



Questions & Answers from
The 12th Annual Family Cafe
Featuring the Summit on Disabilities

June 18-20, 2010

Disney Coronado Springs Resort

Orlando, Florida





The Family Café

Welcome to The Family Café Questions & Answers Book for 2010!

Greetings from The Family Café! A lot has happened since we collected the questions you will find here in *The Family Café Questions & Answers Book* at The 12th Annual Family Café back in June, 2010.

Over the summer, the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the USDHHS contracted with The Family Café to take over Florida's Family-to-Family Health Information Center program. That means that a new federal partner will be supporting our efforts to bring information, training and resources to families of children and youth with disabilities or special health care needs here in Florida.

Then The Family Café also received notification from SAMHSA, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, that we had been awarded a pair of new grants. The first of these charges The Family Café with developing a statewide family network for families of children and youth with behavioral health needs. The second is The Family Café's first national grant, and makes The Family Café a Consumer Supporter Technical Assistance Center. This opportunity will support the operation of a National Technical Assistance Center that will "strengthen and enhance consumer-direct approaches, recovery concepts and empowerment for adults with serious mental illness." This new national CAFE TA Center will help states throughout the nation to develop an effective, consumer-run mental health system.

This is a very exciting time for The Family Café, as we expand our efforts to engage and empower people of all ages, with all types of disabilities. Of course we have been here for Floridians with disabilities since 1998, and that will definitely continue. Our 12th Annual Café brought together a wide array of resources and information, with over 160 breakout sessions, with subject area tracks in eight key areas, a state-wide candidates' panel at the Annual Summit on Disabilities, a wheelchair basketball demonstration, a screening of the soon-to-be-released documentary *Forks Over Knives*, and an outdoor recreation for persons with disabilities.

As in past years, we invited families to share thoughts, concerns and questions by distributing "Pink Cards" to attendees. We have shared those Pink Card questions with the relevant state agencies, and the answers they provided are here in this year's edition of *The Family Café Questions & Answers Book*.

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

Thank you very much for participating in the success that The Family Café has become, and for taking a moment to appreciate the quality of the information available here. We hope you will join us on our journey as we move forward into new territory. Please to visit us online at www.FamilyCafe.net, where you can find updates on our different activities, and sign up to join our mailing list. And we very much hope to see you for The 13th Annual Family Café next June 3-5, 2011, which will once again be held at the Disney Coronado Springs Resort and Convention Center.

Until then, please enjoy *The Family Café Questions & Answers Book!*

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The Family Café

Why don't you offer an alternative for families that are unable to attend the convention a way to experience the workshops? For instance: 1) Tape each workshop (cassette, CD, DVD, etc.) and offer to purchase at a low rate. This would give those that wanted to attend multiple sessions the opportunity to hear/see what they missed. 2) Transcript (PDF) and put online each workshop after the convention concluded. Anything would be better than NOTHING! I realized as a special needs family funds are limited but this information is so needed.

Thanks for an excellent suggestion. We definitely realize that attendees sometimes have a hard time deciding what session to attend, and that more than one interesting session can occur in a single time slot. In past, we have not recorded each individual session, primarily because of the expense involved in contracting the necessary AV services. The Family Café Planning Committee will definitely re-examine this issue as it puts together next year's event.

In the meantime, the best way to obtain information about sessions you would have liked to have attended but missed would be to contact the presenter. We include contact information for all presenters in the event program, which can be found online at FamilyCafe.net. The presenter should be able to provide you with a copy of their presentation and other related materials.

When can you work out a food plan to go along with The Family Café?

This question comes up often, and every year The Family Café reaches out to the staff at the host hotel to discuss meal options. We will continue to press whatever hotel hosts our event to offer less expensive options for our families. Unfortunately not every hotel has the flexibility to meet every family's budget, and many hotels have menus that are slightly more expensive than what one might find off-site. The Family Café will do everything in its power to make reasonable choices available, but you may want to develop some innovative ways to eat well without purchasing food at the hotel as well.

Why was there no lunch break on Friday?

Keynote: 11:30 – 1:00
Sessions: 1:30 – 2:30
3:00 – 4:00
4:30 – 5:30

It's always a challenge for The Family Café and the Planning Committee to strike a balance between packing as much information as possible into the three days we have and leaving enough space for families to take care of their needs and feel relaxed. On Friday, registration begins at 10, and the opening keynote is at 11:30. This allows families some time to travel on Friday morning. There's also a need to fit three hour-long sessions into the day, and the Summit on Disabilities begins at 6:00. The requirement that all of those activities fit into our Friday simply made it impossible to include an hour-long lunch break. We can assure you, however, that we will take your feedback into account as we plan the agenda for next year.

Larger room with actual round table for Round table discussion for Cerebral Palsy please!

We are happy to hear that you enjoyed the Delegate Roundtable on Cerebral Palsy. Our Delegate Roundtable series has been very popular, and we will try to make extra space for this session next year!

Can you move the event each year? We live in the Orlando area. Never get funding for a room. We are a low income family and cannot afford to stay. We drive back and forth all three days. My son has Autism and it is very hard on him to go all day without resting. I want to network and learn all I can so I want to come. If the event moved to different parts of the state, we could be eligible for a room. Please be fair and change the lottery rules or change the location.

The Annual Family Café has always been held in the Orlando area. There are two main reasons for this: geography and capacity. Florida is a large state, and The Annual Family Cafe attracts families from every county. To give everyone a reasonable opportunity to attend, The Family Café has decided to place its event in Orlando, the most geographically central city in Florida. Orlando also offers a unique level of capacity. No other city in Florida can offer a similar degree of large hotel and conference centers at competitive rates.

Because of State of Florida rules, The Family Café cannot provide Financial Assistance to attendees that live within 50 miles of the event location.

Can you please have a resource table for non-profits to display information if they cannot afford to pay for a booth?

At one point in its history, The Family Café did have varying rates for different types of organizations to purchase space in our Exhibit Hall. Unfortunately it became difficult to determine which organizations belonged to what category, so The Family Café elected to institute a single rate for all exhibitors. The Family Café does offer space at no cost to Micro-Enterprises, which are small businesses that are owned and operated by individuals with disabilities and employ five or fewer people with revenue of less than \$35,000 annually. Another option for non-profits would be to purchase a Take Away Table in the Exhibit Hall, which provides a space to display and distribute materials. For more information, visit FamilyCafe.net or call The Family Café at 888-309-CAFÉ (2233).

I would like to talk to someone about me providing respite services. We provided service for 9 children this time. We have families asking about more.

Several years ago, The Family Café routinely provided respite services for a number of attendees. There would be a limited number of slots available, and those families that received respite would be selected by a lottery. Eventually, the cost associated with providing respite became prohibitive, especially when considering the organization's desire to provide Financial Assistance to as many families as possible. The Family Café then decided to eliminate respite and devote all available funding to Financial Assistance.

A number of families certainly arrange for some type of respite services during The Annual Family Café through third-party providers. There is certainly a demand for respite during The Family Café, but due to liability issues, the organization cannot play any role in connecting families with respite providers.

I would like to see a listing of other hotels in the area as an alternative to stay at if we cannot afford the site hotel. List of where closest to site of the conference and costing.

Thanks for that suggestion. We will share it with our Planning Committee. Please understand that The Family Café does have an obligation to encourage families to stay at the event hotel, as our contract commits us to use a certain percentage of our room block. Of course we do also realize that some families prefer to find a less costly option and commute to the hotel. If we are unable to publish a list of alternate hotels, we can help you with that in an informal fashion if you call our office directly.

I would like to see Mr. Arne Duncan and the President come down and for Mr. Arne Duncan to hold a class and the President do a seminar for our disability summit next year. The First Lady, Grandma Mrs. Obama's mother. Invite them all!

That's a great idea, and we would love to see President Obama, the First Lady, and Secretary Duncan at The 13th Annual Family Café Conference. Each year The Family Café invites a number of elected officials and policy makers to our Annual Summit on Disabilities, including members of the Federal Government, as well as State of Florida officials. We will continue to extend invitations to this group in coming years, and hopefully they will choose to attend.

Has anyone invited our federal Representatives to The Family Café? A question and answer period as well as future bill considerations would benefit all concerned with this conference.

Yes! We invite representatives of Federal Government agencies every year. At The 12th Annual Family Café, several representatives from the US Department of Health and Human Services, Agency on Developmental Disabilities were in attendance. If you are referring to US Senators and Representatives from Florida, we do invite them as well. As you can imagine, their time is precious and it can be difficult for them to appear at our event. Nonetheless The Family Café will continue to extend an invitation to our entire Congressional delegation each year.

This is my first year attending The Annual Family Café. It was fun and I gained a lot of information. Great services! Keep up the work! 😊

Thanks very much for your compliments! We are always happy to have new families participate in The Annual Family Café. We hope you are able to join us again next year!

How does The Family Café feel about the TV show "Glee" where a non-disabled actor plays a quadriplegic? Should there be more of an effort to hire real disabilities?

That's an interesting question. The Family Café has always had a commitment to being a non-partisan source of training, networking and information. As such, we don't normally take a position on political issues. That policy would extend to social and cultural issues as well. Of course we are aware that the way persons with disabilities are portrayed in popular culture is controversial, much-discussed issue, and we encourage the debate. However The Family Café does not have an official stance on the issue.

The Annual Family Café was well run. I hope that economy improves enough to bring back more vendors. I especially like the games: Archery, Fishing (TV) and shooting.

Thanks for the compliment! We do our best to put on an efficient, well-run event, and we're glad that the effort shows. We are also grateful to our friends and the Florida Disabled Outdoors Association for the help they have given us in bringing some adaptive recreation activities to our Exhibit Hall, and for bringing together the outdoor activities we have on Sunday morning. These parts of the event have been very popular, and we definitely intend to make them a permanent part of The Annual Family Café.

How do families go about getting the information about other conference like The Annual Family Café?

At this time, we're not aware of any event that is similar to The Annual Family Café. There are many events that take place in Florida, but generally speaking they do not serve persons with all types of disabilities of all ages. You may be better off looking for events that address a specific issue, disability, age group or region of the state.

What can The Family Café do to assist with changing the Wrongful Death Act? My son, died at the hands of the medical professionals at a hospital in Highlands County. Because he was 26, in the eyes of the law, he had no living survivors and no one can be held accountable. In America, we are all equal, or are we? Please help. I do not know how to change this law . . . it can affect so many of us. My heart aches daily for justice, but most of all for my son.

The Family Café encourages families to get involved in the policy-making process, and your situation sounds like a great reason for you to become involved yourself. Although we do not lobby on specific issues, we do encourage self-advocates and their families to engage policy-makers. A great first step would be to contact your Legislators, tell them your story and let them know what changes you would like to see to the law. Don't be afraid to reach out! Remember, they work for you. We would also encourage you to join CAN, The Family Café's Change Agent Network. This group is composed of individuals with disabilities and family members that want to take their advocacy and leadership to the next level. The members of CAN determine what issues they want to speak out about, so you may be able to find some supporters in CAN and get them to take up changes to the Wrongful Death Act as an issue to organize around.

The Family Café staff is wonderful. I hope that they are going to get another year of start planning for next year. They have been so organized. Friendly and courteous. They need a long deserved vacation for themselves.

Only one complaint I have the food prices are too high. Vending machine prices too high \$2.75 bottle of soda and \$10.00 piece of chicken and mashed potatoes only. No vegetables came with it.

Thanks for your compliments! We do the best we can to host an organized, well-run event, and it's great to hear the positive feedback.

As for the food prices at the hotel, unfortunately The Family Café has no control over those aspects of the experience. We have had multiple conversations with the host property about providing inexpensive meal options for our attendees, and we will do so again this coming year. It may also be a good idea for you to consider other options to address the issue, such as bringing groceries to the hotel.

Why can't Malverna and Robert Streater have a bigger room? They pack the room.

Team Streater has been a part of The Annual Family Café for a number of years, and they certainly draw a crowd to their popular presentations. As you can imagine, planning the entire 160+ session scheduled for the event can be a challenge, and there are many competing demands. We do our best to place sessions that we think will be more popular in larger spaces, but it's not always possible to satisfy every contingency. That said, we will make an effort to find them a larger space next year.

The Executive Office of The Governor

Why would Governor Crist come on Friday (early) when a lot of people don't arrive until Friday later in the day? Saturday morning appearance would have been better for the citizens.

Unfortunately, scheduling restraints don't always allow me to attend an entire conference or event. However, I was fortunate to be able to attend this year's conference, not only to address and speak with attendees, but also to sign two disabilities-related bills into law.

Why do Republicans say they are our friend and get into office and cut our programs and reduce our benefits . . . and bring us more grief?

Florida, like the rest of the nation, faces a very difficult economic situation during the next few years with a dramatic reduction in state revenues. Reductions in program funding were required during the most recent Legislative session to meet the constitutional requirement of a balanced budget. While many difficult decisions had to be made, I have made every effort to preserve direct services to our state's most vulnerable citizens, including children, Floridians with disabilities, and the elderly. I also vetoed a rate reduction to APD service providers. I was concerned about rate reductions that affect providers that serve Florida's most vulnerable citizens. Providers that serve the needs of those with developmental disabilities and their families have been subject to numerous rate reductions in the past few years. The additional reduction in the Fiscal Year 2010-11 General Appropriations Act of 2.5 percent would have placed many of the services needed by the developmentally disabled at risk and many providers were faced with shutting down operations and closing their doors. I vetoed this cut because I feel strongly that we need to leave our developmentally disabled population with a robust service delivery system to meet their needs and provide the specialty care they deserve.

Glad to See Governor Crist could make time for us this year. My question is why Governor Crist could not make time to meet with us the past two years (2008 and 2009) event with over a year's notice of this conference? Now finally he comes this year and it just happens to be a year he is trying to get elected again. Coincidence? I do not think so. Governor Bush came to our conference all 8 years in office AND talked to us. Thank you for the veto of the cuts.

I'm happy to say that I was able to attend each of The Family Café Events that were held during my tenure as governor of the State of Florida. I love serving the people of Florida and I have enjoyed the time I spent the last three years with you. Please be assured that I will continue to advocate strongly for Florida's disabled. My office is working with the Agency for Persons with Disabilities as it moves forward in the implementation of the system redesign to ensure that responsible practices are being utilized to provide quality of care-

I think it was nice to see the Governor attend and sign those two bills. I am glad he works with the Family Café office to arrange this.

I was fortunate to be able to attend this year's conference, not only to address and speak with attendees but also to sign two disabilities-related bills into law.

When you get to DC, will you forget about us? It seems Governor Bush forgot about us when he left office. We need support of those of you with power and influence. We do not have any without your support. Don't forget us! Help us!

While as Governor, I have made every effort to preserve direct services to our state's most vulnerable citizens, including children, Floridians with disabilities and the elderly. Please be assured that I will continue to advocate strongly for Florida's most vulnerable residents.

Thank you Governor Crist for attending. We would have loved to see your family at the conference. It was all about family.

Unfortunately, scheduling restraints don't always allow my family to attend specific conferences or events with me. It is always wonderful when Carol and our daughters can attend functions as a family. They were disappointed they could not be there, but are very interested in all that The Family Café accomplishes.

Governor Crist, I know you do not remember me, but I wanted to get a photo with you. You, me and my mom. Your security teams were rude and did not let me get near you. I am sorry, but they hurt my feelings. My mom is writing this for me because I am only 10 years-old. We just wanted a picture. We waited and you walked away.

I am also sorry that I did not have the opportunity to meet you and your mother and that you felt uncomfortable when you were trying to have our picture taken together. I regret that that I miss chances to meet many good people when I am attending large events.. Hopefully an opportunity will arise at some future event to have my photo taken with you and your mother.

Are you going to make sure that events like this continue to happen Governor Crist? I sure hope so . . . if so you have my continued support too!

I have made every effort to preserve direct services to our state's most vulnerable citizens, including children, Floridians with disabilities and the elderly. The funding for events like The Family Café is very important. I will stress the importance of The Family Café with the new Governor and the new administration. I am hopeful that support for the Family Café will continue.

Glad to see that a staff member did a session for us. It was not what I expected.

I appreciate your words of praise for my staff member who presented at The Family Café Conference. One of my priorities in office is to preserve direct services to the state's most vulnerable citizens. I am glad that you enjoyed the presentation and hopefully found it informative.

The Agency for Health Care Administration

KidCare confuses me. How do I apply? Who does the application? How do I find the application? How does payment work? I need coverage for my children.

Applying for Florida KidCare is easy. You can apply online or print an application at <http://www.floridakidcare.org/>, or call the Florida KidCare toll-free information line to request an application be mailed to you at 1-888-540-5437.

When you apply for insurance, Florida KidCare will check and determine which part of Florida KidCare your children qualify for based on age and income. If Florida KidCare determines that your children may be eligible for Medicaid, their files will automatically be forwarded to the Department of Children and Families for processing and enrollment.

Florida KidCare provides low or no cost health insurance to families. Most families pay \$15 or \$20 a month for insurance coverage for their children. After the application has been reviewed, Florida Healthy Kids will notify your family if you qualify for coverage and how much the premium will be. There is no charge for children under the Florida Medicaid program if your child qualifies.

If you have any questions, please contact the Florida KidCare Information Line at 1-888-540-5437.

What can I do to protect myself from losing my benefits with Medicaid? The ticket to work options will not protect me. I need my benefits to survive.

To be eligible for Medicaid, your monthly income and countable assets cannot exceed the established limits. Your assets must stay within the prescribed limits as well. If your eligibility is based on disability, you must continue to meet the disability criteria. Your ability to perform work is taken into consideration in the disability determination process.

If you are receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid, and you become ineligible due to earnings, it is possible your Medicaid can continue. Contact the Social Security Administration if you have questions about this coverage at **1-800-772-1213**. The Social Security Administration determines eligibility for this coverage known as “1619(a)” and “1619(b)”.

Earlier today we attended a workshop where we were told not to worry about losing SSI or SSDI or Medicaid benefits if we earn our income from a job or if we got married. However, when I pointed out I did receive an overpayment; I was told I may still be responsible for it regardless of whether or not it was my fault. Who determines the income limits? I would like to know how to go about letting people in power know how unrealistic they are so we can go about changing them. How is \$2,000 a reasonable cap

when you have collect loans, rent and cars to pay for in order to live the life of any other average adult?

The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Federal Benefit Rate and asset limit are set by the federal government by Title XVI of the Social Security Act.

- The current Federal Benefit Rate is \$674 for an individual.
- The asset limit for SSI for an individual is set at \$2,000.
- Congress provides both the funding and rules for the SSI programs well as the maximum income limit that a state may cover individuals under a Home and Community Based Waiver Program.
- For Home and Community Based Services, including the MR/DD and Supports Waiver, the federal law sets the maximum income limit for Home and Community Based Services at 300 percent of the SSI Federal Benefit Rate. Florida currently covers individuals up to the maximum limit.

For people who receive Medicaid coverage through a category other than SSI, the income limits are set by the Florida Legislature within the limits of federal Medicaid law. The federal Medicaid law, Title XIX of the Social Security Act, prescribes what groups a state may cover and provides the instructions for the state to operate the Medicaid program. The Florida Legislature defines the Medicaid income limits.

Can I be on both Medicaid and Medicare?

Yes, individuals can be “dual-enrolled” in both Medicaid and Medicare as long as they meet eligibility requirements. If a person has Medicare and Medicaid, Medicare is the primary payer (Medicare will be responsible for paying for your care first). There are several categories of individuals that qualify for Medicare and limited Medicaid coverage such as assistance with Medicare premium and cost sharing requirements.

In addition to the categories with full Medicaid coverage, individuals with Medicare may be able to qualify for limited Medicaid coverage to provide assistance with Medicare premiums and cost sharing.

Medicaid eligibility in Florida is determined either by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or the Social Security Administration (SSA). DCF or SSA will be able to address any specifics regarding Medicaid eligibility. DCF determines Medicaid eligibility for:

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

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

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

If you have any questions concerning Medicare eligibility or covered services please call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) or click the following website: <http://www.medicare.gov/MedicareEligibility/home.asp?version=default&browser=IE%7C7%7CWinXP&language=English>.

Medicaid providers are far and few between now. What is up with this? I cannot find a provider who takes Medicaid. They tell me that I have to drive over 180 miles to see someone. I do not have a car . . . what is up with this?

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

If an individual is enrolled in fee-for-service Medicaid or Medipass it is important to understand that Medicaid can enroll Medicaid providers, but has no authority to require enrolled providers to accept a certain number of Medicaid clients or to accept new Medicaid clients. The Agency for Health Care Administration has 13 area Medicaid offices located throughout the state. If you are enrolled in fee-for-service or MediPass, the area offices can assist with locating medical and dental professionals who provide services to Medicaid recipients. The telephone numbers and addresses of the area offices may be found by visiting the Medicaid website at <http://mymedicaid-florida.com>. Click on the "Area Office Map" link under Area Offices. In the Select A County drop down box, choose the county that you live in. You may wish to call the Agency at 1-888-419-3456 and ask for the telephone number of the office located closest to you. In addition, below is a chart that lists each Area Medicaid Office, what counties they serve, and contact information for each.

Area Office and Area Office Manager	Counties in Area	Phone / Fax	Address
Area Office 1	Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, and Walton	Phone 850-595-2300 Toll Free: 1-800-303-2422 Fax:850-595-5717	160 Governmental Center Room 510 Pensacola, FL 32502
Area Office 2A	Bay, Gulf, Franklin, Holmes, Jackson and Washington	Phone: 850-767-3400 Toll Free: 1-800-226-7690 Fax:850-747-5456	651 W. 14 th Street, Suite K Panama City, FL 32401
Area Office 2B	Calhoun, Gadsden, Jefferson, Liberty,	Phone:850-412-4002	2727 Mahan Drive, MS #42

	Leon, Madison, Taylor, and Wakulla	Toll Free:1-800-248-2243 Fax Numbers: Provider Relations:850-921-0394 Consumer Relations: 850-921-6215	Tallahassee, FL 32308
Area Office 3A	Alachua, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Putnam, Suwannee, and Union	Phone:386-462-6200 Toll Free:1-800-803-3245 Fax:386-418-5370	14101 NW Hwy 441 Suite 600 Alachua, FL 32615
Area Office 3B	Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Marion, and Sumter	Phone:352-840-5720 Toll Free:1-877-724-2358 Fax:352-620-3076	2441 W. Silver Springs Blvd Ocala, FL 34475
Area Office 4	Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, St. Johns, Volusia	Phone: 904-798-4200 Toll Free: 1-800-273-5880 Fax:904-353-2198	921 N. Davis St. Bldg. A Suite 160 Jacksonville, FL 32209
Area Office 5	Pasco, Pinellas	Phone:727-552-1900 Toll Free:1-800-299-4844 Fax:727-552-1216	525 Mirror Lake Drive, N Suite 510 St. Petersburg, FL 33701
Area Office 6	Hardee, Highlands, Hillsborough, Manatee, and Polk	Phone:813-350-4800 Toll Free:1-800-226-2316 Fax:813-673-4592	6800 N. Dale Mabry Hwy Suite 220 Tampa, FL 33614
Area Office 7	Orange, Osceola, Seminole, and Brevard	Phone:407-420-2500 Toll Free:1-877-254-1055 Fax: 407-245-0847	400 W. Robinson St. Suite S 309 Orlando, FL 32801
Area Office 8	Charlotte, Collier, De Soto, Glades, Hendry, Lee, and Sarasota	Phone:239-335-1300 Toll Free:1-800-226-6735 Fax:239-338-2642	2295 Victoria Ave. Suite 309 Fort Myers, FL 33901
Area Office 9	Indian River, Martin,	Phone:561-712-	1655 Palm Beach Lakes

	Okeechobee, Palm Beach, and St. Lucie	4400 Toll Free:1-800-226-5082 Fax:561-616-1545	Blvd. Suite 300 W. Palm Beach, FL 33401
Area Office 10	Broward	Phone:954-958-6500 Toll Free:1-866-875-9131 Fax:954-202-3220	1400 W. Commercial Blvd. Suite 110 Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33309
Area Office 11	Miami-Dade and Monroe	Phone:305-593-3000 Toll Free:1-800-953-0555 Fax:305-499-2022	8355 NW 53 St. 2 nd Floor Miami, FL 33166

Why does Medicaid only pay for one wheelchair per five years? Mine was destroyed . . . and I cannot get a replacement. Why?

Florida Medicaid follows Federal Medicare’s policy of allowing one wheelchair per five years. However, we allow repairs to your existing wheelchair during that five year span. If equipment was destroyed in a fire, your provider can submit a request for the specific medical equipment that was destroyed. Your provider will need to include a completed police or insurance report with the request.

Please refer to the chart above and you or your provider can call the Medicaid office located in your area to learn more about submitting a request for a replacement item.

I badly need dental work! My teeth hurt so bad. No dentist in my area takes Medicaid and my dental work will cost so very much.

The Florida Medicaid adult dental services program covers eligible beneficiaries age 21 and above. Dental services for adults include medically-necessary emergency dental procedures to alleviate pain or infection. Removable partials and full dentures are covered for all eligible Medicaid beneficiaries. Medicaid also covers dental procedures related to dentures such as adjustments, repairs, and relines.

Please refer to the chart above and call the Medicaid office located in your area for help in finding a Medicaid-enrolled dentist who is willing to furnish the dental services that Medicaid covers.

My doctor has chosen not to take Medicaid any more. I am now without the doctor who has seen me for over 12 years. What can I do? I am living alone and need services.

If you are enrolled in a Medicaid managed care plan (HMO, PSN, or MPN), you can call your plan and request a new provider at any time. Managed care plans are required to have an extensive network of providers, including specialists.

In addition, the Agency for Health Care Administration has 13 area Medicaid offices located throughout the state. If you are in Medipass or on fee-for-service Medicaid, the area offices can assist with locating medical and dental professionals who provide services to Medicaid recipients. The telephone numbers and addresses of the area offices may be found by visiting the Medicaid website at <http://mymedicaid-florida.com>. Click on the "Area Office Map" link under Area Offices. In the Select A County drop down box, choose the county that you live in. You may wish to call the Agency at 1-888-419-3456 and ask for the telephone number of the office located closest to you. Or you can refer to the Medicaid Area office listing above for contact information for your local Area Office.

I need a hearing aid. I lost mine right after Medicare gave it to me. I accidentally threw it away. I forgot I had taken it off. Now, they will not replace it for me. How come they do not come with insurance coverage? I am sure that I am not the only one who has accidentally thrown it away. I was not used to it, and left it on the napkin. Well, you know the rest of the story.

Medicare is a federal program that is not administered by the Agency for Health Care Administration. For information on Medicare coverage and policy regarding replacement of hearing aids, please call 1-800-633-4227.

If this hearing aid was paid for by Florida Medicaid, we encourage you to contact the Medicaid office in your area. Information for your local Medicaid office can be accessed online at www.mymedicaid-florida.com/. Select "Public Information for Providers", then "Area Offices", and select the county where you live from the drop down box, or please refer to the Medicaid Area office listing above for contact information for your local Area Office.

How come Medicaid does not supply all the needed supplies that I need?

A Medicaid recipient should first call their Area Medicaid office to ensure the supply or service is not actually covered by Medicaid. The supply or service may require a prior approval/authorization from the Agency before the service or supply can be provided. Please refer to the Medicaid Area office listing above for contact information for your local Area Office.

If the service or supply is in fact not covered by Medicaid it may be that it is not medically necessary, or is not a least costly alternative to services currently provided by the Medicaid program. In addition, in order for Medicaid to be able to reimburse for any new services or supplies the Florida Legislature would have to authorize the funding to support the cost.

Explain to me the relationship between the waivers and regular Medicaid.

The State Medicaid program must follow federal Medicaid rules, unless a state is granted a waiver. The Medicaid State Plan is limited to certain services and has a limited number of

optional services. An individual must meet eligibility criteria, such as a limited income, to qualify for Medicaid. State plan services must be available to all Medicaid-eligible recipients if medically necessary.

A Medicaid Waiver is a program approved by the federal government to be flexible with some of the limitations of a Medicaid State Plan. It allows additional services to help the individual remain in the community and avoid an institution. The state can limit the number of people enrolled in the waiver and restrict the waiver by diagnosis or other conditions. Waivers provide services to a specific population of Medicaid recipients that are not available to all Medicaid eligible recipients. Florida has 14 home and community-based services waivers.

More details about specific Medicaid services are available on the Florida Medicaid website: www.ahca.myflorida.com.

I need information for middle class folks that are losing their Medicaid. We lost our jobs, are on food stamps, and need assistance. What are my options?

You should first contact your local Department of Children and Families (DCF) office to see if you are eligible for any programs such as the Medically Needy program. Individuals enrolled in Medically Needy have a monthly share of cost (which is like an insurance deductible) and the amount varies depending on the family's size and income. Once a person is determined eligible for the Medically Needy program and the amount of their share of cost has been set by the Department of Children and Families (DCF), accumulated medical bills that meet allowable medical expenses criteria must be submitted to DCF. The beneficiary will need to continue to submit medical bills until the share of cost has been met. Once the share of cost is met; the individual can receive full Medicaid benefits for the remainder of the month in which their share of cost has been met. To contact DCF, please visit the following website <http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/> or call 1-866-76ACCESS (1-866-762-2237).

The Cover Florida program offers Floridians access to more affordable health insurance options. Six private insurance companies were chosen to participate in the Cover Florida Program based on their proposed robust, innovative and affordable health insurance products. For additional information on the Cover Florida program please visit the following website: <http://www.coverfloridahealthcare.com/>

There are also many statewide and community resources available to Florida residents. You should contact your local Medicaid office to see if there are any community resources you may be eligible for in your area. Please see the Medicaid Area office listing above for contact information for your local Area Office.

The Agency has also put together a comprehensive list of state and county based resources for the uninsured. To access this document, please visit the following website and click on the document titled Florida's Health Safety Net Document: http://ahca.myflorida.com/Medicaid/about/other_resources.shtml

Also, below are some additional prescription assistance programs that may be available to assist you with your prescription needs:

[Florida Discount Drug Card:](#)

The Florida Discount Drug Card is now available to all Florida residents without restriction and is accepted at over 60,000 pharmacies nationwide. Florida residents who qualify based on age or income status are eligible to receive additional savings. All Florida residents can participate, there is no age limit, no income requirement, no waiting period, no pre-existing condition restrictions, no membership fees and the card can be activated instantly. No tax dollars are used to make the Florida Discount Drug Card available. A public-private partnership with Envision Pharmaceutical Services (EPS) makes the discounts possible. EPS pharmacy benefits manager secures volume discounts on prescription drugs, passing savings onto consumers.

The Florida Discount Drug Card Website provides a drug pricing index and pharmacy locator tool to determine savings and locate a participating pharmacy. To visit the Florida Discount Drug Card Website, please click the following link: <http://www.floridadiscountdrugcard.com/>

Patient Assistance Programs:

A variety of patient assistance programs are available for individuals who have no prescription coverage to help them save on their medications, no matter their age or income. Program options provide drugs at reduced prices, and in some cases at no cost to eligible individuals. Coordination is achieved through a physician, community health center, or pharmacy. The following are links to some of the available patient assistance programs:

- PPARX www.pparx.org
- PHRMA www.phrma.org
- Needy Meds www.needymeds.org
- NORD (National Organization for Rare Disorders) www.rarediseases.org
- MERCK <http://www.merck.com/responsibility/pap-information.html>

Extra Help Program:

If an individual is enrolled in a Medicare Prescription Drug program, they may be able to get “Extra Help” to pay for the monthly premiums, annual deductibles, and co-payments related to the Medicare Prescription Drug program. An individual should complete an application for Extra Help if:

- You have Medicare Part A (Hospital Insurance) and/or Medicare Part B (Medical Insurance); and
- You live in one of the 50 states or the District of Columbia; and
- Your combined savings, investments, and real estate are not worth more than \$25,010, if you are married and living with your spouse, or \$12,510 if you are not currently married or not living with your spouse. **(DO NOT include the home you live in, vehicles, personal possessions, burial plots, irrevocable burial contracts or back payments from Social Security or SSI.)** If you have more than those amounts, you may not qualify for the extra help. However, you can still enroll in an approved Medicare prescription drug plan for coverage.

For additional information regarding the Extra Help Program, or to submit an application, please click on the following link: <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps6z/i1020/main.html>

We are new to the public health insurance role of Medicaid. We have always had private insurance and because we are now without coverage we are going to have to rely on public insurance. Our doctors for our daughter do not take Medicaid for Botox treatments. Help!

Botox treatments are available to Medicaid recipients for non-cosmetic purposes. If you need assistance in locating a provider that will accept Medicaid for your daughter to get the treatment she needs, please contact your area office. You can find the area office for your location by going to this link:

http://portal.flmmis.com/FLPublic/Provider_AreaOffices/tabId/37/Default.aspx

The area office is most knowledgeable about participating providers in your area. Please refer to the Medicaid Area office listing above for contact information for your local Area Office.

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities

The Governor vetoed the one bill that would have impacted providers with budget cuts. As I understand what I just heard in my session, the proposed cuts would have impacted service providers. Now that the budget cuts have been eliminated, do we get more services offered to those of us who desperately need them? By saving the cuts, do we (people who need services) get any more services? Better services? I know the veto sounded good, but what does it mean to those who are receiving services?

Governor Crist vetoed the 2.5 percent rate reduction for providers that serve individuals with disabilities in the FY 10-11 budget. The Governor felt that these providers had been subject to numerous rate reductions in the past few years and this action may have put the providers at risk of having to shut down operations and limit services available to individuals with developmental disabilities. The Governor's veto of this action did not result in more dollars being available for people who are currently on the waiver or for those who are waiting for services.

I hear that the new bill signed by the Governor today was supported by the APD office, but not by the other agencies? Why was that? I thank you for your help and support . . . and coming from me this is a biggie!

Agency for Persons with Disabilities publishes a Legislative Session Wrap-Up Report that is available online at <http://apd.myflorida.com/>. For additional questions you may contact the Office of Legislative Affairs at 850- 414-0488.

My daughter has been on the waitlist now for 8 years . . . with no relief in sight. Why don't you provide more forums like the Family Café conferences for families to learn how to find resources on their own? I learn so much by attending this event. This is my fourth year attending and it is a life saver. Jeremy at the Family Café told me you supported the event. Thank you! Keep it up, give us more! We are just struggling to get services, and to be served.

Thank you for your participation in The Family Café over the past few years. As you are aware, The Family Café is a statewide event held annually to serve as a clearinghouse of information. It provides an opportunity for individuals with disabilities and their families to connect with providers and other stakeholders to find out where services are available in their communities.

The Family Care Council (FCC) can assist you with finding services in your local area. FCC is designed to advocate, educate and empower individuals with developmental disabilities. You can contact the FCC online at <http://www.fccflorida.org/> or by phone at 1-800-470-8101.

Also the Clearinghouse on Disability Information serves as a referral source connecting people with disabilities to the resources they need. The Clearinghouse can be reached at 1-877-232-4968.

I don't like the Tier system. Bad policy! Please work to rid the APD of this terrible system.

The Tiers were created by Section 393.0661, of the Florida Statutes and The Agency for Persons with Disabilities must follow the Laws of the State of Florida.

You may be interested in following the progress of the iBudget, a new concept APD will be implementing which will provide for more consumer direction relating to service selection and frequency. This concept is based on each person having an individualized budget in which they prioritize how they spend the money allocated to them. You can find more information about the iBudget on the Agency website www.apd.myflorida.com.

Why can't we get more service providers to work in our rural areas? My service provider is over 45 minutes by car. This is way too far to go for services. Help!

Thank you for your question. Increasing the availability of providers in rural areas continues to be a problem in some parts of the state. Each APD Area office has the responsibility to assess their provider development needs and implement recruitment efforts.

Contact your local APD Area office and support coordinator about your provider availability concerns. Contact information for your local APD office can be found at <http://apd.myflorida.com/area/>.

The Family Care Council (FCC) can assist you with finding services in your local area. FCC is designed to advocate, educate and empower individuals with developmental disabilities. You can contact the FCC online at <http://www.fccflorida.org/> or by phone at 1-800-470-8101.

Also the Clearinghouse on Disability Information serves as a referral source connecting people with disabilities to the resources they need. The Clearinghouse can be reached at 1-877-232-4968.

You may also explore unpaid, non-waiver supports such as family, friends, and church and community volunteers.

When can we expect the i-Budget to be implemented? It sounds like a good idea. When will it come to my area?

Work on implementing iBudget Florida continues at a brisk rate. In August, The Agency for Persons with Disabilities announced that APD will begin implementing iBudget Florida in several counties in North Florida which are located in Area 2B. Implementation will first begin in Franklin, Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Taylor and Wakulla counties. Several months later, APD will implement the iBudget Florida in Bay, Calhoun, Gulf, /Holmes, Jackson and Washington counties. APD must receive approval from the Federal Government before implementation, and we expect to receive that approval during the Fall of 2010 or Winter of 2011.

Right now, we are busy working with area staff in Area 2B on the official phase-in execution; communicating with consumers, families, Waiver Support Coordinators, providers, and area staff; developing policies, procedures, and forms; and building our online iBudget system.

APD is moving forward with expedience to get the iBudget in place and working for you in the very near future.

I am excited about the i-Budget, but do not understand what this means to us all if the Florida Legislature passes Medicaid HMOs next year. Should we all be scared? Sounds like it.

Last year, the Governor signed into law HB 5303. In this bill, the legislature created 393.0662, F.S.; which instructs the Agency for Persons with Disabilities to establish the iBudget Florida program for the delivery of home and community-based services; providing for amendment of current contracts to implement the iBudget Florida system. This is the present law in Florida.

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ibudget is the law in Florida, managed care is not. We cannot truly speculate about what the legislature will accomplish this next session, but you should rest assured that APD is moving forward with expedience to get the iBudget in place and working for you in the very near future.

I thought that if you were on the waitlist that you would still get support coordination services. I thought I had a support coordinator assigned to me, BUT no one calls anymore. I got one visit, completed a ton of paperwork BUT no one checks in on us. Am I supposed to be doing something, besides waiting? I do waiting quite well!

Support coordination is provided by state employees while an individual is on the waitlist.

Each of the state support coordinators manages caseloads of 200-500 individuals. They attempt to contact each person at least annually to determine if needs have changed, if there are any changes in the contact information, etc.

Upon request from an individual or legal representative, each state support coordinator will do all that they can to provide assistance, whether it be by referrals to other potential resources or

through temporary emergency provision of services, dependent upon the availability of general revenue funds allocated to the APD area office.

Ongoing case management, such as that provided by waiver support coordinators, is generally not provided. Nevertheless, if assistance is needed, please do not hesitate to contact your area office to speak to the assigned support coordinator.

We need more PCA for our family.

Individuals and families should work with their support coordinator to inform them of any recent significant life change or emergency service need in their life that was not yet documented in the QSI or support plan which could affect their service needs such as an increase in PCA. The individual's cost plan may be amended at a time other than the annual review only if there is a documented significant change in the individual's condition or circumstances that affect the individual's health or welfare and this change in plan are required to avoid institutionalization.

PCA services are to assist the individual with eating and meal preparation, bathing, dressing, personal hygiene, and other self-care activities of daily living. The service is provided on a one to one basis. PCA may not be used solely for supervision.

How can I get a copy of the rights for APD services? I think I have been violated.

Information/brochures pertaining to APD services is available at your local APD Area Office. The addresses and phone numbers are found at www.apd.myflorida.com and click on Area Offices on the left side.

Further, information/brochures are available on line by going to www.apd.myflorida.com and click on News & Information, click Brochures than scroll to brochures: Decision Making Options and Guide to Administrative Hearings.

Can the Med-waiver pay for transportation to my job?

The Medicaid Waiver pays for rides to and from a recipient's waiver services. In most cases, this would be transportation to and from adult day training and supported employment. If a person is employed and is receiving supported employment on their job, then the waiver would pay for transportation to and from their job.

When will the Tier system go away? I thought it was designed to assist people with disabilities and consumers. It is a terrible piece of work enacted by the State Legislature. It only bogs down the system. It needs to be repealed. Can this happen?

The Tiers were created by Section 393.0661, of the Florida Statutes and The Agency for Persons with Disabilities must follow the Laws of the State of Florida.

You may be interested in following the progress of the iBudget, a new concept APD is exploring which would provide for more consumer direction relating to service selection and frequency. This concept is based on each person having an individualized budget in which they prioritize how they spend the money allocated to them. You can find more information about the iBudget on the Agency website www.apd.myflorida.com.

I am a CDC+ consumer, and have been since day one. Why do we have to adhere to the tier program? It is defeating the purpose of the CDC+ program.

The Consumer Directed Care Plus (CDC+) program is a long-term care program alternative to the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Medicaid Waiver. Your CDC+ monthly budget is based on the cost of services that have been approved for you to receive under the Developmental Disabilities Home and Community-Based Services (DD/HCBS) Waiver. Your tier designation will have a direct impact on the services that are approved to meet your needs. This in turn will affect the total dollar amount that is approved on your cost plan. That is the dollar amount that is available for you to spend on the CDC+.

What about the wait list? I ask every year . . . and here I wait.

Each year, the number of individuals who can be added to the waiver is contingent upon the funding authorized by the Florida legislature. As funding becomes available, the Agency will enroll people from the waitlist. At this time, it is expected that enrollment may be limited to crisis cases, based on available funding. Crisis is defined as the individual being a danger to self or others, homeless, or their caregiver is unable to provide care. If you feel your situation is a crisis, please contact your area office and request that a Crisis Identification Tool be completed.

Tell me more about the new legislation the Governor signed at The Family Café this year and how and when will it impact us? They sound promising.

There were several pieces of relevant legislation passed during the 2010 Regular Legislative Session and signed by the Governor. The Agency for Persons with Disabilities publishes a Legislative Session Wrap-Up Report that is available online at <http://apd.myflorida.com/>. For additional questions you may contact the Office of Legislative Affairs at 850- 414-0488 .

Are there any support groups in my area for Autism?

If you have not already visited the CARD and become familiar with the assistance that can be provided, we recommend that you do so.

For more information, please visit the CARD website at <http://card-usf.fmhi.usf.edu/> or contact them by telephone at 1-800-333-4530.

Why can't there be one document needed to sign up for APD services, Medicaid, Med-waiver, etc.? Everyone wants me to complete the same type of paperwork; why can't it be done and saved on a computer and then just shared with other agencies? I get writer's cramp from completing so many forms.

There is only one document to apply for services from the APD and for waiver services. However, each agency must design specific documents to comply with federal regulations that govern their specific program, such as the application for Medicaid Social Security, etc. A single state document that would meet all requirements would be quite lengthy.

How do I get services on the waiver? Do you ever publish the requirements?

In order to apply to be on the waiting list, you will need to get in contact with the APD area office serving the county you are currently living in. Your area office will walk you through everything you need in order to apply for our services. Area office numbers can be found at the following website <http://apd.myflorida.com/area/> or by calling 1-866-273-2273.

How can I get services for my son with Cerebral Palsy? Where do you go to sign up? My son's therapist and doctors cannot help.

In order to apply to be on the waiting list, you will need to get in contact with the APD area office serving the county you are currently living in. Your area office will walk you through everything you need in order to apply for our services. Area office numbers can be found at the following website <http://apd.myflorida.com/area/> or by calling 1-866-273-2273.

Families need to know how to find and locate services or networks locally. Why can't CPD publish a listing and give it to all of us? Let us find our own services and give us a bit of guidance.

Individuals and families who are interested in locating providers may contact their local APD Area office. Go to www.apd.myflorida.com and click on Area Offices on the left side. You will find the local address, phone number and contact person.

Further, detailed provider contact information is available on line by going to: www.apd.myflorida.com/providers and click on Online Provider Search on the right side. You may search by county or area.

How long do we have to be on the waitlist: why don't you have smaller events like this one (The Family Café) around the state so we can learn what is available or how to develop resources and service in our local community?

Each year, the number of individuals who can be added to the waiver is contingent upon the funding authorized by the Florida legislature. As funding becomes available, the Agency will enroll people from the waitlist. At this time, it is expected that enrollment may be limited to crisis cases, based on available funding. Crisis is defined as the individual being a danger to self or others, homeless, or caregiver is unable to provide care. If you feel your situation is a crisis, please contact your area office and request that a Crisis Identification Tool be completed.

The APD Area offices hold quarterly meetings with people on the wait list. To find out when the next meeting will be held contact your local area office. The area office phone number can be found on our website at www.apd.myflorida.com

I used to see more providers and administrators from APD at prior years' events. They should be here too!

Chapter 2009-82, Laws of Florida, passed during the 2009 Regular Legislative Session stated travel limitations are continued during the 2009-2010 fiscal year to activities that are critical to the state agency's mission. Agency travel has been limited to monitoring group homes, medication administration, conducting QSI Assessments, application and eligibility determination, direct client services contacts, closure of DDC's and travel by the Florida Family Care Council staff who are statutory under APD.

Providers have the choice to choose what conferences they want to attend.

Eliminate the crazy tiers. This is bad policy

The tiers were enacted into law by the Florida legislature and are found in F.S. 393.0661 (3) (a) (b) (c) and (d). The APD complies with statute.

Why is there a waitlist for services? We are dying out here man!

Each year, the number of individuals who can be added to the waiver is contingent upon the funding authorized by the Florida Legislature. As funding becomes available, the Agency will enroll people from the waitlist. At this time, it is expected that enrollment may be limited to crisis cases, based on available funding. Crisis is defined as the individual being a danger to self or others, homeless, or the caregiver is unable to provide care. If you feel your situation is a crisis, please contact your Area Office and request that a Crisis Identification Tool be completed.

The Area Office phone numbers can be found on our website at www.apd.myflorida.com.

APD has a growing "waitlist" and a huge state budget. Simple math, where does all the money go? Care alone does not cost that much. Give me a simple breakdown.

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities funds services for approximately 30,000 on the DD/HCBS waiver programs. The waiver provides for a number of services including supports to

allow people to live in their own home, family home or group home; support to assist individuals with locating and maintaining employment or adult day training or therapies. According to the Agency's monthly data from June 2010, waiver expenditures totaled \$73,780,021.

Eliminate Med-waiver wait list.

Each year, the number of individuals who can be added to the waiver is contingent upon the funding authorized by the Florida legislature. As funding becomes available, the Agency will enroll people from the waitlist. At this time, it is expected that enrollment may be limited to crisis cases, based on available funding. Crisis is defined as the individual being a danger to self or others, homeless, or caregiver is unable to provide care. If you feel your situation is a crisis, please contact your Area Office and request that a Crisis Identification Tool be completed.

The Area Office phone numbers can be found on our website at www.apd.myflorida.com.

What programs are available in Gainesville, Florida for a 13 year old Downs Syndrome girl to train her in a trade? She doesn't talk but understands well. She signs a little. She will enter 6th grade in August. She will be 13 in September.

All workforce programs sponsored by the feds/State of Florida for persons with disabilities generally begin at age 14. Moreover, at age 16, a traditional work age, programs like Vocational Rehabilitation can financially sponsor integrated workforce training.

APD would encourage the concerned grandmother to ensure that all appropriate goods and services are integrated into you granddaughter's Individual Educational Plan (IEP). These would include but not limited to Vocational Rehabilitation, Agency for Workforce Innovation, Center for Independent Living and so forth. All transition aged individual with or without a disability, should be encouraged to explore the workplace, volunteerism, and meaningful youth programs like Girl Scouts. Collectively, you and your granddaughter can identify community resources, experience community programs and thus plan appropriately for the future. Some community programs can include the annual Disability Mentoring Day, Americorp, and county/city summer youth programs.

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, your granddaughter cannot be overtly discriminated against. If she is otherwise qualified to participate, you should enroll her in as many after school programs as possible.

What are some funding options for leisure equipment on the waiver?

The waiver does not provide funding for leisure equipment. As stated in the Developmental Disabilities Waiver Services Coverage and Limitations Handbook, "Durable medical equipment includes specified, prescriptive equipment required by the recipient."

You might want to check with your local Center for Independent Living or Arc to see if either of those agencies might have either equipment or knowledge of where some might be available.

You might also check your local “Craig’s List” on a regular basis to see if any items have been listed for free or at a very low cost. Another option would be checking to see if there is a FreeCycle group in your area by going to <http://my.freecycle.org/>.

Why doesn’t APD start communicating in bulk emails with families on the waiting list? You do this with providers. They can get their GRSC to call and get as many emails as possible from their case load. They can let the family members who want to communicate with each other share their email addresses. They can link APD website with NOEWAIT and Left Behind in Florida, ARC, etc.

To access resources for persons with disabilities you may go to:

The Clearinghouse on Disability Information, which serves as a referral source connecting people with disabilities to the resources they need. The Clearinghouse can be reached at 1-877-232-4968.

Also, the Family Care Council (FCC) can assist you with finding services in your local area. FCC is designed to advocate, educate and empower individuals with developmental disabilities. You can contact the FCC online at <http://www.fccflorida.org/> or by phone at 1-800-470-8101.

Does the Family Care Council have a mandated responsibility to monitor parts of the DD system including APD? How can the Family Care Council do this when most do not have very many members – and most have few, if any, family from the waiting list? How can they do their job with only 10K if they are dependent upon APD for support? List 10 accomplishments by the Family Care Councils in the last five years. What have they done for the waiting list?

The Family Care Council (FCC) is statutorily charged by Chapter 393.502, F.S. The purpose of the Family Care Council “. . . shall be to advise the agency, to develop a plan for the delivery of family support services within the local area, and to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of services and support provided under the plan.”(Section 7).

The statute specifies that the Governor shall appoint qualified members to serve a maximum of two terms consecutively. Because there are nearly 300 Family Care Council members and the Governor has other pressing appointments that surpass nearly 10,000 citizens. Thus, maintaining an accurate and robust membership within the Family Care Council is a partnership with the community, APD and the Governor’s office which is an ongoing challenge. APD encourages all interested parties in applying and citizen advocacy in achieving the recruitment goals is greatly appreciated. Because this is community service, not all advocates and family members have the time to commit.

The Family Care Council has an annual appropriation of \$150,000 to help all 15 councils contribute to the APD mission in the State of Florida. With limited resources, the FCC does an excellent job and the statute encourages each council to raise their own additional resources to advance their goals. In short, the state cannot fund everything.

Some of the accomplishments of the FCCs include but are not limited to: successful contributions to the iBudget Florida, implementation of the tier system, waiver programs, successful advocacy on behalf of the wait list, and perhaps most importantly, unified voice on APD successes and challenges. The wait list is the number one priority of the agency and the FCC can take the majority of the credit for this policy adjustment.

Feel free to recruit qualified members both in your community and abroad. Please take the leadership in raising local resources to increase the visibility of APD and its mission.

Why doesn't the Florida Legislature have a Policy Committee or Subcommittee on Developmental Disabilities? Why doesn't the Florida Legislature hold oversight hearings on the DD system in the areas of waitlists under APD? They could address topics such as having a fixed point of contact for all families from birth to death, the way to discuss the right to services, the state's responsibility, if any, to people with a DD, and to prepare an amendment to fully fund the DD system. This committee could evaluate the continuity of care for a continuum of services system accountable, and safety in the community with safe guards.

The Florida Legislature has several committees relating to the overall interests of the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD). APD is part of the Health and Human Services subgroup within the Florida Legislature. Listed are the specific committees that deal with APD issues:

- Senate Health and Human Services Appropriations
- Senate Children, Families, and Elder Affairs
- House Health Care Appropriations Committee
- House Health Care Services Policy Committee

Additionally, the Florida House of Representatives established the Select Committee on Autism & Developmental Disorders during the 2007 Legislative Session. For more information on this and other committees you may visit www.myfloridahouse.gov and www.flsenate.gov.

For additional questions we invite you to contact the Office of Legislative Affairs at 850- 414-0488.

How much money has been turned back to the general fund or otherwise not spent at the end of the year for the last three fiscal years? APD general revenue funds, Med-waiver funds, especially state match FDDC funds?

Only General Revenue reversions revert to the general fund. There have been no reversions of Medicaid waiver funding in the last three fiscal years.

The General Revenue reversions are listed below by fiscal year.

The acronym "FDDC" is not an identified organization to which APD provides funding.

Sum of Releases	Total Fund Title	
For Fiscal Year	1000 - GENERAL REVENUE FUND	Grand Total
2007-08	(1,271,876.22)	(1,271,876.22)
2008-09	(1,413,164.38)	(1,413,164.38)
2009-10	(608,834.76)	(608,834.76)
Grand Total	(3,293,875.36)	(3,293,875.36)

First release only

The crisis review by APD to add people to the Med-waiver is becoming like “Queen for a Day.” Just like the old TV show. In Area 1 a person made several requests to get on the Med-waiver, but was ignored. When he learned about the Family Care Council from Left Behind in Florida he joined and the local APD Administrator brought him to his office and told him he was going to be asked to be the FCC Chair. At that meeting the local APD Administrator said he also got off the waiting list. Was this a coincidence? Who monitors these decisions? How do we know that politics are not a large factor in your decisions to take people off the waiting list?

The APD Central Office Crisis Team is charged with the responsibility of reviewing crisis referral packages submitted by the area offices on a monthly basis. The packages contain assessments, correspondence and documentation that address the individual’s need to be enrolled on the waiver from the waiting list due to the crisis in their lives.

The team members review each situation thoroughly to determine if the situation meets crisis criteria specified in state rule, does not meet crisis criteria or more information is needed before a decision can be reached. If more information is needed, the case is pended until the following month and the area office is notified that specific information must be submitted for the committee to finalize its review. The crisis criteria, specified in rule 65G-1.047 of the Florida Administrative Code, is that the individual is homeless; the individual is a danger to self or others or the individual’s caregiver is unable to provide care because of illness, injury or advanced age.

The decision to offer waiver enrollment is based strictly on the needs of the individuals and how well the crisis criteria is met. You can be assured that politics do not play a role in the decision of whether or not an individual is offered crisis waiver enrollment.

Does APD get abuse and neglect reports from APS CPS ombudsman, etc.? What do you do with the reports? Are they public information? Do they get reports from Delmarva? Why are these reports not public? Why can’t SPD send to the FCC and FDDC a monthly tally of abuse reports by types of abuse and by county, by facility, by verified, etc.

Department of Children and Families (DCF) abuse investigators work closely with APD staff in cases involving abuse, neglect, or exploitation committed against clients of our Agency. As far as what is done with that information, it is dependent upon the individual situation. For example, if an abuse investigation necessitates the removal of an individual from their family home, APD staff work with the abuse investigators to identify alternative living arrangements.

In accordance with state law (ss. 415.107 and 39.202, Florida Statutes) abuse reports are not considered public information and the unauthorized release of such reports is considered a crime. Abuse registry information is maintained by DCF. As such, any requests for aggregate or summary data should be directed to DCF at: <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/>

For additional information regarding the Agency's abuse prevention activities, please visit the Zero Tolerance section of the APD website at: <http://apd.myflorida.com/zero-tolerance/>

APD area office staff receive copies of all Delmarva review reports. In situations where those reports reveal deficiencies on the part of our contracted providers, area office staff take a variety of actions (which could include the provision of technical assistance, referrals to Medicaid Program Integrity, recoupment of payment, termination, and/or other actions as appropriate and authorized by state law and administrative rule).

Why can't a parent on APD's waiting list interview the APD workers who are General Revenue Service Coordinators so they can decide who they want? Why can't we evaluate them to help you (APD) get rid of your dead weight? Why can't APD produce a simple budget that shows by area what each APD area office spends? By category for example, Administration, or general revenue service coordinators, respite, transportation, day programs, residential by type of service, etc.

Each area office may be staffed differently depending on the geography of the area and the number of people who reside in the area. The area might assign workers by County or by workload. The number of staff in each area is limited. If you have a specific problem with your general revenue support coordinator, you should contact the Area Administrator. Contact information for each of the area offices is on our website at www.apd.myflorida.com.

Your suggestion about posting the budget and expenditures for services by area office is a good one. I will forward this suggestion to our management staff.

Do you plan on writing new legislation that reforms the tier system?

The 2010 Florida Legislature passed and the Governor signed HB 5303, which authorized the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) to implement iBudget Florida. The goals of iBudget Florida are to simplify the system and enhance self-direction, equity, and sustainability.

Consumers in a limited geographic area in North Florida will be the first to receive services through iBudget Florida. After collecting data to evaluate the implementation and outcomes and refining the program, APD would begin statewide expansion about a year later.

Benefits to consumers and their families include:

- Greater ability to choose services that matter to them.
- Greater flexibility for consumers to respond to changing needs.
- Reduced bureaucracy and "red tape."
- Support coordinators freed to focus on providing help that makes a real difference.
- Confidence that their funding is fair compared to other similarly situated consumers.

- Reduced likelihood of policy changes that cause significant disruption due to budget deficits.
- Security of a financially stable system that will be there to serve them down the road.
- Greater opportunity for the Agency to use new funds to serve the wait list and fairly meet consumers' changed needs rather than resolve deficits.

For more information we invite you to visit <http://apd.myflorida.com>. You may also contact the Office of Legislative Affairs at 850-414-0488.

We want the Governor to take our child's name and look into his situation because he is in danger of dropping to Tier 2 and if this happens he will lose funding for ADT which is Pyramid and transportation to get there. At Pyramid he is a respected artist and performer and without this service he will be sitting at home all day with nothing to do. Please do not let him lose this valuable service.

The Florida legislature passed a law, which required the Agency to implement tier waivers. The law can be found F.S. 393. Consumers, families and guardians are encouraged to work with their Waiver Support Coordinators to identify services and resources. If you would like further information on tier implementation, please contact the local Area office in Tampa by 813-233-4300.

How do you go about getting a syndrome qualified for a medical waiver? Prader-Willi is listed but not 22Q11.2. (VCFS, DiGeorge, CIFA, are all the same syndrome, just with different names.)

In order to be eligible for participation in a Developmental Disabilities waiver, a person must first be determined eligible for services from the Agency for Persons with Disabilities. Agency eligibility is set forth in statute. To have a specific syndrome added to Florida statute, please contact your local legislator and ask that he or she sponsor a bill to that effect.

What programs are going to be set by APD for people with disabilities that are independent in their community?

The waiver offers several services that assist people with disabilities to be independent in the community. Some of these services include Supported Living Coaching Service, Adult Day Training, Supported Employment, Companion service, and In-Home Support Service. For a complete listing of services offered through the waiver and local Area offices please visit the following link <http://apd.myflorida.com/>. For additional assistance, we encourage you to contact the local Area APD office by calling 1-813-233-4300.

I would like to know about the autoimmune disorder. My daughter's three children all have autism. All were developing normally until the MMR-hepatitis, varicella was given. Not all kids' immune systems are alike.

Autism Spectrum Disorder is a “range of complex neurodevelopment disorders characterized by social impairments, communication difficulties, and restricted, repetitive, and stereotyped patterns of behavior.”

“Some people believe exposure to thimerosal explains the higher prevalence in recent years. However, evidence from several studies explains trends in vaccine use and a change in autism frequency does not support such an association.”

I wish there was a presence here at The Family Café from providers of APD services like United Cerebral Palsy or one of their affiliates.

While APD staff members participate in The Family Café conference each year, it is ultimately The Family Café organization itself that decides which individuals or organizations will be invited and/or approved to serve as conference presenters and exhibitors.

For that reason, we have forwarded your suggestion to Family Café staff members for their consideration in planning future meetings. You may also contact the Family Café directly by calling (850) 224-4670 or Toll Free 1-888-309(CAFÉ) or via the Internet at www.familycafe.net

How do you come up with the baseline monetary figure for qualifying for aid? Your “poverty level” is ridiculous and once they say every aid I apply for is “income-based” and I don’t qualify, that is it. You don’t consider all our medical bills current and future for a dual-diagnosis of Downs Syndrome and Autism and the fact my son will NEVER live alone or work. I can no longer work because I have to stay home and care for him 24/7. We get NO AID and plenty of BILLS! What is to become of my family when we are homeless? We already had to quit all therapies for lack of funding.

The federal government establishes the poverty level annually. The Social Security Administration determines if a minor child (under the age of 18) is eligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) by applying the standards for the entire household. In the state of Florida, the Economic Self-Sufficiency Program of the Department of Children and Families is responsible for applying the federal standards to applicants for Medicaid who are not SSI recipients.

Please visit the website of the Social Security Administration for additional information at <http://www.ssa.gov/>.

For additional information on Florida Medicaid rules, please visit <http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/>.

Once funding is issued to the 20,000 individuals on the Medicaid waiver list, I would like to know if the state will issue additional funds to every school district in state of Florida, to provide more services for children and students with special needs. (Funds that will cover speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy and paraprofessionals.) This is important to start at all schools throughout Florida starting from grades Pre-K to 12th grade.

The Agency receives funding for individuals to be served by a waiver. The Department of Education is responsible for programs in the schools. You may get additional information as to DOE requests for funding for services for children with special needs at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/>

How will services to people with disabilities be affected in future state budget cuts?

The Budget passed in HB 5001 totaled \$1.013 billion in funding for APD. Of that total budget, \$805 million will go toward the Medicaid Waiver.

Tier 1 will be capped at \$150,000, except those with documented medical necessity requiring intensive behavioral residential habilitation services, intensive behavioral residential services with medical needs, or special medical home care.

Tiers 2, 3 and 4 will be reduced 2.5 percent

Tier 2 will be capped at \$53,625

Tier 3 will be capped at \$34,125

Tier 4 will be capped at \$14,422

Governor Crist vetoed a provider rate reduction of 2.5 percent. The veto did not add the funding back into the agency's budget.

I want you to help me to get me a job to work, or off the list for a program so my wheelchair can get fixed.

Individuals who are interested in going to work should contact their support coordinator who can coordinate the appropriate referrals for services. In your case, your support coordinator may contact Vocational Rehabilitation for assistance. You may want to contact your local APD Area office if you feel you are in need of services and assistance that you are not receiving. Go to www.apd.myflorida.com and click on Area Offices on the left side. You will find the local address, phone number and contact person for

You may also suggest to your support coordinator to contact Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology for potential assistance in wheelchair repairs/modifications at www.faast.org

Further, detailed Supported Employment information is available online by going to www.apd.myflorida.com/customers/supported-employment

I want you to call right now. I hope you find a better job and a home for me and disabilities people in the home town.

Thank you for your question about finding a better job and a home. I encourage you to work with your support coordinator to achieve your specific goals. You may wish to discuss with your

support coordinator the options available to you through Vocational Rehabilitation, supported employment or supported living.

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities Website has a number of resources that might be helpful to you. More information is available at www.apd.myflorida.com under the "Finding Resources" tab.

Does APD have an online website that brings together all the available services with a checklist to narrow down or eliminate the resources that don't pertain to us!?

APD has two resources that we utilize for locating services:

1. PLANNING RESOURCES (<http://apd.myflorida.com/planning-resources/>)
2. PROVIDER SEARCH (http://www.flddresources.org/html/provider_search.asp). This site is maintained and updated by Delmarva.

I heard from a reliable source that family members will no longer be able to be providers through the CDC+ program. That would be going against the whole purpose of CDC+ and serving our own as the best providers for our disabled.

CDC+ participants have always been able to (and continue to) hire family members as Directly Hired Employees. There are no plans to take this option away from CDC+ participants. One change did occur this legislative session and it has to do with a new requirement for Level 2 Background Screening (which includes local and national screening) for all providers (including family members) effective August 1, 2010. Providers with a disqualifying offense will not be able to work for the CDC+ participant.

Is there a place where a client can go to get all the resources that are available to persons with disabilities?

To access resources for persons with disabilities you may go to:

The Clearinghouse on Disability Information, which serves as a referral source connecting people with disabilities to the resources they need. The Clearinghouse can be reached at 1-877-232-4968.

Also, the Family Care Council (FCC) can assist you with finding services in your local area. FCC is designed to advocate, educate and empower individuals with developmental disabilities. You can contact the FCC online at <http://www.fccflorida.org/> or by phone at 1-800-470-8101.

Has Florida allocated money to assist individuals with Developmental Disabilities to live in a more community-like setting rather than a residential group home?

The Agency receives funding each year that is specifically intended to pay for services and supports to individuals with developmental disabilities which enable them to live as independently as possible within their communities.

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

I recommend that you access the Developmental Disabilities Waiver Coverage and Limitations handbook. The website address for this document is http://portal.flmmis.com/FLPublic/Portals/0/StaticContent/Public/HANDBOOKS/CL_10_100501_DD_Waiver_ver1.0.pdf
The handbook is a reference guide to the community-based services that may be purchased for individuals eligible for the Developmental Disabilities Home and Community Based Services waiver.

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities provides assistance in identifying the needs of people with developmental disabilities and funding to purchase supports and services for these individuals. Although the program office is in Tallahassee, area and region offices throughout the state provide supports and services for people with developmental disabilities. Please use the following link to access a list of telephone numbers and addresses for our local offices: <http://apd.myflorida.com/area/>

Additional information regarding the programs and services provided through the Agency may be accessed via our website at: www.apd.myflorida.com

I am a married person with a physical disability. I cannot get any help from Medicare or Medicaid or the Med-waiver because my husband makes just over the financial limit. This needs to be looked at. People with physical disabilities should not have to get divorced or remain single just to be able to have access to medical care. How can this be changed? Maybe disability should be measured by a percent system like the military does, instead of work credits.

Thank you for submitting the question at The Family Cafe regarding the status of available disability benefits for a married person.

Marriage for people with disabilities raises a good and frustrating question with regards to Medicare/Medicaid as it relates to financial earning limits, resource limits and related benefits.

Medicare is a federal program, and all financial requirements are established by Congress. I suggest that you contact your Congressional Representatives and Senators to express your needs regarding Medicare's eligibility requirements. The State of Florida and the Agency for Persons with Disabilities has no ability to make changes to the federal program. People who are receiving Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) through their own work record are also eligible for Medicare. These are people who have worked for a sufficient number of years to vest in the SSDI program, paid for through payroll taxes i.e. F.I.C.A. People who become disabled after having vested in SSDI can apply for SSDI benefits. If approved by the Social Security Administration, they will receive a cash payment and will be eligible for Medicare after a 24-month waiting period.

Medicaid is a state administered program that receives both state and federal tax dollars. The State of Florida has greater flexibility in shaping the financial requirements and eligibility for Medicaid. Currently, the income and resources of spouses is countable income and countable resources for purposes of determining Medicaid eligibility. The resource limits are currently \$3,000 for a married couple (if both are on SSI/Medicaid), \$2,000 for a single person on SSI, and an overall income limit of \$28, 425 per year in Florida. This applies to people on Supplemental Security Income, or SSI – a source of welfare assistance for people with disabilities who are also poor. In Florida, if a person is enrolled in SSI, that person is automatically eligible for Medicaid.

States can do more to offer Medicaid to people with disabilities by passing legislation referred to as the "Medicaid Buy-In." More than forty states have passed and implemented the Buy-In; however Florida has not. The Buy-In would enable people with disabilities who work to purchase Medicaid by paying premiums based on a sliding scale with a limit of no more than 7.5% of their total income. People could work and earn more (up to \$39,000 per year based on 2010's legislative proposal that failed) and maintain higher resource limits - up from \$2,000 to \$12,000 and up from \$3,000 for a couple to \$18,000. However, Buy-In continues only as long as the person continues to work. Accordingly, people with disabilities who are not working would not be eligible for this program even if Florida passed it, which at this point appears doubtful. The Legislature did not pass the proposal due to the limited budget currently here in Florida. As a result, the eligibility for Medicaid has remained the same.

However, the new federal Health Care Reform will be making changes to eligibility requirements for Medicaid. Everyone should review the new law and consult with their local Medicaid administrator (Department of Children and Families - ACCESS program) once the law has been implemented to determine if they have become eligible.

With regard to Medicaid waiver, people with disabilities in Florida who are not yet on the waiver but have applied are on the wait list. The lack of funds has resulted in a very long wait list of people in need but waiting for services. Because few people leave the waiver once on it, there are very limited slots opening up which continues to slow down progress for people on the wait list.

To determine if you are eligible for Medicaid waiver, you must apply to the Agency for Persons with Disabilities local area office. Forms are available. There is no way to determine your eligibility for Medicaid waiver without first completing the application and submitting it to APD's local area office.

I hope the above serves to address your concerns.

Why, if the LAW states that anyone under the auspices of APD is entitled to services, is anyone on a “Wait List” not receiving services? It is my understanding that people on the “Wait List” are part of APD. Have our Legislators broken the law by ordering services without funding?

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities is authorized to provide services to eligible individuals pursuant to Chapter 393 of the Florida Statutes. The statute requires the Agency to remain within its appropriated budget and allows for the establishment of a waiting list for waiver services, however while on the waiting list, the local APD office can provide individuals with information and referral about other programs and services. In addition, the agency does have limited general revenue funding that can be used for individuals on the waiting list.

APD and Family Café: Respite Care at The Family Café. Can you set up a way to coordinate Respite with waiver providers on site? I know in the past Kiddie Corp was used and paid for by APD. I know it was expensive and budget costs were cut by APD, but those of us on waiver have funds to use but cannot always get providers to come to Orlando.

The Family Café is made possible through a wide range of public and private entities which does include The Agency for Persons with Disabilities. Since respite care is high-cost and given their limited resources, The Family Café was only able to serve a relatively small number of families.

The Family Café always appreciates suggestions and is willing to investigate new ideas. For additional questions, suggestions or concerns you may contact Family Café at <http://www.familycafe.net>

My son has emotional behavioral disorders and I know nothing about it; please help! I would like to see more discussed about Autism and or Asperger’s. I need services.

There has been a lot of debate about the nature of Asperger's syndrome and where it fits within the Autism spectrum. The one thing that is known for sure is that Asperger's IS a type of autism, but without many of the debilitating symptoms of the more severe form, autistic disorder.

A child who is typically autistic will show severe lapses in the development of language. A second way to differentiate Asperger's from classic autism is the cognitive abilities of Asperger's children. Most kids that have Asperger's show normal or even above average cognitive ability in classroom settings and on I.Q. tests. Another major difference between kids with autism and Asperger's is the way the two interact socially. Autistic individuals can sometimes come across as not really being aware of or caring about children around them. However children with Asperger's syndrome in most cases want to be social but are just very, very awkward, and appear to have no knowledge of social rules and proper mannerisms. Finally, a child with Asperger's syndrome is often different from the child with traditional autism in the way they become obsessed with things. They tend to only want to talk about whatever their current obsession is with other people, including kids their own age, which only adds to their being socially awkward.

As a parent we know that you want your child to receive needed services as soon as possible. So, it's important that you start as early as you can to obtain a determination of your child's diagnosis and whether your child will meet eligibility criteria for services from APD. In order to get the ball rolling you will want to fill out an application and submit it to the appropriate Area office identified by county in the attachment to this message.

In addition, you may wish to get involved with one of the following groups who advocate for individuals with disabilities, including autism, statewide. Below are just a few:

The CARD (Center for Autism and Related Disabilities) organization has many offices located throughout the state. Shands Hospital and the University of Florida have an excellent CARD program. You can reach them by calling 1-800-754-5891 and 352-846-2761. The CARD program works with all individuals within the Autism Spectrum Disorders and their family members.

The Family Care Council (FCC) of Florida is an organization that provides support and advocacy to families and individuals with disabilities. They have local groups throughout the state. Please visit their website at <http://fccflorida.org>.

The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council encourages and advocates for opportunities for persons with developmental disabilities and their families, to enhance their quality of life within their communities. The Council accomplishes its mission by supporting innovative initiatives that demonstrate new approaches to enhance the independence, productivity, inclusion and self-determination of individuals with developmental disabilities in all facets of community life. For more information about assistance, please call the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc. at 850- 488-4180 or Toll Free at 1-800-580-7801. You can also visit their website at <http://www.fddc.org>.

Family Network on Disabilities is a statewide network of families and individuals of all ages who may be at-risk, have disabilities, or have special needs and their families, professionals, and concerned citizens. Their mission is to ensure through collaborative efforts that Floridians have full access to family-driven support, education, information, resources, and advocacy and to serve families of children with disabilities, ages birth through 26, who have the full range of disabilities described in section 602(3) of IDEA. <http://www.fndfl.org>.

You may also be interested in contacting the Clearinghouse on Disability Information and Referral Program. The Clearinghouse provides a statewide toll-free information and referral system for all disability-related services, programs, assistance, and resources. Please call them at 1-877-232-4968 or email them at clearinghouse@myflorida.com.

We are very concerned about the waiting list. We have attended The Family Café since 1998, each year looking for information about Health Care and Insurance. We have been on the waitlist for many years and the insurance where I work is up as Deputy Sheriff is getting worse. Costs are up and benefits are down. Please help us get off the waiting list for my daughter's benefit.

Improving services to people on the waitlist continues to be one of the top strategic objectives for the agency. Each year, the number of individuals who can be added to the waiver is

contingent upon the funding authorized by the Florida legislature. Area offices are working to meet with people on the waitlist on a quarterly basis and to provide additional resources and referrals to programs that may be helpful in finding supports.

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities Website also links to additional resources that might be helpful to you. More information is available at www.apd.myflorida.com under the “Finding Resources” tab.

If you feel your situation is a crisis, please contact your area office and request that a Crisis Identification Tool be completed. Crisis is defined as the individual being a danger to self or others, homeless, or caregiver is unable to provide care. Should you have additional questions, please contact your local APD Office.

My daughter has been on the Med-waiver waiting list for 12 years and I have never heard from her caseworker to see if we need anything. When I call him to find out anything, I never get a return call. He told me one time he would come to my daughter’s IEP and never showed up. My daughter is now 21 years-old and will be in her last year of school.

Improving services to people on the waitlist continues to be one of the top strategic objectives for the agency. Each year, the number of individuals who can be added to the waiver is contingent upon the funding authorized by the Florida legislature. Area offices are working to meet with people on the waitlist on a quarterly basis and to provide additional resources and referrals to programs that may be helpful in finding supports.

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Regarding agencies and organizations serving people with disabilities: Over several years I have observed most Florida agencies and many organizations (usually non-profit) are not able or perhaps willing to unify the population of people with disabilities. People are sorted and labeled into diagnoses, economic status, and/or political party. Will state agencies and disability-related organizations ever be encouraged to unify the population? The appointment of board members and directors of these organizations must stop limiting their selections of individuals only to those same people who are not going to challenge the status quo. New ideas and solutions cannot grow in an environment of the same people/guaranteed allies and “yes men.”

The history of disability agencies, programs, and not-for-profit service providers has grown and evolved with the broader civil rights movement and other equal rights laws. This evolution continues today. Some could argue very well that the federal government, state government and community providers would significantly help the cross disability community through uniform standards and measures. The Governor’s Commission on Disabilities investigated these same

issues. The Commission discovered that it would require federal, state and local long-term collaboration. Reports on this issue can be found at their website (http://dms.myflorida.com/other_programs/governor_s_commission_on_disabilities).

The challenge with some of these lofty goals, perhaps appropriate, is that the federal government, state government and community providers all use different language, measurements and funding structures. For example, the federal Social Security Agency says someone is no longer disabled by earning more than \$1100 per month. While \$1100 per month could be competitive earnings; it does not mitigate the medical condition of cerebral palsy, autism, spina bifida or blindness.

Anyone is free to help educate lawmakers with regards to service delivery models that would be more advantageous for the individual. During these times of great economic difficulty there could be significant cost savings by unifying programs but those cost savings must go to client services with meaningful measures of success.

Until we can create standard language, standard measures and standard expectations for competitive work, independent living and self-sufficiency of the highest level possible for the individual your perspective and long-term goal will always have barriers.

Politicians often mention the potential disabled children and adults have to become productive members of society . . . what of the many who cannot or will not? What will become of them?

A rule exists in the Florida Administrative Code that provides for crisis waiver enrollment of individuals whose caregivers cannot provide the care necessary for the individual's health and safety. The State of Florida recognizes the fact that some individuals will always need supervision and assistance, and the intent is to ensure that they receive that assistance if there is no family member or other person to provide it.

Department of Children and Families

How do I sign up for food stamps? Do I have to be on SSI? Does getting SSI mean that I should automatically qualify for Food Stamps? Is there a one page or one form that I can complete to get all services? This is a maze!

You can apply for food assistance on the ACCESS Florida homepage at: <http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/>. You can use a home computer, visit a DCF Customer Service Center, or apply at one of our community partners. If you cannot apply electronically you can request that we send you a paper application form by calling 1-866-762-2237. You do not need to receive other benefits like SSI to be eligible for food assistance. If you are receiving SSI, you will qualify unless you are serving a disqualification from the Food Stamp Program. The application is more than one page, but you can use it to apply for Medicaid, Temporary Cash Assistance, and for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Community partners can be located by calling 1-866-762-2237 or at by following the link: <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/access/servicecenters.shtml>.

For information on Social Security benefits, including Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), visit: <http://www.ssa.gov/>

Are there grant programs or special low cost mortgages available for people with mental illness or disabilities to purchase their own home or condo?

The Florida Housing Finance Corporation helps Floridians obtain affordable housing by providing low interest loans and other forms of assistance. Programs are not limited to individuals with mental illnesses or disabilities. For more detailed information visit: www.floridahousing.org

My brother has mental health concerns and lives with my parents in Texas. He is 45 and is constantly out of work, leaving home to live with a church community somewhere . . . and when he comes home my parents drop everything to “baby” him and they try to keep him home and working. This never works, because he leaves within 18 months and the same pattern develops. I am worried, because he is my little brother, and I have three children and a husband (one child with a disability who will always live at home). My parents are getting older and when they die, who will take care of my brother? He cannot take care of himself and has no means to stay in Texas without my parents. They feed and clothe him . . . bail him out of jail, bars, etc. I cannot do this. I love my parents and my brother, but what choices do I have? We are worried. He cannot stay with me! We need help, Florida!!

Local mental health agencies know the resources in their areas and may be able to assist in finding housing alternatives. To find local mental health services, go to: <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/samh/mentalhealth/docs/dir011808.doc>

Does diet affect my mental health? I want to get off my meds; I cannot afford the high costs. The movie today mentioned eating for better health care and maintenance. . . . Will this type of vegan diet assist me to have a better quality of life? Can meds for mental health be treated some by diet? I want to get off my meds.

It is important to consult with your doctor about your diet and before making any changes in your medication. It is potentially dangerous to stop using your prescribed medication without consulting with a doctor. You should also consult with your doctor about dietary changes that may be beneficial to you. If you are unable to afford the medications you need, there may be assistance available for you. Discuss this issue with your local community mental health center. For a directory of local providers and local Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program Offices, go to:

<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/samh/mentalhealth/docs/dir011808.doc>

Why do I have to wait 25 months before being able to get SSI/SSDI?

The Department of Health - Division of Disability Determinations is responsible for making decisions regarding the medical eligibility of Florida citizens applying for disability benefits under the federal Social Security and Supplemental Security Income programs, and the state Medically Needy program. It is also responsible for conducting reviews of existing beneficiaries under the federal programs and determining continuing eligibility.

Applications for disability benefits are filed at the claimant's local Social Security field office when the claimant is seeking disability benefits under the Social Security Act or at a local office of the Department of Children and Families when benefits are being sought under the Medically Needy program. In both cases the application is forwarded to the Division of Disability Determinations for a determination of medical eligibility. The claim is then returned to either the Social Security Administration or the Department of Children and Families for a final determination of non-medical eligibility and effectuation of any benefits due the claimant.

If you feel that there have been delays in determining your status for benefits please contact the Bureau of Program Operations at 850-488-4222 or Toll Free: 800-499-6590, or you can check the status of your application on-line at the following websites:

For Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), you can check the status of your application online at:

<https://secure.ssa.gov/apps6z/IAPS/applicationStatus>

If you need additional information about your application, contact your local Social Security office. You can locate your local office at:

<https://secure.ssa.gov/apps6z/FOLO/fo001.jsp>

For general information about SSI, SSDI, and other Social Security benefits, visit:

<http://www.ssa.gov/>

I have a mental illness and am claimed to be unable to work due to the illness. I want to work. How do I find a job without them knowing I have an illness? P.S. I want to have a family and get married without losing my services or income on SSI, Medicaid, etc. How do I do this? I cannot afford not to have the services and money of SSI. I want to be independent. Maybe the state can hire me?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a Federal law designed to ensure that individuals with disabilities (including mental illnesses) who want to work and are qualified to work have an equal opportunity to work. The Federal Government offers a free pamphlet summarizing your rights under the ADA: <http://www.ada.gov/workta.pdf>.

More detailed information about the ADA can be found at: <http://www.ada.gov/>.

Your income, marital status, and number of dependents (including children) may affect your eligibility for some benefit programs. Your Social Security office can advise you and you can get more information about your benefits at: <http://www.ssa.gov/>.

For information on Medicaid, visit ACCESS Florida online at: <http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/>.

How can I get my rights defined as a person with mental health issues and concerns? My parents say I am not fit to make decisions about my life and treatments. I say I am 18 and can do as I see fit! Who is right . . . as I know I am!!

Individuals with mental illnesses have the same legal rights as those who do not have a mental illness. In addition, the Baker Act (Chapter 394, Part 1, Florida Statutes) provides specific legal protections for individuals receiving examination or treatment for a mental illness. Detailed information about the Baker Act can be found at: <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/samh/MentalHealth/laws/index.shtml>

There is nothing for people with mental health concerns, especially if you are young and just out of school. No services offered but plenty needed, especially for my family. We are new to this lifestyle. It is confusing.

A good place to start to get information about resources available to you is through your local community mental health center. There has also been a recent move to create programs specifically for youth. The Federation of Families, Palm Beach chapter was recently awarded a grant to create a statewide Family and Youth Network. As an extension of this network, a Youth Move chapter has been developed in Florida. Youth Move works to unite the voices and causes of youth and to advocate for youth rights in mental health and other services. To find out more about the Florida chapter of Youth Move, please visit www.fofopbc.org or contact Obadiah Payton at (561) 460-8172. Links for information and referral and family-focused are listed below.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program Offices

Contact numbers for Local Substance Abuse and Mental Health Offices

<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/samh/staff.shtml>

211
Information and Referral
<http://211florida.org/> or call 211

Federation of Families-Chapters & State Organizations

Family Organizations

<http://www.ffcmh.org/who-we-are/chapters-state-organizations/>

National Alliance on Mental illness (NAMI) Florida

Education and Support for Families

<http://www.nami.org/MSTemplate.cfm?MicrositeID=279>

Are there specialty schools in Florida for day schooling for kids with mental health outbursts? He is dual diagnosed and we need resources.

The Florida Department of Education-Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services administers programs for students with disabilities and for gifted students. School districts and schools develop their own programs to serve their students in the most effective way possible with the assistance of the Bureau. In addition, the Bureau's Clearinghouse Information Center provides many materials to help parents understand their child's exceptionality, their child's right to a free appropriate education, and the processes and activities that are involved in exceptional student education.

The Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities (SEDNET) is responsible for facilitating the creation of a comprehensive "system of care" for high-risk students and students with emotional/behavioral disabilities and their families. SEDNET has local project managers that are also able to provide information on educational resources available in Florida by school district. The contact list for the Project Managers as well as the web address for the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services are listed below.

Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

<http://www.fldoe.org/ese/> or call (850) 245-0475

Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities (SEDNET)

<http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/ProjectManagers.pdf>.

I have found out that when my child acts out, we have Baker Acted him, put him on meds, etc. They offer him services only when we as parents relinquish our rights. I want my child at home with me, but he is ruining our family dynamics and life for the rest of us. We are highly dysfunctional and cannot continue with the rage . . . and now some violence. I have young boys at home and I do not think this is a way to raise children. Where do I go for help? Who do I call for services? I called DCF and they told me to call the police. The police tell me to call my physician for meds . . . and that we need family therapy. Do you think? If you had to live on pins and needles you would be needing therapy or a padded room. We love our child; it is not his fault that he acts this way. I know that he does not really want to be disruptive and on good days, he shows us respect and love. What to do? There is nothing in our neighborhood, and I will not ship him away or lock him up.

Families dealing with the day to day needs of a child with behavioral issues can become understandably frustrated. This is especially true when it seems that the appropriate resources needed are not readily available. The Department of Children and Families provides a number of contracted mental health services in each county in the state of Florida. Please contact the

Children's Mental Health Program Office at 850- 413-7240 to speak to someone about services. The websites provided below also provide information on the children's mental services available in Florida, the contact numbers for the local Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program Offices and family organizations in Florida.

Children's Mental Health

Information on Children's Mental Health services in Florida

<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/samh/mentalhealth/CMHmission.shtml>.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program Offices

Contact numbers for Local Substance Abuse and Mental Health Offices

<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/samh/staff.shtml>

Federation of Families-Chapters & State Organizations

Family Organizations

<http://www.ffcmh.org/who-we-are/chapters-state-organizations/>

National Alliance on Mental illness (NAMI) Florida

Education and Support for Families

<http://www.nami.org/MSTemplate.cfm?MicrositeID=279>

211

Information and Referral

<http://211florida.org/> or call 211

I was not able to attend the Overview session provided by Laurie Blades on Friday afternoon. I would like a copy of the handouts. Please send or post on your website.

Thank you for your interest in Children's Mental Health. A copy of the handouts from the Overview Session will be mailed to you. If you need additional information, feel free to contact the Children's Mental Health Office at 850- 413-7240.

I am a bright man! I am confused with behavioral versus scientific-based practices for youngsters with mental health concerns. Where do I Google to find the best practices for youngsters with mental health concerns? This is so confusing, and as a parent . . . I am swimming upstream! Help!

While there is a vast amount of information on the internet that addresses best practices for helping young people with mental illness, it may be beneficial to discuss your concerns with a mental health professional that is familiar with the specific concerns of your family. Some websites that offer additional information are listed below.

National Alliance on Mental illness (NAMI) Florida

Education and Support for Families

<http://www.nami.org/MSTemplate.cfm?MicrositeID=279>

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Information

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/child-and-adolescent-mental-health/index.shtml>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Child and Adolescent Mental Health Information

<http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/child/childhealth.asp>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Family Handbook

<http://download.ncadi.samhsa.gov/ken/pdf/SMA05-4054/SMA05-4054.pdf>

My sister's child was just diagnosed with bi-polar disease. It is no surprise, but a blessing to finally know what something is so we can treat it. Does treatment make this illness go away, or just controllable? She wants to ask someone so many questions, but is just overwhelmed. What are good doctors, books or websites to view for quality information?

There are a number of websites and books available to research information on mental health issues. However, it would probably be beneficial to seek the advice of a mental health professional familiar with your sister's child and diagnosis. The following link can be used to find additional information on Bipolar disorder and other resources.

Children's Mental Health Facts: Bipolar Disorder

<http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/sma05-4058/>

National Alliance on Mental illness (NAMI) Florida

Education and Support for Families

<http://www.nami.org/MSTemplate.cfm?MicrositeID=279>

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Information

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/child-and-adolescent-mental-health/index.shtml>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Child and Adolescent Mental Health Information

<http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/child/childhealth.asp>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Family Handbook

<http://download.ncadi.samhsa.gov/ken/pdf/SMA05-4054/SMA05-4054.pdf>

Why doesn't the Department of Children and Families have a manned booth at The Family Café?

The Department of Children and Families has manned a booth at The Family Café in the past and is planning to provide this service again in the future. We encourage families to provide input. If you have any additional suggestions for The Family Café next year, please feel free to contact us by phone at 850-921-4474.

I live in Miami and the doctors are shady when it comes to distributing drugs to youth and young adults with mental illness. I have never seen so many doctors prescribing such mind-altering prescriptions. I am a registered nurse and think someone should look into this type of abuse. You know which doctors I am talking about too!

Information about effective treatments, medication uses and side effects and resources change rapidly. Because of this, it is important to know good sources of reliable up-to-date information. In addition to the information you should be given by the providers you and your child are working with there are a number of excellent resources available. Many of the most up to date resources are on the internet. For those without internet access, staff at your local library and community centers can assist in finding these websites.

Information is also available online for children and youth. Just as with adults, the active involvement of children and youth in learning more about their diagnosis and steps they can take to cope with symptoms can increase their sense of control.

If you have concerns regarding your medical treatment or the behavior of a doctor or other health care professional, you may contact the Florida Department of Health - Division of Medical Quality Assurance. You may visit the Consumer Complaint website at:
http://www.doh.state.fl.us/mqa/enforcement/enforce_csu.html#Complaint_Forms

You may print a complaint form from the website using Adobe Reader or request a form by calling (850) 488-0595. In order to avoid delays in the process, please complete all sections of the form and attach the requested information. The complaint form contains an Authorization for Release of Patient Information, which must be signed by the patient or his/her legal representative. The signature must be witnessed or notarized.

Complaints should be mailed to:
Department of Health
Consumer Services Unit
4052 Bald Cypress Way, Bin C75
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3275

American Psychiatric Association

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry maintains a resource for Families webpage which includes information about current clinical trials, commonly diagnosed conditions, and medication use.
<http://www.aacap.org/cs/forFamilies>

National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI)

An excellent source of information, sources of support, and advocacy efforts.
National site: <http://www.nami.org/>
Florida site: <http://www.nami.org/MSTemplate.cfm?MicrositeID=279>

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

This website contains up-to-date information regarding research about effective treatment and prevention. Publications for children, adults and their families are available as well.
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml>

Also included on the NIMH website is a link to lesson plans for youth on the biological basis for mental health disorders. The resource contains a teacher's guide and interactive activities for

youth. A video is available in which young people talk about their experience with mental illness, *In Their Own Words* at <http://science-education.nih.gov/customers.nsf/MSMental>.

Thank you for the mental health track. I asked you about it last year and now it is here. Needs to expand . . . more topics, like crisis intervention and drug intervention. Thank you!

It is good to hear that the mental health track has been beneficial. Next year's track will include the topics you suggested. Thank you.

Why are agencies that are created to support and assist people permitted to “self-monitor” or “self-regulate”? This leaves the targeted consumers no options or alternatives when their services offered are not appropriate and not satisfactory.

The Department of Children and Families has moved to contracting out the majority of services provided to the public. In order to ensure that services are provided to the standards of the Department and by the terms of the contracts, monitoring is conducted through the contract oversight process. This process ultimately ensures that the services provided to the public are adequate and that non-compliance issues are addressed immediately.

If a consumer is unhappy with the services they are receiving, there are a number of things they can do to address their concerns. First, the consumer can request a copy of consumer rights from the provider. This information usually contains information on who to contact when concerns about services exist. The consumer can also contact the funder of the services provided. Some mental health services are funded by the Agency for Health Care Administration. However, if the services are funded through the Department of Children and Families, please contact the local Substance Abuse and Mental Health Office and speak to staff regarding any concerns.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program Offices
Contact numbers for Local Substance Abuse and Mental Health Offices
<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/samh/staff.shtml>

I have no questions, but enjoyed talking with Laurie Blades of DCF. She was very helpful. Nice!

Thank you! It is good to hear that a representative of the Department of Children and Families could be of service to you.

Do you still have the Guardian Ad Litem program?

Yes, the Guardian Ad Litem program is still in existence. For information on the Florida Guardian Ad Litem program, please visit <http://www.guardianadlitem.org> or call 850- 922-7213. The website provides information on the services provided by the program and includes the areas served in the state.

I have no questions, but I have to say, I enjoyed coming here the last three years. I have learned a lot and hope to learn more about Children's Mental Health programs. You all do such a wonderful job! Keep up the good work.

Thank you! It is good to hear that the information you received was helpful.

We enjoyed the classes, but we would like some open forum opportunities. Maybe open forum classes on specific mental health topics with a moderator. This would give us parents a chance to express ourselves and learn from each other. Sort of like group therapy.

During the 2009 Annual Family Café, Children's Mental Health partnered with NAMI to sponsor a family forum and will include it again next year. We encourage families and youth to provide input on topics for the mental health track. If you have any additional suggestions, please feel free to contact us by phone at 850-921-4474.

Maybe The Family Café could include an opportunity for moms and dads with kids with like mental health problems to have smaller chat/share sessions.

During the 2009 Annual Family Café, Children's Mental Health partnered with NAMI to sponsor a family forum and will include it again next year. We encourage families and youth to provide input on topics for the mental health track. If you have any additional suggestions, please feel free to contact us by phone at 850-921-4474.

Why do we, as a nation, constantly offer illegal citizens services, when those who need services and are citizens never get them?

Florida's Department of Children and Families utilizes stringent federal guidelines when determining the eligibility of immigrant applicants for the services it offers. As a general rule, services are not offered to undocumented immigrants.

For more information on eligibility guidelines for food, medical, and cash assistance, please visit the Department's website at:

<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/access/esspolicymanual.shtml>

Is the unemployment calculated with that of the disabled? Will the high unemployment rate of the disabled be addressed soon?

The unemployment rate in the United States is calculated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Persons are classified as unemployed if they do not have a job, have actively looked for work in the prior 4 weeks, and are currently available for work. Individuals with disabilities who meet the above criteria are included in the count. The links listed below can be used to access information on how unemployment is calculated and on Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), a federal-state program that works with people who have physical or mental disabilities to prepare for, gain or retain employment.

How the Government Calculates Unemployment

http://www.bls.gov/cps/cps_htgm.htm

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

<http://www.rehabworks.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=SubMain.Consumers>

<http://www.rehabworks.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=SubMain.Directory>

Why don't we take the millions we spend on illegal aliens, especially in South Florida . . . and give it to the families who need it who are residents of Florida.

Florida's Department of Children and Families utilizes stringent federal guidelines when determining the eligibility of immigrant applicants for the services it offers. As a general rule, services are not offered to undocumented immigrants.

For more information on eligibility guidelines for food, medical, and cash assistance, please visit the Department's website at:

<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/access/esspolicymanual.shtml>

How do I find a Day Care for special needs? Who is responsible for it? Why isn't there a listing on a website somewhere?

Privately-run child care centers-like other public accommodations, such as private schools, recreation centers, restaurants, hotels, movie theaters, and banks must comply with Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Finding child care can be especially challenging for families, because they want a provider that can accommodate their child's special needs. The Department of Children and Families maintains a website at www.myflorida.com/childcare where parents can search for child care providers in their area. Additionally, the Agency for Workforce Innovation's Office of Early Learning State Child Care Resource and Referral Network is dedicated to helping families find answers to their questions regarding how to identify and locate quality child care and early education programs to meet your family's needs. The Network can provide you with information about child care arrangements in your area with successful inclusion programs. You may access Child Care Resource and Referral services by calling the State CCR&R Network Office at 1-866-357-3239 toll-free or 850-921-3180.

I want to adopt a foster child . . . with a special need. Who do I contact? My doctor said the Department of Revenue. I am confused.

There are two websites recommended in order to begin the process of adopting from Foster Care. The first is <http://www.adoptflorida.org/>. This is the Explore Adoption Website. The Second site is the <http://www.heartgalleryflorida.org/>.

Both of these websites provide information on children in foster care that are available for adoption. There is additional contact information available to assist you through the process.

What is offered to a foster child who has been sent to home after home and been abused? No one cares. She is now 16 and living on her own. My friend lives with me, the foster family is disgusting and treats her badly. My mom says she can stay with us forever! Does she have to tell anyone that she left for good? The foster parents have

never asked her to come back home. She has been at my house now for 6 months. She is my best friend. I am 15. My little sister is in a wheelchair. She is good to her also. She is 12.

To answer your question, yes, your mom needs to tell the foster care agency that your friend is staying with your family. The correct contact for your area can be found by contacting our office or visiting <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/regions/>.

Department of Education

Do after school programs at my son's school have to be physically accessible? My son uses a wheelchair and cannot access the playground or equipment in his current after school program.

Yes. Section 1000.05, Florida Statutes (F.S.), the Florida Educational Equity Act, prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. This statute contains all of the compliance requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If there are concerns regarding specific playground areas or if a student is not able to access the playground due to his or her disability, individuals should contact the school principal where the playground is located as well as the local district administrator in charge of facility services.

Where can I find an after school program that will have staff trained to work with my child who needs one-to-one care? I need to work.

After school care is a concern for many families. School districts are only responsible for providing before and after school care for students with disabilities to the extent that such care is available for students who are not disabled and does not require providers to substantially change their program.

Resources available to learn more about services in your area include the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) and the Florida Children's Forum. Additional information on these programs may be found at the following websites: <http://www.fdlrs.com> and <http://www.fcforum.org/index.html>.

How do schools disseminate valuable information to parents about local conferences and The Family Café?

There are a number of ways that schools inform parents of upcoming events, such as trainings, conferences, or other school/community events. Some of the ways used to inform parents include: fliers posted at the school or other common location, fliers sent home with students, articles or calendars in school or district newsletters, electronic messages to parents, articles or calendars of events on school or district websites, announcements at advisory meetings, and messages on outdoor signs at the school. Some schools and districts have developed a system of notification that is specific to the needs of their population. Check with your child's school, the school district, and your local FDLRS Associate Center to learn how you can receive more information or how you can encourage them to disseminate more information on topics of interest to parents.

My son has cerebral palsy and is deaf. He currently communicates with pictures but I would like him to have a talking device. How do I go about getting him this type of device through the school?

The individual educational plan (IEP) is the cornerstone of education for a student with a disability. Your son's IEP team, of which you are an important member, must consider his communication needs when determining appropriate services, supports, and strategies needed to enable him to access the curriculum. If you have not done so, you may want the IEP team to consider an assistive technology evaluation related to your son's communication needs.

A variety of options exist for students with expressive communication difficulties. Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems include methods of communication that involve the sharing of meaningful information from one person to another. Messages can be conveyed through one or more different types of symbols that represent ideas, entities, and events in life. These symbols can take many different forms, including pictures, pictures with text, and simply text. A variety of AAC systems exist, ranging from picture exchange communication systems to complex speech output devices. In determining a communication system or approach that is most appropriate for your son, we encourage you to continue working with the other members of his IEP team. As the primary communication partner for your son, you will need to be familiar with whatever system he is using at school to ensure his continued communication at home.

Another resource is FDLRS, which includes nineteen associate centers that serve from one to nine school districts. These centers collaborate with districts, agencies, communities, and other personnel and educational entities to provide education and support for teachers, parents, therapists, school administrators, and students with exceptionalities. Each center includes specialists in the areas of Technology as well as, Child Find, Parent Services, and Human Resource Development (HRD). To find the center that serves your school district, go to www.fdlrs.com.

Is the FDOE involved with the Governor's Task Force on Autism?

Yes. The chief of the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services represents the Department of Education as a member of the Governor's Task Force on Autism Spectrum Disorders. The task force was established by Executive Order 08-36 on March 7, 2008, and extended by Executive Order 09-82 on April 1, 2009. The task force was created to advance public policy for the research, screening, education, and treatment of autism; to assess the availability of insurance coverage for appropriate treatment of autism; and to recommend a unified and coordinated agenda for addressing autism in Florida. Additional information about the task force can be found at <http://www.healthyfloridians.com/autism.html>.

Charter schools for students are popping up everywhere. What are the requirements for establishing a charter school?

Charter schools are public schools that operate under a performance contract, or a "charter," which frees them from some regulations created for traditional public schools while holding them accountable for academic and financial results. The charter contract between the charter school governing board and the sponsor details the school's mission, program, goals, students served,

methods of assessment, and ways to measure success. The length of time for which charters are granted varies, but most are granted for three to five years.

Section 1002.33(6), F.S., requires a school board to receive and review all charter school applications and, within 60 days of receipt, approve or deny the application. All charter applications must:

- Demonstrate how the school will use the guiding principles
- Provide a detailed curriculum
- Contain goals and objectives for improving student learning
- Describe the separate reading curricula and strategies
- Contain an annual financial plan

Additional information about charter schools can be found at the Florida Department of Education's website at http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/Charter_Schools/.

How do I determine if a charter school is the right choice for my child?

Finding the right school for a child with special needs takes research and knowing the right questions to ask. As you develop questions to ask of school personnel, it is important to consider your child's learning style, his or her areas of strength and interests, and his or her areas of need. Questions that require more than a yes or no answer will allow you to gather more information. Some basic questions to consider include, but are not limited to:

- Is the environment of the school conducive to my child's learning style (i.e., large classes versus small classes, open classroom structure versus walled-in classrooms, visual versus auditory versus multisensory teaching, structured daily routine versus changing schedule from day to day)?
- What opportunities are provided at the school that will enable my child to explore his or her areas of interests and talents either through school work or other extracurricular activities?
- Are there children at the school with needs similar to my child? If so, how is support provided to those students?
- Is this school flexible and willing to adapt to my child's learning style (i.e., accommodations, study skills assistance, etc.)
- How often does the school monitor students' progress?
- How often and in what manner are students' progress reported to parents?
- What involvement is required of parents by the school?
- What is the application process?

You want to ask these questions of the school administration. At your child's IEP meeting, you should discuss which school might best meet your child's needs. It is always helpful to schedule a tour of the school to talk to other parents about schools they recommend.

We enjoy The Family Café every year! FDLRS used to sponsor us, but now they do not have money to do it anymore. Why do some counties have the money to sponsor a family and other counties don't?

Decisions about availability of funding to support family participation are left up to the individual school districts. There are many local opportunities available without charge to families. The parent specialist at your local FDLRS associate center will be able to assist you in learning of those opportunities. Information about FDLRS centers can be found at <http://www.fdlrs.com/>.

I need a new IEP. I want to self-direct my IEP meeting and have everyone realize my goals and objectives. How do I call a meeting? My ESE teacher told me there was no time for an IEP meeting.

A student or a parent can request an IEP meeting at any time. We encourage you to put your request for a self-directed IEP meeting in writing to the principal. You may want to give your teacher and the local ESE director a copy of your request. If your request is turned down, the school district must tell you why in writing and provide you with a copy of your procedural safeguards.

The FDOE supports the idea that many students can develop the necessary skills to assist with developing their own IEPs and lead portions of their IEP meetings. These skills are referred to as self-determination or self-advocacy skills and often lead to student-directed IEP meetings. Florida requires the IEP team to consider instruction and information in the area of self-determination for all students, aged 16 and older, to help students actively participate in their IEP meetings and self-advocate, if appropriate.

It is recommended that students are taught self-determination skills by the age of 14 or younger. Florida has a curriculum called Standing Up for Me which is used in many school districts. This curriculum is designed to teach self-determination skills to students from kindergarten through high school.

Two other resources to consider as you learn to advocate for yourself are:

- The Florida Youth Council (FYC) – This council is composed of youth (aged 13 to 17) and emerging leaders (aged 18 to 30) with disabilities or special health care needs who live in Florida. The FYC is focused on getting youth and emerging leaders involved in self-advocacy, peer mentoring, and other activities. Additional information about the FYC can be found at www.FloridaYouthCouncil.com.
- A website (<http://www.floridaselfadvocacy.com>) to support self-advocates in Florida in organizing local, independent self-advocacy groups; networking with other self-advocates throughout the state; and providing resources to give self-advocates a voice in the decisions and issues that affect their lives.

I want to take college level courses in high school. My teachers say the district will not let me because I am in an ESE class.

To answer your specific question, we would need to know more about your current educational program and school grades. There are a number of requirements that students must meet in order to enroll in degree-seeking programs through dual-enrollment. For example, students must meet a specific score on the Florida College Entry-Level Placement Test (CPT), ACT, or

SAT exams. Students must have at least a 3.0 un-weighted high school grade point average (GPA) to demonstrate readiness for participation in college credit courses through dual-enrollment.

Students must have a 2.0 un-weighted GPA and demonstrate readiness for career-level coursework to dually enroll in career certificate programs. Districts and community colleges may have minimum GPAs that differ from the GPAs listed above. In the case of district technical center dual-enrollment, changes to the 2.0 minimum GPA must be specified in district school board policy. This is a topic to discuss with your transition IEP team.

The purpose of transition planning is to provide you with the services and supports you need to make a successful move into life after public school. The members of the IEP team, including the parents and the student, are critical to setting high expectations and ensuring access to effective instruction and support for students with disabilities. Based on your present level and IEP goals, the IEP team can then plan the specially designed instruction and related services needed. Assuming you are over the age of 14, the IEP members must address your desired post-school outcomes.

What is the Florida Inclusion Network?

Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) is funded by the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services with IDEA dollars to provide educators, families, and community members with learning opportunities, consultation, and information to help them support the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings. The strategies endorsed by FIN are based on validated research and include curriculum adaptations, literacy strategies, positive behavior supports, ideas for differentiating instruction, and suggestions for developing peer support systems. Additional information about FIN can be found at <http://www.floridainclusionnetwork.com>.

What are the requirements for the McKay Scholarship Program?

The John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program, commonly known as the McKay Scholarship Program, expands school choice opportunities for eligible students with disabilities.

In order to be eligible for the McKay Scholarship Program, a student must apply for the program prior to withdrawing from public school. The student must also have an individual educational plan (IEP), and:

- have been enrolled and reported for funding in a Florida public school during the October and February Florida Education Finance Program surveys (grades K-12); or
- have been a prekindergarten student who was enrolled and reported for funding in a Florida public school during the October and February Florida Education Finance Program surveys and was at least 4 years-old; or
- have attended the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind during the preceding October and February student membership surveys (grades K-12)

During the 2010–2011 school year the eligibility for the McKay Scholarship Program has been expanded for a student with a disability who meets all of the following:

- Has been enrolled and reported by a school district for funding, during the October and February Florida Education Finance Program surveys, in any one of the five years prior to the 2010–2011 fiscal year
- Has a current IEP developed by the school board in accordance with the rules of the State Board of Education for the McKay Scholarship Program no later than June 30, 2011
- Receives a first-time McKay Scholarship for the 2011–2012 school year

Upon request of a parent, the school district must complete a matrix of services document for a student when the parent has requested an IEP under this new provision.

If your child does not meet these requirements but has an IEP and is a dependent child of a member of the United States Armed Forces who transfers to a school in Florida from out-of-state or from a foreign country pursuant to a parent's permanent change of station orders, the child may be eligible for a McKay Scholarship.

The application process may be done online at <http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/McKay/>.

I am graduating with a 4.25 grade point average and qualify for many scholarships. I want to go to away to college, but I am having problems finding a college or university that will accommodate my needs for 24/7 care. What can I do?

In regards to your specific concerns about support, if you have not already done so, you may want to contact the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Office of Disability Services to assist you with your plans to go to college. The mission of DVR is to provide services to eligible individuals with physical and/or mental impairments that will enable an individual to achieve an employment goal and/or enhance their independence. Eligibility for VR services is based upon the presence of a physical or mental impairment and a goal of employment. Additional information about DVR can be found at <http://www.rehabworks.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Main.Main>.

Additionally, contact the Disabled Student Services Program at the college or university in which you are interested. These programs assist students with accommodations and navigation of the postsecondary institution.

How are school district personnel being trained to help students and families with transition planning?

The FDOE supports a number of initiatives to assist schools and school districts to implement transition effective practices. Project 10: Transition Education Network (TEN) is the primary source for providing training and technical assistance to Florida's school districts in the area of transition. Project 10 employs five regional transition specialists who are based throughout the state. Additionally, most Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) centers have staff trained to provide teacher training in the area of transition. Each Florida school district

has a designated district transition contact. In many districts, the district transition contact person provides training in the area of transition.

In addition, the Professional Development Alternatives (PDA) Transition Module is a comprehensive online module available through local FDLRS centers. This module is designed to assist with identification of the components of effective transition planning and knowledge of the essential elements that must be in place for an individual with disabilities to successfully transition from school to work and adult living. Upon satisfactory completion of this facilitated module, teachers may be awarded 60 in-service points. For additional information on the PDA program, visit <http://www.pda-ese.org>.

How do we get help with transition planning for our son who is 17 years-old and a senior in high school?

The IEP is the cornerstone of planning an educational program for students with disabilities. Beginning at age 14, transition planning must be addressed at each IEP meeting. At these meetings, one of the discussions should be about the type or types of agency support, if any, that will be needed after the student graduates from high school. Beginning at age 16, the school district must invite agency representatives to participate in IEP meeting if the agency is likely to provide or pay for a service. The FDOE has a variety of informational materials available for parents, young people, and school district personnel related to effective services and supports available to students as they transition into adulthood. It is important that parents and students communicate with the IEP team about the transition needs and goals of the student.

Since your child is still in school, we encourage you to meet with your child's guidance counselor, a transition staff person, or request the IEP team to reconvene to discuss your child's options. Some resources you may want to research are found on the following websites:

- Project 10: Transition Education Network – <http://www.project10.info/>
- Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services – <http://www.fldoe.org/ese>
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation – <http://www.rehabworks.org/>
- Florida Center for Inclusive Communities at the University of South Florida – <http://flfcic.fmhi.usf.edu/>

Transition sounds wonderful, but there seems to be nowhere for my child with severe disabilities to transition after school is done. What can I do?

Since your child is still in school, we encourage you to meet with your child's guidance counselor, a transition staff person, or request the IEP team to reconvene to discuss your child's options if you have not already done so. Additionally, if you have not already done so, you may want to research some resources found on the websites noted above.

My child has started high school at a private school with a McKay Scholarship. Have we missed out on transition services through the county?

There is no individual entitlement to free appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities who have been enrolled by their parents in private schools. The school district where the private school is located has an obligation to ensure that private school students have an opportunity to participate in programs assisted by or carried out under Part B of IDEA 2004.

The specific types of services to be provided are based on information obtained during the school district's consultation with representatives of private schools and parents of students with disabilities. Transition planning may or may not be part of the services agreed upon by the school district and the private school. The final decision with respect to the services provided is made by the school district.

Additional information can be found in the Technical Assistance Paper, Students with Disabilities Enrolled by Their Parents in Private Schools, located at <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-4656/TAN2007-158.pdf>.

How can parents become more active at the state level?

If you have not already done so, you may want to consider the Partners in Policymaking (PIP) program. Sponsored by the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, PIP is a leadership and advocacy training program that teaches self-advocates and parents how to be community leaders and how to obtain the best available services for themselves and others. Based on a national model, the overall goal of PIP is to develop productive partnerships between people who need and use services and those in a position to make policy and law. PIP participants are able to accomplish this by having opportunities to meet and talk to national leaders in the field of developmental disabilities. Additional information and applications can be found at <http://www.fddc.org/about/partners-in-policymaking>.

As an ESE teacher's aide and the mother of a child with special health care needs, I would like to know if schools are able to provide training opportunities where parents and teachers can learn to work as a team. I think we are all so stressed that we sometimes work against each other instead of as a team. Where can I find such classes, maybe on the weekends or late afternoon/evening hours?

We recommend that you contact your local FDLRS associate center. These centers collaborate with districts, agencies, communities, and other personnel and educational entities providing education and support for teachers, parents, therapists, school administrators, and students with exceptionalities. Contact information about the FDLRS that serves your area can be found at www.fdlrs.com.

I am told I must take physical education (PE) but I am not physically able to participate in PE. Why can't I get a waiver?

Physical education requirements apply to all students. While students in kindergarten through eighth grade are allowed to have the PE requirements waived under certain circumstances, students in high school, working toward a standard diploma, are required to earn one credit of PE. Students with disabilities that limit their ability to meet the general physical education

requirements may be able to meet the PE credit requirement through participation in adaptive or specially designed PE as defined in their individual educational plan (IEP) or 504 plan. The PE credit can be earned in several other ways, including:

- Participation in an interscholastic sport at the junior varsity or varsity level for two full seasons shall satisfy the one-credit requirement in physical education if the student passes a competency test on personal fitness with a score of “C” or better.
- Completion of one semester with a grade of “C” or better in a marching band class, in a physical activity class that requires participation in marching band activities as an extracurricular activity, or in a dance class shall satisfy one-half credit in physical education or one-half credit in performing arts. This credit may not be used to satisfy the personal fitness requirement or the requirement for adaptive physical education under an IEP or 504 plan.
- Completion of two years in a Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) class, a significant component of which is drills, shall satisfy the one-credit requirement in physical education. This credit may not be used to satisfy the personal fitness requirement or the requirement for adaptive physical education under an IEP or 504 plan. Additional information about PE requirements can be found at http://www.fldoe.org/BII/CSHP/Education/Physical_Ed/default.asp.

I cannot reach agreement about my son’s educational program. Is there something I can do besides requesting a due process hearing?

Parents and school districts are encouraged to work together to resolve issues regarding a student’s educational needs. When concerns or disagreements regarding a student’s educational needs arise, it is helpful for the parent to immediately speak with the student’s teacher, guidance counselor, staffing specialist, or school principal. If the parent is still unable to resolve the concerns, he or she may contact the district’s ESE office. School districts have procedures in place to assist families in resolving disputes.

In addition, parents may contact the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services to discuss the following administrative remedies:

- Mediation
- State complaint
- Due process hearing request

Additional information about administrative remedies can be found at <http://www.fldoe.org/eese/resolution.asp>.

What can I do to be treated better by my teacher? She picks on my faults and her words hurt.

We encourage you to have an honest discussion with your teacher. We suggest that you ask your school counselor and your parents or another trusted adult to take part in the conversation too.

You may also want to learn more about self-advocacy and self-determination. One way to find out more about Florida’s requirements for self-determination skills to be taught to students age

14 or younger is to ask your school guidance counselor what your school offers in the way of self-advocacy or self-determination courses. Florida has developed a curriculum called Standing Up for Me. This curriculum is designed to teach self-determination skills to students from kindergarten through high school.

Another way to develop your advocacy skills is by joining other self-advocates. The Florida Youth Council (FYC) is a group of youth (aged 13 to 17) and emerging leaders (aged 18 to 30) with disabilities or special health care needs that live in Florida. The FYC is focused on getting youth and emerging leaders involved in self-advocacy, peer mentoring, and other activities. Additional information about the FYC can be found at www.FloridaYouthCouncil.com.

There is also a website to support self-advocates in Florida to organize local, independent self-advocacy groups; network with other self-advocates throughout the state; and provide resources to give self-advocates a voice in the decisions and issues that affect their lives. That website can be found at <http://www.floridaselfadvocacy.com>.

As an educator, I am not receiving information about educational initiatives, including training events. Is there a way you can reach out to more educators or inform the school?

We recommend that you contact your local FDLRS associate center to learn about trainings offered in your area. These centers collaborate with districts, agencies, communities, and other personnel and educational entities, providing education and support for teachers, parents, therapists, school administrators, and students with exceptionalities. Contact information about the FDLRS that serves your area can be found at www.fdlrs.com.

My son scored at a Level 1 in reading on the FCAT, but he has not had a reading program for two years. What can I do to help my son get this reading instruction that he is entitled to, based on his FCAT score?

Your son's IEP should identify solutions to address your son's needs in the area of reading. It is very important that the team engages in a systematic problem-solving process when making decisions about instruction in the area of difficulty.

If you have not already done so, submit a written request that your son's IEP team convene to plan interventions related to your son's reading. Address the request to your son's principal and copy the school district's ESE director. Key questions to ask during the IEP meeting include:

- What additional instruction/interventions does my child need?
- What types of programs are used in my child's classroom (e.g., instructional programs, intervention supports)?
- How will additional assistance be provided? By whom? How often? For how long?
- How will I know if my child is making progress? How will I know if my child is making sufficient progress?
- What will the school do if my child is still not improving?
- What can I do to help my child?

The State Board of Education Rules require districts to provide intensive intervention based on a student's level of need, determined in part by FCAT scores. Each district develops an annual

K–12 Comprehensive Researched-Based Reading Plan that is approved by the Florida Department of Education and includes the details of what types of programs will be provided to all students. The districts hold each school accountable for meeting the requirements of the reading plan. These reading plans are public documents that you may access. Current K–12 Reading Plans may be viewed at https://app1.fldoe.org/Reading_Plans/.

What are the parameters guiding the administration of the 90 minutes of uninterrupted reading instruction? I was told that because my son is in ESE, it is up to the IEP team to decide. My son is eight years-old and is in the third grade. He is nonverbal and alternatively assessed. He recognized letters at home as well as sign words; however, he doesn't receive, nor has he ever received, uninterrupted reading instruction.

Through the K–12 Comprehensive Research-Based Reading Plan, all students in grades K–5 are required to receive 90 minutes of daily, uninterrupted, scientifically based reading instruction. This requirement includes students who participate in the Florida Alternate Assessment. For students who have significant cognitive impairments, the IEP team may determine that other instruction, such as language acquisition or other pre-reading skills, are more appropriate for the student during the 90-minute reading block. Additional information about reading requirements for students with disabilities can be found at <http://www.justreadflorida.com/pdf/rrsd.pdf>.

As a member of your son's IEP team, you have a right to request that the IEP team reconvene to review or revise his IEP if you feel he is not progressing, or if you feel that any components of his IEP are not appropriate to his needs. The IEP team should reconvene to study all of the available data related to his progress and his performance given the current instruction, interventions, services, and accommodations. During this process, the team should address the following problem-solving questions to improve outcomes for him:

- What are the specific problems/barriers to his growth?
- Why are the problems/barriers occurring?
- What are we (as a team working toward the common goal of finding solutions that result in better outcomes for him) going to do about it?
- Once a plan or adjustments to the current plan for interventions have begun, are they working? How is he responding based on frequent progress-monitoring data?

Used in this way, the IEP process is the most direct and effective tool for helping your son access his learning opportunities and increase his progress.

Can you provide me with more information about the House Bill 1073, and the provisions included in the bill that address restraint and seclusion of students with disabilities?

As it relates to the education system and students with disabilities, House Bill 1073 created s. 1003.573, F.S., Use, monitoring, and reduction of unnecessary seclusion and restraint on students with disabilities. This statute requires detailed reporting and documentation each time manual physical restraint or seclusion is used. In addition, it establishes monitoring of manual physical restraint or seclusion at the classroom, building, district, and state levels. The bill is available at <http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Bills/billsdetail.aspx?BillId=43770&BillText=1073&HouseChamber=H&SessionId=64&>.

The FDOE has a Technical Assistance Paper DPS: 2010-168 Guidelines for the Use, Documentation, Reporting, and Monitoring of Seclusion and Restraint with Students with Disabilities, which can be found at <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-5883/dps-2010-168.pdf>

I am concerned about violence and sexual assaults at the school. How do we protect our kids?

To learn more about how you can help in your school district, we encourage you to contact your district's designated Safe and Drug Free school contact. To find the contact for your district, go to the following website: http://www.fldoe.org/safeschools/sddfs_coordinators.asp.

Where can I find out about training for bullying prevention?

Information about bullying prevention programs can be found at <http://www.fldoe.org/safeschools/bullying.asp>.

Why can't I skip a grade? I know all there is to know at my current grade level. I am smart.

The decision regarding grade acceleration is made at the district level. Each school district includes their policy for acceleration in their Student Progression Plan. Some districts have developed a specific action plan to determine whether acceleration might be appropriate for a student, so you would need to find out about your district's policy. Many districts, for example, use the Iowa Acceleration Scale, a test that provides indicators of whether the student would be comfortable in making an adjustment to a higher level of work and social situations. The administration at the school or at the district office could provide guidance as to the steps to follow toward making a decision. Typically, the considerations include test scores, report card grades, and the social-emotional maturity of the student.

For a student who has met state eligibility requirements for the gifted program, the topic of acceleration would be appropriate to discuss when the team meets to develop an educational plan (EP). The intent of the EP is to determine present levels of educational performance and then to set in place what will happen to ensure that the student continues to make appropriate academic gains. Acceleration might be discussed as an option for one subject or for a whole grade.

The Florida Department of Education supports acceleration if it is determined to be appropriate for the student. Please refer to the Acceleration of Gifted Students brochure located online at http://www.fldoe.org/ESE/pdf/gift_accel.pdf.

Are any future projects in the works to provide summer camp experiences for tots, kids, teens, and young adults with autism spectrum disorder?

A potential resource for summer camp experiences is the Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD). The mission of this program is to enhance the educational program for students with autism spectrum disorders. The CARD staff are aware of local resources. Additional information about CARD can be found at <http://doepartnership.usf.edu/index.asp>.

In addition, we recommend that you contact FDLRS to learn about local resources offered in your area. Contact information about the FDLRS center that serves your area can be found at www.fdlrs.com.

How can I become a teacher? I am a retired worker with time on my hands and lots of experience.

To teach in Florida you must have a temporary or a professional teaching certificate. To apply for a teaching certificate, you must have, at a minimum, a bachelor's degree and demonstrated knowledge of subject area. Additional information about teaching requirements in Florida can be found at the Florida Department of Education website <http://www.fldoe.org/edcert>.

Florida's public school districts are defined by county boundaries; therefore, each school district is unique with respect to its hiring procedures. Interested individuals must apply directly to the district for employment. To interview and be formally considered for a particular teaching vacancy, applicants must have a current employment application on file with the district's personnel office.

How can I become a volunteer? I am a retired worker with time on my hands and lots of experience.

The FDOE encourages parent and volunteer participation in the education of all students, including students with disabilities. Interested individuals may become involved in improving education for students with disabilities by mentoring or tutoring students; becoming classroom or school volunteers; membership in local Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA); or membership on school or district advisory committees. Contact your local school district's office to find out more about volunteer opportunities.

What is the Race to the Top grant?

The Race to the Top grant is the largest-ever, federal competitive investment in school reform. It rewards states for past accomplishments, create incentives for future improvements, and challenge states to create comprehensive strategies for addressing the four central areas of reform that will drive school improvement:

- Adopting internationally benchmarked standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace
- Recruiting, developing, retaining, and rewarding effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most
- Building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction
- Turning around our lowest-achieving schools

Florida was named a winner of the Race to the Top Phase 2 competition. Additional information can be found at <http://www.fldoe.org/ARRA/Racetothetop.asp>.

Department of Health

What can we do to help identify disabilities in children at an earlier age? Especially disabilities that affect social interaction that may not show up until they are older?

Developmental Screening is the best way to catch problems in a child's development in all areas. Developmental screening is a preliminary assessment to identify the need for more comprehensive diagnostic testing for potential developmental delays. Because children develop at different rates, and some signs of delay may be subtle, all children should be screened for developmental issues at regular intervals. Organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and Healthy Child Care America recommend developmental screening of all children, repeated as they grow and reach certain milestones. The Children and Youth Cabinet of Florida has a strategic plan to improve the self-sufficiency, safety, economic stability, health and quality of life of all children and youth in Florida.

Goal 3.a. of The Children and Youth Cabinet of Florida's Strategic Plan is copied below:

- 3) Ensure that all children in Florida have access to high-quality preventative, primary, specialty and long-term healthcare
 - a. Promote the development of a culturally-competent and comprehensive system of quality health care and medical home services, including prevention; prenatal; early and continued developmental, mental and behavioral screening and diagnosis; early intervention and on-going treatment

More attention needs to be given to Type II diabetes and the epidemic that is going on. I requested two years ago to the Family Café to give more information at booths, roundtables, etc. I do not see the local health departments participating.

The Orange County Health Department participates in the Family Café conference and provides informational sessions as requested. The county health department will provide a session and information on diabetes if requested by the organizers.

The Diabetes Prevention and Control Program, 850- 245-4330, is also available to assist with identify speakers and obtaining materials.

The American Diabetes Association website, www.diabetes.org, and the National Diabetes Education Program, www.yourdiabetesinfo.org, have materials and information on diabetes prevention and management.

Why do you say that the DOH supports our community, and then not show up at the event as an exhibitor or do sessions? Where is the Department of Health?

The Orange County Health Department participated in The Family Café conference this year and provided H1N1 vaccine to attendees (as requested by The Family Café organizers). Staff was also asked to conduct presentations on health-related topics. The request for the county

health department's participation has always been very specific as to what organizers want us to provide.

Why don't you take the millions spent on public healthcare and free lunches for all the illegal aliens in the state of Florida and spend it on our handicapped legal citizens?

The budget for all State agencies is appropriated by the Florida Legislature. Your elected senators and representatives are the voice of the people in their district.

Why is funding cut for healthcare when the politicians keep voting themselves raises?

The budget for all State agencies is appropriated by the Florida Legislature. Your elected senators and representatives are the voice of the people in their district.

Why don't we have sessions on Diabetes or Health and Nutrition for families? We need to learn to eat better.

These types of sessions can be provided by the county health department if requested by the organizers.

The Diabetes Prevention and Control Program, 850- 245-4330, is available to assist with locating speakers and materials for the recommended sessions.

The American Diabetes Association website, www.diabetes.org, has materials and information on diabetes and nutrition.

You used to have a fetal alcohol syndrome session during this event. What happened? I did not see it in the program.

The Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Clinic at the Florida Center for Child and Family Development presented on June 19th at The 12th Annual Florida Cafe. Dr. Anika Trancik, from The Florida Center provided two presentations, which included: "Identifying Children Affected by Fetal Alcohol Syndrome" and "Preventing and Treating Behavioral and Emotional Challenges Commonly Experienced by Children Affected by Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS)." The service the center provides at The FASD Intervention and Diagnostic Clinic at The Florida Center for Child and Family Development is state funded to provide Diagnostic Assessments, Intervention Services, and Statewide Trainings on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders.

Please feel free to contact The Clinic at any time via email or telephone for additional information at. 941- 371-8820, 1-800- 587-1385 or online at <http://www.thefloridacenter.org/index.htm>.

I worry about the flu and the impact it will have on my family. We with disabilities need the shot. Can it be provided free of charge? What is the plan?

You should contact your primary care provider for a flu shot. The county health departments provide flu shots under the Vaccine for Children program to those without insurance or a medical home. If your primary care provider is unable to provide your shots please contact your local county health department.

The flu vaccine is available at your county health department (CHD) free of charge for children 6 months through 18 years of age who meet eligibility criteria for the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program. Medicaid-eligible children (Title XIX Program) are eligible for the VFC Program. Adults may obtain the flu vaccine at their county health department; however, they usually charge a fee for the vaccine. Please contact the CHD directly to inquire about adult vaccine services, clinic hours, vaccine availability, and any applicable fees.

What services can I get for my child who is 1½ years-old with significant medical concerns? Is CMS based on my family income? Does it take into account the costly medical bills to keep him alive? I have had to take a job working at night and my husband works in the day hours. We are never together as a family, but are okay with this until we get services. I started coming here years ago for my brother, but now my daughter needs services and we are doing the best we can, but I am lost, and tired.

We encourage you to apply for Florida KidCare, our state's children's health insurance program. Florida KidCare has four parts, one of which includes the Children's Medical Services Network. When you apply for the insurance, Florida KidCare will check which part your child may qualify for based on age, family income, and special health care needs.

There are several ways to apply. You may apply online at www.floridakidcare.org. If you applied for Florida KidCare previously or wish to submit a paper application, please call (888) 540-5437 for assistance.

Do you provide supports to traumatic brain injury people? I call the local Health Department and they tell me they cannot help. They keep telling me to call someone else. Confused?!

The Florida Department of Health, Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program (BSCIP) provides services and support to individuals who sustain new moderate-to-severe traumatic brain and/or spinal cord injury. For more information or to ask questions about the BSCIP, individuals may contact the BSCIP by calling 1-866- 875-5660.

The individual who has sustained the injury must meet the requirements of *Florida Statute* 381.76. Additionally, the individual must meet the state definition of a brain injury and/or a spinal cord injury, must be referred to the BSCIP Central Registry, and must be medically stable. Referrals can be phoned in to the Central Registry's toll-free number, 1-800- 342-0778, by hospitals, doctors, nurses, families, or the individual with the injury. The BSCIP staff are not located in the local county health departments, which is why the health departments tell callers to call the BSCIP. Once the information is received, a BSCIP case manager or Children's Medical Services nurse care coordinator (for individuals 18 years and younger) will contact the individual within 10 working days to determine eligibility, provide information about the injury and its effects, and provide information about state, federal, and community resources.

How many people does the Department provide services for? You are a large department and I cannot figure out your website. It is confusing.

The Department of Health provides services to the citizens and visitors of Florida through Children's Medical Services, the 67 county health departments, and many divisions and bureaus. The county health departments provided 40,454,632 services to 3,620,534 people in fiscal year 2009.

Why don't the county public health units see our children with disabilities?

Not all county health departments provide primary care services. If there is sufficient access to those services in a county, the county health departments do not duplicate the services. Those counties that provide the service enroll patients based on financial eligibility. The county health departments may provide primary care services but do not provide specialty care services. We encourage you to contact your local county health department to find out what services are available in your area.

Does the DOH provide immunizations for school-aged kids free of charge?

The best place to seek immunizations is from your primary care provider. The county health departments provide immunizations under the Vaccines for Children program; please contact your local county health department for assistance.

All vaccines required for school entry/attendance in Florida schools (public or private) are provided at no cost by the county health department (CHD). Please contact your local county health department for clinic hours.

The Early Steps Program is changing its eligibility. Why? Does this mean we will not get services anymore? The lady here said that I would be automatically grandfathered in . . . what exactly does this mean? Automatically? So no one can take away my services for my child? Why do this to the smaller ones? Our babies need the best care and the most services they can get.

Early Steps eligibility changed on July 1, 2010, to match the eligibility for the IDEA Part B program. This change has been in the works for three or four years. If your child is already enrolled in Early Steps, this change will not affect your eligibility or services. Only new infants and toddlers being evaluated for eligibility after July 1, 2010 will be affected by the change.

I wish that more sessions were done for families who are just beginning to get services. I liked the Early Steps staff that talked with the families and gave away all the great resources stuff. Thank you.

Thank you for the suggestion to have an Early Steps session for newly-enrolled families. We will take your suggestion under consideration when planning our Family Café participation next year.

Is there a plan for disasters for those of us with special health care needs?

Each county has a plan for sheltering residents with special needs. You should contact your county emergency management office for information on how this works in your county.

Division of Emergency Management

We need more Disaster Kit preparation classes, at different times and in bigger rooms. These classes by No Person Left Behind are very informative and motivational for people with disabilities. I did not know all these items were available and care givers should attend the class with their clients. Linda Carter has a lot of free material she gives out from FEMA and other agencies.

Adding more of Linda's sessions is up to The Family Café Planning Committee.

We are not prepared for a hurricane, tornado, flood or God forbid an attack . . . what to do?

Go to www.floridadisaster.org and follow the Get A Plan icons. The Disability Disaster Information icon addresses preparedness issues for people with disabilities.

Please give me more information about how to prepare for a disaster. It is hurricane season already.

Go to www.floridadisaster.org and follow the Get A Plan icons. The Disability Disaster Information icon addresses preparedness issues for people with disabilities.

What do you mean by "Get a Plan"? I do not live in a flood zone and I have a generator. That is my plan.

Emergency planning involves more than being prepared for a hurricane or flooding. While you may not live in a flood zone, you might be affected by wildfire, tornadoes, hazardous material spills or other emergencies. Go to www.floridadisaster.org and follow the Get A Plan icons. This will help you develop a comprehensive plan for multiple contingencies. The Disability Disaster Information icon addresses preparedness issues for people with disabilities.

I am not ready for anything. I cannot afford to update my home or to evacuate. How can you help me get there?

Contact your local Office of Emergency Management. They may be able to refer you to groups or agencies which may be able to help. Go to www.floridadisaster.org/county_em/county_list.htm# to locate contact information for your county Office of Emergency Management. Click on the county in which you live to get the contact information. You might also contact your local Center for Independent Living. They may be able to provide you with agencies or groups who may be able to help. Go to www.flailc.org/contact_list.htm and choose the format you wish to use (word, pdf, text) then look for your county's name and the CIL's contact information.

Are there DEM dollars available for helping families of those with special needs to keep them in their own homes, like for generators or supplies, so they do not have to go to the shelters? There was not a tax break week this year.

Unfortunately, DEM has not appropriated funds for this purpose.

What is in place to help people with disabilities to access ice and others supplies after the disaster when Para-transit is not available?

Be sure to register on your county's Special Needs Registry. This does not mean you will automatically be eligible for a Special Needs Shelter but it does allow your county Emergency Management team to better plan for the needs of the county's population. Also contact your local Office of Emergency Management to address this question. Go to www.floridadisaster.org/county_em/county_list.htm# and click on the county in which you live.

Why do emergency operations differ in each county and why is there not more emphasis placed towards helping people with disabilities during an emergency?

Each county establishes its own structure for the Office of Emergency Management so there will be differences. More emphasis is being placed on people with disabilities during emergencies than in the past but more can be done. Individuals with disabilities (or their families, friends or advocates) should become involved with their local Office of Emergency Management in order to ensure their issues are addressed.

We need more hands-on disaster building of kits from food to solar power equipment. Show us what is available. Have one session in the morning and one again in the afternoon. Not so much on the government side. We need to go into detail on how to prepare your kit.

Adding more of Linda's sessions is up to The Family Café Planning Committee.

I am worried about being prepared for hurricanes this year.

Go to www.floridadisaster.org and follow the Get A Plan icons. This will help you develop a comprehensive plan for multiple contingencies. The Disability Disaster Information icon addresses preparedness issues for people with disabilities. You should also be prepared for more than hurricanes. You may be vulnerable to flooding, wildfire, tornado or other types of emergencies.

We need more local disaster preparedness training for our population. I was here for Hurricane Andrew, and I am worried with the lack of providers and services and in increase in population we are headed for a "perfect storm."

Go to www.floridadisaster.org/county_em/county_list.htm# to locate contact information for your county Office of Emergency Management. Click on the county in which you live to get the contact information. Ask about training for your community and also if your area has Community

Emergency Response Team. You might be able to volunteer for that team and receive training through them.

Can a law be passed to make sure monitors or lighted signs are posted in malls and large consumer stores to alert the deaf and or hard of hearing that the stores are at closing time or to let them know that a disaster is happening/occurring?

Contact your local state Representative or Senator. Go to www.leg.state.fl.us/Welcome/index.cfm?CFID=161973371&CFTOKEN=17085246

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

I have gone to several disabilities conferences in Florida and I just heard that VR has a program that will assist students with disabilities attend college with tuition and book money. Why isn't this program better "advertised"?

Thank you for your question regarding the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's transition services for students entering higher education programs. We are glad you have found out about this program and hope you will take advantage of it. We try very hard to "get the word out" about our programs and services, as it is essential to our mission of helping individuals with disabilities to find meaningful employment and live independent lives. We conduct outreach in a variety of ways, including: attending job fairs in high schools and on college campuses; through our website rehabworks.org; and contact with employer and stakeholder groups, such as the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, the Governor's Commission on Disabilities, the Agency for Workforce Innovation, the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council and The Family Café. If you can think of groups we can add to our list, please write us at www.rehabworks.org

The process of Vocational Rehabilitation "due process" is not in any way controlled by the complaining party/plaintiff. Instead the agency or state chooses who may file a request for due process. When a due process request is approved, the agency files their definition of the complaint, decides what will and will not be tried before a judge, has the support of a lawyer, documentation, funding . . . the deck is stacked against the clients. Why is the "due process" protection polluted by a procedure that treats the client as both a joke and an incompetent being?

Please refer to the VR Handbook of Services for an explanation of assistance that can be provided by our Ombudsman's Office and by the Client Assistance Program. An electronic copy of the Handbook is found at www.rehabworks.org. Click on "Consumers" and scroll down to "VR Consumer Services" to see a copy of the Handbook.

Why will VR provide transportation to my schooling, but not to my mentor who is going to help me pass the GED? I cannot drive and we are not on a bus line. Why could the school bus pick me up, or a cabby to get me to school but not to get me to a tutor? I need a tutor to pass the GED. I want to get this GED so I can attend college.

There are some transportation services Vocational Rehabilitation can provide; however, we would need more information in order to assist you. You may wish to contact your VR counselor, or contact the VR Ombudsman's Office at our toll-free telephone number 1-866-515-3692 for further assistance.

How can I get VR services? I need them! I need a job.

Please go to our website, www.rehabworks.org, and under the Navigation “Contact Us” button, you will find a link to a Vocational Office in your area. They will be able to help you with eligibility information.

I have waited and waited for my VR counselor to call me back. I call her, but she does not respond. So, I email her and she does not respond. Don't they have to respond? She knows why I am calling, I need to work. I cannot spend all day at home and I WANT A JOB! Please make her return calls. I am important too! You should have more educational sessions at this event, such as sessions about who you are and what services you have to offer. You were not around during my high school years. No one ever heard of VR. My teachers did not know you existed. They never know anything though. What is your website? Are programs offered via the web? Can counselors be available via web, since they never return calls?

We are sorry to hear you are having problems with your counselor. Our counselors maintain heavy caseloads, and sometimes it does take a while for them to get back with their customers. If you believe it is taking too long, you may ask to speak to your counselor's supervisor or contact the VR Ombudsman's Office at our toll free telephone number, 1-866-515-3692. You can find out more about the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's programs and services at our website www.rehabworks.org. Thank you for your suggestion about having more educational sessions at The Family Café. We will take this up during our planning meetings with The Family Café staff and see what can be added.

Once I have an IPE (Individual Plan for Employment), how long is it good for? It states it is for four years or until I finish school . . . which may be sooner. I cannot ask my VR lady as she does not return my calls.

Every customer has an annual review of their IPE to determine the status of the services and whether other services are needed. The counselor may identify a training program that could take four years, and indicate the respective timeframe on the IPE, but would still monitor your progress and do the annual review. If there is a problem with contacting the counselor, you may ask to speak to the supervisor or contact the VR Ombudsman's Office at our toll-free telephone number, 866-515-3692.

How do I get VR services?

Please go to our website, www.rehabworks.org. Under the Navigation “Contact Us” button, you will find a link to a Vocational Rehabilitation office in your area. They will be able to help you with eligibility information.

What is your website address?

You may find out more about the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation programs and services at www.rehabworks.org.

Can you be located on college campus to assist us?

Yes! The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation already has staff who regularly visit many college campuses to let students know about our services. If you would like for someone to visit your school, please contact Kirk Hall, our school to work transition coordinator, at (850) 245-3360 or kirk.hall@vr.fldoe.org and he can discuss our services with you.

What is the Adult Handicapped Fund and how is it different than VR services? How can you apply for these enhanced services? I am confused. How do I find out about your programs?

To find out about Vocational Rehabilitation programs and services, please go to our website, www.rehabworks.org. First click on “Programs” (under “Site Navigation”), and then scroll down to learn more about the programs and services VR offers. We are not familiar with “the Adult Handicapped Fund.” If you are referring to the Adults With Disabilities Grants, these are specific programs funded by the legislature to specific, listed school districts and community colleges. The funds are administered through VR, but these are not grants available to individuals.

Does VR help people like my daughter find work? She needs supervision, but I think she would be able to find some type of work and independence. Since graduating high school, she has not been doing anything. She has no friends, no services (waitlist) and she needs to get out and do something. She does attend church groups and services on Wednesday and Sunday. She sings in the choir. She is ready to do something during the day. She would need help though. How do we find out about VR? School is out for the summer, she did just graduate, but no one told us about VR or what you do. I learned about you today from a parent I just met. She said you were wonderful, but slow to work with. I have nothing here but time . . . unless you make it too cumbersome. Help!

Please go to our website, www.rehabworks.org. Under the Navigation “Contact Us” button, you will find a link to a Vocational Rehabilitation Office in your area. They will be able to help you with eligibility information for your daughter.



The 12th Annual Family Café Report Card

Attendees at the 12th Annual Family Café were given the opportunity to grade their experience on the following scale:

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

The table below displays average grades for 2009, along with grades from the previous five years.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
I thought the location was...	A	B+	B	B	A-	A
I thought the hotel accessibility was...	B+	B+	C+	B	A-	A
The organization of was...	A	B+	B	B	A-	A
The choices for breakout sessions to meet the needs of different interests were...	B+	B	B	A-	A-	A
Overall, I would give the 12 th Annual Family Cafe a ...	A	B+	B	B	A-	A

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

- As a result of attending the 12th Annual Family Café I am able/will be able to....
- In general, the most helpful to me was...
- I thought we could use more of...
- I thought we could use less of...
- I am interested in finding more about...
- I would like to suggest for future conferences...

Here is a sample of their responses:

As a result of attending the 12th Annual Family Café, I am able/will be able to...

- Attain more information on adult programs and homes
- Understand and contact SSI with a problem we had, completely understand the PASS program now
- Help others to identify and receive the services they need and understand their rights
- Navigate transition issues to better advocate and access services for my 17 year old son with DD
- Have more contacts to give to other parents and local community organizations
- Locate resources and services in my area and also better understand my options as a parent
- Learned more about my son's disability and how to help him, received information on resources available that will help him
- I am more aware of what's out there to help my child. I've made friends and felt encouraged to advocate for my child's needs
- I will start therapeutic horse riding and I will get a wheelchair
- Continue to give the best education/ behavior support opportunities to my child
- Bring the new information back to my work place
- Work using positive principles with my child's behavior
- Understand the rights of IEP's
- Learn to help my mom help me
- Talk with other families
- Connect with other families
- Awareness

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

- Meeting people/networking
- The wide variety of breakout sessions
- IEP
- Specific methods to help me at home (academic, functional ideas)
- A lot of the resources and information, transition information
- Disaster Preparedness session
- Communication with others
- Networking
- Inclusion
- No wait list
- Vendor availability
- Advocacy
- Having someone to tell me I have choices over my life
- Learning the existence available and resources were excellent
- Conversing with others with similar situations
- Autism, healing, education (IEP), Advocacy

I thought we could have had more of...

- Opportunity to gather with experienced parents and hear how they navigate the system to get services, personal experiences, etc.
- Employment during the Saturday session
- Autistic discussion groups
- Kids' activities, youth activities
- More opportunity to see more breakout sessions, wanted to see more on the same scheduled time—repeat breakout sessions such as guardianship
- Activities for young people to get together
- Transition to adulthood
- People in charge of making policies for health care in the state
- More breakout sessions
- Mental health presentations
- Time—this weekend seemed to go faster than any Family Cafe to date
- Parental influence on their experiences as well as sharing same with the audience
- How to session on advocacy
- Everything was great
- Showcasing the micro enterprise, let people know we are here
- Nutrition
- Information about ADHD
- Gatherings for families to network and share
- Access to state programs

I thought we could use less of...

- Speakers need to hold sessions and hold questions until the end of the session
- Late evening speakers, legislators should be prioritized in mid-afternoon instead of evening, too many DD individuals are worn out later in the day
- Nothing, the event was great
- Heat (just teasing!)
- Medicaid waiver since there is no hope of addressing the already climbing list
- One on one Q & A in sessions—maybe have 45 minute presentations and 15 minutes of Q & A
- Complaining people but they are everywhere, aren't they?
- Meetings

I am interested in finding more about...

- Legislative role: how to address them
- Behavior management
- Community-based projects to inform the community how to be informative about a typical individual within the community
- How I can help my brother and others like him
- Autism developmental and resources
- Florida legislations, Florida education, Inclusion for special needs children
- Housing options/Funding sources
- Cerebral palsy
- Group homes and assisted living
- Medicaid and insurance
- Some of the products we saw in the exhibit hall

- How could I help plan a future Family Café
- Home schooling info
- Ways to interact with others
- Round table discussion on other genetic syndromes
- How to become involved with legislative initiatives at the local/community level
- Source of funding to help get therapy and equipment
- Volunteering at next year's event as well as more resources for parents to cope with challenges of children with Autism
- True summer camp programs (day and/or overnight) for ASD tots through young adults. By "true" I don't mean a classroom and 2 weeks of lesson plans. I mean an indoor and outdoor facility with all the amenities one would expect to find at traditional day/overnight camp. Even interested in learning about how to start one! It can be done!!
- How teens with disabilities or siblings with disabilities are able to cope with it
- How to interact with my child not how to find services
- Supportive housing

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

- There were great topics that I wish I had attended but were on conflicting schedules, next year I have to plan my schedule better
- Some food involved
- Helping more people
- A/V set up in sessions seemed not good this year
- Counseling speakers
- More outdoor stuff
- Don't schedule the two workshops dealing with SED/bipolar/dual diagnosis at the same time on the same day
- Have more meetings with families to talk or round table
- I liked that some meetings were repeated from Friday and Saturday. There are too many at the same time that you want to go to and you miss them cause you can only be at one at a time
- Too much going on at the same time but I know why—not enough time
- Healthy lifestyle change
- I would like it if there were information in Spanish
- It was great! Maybe a summary sheet of every day at-a-glance like the emails you send out—families get overwhelmed by the large book
- Suggestion to all presenters that they do not take questions until after their presentation is done
- Start a grass roots activity now to ensure/secure more funding for families to attend Family Café—though the workshops are free—many families could not fund themselves or find funding to stay at hotel to attend all days—this is a priority!
- More music, dancing, fun!
- More breakouts on healthy eating, nutrition habits—displays, tasting, etc.
- Great experience
- This Family Café was very well run. Your choice of speakers and breakouts were good. The only problem I had was not being able to go to all the sessions I wanted to because some of them ran in the same time slots
- Thank you for allowing us to attend the conference. We had a wonderful time and I could only wish I had a spouse to help attend many of the sessions that conflicted

- with other programs I wanted to attend. I believe we attended ongoing throughout the weekend from morning to night. Sunday morning we took the long wait to the huge pool with a slide only to find it didn't open until we would once again be busy until it was time to go home. I must say that should let you know that you did a great job scheduling speakers of interest to each of us. We hope to attend next year; although I have to make time to take my son to the "pool" when the slide is open.
- It was an awesome exhibit hall. Thanks you and we hope to see you next year.

NOTES

NOTES



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Family
Café**

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at

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