

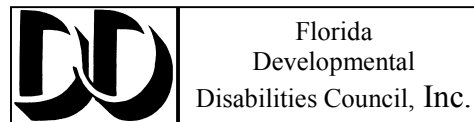


STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

Prepared by

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INCLUSION NOW STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

I. INTRODUCTION

During the twelve month period of October 2006 through September 2007 a group of persons with developmental disabilities and family members in Florida came together with a commitment to identify and overcome the obstacles which prevent persons with developmental disabilities from living fully inclusive lives. A review of current practices in Florida was completed and compared to the experiences in other states across the nation. In June of 2007 the "Inclusion Summit" was convened in Orlando where eighty self-advocates, family members, and professionals met with national experts under the auspices of the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council to consider inclusion practices, identify barriers, and develop a plan for action to help move Florida forward with the goal of full inclusion for all. The call to action and plan which follows is the result of this effort.

II. CALL TO ACTION

The time to end segregation of people with disabilities is NOW!

The struggle to end segregation has been waged for more than 40 years. While gains have been made to secure and protect the civil rights of people of some races and creeds, there is still a segment of our population for whom inclusion in everyday life (school, recreation, work, and housing) is not an option □ people with disabilities.

All people have the same hopes and aspirations to live, learn, work, play, and participate in life experiences and responsibilities as valued community members. Everyone benefits when the civil rights and innate potential of all individuals are recognized and supported in all aspects of community life.

Excluding or separating individuals with disabilities does not serve the public interest nor does it serve the person's best interest. Barriers that prevent or impair the realization of full inclusion for all individuals must be identified, addressed, and overcome.

Fully inclusive communities ensure the following:

- All individuals have the full rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
- All students have maximum access to the general education expectations, curriculum, and instruction within regular school settings and programs.
- All individuals have lifelong access within their community to quality medical, dental, and vision health care throughout their lives.
- All individuals have the opportunity to contribute to the economic viability of their community as workers and consumers of services and goods.
- All individuals have access to safe, integrated, accessible, and affordable housing that includes both home ownership and rental opportunities.
- All individuals are welcome to enjoy, participate, and contribute to the full range of social, cultural, and recreational resources and activities within their community.

We call upon you and all people throughout the State of Florida to become a force for making our communities fully inclusive. Make inclusion happen NOW!

III. STRATEGIC PLAN

1. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION GOAL

- **All students are educated together within general education classrooms and have continuous access to the regular education curriculum and instruction.**

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION OUTCOMES:

- 1.A)** Infants and toddlers have access to developmental screening as a routine part of well baby care.
- 1.B)** Infants and toddlers have access to comprehensive developmental evaluation and intervention services within their home and other natural child care settings.

1.C) All persons with disabilities complete their education within inclusive general education classrooms which value diversity and achieve the academic, vocational, and community living skills needed to transition into their adult life as self-sustaining, self-directed, productive, and contributing citizens.

1.D) All teachers and school administrators receive professional preparation and ongoing support designed to meet the diverse needs of all students within general education classrooms.

1.E) School personnel value and engage parents as partners in matters related to the education of their children.

1.F) Florida moves beyond compliance with IDEA and practices inclusion within all schools based on shared values that recognize the learning potential of all students.

STRATEGIC EDUCATION OBJECTIVES:

Preschool Education Objectives:

- a) Establish a developmental screening and early identification system that is accessible to all infants and toddlers and supports parents with the information and resources needed to choose intervention options that are appropriate to their child and family needs.
- b) Designate a Single State Agency as the responsible entity for all birth-to-five programs.
- c) Implement a fully funded universal and inclusive pre-kindergarten (pre-k) education program for all children ages three and four.
- d) Establish initial and continuing early childhood education teacher certification requirements that ensure early childhood education teachers have the foundation competencies (a minimum of a bachelor's degree in early childhood education) and receive annual continuing education with an emphasis on meeting the needs of diverse learners.
- e) Develop and propose to the Florida legislature funding incentives that motivate pre-k programs (public and private) to enroll children with disabilities.

K Through 12 Education Objectives:

- a) Amend Florida statute 1003.57 paragraph six with language that
 - clearly establishes a legislative intent for the education of all students to occur within regular class settings; and
 - sets forth responsibility of superintendents, principals and teachers to meet the needs of exceptional students regardless of the nature or severity of the exceptionality.

- b) Propose a legislated statewide goal for achieving inclusive education which establishes
 - the expectation that all children be educated in regular classrooms and have access to the general education curriculum and instruction
 - a target date for complete implementation
 - a requirement that each district prepare an implementation plan that provides a phase in schedule for achieving full inclusion
 - requires the annual administration of the BPIE (Best Practices in Inclusive Education) to measure yearly progress, and mandates corrective action plans as may be required
 - provides funds to support technical assistance resources to help districts achieve implementation plans and address identified inclusion performance problems

- c) Identify and fund the Florida Inclusion Network as the technical assistance resource to support school districts across the state to develop and implement plans for achieving fully inclusive educational programs.

- d) Identify one or more potential demonstration school districts who will model the integration of their general and special education curriculum into a fully inclusive education environment based on differential instruction, positive behavior support, and effective evidence-based instruction strategies.

- e) Modify the Florida Department of Education funding matrix formulas to provide placement neutral funding to support inclusion opportunities equitably among all school districts and students throughout the state.

- f) Adopt teacher certification requirements that recognize the diversity of all student needs and establish a date for mandating that new teacher (general and special education) certification requirements be integrated into a single and uniform set of standards which prepare all teachers to meet the needs of a diverse student population within general education classrooms.

- g) End the diploma track system for students, and provide opportunities for all students to select both academic and vocational course work consistent with their life goals and interests.
- h) Revise secondary school graduation requirements to ensure that all students leave school with a meaningful diploma that relates to post secondary responsibilities and promotes integrated and competitive employment opportunities.
- i) Identify one or more potential demonstration secondary schools who will model best practice transition planning and implementation practices. Link these districts with state and national best practice resources and disseminate results to other secondary schools throughout Florida.
- j) Establish a legislative requirement for the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Children's Medical Services (CMS), and the Department of Education local school districts to develop a memorandum of agreement that establishes the necessary procedures for insuring that representatives from all four agencies are present at transition IEP meetings; and require the APD, CMS, and DVR to submit annual budget recommendations that will ensure funds are available to meet the continuing needs of students who will graduate the following June from school and transition to adult life.
- k) Assess the background and results of the class action "least restrictive environment" litigation actions in Connecticut and Pennsylvania, and make a decision about filing a similar action in the State of Florida.

IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE (NOVEMBER 2008)

- **Developmental Screening:** Both the Children's Cabinet and Governor's Task Force on Autism Spectrum Disorder are examining the establishment of developmental screening for all children, with a focus on autism for the Governor's Task Force. A Child Screening panel has been convened to provide recommendations to the Children's Cabinet and includes a member of the Governor's Task Force on Autism Spectrum Disorder. The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council is very interested in assisting with implementing this recommendation.
- **Transition Planning and Implementation:** The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council has undertaken several initiatives to provide resources to and build the local capacity for effective transition of students

with disabilities into post-secondary education or employment. These initiatives include a website for youth, families and providers with information to facilitate successful transition; establishing and supporting Project SEARCH sites in Florida; demonstrating the assessment model DISCOVERY in a local school system; providing technical assistance and training to local transition teams to build collaboration and effective transition strategies; and developing post secondary options for students with disabilities. The Council is currently working with the Department of Education as they reframe their transition efforts to focus our continued transition efforts to support and facilitate this statewide effort.

- The Department of Education is currently revising its rules relative to diploma options for certain students with disabilities. The Council has and will continue to work with the department in this process.

2. INCLUSIVE HEALTH GOAL

- All individuals access comprehensive quality medical, dental, and vision health care in their community throughout their lives.

INCLUSIVE HEALTH OUTCOMES:

- 2.A)** People with developmental disabilities and their families are essential partners on the health care team and the ultimate decision-makers for their care.
- 2.B)** Prevention and health promotion provide the focus of the health care delivery system for all persons with disabilities.
- 2.C)** All people with developmental disabilities have access to comprehensive and seamless health care sufficient to meet their needs regardless of their age, level of disability, income, or where they live.
- 2.D)** People with disabilities receive health care from competent, sensitive, caring providers of their choice.
- 2.E)** Transition from pediatric to adult care ensures continuity in care, the identification of a medical home, and access to a comprehensive array of adult health care services.

STRATEGIC HEALTH OBJECTIVES:

- a) Align the Florida State statutory definition of developmental disabilities with the federal definition.
- b) Propose to the Agency for Health Care Administration (ACHA) a uniform and comprehensive package of health, dental, and behavioral health care services and supports within Florida's Medicaid program for all adults who have a developmental disability.
- c) Propose within the Medicaid program the principle of a "medical home" as the basis for coordinating continuity and access to comprehensive health promotion and care including dental and vision for all persons with a developmental disability who are served within the Medicaid program.
- d) Include transportation as a component within the Medicaid specialty health care plan for persons with developmental disabilities, and require geographic specific solutions that may include mobile service delivery, i.e. bring service to consumer, use of personal vehicles (family, friend), public transportation, taxi services, or any combination of these options.
- e) Propose that ACHA routinely require the use of consumer satisfaction instruments as a quality improvement tool in Medicaid specialty care plans.
- f) Propose to ACHA that transition planning and coordination from pediatric to adult care become a mandated service for all children who are served within the CMS Medicaid system and are transitioning to adult health care services.
- g) Propose to ACHA higher income eligibility thresholds that are tied to a Medicaid buy-in program for persons with developmental disabilities who have earned income from employment as an incentive for achieving increased self sufficiency.
- h) Develop and propose to ACHA a functional definition within the Medicaid program for "medical necessity" that emphasizes quality of life, independence, and self-sufficiency as the basis for Medicaid services authorized and provided to persons with developmental disabilities.
- i) Propose a statewide uniform electronic medical record system as the basis for communicating and sharing current accurate health information among health care providers who support persons with developmental disabilities.

- j) Develop and distribute a self-assessment tool for use by health care providers to review access and service delivery capacity within their practice to include office setting, scheduling, staff training needs, equipment, transportation options, and communication, and identifies resources to promote a welcoming and supportive experience for the delivery of health care services to individuals with developmental disabilities.
- k) Review the "My Florida" web page and develop recommendations to ACHA that ensures the availability and access to user friendly Medicaid information related to eligibility, services, providers, and application procedures.
- l) Establish a single Internet-based source of health care information for families, individuals with disabilities, and health care professionals that links to national health care resources and information related to health promotion and care for persons with developmental disabilities.
- m) Review the Medicaid ambulatory care rates to include primary, specialty, and university-based payment schedules to ensure adequate reimbursement levels that attract and maintain access to qualified health care providers across the life span needs of persons with developmental disabilities.
- n) Identify alternate provider payment methodologies that create incentives for providers to serve persons with developmental disabilities, for example, single payer plan, public private partnerships, etc., and make recommendations to AHCA.
- o) Request that the Advocacy Center for Persons with Disabilities conduct a national review of best practices related to health care decision-making to support persons with developmental disabilities (for example, guardianship, surrogate decision committees).
- p) Propose physician and auxiliary health care professional training, licensing, and continuing education standards that require the acquisition and demonstration of the skills required to provide health care services to persons with developmental disabilities in a culturally competent, family-centered, self-directed, and sensitive manner.
- q) Ensure as part of secondary school education requirements that all students receive health promotion and health care skill development that prepares them to function as competent adult health care consumers.
- r) Identify individual and organizational allies (e.g., Medical Society, and other health professional Associations) who will support an inclusive health care agenda for all Florida citizens with developmental disabilities.

IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE (NOVEMBER 2008)

- **Health Care Transition:** The 2008 Florida Legislature established a Health Care Transition Task Force (SB 988) within the Department of Health to develop recommendations for coordinating and providing effective transition of health care for children with disabilities from pediatrics to adult health care. The Council is committed to this issue and is providing the facilitation and support for this task force. The Council has also established a health care transition website for students, families and provider.
<http://hctransitions.ichp.ufl.edu/ddcouncil/>
- **Medical Necessity:** The Council has been working to develop support and a framework for the Agency for Health Care Administration and Agency for Persons with Disabilities that will implement a □medical necessity□ criteria for service authorization and utilization that is based on optimal functioning and align Medicaid and waiver rates.

3. INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT GOAL

- **All individuals with disabilities have the freedom, support, and opportunity to achieve Employment First.**

INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

- 3.A)** Persons with disabilities have a range of integrated employment opportunities which recognize their diversity of interest, career stage, and continuing desire for self-improvement.
- 3.B)** A competitive and living wage which promotes self-sufficiency and independence is the standard for compensation.
- 3.C)** Integrated employment will ensure that persons with developmental disabilities are present in a natural proportion to the larger work force within any particular work setting.

3.D) Accessible benefit management and coordination is provided by persons with the knowledge and skills required to maximize all public, private, and personal resources to persons with developmental disabilities who have earned income.

3.E) Economic self-sufficiency, independence, and self-reliance are the underpinnings for how services and supports are provided to individuals who are employed.

STRATEGIC EMPLOYMENT OBJECTIVES:

- a) Develop and implement an Employment First Initiative that is based on a partnership among state agencies, providers, school systems, individuals, and families which
 - aligns policies and procedures
 - maximizes funding
 - establishes necessary infrastructure
 - provides individual and family education and support
 - provides professional training, support, and accountability
 - designs and implements a system for all students to begin employment planning within the transition IEP process with an emphasis on development of creative and individual supports to achieve competitive integrated employment as the post secondary outcome based on student choice and the basic right to pursue gainful employment in the community
- b) Establish a Florida Center for Excellence on Integrated Competitive Employment that will support the statewide leadership and provider network in building employment capacity through training and technical assistance with priority attention to planning and managing ADT conversions and downsizing, service coordinator training, supported employment best practices, PASS, IRWE, and related benefit management.
- c) Amend Florida Statutes to direct AHCA and APD to add benefit management and coordination, and employment related transportation to the array of services available within HCBS and FSL waivers to individuals who work.
- d) Design and implement a uniform and statewide process for all students to begin employment planning and transition within the transition IEP process with an emphasis on the development of creative and individual supports that will result in a customized employment post secondary outcome based on student choice.
- e) Convene a supported employment provider group with APD and DVR participation to review the existing supported employment rate structure, identify operational impediments created by the current rate structure, and recommend modifications that are needed to expand supported employment opportunities to serve more individuals including persons with significant disabilities.

- f) Engage the Business Leadership Network as a partner in implementing Florida's Employment First policy, and obtain specific recommendations from the Network on what actions are needed to expand participation by employers throughout the state.
- g) Identify best practice examples from other states which provide secondary diploma options which co-relate to increased post secondary employment outcomes, and transmit this information to the leadership of the inclusive education component of this initiative.
- h) Identify a best practice examples where the option for enrollment with payment through the local school district in community colleges and vocational and technical schools for ESE students ages 18 through 22 is an alternative to remaining in the secondary school.
- i) Establish with AHCA Medicaid regulations for personal care within the workplace as an eligible location for delivering personal care service.

IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE (NOVEMBER 2008)

- **Employment First:** The Council has adopted a position that supports the tenets of Employment First and works through our employment initiatives to create the employment options and services so that employment will be the first option for students with disabilities.
- **Employment planning and transition:** The Council is supporting the demonstration of the DISCOVERY assessment model in a Florida school district. This assessment model emphasizes identifying the strengths and interests of the students with disabilities and beginning the planning to reach those identified goals. The Project SEARCH model, which has been implemented in 5 sites and is expanding, provides specific work experiences and supports for actual employment placements for students with disabilities.
- **Post Secondary:** The Council is funding the research of options and development of a strategic plan for education programs in community colleges and universities for students with disabilities as both an 18 to 22 year old alternative to remaining in the secondary schools and as a post secondary option. The Governor's Commission on Disabilities included a recommendation for a post secondary initiative for students with disabilities and the Department of Education is interested in this effort.

4. COMMUNITY LIVING GOALS

- **All individuals have safe, integrated, accessible, and affordable housing that includes both home ownership and rental opportunities.**
- **All individuals enjoy, participate and contribute to the full range of life experiences within their community. The need for support is determined by the individual.**
- **All individuals have affordable transportation options to support the day to day connections that are essential to participate in their community on demand.**

COMMUNITY LIVING OUTCOMES:

- 4.A)** Persons with developmental disabilities have control over resources including waiver funding that allows flexible person centered and individualized spending for services and supports that promote self sufficiency, productivity, and community inclusion.
- 4.B)** Performance accountability and tracking systems within the waivers and other public agency funding streams are based on measurable quality of life outcomes which are defined in terms of individual self sufficiency, productivity, personal responsibility, and community participation.
- 4.C)** Waiver funding is intentionally used to leverage, support, and nurture natural relationships whenever possible in recognition of both the limitations in the availability of public resources and the essential value that family and friends play as resources in the lives of all people.
- 4.D)** Individual supports are reliable and provided by personnel who are competent in person centered services which result in an inclusive life within the community.

STRATEGIC COMMUNITY LIVING OBJECTIVES:

- a) Design and implement a campaign that will result in a better understanding among elected public officials of the issues that impact the lives of persons with developmental disabilities; what needs to change, and what results they can expect to see if the changes are implemented.

- b) Ensure that the CDC + waiver is continued and expanded as a flexible person centered option for all persons with developmental disabilities who opt to direct their own services.
- c) Ensure that the CDC + provides maximum flexibility to support person centered solutions which promote self sufficiency and inclusive community living.
- d) Ensure that the CDC + waiver has the infrastructure to support reliable, competent, and consistent implementation with a particular attention to the training and technical assistance needs of individuals, paid support staff, and unpaid members of the natural circle of support.
- e) Develop statewide and local integrated, accessible and affordable housing resources to include a) dedicated commitments to develop housing units for persons with developmental disabilities, b) housing developer capacity to access these resources, and c) dissemination of information to persons with disabilities, parents, and support coordinators about generic affordable housing resources.
- f) Expand and support the grassroots self advocacy movement throughout the State of Florida.
- g) Develop a comprehensive list of creative ideas and successful transportation solutions which are being used in Florida and other states, formulate a menu of options for improving and expanding access to transportation, and present this information to the Governors Commission on Disabilities and the legislature with a request that transportation solutions be given a high priority by all state agencies.
- h) Implement an "Inclusion Now Public Information Campaign" to reach out to individuals with disabilities, parents, groups and organizations, and the community at large to build a broader base of public support for achieving the goals of community inclusion.

IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE (NOVEMBER 2008)

- **Campaign to Educate Legislators: The Council has begun establishing grassroots coalitions in the state for the purpose of educating legislators and generating media attention on the service and**

support needs of individuals with disabilities. Work is underway to establish seven coalitions with an initial focus of the developmental disabilities waiver and Part C Early Steps service needs.

- **Expansion of CDC+:** There is a focused effort currently underway to increase the number of individuals and families who can participate in the CDC+ program by both the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, the Council and many developmental disabilities advocates.
- **Grassroots Self Advocacy:** The Council is entering the third year of its initiative to establish grassroots self-advocacy coalitions across the state. During the first two years, eight (8) coalitions were established with two (2) planned for this upcoming year.
- **Transportation:** Several disability organizations in this state are interested into identifying creative transportation options for persons with disabilities, particularly consumer directed and voucher options. The Governor's Commission on Disabilities included a recommendation to examine the options and develop a plan its first report. A Transportation Feasibility Study is being initiated and jointly funded by the Council and the ABLE Trust to examine consumer directed options (particularly vouchers) and develop a plan for Florida, with the participation of the Governor's Commission on Disabilities.
- **Inclusion NOW Campaign:** A post Inclusion NOW summit kit was sent to all the participants at the Inclusion Summit with this Strategic Plan, a Media Plan and resources (such as PSAs, DVDs, fact sheets, etc) for promoting Inclusion NOW. The Council has also continued to use the Inclusion NOW logo on its legislative issues papers and materials and resources for the grassroots coalitions that are educating legislators and the media.

APPENDIX: PROPOSED FORMAT FOR PLAN IMPLEMENTATION, FOLLOW-UP, AND MONITORING

Actions	Responsibility	Resources	Target Completion Date	Status