, or combination of resources, to help. One excellent resources is the Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System (FDLRS) office serving your area. FDLRS

provides diagnostic, instructional, and technology support services to district exceptional education programs and families of students with disabilities. They can be found through <http://www.fdlrs.org/>. Unfortunately we don't know of any organizations that might provide financial support through grants. To begin that search, consider contacting the United Way in your community.

How can you give out info about The Family Café at schools in Palm Beach County?

The Family Café works with the Department of Education's Bureau for Exceptional Education and Student Services to inform families throughout the state of the information and resources available at The Family Café. As our organization lacks a significant budget for promotion and advertising, we rely on partners and past attendees to help spread the word about what we do in communities throughout Florida. We encourage you to let others in your area know about us. If you would like materials and resources to share with others, please contact our office so we can help you out.

Miss Monica from DOE. She was helpful to me these past two years of my son's needs in school. She is a great resource. Thank you!

That's great to hear! The Department of Education's Bureau for Exceptional Education and Student Services, which is led by Monica Verra-Tirado, works very hard to support students with disabilities in Florida. They have been a great partner for The Family Café, and we're happy that they have been a resource for your family as well.

Special high schools and colleges which specialize in kids with autism? We need them!

Thanks for that suggestion. You may be interested in learning more about the Marino Campus in Fort Lauderdale, which was established to provide higher education to young adults with autism and other developmental disabilities. You can find it online at <https://marinocampus.org/>.

Can we learn more about autism? I have friends with autism and they get services in their schools.

Thanks for your suggestion. The Family Café always includes a number of sessions related to autism, and will do so again in 2016.

Can you please provide more events on twice exceptional students? I am gifted and have other learning issues, and it's been a fight to get an IEP in my county.

We agree that being an individual that is "twice exceptional" can be complicated. Students that are both gifted learners and individuals with disabilities or learning difficulties face unique challenges. We will share your desire for information on this topic at next year's Annual Family Café with our Planning Committee.

The Agency for Health Care Administration

Will I be able to get funds for a wheelchair van so my mom can stop lifting me in her car to take me out in the community, shopping, movies, dances, church, etc.?

Florida Medicaid reimburses for adaptations to vehicles for wheelchair accessibility through the Individual Budgeting waiver (iBudget). To apply for the waiver, please contact the Agency for Persons with Disabilities.

I would like to know how I can get dental care for a person my age, 80, with MS under Medicaid/Medicare.

If you are enrolled in Florida Medicaid, Florida Medicaid reimburses for acute emergency dental procedures to alleviate pain or infection, dentures and denture-related procedures for recipients 21 years and older including:

- Comprehensive oral evaluation
- Denture-related procedures
- Full dentures and partial dentures
- Incision and drainage of an abscess
- Radiographs necessary to make a diagnosis
- Problem-focused oral evaluation

This service is part of the minimum covered services for all Managed Medical Assistance plans serving Medicaid enrollees. In addition, Managed Medical Assistance plans offer expanded dental benefits above the services outlined above. Use your computer and go to www.flmedicaidmanagedcare.com or call 1-877-711-3662 to talk to a choice counselor to check what service each plan in your area covers.

For questions relating to services covered by Medicare, please contact Medicare by calling 1-800-633-4227.

I would like to know how I can get a wheelchair van for my sister who is on a limited budget and needs transportation every day. Waiting for city transportation for 3 plus hours is ridiculous and makes for a long day for my sister who has Cerebral Palsy and Epilepsy. She is on Medicaid/Medicare. Can those program and services help?

With regard to transportation services, Florida Medicaid reimburses for medically necessary non-emergency transportation services for a Medicaid eligible recipient and a personal care attendant or escort, if required, who have no other means of transportation available to any Medicaid compensable service. If your sister is enrolled in fee-for-service Medicaid, she can contact MTM at 1-844-239-5974 to schedule transportation.

If your sister is enrolled in a Medicaid health plan, she can contact her health plan to schedule transportation services.

How can I get my son's gold Medicaid card? I am told that he has it—Medicaid—but still he has no card.

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.

How come my Medicaid will not pay for services that I need for my Autism services like ABA and others?

Florida Medicaid reimburses for a variety of services, including Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) for Medicaid recipients. ABA services are available for Medicaid recipients diagnosed with an Autism spectrum disorder who are under the age of 21 through state plan Medicaid.

To learn more about ABA services, please refer to the following link for Florida's Medicaid services for children under the age of 21: <http://ahca.myflorida.com/Medicaid/childhealthservices/chc-up/index.shtml> or call the recipient assistance helpline at 1-888-254-1055.

ABA services are also available to Medicaid recipients age 21 and older who are enrolled in the Individual Budgeting Waiver (iBudget).

To learn more about these services, please contact the Agency for Persons with Disabilities at 1-866-APD-CARES or visit their website at <http://apd.myflorida.com/>.

Why does Medicare pay for hearing aids for men but not for women?

Medicare is a federal program that is different than state Medicaid programs. For questions relating to services covered by Medicare, please contact Medicare by calling 1-800-633-4227.

Is there an easier process for older people with disabilities to navigate through the SSI/SSD and Medicare/Medicaid process?

The Florida Department of Elder Affairs offers a program called Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders (SHINE). SHINE is a free service offered by the Florida Department of Elder Affairs and your local Area Agency on Aging. Specially trained volunteers can assist you with your Medicare, Medicaid, and health insurance questions by providing one-on-one counseling and information. SHINE services are free, unbiased, and confidential. Please call 1-800-963-5337 for additional information about the SHINE program.

What can we do to change laws for income requirements to be able to keep Medicaid for a child under 18?

Eligibility criteria for Medicaid are established by federal and state laws and regulations. Federal Congress or the State Legislature would have to pass a bill authorizing changes in eligibility.

With regard to current Florida Medicaid eligibility, generally speaking, 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. In Florida, at age 21, recipients are 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.

If you have additional questions you may contact the Florida Medicaid Help Line at 1 (877) 254-1055.

How can I get a handicapped stroller so I can go on camping trips, trails, and go to the beach? I am on Medicaid and live in Florida. Why can't Medicaid pay for this? Wouldn't it be considered durable medical equipment?

Florida Medicaid pays for services that are medically necessary. Children under age 21 can receive services that are not on the list of Medicaid-covered services if

they meet certain conditions. If you are enrolled in a Medicaid health plan, please contact the plan for information on how to request a special services coverage determination. If you are on fee-for-service Medicaid, please have your medical equipment provider follow the instructions for Multi-Specialty Services Authorization Request at <http://www.ahca.myflorida.com/Medicaid/childhealthservices/chc-up/index.shtml>.

I would like to know of a good contact to investigate going from Medicaid to Social Security for our son.

Eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is determined by the Social Security Administration. If you have specific questions regarding SSI, 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.

I needed resources for Parkinson's. It would have been great if someone was here specifically for this disability. I have a 24-year-old son and need to secure health care options for him. I am on Medicare. He needs Medicaid and other benefits.

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, you can apply online through the following link <http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/> or please contact the Department of Children and Families (DCF) at 1-866-762-2237.

For questions relating to services covered by Medicare, please contact Medicare by calling 1-800-633-4227.

I would like to know more about Medicaid ABLE accounts please. Also I would like to know how we can know about service for autism in other states like New York or Illinois with Medicaid. Does it transfer from state-to-state?

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. You will have to contact each state that you are interested in to determine what services they cover.

With regard to ABLE accounts, Senate Bill 642, passed during the 2015 Legislative Session, created the Florida ABLE program to encourage and assist in the saving of

private funds in tax-exempt trust accounts to pay for qualified disability expenses of eligible beneficiaries. The Florida Prepaid College Board is currently developing the ABLÉ program. For more information, please contact the Florida Prepaid College Board at 1.800.552.GRAD.

How can we get waiver and Medicaid services to be transferrable from state-to-state, so if you have services in one state and need to move you would automatically have them in your new state?

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. Congress would need to change Medicaid laws to require all states to cover the same services.

I want answers to why healthcare covers electric wheelchairs but refuses to help with the cost of handicap vans or lifts so the people don't lose their independence. I am talking about Medicaid/Medicare.

Florida Medicaid reimburses for adaptations to vehicles for wheelchair accessibility through the Individual Budgeting waiver (iBudget). To apply for the waiver, please contact the Agency for Persons with Disabilities.

For questions relating to services covered by Medicare, please contact Medicare by calling 1-800-633-4227.

We used to hear a lot about KidCare in the schools and at the doctor's office. Is it still a program? Can kids still use their insurance through them?

Florida KidCare is still very much available and providing health care coverage to over 2.3 million children in Florida. Families can apply by submitting an application online at www.floridakidcare.org. Eligibility will be determined for each child based on the child's age, family income, and whether the child has special healthcare needs.

Florida KidCare is made up of the following four programs:

- Medicaid for children

If children do not qualify for Medicaid, then eligibility for the following programs will be determined:

- MediKids for children 1 through 4

- Healthy Kids for children ages 5 through 18
- Children’s Medical Services Managed Care Plan for children with special healthcare needs

Please call (888) 543-5437 if you have any questions.

Why does the state continue to fight and pursue legal means to end the Affordable Care Act? The Supreme Court has ruled. We must adhere to their ruling. The money we waste in conflict and litigation could be used to provide health care to the many who desperately need it. Why isn’t the Medicaid program supporting the ACA?

Many ACA provisions are optional for states, meaning that a state can choose whether to adopt them. Declining these options does not mean the state is legally challenging the ACA. 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.

How can I apply for Medicaid? I was denied years ago, but heard that you can apply more than one time. Is this true? Who knows this?

There is no limit to the number of times you can apply for Medicaid. You can apply at any time online at <http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/>. For questions about Medicaid eligibility, please contact the Department of Children and Families (DCF) at 1-866-762-2237.

How do you feel about the state turning away the opportunity for all of us to have health care and Medicaid? Would the cost be that great that the state would go bankrupt?

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.

I moved here from New York and have lost Medicaid and Medicare services. I thought that they both would transfer with me. Why not? Medicare is a federal program.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) is the agency responsible for determining Medicare eligibility. 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.

Medicaid is operated by states, and eligibility requirements vary from state to state. To apply for Medicaid in Florida, can apply online at <http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/>. For questions about Medicaid eligibility, please contact the Department of Children and Families (DCF) at 1-866-762-2237.

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities

I live in a small town where we don't have many services or service providers. What can I do to get more APD services here? Thank you.

APD has an online community resource directory that contains thousands of federal, state, and local resources. You can access the resource directory at <http://resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory/>. You may also want to contact your APD regional office or your support coordinator for additional information on local providers. Contact information can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/region/>. You can also use the online provider search tool at <http://www.fldresources.org/ProviderSearch.aspx> to find providers in your area.

What kind of help is available to me for the care of my adult daughter who is disabled?

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities serves individuals with developmental disabilities that include autism, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, Prader-Willi syndrome, and intellectual disabilities. If your daughter has one of the six developmental disabilities listed above, please contact the APD regional office for information on applying for services. You can also check our online community resource directory that contains thousands of federal, state, and local resources. You can access the resource directory at <http://resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory/>.

We need more family reality classes, to share how the system failed families or how it helped them. We need step-by-step help as to how to approach appeals hearings against the agencies when no attorneys are available. Governor Scott, how are families truly going to be given an equal chance in the appeals process when agencies have the upper hand with experienced and educated attorneys? We the people have been given very little to work with, especially when the non-profits' free appointed are being funded by the exact agencies refusing services or manipulating what is happening behind the scene. Please help.

For legal assistance, you may want to contact Disability Rights Florida at 1-800-342-0823.

Have there been any conferences or professionals that can help families with a member that has more than one type of disability, and how to help them in the educational system since it is so difficult to determine which syndrome affects the child more in the general developmental and social aspect?

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities is looking into solutions for individuals with dual diagnoses. We understand this is hard to navigate and are working with other agencies to find better ways to serve Floridians with disabilities.

We transport our 29-year-old son to the Primrose Center a few days a week for an adult day program. He is in the life-skills program. It is 40 miles each way. Are there any programs closer to us? He is incontinent and that precludes him from going to any others we have found. We are clients of APD.

You may want to talk to your son's Waiver Support Coordinator to determine which providers are closer to your home. You can also contact the APD regional office for a list of providers in your area. Contact information can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/region/>.

What I would love to see are more employment sessions and transportation sessions for those who receive APD services next year.

Thank you for your suggestion. Our goal is to provide the most relevant and helpful breakout sessions for our APD customers and their caregivers.

When can I obtain more information on getting assistance for services while on the waiting list?

You can contact the state support coordinator at your APD regional office at any time. Contact information can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/region/>.

My 39-year-old son with ASD wants to work. I have a lead on a job at Disney for him. He can be hired if he has a job coach. I work there. He so wants to work. We did the Vocational Rehabilitation thing. They said he could work if he had a job coach. They said there is not money for a job coach. They sent me to APD for it. They said no. I could do it, but then I would have to quit my job, losing my income. That is not an option. I am working 3 days a week, my son stays home alone. Being diabetic, he does

not test his glucose level himself. He eats too much when I am not home. He plays video games and watches TV 3 days in a row. It's not a good situation. APD closed his file when we moved in November 2014. HELP!

Contact your APD regional office to discuss assistance for your son so he may go to work. APD wants all individuals to have the opportunity to go to work. Contact information can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/region/>.

Will I qualify for services to help me with independent living when I turn 18, and what are they? I would like to live on my own but I may require assistance. I have spina bifida and get APD services now.

Please work with your Waiver Support Coordinator to discuss and arrange services you are interested in receiving. You may also contact the APD regional office for more information about your waiver services. Contact information can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/region/>.

I have a suggestion for Director Palmer and the State Legislators. The allocation from the federal government to our state depends on your decision to allocate an adequate amount of funds to our own state. This would make a huge difference in preventing crime connected with neglect, poverty, homelessness, and so many others. Education and prevention is the key to a thriving successful society.

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities is thankful to Governor Rick Scott and the Legislature for their continued support of the agency. Over the last three years, the agency has been allocated about \$96 million in additional funding to serve individuals with disabilities.

What new or old programs were determined this legislative session? What does APD have to look forward to? Any money from the state to get more folks off the waiting list? I am ready.

This year the agency received \$40 million in additional funding to move individuals from the waiting list to the waiver. This is the third year in a row that additional money has been provided, bringing the total to \$96 million to enroll people from the waiting list to the waiver.

How long is the wait list now? Is it going down or still growing? I am waiting for services. I hope that you have services left for our family. I was provided a service coordinator. We talked once. That is it.

The waiting list is divided into categories based on a prioritization tool. There is no standard length of time individuals wait. As more people learn about the Agency for Persons with Disabilities and as additional funding is provided, more people are applying for services. As individuals are enrolled in the waiver, there are many others coming onto the waiting list. Some services may be available to individuals on the waiting list. Please contact the state support coordinator at the APD regional office that serves your area. Contact information can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/region/>.

How long do you think that someone who is on the wait list will have to wait to actually get some help? I am waiting on you, APD.

The waiting list is divided into categories based on a prioritization tool. There is no standard length of time individuals wait. Some services may be available to individuals on the waiting list. Please contact the state support coordinator at the APD regional office that serves your area. Contact information can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/region/>.

I am confused. When I heard Denise Arnold speak today, she said that folks should be getting off the wait list because funding by the state was awarded. Then how long will someone have to wait to actually get off the wait list? How long do I have to wait?

The waiting list is divided into categories based on a prioritization tool. There is no standard length of time individuals wait. Please contact the state support coordinator at the APD regional office that serves your area. Contact information can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/region/>.

Does APD ever talk to the other agencies that serve us? My coordinator knows nothing of the mental health services or the employment services or the school system. She states that you never talk to one another. Amazing.

APD understands that our customers often have complex needs that require the cooperation of more than one agency. We are constantly striving to find better ways to work with other agencies. 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.

I get APD services. I need a new van. My coordinator suggested that I reach out to others for support. Do a fundraiser? What the heck lady. Why can't APD help me to get a van?

Your Waiver Support Coordinator should assist you in identifying community resources to help you with purchasing or modifying a van. Please contact your APD regional office with assistance in determining if Medicaid or waiver funds can be requested. The contact information for the regional offices can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/region/>.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is specifically funded for purposes of assisting people with disabilities so they can go to work. This assistance includes financial help with purchasing necessary accommodations such as the cost of modifying a vehicle, among other expenses. You can reach VR at 1-800-451-4327.

What ever happened to respite services? There used to be a coalition of respite services—a pool of providers to get this much needed service from. What happened?

The respite pool is a mechanism through which a portion of the approved respite services for people on the waiver is set aside until it is actually needed by the person for whom it is approved. It is not an open pool for which anyone may request services.

Options for respite vary statewide. Please contact your Waiver Support Coordinator to assist you with respite services that may be available. Additionally, there may be community resources around the state that offer respite services. You can access the community resource directory online at <http://resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory/>.

All the providers are leaving—the pool of approved providers for APD is drying up. Are you going to do a drive to find qualified providers? Ever thought of paying them more? Maybe then they would stay.

This year additional funding was allocated by Governor Rick Scott and the Legislature to increase Waiver Support Coordinator and Personal Supports provider rates. APD will continue to work to support providers and their efforts for increased rates.

I need dental services and dentists who are willing to take my son with APD as a provider. They will not see him at my office.

You can search for providers in your area with the online provider search at <http://www.flddresources.org/ProviderSearch.aspx>. You may also want to contact your Waiver Support Coordinator to assist you in arranging dental services, or the APD regional office that serves your area. Contact information for the regional offices can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/region/>.

Additionally, the Arc of Florida has a dental program and may be able to provide dental services to your son for free. You can contact them at 1-800-226-1155.

We need quality dental care!

APD is constantly working to improve existing services. Your feedback is very important to us. Suggestions or questions can be submitted to our agency email at APD.Info@apdcares.org.

Additionally, the Arc of Florida has a dental program and may be able to provide dental services to your son for free. You can contact them at 1-800-226-1155.

When I get married will I lose my services with APD?

Please contact your Waiver Support Coordinator or the APD regional office for guidance on maintaining your APD services. The contact information for the regional offices can be found online at <http://apdcares.org/region/>.

How is the iBudget working for the Agency? Is it all that you thought it would be? Well, we think it is bad. Not terrible, just needs some work. Are you still working on the formula?

iBudget has enabled the agency to stay within its allocated budget, which is required by Florida law, and deliver a budget with more flexibility to its customers. The agency is currently working to improve the algorithm to better allocate the agency's resources. As we learn more about how the different needs affect the funding required to meet our customers' health and safety, we can continually improve the algorithm.

Department of Children and Families

When will you have more on all mental health and mental illness? When will you be having more local trainings of Mental Health Awareness?

The Department of Children and Families has several contracts with partner agencies to provide a variety of trainings. These partners include the Florida Alcohol and Drug Abuse Association, the Florida Certification Board, and your local National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) chapter. We welcome you to utilize these resources which are free to the community and can be accessed at the websites listed below:

- http://www.fadaa.org/resource_center/index.php
- <http://fcbonline-ed.mrooms3.net/>
- <https://www.nami.org/>

In addition to the trainings provided through the partner agencies, there are many trainings and publications on the topic of mental health through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, which can be accessed at: <http://www.samhsa.gov/topics>

I enjoyed the mental health roundtable. I wish DCF would co-present about their efforts to provide for local mental health needs.

Department of Children and Families is serious about meeting its mission to “Work in partnership with local communities to protect the vulnerable, promote strong and economically self-sufficient families, and advance personal and family recovery and resiliency.” At the request of the event organizer, we would welcome the opportunity to co-present and invite local providers to share the initiatives and efforts underway to meet the needs of individuals with mental health and substance use disorders.

When will they have more seminars on Adult Mental Illness such as bipolar, OCD, anxiety and depression?

The Department of Children and Families welcomes the opportunity to work with The Family Café. DCF, at The Family Café’s request, will participate in seminars addressing topics pertaining to adult mental illnesses.

If you are interested in learning more about mental illness now, there are many online resources. As an example, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) provides many fact sheets and other educational resources on mental health conditions that may be accessed at: <https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions>.

I enjoy going to The Annual Family Café, however I wish that DCF would attend and provide the state view of mental health and substance abuse. You hear from the locals about how we need to do more and I totally agree. But what does the state do or say? They should present and communicate better.

At the invitation of the event organizers, the Department of Children and Families would welcome the opportunity to share its work and discuss its policies with the public at The Family Café.

Does Florida support Peer Specialists? I have been trained yet there is not a mechanism for the Peer Specialists to connect with one another or to work within the system. Florida does not accept this as a true profession within Medicaid, a reimbursable service. Why? Other states do, and do so successfully.

Florida supports peer services and has made several policy changes over the last year to enhance this support. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) has historically included peer positions in billable services such as Florida Assertive Community Treatment, Drop-in Centers, and Comprehensive Community Service Teams. DCF also added a billable service for Recovery Support, allowing agencies to bill for services provided by Certified Recovery Peer Specialists.

Peer Specialist services have also become billable through the Agency for Healthcare Administration's Medicaid funding. In March 2014, the Medicaid Community Behavioral Health Handbook was released and included five services that may be provided by Certified Recovery Peer Specialists. Additionally, Managed Care Organizations can request to use the billing code H0038 for Self Help/Peer Services, which is a distinct billing code for Peer Specialist Services. Several Managed Care Organizations, covering most of the Medicaid regions in the state, allow providers to bill using this code.

These policy changes have opened more doors for peers to be hired in more agencies. Additionally, DCF has invested resources to increase the number of trained and certified peers in the state. The Florida Certification Board (FCB),

through funding from DCF's Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, is administering a scholarship program for certification-related fees for persons seeking initial certification, reinstatement, or renewal as a Certified Recovery Peer Specialist. This scholarship program is available through June 30, 2016. Interested persons need to complete the FCB Scholarship Application form on the FCB website, <http://flcertificationboard.org>. A Compendium of Training and Self-Study Resources for Recovery Peer Specialists and Recovery Support Specialists was created in 2015 and can be accessed at http://flcertificationboard.org/assets/uploads/2015_Compndium-of-Training-and-Study-Resources_Final.pdf.

Recently, DCF provided WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) train-the-trainer training so that facilitators and trainers for this 40-hour curriculum are available statewide. The expectation is that more peers will be ready to work and enhance the system of care as training and certification opportunities are expanded.

The Peer Support Coalition of Florida is a network that connects Peer Specialists throughout the state. Its website is www.peersupportfl.org/. The Coalition also has an active Facebook page with up-to-date information about continuing education opportunities.

What is the system of care and why doesn't the state work with families? I am from Georgia, and we utilize Peer Specialists there, and we value the voice of families. Florida does not have a voice from the family or consumer perspective on any of its councils, workgroups, etc.

The Department of Children and Families' Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (SAMH) strives to include individuals and their families in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of services.

Florida has a strategic plan for system of care expansion for children's mental health. A key part of the plan is the participation of consumer, family, and youth voices at all levels. The Office of SAMH works closely with Voices and Choices of Florida, the statewide family and youth consortium, comprised of Florida's Federation of Families and Youth M.O.V.E. organizations.

The Office of SAMH also has a statewide Planning Council, which represents the voices of consumers and family members. The Council provides an opportunity for consumers, former consumers, and their families to participate in the statewide planning process. The Council is comprised of 14 consumers and family members from across the state, as well as consumer and family advocacy groups, and serves as an advisory body to the Office of SAMH. The Planning Council has three duties:

- To review the block grant plan and to submit any recommendations for modification(s) to the state;
- To serve as an advocate for adults with serious mental illnesses, children with severe emotional disturbances, and other individuals with mental illnesses or emotional problems; and
- To monitor, review, and evaluate, not less than once each year, the allocation and adequacy of mental health services within the state.

The Planning Council supports the Office of SAMH in implementing an improved model of care, shifting to a recovery-oriented system of care.

The Office of SAMH contracts with seven regional Managing Entities for the administration and management of regional behavioral health systems of care. The Managing Entities are private, non-profit organizations responsible for planning, implementation, administration, monitoring, data collection, reporting, and analysis for behavioral health care throughout the state. Managing Entities do not provide services; rather they contract with local service providers for the provision of prevention, treatment, and recovery support services. The Office of SAMH holds monthly recovery-oriented, technical assistance calls with the Managing Entities to discuss and promote recovery and Peer Specialist services, and ensures that peer and family voices are heard. The Department recently convened workgroups to look at key issues such as recovery-oriented systems of care, care coordination and the Baker and Marchman Acts. Each of these workgroups included the perspective of the consumer voice.

I would like to either become a foster parent or adopt a child with a disability. I already have 2 children who I adore, but would be interested in sharing our family with those who need a family. How do you apply to be a foster or adoptive family? I looked in the phone book and found how I could become a foster or adoptive family for a dog really quick—just not a child.

Florida's adoption initiative aims to promote the benefits of public adoption. Explore Adoption urges families to consider creating or expanding their families by adopting a child who is older, has special needs, or is a part of a sibling group. Persons interested in becoming foster or adoptive parents are encouraged to contact a local foster home licensing or adoptive provider. Below is a link where you can learn more and find local resources: <http://www.adoptflorida.org/>.

What happened to the Mental Health program within DCF? It used to be a stronger, more family- or consumer-friendly program. Everyone has left and now, well, who knows what they do. So short staffed. No resources.

The Department of Children and Families and our partners are committed to ensuring that the right services are provided and that clients are treated the same way we would want our family treated. There have been major changes in the delivery of services in Florida in recent years. DCF merged the substance abuse and mental health program offices into one Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (SAMH). This Office used to contract directly with local providers to implement behavioral health services and supports.

The Florida Legislature found that a managing structure that places responsibility for publically funded behavioral health services under the purview of local entities would promote access to care and continuity, be more efficient and effective, streamline administrative processes to create cost efficiencies, and provide flexibility to better match services to needs. As a result, the Office of SAMH now contracts with seven Managing Entities for the administration and management of regional behavioral health systems of care. The Managing Entities are private, non-profit organizations responsible for planning, implementation, administration, monitoring, data collection, reporting, and analysis for behavioral health care throughout the state. Managing Entities do not provide services; rather they contract with local service providers for the provision of prevention, treatment, and recovery support services. As such, many of the activities that used to be performed by the Office of SAMH are now the responsibility of the Managing Entities.

To learn more about the Managing Entities, please follow the link below which shows the counties each Managing Entity serves and provides links to each Managing Entity:

<http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/substance-abuse/managing-entities>.

We care deeply about the people we serve and the level of service we provide. Please be sure to address any concerns you have with your provider.

The DCF should have an 800 line for resources so families can call and TALK to someone when they have questions about the services they receive or need. Not a machine where you have to punch numbers, or someone puts you on hold forever. Yes, it happens more times than you think.

The Fostering Success Initiative currently has a workgroup assigned to identify possible uses and feasibility of a toll free number. Below is a link to stay up to date and where you can find helpful information:

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

How do you report abuse on the elderly with a disability? It happens more times than you think. Family steals from them and then never takes the time to visit. It is abuse!

If you suspect that an individual is a vulnerable adult (elders or adults with disabilities) and is the victim of self-neglect, abuse, neglect or financial exploitation by a second party, you should immediately file a report with the Florida Abuse Hotline to facilitate involvement by the Department of Children and Families, Adult Protective Services/Investigations. If enough information is provided, an Adult Protective Investigator will be out to see the individual within 24 hours.

To file a report with the Florida Abuse Hotline:

1. File a Report on-line at <https://reportabuse.dcf.state.fl.us/> - You must have Javascript and Popups enabled to complete a report.
2. Call the Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-800-96ABUSE (1-800-962-2873) to file your report.

How do you know if you qualify for food stamps?

An individual can see if they are potentially eligible for food assistance (food stamps) by visiting the department's online web site at: <http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/> and select "Am I Eligible?" An individual will be asked a series of questions about their household circumstances to determine if they are eligible for assistance. The questions take about 15 minutes to answer. To receive benefits, an individual must submit an application so staff can make an eligibility determination. An individual may submit an online application using the same website address or by completing and submitting a paper application. A paper application is available online at: (<http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/access-florida-food-medical-assistance-cash/common-access-florida-forms>) or an individual can call our Customer Call Center at (866) 762-2237 to have a paper application mailed to them. The online application is available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. After staff makes an eligibility determination, the department will send a notice. The department has 30 days from the date an individual submits an application to determine eligibility. Currently, the average timeframe for processing applications is 10 days.

How come food stamps cannot provide or pay for diapers for those who need them?

Federal law limits the use of food assistance benefits to buy only eligible food items. The Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 defines eligible food as any food or food product for home consumption. The Act does not allow the following items to be purchased with SNAP benefits: alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, hot food; food sold for on-premises consumption; pet foods, soaps, paper products, medicines and vitamins, household supplies, grooming items, and cosmetics.

We need childcare services for our children with special health care needs. How do I secure them?

Child Care Resource and Referral
State Child Care Resource and Referral Network

To locate a child care resource and referral office in your area, contact your early learning coalition or call (toll-free) 1-866-357-3239.

If you have a question about how to identify quality child care and early education programs or how to locate a provider who meets your family's needs, you can find answers through a statewide network of child care resource and referral services.

The state Child Care Resource and Referral Network provides information about state-funded early learning programs, such as School Readiness, VPK, Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start and Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters. Local resource and referral offices have information about creative financial assistance options and community resources that may help with other needs.

To find a child care resource and referral program in another state, call Child Care Aware at 1-800-424-2426 toll free or visit www.childcareaware.org.

How do I find behavioral health services for my son? The doctor says to call the provider and they do not take referrals from him. The center says I need to call DCF, DCF says I need to call the doctor or report it as abuse. What?

We suggest that you contact your regional Managing Entity and ask about available services in your area. The link below shows the counties each Managing Entity serves and provides links to each Managing Entity:

<http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/substance-abuse/managing-entities>.

Can you help me with homelessness? They tell me that this is the correct term. I don't have a place to sleep is my term.

The Department of Children and Families' Office on Homelessness does not offer direct financial or program assistance, but can refer you to the local continuum of care lead agency in your area. If we know the name of the county where you currently reside, we can help you get connected to someone from that coalition who can offer you various resources, programs, or in some cases, financial assistance in order to prevent and reduce homelessness in the community. Contacting them is the best way to get help if you are experiencing homelessness. Below is a link to local lead agency in your area:
<http://myflfamilies.com/service-programs/homelessness/lead-agencies>.

I come here to this event and my heart breaks. We have a loving home and would be honored to become a guardian or adoptive parents/family to some. What can I do to open my home to someone?

Florida's adoption initiative is aimed at promoting the benefits of public adoption. Explore Adoption urges families to consider creating or expanding their families by adopting a child who is older, has special needs, or is a part of a sibling group. Persons interested in becoming foster or adoptive parents are encouraged to contact a local foster home licensing or adoptive provider. Below is a link where you can learn more and find local resources: <http://www.adoptflorida.org/>.

I called and reported my child's caregiver for abuse. She turned around and reported me for abuse. The state opened a case on both of us. I am amazed how the state now is looking at both of us without any information from anyone else. She broke my daughter's arm!

In Florida any person who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is abused, abandoned, or neglected shall report it to the department. The department has a responsibility to investigate reports of abuse.

Where can I find a rehab center to help my brother? He will not voluntarily go to rehab, as he thinks his behavior is okay all the time. How do I find the place that will take him? Do I just call the cops? He is not bad, just using pain meds too much. Doctors are continuing to give him the pills too! Amazing.

That depends on many factors. For example, if your brother is age 18 or older he is considered an adult and cannot be forced to accept services, unless he is court-ordered to do so. As a concerned family member, you may consider pursuing Florida Marchman Act intervention and file a Petition for Involuntary Assessment with your local Clerk of Court if there is good faith reason to believe that he is substance abuse impaired and, because of such impairment:

- (1) Has lost the power of self-control with respect to substance use; and either
- (2)(a) Has inflicted, or threatened or attempted to inflict, or unless admitted is likely to inflict, physical harm on himself or herself or another; or
- (b) Is in need of substance abuse services and, by reason of substance abuse impairment, his or her judgment has been so impaired that the person is incapable of appreciating his or her need for such services and of making a rational decision in regard thereto; however, mere refusal to receive such services does not constitute evidence of lack of judgment with respect to his or her need for such services.

If you have specific questions about the Marchman Act, please contact Ashley Schwab at Ashley.Schwab@myflfamilies.com or (850) 717-4414.

Department of Education

I live in Palm Beach County and I think that the schools there should have to give out information to all ESE students about The Family Café events. This is a great way to get information and resources for our children.

Thank you for your suggestion. The Department of Education's Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS) is proud to partner with The Family Café, as one of our discretionary projects, each year. BEESS announces the conference in various outlets including various state-wide conference calls and in *The Buzz*, the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services' weekly newsletter that reaches over 200 contacts. The bureau will continue to market the conference and place a specific emphasis on informing parents for 2016.

You can find more information on the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services' (BEESS) discretionary projects at <http://www.fl DOE.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/grants-management.stml>.

We need special high schools and colleges that specialize in kids with autism! Where are they? We need them!

There are various service delivery models available at high schools for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The services are based on the student's needs and the discretion of each district in the State of Florida. Contact your local district directly to discuss options. The following link is provided as a resource:

- Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD), <http://florida-card.org/map.htm>

Colleges specializing in individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder:

- Nova Southeastern University, <http://www.nova.edu/humandevlopment/autism/access-plus/support-programs.html>
- University of West Florida, <http://uwf.edu/offices/dean-of-students/case-management-services/mission-and-vision/>

The Autism Inclusion Program is offered by Inclusion Services and Programs in the Division of Student Affairs. The program provides academic, social, life skills, and career planning support to students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (Asperger Syndrome/High Functioning Autism) who attend the University of West Florida.

Key areas include Academic Support, Social and Community Involvement, Transition and Life Skills, Career Preparation. For more information, contact Dr. Vannee Cao-Nguyen at 850-474-2387 or vcao@uwf.edu.

- Division of Florida Colleges, <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/higher-ed/fl-college-system/index.stml>
- The Dan Marino Campus in Fort Lauderdale provides a collegiate experience for young adults, ages 18 to 28, with Autism Spectrum Disorder and other developmental disabilities: <http://marinocampus.org/>
- The Florida Consortium on Postsecondary Education and Intellectual Disabilities, <http://fltpsids.info/>

Can we learn more about autism? I have friends with autism and in the schools we need to learn how the school supports them. If we were aware and knew how to help, we could help!

There are a number of ways to learn more about Autism Spectrum Disorder including:

- Centers for Autism Spectrum Disorder (CARD), <http://florida-card.org/map.htm>
- What is Autism Spectrum Disorder, <http://www.umcard.org/what-autism/>
- CARD-University of Miami online resources, <http://www.umcard.org/resources>
- CARD VINE, Robin's Tree of Learning, <http://www.nova.edu/card/video-categories.html>
- CARD-University of Central Florida Resource Guide, <http://www.ucf-card.org/index.php/services/family-support-and-services/resource-guide>
- Marino Autism Research Institute (MARI), <http://www.danmarinofoundation.org/portal/mari-research#.VehkhNJVhBd>
- Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS), <http://www.fdlrs.org/>
- Autism Florida, <http://www.autismflorida.com/>
- Autism Society of America: Florida Chapter, <http://www.autismfl.com/>
- Autism Internet Modules, http://www.autisminternetmodules.org/user_mod.php
- Florida Department of Education, <http://www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/ese-eligibility/autism-spectrum-disorder-asd.stml>

Can you please provide more events on twice exceptional students? I am gifted and have other learning issues, and it's been a fight to get an IEP in my county. Why is it always a fight to get services from the school? If the IEP states the need, then why can't the school provide for the need? I

would like to see the school trained with resources, information etc. on the services students need to be successful in school.

The Florida Department of Education provides school district gifted education coordinators with resources and information regarding training opportunities that cover gifted and twice exceptional issues. For example, recently the gifted education office sent a list of links for twice exceptional articles and publications to all of the FDOE exceptional student education contacts in *The Buzz*, the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services' weekly newsletter. The FDOE will continue to keep educators updated on new research and practices through information blasts to district coordinators and contacts, webinar trainings, and district visits throughout the year.

Students with IEPs obtain their services from their local school districts and school districts set their policies for gifted services. For more information on gifted services in Florida, please see the FDOE Gifted Education webpage at <http://www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/gifted-edu.stml>.

If you have additional questions, please contact Kathleen Casper, Gifted Education Specialist in the Bureau of Standards and Instructional Support at Kathleen.Casper@fldoe.org. Thank you for your interest in twice exceptional student education.

Can you explain to me the new law on high school diplomas (no more ESE) in detail please?

Exceptional student education (ESE) has not gone away. Students with disabilities continue to receive specialized instruction, related services, and accommodations, as described on their IEP. What did go away is the special diploma. That statute (S. 1003.438, F.S) was repealed during the 2014 legislative session, effective July 1, 2015 and new options were made available to students with disabilities, including students with significant cognitive disabilities, to earn a standard diploma. Students who began 9th grade in 2014-15 or later will work toward a standard diploma. They may earn their diploma using an option available to all students or an option available only to students with disabilities. Students who began 9th grade before 2014-15 and whose IEPs stated that they were working toward a special diploma may continue to do so. All high school completion options are detailed in a free online training module that is available at <http://pdportal.florida-ese.org>.

Does the High School High Tech program with the ABLE Trust offer this within each school zone area? They do a great job in partnering with the

school system here in Gainesville. My son loves it! It is part of his classroom activities. It's fun and informative.

No, High School High Tech is not offered in all areas, although it is a growing program. Last year it was available in at least one school in 38 school districts in Florida.

I have a son who is five years old with septo-optic dysplasia syndrome, seizures, blind (both eyes), global developmental delay, autism spectrum, and neuro sensory integration disorder. What type of help is there for children with multiple disabilities in school? What type of classroom would be best for him? Who can help me review his IEP? Are there any grants for children like him? Grants for his educational needs?

Students with visual impairments and multiple disabilities should receive their education in their least restrictive environment. This decision is based on the IEP team's consideration of the continuum of alternative placements, thinking about where a student can be taught and make progress in the general education curriculum to the maximum extent possible with students without disabilities. These placements include a general education classroom, a general education classroom with some services being delivered in a resource room, a self-contained classroom, a special education school, at home, and in a hospital or other public or private institution.

There are grants available for students with disabilities, <http://www.fl DOE.org/schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/>, as part of students' school choice options. Each has its own requirements for application as well as for the use of the funds.

I have a son who will be attending kindergarten next year. I am worried about the services that he will need to be successful in school. They do not want to provide him a classroom setting and the school's principal has suggested that I either homeschool, or look for charter schools in my area. I thought all kids could go to school. Are kids with disabilities treated separately? I am upset and have decided to go to my school board and discuss this with them.

State Board Rule 6A-6.03028 (1) Provision of Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and Development of Individual Educational Plans for Students with Disabilities states the following: Entitlement to FAPE. All students with disabilities aged three (3) through twenty-one (21) residing in the state have the right to FAPE consistent with the requirements of Section 1003.571, F.S. and Rules 6A-

6.036, F.A.C. FAPE shall be made available to students with disabilities, including students who have been suspended or expelled, and any individual student with a disability who needs special education and related services, even though the student has not failed or been retained in a course or grade, and is advancing from grade to grade.

In addition to Rule 6A-6.03028, A Parent’s Introduction to Exceptional Student Education in Florida: <http://www.fl DOE.org/core/fileparse.php/7690/urlt/0070085-eseparent.pdf> provides information about the ESE process and key ideas in the state and federal laws about ESE. Every student receiving ESE services has the right to a free appropriate public education. This means that the local public school district must provide services designed to help your child meet their annual goals and make progress in the general curriculum at no cost to you. If your child has a disability, lives in Florida, is at least three years old and less than 22 years old, meets the eligibility criteria, and has not yet graduated from high school with a standard diploma, they are entitled to receive free exceptional education services (ESE) from your local public school district.

For more information you may contact BEESS at 850-245-0475.

Tell me about the new legislation for schools and students with disabilities. It was quickly mentioned on Friday Night (at The Summit) however, I did not understand all of the issues. Can you please elaborate?

Significant changes were made with regard to students with disabilities in both the 2013 and 2014 legislative sessions. In 2013, Committee Substitute/Senate Bill 1108 included the following important changes:

- The right of parents of students with disabilities to bring an individual of their choice to any meetings related to their child was clarified through revisions to Section 1002.20, Florida Statutes. Districts are required to have personnel and parents sign a form stating whether any school district personnel have prohibited, discouraged or attempted to discourage the parent from inviting an individual of their choice to a meeting.
- Implementation of an assessment called “Best Practices in Inclusive Education” became a requirement for every school and district. Once every three years, each district and school must implement this internal assessment process designed to facilitate the analysis, implementation, and improvement of inclusive educational practices. More information is available on the Florida Inclusion Network website at <http://www.floridainclusionnetwork.com/best-practices-for-inclusive-education/>

- Written parental consent is now required before a district can instruct a student in the state standards access points curriculum and administer the Florida Standards Alternate Assessment or before a district can place a student in an Exceptional Student Education center school.
- A new statute was created, Section 1003.572, Florida Statutes, which allows that certain private professionals hired by a parent may observe, collaborate with personnel, and provide services to students in the public school setting. The student's public instructional personnel and principal must consent to the time and place. The professionals specifically identified include certified behavioral analysts, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, psychologists and clinical social workers. All of these individuals must be licensed or certified in accordance with the laws governing their professional practice.
- Provisions were made for the Commissioner of Education to exempt a student with disabilities from participation in state standardized assessments in certain extraordinary circumstances. In 2014, legislation was adopted creating a special exemption from participation for students who are medically complex. More information on both these exemption provisions may be found in a technical assistance paper entitled "Statewide Assessment for Students with Disabilities." This document may be found at <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-7301/dps-2014-208.pdf>.

In 2014, the legislature passed Committee Substitute/Senate Bill 850. Key provisions that are specifically related to students with disabilities include the following:

- The Florida Personal Learning Scholarship Accounts (PLSA) program was established through the creation of Section 1002.385, Florida Statutes. PLSA scholarships allow a parent to customize an educational program. There is a specific eligibility criterion that applies and not all students with disabilities will be eligible for this scholarship program. For more information you may link to <http://fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/plsa/plsa-faqs.stml>
- Section 1003.5716, Florida Statutes, was established to address the transition to postsecondary education for a student with disabilities. Many of these requirements were already components of the transition planning process conducted by individual educational plan teams (IEP).
- The law allowing Florida to award special diplomas for certain students with disabilities was repealed. Revisions were made to the law that establishes the high school graduation requirements (Section 1003.4282, Florida Statutes) creating new opportunities for students instructed on access points curriculum to attain a standard diploma. Also established is an option related to academic and employment competencies.

The home page for the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services provides information on SB 850. Link to <http://fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu> and scroll down to "Topics of Special Interest."

Will education be a big issue in the Presidential race this 2016? I know that Florida has a lot to lose or gain with its educational policies. Please explain.

The topic of education is often part of a presidential candidate's platform. It is challenging to try to predict what "big issue" will be addressed. FDOE does operate under federal and state laws as well as rules set by the State Board of Education. Any legislation passed by elected officials including the President will be adhered to by FDOE.

For more information about the State Board of Education and laws/rules, please visit the website at <http://www.fldoe.org/policy/state-board-of-edu/>.

I would like to see the Early Steps Program moved to the Department of Education. I would like to see the 0-3 program moved to provide an extended continuum of services for this population. I feel that the DOH is not working together with DOE or families to provide these much needed resources and services.

Florida Statute 391.308 states that the Department of Health (DOH) shall implement and administer part C of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) which shall be known as the "Florida Infants and Toddlers Early intervention Program." The statute goes on to say that the DOH must work jointly with the Florida Department of Education (DOE).

Both departments work closely to provide services to children birth through three as statute requires.

I hear that the state has a critical need for ESE teachers, that there is shortfall of qualified teachers. This is going to reflect on the care or education needed.

Why do we always have to fight to get services or accommodations for our kids in the school system? If the child needs services to progress, just by the students. What is the DOE doing to enhance recruitment of qualified ESE teachers? Why the shortfall? Pay related?

The Florida State Board of Education's first strategic imperative is to increase the supply of highly effective teachers in Florida classrooms. Florida has developed standards, assessment systems and programs that measure and help to improve the performance of teachers, student support personnel, administrators, and those who aspire to those positions. You can review those standards at:
<http://www.teachinflorida.com/PerformanceStandards/tabid/190/Default.aspx>.

In addition, the Department of Education's Recruitment program addresses the issue of teacher shortages through work with educators, potential educators, and school district staff. These program areas include recruitment, recognition, preparation, professional development and performance and standards. For more information on qualified teachers please go to:
<http://www.teachinflorida.com/Home/tabid/36/Default.aspx>.

Was there new funding or an increase in funding from the new state budget for students in school?

There was an increase in total state and local funding and funds per grades K-12 students for Florida school districts from the 2014-15 school year to the 2015-16 school year authorized by the Florida Legislature in the 2015 General Appropriations Act. In budget workshop materials reviewed by the State Board of Education on August 5, 2015, a history of funding from the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP), the primary source of operating funds for school districts and schools, was provided; slide #7 documented the history of total funds and slide #8 documented the history of funds per student.

Budget Overview from August 5, 2015 State Board of Education
Legislative and Budget Workshop
<http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/12088/urlt/budget.pdf>

2015 General Appropriations Act
<http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2015A/2500A/BillText/er/PDF>

Do my local school personnel know about the WIOA law? I just heard about this new venture and wanted to know if schools have been notified?

During the last year, the Florida Department of Education's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Division of Blind Services and Bureau of Exceptional Education, and Student Services have been informing educators about the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA). A joint memo will be released to all school districts

early in the 2015-16 school year, outlining expectations for schools and agencies. Continued information and training will also be available as WIOA is implemented.

I heard about the Parent Survey this weekend. How can I supply my input to this survey instrument? I would like to be able to supply input.

The ESE Parent Survey is open February 1 through the end of May each year for parents of students with a disability. The survey measures the percentage of parents that report that the school district partnered with them throughout the year. It is available in paper form or online.

If you did not have the opportunity to take the survey for the 2014-15 school year you may contact Aimee Mallini at the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services to provide your feedback by phone at 850-245-0475 or by email at aimee.mallini@fldoe.org.

I missed the Mental Health First Aid pre-con that was held on Thursday before The Annual Family Café. How can I attend one of these trainings in the future? I am sorry that I did not attend. I heard it was great!

Thanks for the positive feedback. Florida AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education) is sponsoring Youth Mental Health First Aid training at no cost to youth-serving adults, parents, and community members in various locations across the state. Mental Health First Aid USA provides information on trainings in your area at <http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/cs/take-a-course/course-types/youth/>.

If I do not agree with the IEP team and clearly state my objections, why don't they listen to me? They, the team, just continue as if I was not in the room. Who knows this child better, me or them? Who is going to ensure that the IEP is a valid tool? The school person suggested I sue. Are you kidding me??

You may want to begin by contacting the district ESE office to express concerns regarding the issues you are having at the IEP team meetings. Some conflicts can be resolved at that district level. Also, there are many federally funded advocacy groups available at no cost to the parent. Information about these groups, along with other resources, can be found at <http://fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/parent-info>.

In addition, you may also request a facilitated IEP (FIEP) team meeting. An FIEP meeting can help with issues that arise related to the process of the development of an IEP. A trained facilitator supports the IEP team in developing an IEP that best meets the needs of the student while hearing from both parties and helping the parties reach a consensus when possible. An FIEP meeting can be requested at the district level. Most districts have personnel trained in conducting the FIEP process. FIEP meetings are of no cost to the parent.

Mediation is another alternative resolution. The focus of mediation is to provide an environment that is conducive to the creation of a working agreement that benefits the student. Both parties must agree to mediation. Mediation is also a no-cost option for the parent.

A trained mediator works to help parties reach a mutually satisfactory and legally binding agreement that is in the best interest of the student. However, a mediation session is not an IEP team meeting; so a follow-up IEP team meeting may be needed (depending on the outcome of the mediation session). If there is an alleged violation of state or federal requirements regarding the education of students with disabilities, a state complaint can be filed. Information about this process can found at <http://www.fl DOE.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/dispute-resolution>.

If the IEP team cannot reach consensus, parents have a right to seek resolution through a due process hearing. In a due process hearing, an impartial hearing officer will listen to evidence in a courtroom-like setting and issue a written order. The district is obligated to provide a list of low-cost attorneys.

You can find more specific information on dispute resolutions at <http://fl DOE.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/dispute-resolution>.

There have always been problems scheduling IEP services with the school. It takes several weeks to months to get everybody together, and they are still cancelled or rescheduled multiple times, more often at the last minute. The time allocated is also about just an hour. Is there something that can be done? What are my options?

You may want to begin by contacting the district ESE office and expressing concerns regarding the process of scheduling an IEP. They may be able to provide assistance. IEP development is a collaborative effort involving parents, teachers and other service providers or the student. There are requirements related to role of the individuals on the IEP team. Every IEP team member has important knowledge to contribute and an opportunity to participate in the development of the IEP.

My child would love to go to college or a vocational institution to enhance her learning experience. She has excellent grades, yet will need either her mother/myself to assist her for her daily needs. Why can't she live on campus and have an aide/assistant to assist her for her daily needs?

Many students with disabilities go to college and live on campus. However, it is important to note that students with disabilities are not guaranteed the same accommodations or services at the postsecondary institution as were provided in school under IDEA. For example, the colleges and universities do not provide personal care attendants. Adults are covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Educational institutions are required to ensure that students with disabilities have access to allowable assessment accommodations and exemptions, if needed. Other agencies, such as Vocational Rehabilitation or the Agency for Persons with Disabilities may provide funds for additional services, such as personal aides.

For more information on additional programs available to adults with disabilities you can contact the Agency for Persons with disabilities at <http://apd.myflorida.com/> and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation at <http://www.rehabworks.org/>.

Who gets to decide if the student, my son, gets a special diploma or a regular diploma? I want him to have a regular diploma, yet the principal says he cannot receive one! Why is this? I think he can achieve this goal, even if he does not go to college.

The IEP team, of which parents are important members, decides which type of diploma a student will work toward. The special diploma statute (S. 1003.438, F.S) was repealed during the 2014 legislative session, effective July 1, 2015. New options were made available to students with disabilities, including students with significant cognitive disabilities, to earn a standard diploma. All students who began 9th grade in 2014-15 or later must work toward a standard diploma. They may earn their diploma using an option available to all students or an option available only to students with disabilities. Students who began 9th grade before 2014-15 and whose IEPs stated that they were working toward a special diploma may continue to do so or they may switch to a standard diploma. All high school completion options are detailed in an online training module that is available at <http://pdportal.florida-ese.org>.

Charter schools were all the rage, and now they have disappeared from the landscape. We complained about FCAT and now it is gone. What testing and school types are the “rage” now?

Charter schools in Florida have grown to over 640 in 2014-15. Charter schools are an option for any public school student in Florida. For more information go to <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/charter-schools/>.

The Florida Department of Education continues to manage the K-12 assessments of students as required by Florida Statute. With the new Florida Standards in place to help Florida students succeed, the Florida Standards Assessments (FSA) in English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, and end-of-course (EOC) exams (Algebra 1, Algebra 2, and Geometry) will serve Florida students by measuring education gains and progress. For more information about the FSA and other assessments that are administered to Florida students, go to <http://www.fldoe.org/accountability/assessments/>.

A student turns 22 and leaves the school because they age out. Why not allow them to say and continue to a vocation or other learning experience?

Federal and state laws require that students with disabilities who have an IEP receive a free appropriate public education until they receive a standard diploma or through the age of 21, whichever comes first. In Florida, school districts have the option of allowing a student who turns 22 during the school year to stay in school until the school year ends. After that time the school district is no longer provided funds to educate the student. This does not mean that learning experiences must end. Adults with disabilities may receive training and employment services through Vocational Rehabilitation or the Agency for Persons with Disabilities. It is important that connections be made to these agencies long before a student leaves the school system.

What does the Division of Blind Services do for the visually impaired? I have never heard of them and my son is 7. He was born visually impaired with a slight issue. Please tell me more about the services. Thank you!

The Division of Blind Services (DBS) assists and empowers Floridians who are blind and visually impaired to achieve their goals and live their lives with independence and self-direction. We accomplish this by providing quality rehabilitation services to our clients of all ages through counseling and financial support for vocational training, job placement, training for adults in independent living skills, and services to children and families. Services are provided directly by

our program staff, contract providers and community-based rehabilitation program partners.

Since your son is 7 years old, he may be eligible to participate in our Children's Program. In this program, a Division of Blind Services children's specialist works with the child, parents, local school district, and other professionals to provide, training, guidance, information, referrals and advocacy throughout the child's elementary and middle-school years. This program acts as a supplement to the services already provided by the school system to foster a child's learning and ability to function independently. Parents of children in the program are provided with training opportunities to assist in understanding the impact of the visual impairment on various aspects of their child's life. Specific services include:

- Information about devices designed to maximize communication and computer skills for individuals with visual impairment;
- Training to assist parents in understanding the impact of the visual impairment on their child's education and independent living skills;
- Educating parents about their rights and responsibilities in the development of the child's Individual Educational Plan;
- For more information or to apply for services please contact us at (800) 342-1828 or visit dbs.myflorida.com.

We need more advocacy trainings for families who are in the school system. It is too hard to navigate. I need help in Polk County.

The U.S. Department of Education funds Parent Training Centers in each state. These centers provide guidance and resources including webinars to parents of students with disabilities. The Family Network on Disabilities (FND) is the parent training center for Florida. You may contact FND at (800) 825-5736 or <http://fndusa.org>.

In addition, each school district employs a parent liaison to assist parents with resources and navigation through the ESE process. For a list of district parent liaison please go to <http://app4.fldoe.org/EESSESSContacts/> and select your district.

It should be mandatory for kids over age 12 to be present in their own IEP meetings. Heck, half the time, they do not even care if the parents are in attendance for these meetings.

Parents and students are an important part of the IEP team. Students of any age may attend their IEP meetings and it is strongly encouraged that students of transition age (14 and older) attend and actively participate to the best of their ability, which may include leading the meetings. While this is a best practice, it

would be problematic to make participation mandatory as the IEP team could not move forward if a student refused to attend.

Do the schools have an anti-bullying policy that they must adhere to?

The “Jeffrey Johnston Stand Up for All Students Act” was signed into law in 2008, with additional amendments added in 2013. This legislation prohibits bullying and harassment of any student or employee of a public K-12 educational institution, and requires all Florida school districts to adopt an anti-bullying policy with a number of specific components. The statute (s. 1006.147, F.S.) can be found at the following link:

http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=1000-1099/1006/Sections/1006.147.html. Districts must comply with the law or risk forfeiture of state Safe Schools funds.

Why is physical therapy so hard to get for my son, yet speech is readily available?

In the educational setting, related services are required to assist a student with a disability to benefit from special education under IDEA. In the school setting, physical therapy as a related service is available to students who need it to benefit from special education services identified in their individual educational plans (IEPs). The IEP team, not a diagnosis or individual, determines whether therapy is required to assist a student with a disability to benefit from special education. The team, considering all available assessment data and input from the related service provider, first identifies the special education services that the student needs and then determines if therapy is required to assist the student to benefit from the special education services. Although the student may have a medical condition requiring private therapy, the student may not need school-based therapy services to benefit from special education and related services.

More information is available at the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services website: <http://fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu> and scroll down to “Topics of Special Interest.”

Why don't you allow service dogs in elementary schools? My dog is my best friend and helps me all day long.

The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) has published updated guidance for the use of service animals by students with disabilities. The 2015 document outlines required components for local school boards to consider in order to modify

local policy, practices, and procedures pertaining to request for a service animal to accompany a student to schools. You may download the Updated Guidelines and Template for School District Policy, Practice, and Procedures for the Use of Service Animals by Students with Disabilities (2015) via the FDOE Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services website at <http://www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/beess-resources/technical-assistance-papers-memos-note.stml>.

Will my son’s IEP be valid in college? What if he stays in Florida and goes to a state university?

No, the IEP is for PreK-12 and is required under IDEA. Once your son graduates and goes to college he is no longer covered under IDEA. That does not mean he is no longer protected. Adults are covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. However, it is important to note that students with disabilities are not guaranteed the same accommodations or services at the postsecondary institution as were provided in high school. For example, the colleges and universities do not provide personal care attendants. However, educational institutions are required to ensure that students with disabilities have access to allowable assessment accommodations and exemptions, if needed.

For more information on additional programs available to adults with disabilities you can contact the Agency for Persons with disabilities at <http://apd.myflorida.com/> and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation at <http://www.rehabworks.org/>.

The big issue now is with virtual schools. What is up with this? Why are they not expanding this option across the state? This year they limited the use of this type of learning. We need notice.

Florida has more virtual education options for its students than any other state. Florida has the largest state virtual school (Florida Virtual School) and all school districts offer virtual options for students at all grade levels. Florida is the only state that has both full-time and part-time virtual options at all grade levels. In addition to enrolling in a full-time virtual school offered by Florida Virtual School or your school district, students may take individual online courses from their school district, from other school districts, or from Florida Virtual School. Florida’s new online course catalog lists courses offered by school districts, Department of Education (DOE)-approved virtual providers, and Florida Virtual School. The link to this helpful resource is: <http://app4.fldoe.org/coursecatalog/>.

To participate in some of the above virtual options, students must meet one of the eligibility criteria listed in section 1002.455, Florida statutes. The main criterion is enrollment in a Florida public school the previous year. This statute has some exceptions for military dependents, siblings, and for students at specified grade levels. The link to this statute is:

http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?mode=View%20Statutes&SubMenu=1&App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=1002.455&URL=1000-1099/1002/Sections/1002.455.html.

If you have questions about specific options, please contact the virtual education office in the Florida Department of Education at virtualeducation@fldoe.org. We are happy to assist you.

Department of Health

How do I find out more about WIC? How can you apply if you do not have a computer? Our doctor says they can help, but I do not know how to apply if I don't have a computer or smart phone.

WIC is a supplemental nutrition program for pregnant women and young children (less than 5 years of age) who have a low or moderate income and have a nutritional or medical reason for being on the program. WIC provides a select group of nutritious foods (milk, eggs, cheese, cereal, juice, whole grains, fruits and vegetables), provides nutritional counseling and education, and works closely with health care. You do not need access to a computer or smart phone to apply for WIC. You can call the WIC toll-free number 1-800-342-3556 to find out the telephone number of your local WIC office. Most of the WIC clinics are located in the county health departments. When you call your local WIC program, they will make you an appointment, tell you what you need to bring to the WIC appointment, and answer your questions. We hope this information is helpful and you call us.

We need information from the brain injury program. I was wondering if the brain injury program people are ever here?

The Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program at the Department of Health is looking for potential outreach opportunities to inform our residents about our program and the services we provide. In the coming months we will look into the possibility of participating or providing information to be disseminated at next year's Family Café. In the meantime if we can be of any assistance or provide any information please don't hesitate to call our office at 850-245-4045 or visit our website at <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/brain-and-spinal-cord-injuries/>.

My daughter drowned in a neighbor's friend's pool at the age of 3. Please teach the babies how to swim.

Drowning is the leading cause of death for children ages 1 to 4 years old and the second leading cause for children 5 to 9 years old. The Florida Department of Health recommends parents seek the advice of their child's pediatrician to determine the most appropriate time to teach their children to swim. A pediatrician will evaluate the child's cognitive and developmental capabilities to participate in and benefit from swim lessons. Parents should also follow the

recommended layers of protection included in Florida's water safety campaign, Waterproof FL. These layers include:

- Supervision – children should always be actively supervised by an adult when in the water.
- Barriers – a child should never be able to enter the pool area unaccompanied by a guardian. Barriers include: child-proof locks on all doors, a pool fence with self-latching and self-closing gates, and door and pool alarms.
- Emergency Preparedness – the moment a child stops breathing there is a small precious window of time in which resuscitation may occur, but only if someone knows what to do. Everyone should learn CPR. It is also critical to have a phone nearby and immediately call 911.

Swim lessons are usually offered at YMCAs and through city or county parks and recreation departments. Parents may check with these organizations or their local county health department for more information about free or reduced cost swim lessons and about other drowning prevention efforts.

Is there a place where parents can go to find out what services are available for the babies? After having a child with a disability, there is no one to talk to. Not a childcare provider available either. We need resources and respite.

There are multiple resources depending on multiple factors including location, limitation and severity of the disability, commonality of the disability/disorder, payor source, etc.

1. The best place to start would be discussing resources with your pediatrician and staff. They will know what is available in your area and what your specific needs may be.
2. If you have not already done so, I would encourage you to contact the Early Steps Program at 1-800-218-0001 or you can visit the CMS Early Steps website at http://www.CMS-Kids.com/families/early_steps/early_steps.html. The Early Steps program serves children from birth to 36 months who have disabilities, developmental delays, or are at risk of developmental delay. Florida's Early Steps Directory provides information and referral services to families of children with disabilities and special health care needs and is located at http://www.floridahealth.gov/AlternateSites/CMS-Kids/early_steps_directory/index.html. Resource specialists provide answers to questions about services within your community and education on disability related matters. For more information or to make a referral to Early Steps, please call (800) 218-0001.

3. If your child is enrolled with the CMS Managed Care Plan, you can talk with your CMS Nurse Care Coordinator about services, providers, resources, and support available.
4. If your child is not enrolled in the CMS Managed Care Plan, contact your Medicaid Plan or Insurance Carrier to inquire what assistance is available to you including possible case management services.
5. If medically necessary and with a physician's order, a Prescribed Pediatric Extended Care Center (PPEC) may be an option for childcare. PPEC centers allow Medicaid eligible children from birth through age 20 with medically-complex conditions to receive continual medical care in a non-residential setting. When approved, children can attend a PPEC up to a maximum of 12 hours per day while receiving nursing services, personal care, developmental therapies, and caregiver training. If the child has a private insurance, contact the insurance to determine if coverage is available.
6. Depending on your location and the severity of the illness, CMS has a program that provides pediatric palliative care and support services to children and their families. This program is only available to those enrolled in the CMS Managed Care Plan, where a provider is available, and the child is diagnosed with a life-threatening illness by their primary care provider or specialty physician. For more information you can go to http://www.CMSKids.com/families/health_services/pic.html or contact your local CMS area office.

What happened this year with Early Steps program? I hope that they get the needed funding. It is a great program for families of young babies. I know that my CMS office called me and asked me to write to my legislator about the cutbacks. I did call, but never heard if the funding was received.

Thank you for sharing your appreciation for the services provided by the Early Steps program. The Florida Legislature and Governor Rick Scott approved an additional \$13 million in funding for the Early Steps program. These funds will be used to continue to provide the highest quality of services to children from birth to 36 months who have disabilities, developmental delays or at risk of developmental delay and their families.

Are there more early interventions besides Early Steps for kids after they age out of the program? No one helps with this part. They just told me goodbye.

The Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System (FDLRS) provides diagnostic, instructional, and technology support services to school district exceptional education programs and families of students with disabilities. FDLRS Child Find

services help to promote general public awareness of programs and services available for young children who have or are at risk of development disabilities. Services coordination for diagnostic screening, placement, training and support is also provided. The FDLRS website is <http://www.fdlrs.org/>.

Our CMS office in our county does not have any resources for my son with diabetes (juvenile diabetes). Do you have any information for us? This is a hard disease to manage.

On September 1, 2015, CMS Managed Care Plan launched the new Chronic Conditions Disease Management Program. One of the disease management programs included is Diabetes Management. You can contact your CMS Care Coordinator at http://www.CMS-Kids.com/home/contact/area_offices.html to be assessed for the program.

How do I find out more about the Children’s Medical Services program?

Our website has an overview of the many programs provided under Children’s Medical Services and a directory of contacts. Please visit <http://www.CMS-Kids.com> for more information. You can also contact the CMS Central Office at 850-245-4200 with any questions and we can direct to the program contact or local area office contact.

How do I get services from CMS? They say that my family does not qualify for services. Why is that? We are on Medicaid/Medicare. What is the qualifications for services for my two sons?

The CMS Managed Care Plan is a specialty plan under Medicaid and Florida KidCare that serves children with special health care needs. The CMS Plan serves those children younger than 21 years of age who have chronic and serious physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional conditions and who require health care and related services of a type or amount beyond that which is generally required by children. Section 391.021(2), Florida Statutes.

There are 2 parts to eligibility for the CMS Managed Care Plan including financial eligibility and clinical eligibility. Financial eligibility is determined by the Department of Children and Families, which is completed during your application process for state benefits. Clinical eligibility is determined by CMS through a screening process, which assesses the health consequences of the child’s condition. The child must be both financially and clinically eligible to be enrolled.

For more information on eligibility you can contact your local CMS area office or visit http://www.CMS-Kids.com/families/health_services/eligibility.html.

I have a 10-year-old son who needs a chair (wheelchair) to get around. We need help in securing one. Does CMS help with this?

For children enrolled in the CMS Managed Care Plan, assistance is available. Once an order is received for a wheelchair evaluation from a physician, the CMS Care Coordinator will help you and your child through the process.

Does the department teach or supply families with nutritional information when my child is on so many medications? We all have tried to get him to eat healthier and more. His caloric intake is so low. We need a food nutritionist.

I would encourage you to first discuss your concerns with your pediatrician and develop a meal plan. If your child is underweight and there is continued concern, you may look into obtaining a referral from your pediatrician to a nutritionist or a registered dietitian who could teach you to choose the best food options to benefit the child's health needs.

Nutritional Services available at local health departments vary by location. Your local health department may have a program, resources, or other support that you could access.

Division of Emergency Management

Shark Attacks! Is this an area of concern for the state? Will the beaches be closed during a thunderstorm? What happens if the beach water comes up to the street level? Will the streets and city be under an emergency situation?

The Florida Division of Emergency Management takes an all-hazards approach to Emergency Management. While beaches are not closed during a thunderstorm, it is important to check the weather before participating in outdoor activities and always remember, 'When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors.'

Depending on the severity of an event, a city, county, or other jurisdiction may be under a state of emergency. It is important to know what you and your family would do in this situation. Visit www.FLGetAPlan.com to start your family emergency plan today.

We have not had a bad storm or hurricane for many a year. Is the state ready?

The state, counties, and cities in Florida are ready for emergencies through planning, training, and exercises. We encourage all visitors and residents of Florida to be ready for emergencies by having a plan. Visit FLGetAPlan.com to learn more.

If the other states have an emergency, like fire or drought, does Florida help them out?

Yes, Florida often helps other states during emergencies in areas of response, recovery, and mitigation.

The presentation by Professor Tinkermeister at the booth was great! I learned a lot about weather and science. We need more interactive sessions like this at the event. The kids loved it! Thank you for the entertainment!

You're welcome! Learn more about Professor Tinkermeister and science fun by visiting KidsGetAPlan.com.

I got a PLAN! Or I will create a plan. Got me thinking about the world we live in and how we need to be prepared!

That's great! Be sure to encourage your friends and family to get a plan, too. Visit FLGetAPlan.com to learn more.

You need to let everyone know about the Special Needs Registry in their local neighborhoods. It will help in an emergency situation for sure.

Contact your local emergency management office and ask how to sign up for the special needs registry or visit FLGetAPlan.com to register.

Where do I find out more about the special needs shelters in my area? Does each community have a place for those who have elaborate care needs? Or do we simply shelter at home and wait it out? Do we call the city or hospital and let them know where we are located?

Every county has a shelter or shelter arrangements in the event of an emergency. Contact your local emergency management office and ask about these arrangements and the process to register for the special needs registry.

This weather is so chaotic. I cannot believe there have been so many storms with harsh lightening. Amazing!

Lightning is dangerous and unpredictable. Be sure to stay away from trees and power lines if there is a potential for lightning in your area. To learn more about staying safe in a storm, visit FLGetAPlan.com.

Flash flood warnings are silly to me. We do not live anywhere near water like a lake, stream or river, or even the ocean, and we always are on a flood advisory watch. I do not understand.

Weather Watches and Warnings for your area are issued by the team of meteorologists at the National Weather Service, and you should take them seriously. You can visit the National Weather Service online at www.weather.gov to learn about the weather for your area.

Know what you should do in the event of a watch or a warning for any hazard. Visit FLGetAPlan.com to create your family emergency plan.

Linda Carter did a great job in the disaster planning session! Who would have thought that a few simple items can be used for so many different things, especially during an emergency? Loved the presentation!

To learn more about staying safe in an emergency, contact your local emergency management office or visit FLGetAPlan.com.

I am worried about living so close to a nuclear plant and the concerns of an attack or something. Does the state have a plan to ensure our safety?

Yes, the state plans, trains, and conducts exercises involving nuclear power plants. To learn more about staying safe in an emergency, contact your local emergency management office or visit FLGetAPlan.com.

How do we plan for a disaster? What are the lists of concerns and preparedness we should create to be safe and secure in a disaster? I was not able to make the presentation on this. Can you send me some materials? Or provide a link? We need to have resources on all the websites from the state agencies and providers. This would help!

To learn more about staying safe in an emergency including developing a personal preparedness plan, visit FLGetAPlan.com.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Can we have some education on how to start a business with a disability? I want to present my ideas to my Counselor at VR.

That is an excellent suggestion and we will make sure to bring it to The Family Café Planning Committee as a topic for consideration at next year's conference. In the meantime, please go ahead and talk to your VR counselor about this as part of your Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) development. He or she will be glad to provide you with information that will help you make an informed decision about your career path. For more information, please see the links below. There is also a lot of additional information about self-employment online.

<http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/SelfEmploymentEntrepreneurship.htm>

<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/road-to-self-sufficiency>

When are we going to get a college that our children with a special diploma can go to and stay on campus? They need to feel important and like a college student, with lessons on their level and training for jobs. This should be part of VR. I heard the Director talk about jobs. That is what VR is. I know they support children to go to college. How can we make this work? Is it already working and I just don't know about it?

If you are a Florida student with a disability, there are Postsecondary Education (PSE) Programs that may be available to you. The Florida Consortium on Postsecondary Education and Intellectual Disabilities has an informative website that provides information on postsecondary education programs available around the state. This website can be found at <http://fltpsids.info/>. Here, interested individuals will learn about postsecondary sites as well as programs available at each. Each program is designed to serve individuals with specific disabilities, so you will need to learn which program could meet your needs. Programs also differ in what they offer so it is important to find a program that best matches your postsecondary goals and long-term employment outcomes. Vocational Rehabilitation may provide support to individuals who wish to attend a PSE Program if they apply and are found eligible for services. To apply for Vocational Rehabilitation services or for more information, visit www.RehabWorks.org or call 1(800)451-4237 (Voice/TDD).

We need a special high school and college which specialize in kids with Autism! We need to support youth in school by educating them about VR! We need this!

There are a number of organizations in Florida that provide information to families on programs for students with Autism. Autism Speaks, found at www.autismspeaks.org not only provides program resources for families, but also includes a link <https://www.autismspeaks.org/resource-guide/state/FL> that directly links visitors to school-aged (K-22) programs, services, and schools. The Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD) is an organization that provides resources to families of individuals with autism including education and secondary transition. CARD can be found at <http://www.florida-card.org/>. Each postsecondary institution of higher education has a Disabilities Services Office on campus. They would know of specialized programs on their respective campuses that are designed to serve students with autism.

To apply for Vocational Rehabilitation services or for more information, visit www.RehabWorks.org or call 1(800)451-4237 (Voice/TDD).

Vocational Rehabilitation wait list. Why are you taking people off list if they are working but still need help to maintain the job? Do you provide assistance for hearing aids if it is related to their performance at the job site?

The wait list is for individuals who are waiting to receive VR services in order to become employed. VR can help you overcome or manage your disability while improving your ability to get and keep a job. Various types of services can be provided, depending upon your needs. After you begin work, your VR counselor will want to make sure that you and your employer are satisfied and may determine if other services, such as a job coach or other accommodations, are needed to help keep you working. If you are in immediate need of a job coach, please contact your VR counselor.

Regarding hearing aids, VR will assist customers when found eligible. VR may help purchase hearing aid(s) for eligible customers who are determined to be at-risk of losing their jobs due to dependence on residual hearing to perform their daily job duties (e.g., customer relations, handling phone calls, managing employees).

My ASD 39 year old son wants to work. I have a lead on a job at Disney for him. He can be hired if he has a job coach. I work there at Disney. He so wants to work! We did the Vocational Rehabilitation thing. They said he could work if he had a job coach. I could do it, be a job coach I mean, but

then I'd have to quit my job and lose my income. That's not an option. Since I am working 3 days a week, Jason stays home alone. Being diabetic he does not test his glucose level himself. He eats too much when I am not home. He plays video games and watches TV 3 days in a row. It is not a good situation. APD closed his file when we move in November 2014. HELP!

VR may be able to help your son overcome or manage his disability while improving his ability to get and keep a job. Various types of services can be provided, depending upon his needs if he is determined to be eligible for the program. After he begins work, his VR counselor will want to make sure that he and his employer are satisfied and may determine if other services, such as a job coach or other accommodations, are needed to help him keep working.

Will I qualify for services to help me with independent living? Soon I will turn 18 and need to know what services are available to me after high school. What is VR? I heard her talk about college and jobs, but I never heard of VR. I would like to live one day on my own but may require assistance with living and working.

If you are residing in Florida, you may be eligible for services provided by the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Visit us online at www.RehabWorks.org or call 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information. If you qualify, Vocational Rehabilitation has a number of programs, services, and resources available that would be based on your long-term employment goals and individual needs. The Florida Association for Independent Living may also be able to help with independent living services. To find a center in your area check out this link <http://www.floridacils.org/LocateYourLocalCIL.html>.

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

I want to go to college but I cannot because I have a special diploma. I need to know why I cannot go to college by VR when they have a disability college available. Why won't you help me?

VR assists eligible individuals who require VR services prepare for and obtain employment. If additional training or education is needed to obtain employment, then VR may be able to assist. If you are a Florida student with a disability who has a special diploma, there are Postsecondary Education (PSE) Programs that may be available to you. The Florida Consortium on Postsecondary Education and Intellectual Disabilities has an informative website that provides information on

postsecondary education programs available around the state. This website can be found at <http://fltpsid.info/>. Here, interested individuals will learn about postsecondary sites as well as programs available at each. Programs differ in design and offerings so it is important to find a program that best matches your postsecondary goals and long-term employment outcomes. Vocational Rehabilitation may provide support to individuals who wish to attend a PSE Program if they apply and are found eligible for services. To apply for Vocational Rehabilitation services or for more information, visit www.RehabWorks.org or call 1(800)451-4237 (Voice/TDD).

How long will the Level II VR waiting list take to go out?

Currently, individuals are being activated from the Category 2 waiting list at a rate of 500 per week. It is anticipated that all individuals in this Category will be off the waiting list by the end of the year. When your case is activated, your counselor will send you a letter. There is no wait list for individuals in Category 1 which is for people with the most significant disabilities.

Where can I obtain more information on getting assistance in getting help while on the VR waitlist for hearing aids? The VR lady says I have to wait. I don't know how long though.

You could check the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) website to view this information in the link below:

<http://www.hearingloss.org/content/financial-assistance-programs-foundations>.

I would love to see more employment sessions next year. I learned a lot, but still have many questions about VR.

We are glad you were able to take away new and helpful information about VR from the conference and thank you for your interest in bringing more employment-related topics to the event. 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 to our very next Family Café.

If you are residing in Florida, you may be eligible for services provided by the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Visit us online at

www.RehabWorks.org 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.

I appreciated your talk on VR and what it can do for my child. I would like to find out more about how you are focusing on the youth. What services do you have?

VR is working closely with Florida's School Districts to make sure families and youth with disabilities are receiving information about VR services and programs. A joint memo is currently being drafted with the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEES) that will provide information to School District faculty and staff. Transition information, including informational videos, brochures, and transition guidelines, are available to families and students at <http://rehabworks.org/stw.shtml>.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is a new law that puts a strong emphasis on VR providing employment planning and preparation services to transitioning youth at an earlier age. Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) are available to students with a disability beginning at the age of 15. VR offers core services such as career assessment and counseling, workplace readiness training, engagement in multiple work experiences, and postsecondary education counseling to students without having to apply for or be found eligible for VR services. Additional program and services are available to those students who do apply and are found eligible. VR has transition specific information that may be found at <http://rehabworks.org/stw.shtml>. Here, you will find helpful videos, links, and resources for you and your son to explore. If you are residing in Florida and you are interested in applying for VR services, visit www.RehabWorks.org to identify a VR office in your area.

The Florida Association for Independent Living may also be able to help independent living services. To find a center in your area check out this link <http://www.floridacils.org/LocateYourLocalCIL.html>.

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

I used to listen to The Family Café's calls on Friday afternoon during the session. I heard a lot about VR on the calls. I did my research and found out a lot about your program. Wish I knew more when my child was still in school about VR. Best kept secret.

We're so glad you listen in on the legislative calls. This is an excellent way to find out about what is happening regarding issues affecting people with disabilities and the service delivery system. Please be sure to help us spread the word about VR and our mission to assist persons with disabilities in preparing for, obtaining, keeping, or regaining employment.

If VR is jobs, then why does everyone else say they are jobs? I liked the Director's talk on Friday night.

There are a variety of agencies such as the Department of Economic Opportunity and the Agency for Persons with Disabilities who provide employment-related services to people with disabilities, in addition to VR. However, unlike these agencies, the sole purpose of VR is to assist persons with disabilities in preparing for, obtaining, keeping, or regaining employment. We all work together to make sure there is a comprehensive service delivery system to help meet the individual's needs.

How long is the wait list for VR? How long until you begin taking folks off the list?

Currently, individuals are being activated from the Category 2 waiting list at a rate of 500 per week. It is anticipated that all individuals in this Category will be off the waiting list by the end of the year. When your case is activated, your counselor will send you a letter. There is no wait list for individuals in Category 1 for people with the most significant disabilities.

Do I need to be on Medicaid to get VR services?

No, eligibility for VR services, as determined below, is based upon the presence of a physical or mental impairment and a goal of employment.

- The physical or mental impairment constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment.
- The individual can benefit from vocational rehabilitation services in terms of an employment outcome.
- The individual requires vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, obtain, keep, or regain employment.

If you are receiving Social Security Disability (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for your disability, you are presumed eligible for VR services if you intend to secure employment.

Can I get services with job searches if I am a parent of child with a disability and I have a disability myself? I want to work. I want to go back to work. I had a breakdown and was hospitalized for a stay or two. I want to go back into the employment field. Can VR help me?

Yes, if you are residing in Florida, you may be eligible for services provided by the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Visit us online at www.RehabWorks.org or call 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information. If you qualify, Vocational Rehabilitation has a number of programs, services, and resources available that would be based on your long-term employment goals and individual needs. You may also wish to contact the Department of Economic Opportunity for job-related services they provide at www.employflorida.com.

In regards to your son, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is a new law that puts a strong emphasis on VR providing employment planning and preparation services to transitioning youth at an earlier age. Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) are available to students with a disability beginning at the age of 15. VR offers core services such as career assessment and counseling, workplace readiness training, engagement in multiple work experiences, and postsecondary education counseling to students without having to apply for or be found eligible for VR services. Additional programs and services are available to those students who do apply and are found eligible. VR has transition specific information that may be found at <http://rehabworks.org/stw.shtml>. Here, you will find helpful videos, links, and resources for you and your son to explore. If you are residing in Florida and you are interested in applying for VR services, visit www.RehabWorks.org to identify a VR office in your area.

I do not like my Support Coordinator from VR. Can I change her? She does seem to like her job.

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities usually has Support Coordinators, while VR has Counselors. You may always request a new VR Counselor or service provider. However, I would first encourage you to discuss with your VR Counselor what it is that you don't like about them or the service provider. For instance, what change would you like to see happen to improve how you feel about them? VR Customers who are not receiving the services or programs that are identified in their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) are also encouraged speak to the supervisor of their local office. Making contact and sharing concerns will ensure specific points are heard and followed up on. Customers may make a request with the office supervisor for another counselor if adequate progress has not been

made after the initial contact. Customers may also contact VR's Ombudsman Office (Customer Service) if concerns and requests have not been handled satisfactorily. The Ombudsman Office can be reached by email at ombudsman@vr.fl DOE.org or by calling toll-free (866) 515-3692.

I listened to the Let's Talk calls from The Family Café every Friday during the legislative session. How did VR do? I was concerned about their funding and structure of the program. My child is 14 and will need the assistance of VR in the future.

We're so glad you listen in on the legislative calls. This is an excellent way to find out about what is happening regarding issues affecting people with disabilities and the service delivery system. The Legislature was very supportive of VR direct programs and services and provided the division with a continuation budget—no FTE (employee) or client services reductions.

Please tell me more about the WIOA program. Sounds like a great start to get the kids engaged and working.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is a new law that puts a strong emphasis on VR providing employment planning and preparation services to transitioning youth at an earlier age. Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) are available to students with a disability beginning at the age of 15. VR offers core services such as career assessment and counseling, workplace readiness training, engagement in multiple work experiences, and postsecondary education counseling to students without having to apply for or be found eligible for VR services. Additional program and services are available to those students who do apply and are found eligible. VR has transition specific information that may be found at <http://rehabworks.org/stw.shtml>. Here, you will find helpful videos, links, and resources for you and your son to explore. If you are residing in Florida and you are interested in applying for VR services, visit www.RehabWorks.org to identify a VR office in your area.

Does VR work with those who have substance abuse issues?

Yes, the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) may provide services to individuals that have a substance abuse or dependency diagnosis. Individuals still must apply and be found eligible for VR services needed to prepare for, obtain, or keep employment. If you are residing in Florida, you may be eligible for services provided by VR. Visit us online at www.RehabWorks.org or call 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information.

I want a job! I need a job! I need to find out more about this VR. How can I find out more? I tried to talk with the lady on Friday night but she was too busy. I will look online for resources.

If you are residing in Florida, you may be eligible for services provided by the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Visit us online at www.RehabWorks.org or call 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information. If you qualify, Vocational Rehabilitation has a number of programs, services, and resources available that would be based on your long-term employment goals and individual needs.

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

How do you sign up for VR services? What can VR provide for me?

If you are residing in Florida, you may be eligible for services provided by the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Visit us online at www.RehabWorks.org or call 1-800-451-4237 (Voice/TDD) for further information. If you qualify, Vocational Rehabilitation has a number of programs, services, and resources available that would be based on your long-term employment goals and individual needs.

Do you support higher education? Do you provide assistance with college? Or is your focus only on immediate employment?

Vocational Rehabilitation has the ability to assist customers with Certificate Programs, Apprenticeships, Career and Technical, Associate's Degrees and beyond. Assistance is based on individual's needs and the identified vocational goal. To learn more about Vocational Rehabilitation services or for more information, visit www.RehabWorks.org or call 1(800)451-4237 (Voice/TDD).

Will you provide a job coach?

VR can help you overcome or manage your disability while improving your ability to get and keep a job. Various types of services can be provided, depending upon your needs. After you begin work, your VR counselor will want to make sure that you and your employer are satisfied and may determine if other services, such as

a job coach, are needed to help keep you working. If you are in immediate need of a job coach, please contact your VR counselor.

What do I need to do to get my person within VR to help me? I have been seen twice and still do not have a job!

VR Customers who are not receiving the services or programs that are identified in their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) are encouraged speak to the supervisor of the local office. Making contact and sharing concerns will ensure specific points are heard and followed up on. Customers may make a request with the office supervisor for another counselor if adequate progress has not been made after the initial contact. Customers may also contact VR's Ombudsman Office (Customer Service) if concerns and requests have not been handled satisfactorily. The Ombudsman Office can be reached by email at ombudsman@vr.fl DOE.org or by calling toll-free (866) 515-3692.

What do I do if my VR counselor is discouraging me from getting or securing the employment that I want or need? What do I do if I do not like my counselor? Can I fire them?

The VR Counselor and Customer work together to identify an appropriate vocational goal based on your individual strengths and abilities. VR only provides those services needed to achieve the agreed upon employment goal. VR Customers who are not receiving the services or programs that are identified in their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) are encouraged speak to the supervisor of their local office. Making contact and sharing concerns will ensure specific points are heard and followed up on. Customers may make a request with the office supervisor for another counselor if adequate progress has not been made after the initial contact. Customers may also contact VR's Ombudsman Office (Customer Service) if concerns and requests have not been handled satisfactorily. The Ombudsman Office can be reached by email at ombudsman@vr.fl DOE.org or by calling toll-free (866) 515-3692.



The 17th Annual Family Café Report Card 2015

Attendees at The 17th 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 **F** = Poor

The table below displays average grades for 2015, along with grades from the five previous years.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
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-	B+	A-	A-	A-
I would give the organization of The Annual Family Café a...	A	A	B+	A	A	A
I would rate the choices for breakout sessions and their ability to meet the needs of different interests a...	A	B+	B+	A-	A-	A-
Overall, I would give The 17 th Annual Family Café a...	A	B+	A-	A	A	A

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

1. As a result of attending The 17th Annual Family Café, I am able/will be able to . . .
2. In general, the most helpful to me was . . .
3. I thought we could have had more of . . .

4. I thought we could have had less of . . .
5. I am interested in finding out more about . . .
6. I would like to suggest for future Annual Family Café events . . .

Here is a sample of their responses:

As a result of attending The 17th Annual Family Café, I am able/will be able to . . .

- Forge ahead with new information and ideas to try and to share
- Understand more about my child's disability
- Find more resources out there
- Network with other caregivers
- Understand more options available to my son in the state. This was a great conference to attend.
- Become aware of more services
- Take back the training that I received to my organization and use that to help other families become very knowledgeable
- Use the information about services that are available for my son's needs
- Understand better how the IEP affects my son's education, and how we can make a difference in his future
- Get some much-needed equipment for my daughter
- Trust my son with more independence
- Have a better understanding of the challenges people with disabilities face and what organizations to refer people to
- Keep in contact with a new friend
- Let families in my area know more about apps
- Network with different organizations
- Spend a weekend with my family learning, having fun, and networking
- Effectively advocate for my child in the school system
- Be more knowledgeable about the history of the ADA
- Understand how I can deal with my situation better

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

- Guardianship sessions
- Information on the Americans with Disabilities Act
- The 2015 Women's Summit
- Gaining more knowledge
- Meeting other people with similar disabilities
- Financial and legal planning for the future of my family
- The Ticket to Work session
- The Dad to Dad sessions
- The Exhibit Hall
- Being able to receive valuable information from various sources all in one weekend

- Breakout sessions about understanding autism and connecting with other moms
- Networking with other advocates, persons with disabilities, their caregivers, and families
- Finding out I am doing a good job as a parent
- The feeling of family
- Speaking with some of the presenters
- Getting contact information for later use during the year
- The booklet that I can use through out the year
- Employment and the military
- Learning more about self-advocacy
- Mental health
- Many volunteers
- Information about CDC+
- The staff and the Youth Council
- Healing and motivational tips

I thought we could have had more of . . .

- Developmental and physical education sessions
- Breakout sessions or repeated sessions
- Activities done together, like the dance
- Breakout sessions in Spanish
- Time in between sessions, allowing us to get from point A to point B
- Actual hands-on workshops to develop transition and life plans for young adults
- Sibling Shops. Last year my oldest daughter attend a sibshops and it was a wonderful experience for her.
- Food options
- Equipment and new therapy/treatments available
- Job opportunities for the attendees
- Mental health resources
- Leadership development training
- Time to talk to everyone there
- On-site babysitting/respice services or programs for kids/adults with special needs
- Adult assistance
- Spouse relation tips, advice on making time for ourselves and each other
- Sessions on recreational activities for people with DD
- Games for the kids
- Breakout sessions for older adults
- Sessions on life and money
- Times where parents with children of disabilities can hang out
- Teenage-related activities

I thought we could use less of . . .

- Repeating same break out sessions from previous years
- People trying to sell expensive products at the Exhibit Hall
- High-cost food
- Early morning sessions/events
- Tight, crowded spaces
- Cancelled breakout sessions
- Long lines to check in
- People reading the PowerPoint slides
- Having to choose between several good, interesting, pertinent talks
- People smoking near the hotel
- Sessions that overlap/repeat
- Traffic around the site
- Cancelled classes

I am interested in finding out more about . . .

- Children with hearing loss
- Legislative issues
- Holding schools accountable
- Diet and biomedical research
- ASD
- Employment
- Autism service dogs
- Options for 22 and older. Day programs, housing, recreation, horse therapy, for disabled not able to live on their own or options for employment. Also augmentive devices
- Housing options and community models that work, available financial literacy curriculum options for individuals with IDD that include specific content areas targeted to the needs of individuals and families
- Adult day care programs
- How to see the signs of the suicide, and how to prevent it
- How to help our young adults to deal with bullying
- Modified vehicles, grants, and/or financial aid
- Aspergers and experts in high functioning autism
- Opportunities for activities for adults on the wait list
- Youth advocacy
- Early Intervention and Sibling workshops
- Grants to start non-profits from real people who have actually done it
- Helping people get connected to the resources they need
- Dads and communications
- Disability History
- WIOA as it unfolds
- Topics on coming to terms with having the disability
- Life coaching

- Soul and spirit
- Disability rights
- Volunteer opportunities
- The Florida Youth Council

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

- Navigating changes as your child reaches adulthood
- More activities
- Definitely another Women's Summit
- More kids activities
- A web page for Q&A for each one of the conferences for families to share thoughts and concerns with the presenter and each other If possible, to schedule the extra curricular events so more could enjoy and attend More empowerment workshops for families and caretakers
- I would have liked to have supervision for my kids so I could attend sessions by myself
- Everything a little bit closer together
- Childcare so that parents can attend workshops independently
- Living options for people who have had problems with group homes
- Lack of day programs and employment issues
- Session for employers to share experiences and information on successes and learning lessons
- Independent living opportunities for low income adults with intellectual disabilities
- More break out sessions on Sunday
- Dating tips
- More braille maps for large hotels
- More knowledge, programs, for adults over 21
- To repeat more sessions or have the handouts electronically available in case I missed one of the sessions
- Create more "free" or "down" time during the day, between sessions
- Keep the Exhibit Hall open late
- Maybe a healthy food cooking program
- Healthcare and med waiver benefits
- A map of the vendors on the floor with matching booth numbers so that one can actually find the location of the booth if desired
- Parent needs session
- Therapeutic daycare/recreation
- More food choices
- Have water available
- More booths to purchase things
- More presentations on successful post-school options for people with autism who are not being served well by current array of programs
- Service dogs for multiple disabilities



**THEY
NEED
YOU!**

**I WANT
YOU!**

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CHANGE AGENT NETWORK

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The CareerSource Florida network's nearly 100 career centers have professional Disability Specialists and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists available to help you find the right training or land a great job.



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CareerSource Florida is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Disponible en Español.

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YOU NEXT
YEAR**

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**The
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