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Governor Scott: Florida Families First Budget Invests in Priorities for Disability Community and Vulnerable Populations

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Governor Rick Scott today highlighted investments in the Florida Families First budget to invest in programs for Florida’s disability community.

Governor Scott said, “For the first time in eight years, our budget will be used to remove persons with disabilities from the Medicaid waiver program waitlist and get them the help they desperately need. As we put Florida’s families first, we have a responsibility to invest in programs for the disabled and other vulnerable populations.”

The Florida Families First budget supports Governor Scott’s commitment to make investments for Florida’s disability community.

- **Agency for Persons with Disabilities Waitlist Funding:** For the first time in eight years, the Florida Families First budget provides additional funding for the Developmental Disabilities Medicaid Waiver program to go toward serving individuals on the waiting list. The Florida Families First budget provides \$36.3 million to remove an estimated 750 individuals from the waitlist and onto the waiver program.
- **Nursing Home Diversion and Aged and Disabled Adult Waiver Waitlist Funding:** The Florida Families First budget funds the waitlist by \$25.2 million. This funding will help keep the most frail of individuals at risk of home placement in their homes and community settings. The funding will serve approximately 2,000 individuals on the waitlist.
- **Fetal Alcohol Diagnosis and Intervention:** The Florida Families First budget more than doubles existing funds for early intervention and treatment to mitigate potential long term effects on children.
- **Quest Kids:** The Florida Families First budget invests \$650,000 toward early intervention services for at least 82 children, and skill validation and behavioral support services for at least 221 adults. Services will teach critical skills and

reduce problem behavior, improve IQ and adaptive and social skills in children, and develop home-life and employment skills in adults. With this funding, individuals with disabilities will master new skills, transition into and maintain placement in mainstream school, improve literacy skills, achieve personal goals, and maintain current living arrangements.

- **Dan Marino Jobs Program for Children with Disabilities:** The Florida Families First budget invests \$1,000,000 toward on-the-job training, internships, and mentor apprenticeships for individuals with developmental disabilities between the ages of 18 and 30 years old. With this funding, more young adults with disabilities will have firsthand opportunities to prove their value in the workplace. Maximizing firsthand experiences in the workplace was one of three primary recommendations of the premier 2012 report by the Governor's Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities.
- **Rate Increase for Adult Day Training Providers:** The Florida Families First budget invests \$1,895,756 in the form of a 3 percent across-the-board raise to all providers of adult day training services in the Medicaid Home and Community Based Services Waiver program. These services are among the most popular in the program. Providers offer individuals up to six hours per day of meaningful activities that support the individual in daily routines of the community, including training in the areas of self-help, adaptive, and social skills. These services are provided in congregate, facility-based settings, and may include off-site enclaves or mobile work crews.
- **William J. (Billy Joe) Rish Recreational Park:** The Florida Families First budget provides \$1,400,000 to provide maintenance and repairs at Billy Joe Rish Park, located on the St. Joseph Peninsula near Port St. Joe and Cape San Blas in Northwest Florida. Rish Park is open year round for people with disabilities and their family members, guardians, and caregivers. Special ramps provide access to the beautiful beach on the Gulf of Mexico. Boardwalks connect all the cabins to the beach, event hall, and pool, and the Olympic-size swimming pool is wheelchair accessible.

Agency for Persons with Disabilities Director Barbara Palmer said, "The agency is extremely grateful and humbled by the support we have received from both Governor Scott and the Legislature. The \$36 million to help individuals with critical needs move from the waiting list to the Medicaid waiver will dramatically improve their lives and allow them to receive needed services in their communities. Also, the funding to provide job coaches and internships to additional people with disabilities will help them compete in the job market, and go to work like everyone else. We thank Governor Scott and the Florida Legislature for this strong support which will truly change lives."

The Association of Support Coordination Agencies of Florida Chairperson Janice Phillips said, "The Association of Support Coordination Agencies of Florida "With the improvement in the economy and increase in state revenue, it is heartening to know that

Governor Scott and the Legislature are making Florida's citizens who are most in need a priority. We are sincerely grateful to Gov. Scott and the Legislature for the funding to provide services to individuals with developmental disabilities who are on the waiting list. We have many deserving people who need support and services to help them live in their community and to realize goals such as working and being productive citizens."

Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities President and CEO Suzanne Sewell said, "On behalf of its member agencies and the thousands of individuals they serve, the Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities thanks Governor Rick Scott and the Florida Legislature for approving funding that will allow the Agency for Persons with Disabilities to begin addressing the DD Medicaid Waiver services wait list. For the first time in eight years, hundreds of wait list individuals and their families can look forward to receiving much needed services to meet their health and safety needs. As a result of the incremental funding and triage language that was passed to conform with the wait list funding, Floridians with developmental disabilities and their families can be assured that their needs were truly recognized by our Governor and lawmakers."

Family Care Council Florida Past Chair Betty Kay Clements said, "Many thanks to Governor Rick Scott and the Florida Legislator for their attention to individuals with developmental disabilities. There will be dramatic and positive changes in the lives of at least 750 people and their families. This is wonderful news for them and for their families. It is a step in the right direction and one that gives hope to those waiting for services. Addressing the needs and issues of individuals with developmental disabilities is a win- win situation. It really does make a difference for them, their families and their communities. Individuals, families and their Florida communities are the winners."

Executive Director of Special Olympics Florida Sherry Wheelock said, "This new \$36 million in funding for the APD waiting list is critical to expanding statewide access to support services for those who need them most. It will help grow awareness of programs like Special Olympics Healthy Community that offers comprehensive health screenings, evaluations, and wellness opportunities to a population that is generally underserved. We are grateful that Governor Scott, the Legislature, and APD recognize and are committed to better serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities; a goal that Special Olympics has routinely sought to accomplish."

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