



I WANT YOU!

The Family Café CHANGE AGENT NETWORK THEY NEED YOU!

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.

The 2019 Legislative Session Wrap-up

First and foremost, we are pleased to report that The Family Cafe is poised to enjoy one of our best budget years ever! A special thank you goes out to our champion, Senate President Bill Galvano. Senator Galvano has been critical to our success for many years and we appreciate his encouragement and support immensely. We now await the Governor's signature on the budget.

The Florida Legislature's 2019 Legislative Session came to an end officially on Saturday, May 4th, one day late due to a slightly extended budget conference process. There were 3,571 bills filed, 2,997 amendments filed, 3,765 votes taken in 40 floor sessions (House and Senate).....and after all that, only 196 bills passed both chambers and will go on to the Governor for his signature or veto.

On the budget side.....The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) received a \$48,000,000 increase for people currently on the waiver. Also, providers within the residential habilitation area will receive a total rate increase of approximately \$30,000,000 which will put them over \$10 an hour. Another exciting proposal that was passed as part of the budget is the "working people with disabilities" provision. Previously, in order to keep Medicaid benefits, working individuals were capped at earning no more than \$27,000 per year and to not have more than \$2,000 in savings. The new language will allow individuals to earn up to \$50,000 per year and save up to \$13,000 without losing their benefits. This is a significant change for people who have to decide between getting better jobs and their health care needs.



Bills that Passed

School Voucher Expansion: This bill pay for as many as 18,000 students to attend private schools. Governor DeSantis will have until May 21 to act on the bill. The bill also makes changes to the teacher bonus provisions within the Best and Brightest Program.

Firefighter Cancer Benefits: Despite initial reservations The Florida House reversed course and passed a bill that will give firefighters cancer coverage and Governor DeSantis signed the bill last Friday. The legislation will allow for certain disability payments to firefighters and death benefits to their families if they die as a result of cancer or cancer treatments.

School Guardian Program: This year the legislature approved the recommendations of the Marjory Stoneman Douglass High School Public Safety Commission. Despite many agreed to provisions such as increased funding for mental health care and school resource officers much of the attention was focused on allowing teachers who complete specified training to be armed. The legislation requires a district school board to opt-in to the guardian program through a majority vote and require employees who volunteer to pass a psychological evaluation and complete 144 hours of required training. The bill also requires the employee to complete the required training to the Sheriff's satisfaction and then be appointed by the superintendent or charter school principal.

Repeal of Smoking Ban on Medical Marijuana: Earlier this session, the legislation removed the ban on the smoking of medical marijuana. This was welcome news to cannabis activists and was promptly signed in to law by the Governor.

Importation of prescription drugs: This year, legislation passed that will allow prescription drugs from Canada to be purchased by the state's Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) and imported for use in Florida. Prior to this actually happening, Florida must get permission from the Federal Government (Dept. of Health and Human Services).

Restoration of Felon Voting Rights: Legislation passed that will implement the recently passed constitutional amendment. Unfortunately, it was mired in some controversy with a provision that will require felons to pay all court assessed fees before their right to vote is restored. The Governor has already signed this bill.

Making texting and driving a primary offense: Simply put, if the police witness a driver texting while behind the wheel, they will be able to pull you over for that alone. In the past, texting was a secondary offense which meant that if you were pulled over for speeding or another primary offense AND you were texting, the driver could be cited. Now texting alone will do the trick



Bills that Failed to Pass

Ban on Fracking: The controversial proposal to ban "hydraulic fracturing," or "fracking", passed two Senate committees but failed to be heard in the remaining two. The House version saw a similar fate. Environmentalists were disappointed that both bills had loopholes that would allow use of another type of drilling technique called matrix acidizing, a process that involves injecting an acid solution at a pressure low enough to not be considered hydraulic fracturing.

Raising the age to buy tobacco from 18 to 21: This legislation was called the "Tobacco 21 Act," and would have raised the legal age of buying tobacco products — including electronic devices from 18



to 21. It also would have prohibited the sale of tobacco products from vending machines. This bill made it to the floor in both bodies but ultimately identical bills were not passed by both.

Parental consent for abortion: The Florida House approved a bill that would require minors to obtain parental consent before they could have abortions. State law currently requires parents to be notified if their daughters are planning to have abortions, but the bill goes further by requiring parental consent. The bill includes exemptions for situations such as minors who have health emergencies or who already have children. Ultimately, the Senate decided not to take up the House bill.

Does Advocacy Matter?

Our friends at Sach's media put together an interesting analysis on the relationship between how much a bill is lobbied or advocated for and its chances of successfully passing as a result. Bills that passed both chambers averaged 27 lobbying appearances, while those that died generated just nine appearances on average.

According to their study: "The overall passage rate of bills this session was 5.5 percent. Among those that had zero lobbying appearances logged, the passage rate was just 2.5 percent. This rate steadily increases to 3.5 percent for bills that had 1 to 9 appearances ... 8.0 percent among those that had 10 to 19 appearances ... 9.5 percent among those with 20 to 49 appearances ... 15 percent among those with 50 to 99 appearances ... and finally, 23.0 percent among those with 100 or more appearances. In other words, the odds were 40-to-1 against a bill that wasn't lobbied at all, but almost 4-to-1 for those that had over 100 appearances – close to 10 times better. The takeaway? The more feet on the ground to lobby an issue, the better the chances it will cross the finish line."



May is Children's Mental Health Month



Each May, advocates and families recognize the impact mental health challenges have on our nation during Mental Health Month, as well as the unique challenges faced by children and youth during Children's Mental Health Awareness Week. The Family Café recognizes the importance of mental health to the overall wellbeing of all people throughout our state. We believe that addressing the needs of children with behavioral health needs is essential to Florida's efforts to educate and support young people with disabilities, and to build a more inclusive, accessible community.

We would like to thank Governor Ron DeSantis for joining us in recognizing the importance of children's mental health, with his recent signing of an official proclamation naming May as "Children's Mental Health Month" in the State of Florida. It is critical that we work together to shine a bright light on the tragic yet eminently treatable epidemic of mental health challenges among children and youth. In honor of this proclamation, we wanted to share some important facts and figures in the area of children's mental health awareness, as well as several considerations and warning signs in the prevention of teen suicide.



Children's Mental Health Awareness/Facts and Figures (National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health)

1 in 5 children currently experience, or will experience, a mental health disorder.

1 in 6 U.S. children aged 2-8 years old have a diagnosed mental, behavioral or developmental disorder.

Among children aged 2-8, boys are more likely than girls to have a mental, behavioral or developmental disorder.

Among children living below 100% of the federal poverty level, more than 1 in 5 has a mental, behavioral or developmental disorder.

50% of mental illnesses begin by age 14.

The average delay between the onset of mental health symptoms and treatment is 8-10 years.

37% of youth ages 14 and older who have a mental health disorder drop out of high school, the highest drop-out rate of any disability group.

70% of youth in state and local juvenile justice systems have a serious emotional disturbance.

Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death in youth ages 10-24.

Facts about Youth Suicide: There is no single cause to suicide, but knowing about the following contributors may help you prevent someone from losing their life. Suicide most often occurs when stressors exceed the current coping abilities of someone having a mental health need. Youth who are at increased risk for suicide may be stressed by complex interactions or relationships; sudden changes that feel overwhelming (losing friends, family, pets); relationship problems (peer, family or romantic); by getting in trouble that seems too big to handle, or by mental health systems or school stressors. Suicide prevention can take place in many settings. It is important to help people in your child's daily life and community know more about prevention strategies (school, faith and family). (FREDLA)

Warning Signs: Talking about being a burden; Staying more isolated than usual for their age or development; Increased anxiety; Feeling trapped or in unbearable pain (emotional, social or physical); Increased substance use; Looking for access to drugs, weapons or means; Increased anger, rage or resentment; Extreme mood swings or passive aggressive comments; Expressing lack of worth or hope; Loss of interest in doing things they normally enjoy; Sleeping too little or too much; Seeming to have finally found a solution; Giving away favorite items; Talking or posting about death or wanting to die; Making statements or plans for "when/if I die". (FREDLA)

During this Mental Health Awareness Month, we encourage you to tend to the mental health and wellbeing of everyone in your community, and to make it clear that mental health should be addressed openly by doing so yourself. Too many children and youth get the message that facing mental health difficulties is something to be ashamed of. As advocates, one of the best things we can do is to start the conversation, and make it clear that it's ok to not be ok!



AS SUMMER COMES TO AN END, JOIN THE FLORIDA YOUTH COUNCIL FOR ONE BIG LAST HURRAH AT THE 12TH ANNUAL YOUTH SUMMIT (AYS) ON AUGUST 2 - 3 IN ORLANDO!

The Annual Youth Summit is a place for **young people with disabilities between the ages of 15 and 30** from communities across the state of Florida to come together to learn, share, and network. This two-day event is hosted by The Florida Youth Council, a group of youth and emerging leaders with disabilities who have a passion for encouraging leadership and advocacy among their peers. The FYC is all about youth empowerment and youth involvement, and the entire Annual Youth Summit is planned **by youth, for youth!**

The 12th Annual Youth Summit will bring together over 200 youth and emerging leaders to attend engaging youth-only sessions on a wide variety of topics, including transition, workplace preparedness, and post-secondary schooling. We also have a great, youth-friendly keynote and fun social activities planned for The Summit, including a dance party to cap off the festivities. There will be plenty of opportunities for attendees to network, and share their thoughts, experiences, and aspirations.

The 12th Annual Youth Summit will be held at The Florida Hotel and Conference Center in Orlando **August 2 - 3, 2019**. If you are not requesting financial assistance please contact The Florida Hotel and Conference Center directly at **407-859-1500** to make reservations. The room rate is \$109 per night. Limited financial assistance is available. For more information about the event, or to register, contact The Florida Youth Council and The Family Café at **888-309-2233**, or visit www.FloridaYouthCouncil.com



WE'LL SEE YOU THERE!

THE 12TH ANNUAL YOUTH SUMMIT

Check here if you'd like to be considered for financial assistance to attend this event.

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Email _____

Demographics (optional): Age _____ Gender _____ Disability _____

Race: White _____ Black _____ Hispanic _____ Asian or Pacific Islander _____ Native American _____ Other _____

Other family members attending: Name _____

Name _____ Name _____