



For people with intellectual
and developmental disabilities



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The Arc of Florida's 2014 Legislative Priorities

(As of March 13, 2014)

Issue #1 - 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 Medicaid Waiver Waitlist Funding, Increased Rates for Services, Community-Based Services and Alternative Family Homes.

Medicaid Waiver Waitlist Funding

The current Developmental Disabilities Medicaid Waiver system and long waitlist for services are inadequately funded to meet the health, safety and basic rights of individuals with I/DD. Funding is essential to providing necessary services and supports to Floridians with I/DD.

Solution: *Florida must invest in Medicaid Waiver Waitlist Funding by supporting the Governor's recommendation for \$20 million in funding for the 2014 – 2015 fiscal year.*

Increased Rates for Services

Florida must invest in provider rate increases so individuals with I/DD are served by qualified and quality professionals. Right now, professionals working with Floridians with I/DD make less money than employees at fast food restaurants although they are responsible for lives and required to have a much higher level of training. 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.

Solution: *Florida must increase provider rates by 5% for the 2014 – 2015 fiscal year and the funding for this should not be taken away from current client services. The Arc of Florida also supports building a plan to continue to increase rates in the coming years and increasing all provider rates to at least minimum wage.*

Community-Based Services

Florida must invest in community-based services so people are not institutionalized. This will benefit both individuals with I/DD and taxpayers. Florida taxpayers could save up to \$61 million per year by funding community-based services as opposed to institutional placements. There are approximately 677 individuals with I/DD living in Florida public institutions. The average cost to live in an institution is approximately \$120,000 per year per person, as opposed to community-based services at approximately \$30,000 per year per person.

Solution: *Florida must support the request to the Agency for Persons with Disabilities to create and implement a comprehensive five-year plan to reduce the number of people with I/DD living in Florida institutions. The plan will include a review of the cost of serving individuals in state institutions compared to community-based settings. The plan should be included in legislative proviso language.*

Alternative Family Homes

Florida must invest in alternative family homes for children who are medically fragile so they do not have to live in nursing homes. There are 149 children with medically complex conditions living in skilled nursing facilities in Florida. Skilled nursing facilities can provide interim intensive medical care to stabilize a child, but 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 in place that supports those families. The Arc of Florida also believes families wishing to adopt children with extensive medical needs should be able to do so and the state should have a system in place to support those families.

Solution: *Make funding and services available to families caring for children who are medically fragile so they can leave nursing homes and return to their communities.*

Issue #2 – Continue funding 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.

Solution: *The Arc of Florida's special appropriation in 2012 and 2013 for dental services has relieved the pain and suffering of hundreds of individuals. The Arc has more than 139 dentists now working with them to alleviate years of dental neglect in the I/DD population. Continue funding for this worthwhile project.*

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