

THE

23rd

ANNUAL
family

Pale

QUESTIONS &
ANSWERS BOOK

Join the momentum!

Take part in The Family Café's newest program,
the Family-Run Organization Movement (FROM)!

The Mission of FROM is to engage, support, empower and advocate for family, youth and peer-run organizations.

FROM will provide a wide range of supports and services, including leadership training, governance enhancement, program support, monthly collaborative forums, a program newsletter, and other resources to help organizations attain new levels of participation in the system of care.

Local family-run organizations are a critical part of the service delivery system, bringing families and youth together, connecting them with information, resources, and each other. FROM is here to help them thrive!

To join and get more information please see the FROM link at www.familycafe.net or call 850-224-4670

FROM
Family Run Organization Movement
"Moving families forward. From our family to yours."



Welcome to The Family Café Questions & Answers Book for 2021!

Navigating the service delivery system and finding resources has always been a challenge for people with disabilities and their families. For over twenty years, The Family Café has been here to help! Since 1998, our mission has been to connect Florida's disability community with information, training, support, and opportunities to network with other families, professionals, and public policy makers.

The primary place where that mission has been realized is at our signature event, The Annual Family Café. After hosting a virtual event in 2020, we were thrilled to return to Orlando for a virtual-friendly "hybrid" event in 2021. The idea behind The 23rd Annual Family Café was to return to our usual event as much as possible, while still offering Floridians who were not yet ready to engage in face-to-face activities the same opportunities as those attending in person. Events that were available both in person and via livestream included our three keynotes, featuring Shane and Hannah Burcaw, relationship vloggers with a popular YouTube channel, Mickey Rowe, an autistic self-advocate and actor in a Tony Award winning play, and Chris Nikic, the first person with Down syndrome to complete an Ironman triathlon. Virtual attendees heard remarks from Senate President Bill Galvano and Governor Ron DeSantis, as well as several members of the House and Senate at The Annual Governor's Summit on Disabilities. We also held ten breakout sessions in the main ballroom to allow for livestream broadcasting.

We also expanded our efforts to make virtual content available by recording the remaining sixty breakout sessions on site, and collecting videos, presentation slides, and other materials from dozens of additional presenters. All of the content is available through an interactive program on The Family Café website at familycafe.net/interactive-program-from-the-23rd-annual-family-cafe/, and all of the video content can be found at familycafe.net/videos/.

Of course, The Family Café recognizes that no matter how informative The Annual Family Café is, it can't answer every question! That's why we collect questions and comments from families like yours, and put together the responses we get from State Agencies to create ***The Family Café Questions & Answers Book***.

Although every situation is unique, *The Family Café Questions & Answers Book* can serve as a quick reference guide and a starting point for anyone seeking information. If you need to know more than you can find here, we encourage you to contact the relevant state agency, and to make your needs known, and your voice heard!

We hope you will join us for The 24th Annual Family Café, May 27-29, 2022, at the Hyatt Regency Orlando. Online registration opens on Monday, February 14th. Until then, feed your need for information with *The Family Café Questions & Answers Book*! And remember, we are always available online at FamilyCafe.net, on Facebook at [Facebook.com/TheFamilyCafeFL](https://www.facebook.com/TheFamilyCafeFL), on Twitter [@TheFamilyCafe](https://twitter.com/TheFamilyCafe), and on Instagram [@thefamilycafefl](https://www.instagram.com/thefamilycafefl)!

Table of Contents

The Family Café		3
The Agency for Health Care Administration		11
The Agency for Persons with Disabilities		19
The Department of Children and Families		31
The Department of Education		47
The Department of Health		63
The Division of Emergency Management		71
The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation		78
The Family Café Report Card		88



The Family Café

It was great for the meeting to be virtual and I watched for three days. Great job!

Thank you for watching! Despite the difficult circumstances, our commitment to connecting people with disabilities and their families with information and resources will always remain in place.

More exhibits next year?

Due to Covid-19, our in-person event was scaled back to accommodate social distancing and keep our attendees, presenters, exhibitors, and staff safe. We hope to return to our usual numbers next year with more exhibitors, as long as we can do so safely.

Thank you so much for this event! I've enjoyed it so much!

Our pleasure! We are so glad you were able to enjoy the event this year!

Do you think we can have the full Café in 2022?

We certainly hope to return to the full Café as soon as possible, but it will depend on the state of the Covid-19 pandemic next summer. Please join our mailing list at familycafe.net and follow us on Facebook to stay updated on our event.

Are we going to have the dance and sensory room next year?

There are several parts of the event that we hope to bring back next year, but doing so depends on the state of the pandemic next year. Please join our mailing list at familycafe.net and follow us on Facebook to stay updated on our event.

Glad we could come this year—missed seeing everyone last year. Hope to be able to have the dance next year.

The dance is one of our most popular events! We hope to return to our full program as soon as possible. We will be watching the progression of Covid-19 very closely as we plan for The 24th Annual Family Café and make decisions based on the safety of all of our attendees, presenters, exhibitors, and staff.

The IEP training and financial training were really good. Loved learning more about ABLE. Love that all sessions will be available to watch in a few weeks.

We are so glad you learned such valuable information from our 23rd annual event. Videos of all sessions can be found at familycafe.net under the "videos" tab, as well as on our Facebook page and the full interactive program is online at familycafe.net/interactive-program-from-the-23rd-annual-family-cafe/.

Enjoyed session on IEPs and advocacy. Hope to sign up for DD Partners in Policymaking.

We are so glad you enjoyed these sessions. Best of luck in your endeavors to join Partners in Policymaking!

This is my first time attending this event. I would like to let you know if I am in Jacksonville, Florida, or Honolulu, Hawaii I will be coming back!

We are so glad you were able to attend this event. Welcome! We look forward to you continuing to join our annual events in the future.

Great event. Enjoyed the classes, but enjoyed meeting people and finding new supports!

Thank you! We are so glad you enjoyed The 23rd Annual Family Café. It is wonderful that you were able to network and make new friends. That is what Family Café is all about!

Is it a possibility to have The Family Café team to have a heavy recovery mental health focus next year? So many families have been affected with care taking times 100 during Covid.

The Family Café begins accepting presentation proposals for the upcoming event in October. We also reach out to various state agencies to help us fill a need for important topics. We will mention the need for sessions on this topic to our Planning Committee as they plan for next year's event. Additionally, if you are knowledgeable in this area or know anyone who is, please submit a presentation proposal form. Mental health is extremely important!

Why didn't we do the dance this year? I want to know how to volunteer. I love Family Café. God bless. See you next year.

Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we could not hold the dance. With social distancing in place, it just would not be possible to have hundreds of people dancing in close proximity. We hope to be able to offer the dance again next year.

The Family Café relies on dozens of volunteers to help us make The Annual Family Café run smoothly. If you're interested in helping out, please let us know by marking the appropriate box on the form when you register. Due to Covid-19, we were unable to accept volunteers outside of our organization for The 23rd Annual Family Café. Hopefully we will be able to accept more volunteers for The 24th Annual Family Café.

How do I easily access videos of workshops? I mainly need to watch two—some in-person sessions have info I didn't get.

All video presentations from the event are available on our website. Please visit familycafe.net/videos/ to find videos from The 23rd Annual Family Café. You can also find the livestream of the in-person event, as well as the additional session videos on our Facebook page.

Will virtual continue after Covid? Previously had sessions I was interested in but were at the same time.

The Family Café will continue to offer some virtual options from our annual event, dependent upon the funding available to provide video recording and streaming.

More kid stuff please.

Thank you for your suggestion. At The Family Café we strive to offer an event that is fun and engaging for people of all ages. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we were unable to offer some of our more hands-on activities, but hope to be able to bring those back soon.

Presentation on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome please.

Thank you for your suggestion. We will share this request with our Planning Committee so they can take it into account in planning the agenda for next year.

Thank you Family Café. If it wasn't for you my daughter wouldn't have the opportunity to meet new friends that are making their dreams come true. Lacy enjoyed the 23rd Annual Family Café. I had the opportunity to get hands-on information about services, workshops, and make new friends that see and know from a parent's aspect, view for caring for children with disabilities, and being able to talk, enjoy some family and downtime. I would not have that if you did not provide financial assistance for me and my family. Thank you.

Thank you for your comments. We are glad you were able to learn and network at this year's Family Café. The Family Café is always looking for additional funding for financial assistance. The organization has a strong relationship with a number of state agencies, as well as key supporters in the legislature, and is fortunate to have relatively consistent

state funding. We strive to assist as many families as possible in attending our annual event.

Do they have Family Café or disability expos in other states besides FL?

Other states do have disability conferences, but The Annual Family Café is the largest cross-disability event in the nation.

Where did the name Family Café come from?

The Family Café's name is an acronym for its core values: **C**ollaboration, **A**dvocacy, **F**riendship and **E**mpowerment.

We would like to see a session for the parents of The Youth Council to speak about the challenges, struggles, successes of our children to other parents that a disability won't stop your child from being a productive person in our society.

Thank you for this wonderful suggestion. We will share your idea with our Youth Council and Planning Committee as they plan for next year's sessions.

Could you, by any chance, do more animé-themed events please?

Thank you for your suggestion. Animé-themed sessions have become popular at The Annual Family Café. We will pass on your desire for more of these sessions to our Planning Committee as they plan for next year's sessions.

Thank you all so much for all you do. I needed all of this Family Café in my life this year. Thank you and see you next year. P.S. please look up PANDAS and PANS in kids.

We are so glad you were able to benefit from this year's event. We will pass along the suggestion to include presentations on PANDAS to our Planning Committee as they plan next year's sessions. If you know of anyone qualified to present on this topic, please have them fill out and submit a Presentation Proposal form.

I would love to see a mobile Family Café come to each county for a week.

Thank you for your suggestion. The Family Café is a small operation with a small staff. It takes many volunteers and many months of planning and preparation to host our annual event in Orlando. Unfortunately we simply do not have the capacity to visit each county in Florida, but hope to continue to grow our attendance at our annual event each year.

How do you get on The Youth Council?

You can find the application to join The Florida Youth Council at floridayouthcouncil.org. All FYC members must be between the ages of 15 and 30, live in the state of Florida, and have a disability or special health care needs.

Miss the ducky race.

The duck race was a fun event hosted by Sportsability Alliance. Their participation in The 23rd Annual Family Café was virtual this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We will pass along your comment to them in hopes that the duck race can return.

It is hard for families that work 9-5 Monday through Friday. More Sunday activities and later checkouts please.

We are sorry this schedule is difficult for some families. The hotel has provided late checkout for our attendees in previous years and will again in 20220. We will discuss options with the hotel and share your suggestion for Sunday activities with our Planning Committee as they plan for next year's event.

We need our sports back!

We love our sports expo with Sportsability Alliance. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, FDOA participated with The Annual Family Café virtually. Hopefully next year if conditions permit, we can resume our adaptive sports exposition.

Please add me to your list of information for next year as this is my mom's trip but I adopted a son with Arthogryposis and would like to attend with my family in the future. Thanks.

Please join our mailing list at familycafe.net/mailling-list/ to stay updated on our event. We hope you can attend in the future and gain valuable information for your family.

Where can I go to meet more people like me?

The Annual Family Café is a great place to network and meet other people, with disability specific sessions and groups. We encourage you to contact The Family Café directly at info@familycafe.net or take advantage of the many partners, breakout opportunities, and activities to find more community within the Florida disability movement. In a digital age, many have found online support through disability-focused groups on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and signing up for webinars and free online opportunities to connect with others within our vast community.

Thank you for everything! This is our first year coming and we will be back!

Our pleasure. We are so glad your first Annual Family Café was a success. We look forward to your return in the coming years.

Covid aside, it would be interesting to let people who want to talk together, get together in groups in the Plaza International Ballroom. You put a sign on an 8' post saying "Autism," "IEPs," "Advocacy," "Employment," "Assistive Technology," and so forth. People could come and go from the small, dedicated spaces, or chairs, around the 8' sign. I have an interest in Fibromyalgia, so I would put up a sign and hope that someone would sit down and we can just talk without having to only go to formal sessions, which often do not have time for in-depth questions.

This is an interesting idea. In previous years, we have hosted disability-specific "roundtable" sessions similar to what you describe. We will share your suggestion with our Planning Committee as they work together to plan for next year's event.

Mickey Rowe is amazing. He is so inspirational. Have him next year too. He'll have new stories for sure.

Thank you. We think he was wonderful as well. The Family Café strives to provide relevant and interesting keynote speakers each year. We will pass on your suggestion to our Planning Committee as they plan for next year's event.

It was disappointing the session by NAMI was cancelled. It was one of the top sessions I wanted to attend.

Unfortunately The Family Café cannot control the cancellation of breakout sessions. However, we can pass on the desire for more mental health-related sessions to our Planning Committee and hope that our NAMI presenter will be able to return next year.

Why no time for photos with Governor DeSantis?

We would like it if the governor were to spend more time at the event, however, he has a very busy schedule and his availability is controlled by his office. However, we will pass along the request for him to spend more time and take photos with attendees.

What sources/websites are available in the state of Florida where I can find/be notified of legislature, events, and updates affecting people with disabilities?

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities offers an online resource directory. You can find it at resourcedirectoryapd.myflorida.com. Additionally, you can join The Family Café's mailing list to receive updates throughout the year, and listen to The Family Café's Legislative Updates every Friday at 4:00 p.m. during Session. You can join our mailing list at familycafe.net.

Where will we be next year?

The 24th Annual Family Café will be held at the Hyatt Regency Orlando at 9801 International Drive in Orlando on May 27-29, 2022.

How do I get involved with Partners in Policymaking?

Please check out <https://www.fddc.org/partners-in-policymaking/> for application information, or reach out to Stacey Hoaglund at shoaglundpartner@gmail.com.

Need to have more information for people with cerebral palsy. Lately everything is focused on autism. I have a 25 year old with CP and would love to know what he can do around to keep him busy and entertained.

Thank you for your feedback. We strive to have a variety of topics that are relevant to many people. We will pass along your suggestion for more cerebral palsy sessions to our Planning Committee as they plan next year's event.

Will you consider having it twice a year?

The Family Café is run by a small office with a small staff and the help of volunteers. Much of the year is spent planning and preparing for the annual event. In order to bring our attendees the best event possible, one large event is where we have to focus all of our energy.

I would eventually like to give my own presentation about my autistic spectrum life story.

Thank you for your interest in presenting at the next Annual Family Café. Presentation Proposal forms are available to download from our website, as well as an online submission form. Please find the PDF and electronic versions at familycafe.net/present-at-the-24th-annual-family-cafe/.

Please continue the virtual option.

The Family Café will continue to offer some virtual options from our annual event, dependent upon the funding available to provide video recording and streaming.

How do I become an exhibitor?

Becoming an exhibitor is easy! Just visit familycafe.net/be-a-part-of-the-exhibit-hall-at-the-24th-annual-family-cafe/ to find the Exhibitor Agreement, complete it, and send it in with payment. The cost includes two professional registrations, a \$400 value, and if you make payment before February 14, 2022, you'll also receive a \$50 discount.

The Family Café also promotes entrepreneurship among self-advocates through our Micro-Enterprise program. Qualifying Micro-Enterprises that are owned and operated by a person with a disability, employ fewer than five people, and have annual revenue of \$35,000 or less can apply for a free Exhibit Hall booth. To learn more about this program and find the Micro-Enterprise Application, please visit <https://familycafe.net/micro-enterprise/>.



The Agency for Health Care Administration

Medicaid Waiver received more money but the families that are now on the waiver are seeing and getting cuts from their budgets! Why? We shouldn't have to lose money from CDC or waiver for more people to come on the waiver. Put more money in the waiver to help Medicaid/Medicare families.

Funding for the Medicaid program, including the Medicaid waivers, is appropriated by the Florida Legislature.

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) operates the Developmental Disabilities Individual Budgeting (iBudget) Waiver, and their office can provide additional information. You can find the phone number of your local APD office by visiting <http://apd.myflorida.com/customers/application/> or by calling 1-866-273-2273.

Please work to get more money for staff at \$15.00 an hour. How do we get more people (legislators) to add funds to Medicaid Waiver and CDC Programs? We need to care more for caregivers.

Funding for the Medicaid program, including the Medicaid waivers, is appropriated by the Florida Legislature. The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) operates the Developmental Disabilities Individual Budgeting (iBudget) Waiver, and their office can provide additional information. You can find the phone number of your local APD office by visiting <http://apd.myflorida.com/customers/application/> or by calling 1-866-273-2273.

Why is Florida ranked so low in taking care of children with special needs? What is being done to make it better? I know other states don't have a wait list for a waiver. We have CMS for our son and it's based on income. These services for children with special needs should not be income based. Private insurance will not cover most of what our son needs. People who are on the edge of income are not taken care of.

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) operates the Developmental Disabilities Individual Budgeting (iBudget) Waiver and maintains the waitlist for the waiver. People are prioritized for waiver enrollment based on criteria that are in law and rule. For information about the Medicaid waiver for people with intellectual disabilities, please go to www.apd.myflorida.com and read about the iBudget waiver. You can also find the address of your local APD office by visiting <http://apd.myflorida.com/customers/application/> or calling 1-866-273-2273.

Eligibility criteria for Medicaid are set in federal and state laws and rules. Medicaid is for low-income people who also meet other criteria, such as being a child, pregnant, a parent of a dependent child, an elder, or a person with a disability. Each category may

have a different income standard. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is the state agency responsible for determining Medicaid eligibility. For questions about appealing a Medicaid eligibility determination, please contact DCF at 1-866-762-2237. For questions about eligibility for the Children's Medical Services (CMS) managed care plan, or to request a CMS eligibility rescreening, please contact the Department of Health's Toll-Free Clinical Eligibility Hotline at 1-855-901-5390.

Why doesn't Florida have a Katie Beckett Waiver? Is that something that is being considered? There should be some type of waiver to close the gap for the families that are just over those low-income restrictions for Medicaid services. Why are the income restrictions so low to qualify for CMS? Our son has so many significant medical needs, when he was on a major medical plan, it didn't cover half of what he needs. Without CMS or Medicaid we can't afford more of his supplies or meds or therapies.

The Model Waiver operated by the Florida Medicaid program is a "Katie Beckett" waiver in that only the child's income is counted when determining eligibility. This means that the parent's income is not counted. Since most children have no income, they can qualify for the waiver if they meet the clinical requirements that are in place.

The purpose of the Medicaid Model Waiver is to provide services to eligible children under 21 years of age who are medically complex/medically fragile or diagnosed with degenerative spinocerebellar disease. The Model Waiver is designed to delay or prevent institutionalization and allow waiver recipients to maintain stable health while living at home in their community. To qualify for the Model Waiver the applicant must be:

- 20 years of age or younger,
- Determined disabled using criteria established by the Social Security Administration (SSA),
- Be at risk for hospitalization as determined by the Children's Multidisciplinary Assessment Team (CMAT),
- Diagnosed as having degenerative spinocerebellar disease, or deemed medically fragile and have resided in a skilled nursing facility for at least 60 consecutive days prior to enrollment.

This waiver has capacity for 20 recipients, fifteen of which are reserved for children transitioning from a nursing facility to a home and community-based setting after residing in that facility for 60 consecutive days.

Additional information can be found on the Agency's website located at https://ahca.myflorida.com/medicaid/hcbs_waivers/model.shtml. To be assessed for Model Waiver eligibility, please contact the CMAT program at (850)245-4200. For information on Medicaid eligibility in Florida please contact DCF at 1-866-762-2237 or look online at www.myflfamilies.com.

What's the difference between Medicaid and Medicare? Who is eligible?

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

In regard to Medicaid, generally speaking an individual must meet specific requirements in order to be eligible for Medicaid. Each group has specific age, income, and asset limit requirements. People can be eligible for full or limited Medicaid benefits. If you would like to speak to someone about general Medicaid eligibility requirements and whether you qualify, please contact the Department of Children and Families (DCF) at 1-866-762-2237. You may also apply online at www.myflfamilies.com.

Please get insurance companies to provide coverage for more meds and more therapies. Many are denied even though it's medically necessary.

We are sorry to hear about your experience. If you or someone you know is having difficulty accessing services, please contact the Florida Medicaid Helpline at 1-877-254-1055 or file a complaint on the Agency's website at www.flmedicaidmanagedcare.com/complaint.

Please fix the access so we can apply for Med waiver without entering a facility or provider in advance.

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) operates the Developmental Disabilities Individual Budgeting (iBudget) Waiver and maintains the waitlist for the waiver. People are prioritized for waiver enrollment based on criteria that are in law and rule. For information about the Medicaid waiver for people with intellectual disabilities, please go to www.apd.myflorida.com and read about the iBudget waiver. You can also find the address of your local APD office by visiting <http://apd.myflorida.com/customers/application/> or calling 1-866-273-2273.

Will Medicare cover a wheelchair?

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

In Citrus County we have no home care. Please help provide more options for home care in our county.

We are sorry to hear about your experience. If you or someone you know is having difficulty accessing services, please contact the Florida Medicaid Helpline at 1-877-254-1055 or file a complaint on the Agency's website at www.flmedicaidmanagedcare.com/complaint.

My son needs short-term rehabilitation. Florida Blue and Medicaid do not cover this. Why?

We are sorry to hear about your experience. Florida Medicaid is committed to ensuring all medically necessary services, devices, and items are covered for children under the age of 21. If you are having difficulty, please call the Florida Medicaid Helpline at 1-877-254-1055 or request help on the Agency’s website at www.flmedicaidmanagedcare.com/complaint.

Does Medicare provide service animals?

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

Why are companions not required to have an extra insurance to carry “consumers”? A mail carrier, Uber driver, and pizza delivery are required to carry an extra policy!

The Developmental Disabilities Individual Budgeting (iBudget) Waiver Program covers companion services when provided through a licensed home health agency or as a solo provider. For information on qualifications for solo providers of companion care services, please visit the Agency for Persons with Disabilities’ Web page at www.apd.myflorida.com/. For information on home health agency licensure requirements, visit the Agency for Health Care Administration Web site at http://ahca.myflorida.com/MCHQ/Health_Facility_Regulation/Lab_HomeServ/HHA/index.shtml.

Not enough providers—my son is either over-insured or under-insured. He has Florida Blue and Medicaid but can’t get physical therapy. Why?

We are sorry to hear about your experience. Florida Medicaid is committed to ensuring all medically necessary services, devices, and items are covered for children under the age of 21. If you are having difficulty, please call the Florida Medicaid Helpline at 1-877-254-1055 or request help on the Agency’s website at www.flmedicaidmanagedcare.com/complaint.

What type of Medicaid or Medicare is offered to veterans?

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

In regards to Medicaid there are no services offered only for veterans. Generally speaking, an individual must meet specific requirements in order to be eligible for

Medicaid. Each group has specific age, income, and asset limit requirements. People can be eligible for full or limited Medicaid benefits. If you would like to speak to someone about general Medicaid eligibility requirements and whether you qualify, please contact the Department of Children and Families (DCF) at 1-866-762-2237. You may also apply online at www.myflfamilies.com.

I would like to ask Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security to include in their presentations, information that ageing parents/caregivers are going to need as abilities diminish and they themselves will require public assistance and care.

Thank you for your comments. The Agency for Health Care Administration always looks forward to participating in this event to share information and give updates on the services that we provide for those with disabilities and their families. We will take your request into consideration for future presentations.

My son has Florida Blue insurance and Medicaid and is on the med waiver. Why does he have such a hard time finding services? He was in the hospital for four months waiting for physical therapy and we were told that many places did not take his insurance! 2. There are plenty of therapies for mental health—if you do it online—but what happens when you can't? You go without? 3. My son needs cognitive therapy . . .none out there! :(The older my son gets, the less services he receives.

We are sorry to hear about your experience. Florida Medicaid is committed to ensuring all medically necessary services, devices, and items are covered for children under the age of 21. If you are having difficulty, please call the Florida Medicaid Helpline at 1-877-254-1055 or request help on the Agency's website at www.flmedicaidmanagedcare.com/complaint.

Need help for a walk-in shower and removing old tub but denied by Medicaid because they feel I don't need it.

We are sorry to hear about your experience. If you or someone you know is having difficulty accessing services, please contact the Florida Medicaid Helpline at 1-877-254-1055 or file a complaint on the Agency's website at www.flmedicaidmanagedcare.com/complaint.

We are thinking about moving to another state. Will we need to apply for all the benefits my son has here in Florida? (SSI, Medicaid, Medicaid Waiver)

Not all states offer the same Medicaid coverage. States are allowed to set their own rules regarding Medicaid coverage as long as they stay within federal guidelines. You will need to contact the state you are moving to in order to find out how to apply for benefits in their state. In addition, if your son receives Supplemental Security Income (SSI) you will need to contact the Social Security Administration (SSA) to advise them that you are

moving out of Florida. Their toll-free number is 1-800-772-1213. The SSA can answer specific questions from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Why doesn't Healthy Kids cover ABA services for children when the parents pay all or part of the premium?

The Florida Healthy Kids program offers comprehensive medical benefits, including behavioral health services. However, the law governing the Florida Healthy Kids program does not include coverage of Applied Behavior Analysis service in the behavioral health benefit. The Children's Medical Services Health Plan, a Florida KidCare program providing comprehensive health care services to children with special health care needs offers behavioral health care services, that is inclusive of ABA services to CHIP and Medicaid children. Children eligible for these services will no longer be enrolled in the Healthy Kids program if they qualify for coverage under CMS Health Plan. For questions about eligibility for the Children's Medical Services plan, or to request a CMS eligibility screening, please contact the Department of Health's Toll-Free Clinical Eligibility Hotline at 1-855-901-5390.

Can I be paid as a caregiver to my family member?

There are two ways in Medicaid that a person can be paid to care for a family member. For people on the iBudget waiver, it is called Consumer Directed Care Plus (CDC+). For people on the Long-Term Care managed care waiver, it is called Participant Direction Option. In either option, the person enrolled on the waiver must live in their own home, family home.

People on iBudget waiver can talk to their waiver support coordinator about Consumer Directed Care Plus or contact your local APD office by visiting <http://apd.myflorida.com/customers/application/> or calling 1-866-273-2273.

People on the Long-Term Care managed care waiver can talk to their case manager about Participant Direction Option or contact your LTC plan. The contact information for the LTC plans can be found through the following link: https://ahca.myflorida.com/Medicaid/statewide_mc/pdf/SMMC_Plan_Contact_Information_External.pdf.

Does Medicaid cover therapies for individuals with disabilities?

Thank you for your question. Unfortunately, we will need additional information to be able to fully address this question. If you or someone you know is having difficulty accessing services, please contact the Florida Medicaid Helpline at 1-877-254-1055 or file a complaint on the Agency's website at www.flmedicaidmanagedcare.com/complaint.

Any state/federal resources for people who do not qualify for Medicaid?

United Way 211 Community Resource Directory has a list of local health resources on their website that may assist you in finding services. United Way 211's website may be accessed at <http://www.referweb.net/211communityresources/>.

Is there a glossary of acronyms for the Agency that serves Medicaid and Medicare folks?

The Agency does not have a glossary of acronyms that we can provide. However, if you or someone you know is having difficulty understanding an acronym or accessing services through Medicaid, please contact the Florida Medicaid Helpline at 1-877-254-1055 or file a complaint on the Agency's website at www.flmedicaidmanagedcare.com/complaint.

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

How can I appeal a Medicaid denial? I should qualify.

Eligibility criteria for Medicaid are established by federal and state laws and regulations. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is the state agency responsible for determining Medicaid eligibility. For questions about appealing a Medicaid eligibility determination, please contact DCF at 1-866-762-2237.

If your question is related to appealing the denial or reduction of Medicaid services, most Medicaid recipients in Florida are required to enroll in a Managed Medical Assistance (MMA) plan. Recipients may contact their MMA plan directly to request assistance with appealing a denial of Medicaid covered services. The contact information for the MMA plans can be found through the following link:

https://ahca.myflorida.com/Medicaid/statewide_mc/pdf/SMMC_Plan_Contact_Information_External.pdf.

Are there age minimums/maximums for Medicare or Medicaid?

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

In regard to Medicaid, generally speaking an individual must meet specific requirements in order to be eligible for Medicaid. Each group has specific age, income, and asset limit requirements. People can be eligible for full or limited Medicaid benefits. If you would like to speak to someone about general Medicaid eligibility requirements and whether you qualify, please contact the Department of Children and Families (DCF) at 1-866-762-2237 or apply at myflfamilies.com.

Does AHCA pay for the usage of medical marijuana for people with disabilities?

No, due to federal regulations, Florida Medicaid cannot pay for medical marijuana. The Food and Drug Administration has not approved marijuana for medical use. The Drug Enforcement Agency classifies it as a Schedule I drug, which means that it has no currently accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse.

When you do not agree with a medical ruling with Medicaid, is there a complaint line or a manager to discuss the situation with? It is always easier to talk about the issues you have than to write them down and hope someone understands the problem or the program.

We are sorry to hear about your experience. If you or someone you know is having difficulty accessing services, please contact the Florida Medicaid Helpline at 1-877-254-1055 or file a complaint on the Agency's website at www.flmedicaidmanagedcare.com/complaint.

Would love to see more sessions on Medicaid/Medicare eligibility at the conference.

Thank you for your comments. The Agency for Health Care Administration always looks forward to participating in this event to share information and give updates on the services that we provide for those with disabilities and their families. Medicare is a federal program that is different than state Medicaid programs. For questions relating to eligibility or services covered by Medicare, please contact Medicare by calling 1-800-633-4227.

What does AHCA do?

The Florida Agency for Health Care ensures that Florida's Medicaid program complies with all state and federal laws and rules, determines what services are covered and sets payment rates (within federal and state guidelines), assists Medicaid recipients and providers with the program, and many other functions. One of the most important tasks is to monitor the contracted Medicaid health plans. This includes ensuring that the plans are meeting all the requirements as specified in their contracts. For additional information please see the Agency's SMMC website located at ahca.myflorida.com/Medicaid/statewide_mc/index.shtml. The Agency is also still responsible for administering the Medicaid program for those individuals who are not enrolled in the SMMC program who remain in the fee-for-service delivery system.

Does AHCA regulate nursing facilities and group homes?

The Agency for Health Care Administration's Division of Health Quality Assurance (HQA) licenses and/or certifies and regulates 40 different types of health care providers, including hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and home health agencies. For additional information please see the Agency's HQA website located at ahca.myflorida.com/MCHQ/index.shtml.

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities

Have you thought about removing the eight percent decrease in budget for budget neutrality? With no previous pay increases and minimum wage increasing, this would be a help. I understand the four percent is for administrative fees so that would stay.

This is a part of the federal agreement to run the program.

How do we use timesheets app?

If your question concerns CDC+ timesheets, help can be found at this webpage:
<https://apd.myflorida.com/cdcplus/submissions/>.

We need more transportation options on the Treasure Coast.

Please contact the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged at (800) 983-2435 and discuss your needs.

When will the people on CDC+ get the 12 percent back?

CDC+ participants exchange the total budget of their current approved Medicaid waiver cost plan for a reduced budget with greater flexibility. The reduction in budget ensures the program remains cost neutral to the state and is a part of our federal agreement.

We need more day programs for adults.

Thank you for this feedback. For a listing of waiver providers who provide Adult Day Training services, please visit: fddresources.qlarant.com/ProviderSearch.aspx
You may find community programs at the following sites:
Resource Directory - resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory/
Florida Navigator - navigator.apd.myflorida.com/

What if you want to evacuate but you are not in an evacuation zone? I am alone with my special needs daughter and I am afraid to be home if it is a category 2 or above.

It is your choice if you want to evacuate because of a storm. Please work with your local emergency management agency to get information about the storm. If you are an APD waiver client, the Waiver Support Coordinator can assist you and your daughter in developing a Personal Disaster Plan. More resources regarding Disaster Planning,

Response, and Recovery can be found on the APD website:
apd.myflorida.com/customers/disaster/.

Medicaid Waiver received more money but the families that are now on the waiver are seeing and getting cuts from their budgets! Why? We shouldn't have to lose money from CDC or waiver for more people to come on the waiver. Put more money in the waiver to help families.

Thank you for your input. Please work with your Waiver Support Coordinator or CDC+ Consultant if you need assistance in accessing medically necessary services covered by this program. If you have specific questions, please call CDC+ Customer Service at (866) 761-7043.

Please work to get more money for staff at \$15.00 an hour. How do we get more people (legislators) to add funds to Medicaid Waiver and CDC Programs? We need to care more for caregivers.

APD has a contract for an actuarial study on a number of provider rates. This study will provide the legislature with reliable data to make long term decisions on rates in the future.

My son is 19. I know he will be aging out of his insurance. How do we transition to APD?

Information about applying for APD services is here:
apd.myflorida.com/customers/application/.

We need more options for activities for people with disabilities that are visible and invisible.

Additional resources for individuals with disabilities may be found at the following sites:
Resource Directory – resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory/
Florida Navigator – navigator.apd.myflorida.com/
For transportation assistance, individuals with disabilities should contact the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged at (800) 983-2435.

Why is APD cutting funds for those on the waiver to give to others to get on the waiver? Some budgets have been cut by extensive amounts.

APD's budget is determined by the Florida Legislature. In fact, the Legislature provided more funding for waiver services for Fiscal Year 2021-22. Please work with your Waiver Support Coordinator or CDC+ Consultant if you need assistance in accessing medically necessary services covered by this program.

Will there be a cost-of-living increase for budgets? What other services will be cut due to the waiver not paying for them?

A cost-of-living increase for individual iBudget amounts is not planned at this time. Please work with the Waiver Support Coordinator or CDC+ Consultant if you need assistance in accessing medically necessary services covered by this program.

Is there a website with all resources for disabilities?

APD maintains a Resource Directory which is an informational tool to help individuals with disabilities learn about free and low cost programs available in their respective areas: resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory/

The Florida Navigator is an online tool designed to empower and inform individuals with developmental disabilities, caregivers, and professionals about specific state of Florida services: navigator.apd.myflorida.com/.

\$95 million to help people come off the waitlist is awesome, but without the proper funding to pay providers who currently work, how is it expected that the people coming off the waitlist can find providers?

APD has a contract for an actuarial study on a number of provider rates. This study will provide the legislature with reliable data to make long term decisions on rates in the future.

I struggle with keeping good personal supports. I'm a wheelchair user due to Cerebral Palsy. I live independently and work full time as a social worker and a health coach. There's talk of raising rates for personal supports, which is a great first step. My question is, in the long term, how feasible would it be to make caregiving its own credential, similar to nursing? My thought is, we can't pay people to care, but we can invest so that they are properly knowledgeable in the conditions clients manage, legislation that affects them, and their activities of daily living. That way, providers would be experts worthy of higher pay and benefits because caregiving would be a career path, not just a job.

Thank you for sharing these great suggestions. APD is currently reviewing provider training requirements and will engage the public during the rule-making process.

We need 24-hour train and bus services including Sundays, Saturdays, and holidays. Every half-hour for all cities in Florida.

Thank you for sharing this suggestion. For more information about transportation in Florida, please visit the Department of Transportation website at fdot.gov.

You may also contact the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged at (800) 983-2435 to discuss your transportation needs for individuals with disabilities.

How do you get a working relationship to get supports and services authorized instead of shelved and not reviewed after hearing and complaints? CDC specific.

Thank you for your input. If you have specific questions, please call CDC+ Customer Service at (866) 761-7043.

How can we open more day programs filled with positive activities for adults?

You may find community programs at the following sites:
Resource Directory – resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory/
Florida Navigator – navigator.apd.myflorida.com/

Children aging out of the system of being a child to adulthood for a young man who is developmentally a two-year-old. He is not going to be able to have a career. He does learn through music mostly, but what next?

There are organizations within Florida that can help as individuals transition through different stages of life. APD maintains a Resource Directory which is an informational tool to help individuals with disabilities learn about free and low cost programs available in their respective areas. Additional resources may be found at the following sites:
Resource Directory – resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory/
The Florida Navigator is an online tool designed to empower and inform individuals with developmental disabilities, caregivers, and professionals about specific state of Florida services. Florida Navigator – navigator.apd.myflorida.com/

What is being done on the CDC Plus Waiver so that people receiving current services don't lose them?

For specific questions, please call CDC+ Customer Service at (866) 761-7043.

What can be done so the State of Florida Statewide Special Needs Online Registry can be reinstated? This would make it easier for people to register for the service if they feel they are eligible. It would also make it easier for people to report when they move, such as from one County to another.

The Florida Department of Health maintains the Florida Special Needs Registry here: snr.flhealthresponse.com.

Where can someone find a resource that gives information for special needs 101? Meaning where can someone go to find the information to sign up for help, like a one-stop, not search all over?

Information about applying for APD services is here:

apd.myflorida.com/customers/application/

Additional resources may be found at the following sites:

Resource Directory – resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory/

Florida Navigator – navigator.apd.myflorida.com/

Is there some way that we can get the rules for Medicaid waiver? Everything I ask my support coordinator she says “I will have to ask my boss and get back to you.”

Please email details about your situation to APD.info@apdcares.org and your message will be forwarded to the agency's ombudsman. The rules that govern the iBudget Waiver program can be found online by visiting: apd.myflorida.com/ibudget/rules-regs.htm.

How can I access support coordinators survey online?

The APD Waiver Support Coordinator Scorecard is at: scorecard.apd.myflorida.com.

It was disheartening to learn how pervasive the Waiver 'wait list' is in Florida. Our children really need these services. The worry is overwhelming. It truly keeps us up at night. Why is there a wait list at all? The answer we continually receive is that the budget is tight. Really? I believe we can do better than that. Why not think differently? Reverse engineer the thought process and priority system. Put waiver funding and deployment of disability services first—then let other statewide budget items fill in the remaining gaps. What would be left out—unfunded? How would the state function without the provision of the newly unfunded program?

Individuals are enrolled on the waiver from the waiting list based upon available funding appropriated by the Legislature. Information about applying for the waiver is available here: apdcares.org/customers/application/. For specific questions, please call your Regional Office: apd.myflorida.com/region/

Additional resources may be found at the following sites:

Resource Directory – resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory/

Florida Navigator – navigator.apd.myflorida.com/

Family Care Councils – <https://www.fccflorida.org/local-councils.html>

Would love more information on resources for people with cerebral palsy.

Additional resources may be found at the following sites:

Resource Directory – resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory/
Florida Navigator – navigator.apd.myflorida.com/
Family Care Councils – <https://www.fccflorida.org/local-councils.html>

I know a lady that is in a group home and is very unhappy with her current situation. She has a guardian that doesn't care about her best interest and is just a paycheck. Even the support coordinator will not or cannot help. How can I help her? She does suffer retaliation when her family "shows up" for Dr appointments, etc . . . I feel she is in a no-win, neverending situation.

Please email details about your situation to APD.info@apdcares.org and your message will be forwarded to the agency's ombudsman.

APD is a government agency formed to service clients that are vulnerable. Written policies should be easily understood and available in print. Examples: When a client turns 21 years old, here is a guideline chart to follow so that transition occurs smoothly. Client needs vehicle modification . . . here is the guideline for filing a SAN, with all the appropriate forms to fill out and submit, as well as the number of days APD representative has to get back with you on decision. What to do and who to contact if your SANS aren't addressed in a timely manner.

Thank you for your input. For specific questions, please contact your Regional Office: apd.myflorida.com/region/.

What do clients or their representatives do when WSC states that paperwork such as quick updates or purchasing plans or support plans are not signed by APD representatives, yet we are supposed to keep records and are responsible.

APD signs all approved plans, if a plan or quick update has not been signed, then it could not be approved. If you have questions about a specific purchasing plan or quick update, please contact the CDC+ Customer Service line at (866)761-7043.

Clients need access to attorneys that will fight APD for necessary medical services of supports. The present system of due process does not support clients, but APD.

The Florida Bar Association provides a list of options that can be found at floridabar.org/public/probono/.

Why is APD/CDC Waiver list taking so long for financial assistance for family members caring for a permanently disabled adult in their home? I've been waiting 4 years with no updates or notification from the CDC Waiver dept. This

state is so far behind others like NJ that it's sad and puts a burden on families financial status.

Please contact your waiting list support coordinator or your Regional Office:
apd.myflorida.com/region/.

How do you move up on the waiting list with the Agency for Persons with Disabilities?

For more information, please visit APD's Waiting List Priority Categorization: apd.myflorida.com/customers/waitlist/. The APD Regional Office may also be able to assist and you may find contact information at apd.myflorida.com/region/.

When will APD be making training PowerPoint presentations on: 1. clients turning 21 and the need for updating QSI, SANs, and IBudget. What should the representative be aware of before, during, and after changes are made? 2. When no one is listening to your needs, what are the proper steps to get resolution? 3. Transportation. It is a covered service and is available for the clients' needs.

Thank you for your input. For answers to specific questions, please contact your Regional Office: apd.myflorida.com/region/.

Is there a website or list of service providers in Florida, especially for group homes and villages and adult day training?

For a listing of iBudget waiver providers, please visit:

fddresources.glarant.com/ProviderSearch.aspx

Additional resources may be found at the following sites:

Resource Directory – resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory/

Florida Navigator – navigator.apd.myflorida.com/

Family Care Councils – <https://www.fccflorida.org/local-councils.html>

How can I get help to buy a house with my CDC funds?

Per page 3-9 of the CDC+ handbook, CDC+ funds cannot be used to pay for rent or mortgage. You should speak with your CDC+ Consultant to discuss other available options for assistance with purchasing a house.

Can we add more focus on adult disabilities after childhood? There are so few resources for adults who become or are disabled. Can APD provide more services for aging adults?

Resource Directory – resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory/

Florida Navigator – navigator.apd.myflorida.com/

Family Care Councils – <https://www.fccflorida.org/local-councils.html>

Is there any financial assistance to get service animal training for a dog to help with seizures or anxiety episodes?

APD does not fund service animals. The APD Resource Directory may be helpful: resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory/. Requirements and costs for service animals may vary, depending on the organization. The Autism Speaks website provides some information on several service dog organizations at: autismspeaks.org/familyservices/resource-library/assistance-dog-resources.

What options are there for young disabled adults to socialize with others?

Resources may be found at the following sites:
Resource Directory – resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory/
Florida Navigator – navigator.apd.myflorida.com/
Family Care Councils – <https://www.fccflorida.org/local-councils.html>

What are Family Care Councils?

Information about the Family Care Councils is at apd.myflorida.com/fcc/.

What services does APD provide for individuals with Autism?

APD provides a variety of social, medical, behavioral, residential, and therapeutic supports to assist individuals with developmental disabilities. Services must be medically necessary and individualized. Information about applying for APD services is online here: apd.myflorida.com/customers/application/. You may also want to visit Florida CARD for resources: florida-card.org/.

Are there any voting accommodations for anyone with disabilities?

The state of Florida does offer accommodations. Contact your local Supervisor of Elections. Find yours at dos.myflorida.com/elections/.

What is the difference between Human Rights and Disability Rights and what are ways to advocate for access rights?

Disability rights are human rights. There are multiple disability laws. Here are some resources to educate you on your rights as a person with a disability. A Guide to Disability Rights Laws, U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division (Feb 2020): www.ada.gov/cguide.htm

Your Legal Disability Rights: www.usa.gov/disability-rights
Disability Rights Florida: disabilityrightsflorida.org/disability-topics
Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act Public Law 106-402, 106th Congress: Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000: congress.gov/106/plaws/publ402/PLAW-106publ402.pdf

How do providers get approved, reviewed, etc.?

Please visit APD's Medicaid waiver provider enrollment page at apd.myflorida.com/providers/enrollment/. This will show you the applications and the step-by-step process.

Has the virus negatively affected APD funding? Will it affect APD?

No, funding has not been impacted. For the latest information, please visit APD's COVID-19 webpage: apd.myflorida.com/covid19/.

If we seek a Guardianship Advocacy, can court instead give plenary Guardianship? We want our daughter to retain as many rights as possible (like right to vote, choose where she lives, getting a job, where to get services).

One cannot say how a judge will decide; however, section 744.3085, Florida Statutes states: "In accordance with the legislative intent of this chapter, courts are encouraged to consider appointing a guardian advocate, when appropriate, as a less restrictive form of guardianship."

What happens if an adult child needs a guardian advocate but they are against it?

There are alternatives to naming a guardian advocate. Florida law mandates that the courts consider the least restrictive option for an individual who needs decision-making assistance. The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council has publications related to guardianship that can be accessed at: fdcd.org/publications.

If you need further information, consult an attorney who specializes in guardianship or the Office of Public and Professional Guardianship (OPPG). Contact information of OPPG can be found at: elderaffairs.state.fl.us/doea/spgo.php.

In addition to the iBudget waiver, what other areas should we focus on for 2022 legislation?

APD's budget is determined by the Florida Legislature. The 2022 session begins in March, and APD will have more information early next year.

In general, how are Medicaid Waiver Support Coordinators collaborating with school districts and IEP teams to ensure that students are college, career, and life ready?

Through the person-centered planning process, WSCs are required to work with consumers to identify the goals and outcomes that are most important to the person and identify supports and services to help the consumer achieve those goals. Conversations during the person-centered planning process can include planning for school, work, career, and education transitions and goals. iBudget waiver rule requirements place an emphasis on WSCs working with consumers and families to locate and develop natural and community supports. WSCs can assist consumers in accessing supports to meet their needs, regardless of the funding source of the supports.

Is there a Pro-Bono lawyer that will help with CDC hearings?

Please call 211 and request to speak with a local legal services organization or call CDC+ Customer Service at (866) 761-7043, if you need additional help.

Why does my child lose APD services when he turns 21? I still have to work to take care of him.

APD services do not stop at age 21. However, service coverage changes based on age. For clients receiving iBudget waiver services, the Waiver Support Coordinator can assist in planning for age changes and service needs in advance through all available resources and programs. Sometimes a service may no longer be available when an individual turns 21, but a comparable service can be authorized in its place.

What is the process for people being taken off the waitlist? How do the phases work?

People who are enrolled on the waiting list are placed in a category based on their current living and care situation. If any factors change, such as an aging caregiver, the change may move the individual to a new category. For more information, visit: apd.myflorida.com/customers/waitlist/docs/WAITING%20LIST%20PRIORITY%20CATEGORIES.pdf.

Is there a way to check your status on the Med Waiver list online?

Please contact your Regional APD Office: apd.myflorida.com/region/.

I would like to see more funding for the supported living programs.

Thank you for your input. We appreciate your support.

Are there any APD resources available to help fund a wheelchair accessible van? The price tag is extremely high.

APD maintains a resource directory as an informational tool to help individuals with disabilities learn about free and low cost programs available in their area. For more information, visit: resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/.

Why do you have to be in the APD program for 6 months BEFORE you are able to get into the CDC+ program?

There is no such rule. A participant can apply for CDC+ services once they have been enrolled in the APD waiver.

What is APD's policy for reporting abuse?

Any person who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a person with a developmental disability is being abused, neglected, or exploited by a relative, caregiver, or household member or, in the case of self-neglect, by themselves, is required to report such knowledge or suspicion to the Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-800-96-ABUSE (or 1-800-962-2873). Failure to report known or suspected cases of abuse, neglect, or exploitation is a crime.

Does APD recognize military families? Many military families need services but don't know about APD.

APD supports military families by allowing increased portability with home and community-based services. To learn more about Supporting Active Duty Military Families, visit: apd.myflorida.com/docs/military-ad.pdf.

What does APD offer as far as respite services?

APD provides respite services to eligible individuals under the age of 21 through the iBudget waiver program. Individuals over the age of 21 may receive respite through a service called Personal Supports.

Does APD provide services to those with epilepsy?

In order to be eligible for services from the Agency for Persons with Disabilities ("APD"), an individual must have a developmental disability (as defined in section 393.063(12),

Florida Statutes), which occurs prior to age 18 and constitutes a substantial handicap that can reasonably be expected to continue indefinitely. Disabilities served by APD include:

- Intellectual disabilities (Full Scale IQ of 70 or below)
- Severe forms of autism
- Spina bifida cystica or myelomeningocele
- Cerebral palsy
- Prader-Willi syndrome
- Down syndrome
- Phelan-McDermid syndrome or
- Individuals between the ages of 3-5 at high risk for a developmental disability.

Information about applying for APD services is here:

<https://apd.myflorida.com/customers/application/>

Additional resources may be found at the following sites:

Resource Directory – resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory/

Florida Navigator – navigator.apd.myflorida.com/

Family Care Councils – <https://www.fccflorida.org/local-councils.html>



The Department of Children and Families

My son has mental health issues—no group home or facility to help

Please contact your Medicaid health plan for more information on mental health services. If you need help finding contact information for your plan, or if you are not enrolled in a health plan, call our Medicaid Helpline at: 1-877-254-1055 or visit www.ahca.myflorida.com/Medicaid

There are Mobile Response Teams serving every county in Florida. Here is a link to with contacts for the providers: <https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/samh/docs/maps/MRT.pdf>

The Department of Children and Families contracts with seven Managing Entities around the state to manage the behavioral health system of care in their contracted area for individuals who are uninsured or underinsured. Managing Entities provide behavioral health services and supports to eligible individuals through a network of contracted providers. They may also provide training to the community. Peer Support services may be available in some areas.

Eligible individuals are adults with serious mental illnesses or who are in a mental health crisis and children with an emotional disturbance, mental illness, or who are in an acute mental health or emotional crisis. The Managing Entities are listed below, along with their help line numbers for each and the counties they serve.

North West Florida Health Network - 850-747-5755; www.nwfhealth.org

Serving Bay, Calhoun, Escambia, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Taylor, Wakulla, Walton, and Washington counties.

Broward Behavioral Health Coalition - 877-698-7794; bbhcflorida.org/

Serving Broward county.

Central Florida Behavioral Health Network, Inc. - 813-740-4811; www.cfbhn.org/

Serving Charlotte, Collier, DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Highlands, Hendry, Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk and Sarasota counties.

Central Florida Cares Health System - 407-985-3560; centralfloridacares.org Serving Brevard, Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties.

Lutheran Services Florida - 877-229-9098; www.lsfnet.org/

Serving Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Citrus, Clay, Columbia, Dixie, Duval, Flagler, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Hernando, Lake, Lafayette, Levy, Marion, Nassau, Putnam, St. Johns, Sumter, Suwannee, Union and Volusia counties.

Thriving Mind South Florida - 888-248-3111; www.thrivingmind.org/

Serving Miami-Dade and Monroe counties.

Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network - 561-203-2485; sefbhn.org/ Serving Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee, Palm Beach and St. Lucie counties.

What is the “system of care”? What does this mean?

The Florida Children’s System of Care 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. For more information, please visit Florida's System of Care website at <http://socflorida.com/>.

We need presentations on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

Free, online trainings are available through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at cdc.gov for consumers and professional who care for women at risk for an alcohol-exposed pregnancy, and for those who work with individuals living with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs). These online trainings provide strategies to improve the delivery of care related to FASDs and their prevention.

I know a lady that is in a group home and is very unhappy with her current situation. She has a guardian that doesn't care about her best interest and she is just a paycheck. Even the support coordinator will not or cannot help. How can I help her? She does suffer retaliation when her family "shows up" for Dr appointments, etc . . . I feel she is in a no-win never ending situation.

If you suspect that an individual is self-neglecting or is the victim of abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation by a second party, you will need to file a report with the Florida Abuse Hotline to facilitate involvement by the Department of Children and Families, Adult Protective Services/Investigations. If a report is accepted, an Adult Protective Investigator will be out to see this individual within 24 hours. To file a report with the Florida Abuse Hotline:

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

We need more mental health services.

Many insurance plans and Florida Medicaid cover behavioral health services. Please contact your health plan to discuss available services.

For individuals who are uninsured or underinsured the Department of Children and Families contracts with seven Managing Entities around the state to manage the behavioral health system of care in their contracted area. Managing Entities provide services and supports through a network of contracted providers for eligible individuals. The Managing Entities are listed below, along with their help line numbers for each and the counties they serve:

North West Florida Health Network - 850-747-5755; www.nwfhealth.org

Serving Bay, Calhoun, Escambia, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Taylor, Wakulla, Walton, and Washington counties.

Broward Behavioral Health Coalition – 877-698-7794; bbhcflorida.org/

Serving Broward county.

Central Florida Behavioral Health Network, Inc. – 813-740-4811; www.cfbhn.org/

Serving Charlotte, Collier, DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Highlands, Hendry, Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk and Sarasota counties.

Central Florida Cares Health System – 407-985-3560; centralfloridacares.org Serving

Brevard, Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties.

Lutheran Services Florida – 877-229-9098; www.lsfnet.org/

Serving Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Citrus, Clay, Columbia, Dixie, Duval, Flagler, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Hernando, Lake, Lafayette, Levy, Marion, Nassau, Putnam, St. Johns, Sumter, Suwannee, Union and Volusia counties.

Thriving Mind South Florida – 888-248-3111; www.thrivingmind.org/

Serving Miami-Dade and Monroe counties.

Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network – 561-203-2485; sefbhn.org/ Serving

Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee, Palm Beach and St. Lucie counties.

Why when they Baker Act do they not tell the family where you are going or being taken to? This makes it very difficult because family has no idea where you are unless you can call them, and they take your phone when you are hospitalized. I know about HIPAA, but I still think that the family should know, because that is a heavy burden that if you get Baker Acted, your family won't know where you are.

While the Department does not have authority over law enforcement officers or agencies, there is no restriction under statute limiting law enforcement officers from informing family where a person is being transported for evaluation. Each law enforcement agency is responsible for establishing policies and protocols for the safe and secure transportation and transfer of custody of the person according to section 394.462, F.S.

Section 394.4599 states that the receiving facility will notify the individual's guardian, guardian advocate, health care surrogate or proxy, attorney or representative, by telephone or in person within 24 hours after the individual's arrival at the facility. If the individual is a competent adult and has not established a health care proxy or surrogate, no notification is required, and the individual must consent to release their protected health information to any person. For minors it is within 12 hours.

Need to find emergency housing assistance for persons with disabilities who are homeless.

Assistance with housing coordination for eligible individuals may be available from the Department's managing entities. You may contact your local Managing Entity and request housing coordination assistance. Please follow the below link to the Department's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Get Help webpage and select a county from the drop-down list. That will provide you with contact information for the Managing Entity that manages that catchment area. myflfamilies.com/service-programs/samh/get-help.shtml

Additionally, according to the Agency for Persons with Disabilities website, apd.myflorida.com/about/faqs/htm, individuals can call the Florida Housing Search number at 1-877-428-8844. They link people with housing that will fit their needs.

What services and resources are available for foster parents?

Foster parents in the state are provided with various resources intended to provide for the needs of the child or children placed in their homes. Foster parents receive foster care board payments which are intended to cover the basic needs of the child for whom the payments are made. Many of the Community Based Care Lead Agencies (CBCs) provide an enhanced board payment for foster parents that foster newborns and infants to help with their essential needs and childcare. Many CBCs also provide additional supports to families including, but not limited to, monthly allowances, transportation reimbursement, and clothing vouchers. Foster parents have access to Florida's Foster/Adoptive Parent Association (FAPA) which is an organization comprised of foster and adoptive parents with lived experience. The Florida FAPA provides training opportunities and is a resource to assist families with navigating the child welfare system.

Florida's Foster Information Center (FFIC) is a statewide avenue for prospective foster parents to access information on what fostering means and how to take the next steps towards becoming licensed. Former and current foster parents serve as "foster community ambassadors" who answer questions, give "lived experience" insight, and provide peer support to prospective foster parents. Ambassadors are available Monday – Friday from 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. at 1-833-678-3735.

How does DCF assist with the opioid crisis?

The Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (SAMH) in the Florida Department of Children and Families administers Florida's State Opioid Response Project (SOR). SOR is funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and is designed to address the opioid crisis and reduce opioid-related deaths by providing a comprehensive array of evidence-based prevention, medication-assisted treatment (MAT), and recovery support services. Treatment and recovery services target indigent, uninsured, and underinsured individuals with opioid use disorders or opioid misuse. Additionally, SOR funds are used to expand the Department's Overdose Prevention Program which distributes and trains on the use of naloxone (Narcan®), the life-saving medication that reverses opioid overdoses; and assists community-based organizations with the development of standing orders, policies, and protocols for community distribution and training.

This multifaceted project deploys Behavioral Health Consultants to support child protective investigators and a team of qualified medical professionals to assist with MAT capacity building, training, and technical assistance. Recovery support services include the establishment of residences using the Oxford House® Model, implementation of Recovery Community Organizations, employment of Recovery Oriented Quality Improvement Specialists, and expansion of the Veterans information and referral service, MyFLVet Helpline. SOR funds support curricula development for medical schools and buprenorphine induction programs within hospital emergency departments.

The majority of SOR grant funds are being utilized for methadone maintenance and buprenorphine maintenance because controlled trials demonstrate that these services are most effective at retaining individuals in care, reducing illicit opioid use, and reducing opioid-related mortality. Funds will also be used for extended-release naltrexone which blocks the effects of opioids and is approved for the prevention of relapse to opioid dependence. The Department has allocated SOR funds to each region in the state to contract for behavioral health services through regional systems of care or Managing Entities. Please visit myflfamilies.com/service-programs/samh/managing-entities/ to see which Managing Entity manages services in your area. Please reach out with any questions.

What services are there for caregivers that are caring for people with mental health disabilities?

The National Alliance on Mental Illness provides resources, trainings, and linkages to include a helpline. Visit the NAMI website to locate the closest NAMI Family Support Group. www.nami.org/support-education/support-groups.

How can I find a mental health therapist in my area?

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is the largest mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for Americans affected by mental illness. www.nami.org (800) 950-6264.

Florida Department of Children and Families provides funding for in-home and community-based outpatient services, crisis services, and residential treatment. www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/mental-health (850) 487-1111 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

The national agency that leads public efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation regarding prevention, treatment, and recovery support services for behavioral services. www.samhsa.gov (877) 726-4727.

The National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health National family-run organization dedicated to improving the lives of children with emotional, behavioral, and mental challenges and their families. www.ffcmh.org (240) 403-190

What exactly does DCF do?

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is the primary agency for child welfare, substance abuse and mental health, and public assistance benefits for the state of Florida. It is DCF's vision that Florida families and vulnerable populations will receive holistic care at the first interaction with the Department or our providers. This direction integrates Department systems and services more than ever before to provide wrap-around care to those in need to set them on a pathway to prosperity.

What is the impact if a parent becomes disabled and goes on SSDI and has a disabled child on SSI?

One factor of eligibility for benefits with the Economic Self-Sufficiency program is the type and amount of income received by all members of a household. Should the amount or source of income for any household member change, this should be reported to the Economic Self-Sufficiency program for evaluation and to determine if any change to benefits is needed or appropriate. As various programs have different rules on handling specific sources of income, any potential changes will depend on the type and amount of income as well as which programs the family is receiving benefits under.

How can I better advocate for my family member with mental health concerns?

Contact your local National Alliance on Mental Illness also known as NAMI. If you do not know how to contact them, call 2-1-1 to get their contact information. You can find more information here: <https://www.nami.org/Home>. NAMI has a blog that provides different ways you can advocate:

1. Support someone who needs help
2. Volunteer for a local mental health organization
3. Attend an awareness walk or other event benefitting the mental health movement
4. Encourage your local politicians to prioritize mental health
5. Correct those who use stigmatizing language

You can read more about it here: <https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/June-2020/What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Mental-Health-Advocate>

How can we better prepare law enforcement officers for interactions with individuals having mental health crises?

Law enforcement officers in the State of Florida are completing mental health crisis intervention training using a curriculum developed by a national organization with expertise in mental health crisis intervention. The training aids in improving officers' knowledge and skills as first responders to incidents involving individuals with an emotional disturbance or mental illness, including de-escalation skills to ensure consumer and officer safety.

Is WIC the same program as SNAP benefits? How can I apply for these?

Both WIC and SNAP programs help families purchase food, but eligibility is different for each program. SNAP is available to low-income families and individuals who meet income and assets test. WIC is available only to pregnant women, women who recently had a baby, and infants and children up to age 5.

To apply for SNAP: You may apply for assistance from any computer with an internet connection at www.myflorida.com/accessflorida or at one of our community

partner sites. You may also complete a paper application that can be mailed, faxed or returned to your local Customer Service Center (<http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/community-health/dental-health/resources/index.html>).

To apply for WIC: Obtain your local WIC office telephone number from <http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/wic/contact-info.html> or call toll free 1-800-342-3556 and say you want to apply for WIC. The local WIC office will give you a date and time for a WIC certification visit. At this visit, the household income and the medical/nutrition status of each applicant will be reviewed. On that day, you will find out if you and your children are eligible for WIC. More information on eligibility for WIC can be found here: <http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/wic/wic-eligibility.html>

How can we get help with the trauma and anxiety resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic?

Anyone can call 2-1-1 for information and referral as well as supportive counseling. Free behavioral health services through IMPOWER include:

- Psychiatric evaluation
- Mental health & substance misuse counseling
- Medication management
- Medication
- Case management

To make a referral to IMPOWER, please visit their website at www.impowerfl.org. Scroll down the webpage for the referral form links. If the individual is making a referral for themselves or their child, please select "To Make a Behavioral Health Referral for Myself or My Child" to begin the process. Individuals may also call 1-321-639-1224 and choose option 2. For additional resources related to COVID-19, visit SAMHSA's website at this link: <https://www.samhsa.gov/coronavirus/training-technical-assistance-related-covid-19>

What role does DCF have in housing migrant children? Who is responsible for them?

DCF only licenses unaccompanied minor homes (UAC) as child caring agencies or foster homes. The Office of Refugee Resettlement, a federal program, is responsible for the placement of migrant children who come to their attention upon being detained by immigration. Although the licensed shelters and foster homes provide direct care and supervision for this population upon placement, Office of Refugee Resettlement is responsible for all children placed.

There are circumstances when a migrant child and their family are undetected by immigration or ORR, and they come to the attention of DCF through the abuse hotline. Per Chapter 39, DCF has the authority to remove the child if there are concerns for abuse, abandonment, or neglect. During the investigation, the child protective investigator should determine if the child in question is in the care of a sponsor or their parents. If in the care of a sponsor, placement is done by ORR, the CPI should contact ORR to inform them about the concerns so they can intervene and take care and custody of the child. If the

child was never brought to the attention of the federal government and they do not move forward with bringing the child under their umbrella, DCF would then shelter the child and place them with an approved relative/non-relative or in licensed care until the parents complete their case plan to allow for reunification or the child achieves another form of permanency.

What does "Adult Protective Services" do? Is this who I should contact if I am worried about an adult with a disability being mistreated?

The Adult Protective Services Program is responsible for preventing further harm to vulnerable adults who are victims of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or self-neglect. These adults may experience abuse, neglect, or exploitation by second parties or may fail to take care of themselves adequately. Florida statutes require any person who knows or who has reasonable cause to suspect any abuse of vulnerable adults to report that information to the Florida Abuse Hotline.

If you suspect that an individual is self-neglecting or is the victim of abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation by a second party, you will need to file a report with the Florida Abuse Hotline to facilitate involvement by the Department of Children and Families, Adult Protective Services/Investigations. If a report is accepted, an Adult Protective Investigator will be out to see this individual within 24 hours.

To file a report with the Florida Abuse Hotline: 1. File a Report on-line at <https://reportabuse.dcf.state.fl.us/>. You must have Javascript and Popups enabled to complete a report. 2. Call the Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-800-96ABUSE (1-800-962-2873) to file your report. APS Program supports adults with disabilities (18 through 59 years of age) who need assistance to remain in their homes and/or in the community. Those seeking enrollment will be placed on a statewide waiting list for any and/or all programs for which they are determined eligible. The Adult Protective Services Program supports ongoing case management and in-home services through Community-Based services (Chapter 410, F.S.).

The Program Office sets guidelines, pursuant to applicable statutory and/or federal regulations, for in-home care for adults with disabilities in family-type living arrangements, such as private homes, as an alternative to institutional or nursing home care. Clients who qualify for these services are adults with disabilities aged 18 through 59 years with permanent physical or mental limitations that restrict their ability to perform normal activities of daily living and their capacity to live independently. Through case management and other in-home services, the program supports and maintains adults with disabilities' independence and quality of life.

I am considering becoming a foster parent. How does DCF support foster parents? What is the process like?

Every child comes with a dedicated team committed to their well-being and success. As a foster parent you are an important and valued member of that child's team! If a need or barrier to success arises, your child's team is the first line of defense and can work together to ensure that you have the tools needed to care for them.

Our system of care is based on the needs of the local community, so it varies depending on where you live but the process will include a licensing class, finger printing and background checks, and a home study. Classes are a great opportunity to learn more about fostering, meet other prospective foster parents on the same journey, and to begin learning trauma-informed parenting skills.

Additionally, each local Community Based Care Lead Agency partners with agencies in their local area to provide ongoing support through community resources to include, but not limited to, the statewide Foster/Adoptive Parent Association and local foster and adoptive parent associations (where available).

How can I apply for public benefits?

To apply for public benefits offered through the Department of Children and Families, go to <https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/access/> then select "Apply for Assistance." Here, you will create an ACCESS account and be able to apply for the benefits needed. If you do not have access to a computer, you can visit one of the Department's service centers (<https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/access/map.shtml>) or a community partner (<https://access-web.dcf.state.fl.us/CPSLookup/search.aspx>) for assistance.

The School Readiness program offers financial assistance to low-income families for early childhood education and care. The purpose of this program is to help families become financially self-sufficient while preparing young children to be successful in school. To see if you are eligible, contact your county's early learning coalition at: floridaearlylearning.com.

Head Start and Early Head Start are programs that provide childcare to low-income children from birth to age five. Services include early education programs. To find a Head Start Program in your area, go to: flheadstart.org/find-a-head-start-program.

Families with children earning below 200% of the poverty line may be eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding. TANF funds may be used for services not considered cash assistance, including childcare. The Division of Early Learning has additional information regarding these types of funds: www.floridaearlylearning.com/family-resources/financial-assistance.

Are there any resources available to help cover the cost of childcare?

Hope Florida, a new initiative spearheaded by First Lady Casey DeSantis and implemented by the Florida Department of Children and Families, utilizes "Care Navigators" to guide Floridians on an individualized path to prosperity by focusing on community collaboration between the private sector, faith-based community, nonprofits, and government entities to break down traditional community silos, in an effort to maximize resources and uncover opportunities. This resource can help those in need navigate childcare costs and providers. For more information, please visit: <https://www.myflfamilies.com/APathwaytoProsperity/> or call (850) 300-HOPE to speak with a Care Navigator who can assist with connecting you to resources in your area.

The School Readiness program offers financial assistance to low-income families for early childhood education and care. The purpose of this program is to help families

become financially self-sufficient while preparing young children to be successful in school. To see if you are eligible, contact your county's early learning coalition at <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/family-resources/find-quality-child-care/locate-your-early-learning-coalition>.

Head Start and Early Head Start are programs that provide childcare to low-income children from birth to age five. Services include early education programs. To find a Head Start Program in your area, go to: <https://www.flheadstart.org/find-a-head-start-program>.

Families with children earning below 200% of the poverty line may be eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding. TANF funds may be used for services not considered cash assistance, including childcare. The Division of Early Learning has additional information regarding these types of funds: <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/family-resources/financial-assistance>.

What is peer support and how do I access it?

In Florida, there are many organizations across our systems that employ peers. Accessing peer support services may vary depending upon the provider. In addition, the Florida Department of Children and Families, Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, has worked diligently to collaborate with stakeholders in fostering, implementing, and sustaining peer-run organizations.

Recovery Community Organizations (RCOs) are peer-run organizations who provide support to individuals who identify with **substance use disorder** or co-occurring and their family members. Information on how to locate an RCO can be found at <https://floridiansforrecovery.org/>.

Peer Support Networks are peer-run organizations who provide support to individuals who identify with a **mental health disorder** or co-occurring and their family members. Information on how to locate a Peer Support Network can be found at <https://members.peersupportfl.org/>.

What is being done to prevent suicide, especially in light of the worldwide shutdowns and isolation many experienced?

There is no doubt that the worldwide shutdowns and isolation resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic may have been distressing to some. The Statewide Office for Suicide Prevention acknowledges this and continues to work toward expanding suicide prevention efforts across the state of Florida. The 2020-2023 Florida Suicide Prevention Interagency Action Plan guides suicide prevention efforts throughout the state and includes information on the COVID-19 pandemic and specific action items dedicated to mitigating long-term effects of the global emergency on suicide-related thoughts and behaviors. The plan's four focus areas: awareness, prevention, intervention, and caring follow-up are upheld by state agencies that have tailored their action items to meet the needs of the populations they serve.

Additionally, three grants were awarded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) to focus on providing support and decreasing impacts of COVID-19 on suicide in Florida. To help support Floridians in coping with COVID-19,

IMPOWER, a telehealth provider for mental health and substance use needs, continues to offer free mental health services for individuals who have been impacted by COVID-19.

How can I find services in my rural area?

Depending on the type of resources you are trying to access, many resources can be found on our website [MyFLfamilies.com](https://myflfamilies.com). The DCF childcare provider search allows parents to locate childcare programs by zip code, city, or county. Go to <https://caresearch.myflfamilies.com/PublicSearch>.

Telehealth is when you connect with a provider virtually. It's a way to manage your child's health at home. It could be via a video call, a telephone call or through an app. Call Customer Service: 1-866-799-5321 (TTY 711).

For individuals who are uninsured or underinsured the Department of Children and Families contracts with seven Managing Entities around the state to manage the behavioral health system of care in their contracted area. Managing Entities provide services and supports through a network of contracted providers for adults with serious mental illnesses or who are in a mental health crisis. Services include behavioral health assessments, individual and family therapy, group therapy, psychiatric evaluation, medication management, supported housing, supported employment, case management, and many more.

The Managing Entities are listed below, along with their help line numbers for each and the counties they serve.

North West Florida Health Network - 850-747-5755; www.nwfhealth.org

Serving Bay, Calhoun, Escambia, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Taylor, Wakulla, Walton, and Washington counties.

Broward Behavioral Health Coalition - 877-698-7794; bbhcflorida.org/

Serving Broward county.

Central Florida Behavioral Health Network, Inc. - 813-740-4811; www.cfbhn.org/

Serving Charlotte, Collier, DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Highlands, Hendry, Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk and Sarasota counties.

Central Florida Cares Health System - 407-985-3560; centralfloridacares.org Serving Brevard, Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties.

Lutheran Services Florida - 877-229-9098; www.lsfnet.org/

Serving Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Citrus, Clay, Columbia, Dixie, Duval, Flagler, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Hernando, Lake, Lafayette, Levy, Marion, Nassau, Putnam, St. Johns, Sumter, Suwannee, Union and Volusia counties.

Thriving Mind South Florida - 888-248-3111; www.thrivingmind.org/

Serving Miami-Dade and Monroe counties.

Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network - 561-203-2485; sefbhn.org/ Serving Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee, Palm Beach and St. Lucie counties.

Additional information about the Office on Homelessness and contact information for local CoCs can be found at <https://myflfamilies.com/service-programs/homelessness/>.

How can I find childcare for my child with complex medical issues? Are there facilities that offer this level of care?

Each county has access to an early learning coalition that can assist parents looking for specialized facilities. Contact your county's early learning coalition here: <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/family-resources/find-quality-child-care/locate-your-early-learning-coalition>. Be sure to have a referral from your child's doctor available.

I need help with my daughter who has self-injurious behaviors. Is there any help available for this?

As a parent, one of your biggest priorities is to keep your children safe. Thankfully, there are resources available for individuals who are looking to keep those they care about safe. Mobile Response Teams (MRTs) assist youth and individuals under 25 who are experiencing a behavioral health crisis. These teams are trained to help respond during a behavioral health crisis, or in an event that might become a crisis if unaddressed. There are other community-based programs such as Community Action Treatment (CAT) Teams that offer comprehensive, community-based services to individuals ages 11 to 21 with a mental health diagnosis. CAT Teams were designed to strengthen family and support systems for youth and young adults to improve their quality of life, improve school related outcomes such as attendance and grades, and decrease psychiatric hospitalizations, among other needs.

Florida schools have invested in the well-being of their students by having onsite licensed mental health professionals who are able to offer guidance and support. School personnel are equipped to provide referrals and recommendations for appropriate mental health services when the need is identified. There are national resources available as well; your daughter can reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or the Crisis Text Line by texting 'HOME' to 741741 to receive free confidential support for individuals in emotional distress.

Should you or your daughter be interested in support groups, the American Association of Suicidology (AAS) brings together individuals with different experiences related to suicide, including individuals with lived experience.

What services, if any, are available to families who have adopted children with various disabilities?

Post-adoption services are an essential component to stabilizing and maintaining adoptive families. Presently, rule 65C-16.014(1), F.A.C., outlines that after finalization the adoptive family may require temporary case management support, information and referral assistance, and related post-adoption services. Families are able to receive an array of services based on the needs of the child.

In Medicaid, a specialty plan is a plan for Medicaid recipients who have a specific health care condition. To enroll in certain specialty plans, the recipient must be diagnosed with or in treatment for a serious mental illness. The advantage of enrolling in a specialty plan is that the plan is designed to meet the specific needs for someone with mental health conditions and includes case management for coordination of care.

Enroll online at www.flmedicaidmanagedcare.com; Call a Choice Counselor toll-free at 1-877-711-3662; telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) 1-866-467-4970. If

you have special medical needs, you may set up a face-to-face meeting with a Choice Counselor by calling 1-877-711-3662.

If two people on Social Security get married will they risk losing food stamp benefits?

Each household situation is unique, and several factors are considered throughout the eligibility determination process. For example, if the individuals applying indicated they purchase and eat their meals together, then they are considered one household, regardless if they are married or not. Other factors that are taken into consideration are medical expenses, if they are elderly or disabled, shelter expenses, and utility expenses. For more specific information, please refer to: <https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/access/docs/fafactsheet.pdf>

What services are available for helping people cope with bipolar, PTSD, and depression? Are there trainings?

There are many services available for helping consumers with mental health needs as well as trainings. The National Alliance on Mental Illness provides resources, trainings and linkages to include a helpline. **The NAMI HelpLine can be reached Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. – 10 p.m., ET.** 1-800-950-NAMI (6264) or info@nami.org, and you can find your local chapter at nami.org/Find-Your-Local-NAMI

If a consumer has Medicaid or other insurance, please contact their health plan to discuss available services. For individuals who are uninsured or underinsured the Department of Children and Families contracts with seven Managing Entities around the state to manage the behavioral health system of care in their contracted area. Managing Entities provide services and supports through a network of contracted providers for adults with serious mental illnesses or who are in a mental health crisis. Services include behavioral health assessments, individual and family therapy, group therapy, psychiatric evaluation, medication management, supported housing, supported employment, case management, and many more.

The Managing Entities are listed below, along with their help line numbers for each and the counties they are listed below:

North West Florida Health Network - 850-747-5755; www.nwfhealth.org

Serving Bay, Calhoun, Escambia, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Taylor, Wakulla, Walton, and Washington counties.

Broward Behavioral Health Coalition - 877-698-7794; bbhcflorida.org/

Serving Broward county.

Central Florida Behavioral Health Network, Inc. - 813-740-4811; www.cfbhn.org/

Serving Charlotte, Collier, DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Highlands, Hendry, Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk and Sarasota counties.

Central Florida Cares Health System - 407-985-3560; centralfloridacares.org Serving Brevard, Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties.

Lutheran Services Florida - 877-229-9098; www.lsfnet.org/

Serving Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Citrus, Clay, Columbia, Dixie, Duval, Flagler, Gilchrist,

Hamilton, Hernando, Lake, Lafayette, Levy, Marion, Nassau, Putnam, St. Johns, Sumter, Suwannee, Union and Volusia counties.

Thriving Mind South Florida – 888-248-3111; www.thrivingmind.org/

Serving Miami-Dade and Monroe counties.

Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network – 561-203-2485; sefbhn.org/ Serving Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee, Palm Beach and St. Lucie counties.

How can we help children experiencing homelessness?

Each school district is required to designate a Homeless Education Liaison who is responsible for referring students experiencing homelessness and their families to available housing, health, and behavioral health services. The contact list for the district liaisons can be found through the Department of Education at:

<https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7482/urlt/TitleIXDistrictContactList.pdf>

Social Security is an active participant in the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH). The mission of the USICH is to “coordinate the Federal response to homelessness and to create a national partnership at every level of government and with the private sector to reduce and end homelessness in the nation while maximizing the effectiveness of the federal government in contributing to the end of homelessness. Please visit Social Security’s Homelessness website at www.ssa.gov/homelessness for more information.

The SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) is a national program funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) designed to increase access to the disability income benefit programs administered by SSA for eligible adults who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have a serious mental illness, medical impairment, and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder. Please visit SOAR’s website at <https://soarworks.prainc.com/> for more information. For more information, Call 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778).

Finding quality childcare is so difficult with the virus. How can we ensure that the place has taken all the precautions for keeping our kids safe? I want to work, but the lack of quality childcare has me on unemployment. Rather be safe than have more money. What are the state’s restrictions for childcare providers?

The Office of Child Care Regulation offers parents a Quality Checklist for Evaluating Early Learning Programs. This checklist can be used while visiting childcare facilities and/or homes to help parents decide the right fit for their child. This can be found at <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/family-resources/find-quality-child-care/locate-your-early-learning-coalition>.

The State’s restrictions for childcare providers can be found in the Florida Administrative Code, the Licensing Handbooks, and the Classification Summaries on the Child Care website. The Florida Administrative Code and Licensing Handbooks provide the rules, while the classification summaries provide the standards used during inspections of childcare facilities, large homes, and school-age facilities.

<https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/child-care/laws-and-requirements.shtml>.

Do all childcare providers need to have a background check? Even if the provider is a family friend? How many special needs children can be in a childcare setting with a family run provider?

Operators of family day care homes are required to submit a CF-FSP Form 5133 to be considered for licensure. Background screening is required as a condition of employment in a licensed childcare facility, licensed large family childcare home, and licensed family day care home. A Level II screening is required of all childcare personnel, including household members, substitutes, and volunteers in licensed large family childcare homes, and licensed family day care homes.

Family day care homes may provide care for the following:

- A. A maximum of four children from birth to 12 months of age.
- B. A maximum of three children from birth to 12 months of age, and other children, for a maximum total of six children.
- C. A maximum of six preschool children if all are older than 12 months of age.
- D. A maximum of 10 children if no more than 5 are preschool age and, of those 5, no more than 2 are under 12 months of age.

There is no restriction on these numbers for children with special needs.

I am worried about being evicted. What are the chances that the rental assistance program will be continued until after the Covid?

The Department's Emergency Rental Assistance Program branded as OUR Florida opened in May 2021. The program is continuing to accept applications for assistance. To ensure your application is reviewed and processed, we encourage tenants to apply for assistance as soon as possible.

Households may be eligible for rental assistance offered through their local CoCs or OUR Florida. Contact information for each CoC may be found at:

<https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/homelessness/local-providers.shtml>.

Households can visit the following link to learn more about the Emergency Rental Assistance program: <https://www.ourflorida.com/>.

I am worried about unemployment going to a lower weekly amount. I cannot work due to my child's suppressed immunity. Her illness scares me with the virus. I am worried what I will bring home and it may harm her. We do everything via home delivery or mailing from Amazon. Everything! We do not go out to stores. Cannot risk it. I only pray for some continued assistance.

If you are looking for assistance using your EBT card at online retailers to limit visiting or shopping in stores in person, as of May 2021, **Walmart, Amazon, Aldi, BJ's Wholesale Club, and Publix** are accepting SNAP payments online. More retailers may join the online purchasing pilot as it progresses. Information on retailers and this program can be found at <https://www.myflfamilies.com/covid19/accessPurchasingFAQs.shtml>.

For information regarding unemployment benefits, please visit the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity's website:
<https://www.floridajobs.org/Reemployment-Assistance-Service-Center/reemployment-assistance/claimants/apply-for-benefits>

We are foster parents to some of the most beautiful children. All have some type of special needs. In their time with us, the children are safe and always loved. We have been doing this for a couple of years. The reunification process is not always the best for the children and their parents are not always ready. I wish someone would slow down the process of trying so hard to get the babies back with their parents. This process, when hurried does not work, and the babies suffer the most. Please fix the timelines to have more flexibility in the process of reunification.

Thank you so much for your dedication and feedback. The Department adheres to the statutory requirements and timeframes for reunification as outlined in Chapter 39, Florida Statutes, and ruling on individual cases by the dependency court. While families often have complex generational factors that contribute to a child's entry into the dependency system, all system partners attempt to balance a family centered approach that focuses on the child's need for safety, permanence, and well-being.



The Department of Education

In general, how are Medicaid Waiver Support Coordinators collaborating with school districts and IEP teams to ensure that students are college, career, and life ready?

With the passage of House Bill 173, schools are required to share Agency for Persons with Disabilities information with families and students starting at the age of 12 or during 7th grade, whichever occurs first, to ensure students are college, career, and life ready.

During the person-centered planning process, the Waiver Support Coordinators are required to work with consumers to identify the goals and outcomes that are most important to the person and identify supports and services to help the consumer achieve those goals. Conversations during the person-centered planning process can include planning for school, work, career, and education transitions and goals.

Can we get rid of the Administrative Law Judges and go to Hearing Officers to do due process hearings? Go to 2 tier system of State Review Office to review due process hearing decisions? Parent without an attorney has less than a 1% chance to win due process now.

According to Florida law, should a hearing be required, it must be conducted by an ALJ appointed as required by section 120.65, F.S., from the Division of Administrative Hearings (DOAH), Department of Management Services, on behalf of the Department of Education.

In addition, while Florida has a “one-tier” system for due process hearings, within ninety (90) days from the date of the decision of the administrative law judge (ALJ), a party aggrieved by the decision may bring a civil action in federal district or state circuit court without regard to the amount in controversy, as provided in Section 1003.57(5), F.S.

Can you tell me what life will be like after school is done?

What life after high school looks like is different for each student. The planning process for life after school should be discussed annually in the Individual Educational Plan or IEP meeting. Transition planning should be an ongoing collaborative process that develops and builds each year in high school. Post-school goals should be included in the IEP starting at the age of 14 or by the start of the first day in high school, or earlier if determined by the IEP team, whichever occurs first. With legislative changes during the 2021 session, the transition process starts now during 7th grade or at least by the age of 12, whichever occurs first. Supports, services, and agencies needed to support successful transition should be involved throughout the process in order to facilitate a smooth conversion from high school to the post-school setting. A student may use [Rule 6A-1.09963](#) to defer receipt of a diploma in order to continue educational and related services; again this should be discussed at the IEP meeting as a group.

Arrangements for continued services should be discussed at least yearly at the IEP meeting. Both federal and state laws provide for free and appropriate education (FAPE) for students with disabilities through the age of 21 who have not earned a standard diploma. Deferral of the diploma is an option a student may consider continuing to receive services through 21.

Some school districts end services on the 22nd birthday, others at the end of the semester in which the student turns 22, and others at the end of school year in which the student turns 22. This decision is not made student-by-student. The district must state their policy in their Exceptional Student Education Policy and Procedures (SP&P).

School districts offer a wide variety of programs for students who are aged 18-22. These should be discussed at IEP meetings as you go through high school. In addition, with parental consent, outside agencies, such as Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) or Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) should be included in the discussion, if they will be assisting in providing services after high school.

Can a parent choose who they want to help them in a due process hearing without the approval of the Administrative Law Judge and school attorney deciding to deny the parent choice?

According to Florida law, ALJs must use the provisions of Rules 6A-6.03011-.0361, F.A.C., for conducting due process hearings and must conduct such hearings in accordance with the Uniform Rules for Administrative Proceedings, Chapter 28-106, F.A.C. As a result, any party who appears in a due process hearing proceeding has the right, at his or her own expense, to be represented by counsel or by a qualified representative.

A party seeking representation by a qualified representative must file a written request with the presiding officer as soon as practicable, but no later than any pleading filed by the person seeking to appear on behalf of the party. For more information about the criteria for qualified representatives, please visit the following link:

<https://deafblind.ufl.edu/welcome/>.

Why can't we have schools provide and teach Orton-Gillingham reading program?

The Florida Department of Education does not promote or encourage the use of any specific curriculum or companies that provide curriculum. A reading program such as Orton Gillingham Curriculum may be selected by the district if they feel that it would best serve the needs of their students. The selection of curriculum and supports is a process that is completed at the district level. For more information about the process, find answers at fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/5574/urlt/PoliciesandProceduresSpecifications.pdf.

Tell parents about the docket to do e-filing for a due process hearing. Give notice and how to get on the docket, not in the procedural safeguards given to parents.

Florida's <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7690/urlt/0070135-procedural.pdf> informs parents that DOAH is responsible for convening due process hearings. For more

information regarding “eALJ Electronic Filing”, parents may visit DOAH’s website at <https://www.doah.state.fl.us/ALJ/> or contact their local school district office.

How can I get my child in middle school the assistive technology they need to be successful academically? Is there funding available?

The individual education team must determine whether a student needs an assistive technology (AT) device or service to access their right to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The district will provide the device needed to meet the student’s needs. Parents are not required to provide the device or service.

To assist in getting students the AT needed, all districts have an identified AT specialist with borrowing privileges from the AT and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Loan Library. District AT specialist contact information can be found at <https://www.tlc-mtss.com/district-contacts>. The small and rural districts have a Regional Local Assistive Technology Specialists (RLATS). RLATS specialist contact information can be found at <https://www.tlc-mtss.com/contact>.

We need more programs for socialization through school for our children with special needs to meet others and make friends.

Section 1001.42 (19), Florida Statutes, state programs used in a district or school is a local-level decision. Therefore, it is at the discretion of the school or district as to what programs should be used.

Instead of Access Points education can we have students have a 5, 6, 7 years for high school so they get a chance to obtain a real high school diploma by age 21/22?

Students with disabilities can defer their high school diploma until the age of 22. Therefore, all students with disabilities can have more time to complete the graduation requirements for a standard high school diploma.

Section 1003.4282(9)(3)(c), Florida Statute, (F.S.), states that a student with a disability who meets the standard high school diploma requirements in this section may defer the receipt of a standard high school diploma if the student:

1. Has an individual education plan that prescribes special education, transition planning, transition services, or related services through age 21; and
2. Is enrolled in accelerated college credit instruction pursuant to s. 1007.27, industry certification courses that lead to college credit, an early college program, courses necessary to satisfy the Scholar designation requirements, or a structured work-study, internship, or pre-apprenticeship program.

Alternate Academic Achievement Standards—Access Points, should be provided for students with the most significant cognitive disability to access the general curriculum. Rule 6A-1.09401, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), states that access points contained in the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards provide access to the general curriculum for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

Why can't schools teach all children touch typing and have access to a computer in school all day? I make all my kids look up free touch typing then do it 15 minutes a day for 30 days. At the end of 30 days most children do at least 10 words a minute; some 20-30 words.

There are Florida standards that address students' success in the area of computers. One of the third-grade benchmark standards includes performing keyboarding skills for communication and inputting data and information. More information about specific Florida standards and benchmarks can be found at <https://www.cpalms.org/PreviewStandard/Preview/8737>.

Can a child who fails 3rd grade be promoted to 4th and the school pay for 12 months Time4learning.com? The child can do the program at home 7 days a week, 1 hour a day, and at the end of 4th grade pass a test to move on to 5th grade or repeat 4th. I have 5 children I did this with in Manatee and all 5 passed 4th grade and will be in 5th in August.

There are certain criteria a third-grade student must attain to be promoted to fourth grade. To be promoted to grade 4, a student must score a Level 2 or higher on the statewide, standardized English Language Arts assessment required under section 1008.22, Florida Statutes (F.S.), for grade 3. If the student does not attain a score of a Level 2 or higher, the student may then be eligible for promotion using alternative assessments, found eligible for promotion using a good cause exemption, or by demonstrating mastery of the ELA standards via a student portfolio. These are the only options that a student that fails third grade may use to be promoted to fourth grade.

I'm thinking about homeschooling my child to better meet their needs. Are there resources to help me get started?

Home Education is a parent-directed educational option that satisfies the requirement for regular school attendance. Florida Laws protecting home education became effective in 1985. Parents have the freedom to determine their child's educational path and the plan for reaching their goals. Students have the opportunity to explore and learn at their own pace, in any location or at any time. Home education students are able to enter institutions of higher learning and are eligible to participate in the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program.

Parent Home Education resources can be found here <https://www.fl DOE.org/schools/school-choice/other-school-choice-options/home-edu/parent-resources.shtml>.

Do the schools work with Vocational Rehabilitation? It seems that I learned how a VR counselor should be working with transitioning youth, but our teachers and administrators do not work with the VR program. They don't know anything

about the program. I come here and find out that VR is funded under the Education department. They should be aware of their own program. Why not?

Schools collaborate with Vocational Rehabilitation earlier than before with the passage of the Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA provides opportunities for students to access pre-employment transition services including vocational assessment, career exploration, work readiness training, and work experience through the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). The VR website may be found at <http://www.rehabworks.org/>. A formal state agreement was signed in 2016. A local educational agency or LEA template was created to assist school district and local VR agency collaboration to increasing access to pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities.

Arrangements for your child's continued services should be discussed at least yearly at the IEP meeting. You and your child may need time to review all options in selecting the best program and identifying the supports and services needed to assist your child. With your consent, outside agencies, such as Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) may be included in the discussion if they will be assisting in providing services during and/or after high school.

Can students receive music therapy through the school if it benefits them?

Yes, Individual Educational Plans (IEP) are developed for students with disabilities to ensure students are involved in and can make progress in the general curriculum and may include music therapy as a related service. An IEP is the primary way that the school district addresses the unique educational needs for each student with a disability. Rule 6A-6.03028, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.) states that an IEP must be developed, reviewed, and revised for each eligible student or child with a disability served by a school district, or other state agency that provides special education and related services either directly, by contract, or through other arrangements. Each IEP states the special education, related services, and supplementary aids and services that will be provided to the student with a disability. Music Therapy is the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish selected goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program. It may be added to a student's IEP if the educational team who serves the student agrees that the related service is needed by the student to benefit from special education.

How can the state increase funds toward adults living with disabilities for education?

Funds for state support to school districts are provided primarily by legislative appropriations. State funds appropriated to finance the 2020- 21 FEFP total \$9,713,794,684. Included in this total is \$9,148,823,387 from the General Revenue Fund, \$387,832,395 from the Educational Enhancement Trust Fund, and \$177,138,902 from the State School Trust Fund. Although taxes from a number of sources are deposited in the General Revenue Fund, the predominant tax source is the 6 percent sales tax on goods. The state receives funds for school from the legislature. You may find additional

information related to school funding by visiting
<https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7507/urlt/Fefpdist.pdfv>

What is the State of Florida doing to increase access to math instruction? I'm concerned access to math instruction is decreasing overall in the secondary grades 6-12 because many math majors are finding more lucrative jobs in technology than in education. Are Florida colleges appropriately funding and contracting with future teachers for secondary grades 6-12 math education?

With the implementation of the B.E.S.T. Standards for Mathematics, the Bureau of Standards and Instructional Support has created various resources to support the learning and teaching of the B.E.S.T. Standards for Mathematics. One of those resources is the B.E.S.T. Instructional Guide for Mathematics (B1G-M) which includes an analysis of information, including horizontal and vertical alignment, instructional strategies and tasks, related to the B.E.S.T. Standards for Mathematics for each grade level and course. To access these guides, please visit <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/standards/subject-areas/math-science/mathematics/bestmath.stml>. If you have additional questions regarding instruction, please contact Courtney Starling at Courtney.Starling@fldoe.org. Florida continues to focus on the recruitment of a quality teacher for every Florida classroom. Please feel free to contact edrecruit@fldoe.org for recruitment information or edprepfolio@fldoe.org to learn more about teacher preparation.

What kind of services, assistance, or benefits are available for young adults that want to pursue a college education? Is there any assistance for college graduated students to find jobs?

Young adults planning for college, career, and life may access services and assistance in pursuing a college education from a number of sources. Many supports are available for students with disabilities to attend college.

Most schools have a financial aid office and may have information about scholarships and funding available to students at that particular school, as many have a foundation that provide scholarships as well. Many institutions require completing a Free Application for Federal Student Aid or FAFSA. You may find additional information at: <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>. Again, postsecondary institutions may have specific requirements, so please check with them first.

Many postsecondary options are available. There are 51 technical colleges and centers with College of Education Accrediation. The Division of Florida Colleges consists of 28 colleges. To learn more about the Florida College System visit <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/higher-ed/fl-college-system/>. The State University System of Florida consist of 12 universities. You may find additional information about each univeristy at <http://www.flbog.edu/>. Be sure to visit these website as they may also provide additional information related to provisions including financial support. Be sure to check with Financial Aid offices, Disability offices, and University Foundations for additional information on scholarships and additional supports that may be available.

CareerSource Florida helps Floridians find careers in every industry. Whether you're looking for a job, making a strategic career move, or building your own business,

CareerSource Florida may help you reach your goal. Visit the CareerSource Florida at <https://careersourceflorida.com/> to learn more.

How and when should I talk to my child about their IEP?

To establish self-determination for the student, it is best practice to start as early as possible. According to section 1003.5716, Florida Statutes (F.S.), students should be invited to the IEP team meeting at the age of 12 or in the 7th grade, whichever, occurs first. A Parent’s Introduction to Exceptional Student Education in Florida guide can be found at fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7674/urlt/0064540-eseparent.pdf.

What are the benefits of Access Points?

Alternate academic achievement standards—Access Points—should be provided for students with the most significant cognitive disability to access the general curriculum. Such students may require changes to what they are expected to learn. For some students, task adaptations may be needed in the initial stages of skill acquisition. If the adaptations are not faded, the student will not be able to master the targeted skill. Students who are not expected to complete all of the required learning tasks for the grade-level benchmarks will lag behind their peers. The IEP team may decide that students with most significant cognitive disabilities who are unable to achieve the grade-level benchmarks with accommodations and who require intensive, direct instruction for learning may need to be instructed on the access points of the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards. The access points are alternate standards that reflect modified learning expectations. The access points align with the core intent of the grade-level benchmarks at reduced levels of complexity. The Florida Alternate Assessment measures student achievement of the access points.

Students that meet the eligibility requirements from Rule 6A-1.0943, F.A.C., can participate in the Florida Standards Alternate Assessment (FSAA). The FSAA should align with instruction in alternate academic achievement standards—access points.

Are there resources to help me prepare for my child’s IEP meeting?

There are many resources to help prepare for your child’s IEP meeting. Depending on your child’s age, additional considerations to assist with transition in planning for life after high school will be included in the IEP as well. The following resources may be helpful as you prepare for your child’s IEP and starting at age 12 or during 7th grade to review in planning for transition:

Exceptional Student Education (general information)

- *What Is Exceptional Student Education for Children with Disabilities?*
<http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7690/urlt/0070089-ese.pdf>
- *A Parents’ Guide to Exceptional Education*
<http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7690/urlt/0070085-eseparent.pdf>

- *Getting Ready for Your Student’s Individual Educational Plan (IEP) Meeting*
<http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7690/urlt/0070119-iep-card.pdf>
- *Accommodations:* <http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7690/urlt/0070069-accomm-educator.pdf>

Transition: Supporting students from school to post-school life successfully, transition services are provided through Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) based on section 300.43 of Title 35, Code of Federal Regulations, (CFR) and a provision of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). The culmination of schooling should help prepare students to move from school to post-school life. An IEP has specific requirements, a Transition IEP or TIEP includes additional components required by federal and state law to assist with preparing students for moving from the K-12 setting to life after exiting school. By the age of 12 or during 7th grade, the student is required to be invited to participate in meetings. To assist in building self-determination, informing a child about their accommodations, or what supports they are afforded from their IEP to help them succeed in class, should start early. When children leave the K-12 setting and enter into the postsecondary adult setting they will not have an IEP or IEP team and will need to self-disclose on their own; learning, early about accommodations and how to self-advocate can be helpful. With the passage of House Bill 173, many publications are in the process of being updated and may assist in sharing information to assist in preparation for IEP meetings.

Transition Resources:

- ***Indicator 13 Toolkit: Writing Compliant Transition Individual Educational Plans (TIEPs)***
[http://project10.info/Documents/Ind.13Toolkit with Legislative Updates Coming Soon7.29.21.pdf](http://project10.info/Documents/Ind.13Toolkit%20with%20Legislative%20Updates%20Coming%20Soon7.29.21.pdf) (You may view the General narrative Compliance Guidance to assist in identifying what should be included in the IEP)
- ***Predictors of Post-School Outcomes*** found at:
[http://project10.info/Documents/FINAL Post School Predictor Product 6.13.19C 2.pdf](http://project10.info/Documents/FINAL%20Post%20School%20Predictor%20Product%206.13.19C%202.pdf) (This document shares what research has shown to support positive post-school outcomes for students with disabilities)
- ***The Secondary Transition Roadmap*** found at:
[http://project10.info/Documents/Secondary Transition Roadmap FINAL 1.19.21 1.pdf](http://project10.info/Documents/Secondary%20Transition%20Roadmap%20FINAL%201.19.21%201.pdf) is helpful in providing overall information on transition.
- Also, the ***Family Guide to Secondary Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities*** found at:
[http://project10.info/Documents/FamilyGuide Revised FINAL 6.13.18.pdf](http://project10.info/Documents/FamilyGuide%20Revised%20FINAL%206.13.18.pdf) This may be helpful in showing the differences between IDEA and ADA 504. When a student graduates from the K-12 setting, the right to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) culminates; different federal laws, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), support students with disabilities in accessing the postsecondary setting.
- Age appropriate transition assessment information may be found at:
[http://project10.info/Documents/Transition Assessments Resource List 8.14.18 1 .pdf](http://project10.info/Documents/Transition%20Assessments%20Resource%20List%208.14.18%201.pdf)

When should a child start attending their IEP meetings?

One way to help inform your child about their IEP and accommodations is by talking to them about their IEP and accommodations. As the IEP team determines accommodations, sharing and explaining what accommodations the IEP team has determined are helpful to the child and may support the child in understanding what does and does not help them in class or in the educational setting. The student is a part of the IEP team and should share what supports and services, including accommodations are helpful, if they are able to articulate this information.

If conversations related to accommodations start early, the child may learn to identify what works and what does not work to help them in school. Learning which accommodations help may also help your child in gaining self-determination and self-advocacy skills as well, as these skills will be helpful now and in the future.

Consider starting with discussing and identifying what is difficult at school and what helps to make it less difficult. For example, whether it is sitting at the front of the classroom, or having a quiet place to take a test, both may be examples of accommodations that may be helpful. Encourage your child to think about what is hard and what helps to overcome the challenges and barriers.

The earlier the discussion starts the better. By the age of 12 or during 7th grade, whichever occurs first, students should be invited to the meeting and the transition process starts. The student is required to be invited to participate in meetings, as this is part of the requirements of a Transition IEP or TIEP. Informing a child about their accommodations, or what supports they are afforded from their IEP to help them succeed in class, should start early. When children leave the K-12 setting and enter into the postsecondary adult setting they will not have an IEP or IEP team and will need to self-disclose on their own; learning, early about accommodations and how to self-advocate is needed to ensure future success.

Why isn't there more funding available for dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia? What programs are out there?

Each district is awarded an amount of money for purchasing curriculum and supports for students. Specifically, districts are given funds for implementing their K-5 reading components and math standards. This includes providing instruction on systematic [sequential], explicit instruction in phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension, and incorporate decodable or phonetic text instructional strategies to include meaningful experiences with excellent literature and informational text to build comprehension and enjoyment of print. Districts must identify the needs of their students and provide the materials for making every student successful.

What supports are available for students with disabilities to attend college? Is there funding available for my child to get help with daily living activities?

Planning for college, career, and life can be daunting. Many supports are available for students with disabilities to attend college. You may want to start by having a discussion with the postsecondary school near you, if that is where your child is planning to attend.

Most schools have a financial aid office and may have information about scholarships and funding available to students at that particular school, as many have a foundation that provide scholarships as well. Many institutions require completing a Free Application for Federal Student Aid or FAFSA. You may find additional information at: <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>. Again, postsecondary institutions may have specific requirements, so please check with them first. The Division of Florida Colleges found at <http://www.fl DOE.org/schools/higher-ed/fl-college-system/> and the State University System of Florida located at <http://www.flbog.edu/> may also provide additional information related to provisions including financial support. Be sure to check with Financial Aid offices, Disability offices, and University Foundations for additional information on scholarships and additional supports that may be available.

If you have questions or would like to know more about Private Post-Secondary Education you may contact the Commission on Independent Education through the link <http://www.fl DOE.org/about-us/independent-edu.stml> or call Independent Education (Post-Secondary) at 1-888-224-6684. Another consideration is connecting with [Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation](#) or visit the VR website at <http://www.rehabworks.org/>.

What’s the difference between a 504 Plan and an IEP? Who qualifies for each?

Students with disabilities receiving exceptional student education (ESE) services, as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), are protected under Section 504, but not all Section 504 students are eligible for ESE. Both IDEA and Section 504 guarantee students with disabilities access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE). However, there are major differences between them, specifically in the criteria used to determine eligibility.

- For a student to receive exceptional student education services under IDEA, the student’s educational performance must be adversely affected by the disability and the student must be in need of special education services. IDEA applies only to individuals from birth through age 21.
- Section 504 is not limited to specific disability categories and does not require evidence that the disability adversely affects the student’s educational performance, however the definition states that in order to be eligible for an accommodation plan, the student must “have a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities.” Section 504 covers individuals of all ages and is enforced by the Office of Civil Rights (OCR).
- In accordance with Section 399.320 of the Code of Federal Regulations, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) defines an IEP as a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in a meeting in accordance with §§300.320 through 300.324. Rule 6A-6.03028, F.A.C., states an IEP must be developed, reviewed, and revised for each eligible student or child with a disability served by a school district, or other state agency that provides special education and related services either directly, by contract, or through other arrangements, in accordance with this rule. Parents are partners with schools and school district personnel in developing, reviewing, and revising the IEP for their student.

What services are available for persons with communications disorders? Do schools help?

Speech and language services are available to students who meet the initial eligibility requirements found in Rule 6A-6.03012, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), Exceptional Student Education Eligibility for Students with Speech Impairments and Qualifications and Responsibilities for the Speech-Language Pathologists Providing Speech Services, and Rule 6A-6.030121 (F.A.C.), Exceptional Student Education Eligibility for Students with Language Impairments and Qualifications and Responsibilities for the Speech-Language Pathologists Providing Language Services. A student with a speech sound disorder is eligible for exceptional student education if there is evidence, based on evaluation results, of a significant phonological or articulation disorder that is characterized by the atypical production of speech sound(s). A student with a fluency disorder is eligible for exceptional student education if there is evidence, based on evaluation results, of significant and persistent interruptions in the rhythm or rate of speech. A student with a voice disorder is eligible for exceptional student education if there is evidence, based on evaluation results, of significant and persistent atypical voice characteristics. A student is eligible as a student with a language impairment in need of exceptional student education if all of the conditions for eligibility found in the Rule 6A-6.030121 (F.A.C.) above are met. When a student is found eligible for a speech or language impairment, the school is required to provide the special education and related services the student needs to be involved in and make progress in the general curriculum. This includes special education, related services, and supplementary aids and services that address the communication needs of the student.

We need more services for OT and PT, counseling, and behavior/sensory therapies.

Rule 6A-6.03024, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), Provision of Occupational or Physical Therapy to Exceptional Students as a Related Service states that the determination of the need for additional occupational or physical therapy is made by the individual educational plan (IEP) team in accordance with Rule 6A-6.03028, F.A.C., the educational plan (EP) team in accordance with Rule 6A-6.030191, F.A.C., or the individualized family support plan (IFSP) team, in accordance with Rule 6A-6.03029, F.A.C. with input from the licensed therapist.

Rule 6A-6.03028, Florida Administrative Code, states that the role of parents in developing IEPs include participating in discussions about the student's need for related services. A parent may call an IEP meeting any time to discuss their student's related services.

Section 504 is a federal law designed to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Education (ED). Section 504 provides: "No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States . . . shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance" The Section 504 regulations require a school district to provide a "free appropriate

public education" (FAPE) to each qualified student with a disability who is in the school district's jurisdiction, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability. Under Section 504, FAPE consists of the provision of regular or special education and related aids and services designed to meet the student's individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of nondisabled students are met. The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) enforces Section 504 in programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance from ED.

To be protected under Section 504, a student must be determined to: (1) have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; or (2) have a record of such an impairment; or (3) be regarded as having such an impairment. Section 504 requires that school districts provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to qualified students in their jurisdictions who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

I would love to see more information provided for students who are blind and/or deaf.

Information and resources for the blind deaf can be found through the Florida Department of Education Bureau of Exceptional Student Education Discretionary projects. The Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired (<https://www.fimcvi.org/>) and the Resource Materials and Technology Center for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing (<https://www.rmtcdhh.org/>) are statewide resource centers designed to assist in obtaining specialized materials for students with visual impairments and students who are deaf/hard of hearing. The Florida Virgin Islands Deaf-Blind Collaborative (<https://deafblind.ufl.edu/welcome/>) is another statewide resource dedicated to serving families and educators of students who are deaf-blind.

Where can I find out more information about CARD?

In accordance with s. 1004.55, F.S., and Rule 6A-7.0335, F.A.C., the seven regional CARD sites provide nonresidential resource and training services for persons of all ages and of all levels of intellectual functioning who have autism spectrum disorder (ASD), a pervasive developmental disorder, an autistic-like disability, a dual sensory impairment, or a sensory impairment with other disabling conditions. Each site provides services within its geographical region of the state, which are consistent with the other sites. Each site is expected to coordinate services within and between state and local agencies and school districts, but may not duplicate services provided by those agencies and school districts. The website for CARD is <http://florida-card.org/>.

With school shootings are there any programs in schools to reduce these behaviors? Any techniques to offer to schools, teachers, parents, and students to reduce community stressors? Teaching ways to de-escalate tempers, and to influence cooperative behavior?

Section 1012.584, Florida Statutes, Continuing education and inservice training for youth mental health awareness and assistance, states that the "Department of Education shall

select a national authority on youth mental health awareness and assistance to facilitate providing youth mental health awareness and assistance training, using a trainer certification model, to all school personnel in elementary, middle, and high schools.”

The Department of Education chose Youth Mental Health First Aid, which equips one to recognize signs of distress and guide a person toward appropriate treatments and other supportive health care. The training is for a family member, caregiver, teacher, school staff member, peer, neighbor, health and human services worker, or a caring citizen who works with adolescents.

Can students with disabilities who are homeschooled still receive services?

When a student withdraws from public school, the district is no longer obligated to provide all of the services contained in the student’s IEP. Although not required, districts may provide some level of service through the use of a service plan. For example, if a child is found eligible for speech/language therapy services, the school district could allow the child to come to a public school near the child’s home for these services during the week.

What is the legal definition of inclusion?

According to section 1003.57(2), Florida Statutes (F.S.), states that a school district shall use the term “inclusion” to mean that a student is receiving education in a general education regular class setting, reflecting natural proportions and age-appropriate heterogeneous groups in core academic and elective or special areas within the school community; a student with a disability is a valued member of the classroom and school community; the teachers and administrators support universal education and have knowledge and support available to enable them to effectively teach all children; and a teacher is provided access to technical assistance in best practices, instructional methods, and supports tailored to the student’s needs based on current research.

What is ESY? Is it available at all schools?

In accordance with the Code of Federal Regulation Section 300.106, Extended School Year (ESY) Services is defined as special education and related services that—(1) Are provided to a child with a disability—(i) Beyond the normal school year of the public agency; (ii) In accordance with the child’s IEP; and (iii) At no cost to the parents of the child; and (2) Meet the standards of the SEA.

The regulation also requires that ESY services must be provided only if a child’s IEP Team determines, on an individual basis, in accordance with §§300.320 through 300.324, that the services are necessary for the provision of FAPE to the child. (3) In implementing the requirements of this section, a public agency may not—(i) Limit extended school year services to particular categories of disability; or (ii) Unilaterally limit the type, amount, or duration of those services.

What can I do if my child is being pulled out of class to go to the ESE resource room and it is a waste of time? They play computer games more than anything else and my child misses out on instruction in his homeroom class.

Educational placement of a student with a disability is an individual educational plan (IEP) team decision. According to section 300.501(c) of Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.), each public agency must ensure that the parents of each child with a disability are members of any group that makes decisions on the educational placement of their child.

An IEP team meeting should take place to determine which educational placement is most appropriate for the student. Rule 6A-6.030298(4), Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), states that when determining the educational placement of a student with a disability, including a preschool child with a disability, each school district must ensure that the placement decision is made by a group of persons, including the parents, and other persons knowledgeable about the student, the meaning of the evaluation data, and the placement options; and, is made in conformity with the least restrictive environment (LRE) provisions of this rule. The student's placement should be determined annually, based on the student's IEP, and as close as possible to the student's home. Also in selecting the LRE, consideration is given to any potential harmful effect on the student or on the quality of services that he or she needs; and a student with a disability is not removed from education in age-appropriate regular classrooms solely because of needed modifications in the general education curriculum. If a part of an IEP team does not agree with the placement or least restrictive environment for the student then the team should meet to review the current IEP.

What is RtI? Is this something I can be involved in with my child?

The Response to Intervention (RtI) is a multi-tiered approach to early identification and providing of the needed supports to student that have been suspected of having learning or behavior needs. A parent should be involved in every step of the process. Contact the schools guidance counselor or your student's teacher to get more information about the process and how you can become involved. Additional information can be found at <https://www.fl DOE.org/core/fileparse.php/7690/urlt/Parent-Guide-MTSS.PDF>.

Does a speech disorder qualify my child for an IEP?

Yes. Rule 6A-6.03012, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), Exceptional Student Education Eligibility for Students with Speech Impairments and Qualifications and Responsibilities for the Speech-Language Pathologists Providing Speech Services, provides information about how a student with a speech sound disorder qualifies for an Individual Educational Plan (IEP). A student with a speech sound disorder is eligible for exceptional student education if there is evidence, based on evaluation results, of a significant phonological or articulation disorder that is characterized by the atypical production of speech sound(s). After the student is identified with a speech sound disorder, a team of professionals including a speech-language pathologist shall be involved in the development of the individual educational plan for students eligible for speech services,

whether as special education or as a related service for an otherwise eligible student with a disability.

Can my child participate in the gifted program if he has an IEP?

A student is determined to be eligible for gifted service as defined by current State Board of Education Rule 6A-6.03019, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), Special Instructional Programs for Students Who Are Gifted. This rule states (1) "Gifted. One who has superior intellectual development and is capable of high performance. (2) Criteria for eligibility. A student is eligible for special instructional programs for the gifted if the student meets the criteria under paragraph (2) (a) or (b) of this rule. (a) The student demonstrates: 1. Need for a special program. 2. A majority of characteristics of gifted students according to a standard scale or checklist; and, 3. Superior intellectual development as measured by an intelligence quotient of two (2) standard deviations or more above the mean on an individually administered standardized test of intelligence."

For gifted students who are also identified as having a disability, an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) is written, unless it is a disability that is not eligible for special education through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Under those circumstances, a 504 Plan might be appropriate. For a twice-exceptional student, the gifted goals are addressed on the IEP. A teacher of the gifted must attend the IEP meeting to provide input into the gifted goals for the student. In cases when a student who is gifted exhibits characteristics as a student with a disability, the student has rights outlined under IDEA 2004 and Procedural Safeguards for Parents of Students with Disabilities. All guidelines for the gifted goals on the IEP are consistent with the other goals including terms of reporting progress to parents/guardians.

We need help with tutoring. Is there funding available to assist with tutoring?

Districts have the ability to utilize available and allowable funds for intervention and support programs.

We need summer programs, year-round school services. There are not enough providers or therapists in the summer months. Our child falls behind in the summer and it takes months to bring his progress back to where he left off. Why can't the schools have summer school?

The IEP Team determines if a student with a disability requires ESY during the summer months. Districts have the ability to utilize available and allowable funds for summer programs.

How come my child cannot ride the bus to his school like his siblings? They say the driver cannot contain his behaviors. So why can't the school provide an aide to help the driver? This does not seem right. Is it?

300.34, CFR, a student's IEP Team is responsible for determining whether transportation between school and other locations is necessary in order for the child to receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). Likewise, if a student's IEP Team determines that supports or modifications are needed in order for the child to be transported so that the child can receive FAPE, the child must receive the necessary transportation and supports at no cost to the parents.

My daughter graduates this year. No one has ever talked to us about options after school. She could work with assistance, maybe go to college. I think the school guidance counselor just wrote her off as someone who cannot contribute. I hear folks here talk about transitions and how it should start at early high school. No one at her school ever presented transition options for us. We attend all IEPs and volunteer heavily at the high school. Why is this not ever discussed? After graduation is too late!!

Transition services are provided through Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and a provision of free and appropriate public education (FAPE) and may be provided through the age of 21. The student's post-school goals identified in the individual educational plan (IEP) should drive the annual goals, supports, and services to help facilitate movement from school to post-school. This should have been discussed each year once your daughter turned 16, at least at each annual IEP meeting. Parents and students are members of the IEP team and should be sure to discuss post-school goals and deferral and post-school plans prior to graduation. Once a student defers, they must be enrolled in accelerated college credit instruction, industry certification courses that lead to college credit, an early college program, courses necessary to satisfy the Scholar designation requirements, or a structured work-study internship or pre-apprenticeship program in order to continue to receive FAPE (s. 1003.4282(10)(c), F.S.).

Connecting with Vocational Rehabilitation or VR may assist Sally in planning life after high school. You may connect with the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation or visit the VR website at <http://www.rehabworks.org/>.

In addition, if you believe that the school is not meeting its legal obligations, there are various options available to resolve these disputes. Information about these options may be found at the following webpage: <http://www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/dispute-resolution/>.

The Department of Health

Will more be done to stop medical facilities and doctor's offices from denying services to those who can't wear a mask due to a disability?

The Department of Health appreciates your question. Your local medical society is a possible resource for a list of other providers in your area.

I'm nervous about getting the COVID-19 vaccine, but I am more nervous about getting Covid. Are there resources to help me make an informed decision about the vaccine?

This is a great question. You can find information about the COVID-19 vaccines via the Florida Department of Health's COVID-19 website: floridahealthcovid19.gov. This website is also a one-stop shop for COVID-19 vaccine, testing, and monoclonal antibody therapy treatment locations.

Does the governor work with DOH on implementing COVID-19 measures?

Leaders throughout the state continue to implement various strategies to combat COVID-19. Thank you for your question.

How effective are masks at slowing/stopping the spread of COVID-19? How about the Delta variant?

Thank you for reaching out. For information regarding various COVID-19 mitigation measures, please visit, www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html.

If I'm vaccinated should I still wear a mask?

Thank you for your question. Please find information regarding various COVID-19 mitigation measures at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html.

Very worried about the rise of COVID-19 patients in the hospitals. My son has to have a procedure every month for his trach in the hospital. I am so scared that the trained personnel will be over-stretched that this may cause an issue with the hospital. Health and safety issues are everywhere.

Thank you for sharing your story. Please share your concerns with your son's Primary Care Provider for additional information regarding reducing the risk of delayed care. The Department of Health wishes you and your son all the best.

I thought the virus was starting to go away but now numbers are worse and the Delta variant is worse. I don't understand.

While cases can fluctuate, getting vaccinated remains the best way to protect yourself and your loved ones from COVID-19, including against known COVID-19 virus variants.

Learn more via the Florida Department of Health's COVID-19 website: <https://floridahealthcovid19.gov>. This website is a one-stop shop for COVID-19 vaccine, testing, and monoclonal antibody therapy treatment locations.

I am nervous about the COVID-19 airborne illness. What happens if it spreads?

You can protect yourself and your loved ones by getting a COVID-19 vaccine. Find a COVID-19 vaccine near you at <https://floridahealthcovid19.gov> Thank you for your question.

We missed the Early Steps playgroup. I really hope you can bring it back next year.

Thank you for your comment. Department of Health, Early Steps staff also missed seeing all the families and supporters that participate in our Early Wishes playgroup and Family Café. Our dedicated Family Resource Specialists from across the state, who do such a wonderful job organizing and hosting the event, and the Early Steps State Office are eager to bring Early Wishes back next year. It will be loads of fun. Please stop by and celebrate with us. Hope to see you in 2022.

What is Early Steps? How can I qualify?

Early Steps is Florida's early intervention program designed for families who have infants and toddlers, up to the age of three, with delays, disabilities, and/or at-risk conditions. Our program is offered at no cost to all families whose child qualifies, regardless of income.

The Early Steps Program is family-centered, which means services are focused around the needs of the individual child and family. We use a research-based coaching model to help caregiver(s) learn how to easily and effectively incorporate strategies into their regular everyday routines. Applying meaningful and practical strategies into family routines not only builds the caregiver's confidence and competence in meeting their child's unique needs, but also gives their child more opportunity to grow and develop everyday where they live, learn, and play. Routines-based and family-centeredness is what sets Early Steps apart from a clinical-based model of therapy.

To determine if your child is eligible for the program, an evaluation would be performed by our team of qualified professionals. Eligibility is based on current development and/or the potential risks of delays due to a known disability or other qualifying condition. Please contact your local office to submit a referral for your child for an evaluation. For more information, call 800-218-0001 or visit our Early Steps Directory here: [Children's Medical Services - index \(cms-kids.com\)](https://www.cms-kids.com)

We really missed the Early Steps care room this year. I wanted to ask the ladies there if the program works within the school system? Meaning, if you are in the school system from birth to age five, can you still receive services from CMS Early Steps program?

Thank you for your question and comment. Department of Health, Early Steps staff missed our Early Wishes Playgroup too and hope to bring it back next year.

A child enrolled in Early Steps can receive services under Part C of IDEA until the age of 3. Services are generally received in the "natural environment" which can be at home, a daycare, or other childcare setting. At 3 years of age, the child would transition from Early Steps into another setting which is often, but not always, Prekindergarten for Children with Disabilities (PreK) through the school district or a school district approved charter school. Once a child is in PreK through their school district, services can commence under Part B of IDEA.

What is the newborn screening? Are all babies screened?

Newborn screening is a state public health program that reaches nearly 4 million babies born in the United States each year. Approximately a quarter of a million of those babies are in born Florida. Newborns are screened for certain genetic, endocrine, hemoglobinopathy, immunology, and metabolic conditions. Screenings for hearing loss and critical congenital heart defects (CCHDs) are completed prior to discharge from a hospital or birth facility. Florida screens for more than 55 conditions, including those recommended by the United States Department of Health and Human Services' Recommended Uniform Screening Panel (RUSP). If a baby's newborn screen is out of range, parents will be notified, and the Newborn Screening Follow-up Program will ensure access to diagnostic testing to confirm results.

Florida's Newborn Screening Program is an opt-out program, meaning it is part of the standard of care for all newborns born in the state. As with any medical procedure, parents have the right to refuse. For more information, please visit: <https://floridanewbornscreening.com/>

What are the requirements for Florida KidCare? How do I apply? What if I don't qualify?

KidCare is Florida's affordable, high-quality health and dental insurance program for children. To qualify for low-cost coverage, a child must:

- Be under age 19.

- Meet income eligibility requirements.
- Be a U.S. citizen or qualified non-citizen.
- Not be in a public institution.

We need more support for hospitals in regard to implementing transition programs from pediatric to adult care. It is a difficult problem for those living with disabilities.

Health Care Transition is a statewide priority for the Children’s Medical Services Title V program. Nurses, social workers, and family leaders work with stakeholders in their community to initiate a transition process in their organization or enhance their existing transition process. Stakeholders include primary care providers, specialists, hospitals, schools, community organizations, and youth and families. Our work includes helping stakeholders to have transition policies that are based on the nationally recognized GOT Transition Six Core Elements of Health Care Transition.

What are the differences between KidCare and Children’s Medical Services? How does one qualify for each?

KidCare is the state of Florida’s health insurance program that covers children ages 0-18. The program is made up of Florida Healthy Kids, Medicaid, MediKids, and Children’s Medical Services (CMS) Health Plan. CMS Health Plan is for children up to age 18 who are eligible for low-cost KidCare and have special health care needs. CMS Health Plan also covers children up to age 21 who are eligible for Medicaid and have special health care needs. To qualify for CMS, a child:

- Must meet Medicaid or subsidized KidCare financial requirements.
- Must be the age of 21 or younger.
- Must meet Children’s Medical Services clinical screening requirements or have a physician attest to the child’s qualifying medical conditions.

When do you think that Florida will have vaccines available in all CMS clinics for the parents who have the children?

COVID-19 vaccines are available to all children ages 12 and older. Florida has many sites that are providing COVID-19 vaccines. COVID-19 vaccines are safe, highly effective, and free. Vaccine locations in your area can be found using Florida’s Vaccine Locator (floridahealthcovid19.gov/vaccines/vaccine-locator/).

Appointments may be required, and specific vaccine types and brands may not be available at all sites, so review the location’s instructions (for example, you may need to schedule an appointment online). If your child is a member of CMS Health Plan, your child’s CMS Care Manager can assist with scheduling and appointment and coordinating transportation to a vaccination site. In some cases, in-home vaccinations are available.

Does CMS cover children with cancer?

Yes. Children's Medical Services (CMS) Health Plan is designed for children who are Medicaid or KidCare eligible and have special health care needs from birth up to age 21 years old. This includes children who may have a cancer diagnosis.

Who is the carrier for CMS services? Medicaid? StayWell? KidCare? I am so confused. Please make it easy with a single application that will get you services from anyone.

Children's Medical Services (CMS) Health Plan is a Department of Health program. Some operations of the plan are contracted to WellCare of Florida, which does business in Florida as "Staywell." To qualify for CMS, a child:

- Must meet Medicaid or subsidized KidCare financial requirements.
- Must be the age of 21 or younger.
- Must meet Children's Medical Services clinical screening requirements or have a physician attest to child's qualifying medical conditions.

What are the guidelines for receiving CMS services for my child? Do I have to worry about an income limit? Will they work around the amount of money we don't have for his medications? We are drowning with medication expenses. We used to have enough with my and my husband's salary, but due to COVID-19 and schools closing, I had to quit my job. Now it is too costly for food and meds and rent, etc.

Children's Medical Services (CMS) Health Plan is designed for children who are Medicaid or KidCare eligible and have special health care needs from birth up to age 21 years old. To qualify for CMS, a child:

- Must meet Medicaid (<https://www.myflfamilies.com/>) or subsidized KidCare (<https://www.floridakidcare.org/>) financial requirements.
- Must be the age of 21 or younger.
- Must meet Children's Medical Services clinical screening requirements or have a physician attest to child's qualifying medical conditions.

CMS Health Plan covers prescription drugs as provided for in the Florida Agency For Health Care Administration (AHCA) Medicaid Preferred Drug List (PDL).

- The PDL is a list of preferred drugs.
- The drugs on the PDL are organized by brand and generic name.
- Quantity, gender, and age limits are also provided.
- Some medications have additional criteria for use.

How can we better inform people who are new to the process for services of the definitions of the numerous cross-agency terms used for newest families of small children in the system of care? Is there a glossary of terms/acronyms?

Terms and acronyms can be difficult to follow as they may be different from agency to agency and even from program to program within an agency. It is best to follow up with each program office to get the applicable definition for terms specific to the program with which you are applying.

When will we have a provider for dental patients requiring general anesthesia for preventative and restorative dental treatment in NE Florida?

Thank you for your question. The effort to obtain dentistry under general anesthesia is complicated by having to involve multiple specialties to provide the care. The Department of Health will continue to explore opportunities to expand dental services for children with special health care needs.

How can we get dental services for our child with a disability? We do not have dental insurance.

Thank you for your question. Certain Florida Department of Health, Local County Health Departments, and Federally Qualified Health Center dental programs treat children with special health care needs. Many of these programs offer services on a sliding fee scale based on income. To locate available services in your local area, please visit the Public Health Dental Program interactive map of dental providers throughout the state: <http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/community-health/dental-health/resources/index.html>

How can I get more information about medical marijuana?

The Office of Medical Marijuana Use's (OMMU) website, www.KnowTheFactsMMJ.com, is the official source for information about medical marijuana and the medical marijuana program in the state of Florida. Select the *Resources* tab to view a list of useful materials about medical marijuana. The OMMU can also be reached by phone at 800-808-9580 or by email at MedicalMarijuanaUse@flhealth.gov.

What is the process to obtain a medical marijuana card?

To obtain a medical marijuana card, please follow the steps below:

- 1) A qualified physician must first diagnose a patient with a qualifying medical condition. If the patient is younger than 18 or terminal, a second physician must concur, and this determination must be reflected in the patient's medical records.
- 2) The qualified physician enters the patient's information and order(s) into the Medical Marijuana Use Registry (MMUR), to start the patient application process. If the patient has a caregiver who will assist with the administration of medical marijuana, they must also be added in the MMUR, to start the patient application process.
- 3) The patient and their caregiver must then apply for a Medical Marijuana Use Registry Identification Card (ID card) at www.mmuregistry.flhealth.gov. Visit

www.KnowTheFactsMMJ.com and select *Registry Identification Cards* under the *Patients* tab for information on how to apply for an ID card. Please note that it can take up to 10 business days for an application to be fully approved.

- 4) Once the ID card application is approved, the patient and/or caregiver may fill the qualified physician's order(s) at any approved Medical Marijuana Treatment Center.

Are there special doctors I need to go through for medical marijuana?

Yes. These special doctors are called qualified physicians. Qualified physicians must have a clear/active license under Chapter 458, or 459, Florida Statutes, and must complete the required course and examination provided by the Florida Medical Association and the Florida Osteopathic Medical Association. For more information about qualified physicians and how to locate one, visit www.KnowTheFactsMMJ.com and select the *Physicians* tab.

Does the Department of Health have any programs to help someone quit smoking?

The Department of Health's Tobacco Free Florida program offers a variety of evidence-based and free resources to all Florida residents. Resources include nicotine replacement therapy as well as phone, online, and in-person group services. Tobacco users can access services by calling 1-877-U-CAN-NOW or visiting www.tobaccofreeflorida.com.

What are the effects on long term smoking and birth defects? I smoke and am pregnant. My doctor tells me smoking will harm the baby, please help me to quit!! My CMS nurse says I should take classes. What classes? Why?

Smoking can cause problems for a woman trying to become pregnant or who is already pregnant, and for her baby before and after birth. Effects on women include difficulty getting pregnant, water breaks too early, pregnancy occurs outside the womb, and placenta separates from the womb too early, causing bleeding. Effects on the baby can include baby being born too small, baby born too early, stillbirth, sudden infant death syndrome, and cleft lip/palate.

The Department of Health's Tobacco Free Florida program offers a variety of evidence-based and free resources to all Florida residents. Resources include nicotine replacement therapy as well as phone, online, and in-person group services. Tobacco users can access services by calling 1-877-U-CAN-NOW or visiting www.tobaccofreeflorida.com.

What is available for children with epilepsy?

Each year, the Florida Legislature appropriates general revenue funds to support the Florida Epilepsy Services Program (ESP) administered by the Florida Department of Health. Section 385.207, Florida Statutes, provides authorization for the development and implementation of a comprehensive epilepsy services program and allows the Department

to contract out case management, diagnosis, care, and treatment services for persons with epilepsy and prevention and education for persons with epilepsy and their families, physicians, hospitals, county health departments, and the public. Currently, the Department contracts with six epilepsy providers throughout Florida to implement the ESP.

Although ESP focuses on helping adults because uninsured children in Florida generally have other state provided health care options, ESP does treat children when other options are not available. ESP offers prevention and education presentations to parents of children with epilepsy and to school staff, medical staff, and camp counselors etc., who work with children with epilepsy.

ESP often refers parents who have children with epilepsy to other community resources that may assist them with associated needs. Helping the whole family understand and support their child with epilepsy is important to the well-being of that child. ESP's goal is to assist, educate, and empower all families when dealing with the challenges of epilepsy.

Epilepsy Service Program Providers:

- Epilepsy Agency of the Big Bend, Bette Iacino, Executive Director
Email: bj@eabb.org Phone: 850-222-1777
Counties served: Bay, Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Taylor, Wakulla, and Washington
- Epilepsy Association of Central Florida, Chuck Carmen, Executive Director,
Email: chuck@epilepsyassociation.com Phone: 407-422-1416
Counties served: Brevard, Orange, Osceola, and Seminole
- Epilepsy Florida, Karen Basha Egozi, Chief Executive Officer
Email: kegozi@efof.org Phone: 305-670-4949
Counties served: Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Broward, Citrus, Clay, Columbia, Dade, Dixie, Duval, Escambia, Flagler, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Hernando, Indian River, Lafayette, Lake, Levy, Marion, Martin, Monroe, Nassau, Okaloosa, Okeechobee, Palm Beach, Putman, Santa Rosa, St. Lucie, St. Johns, Sumter, Suwannee, Union, Volusia, and Walton
- Epilepsy Services of Southwest Florida, Kevin Linberg, Executive Director
Email: Klindberg@esswfl.org Phone: 941-953-5988
Counties served: Charlotte, Collier, Desoto, Glades, Hendry, Lee, Manatee, and Sarasota
- Epilepsy Services of West Central Florida, Michael Brown, Executive Director
Email: mbrown@epilepsyservices.com Website: www.epilepsyservices.com
Phone: 813-870-3414
Counties served: Hardee, Highlands, Hillsborough, and Polk
- Suncoast Epilepsy Association, Patricia Anderson, Executive Director
Email: panderson@suncoastepilepsy.org Phone: 727-546-2856
Counties served: Pasco and Pinellas

The Division of Emergency Management

What are the most important items to keep on-hand in case of a hurricane if we must shelter in place?

There are many factors to consider when creating a disaster supply kit for your family. Each family has unique needs and circumstances, but all Florida residents are encouraged to keep at least seven days of supplies on-hand in the event of a disaster. This includes non-perishable food, water, batteries, medications, and more. To get a full list of what you should have stocked, see the Division's checklist here:

<https://www.floridadisaster.org/planprepare/hurricane-supply-checklist/>.

If we are hit by a big hurricane again, how long should we expect to be without power? How long should we be prepared to shelter in place for?

Recent hurricanes have taught us that it can take up to seven days or longer to restore power in impacted areas. Because of this, Floridians should have at least seven days of supplies. If you or a loved one have special needs and depend on power, a generator may be a good addition to your family's disaster supply kit. Remember to never use a generator inside—even in the garage. For more information on what to stock up on when sheltering in place, click here: <https://www.floridadisaster.org/planprepare/hurricane-supply-checklist/>.

What if you want to evacuate but you are not in an evacuation zone? I am alone with my special needs daughter, and I am afraid to be home if it is a category 2 or above.

If you feel unsafe, you should evacuate. The greatest risk to your life from a hurricane or severe storm is storm surge flooding. These threats can be a high risk for those in evacuation zones, low-lying flood areas, or mobile homes.

During a storm or other disaster, listen to orders from local officials. Visit the Know Your Zone, Know Your Home page at [floridadisaster.org/planprepare/know-your-zone-know-your-home/](https://www.floridadisaster.org/planprepare/know-your-zone-know-your-home/) to determine what kind of flood-risk area you live in.

Individuals with special needs are also encouraged to register with the Special Needs Registry. The Special Needs Registry allows residents with special needs to connect with their local emergency management agency to receive assistance during a disaster. You can register at [floridadisaster.org/snr](https://www.floridadisaster.org/snr).

How can you have virtual assistance if there is no power?

To increase access to resources during a disaster, register with the Special Needs Registry at <https://www.floridadisaster.org/snr/>. The registry connects individuals with special needs to their local county emergency management agency. Filling in detailed information

on the registry will allow first responders to fulfill your specific needs, including power-dependent essentials.

In the event of a hurricane or other disaster that could leave your home without power, your disaster supply kit should be stocked with at least seven days of supplies. If you or a loved one have special needs and depend on power, a generator may be a good addition to your family's disaster supply kit. Remember to never use a generator indoors—even in the garage.

Additionally, some virtual registration for assistance can be completed using a cell phone. Make sure your phone is charged before a storm and consider buying portable phone chargers. For more information on how to prepare for a storm, visit <https://www.floridadisaster.org/planprepare/>.

If Florida is hit by another big hurricane and we must shelter in place, are there any resources to help us obtain supplies/medications we need but can't stock up on?

Stocking up on medications and other scarce supplies can be a big concern for residents when a storm is approaching, but the state has several protocols in place for residents to have access to medical essentials before and after a disaster strikes.

Prior to a storm making landfall, [Section 252.358, Florida Statutes \(F.S.\)](#) allows individuals to obtain a 30-day refill of your prescription medication—even if you have just refilled it. This will apply to citizens from counties that:

- Are under a hurricane warning issued by the National Weather Service,
- Are under a state of emergency executive order declared by the Governor or
- Have activated their emergency operations center/emergency management plan.

If you are not able to stock up on medications beforehand, visit [RxOpen.org](https://www.rxopen.org) to find open pharmacies near you during a disaster. The site also has locations of American Red Cross shelters and infusion centers in the affected communities.

Can I bring my service dog with me to a special needs shelter?

Yes, service animals are welcome in accordance with [Section 413.08, F.S.](#) Make sure to have documentation of ownership for your animal (paperwork or photos) in the event of separation during a disaster, along with any other supplies they might need in case of evacuation. This includes items like sturdy leashes, carriers, food, toys and more. For more information on things to consider when it comes to including your pet or service animal in your disaster plan, go to <https://www.floridadisaster.org/planprepare/pet-plan/>.

With another rise in Covid cases and the Delta variant, what will shelters look like as far as safety measures to keep the virus from spreading?

Storm shelters are managed by county emergency management offices and all sheltering decisions are made at the local level. For information from your county Emergency Management program regarding shelter preparedness and lists of shelters that may be

opened, visit [floridadisaster.org/planprepare/shelters/](https://www.floridadisaster.org/planprepare/shelters/) and choose your county. A list of each county's Emergency Management Office's contact information can be found at [floridadisaster.org/planprepare/shelters/](https://www.floridadisaster.org/planprepare/shelters/).

Will shelters turn people away if they aren't vaccinated?

Storm shelters are managed by county emergency management offices. Individuals are encouraged to contact their county's emergency management office for more information regarding sheltering during a storm. Contact information can be found at <https://www.floridadisaster.org/planprepare/shelters/>.

Are there any preventative measures I can take to prepare my house in case of a hurricane to minimize damage?

Preparing your home can help you save on extensive repair costs caused by storm impacts before a storm threatens your community. Strengthening the exterior mitigates against wind and debris tearing large openings into your home. This can be done by protecting and reinforcing these five critical areas: roof, straps, windows, doors, and garage doors. Contact the local building code official to find out what requirements are necessary for home improvement projects. For more information, visit <https://www.floridadisaster.org/planprepare/secure-your-home/>

It is also important to note that flood damage is not usually covered by homeowners' insurance. Do not make assumptions; check your policy annually. The National Flood Insurance Program is a pre-disaster flood mitigation and insurance protection program designed to reduce the escalating cost of disasters. The National Flood Insurance Program makes federally backed flood insurance available to residents and business owners. For more information, visit National Flood Insurance Program at <https://www.floodsmart.gov/>.

Please share information on special needs shelters.

Individuals with special needs are encouraged to register with the Special Needs Registry. This allows residents with special needs to connect with their local emergency management agency to receive assistance during a disaster. Register at <https://www.floridadisaster.org/snr/>.

If you do need to evacuate, the basic eligibility criteria needed to stay in a special needs shelter are:

- A person with special medical needs
- Care exceeds the basic first aid provided at general population shelters
- Impairments or disabilities are medically stable and do not exceed the capacity, staffing, and equipment of the special needs shelter to minimize deterioration of pre-event level of health.

Sheltering decisions are made by local governments, for more information reach out to your county emergency management office. Contact information can be found at

<https://www.floridadisaster.org/planprepare/shelters/>.

What precautions and preparations are in place for individuals in group homes and nursing facilities in the event of a high-impact hurricane?

Ensuring long-term care facilities are prepared for a storm is a top priority of the state. Nursing homes and assisted-living facilities are responsible for coordinating their own evacuation plans, and these evacuation and sheltering destinations are confirmed and shared with the state. To assist in this process, the Agency for Health Care Administration has provided [guidance](https://ahca.myflorida.com/mchq/emergency_activities/docs/2021_Hurricane_Preparedness_and_Planning_Letter_Final.pdf) (https://ahca.myflorida.com/mchq/emergency_activities/docs/2021_Hurricane_Preparedness_and_Planning_Letter_Final.pdf) in making sure that facilities confirm evacuation destinations can care for individuals with and without COVID-19 safely. [Section 400.23, F.S.](#) as well as [Rule 59A-4.1265, Florida Administrative Code \(F.A.C.\)](#) require nursing home and long-term care operators to have generators for temperature control in the event of an emergency.

Additionally, the Florida Department of Elder Affairs coordinates with the Division on emergency preparedness issues and post-disaster response. Visit the Disaster Preparedness page on the Florida Department of Elder Affairs site for more information at <https://elderaffairs.org/programs-services/disaster-preparedness/>.

What else do we need to worry about besides weather emergencies?

In addition to weather-related disasters, Florida is susceptible to a variety of hazards, including natural and man-made. More information on these hazards, including how to prepare for them, can be found on the Division's website at <https://www.floridadisaster.org/>.

What category does a hurricane need to be classified as to warrant evacuation?

While all hurricanes indicate a potential threat and potential harm to people and property, not all hurricanes are of equal strength. The greatest risk to your livelihood from a hurricane or large storm is storm surge flooding. This can be a high risk for those in evacuation zones, low-lying flood areas or mobile homes.

However, if you do not reside in one of these areas, it may be safer to stay home. It's always best to listen to the advice and orders of local officials during a storm and if you feel unsafe, you should evacuate. Visit the Know Your Zone, Know Your Home page at <https://www.floridadisaster.org/planprepare/know-your-zone-know-your-home/> to determine what kind of flood-risk area you may live in.

If a hurricane damages my home, how can I get help to fix the damage?

Part of hurricane preparation includes reviewing insurance annually and considering the purchase of flood insurance. It is important to note that flood damage is not usually

covered by homeowners' insurance. Do not make assumptions; check your policy annually and prior to any potential disasters. Standard flood insurance by the National Flood Insurance Program generally covers physical damages directly caused by flooding within the limits of the coverage purchased. For more information, visit www.floodsmart.gov/.

Are tornadoes something we need to worry about in Florida?

Yes, tornadoes impact Florida year-round. Actions you can take to ensure your family is prepared before a tornado include:

- Building or identifying a Safe-Room in your Home
- Purchasing and use a NOAA Weather Radio (www.weather.gov/nwr/)
- Inquiring if your community is StormReady (weather.gov/StormReady)
- Learning how to protect yourself (spc.noaa.gov/faq/tornado/safety.html)

More information on how to prepare for tornadoes can be found at floridadisaster.org/hazards/tornadoes/.

What should you do if your house begins to flood?

Flooding is one of Florida's most frequent hazards. It is a coast-to-coast threat that can occur at any time of the year. There are different reasons a community may flood including storm surge, river flooding, or heavy rainfall. Low-lying or poorly drained areas can also increase a community's flood risk. It is important to have a disaster plan in place in the event a disaster strikes. Individuals can learn their overall flood risk at www.floodsmart.gov.

If your house begins to flood due to natural disaster, you may take the following steps:

- Turn off the electricity (only if you can do so without stepping into water).
- Evacuate the premises (if weather conditions are still feasible for evacuation).

It is important to note that flood damage is not usually covered by homeowners' insurance. Do not make assumptions; check your policy annually and prior to any potential disasters. More information on how to prepare for flooding can be found on the Division's website at <https://www.floridadisaster.org/hazards/floods/>.

What can be done so that the state of Florida statewide special needs online registry can be reinstated? This will make it easier for people to register for the service if they feel they are eligible. It would also make it easier for people to report when they move, such as from one county to another.

Florida's Statewide Special Needs Registry is still actively maintained by the Florida Department of Health. The statewide registry provides first responders with valuable information to prepare for disasters or other emergencies. For more information, please

visit the Florida Department of Health’s website at <https://snr.flhealthresponse.com/>.

Where do we get benefits for emergency management care?

Individuals seeking information regarding emergency management in their communities are encouraged to contact their county emergency management office. Contact information is available at <https://www.floridadisaster.org/counties/>.

Is there any special needs registry we can sign up for? How will anyone know that we need help with our parents and our children if a storm comes? We do not drive, and rely on walking or a bus. We are fortunate to live in Miami where we can just walk everywhere. But if it is raining and storming, we will not be able to leave in time. What are our options?

Florida’s Statewide Special Needs Registry is actively maintained by the Florida Department of Health. The Florida Department of Health, in coordination with its county health departments and each local emergency management agency in the state, developed this registry for persons with special needs to register with their local emergency management agency to receive assistance during a disaster. The statewide registry provides first responders with valuable information to prepare for disasters or other emergencies. For more information, please visit the Florida Department of Health’s website at <https://snr.flhealthresponse.com/>. More information on disaster planning for persons with disabilities can be found at:

- <https://apd.myflorida.com/> (Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities)
- https://disabilityrightsflorida.org/presentations/Intro_to_Special_Ed_Presentations/html/index.htm (Advocacy Center for Persons with Disabilities, Inc.)
- <https://www.nod.org/> (National Organization on Disability)

I see Volunteer Florida has a mention in this program—an ad. I’ve never heard of them before. I went to their webpage and it was down. I would like to know more about their trainings and presentations they offer. Wish they were offering them here at the event.

Volunteer Florida is the state’s lead agency for volunteers and donations before, during, and after disasters. In partnership with the Florida Division of Emergency Management, Volunteer Florida:

- Coordinates with Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) and local and state government emergency management agencies to meet volunteer and donation needs.
- Provides training and presentations on the roles of government and nongovernment organizations in disaster preparedness (<https://apps.floridadisaster.org/getaplan/>), response, recovery, and mitigation.
- Provides training for government, non-government, and private sector organizations on disaster volunteer and donations management.

More information is available at <https://www.volunteerflorida.org/emergency-management/>.

I miss Linda Carter this year as she gave such good practical advice to turn everyday items into something we could put in our disaster to-go kit. Very creative. Very entertaining. Never thought that these items could be of such practical use.

Each family's individual needs during a disaster may vary—it is important to take time before a disaster to determine what items you should place in your disaster supply kit. For a full list of items recommended by the Division, please visit <https://www.floridadisaster.org/planprepare/hurricane-supply-checklist/>.

I think you should run more ads and shows on TV and YouTube for folks to get ready for storms, hurricanes, tornadoes, etc. No one is prepared. It is just a matter of time before another disaster hits our state.

The Division participates in a wide variety of campaigns to inform Floridians about the importance of preparedness for natural and man-made disasters. Additionally, our website contains a wide variety of resources to assist you in your preparation. Individuals are also encouraged to connect with their county's emergency management office for outreach activities in their communities.

Very worried about hurricane season. When I was a child Hurricane Andrew blew through my neighborhood. We lost our house and there was no place to go. Now, with my kids who need help, where do we go for help? I have such a fear. Help!

While living in and visiting Florida offers many benefits and advantages, it is important to keep in mind severe weather hazards and potential threats.

Every family should have predefined emergency plans and always keep a stocked emergency supply kit. For more information on creating a family plan and what to keep in your disaster supply kit, please visit the Division's website at <https://www.floridadisaster.org/planprepare/>.

Further, each Florida county has a designated emergency management program. Residents and visitors should visit their county's emergency management website at <https://www.floridadisaster.org/counties/> for the most up-to-date and locally significant information.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

What services are available for adult persons with disabilities for housing, training, higher education, master's degree, business ownership, grants to start a business, etc.? Are there legal work from home employers who hire persons with physical movement disabilities?

VR offers a wide variety of services to help individuals with disabilities prepare for, find, advance, and maintain a job such as on-the-job training, vocational training, Discovery, work-readiness training, resume development, as well as job placement and retention services.

In relation to higher education, VR may sponsor any vocational training (e.g., Associate degree, certification, bachelor's degree, or higher education) based upon an identified employment goal that is suitable to the customer's skills, abilities and interest. If a customer is unable to reach the desired employment goal without additional training and education, the VR counselor and the customer will work together to obtain additional information from an employer or other credentialed professional in the field for which the individual is seeking an advanced degree.

VR's self-employment program provides an opportunity for individuals with disabilities to explore entrepreneurship. VR's funding is designed to assist with start-up costs necessary to establish a new business. Start-up costs are limited to the amount approved and duration specified in an approved business plan. VR may provide services necessary to stabilize a business only when an eligible individual has an existing business, which for reasons related to the individual's disability requires changes to the product, services, or methods of operations.

How does vocational rehabilitation choose their vendors?

Potential Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) service providers can apply to provide services to VR's participants through our Vendor Certification process. These services may include, but are not limited to, medical services, training opportunities, and/or specialized equipment. Each service has specific requirements of the vendors. If you have specific questions about the qualifications or are just looking for additional information on becoming a VR Provider, you may call 850-245-3401 or toll free 866-580-7438. Applications for specific vendor types are available at rehabworks.org/vendor_apps.shtml.

What kind of services, assistance, or benefits are available for young adults that want to pursue a college education? Is there any assistance for college graduates to find jobs?

Employment services are available to any eligible individual with a disability seeking employment, including college graduate students. Employment services are designed to provide vocational support and training necessary to obtain employment. Services include interviewing skills and resume writing and job search assistance. If higher education is

required to obtain desired employment, VR offers post-secondary education support to learn new work skills.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) has many opportunities for students with disabilities as they transition out of high school to learn about work and training opportunities including services such as Job Exploration, Counseling, Vocational Assessment, Work Readiness Training, Work-Based Learning Experience, and Discovery. The best way to begin working with VR is by contacting the local VR office in your area. To get you started on your journey to employment, find an office in your area at http://www.RehabWorks.org/office_directory.shtml. We look forward to working with you.

Is it harder to find a job now after COVID-19 for a person with a disability?

According to the State Exchange on Employment and Disability, the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected many who have historically faced significant barriers to employment, including people with disabilities. As of July 2021, the unemployment rate for individuals with disabilities was 12.6%, compared with an unemployment rate of 5.4% for individuals without disabilities. In addition, many individuals with disabilities are hesitant to return to employment due to concerns about exposure to COVID-19. Despite this, the pandemic has changed the nature of work in many industries, including opening opportunities for remote work that may appeal to some individuals with disabilities. For individuals with disabilities who want to work, VR is available to assist with identifying job opportunities that suit their abilities and needs, including concerns about the impact of COVID-19 on their disability. VR can also assist with negotiating employment accommodations, if needed.

Where can I find contact info for my local VR office?

All of our office locations are found on our website at www.RehabWorks.org/office_directory.shtml. Select your area on the map to see a listing of VR office locations and contact information. If you do not have access to the internet, call VR's Ombudsman Office toll free at 800-451-4327 or 866-515-3692. TTY users dial 711 to connect with the telecommunications relay service (TRS). Video phone users can call through the video relay service (VRS).

What kind of assistive technology/equipment does VR provide to enable employment?

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) offers a variety of assistive technology options based on the need of the individual, including vehicle and home modifications. Assistive technology options are customized to the needs of the individual. VR is partnered with Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology, known as FFAST, to expand assistive technology services throughout the state. For additional information visit <https://faast.org/>.

If we live in a county that doesn't offer apprentice positions for Ticket to Work or youth programs, can we work with a different county nearby?

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) actively encourages informed choice with each participant. As such, all the available providers for services are offered to individuals so that participants can select the provider that best meets the goals and needs of the participant. There are no county or region restrictions enforced by VR as they pertain to service providers.

What is the difference between VR and CareerSource? Do they work together?

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Career Source are both wonderful resources for job seekers in Florida. VR and Career Source are core partners under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and work to assist job seekers with obtaining employment. While both agencies can serve student and adult populations, VR specializes in employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Where can I find pre-employment skills training for my child?

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) offers Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students (age 14-21) with disabilities across the state. These Pre-ETS give students with disabilities an early start at career exploration and preparation for adult life. Services include:

- Job-exploration counseling
- Work readiness training
- Work-based learning experience
- Postsecondary educational counseling
- Self-advocacy training and peer mentoring

If a student is interested in pursuing these services, he or she can request a referral made on their behalf through their school. Additionally, as with any individual, a student can always refer themselves by contacting the local VR office. You can find your local VR offices on our website's VR Office Directory at http://rehabworks.org/office_directory.shtml.

Do you have to receive SSDI or SSI to participate in the Ticket to Work program?

Ticket to Work is a Social Security Administration (SSA) work incentive program available to individuals who qualify for social security benefits. Tickets will be issued and may be taken to Employment Network (EN) participants, such as VR, who offer access to employment and rehabilitation services necessary to help a person secure and retain employment. If you have additional questions, contact a local VR office at http://www.RehabWorks.org/office_directory.shtml or VR Ticket to Work Administrator Willette Bowers by email at Willette.Bowers@vr.fl DOE.org or call her at 850-245-3271.

What kind of Covid safety precautions are in place with VR offices?

The Florida Department of Education understands that concerns about health and safety are paramount for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) staff, customers, and stakeholders. Local VR offices are open to the public following the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines, local ordinances, and landlord approval, if applicable. For information on offices that are open and to schedule appointments, call your local office at http://RehabWorks.org/office_directory.shtml. If you do not have access to the internet, contact our Ombudsman Office at 800-451-4327 or 866-515-3692. TTY users dial 711 to connect with the telecommunications relay service (TRS). Video phone users can call through the video relay service (VRS). For information on meeting in a VR office, see rehabworks.org/docs/ReopeningInformationForVRCustomers.docx.

How do you get a VR referral?

You can be referred for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services by anyone—including yourself! Watch the VR Orientation video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxjYH1xYgrs>, which will introduce you to VR and what you can expect as you navigate through the VR process. Then, reach out to your local VR office to take the next step on your journey to employment at http://www.RehabWorks.org/office_directory.shtml. A VR counselor will work with you to help you prepare for a job, as well as find and keep a job. If you do not have access to the internet, contact our Ombudsman Office at 800-451-4327 or 866-515-3692. TTY users dial 711 to connect with the telecommunications relay service (TRS). Video phone users can call through the video relay service (VRS).

Additionally, family members and other service providers can submit a referral on your behalf by contacting the local VR office. School districts can also submit an electronic referral for students by using the STAR portal.

How can I find a job coach?

Your VR Counselor will help you find a job coach available to provide services in your area. If you do not have a VR Counselor, we encourage you to visit our website to watch the VR Orientation video. Completing this video is the first step on your journey with VR. Please visit our website at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxjYH1xYgrs> to watch the video.

After watching the video, sign an attestation form and reach out to your local VR Office to take the next step on your journey to employment at http://RehabWorks.org/office_directory.shtml. A VR counselor will work with you to help you prepare for a job, as well as find and keep a job. If you do not have access to the internet, contact our Ombudsman Office at 800-451-4327 or 866-515-3692. TTY users dial 711 to connect with the telecommunications relay service (TRS). Video phone users can call through the video relay service (VRS).

Does VR help with work-from-home opportunities?

One of the positive outcomes from the COVID-19 pandemic has been the increased availability of work-from-home jobs. When you work with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), your VR Counselor or Employment Specialist will help you identify work-from-home opportunities and assist you with deciphering employment postings to ensure the job matches your skills, abilities, preferences, and is an opportunity that is available in the local labor market.

If someone is placed in a job through VR and it is not the right fit, how do we go about finding a better opportunity?

We encourage you to reach out to your VR Counselor and discuss options to move forward. Our Ombudsman Team is also available to assist you with addressing your concerns by calling 800-451-4327 or 866-515-3692, or email at Ombudsman@vr.fl DOE.org. TTY users dial 711 to connect with the telecommunications relay service (TRS). Video phone users can call through the video relay service (VRS).

Will VR help pay my bills while I look for employment?

All Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services are individualized based on the customer's need and available resources. We encourage you to contact a local office in your area for an evaluation at RehabWorks.org/office_directory.shtml. A VR counselor will work with you to help you prepare for a job, as well as find and keep a job. If you do not have access to the internet, contact our Ombudsman Office at 800-451-4327 or 866-515-3692. TTY users dial 711 to connect with the telecommunications relay service (TRS). Video phone users can call through the video relay service (VRS).

Can VR help me get a service animal?

Service animal requests are considered a reasonable accommodation under Title II and III of the ADA. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services are individualized based on the customer's need and available resources to get to work. We would love to evaluate your case. We encourage you to contact a local office in your area to get started at http://RehabWorks.org/office_directory.shtml. If you do not have access to the internet, contact our Ombudsman Office at 800-451-4327 or 866-515-3692. TTY users dial 711 to connect with the telecommunications relay service (TRS). Video phone users can call through the video relay service (VRS).

Does VR help with trade school?

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) offers a variety of services that include vocational training, if necessary, to meet the client's employment goal. VR services are individualized to meet the needs of the customer. VR counselors will work with clients to assess their needs for

vocational training and develop an individualized plan for employment to meet these needs. If you are interested in learning more about VR, contact a local office at RehabWorks.org/office_directory.shtml, call toll free at 800-451-4327 or 866-515-3692, or email Ombudsman@vr.fldoe.org. TTY users dial 711 to connect with the telecommunications relay service (TRS). Video phone users can call through the video relay service (VRS).

Does VR provide services for students while they are still in high school?

All students ages 14-21 with disabilities should be encouraged to apply for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services. VR Transition Youth Services helps students with disabilities train for a job, continue their education, or find a job after high school. Under this program, every youth will have the opportunity to participate in sponsored career counseling, work readiness training, and fully integrated work experiences in the community. These services are delivered while youth are still in high school and establish the foundation for a seamless transition to individualized training, education, and employment. Use the VR Office Directory to locate the VR office nearest you at RehabWorks.org/office_directory.shtml, call toll free at 800-451-4327 or 866-515-3692, or email Ombudsman@vr.fldoe.org. TTY users dial 711 to connect with the telecommunications relay service (TRS). Video phone users can call through the video relay service (VRS). Inform the VR representative that you are interested in receiving VR services and they will help you determine what to do next.

Does VR hire people with disabilities?

Yes. Job vacancy information for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is available through the People First Job Center at <https://jobs.myflorida.com/>. From this website, candidates may review vacancies, create a candidate profile, sign up to receive vacancy notices, and apply for state job vacancies online. Job titles we most often hire are VR Technician, VR Counselor, and VR Consultant.

Can I receive services from APD and VR at the same time?

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) works with the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) in order to serve mutual customers, particularly those receiving Supported Employment Services. VR offers services to assist customers with finding and maintaining employment, while APD offers a broader range of services beyond employment. Typically, VR provides initial time-limited support for individuals to obtain and stabilize in employment before transitioning support to APD to provide long-term assistance.

Would love to see a job fair and career coaching offered at The Annual Family Café in the future.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) actively participates in the planning of the Family Café's conference. Staff will share your idea. VR also participates in job fairs around the state. Contact a VR office nearest you at RehabWorks.org/office_directory.shtml, call toll free at 800-451-4327 or 866-515-3692, or email Ombudsman@vr.fl DOE.org. TTY users dial 711 to connect with the telecommunications relay service (TRS). Video phone users can call through the video relay service (VRS). Inform the VR representative that you are interested in job fairs and career coaching.

Can VR help me if I already have a college degree but am struggling to find employment?

VR is committed to helping people with disabilities find meaningful careers. If your disability significantly interferes with your ability to obtain, maintain, or advance in employment, VR may be able to help. Services help VR customers understand their best career options based on interests and skills, as well as the local labor market. VR can also assist you to hone your job search and interview skills, as well as network with local employers to find employment that suits your skills.

We encourage you to contact a local office in your area to get started at http://www.RehabWorks.org/office_directory.shtml. If you do not have access to the internet, contact our Ombudsman Office at 800-451-4327 or 866-515-3692. TTY users dial 711 to connect with the telecommunications relay service (TRS). Video phone users can call through the video relay service (VRS).

Can VR help with transportation so I can go to work?

Vocational Rehabilitation may provide time-limited support to meet the transportation needs of a client obtaining employment. Transportation options may be offered through reimbursement or public transportation to assist with initial transit needs, and is gradually phased out to encourage independence.

I need information about transitioning into adulthood and changes to services that I will be using. What can VR do for a 20-year-old who is still in school?

VR Transition Youth Services helps students with disabilities train for a job, continue their education, or find a job after high school. Under this program, every youth will have the opportunity to participate in sponsored career counseling, work readiness training, and fully integrated work experiences in the community. These services are delivered while youth are still in high school and establish the foundation for a seamless transition to individualized training, education, and employment.

There are two ways to access these services:

1. Ask your school ESE facilitator to submit a Pre-Employment Transition Service referral on your behalf via the STAR portal.

OR

2. Contact the local VR office near your home to request an appointment for orientation at http://www.RehabWorks.org/office_directory.shtml.

What can I do if my VR counselor is not keeping in contact with me or returning my phone calls? Can I be assigned a new counselor?

We apologize for you are having difficulties with your VR Counselor. We suggest that you contact the unit supervisor to express your concerns about your VR case. This list of offices is online at http://www.RehabWorks.org/office_directory.shtml. If you are unable to reach the unit supervisor, you have the option to contact our Ombudsman Office by calling 800-451-4327 or 866-515-3692, or by emailing Ombudsman@vr.fl DOE.org. TTY users dial 711 to connect with the telecommunications relay service (TRS). Video phone users can call through the video relay service (VRS). We look forward to helping you address these concerns.

How does VR coordinate with the Social Security systems?

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) participates in Social Security's State Verification and Exchange System (SVES), which provides VR with a standardized method of SSN verification and SSI/SSDI benefit information. Specific information such as medical or psychological records are protected information and not shared without the individual's explicit permission.

Additionally, VR is a registered Employment Network under Social Security's Ticket To Work program. The Ticket to Work Program offers Social Security beneficiaries with disabilities the choices, opportunities, and supports needed to find and keep employment, increase their earnings through work, and reduce their reliance on cash benefits to the greatest extent possible. If you have additional questions regarding the Ticket to Work program, contact your local VR Office or the VR Ticket to Work Administrator Willette Bowers at Willette.Bowers@vr.fl DOE.org or call her at 850-245-3271.

Does VR help with writing my resume and cover letter, and with job searches?

Yes. VR provides a range of services related to job placement, including assistance with job searches, preparing resumes and cover letters, and preparing for interviews. We encourage you to contact a local office in your area to get started at http://www.RehabWorks.org/office_directory.shtml. If you do not have access to the internet, contact our Ombudsman Office at 800-451-4327 or 866-515-3692. TTY users dial 711 to connect with the telecommunications relay service (TRS). Video phone users can call through the video relay service (VRS).

I would like some information about the WIOA please.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is a law that went into effect in 2014. It has made some significant changes to VR's program with expanded services for youth and provided the opportunity to serve youth at an earlier age. WIOA placed an increased emphasis on services for youth. The new services are Job Exploration

Counseling, Work Based Learning Experiences, Postsecondary Educational Counseling, Work Readiness Training, and Self-Advocacy Training. The law is designed to give job seekers easier access to employment, education, training, and support services needed to succeed in the labor market, and to match employers with skilled workers.

When does transition begin for high school age students? No one has ever spoken to me or my son about transition options before.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) offers Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students ages 14-21 with disabilities across the state. Pre-ETS give students with disabilities an early start at career exploration and preparation for adult life. Services include:

- Job-exploration counseling
- Work readiness training
- Work-based learning experience
- Postsecondary educational counseling
- Self-advocacy training and peer mentoring

All students with disabilities can contact VR if they are interested in participating in Pre-ETS. Individuals who need additional supports beyond the Pre-ETS listed above are encouraged to apply for traditional VR services. More information about our School to Work transition services are found on our website at <http://www.rehabworks.org/stw.shtml>. If you know a student who is interested in pursuing these services, a referral can be made through their school or by contacting the local VR office. You can find your local VR offices on our website's VR Office Directory at http://rehabworks.org/office_directory.shtml.

Can VR assist with the tuition for skill set trainings at a school?

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) may provide tuition assistance if necessary for the client to obtain their desired employment outcome. Financial participation will factor in the amount of monetary assistance that VR can provide based upon the client's financial income. VR cases are individualized and may vary based upon the client's financial status. For more info, see RehabWorks.org/customers.shtml, call toll free at 800-451-4327 or 866-515-3692, or email Ombudsman@vr.fl DOE.org. TTY users dial 711 to connect with the telecommunications relay service (TRS). Video phone users can call through the video relay service (VRS).

I want to be a dog groomer. Can you help me by paying for my technical classes? Would you be able to help me get my first job as a dog groomer too?

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) offers many different individualized services to assist individuals with disabilities find and maintain employment and enhance their independence. We frequently help individuals discover careers that match their abilities, interests, resources, and capabilities, as well as support individuals in developing a

strategy to reach their goals. We would be happy to help you pinpoint the best path for you to reach your career goals. The first step would be to contact the local VR office in your area. To find the closest VR office go to our Office Directory at http://rehabworks.org/office_directory.shtml. If you do not have access to the internet, contact our Ombudsman Office at 800-451-4327 or 866-515-3692. TTY users dial 711 to connect with the telecommunications relay service (TRS). Video phone users can call through the video relay service (VRS).

Why won't my counselor help me to get the programming degree from my local community college? She says that is not what I really want. She is wrong! I do want to become a computer programmer. How can I get her to listen to me?

We are happy to work with you to resolve these issues. Contact VR Ombudsman Office so we may help you resolve your concerns by email at Ombudsman@vr.fl DOE.org or call toll free at 866-515-3692. TTY users dial 711 to connect with the telecommunications relay service (TRS). Videophone users can call through the video relay service (VRS).

I have friends who want to help me start my own business. I need friends to help, because I am limited physically to what I can lift, move, type etc. I want to open a "food truck" that sells my grandmother's pasta meals. Can VR help me to develop and fund a business plan?

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) offers a self-employment program that assists individuals with disabilities in developing or starting their own business. VR contracts with Certified Business and Technical Assistance Consultants (CBTACs) to provide supports to individuals with disabilities to develop and implement a viable business plan. For more info, we encourage you to contact your local office at www.RehabWorks.org/office_directory.shtml, call toll free at 800-451-4327 or 866-515-3692, or email Ombudsman@vr.fl DOE.org. TTY users dial 711 to connect with the telecommunications relay service (TRS). Video phone users can call through the video relay service (VRS). We look forward to working with you.

What is the connection between the Able Trust, Career Source, and VR?

The vision of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is to be the first place people with disabilities turn to when seeking employment and a top resource for employers in need of qualified employees. Career Source, managed by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, is one of the partners that VR works with to expand employment outcomes for our customers. The Able Trust is a direct support organization for VR. Since its establishment, The Able Trust has worked with community organizations to help Floridians with disabilities of all ages enter the workforce.



The 23rd Annual Family Café Report Card 2021

Attendees of The 23rd 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 the average grades for 2021 and 2016-2019. The subsequent table displays the average grades for 2020, which included different prompts due to the virtual nature of the event.

	2021	2019	2018	2017	2016
I would give the Annual Family Café location a . . .	A	A	A	A	A
I would rate the hotel's accessibility a . . .	A	A	A	A-	A-
I would give the organization of The Annual Family Café a . . .	A	A	A	A	A
I would rate the choices for breakout sessions and their ability to meet the needs of different interests a . . .	A-	A	A-	A	A
Overall, I would give The Annual Family Café a . . .	A	A	A	A	A

The 22nd Annual Family Café Virtual Event	2020
I would give the overall quality of the virtual event a . . .	B
I would rate the accessibility of the virtual event a . . .	A
I would give the organization of The Annual Family Café a . . .	A
I would rate the choices for breakout sessions and their ability to meet the needs of different interests a . . .	B
Overall, I would give The 22 nd Annual Family Café a . . .	A

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

1. As a result of attending The 23rd Annual Family Café, I am able/will be able to . . .
2. In general, the most helpful to me was . . .
3. I thought we could have had more of . . .

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

Here is a sample of their responses:

As a result of attending the 23rd Annual Family Café, I am able/will be able to . . .

- Advocate for people like myself and other individuals with disabilities
- Provide a safety plan for my child
- Motivation for special needs trusts
- I'll volunteer for the Special Olympics here in Orlando next year
- Share with others what I've learned
- Find contacts for Early Learners—infants to five years old
- Network more about my diagnosis
- Set up financial planning for my kids and myself
- Better advocate for my children
- Look further into Vocational Rehabilitation service
- Assist my son with obtaining SSI benefits to help better secure his financial future
- Communicate with police officers about my child
- To know what's available in the future for my son as an adult
- Save more money
- Navigate disability networks
- Get started on application to APD
- Think more about writing a letter of intent
- More comfortably travel
- Work on financial planning better
- Start an ABLE account
- Hope to be a part of the Partners in Policymaking!
- Understand SNTs more
- Understand IEP
- Connect with friends and network for opportunities
- Connect with other parents and agencies
- Take information back to my clients' parents that weren't able to come (I do ABA)
- Possibly get/look into guardianship or power of attorney
- Know how to go to college even during a pandemic
- Help do more for my grandson and share info with families in my school
- Get more involved in advocacy to make a greater impact in my community
- Organize my children's IEPs with the tool kit given by FDLRS.
- Have access to more resources

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

- The sessions on work
- Special Needs Trusts/Medicaid/Medicare interactions
- Sign language (AS) interpreter on the stage, at workshops, and the exhibit hall
- On Demand Advocacy: One Person's Experience After Hurricane Irma
- The Vocational Rehabilitation Director's name and contact
- Using music to teach children
- Financial classes this year

- Behavioral/mental health information
- Time with APD
- IEP toolbox was amazing
- Partners in Policymaking was superb
- Meeting people
- More knowledgeable vendors
- McKay Scholarship info
- Legal information given was very helpful to know
- Being able to interact with other special needs families
- Networking
- Long-term planning
- Family Café employees
- Booths were very helpful and resourceful, and the micro-enterprises were inspiring!
- Keynote speakers
- Learning about the Access Points for testing
- Showing my 15-year-old he fits in and how he can help fight for his rights
- Knowing there are more people in the situation I am in
- Learning about the service dogs
- Criminal justice and people with disabilities
- Preparing your child with autism for law enforcement officer interaction
- Seeing so many people like me
- Planning
- Connecting with others in the world of disability
- Class about post-secondary school options
- Networking with other agencies

I thought we could have had more of . . .

- Sessions by self-advocates and families
- Handouts; translations for Spanish classes
- Audience participation when we can share our experiences and Q&A sessions
- Printed handouts of PowerPoints
- Mental health
- Family interaction opportunities
- Activities
- Exhibits
- Activities and classes for teens
- Missed the music
- Info for high school students
- Information for ESE
- Mental health issues
- Epilepsy info
- Sensory for older kids
- Info for single parents
- Classes to show really how to start a micro-enterprise
- Printouts of PowerPoints upon request
- Youth activities
- Dance parties
- Sessions on anxiety

- Information to help adults with a disability find a career
- Music and entertainment
- More signage of directions to Family Café on lower level
- Behavior sessions
- Handouts/pamphlets at breakout sessions to be able to facilitate note-taking
- More presentations of personal stories would be welcome

I thought we could have had less of . . .

- The cold air. Every year it's freezing in all the rooms
- Repeat topics
- COVID-19
- So many on ABLE and trusts
- Noise, air horns (booth 301), loud noises and sounds
- People talking in the audience during speeches
- Lecture style sessions, maybe a few round table style meetings
- Crowds
- Nothing
- Cannot think of anything
- Child themed vendors
- Wait time for elevators
- Things with no games
- Most things were geared towards children with disabilities
- Waiting in line to register
- Everything was great!

I am interested in finding out more about . . .

- Future events
- Employment for disabilities with severe challenges
- Music to teach children and youth
- Grants for all titles
- More services for children, youth, young adults, and adults
- Volunteering for Family Café
- More information for homeschool and private school kids, Dyslexia, teenage years
- Jobs after school
- Social group opportunities for teens with autism/ADHD
- Ways to help my son be successful in school
- Legislation we should be advocating for
- Funding in the state of Florida for the disabled community
- College
- How to help the older teen child
- SSI
- New supplies
- Services for over 21
- Self-advocacy
- Services for students who are struggling academically
- Transportation
- Planning for the future
- Inclusive communities

- Guardianship through the years
- How to fight for an IEP
- Mental health and service dogs
- Autism and mental health
- Scholarships and trainings
- Activities my child can be a part of
- How siblings can be guardians
- Healthy marriage tips
- Sibling resources
- Middle school/sports events for kids with disabilities
- Support for providers
- Mental health and dual diagnosis of disabilities
- Family Care Council

For future Annual Family Café events, I would like to suggest . . .

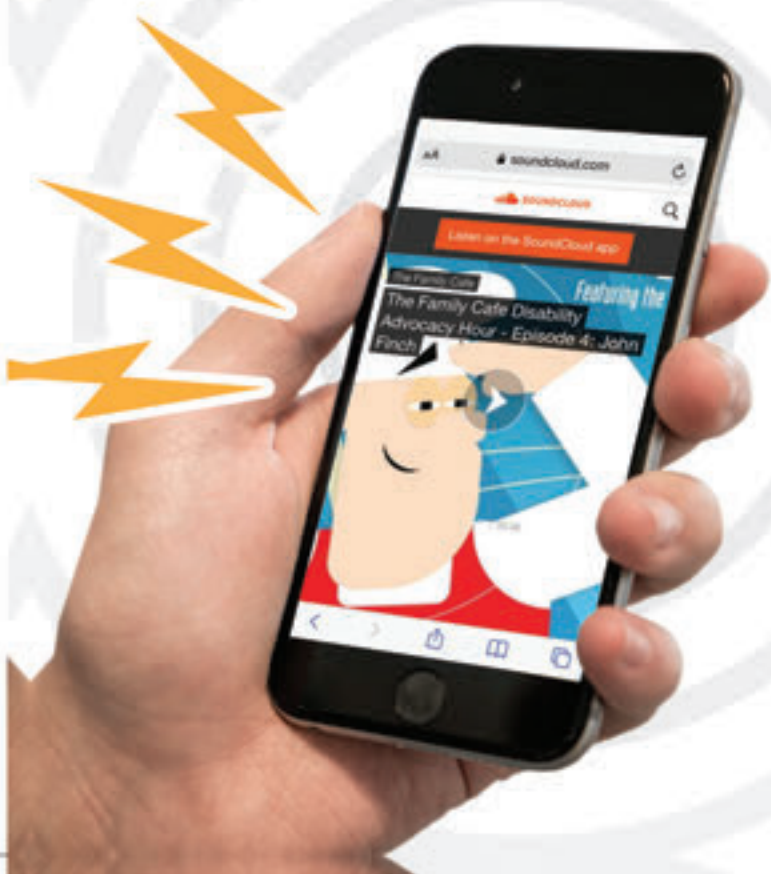
- More virtual for parents that can't personally go due to finances
- More Anime type presentations and more presentations from people with disabilities
- Recording the sessions for people to share with others throughout the year
- Hands-on activities/interactive things for children to participate in
- A notes page or small notebook to take notes in the sessions
- Bring back talks on abuse of our population and what to watch for
- Kids programs
- Youth activities
- A sensory room
- Healthy single mom relationship tips or more information to help single moms
- Social events
- Special Olympics, diet and nutrition, and more mental health
- More young speakers
- Forum for parent/caregiver exchange ideas sessions with solutions
- Sibling resources
- More kid-centered breakouts or respite
- Methods/plans for improving the lack of representation of POC in leadership positions within the community
- More of the same! Loved the props!
- No new suggestions as everything was great
- Having sessions on traveling with persons with disabilities.
- More sessions for siblings support and dad support. Loved these sessions.
- More breakout sessions
- More panel discussions
- More sessions by young adults and their parents who are meeting challenges of life and finding out their tips
- Keeping virtual option



Attention!

WE INTERRUPT
THIS PROGRAM
TO BRING YOU...

THE DISABILITY ADVOCACY HOUR!



**A NEW PODCAST
EXAMINING ALL FACETS OF
LIVING WITH A DISABILITY,
AND THE ISSUES IMPACTING
THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY.**

Available on Spotify, Apple, Google, Anchor,
and other major podcast platforms!

Brought to you by





SEE YOU NEXT YEAR!

at the

24TH ANNUAL Family CAFÉ

May 27 - 29, 2022

Hyatt Regency Orlando
9801 International Drive
Orlando, Florida



**The
Family
Café**



The Family Café is on Facebook!



Follow us @TheFamilyCafe



Follow us @thefamilycafe1



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
fldoe.org

THE FAMILY CAFÉ IS FUNDED IN PART BY THE
FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION,
DIVISION OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS, BUREAU OF
EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION (BESE)

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