



For people with intellectual
and developmental disabilities



Achieve with us.

The Arc of Florida's 2013 Legislative Priorities

(As of March 5, 2013)

The Arc of Florida has spent nearly six decades working with the governor and legislators at The Capitol in Tallahassee to ensure that Floridians with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) have a high quality of life.

Community life is enriched when individuals with I/DD and other disabilities have the opportunity to become contributing members and are included in the life of their neighborhoods. Here are the pressing issues and potential solutions for lawmakers during the 2013 Florida Legislative Session:

Issue #1 - Support Adequate Medicaid Waiver Funding

The current Developmental Disabilities Medicaid Waiver system and long waitlist for services is inadequately funded to meet the health, safety and basic rights of constituents with I/DD. Payments for Floridians with I/DD in residential settings currently range from as low as \$3.01 per hour for basic care to \$11.04 per hour to care for the most involved individuals. Funding is crucial to providing necessary services and supports for Floridians with I/DD.

The Arc of Florida is interested in solutions that are fair and efficient to both individuals with I/DD and taxpayers who fund them. As stakeholders, we welcome the opportunity to review and assess all proposals that offer solutions to the state's current situation. Florida has one of the lowest funding levels in the United States for people with I/DD. For any proposed solution to be effective, it must include adequate funding.

Solutions:

- **Stop additional funding cuts** to the already devastated Medicaid Waiver funding system administered by the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) and Agency for Healthcare Administration (AHCA). The current budget does not fund adequate services to protect the health and safety of people who receive Medicaid Waiver benefits. It also has no money for the 21,000 Floridians on the 10+ year Medicaid Waiver waiting list.
- **Reduce and reorganize state agencies** to ensure funding is being spent on constituents. As service providers and families have faced many funding reductions, APD and AHCA must also consolidate and reduce operational expenses.
- **Offer regulatory relief to community providers** whose rates have been reduced over the past decade. Overburdensome provider handbooks and other regulations add to the cost of providing services.
- **Support the Internet Sales Tax Initiative.** This legislation will allow our state to collect its fair share of sales tax, which can be used to balance the state budget and protect local businesses where our clients work.

Issue #2 - Respect Individuals with I/DD and Remove the R-Word from Florida Statutes - SB 142 & HB 1119

The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities has changed the diagnosis of "mental retardation" to "intellectual disability." The Federal Government has changed all references of "mental retardation" to "intellectual disabilities" in Federal law. Many other states have also made this important change.

Solution:

- **Support legislation** to strike the term "mental retardation" in Florida statutes and replace it with "intellectual disabilities."

Issue #3 - Fund Transportation so Floridians with I/DD aren't blocked from services

Stop cost plan reductions that remove funding for transportation to services which were determined to be necessary for individuals with I/DD to remain in their community. Without transportation, Floridians with I/DD cannot use the limited services the state funds.

Solution:

- Support appropriations that fully fund Medicaid Waiver services.

Issue #4 - Move Floridians with I/DD Out of Institutions

Despite significant progress that has been made over the years, there are still Floridians with I/DD living in institutions who desire to live in the community. This is a violation of their civil rights and expensive for taxpayers.

Solution:

- Move children and adults living in institutions who desire to move back to community settings and fund their services and supports to provide for their development. Institutionalization is very expensive for Florida taxpayers.

Issue #5 - Protect Children with Developmental Disabilities in School

Protect the safety of children with developmental disabilities in our public schools.

Solution:

- Restrict the use of seclusion and restraints and encourage positive behavior supports.

Issue #6 - Maintain Funding for Adults with Disabilities

Funds for programs designed for adults with disabilities (Adults with Disabilities grants) have been decreased over the past several years. This funding is vital to provide much needed educational services in local communities.

Solution:

- No further funding cuts to Adults with Disabilities funding in the Department of Educational Division of Vocational Rehabilitation budget.

Issue #7 - Secure the future of Floridians with I/DD through Savings Programs - HB 339 & SB 472

The years after a student with a developmental disability ages out of the education system are critical for learning and transition. Due to the lack of Medicaid Waiver funding in Florida, families often find themselves unable to afford the private services that are their only option.

Solution:

- Develop a Prepaid Developmental Disabilities Program and Savings Plan for families of Floridians with I/DD. Much like the Florida Prepaid College Fund, the Prepaid Developmental Disabilities Program and Savings Plan would allow families to pay into a fund that would help pay for special needs for loved ones once they become 22 years of age. This would help cover expenses until people with I/DD are able to receive Medicaid Waiver services.