



January 1, 2015

## A Plan for Investing in Our Communities

*The key to improving life for Floridians with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) is to invest in communities. The Arc of Florida has developed the Invest in Florida's Communities plan. The four-part plan includes sustaining a vibrant provider base, serving those in need on the waitlist list, alleviating pain and suffering through dental services and working to keep Floridians with I/DD in their communities.*

### **Issue #1 - Provider Rate Reinstatement**

In 2003, the Florida Legislature mandated a provider rate study for the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, APD. This is the only validated study that had ever been conducted on APD provider rates by the Legislature.

Since 2003, providers have seen their rates decreased over 14%. This decrease has occurred in a 10 year period where minimum wage increased over 54%. Today's state minimum wage is \$7.93 but provider rates begin at \$6.72 per hour. In the past 10 years health care, worker's compensation and property insurance rates have skyrocketed and inflation has increased over 32%.

### **Solution: Return Provider Rates to the 2003 Level over a 2-Year Period**

Increase provider rates by 7% this session and again next year. An investment this year of \$23 to \$26 million in general revenue funds would allow providers to remain in business and pay minimum wage and over.

Companies and the U.S. military considering Florida locations for installations desire communities where employees can have their family needs met. Offering community based services is an additional enticement for bringing jobs to Florida. Reinstatement of the rates is essential in order to continue Developmental Disabilities Home and Community based waiver services.

### **Issue #2 - Some families have been waiting over 12 years for waiver services.**

The Legislature and the Governor have worked to fund some of the most crucial needs; however there are still more than 18,000 families without services.

**Solution: Fund individuals on the waitlist in order to place them on the I/DD Waiver. Begin with the Florida National Guard and Florida military reservist's family members on the waitlist. Include them in Florida's efforts to fund military families.**

### **Issue #3 - The Arc of Florida Dental Program**

It is recognized that poor oral health care leads to poor overall health. An investment in oral/dental health for persons with I/DD alleviates pain and suffering and improves overall health costs.

The Arc of Florida has successfully operated a dental program for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities for over 3 years with funding provided by the Legislature. The Arc has a network of over 192 dentists and has performed thousands of procedures ending true pain and suffering.

**Solution: Fund the Arc of Florida Dental Program**

Dental funds provided in the 2014 session were adequate to provide services from July to December in 2014. The need has been great but the results have been rewarding. Please re-appropriate the current \$2 million plus additional funding this session to continue to end pain and suffering by individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

**Issue #4 - There are 149 children with medically complex conditions living in skilled nursing facilities in Florida.**

While skilled nursing facilities can provide interim intensive medical care to stabilize a child, they should not be a child's permanent home. Families wishing to keep their children with extensive medical needs at home should be able to do so. Florida should have a system that supports those families. Families wishing to adopt children with extensive medical needs should be able to do so and the state should also have a system in place to support them.

**Solution: Make a commitment through legislative action to have Florida adopt a comprehensive plan to raise children with extensive medical needs in their homes and communities.**

**Issue #5 - Individuals and taxpayers benefit when individuals with I/DD can remain at home in their community.**

There are approximately 677 individuals with I/DD living in Florida I/DD public institutions. The average cost to live in one of these institutions is \$147,228 per year. The average cost to move individuals in the institutions to the community is \$67,288 per year per person. This represents a total savings of \$54,119,380 per year for the Florida taxpayer.

**Solution: The Agency for Persons with Disabilities should begin a workgroup to create a 5 year plan for returning individuals to the community.**

**Issue #6 – Put a system in place to allow Florida families to help themselves.**

**Solution: The ABLE Act has now passed the U.S. Congress and will be signed into law. The addition of “disability related expenses” under the U.S. tax code in the ABLE Act now makes it possible for Florida to pass a Prepaid Services Plan as previously proposed by Representative Clay Ford.**

**Issue #7 – Florida must work to end the use of abusive seclusion and restraint practices.**

**Solution – Support all reasonable proposed legislation which better protects children and adults with I/DD from abusive seclusion/restraint practices.**

***The Arc of Florida, Inc.***

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