



I WANT YOU!

The Family Café
CHANGE AGENT NETWORK
THEY NEED YOU!

Volume 5, Issue 1

This Newsletter Is A Project Of The Family Cafe

April 2022

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



A Historic Year

The 2022 Legislative Session, despite all the political theatre, will go down as one of the most significant sessions in Florida history for the disability community. As you know, we have been facing a crisis in relation to the shortage of Direct Support Professionals who take care of those receiving services under the Home and Community Based Waiver. Rates have not been increased for years in the State of Florida for these critical workers who are a lifeline for families and individuals with disabilities. Last year, employees made on average only slightly more than \$11 an hour. As a result of this unfortunate reality, the turnover rate for these workers has exceeded 50% in the past few years. Many group homes and providers have had to close their doors due to a dramatically diminished workforce. All were facing serious and immediate consequences if the Florida Legislature did not deal with this pressing issue. Fortunately, thanks to a unified message from all areas within the disability community (especially families), the legislature appropriated over \$400 million to increase the rates for DSP's to ensure that all workers will earn at least \$15 an hour.



When We Speak with the Same Voice

It became clear several years ago that Florida was about to fall off a workforce "cliff" if this issue wasn't addressed in a meaningful way. We were disappointed when the Governor vetoed a much smaller rate increase in 2020. We were also surprised, considering he had recommended the increase in his proposed budget. Unfortunately, this was at the very beginning of the COVID epidemic and many worthy budget items were vetoed out of an abundance of caution. However, in retrospect, this veto paved the way for a much more substantial rate increase thanks to two factors: the Governor's commitment to the issue, and the federal assistance which allowed for a great deal of fiscal flexibility. Despite the opportunity, it was still up to the Florida Legislature to appropriate the funds for the rate increase, and it was our collective and unified voice that made the difference. For the first time in many years, the en-



tire disability community was focused on this issue as the main priority for the 2022 legislative session. We should remember moving forward that when we all speak with the same voice, as one community, there is very little we can't achieve! Our friends (in no particular order) at The Arc of Florida, the DD Council, Disability Rights Florida, and FARF deserve special recognition for their leadership and hard work. We don't always have the same "priorities," but when an issue of this magnitude becomes a common objective, the sky is the limit.

The Specifics

Since this is a budget issue, the language that explains how the money is to be spent is called "proviso." It is a short narrative that explains a line item and is contained in the budget itself. While it does have the force of law, proviso is only applicable for the calendar year. This is unlike a statutory change, which remains in effect until (or unless) it is changed. In this case, moving forward, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) will likely begin a rulemaking process to decide the methodology permanent. This year's proviso stated that APD shall enter into a supplemental wage agreement with providers to ensure compliance with the \$15 minimum wage requirement. The agreement requires an attestation that the provider will pay qualified employees this new rate, and will take effect as of October 1, 2022.

Specific services covered under the iBudget Waiver to be funded at this new rate are:

- Adult Day Training
- Behavior Assistant Services
- Life Skills Development Level 1
- Life Skills Development Level 2
- Life Skills Development Level 3
- Personal Supports
- Residential Habilitation
- Respite
- Supported Employment



More Good News

In addition to the minimum wage rate increase, several other increases were achieved in the APD budget as well:

- \$59,615,290 from the General Revenue Fund to transition about 1,100 individuals off the waitlist.
- \$8,500,000 for qualified dental service providers who apply for grants to serve individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This is a significant increase in a very critical area for the disability community.

And FINALLY.....

A legislative issue of note was the passage of House Bill 235 which once and for all prohibits school personnel from using mechanical restraint on students with disabilities. As you may recall, last year legislation was passed that prohibited the use of restraint and seclusion for students with disabilities but left mechanical restraints in place in certain circumstances. This "oversight" was corrected this year.

The 24th Annual Family Cafe

Don't forget! The 24th Annual Family Cafe is scheduled for May 27-29, 2022 at the Hyatt Regency Orlando. Please register at www.familycafe.net today!

The Family Café does everything it can to connect its attendees with the resources it offers at the lowest cost possible. The Annual Family Café remains a FREE EVENT, with no registration cost for people with disabilities and their families. Only those attending in a professional capacity are asked to pay a \$200 registration fee.

If you would like to make a reservation at the host hotel, the Hyatt Regency Orlando, you can call 402-593-5048. Make sure to mention The Annual Family Cafe to get the special \$129/night rate. Overflow hotel space is available at the special event rate of \$125/night at the Rosen Centre and Rosen Plaza, both of which are located directly across the street from the Hyatt Regency. Contact the Rosen Centre at 407-996-9842 or the Rosen Plaza at 407-996-9700. Remember to mention The Family Cafe to get the special event rate!

Join us for the Family-Run Organization Pre-Conference Event

The Family Cafe invites you to attend The 2022 Family-Run Organization Movement Pre-Conference training event! The FROM pre-con will take place from 10 AM – 4 PM on Thursday, May 26, the day prior to The 24th Annual Family Cafe, at the Hyatt Regency Orlando.

This year's FROM Pre-Conference training will explore the role of public policy and advocacy in advancing your organization's goals. Presenter Mary Kingston Roche will provide an overview of the relevant state and federal policies that most directly impact people with disabilities, and discuss how to connect with groups that advocate for or against those policies. The FROM Pre-Con will feature an interactive exercise that will help you strengthen your advocacy skills.

There is a mandatory registration fee of \$25, and a lunch is included. Please register at familycafe.net/2022-family-run-organization-movement-from-pre-conference/.





Family Run Organization Movement

"Moving families forward. From our family to yours."

Thursday, May 26, 2022

10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Hyatt Regency Orlando

9801 International Drive • Orlando, Florida

This year's FROM Pre-Conference training will explore the role of public policy and advocacy in advancing your organization's goals. Presenter Mary Kingston Roche will provide an overview of the relevant state and federal policies that most directly impact people with disabilities, and discuss how to connect with groups that advocate for or against those policies. The FROM Pre-Con will feature an interactive exercise that will help you strengthen your advocacy skills, touching on key aspects such as: performing a root cause analysis on issues or challenges that your Family-Run Organization may want to address; identifying your desired change and learning how to translate it into a concrete policy recommendation; building a strong and diverse coalition of advocates; and motivating elected officials to move from being passive supporters to champions.

Assisting in facilitating this year's FROM Pre-Con will be nationally recognized consultant John Ferrone. John will kick off the day with a review of FROM's efforts over the past five years, and will offer an overview of the recently released "FROM Guidebook," a comprehensive guide designed to help Family-Run Organizations evolve from a simple idea all the way to a sustainable organization. All registered participants will receive a free copy!

We're excited to offer people that want to make an impact through their own organizations a chance to learn, connect, and advance their vision through this year's Family-Run Organization Movement (FROM) Pre-Conference event. We hope to see you there!

Take your family-run organization to the next level.

The Family Café's 2022 Family-Run Organization Movement (FROM)

Pre-Conference training event!



featuring

Mary Kingston Roche

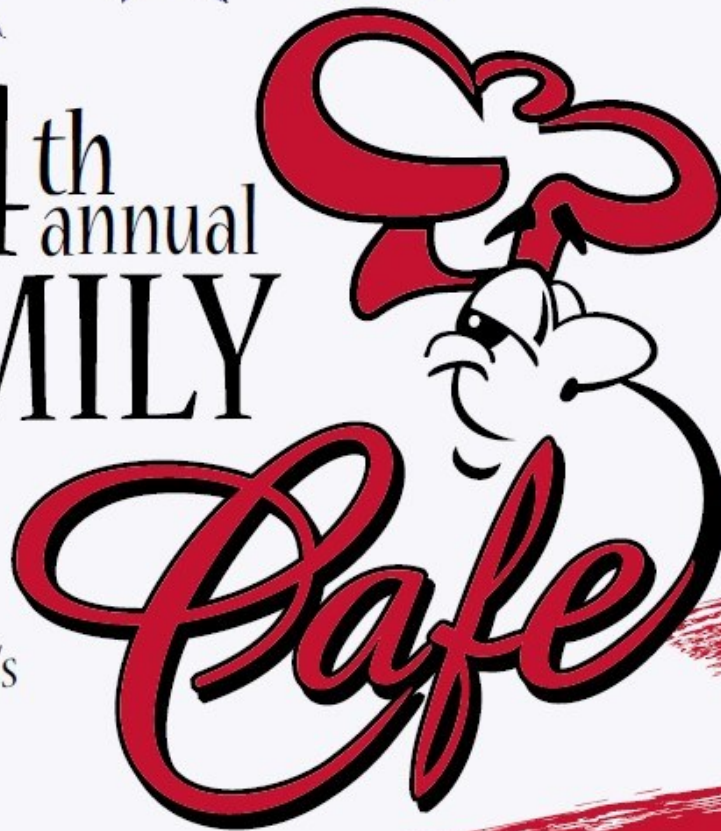
Mary is the Director of Policy for the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL), where she leads policy and advocacy efforts to promote the organization's federal policy agenda and supports local and state leaders to become effective advocates. She also leads advocacy efforts for IEL's Coalition for Community Schools.

Mary began her career teaching 6th and 9th grade English in Oakland, California. Mary received her Master of Public Policy from Duke University and a Bachelor of Arts in English from Boston University. Mary lives in Maryland with her husband and two young children.

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the 24th annual
FAMILY

Featuring
The Governor's
Summit On
Disabilities



May 27 - 29, 2022 ★ Hyatt Regency Orlando

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



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