



I WANT YOU!

The Family Café CHANGE AGENT NETWORK THEY NEED YOU!

Volume 1, Issue 2

This Newsletter Is A Project Of The Family Café

December 2017

The Change Agent Network is a project of The Family Café and offers an opportunity for advocates and change agents to work collaboratively to transform the system by: combining abilities, skills, ideas, and talents; standing together for meaningful system reform measures; taking the lead in our communities and neighborhoods; sharing information to help families become effective players within their communities; developing statewide networks to organize and discuss the issues that are most important to families and persons with disabilities; and creating a united position on critical disability policy issues.

What's On Tap for December

Greetings and welcome to the second issue of The Family Café's Change Agent Network newsletter!

This issue features articles from two of our state agency partners, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities and the Department of Children and Families. In APD's article, they share some information on what they have been doing to address the **transportation needs of Floridians with disabilities** through their Transportation Task Force. DCF's article describes their **System of Care for children's mental health**, and efforts to develop new approaches to mental health that center families and youth, while building collaboration among providers, stakeholders and community partners.

We have also included an article that looks forward to the **state legislative session**, which is set to open on January 9th. It's never too early for advocates to start paying attention to the issues that are likely to set the agenda when the state legislature comes together, and our legislative preview is a great place to start.

It's December, and that means there are a couple of regular events on our calendar. First, the latest edition of **our Questions & Answers Book** has been mailed out to everyone that attended The 19th Annual Family Café this past June. This resource guide includes responses to questions and comments from our attendees directly from the state agencies that serve people with disabilities. If you don't get one in the mail, you can find it on our website at www.familycafe.net, or send us an email to info@familycafe.net and we'll send one out to you.

Looking forward to the New Year, The Family Café Planning Committee is getting ready to come together to select presentations for inclusion in The 20th Anniversary Family Café in January. **The deadline to submit a proposal is January 12th.** If you know of an individual or organization that would be a good fit for The Family Café, please encourage them to submit a proposal! And don't leave



WWW.FAMILYCAFE.NET

yourself out! Many of our presentations are delivered by self-advocates and family members. So if you've ever thought about delivering a presentation at The Annual Family Café, go ahead and give it a shot. We'd love to hear from you! Submit a proposal at www.surveymonkey.com/r/20thAFCPPF or visit our website for more info.

In addition to making space for your voice at The Annual Family Café, we would also love to provide **a space for self-advocates and families to tell their stories, right here in the CAN newsletter.** What's happening in your world? Is there a particular issue or policy that you would like to see addressed? Have you found an innovative way to overcome a challenge or solve a problem in your home, school, or community? Why not tell the world about it here in the CAN newsletter? Just **send us an email at info@familycafe.net to let us know what you would like to share.**

Finally, December means that the holiday season is upon us. Everyone here at The Family Café would like to wish the very best for you and your family. **Please enjoy this time of celebration, peace, and renewal. We'll look forward to seeing you energized and ready for a year of advocacy in 2018!**



A Preview of the 2018 Legislative Session

By Joe McCann

As 2017 comes to a close, we are getting nearer to the beginning of another legislative session in Tallahassee. As you may know, this being an even year, **the first official day of the 2018 regular session will begin on Jan. 9, 2018.** The 2018 legislative session is scheduled to conclude March 9, 2018.

The 2018 legislative session is not, as of this writing, overshadowed by any specific legislative issue on the horizon. It will, however, be dominated by three overarching truths: (1) it is an election year and the political atmosphere in Tallahassee borders on toxic; (2) the budget is stagnant; and, (3) the majority of legislative discussion will center on hurricane recovery and hardening.

Let's take a closer look at these three points.

Political atmosphere: In November of 2018, Florida will

elect a new Governor, Chief Financial Officer, Agriculture Commissioner, and Attorney General. On the state side, we will also elect a new Florida House of Representatives (although many will be re-elected incumbents), and a new Speaker of the House. On the Senate side, we will install a new Senate President with half of the Senators being on the ballot. Tallahassee, like many other state capitols, has been embroiled in sexual harassment controversies. Fallout has resulted in the resignation of the incoming Senate Democratic Leader and in the removal of the current Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee amid an ongoing investigation. Also, several members of leadership in the legislative branch are running against each other in statewide primaries, which is proving to add to the already politically charged atmosphere.

Budget and hurricanes: Prior to the 2017 hurricane season, Florida budget projections were such that the state's economy was expected to have razor thin \$50 million dollar surplus. Considering that Florida's total state budget in 2017 was \$82 billion, this has been described by economists as a

WWW.FAMILYCAFE.NET

"break even" year. The final revenue estimating conference prior to the start of session is expected to slightly reduce that estimate further. The main legislative issues this year will be hurricane recovery and the economic development issues that have resulted from the storms. The House has created the Select Committee on Hurricane Response and Preparedness to deal with a range of issues, such as generator availability, debris removal, FEMA reimbursement, and future storm hardening objectives, to name a few. Taken together, this means that there is little room in the budget for new initiatives, and whatever new initiatives are funded are very likely to relate directly to hurricane recovery and preparedness.

Constitution Revision Commission (CRC): Lastly, it is worth paying attention this session to the parallel efforts of the Constitution Revision Commission (CRC). The CRC meets every 20 years and is constitutionally empowered to offer amendments to the constitution for the voters to ultimately decide. It is composed of 37 members, with 15 members appointed by the Governor, 9 appointed by the Speaker of the House, 9

appointed by the President of the Senate, 3 appointed by the Chief Justice of the Florida Supreme Court, and the Attorney General being a mandatory member. This Commission will offer numerous, comprehensive amendments to the Florida Constitution. Their recommendation will go directly to the voters. Many significant issues impacting our state government have emanated from the CRC.

Whatever happens during the 2018 legislative session, The Family Café will keep you informed of the latest developments. The Family Café will once again host The "Let's Talk!" Legislative Conference Call Series in 2018, with weekly calls featuring experts with insight into the issues in play in Tallahassee, and the ways in which they could impact Floridians with disabilities and their families. The "Let's Talk!" Legislative Conference Call Series will begin with the first week of session, with calls being held at 4:00 pm ET on every Friday throughout the entirety of the legislative session. We encourage you to call in, and to stay engaged in our state's legislative process in 2018!



Transportation Task Force on the Move—Update

By Barbara Palmer, APD Director

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) is taking a leadership role in a very important issue that affects many people with disabilities—transportation or the lack of reliable transportation. I am chairing the Transportation Task Force that the Legislature created this past spring.

The Transportation Task Force held its fourth meeting on November 28 in Tallahassee. The members reviewed the recommendations presented by the Center for Urban Transportation Research, or CUTR, representatives who were hired by the task force to conduct the study.

During meetings, we have heard from Task Force members who are self-advocates about the plethora of issues they face every day just trying to get to where they want to go. Member Danielle McGill outlined multiple snafus she has experienced just trying to get to work. This is a huge issue with no easy solution.

WWW.FAMILYCAFE.NET

Transportation rates vary in Florida and are based on the county a person lives in. Every county is unique and has different tax systems. Ideally, we want the transportation system in Florida simplified so that a rider will only have to call one telephone number for any trip they need. We have Waiver Support Coordinators working with families to determine their transportation needs; however, it is very difficult to navigate. We have come together to make recommendations for improvements.

The Transportation Task Force is required to submit a transportation study to the Legislature on December 15.

Listed below are the members of the Transportation Task Force:

APD-appointed Self Advocate Danielle McGill

Commission for Transportation Disadvantaged Executive Director Steve Holmes

Alachua County Community Transportation Coordinator Agency - Edward Griffin with MV Transportation, Inc.

Jackson County Community Transportation Coordinator Agency- Sharon Peeler, JTrans

Pinellas County Community Transportation Coordinator Agency- Ross Silvers, Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority

Miami-Dade County Community Transportation Coordinator Agency- Robert Villar, Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners, Miami-Dade Transit Authority

Florida Developmental Disabilities Council Executive Director Valerie Breen

Family Care Council Florida Chair Mary Smith

Commission for Transportation Disadvantaged appointment and User David Darm

* If you want to know more about this important initiative, visit www.apdcares.org for future meeting agendas and additional information to be posted soon.

Florida's System of Care Initiative for Children's Mental Health

By Dekywan C. Debose, DCF, SAMH Program Office

Florida's Children's Mental Health System of Care Initiative is a partnership between state and community stakeholders from child-serving systems working to transform the children's mental health system into a coordinated and integrated continuum that is: youth-guided, family driven, community based, and culturally and linguistically competent. It encourages every individual in Florida to be one person that makes a difference by supporting wellness and mental health for all of Florida's children. It inspires all its citizens to "Be One Florida" in order to de-stigmatize mental health.

The intent of the system of care (SOC) concept is to provide a framework and philosophy to guide service systems to improve the lives of children with mental health challenges and their families. It is not intended to refer to a single program, but rather to a coordinated network of services and supports across agencies to meet the multiple and complex needs of any given population. The goal is for all Florida communities who serve children with behavioral health needs embrace this philosophy and build the necessary partnerships to create their unique system of care.

The system of care approach to improving the state's approach to children's mental health is guided by essential principles. There must be access to a broad, flexible array of effective, community-based services and supports for children and their families that addresses their emotional, so-

WWW.FAMILYCAFE.NET

cial, educational, and physical needs, including traditional and nontraditional services as well as natural and informal supports. Care should be unique to each individual, with services in accordance with the unique potential and needs of each child and family, guided by a strengths-based, wrap-around service planning process and an individualized service plan developed in true partnership with the child and family. Services and supports should be provided within the least restrictive, most normative environments that are clinically appropriate.

The role of families and youth in the system of care approach is also central. Family-driven care empowers families to be the main decision makers as to the services and supports which best meet their unique needs. Families who are actively involved in their child's care ensure that the services chosen are responsive to their own unique cultural and ethnic needs and are delivered in a way they can understand. Effective collaboration, respect and partnership between families and professionals helps to improve programs and achieve positive results for all involved.

The system of care philosophy also encourages the idea that youths are the experts to their own health and wellness. Involving youth promotes hope which in turn promotes resiliency, recovery, and empowerment. Youth should be given opportunities to contribute to their communities, gain experience in decision making, and form important youth-adult partnerships.

Since 1998, the Department of Children and Families has engaged in a number of efforts to promote a system of care approach in various communities throughout Florida. They have included the Tampa Hillsborough Integrated Network for Kids (THINK); a community effort in Palm Beach County called Family Helping Organize Families for Empowerment (HOPE); the One Community Partnership (OCP) in Broward County; The Sarasota Early Childhood Mental Health Partnership; Wraparound Orange in Orange County; and Families And Communities Empowered for Success (FACES) in Miami-Dade County. Each of these programs has used system of care principles to pilot changes to different parts of the children's mental health system in their areas.

Most recently, the Florida Department of Children & Families (DCF) was awarded a System of Care Expansion Planning Grant in the fall of 2011. The purpose of the grant was to enhance the state's ability to take the lessons learned from its graduated and active grant sites and take the system of care philosophy and principles to scale statewide. The statewide System of Care Expansion Grant was awarded in 2012. This award will enable DCF to continue the partnerships established in the planning efforts to operationalize the strategic plan developed.

As DCF's Children's Mental Health System of Care Initiative moves forward, the Department looks forward to partnering with youth, families, and stakeholder organizations like The Family Café to bring positive change to Florida's children's mental health system. For more information on the System of Care, visit <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/mental-health/system-care-CMH>.



WWW.FAMILYCAFE.NET

See You Next Year!

AT THE

20th ANNUAL Family Café

JUNE 15 - 17, 2018 • ORLANDO

**HYATT REGENCY
ORLANDO**

9801 INTERNATIONAL DRIVE
ORLANDO, FLORIDA



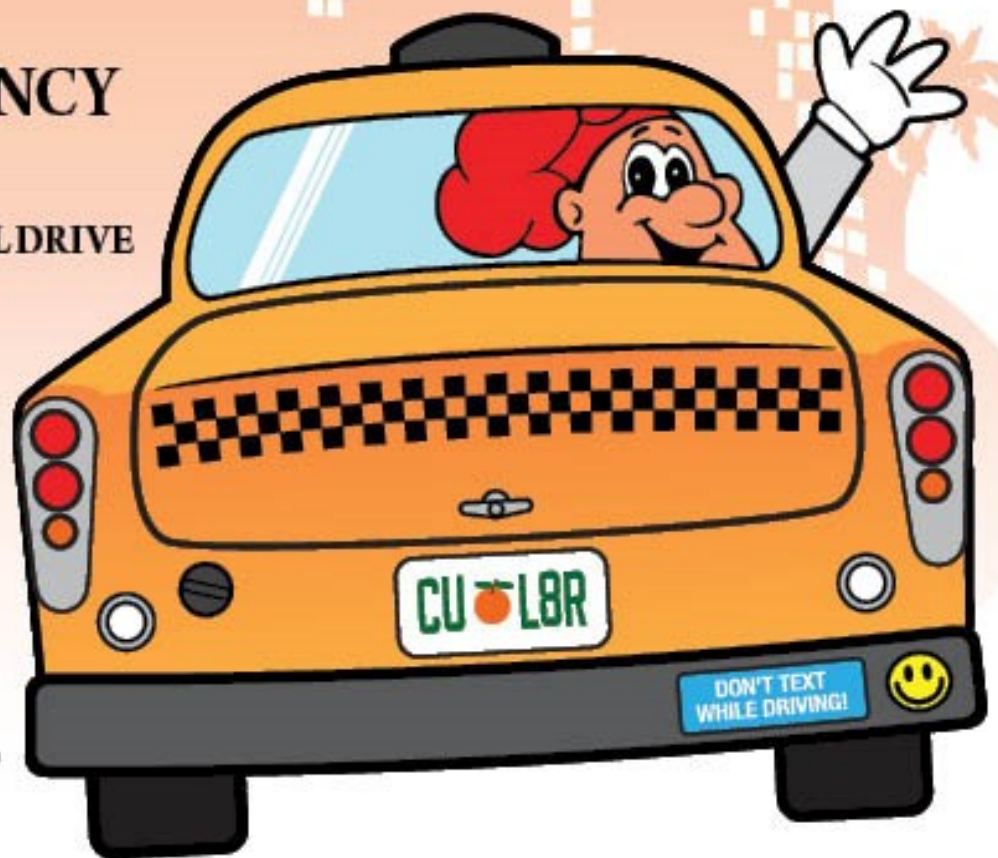
The Family Café is
on Facebook!



Follow us
@TheFamilyCafe



**The
Family
Café**



820 East Park Avenue, Suite F-100 • Tallahassee, FL 32301 • info@familycafe.net