

ANGELS UNAWARE, INC.

Talking Points for Disabilities Day 2013

Most of our issues and talking points mirror the ARC- Florida's points, I have added specifics as needed and arranged in order of importance to AUI.

Issue #1 Support Adequate Medicaid Waiver Funding

The current DD Medicaid Waiver support system and long waitlists for service is inadequate to meet the health, safety and basic rights of constituents with DD. Payments for Floridians with I/DD (intellectual developmental disabilities) in residential setting currently range from as low as \$3.01 per hour for basic care for the basic care to \$11.04 per hour for the most involved individuals.

Results to AUI are that our staff is making minimum wage, for work they should be paid in the \$10 -15 dollar per hour range with full benefits. This makes it nearly impossible to hire, train, and retain qualified caring individuals that have all the required certifications, and a clean background to care for these Floridians with I/DD.

Our consumers cannot get vital needed services. We are in the process of eliminating needed nursing services because of APDs inability to approve and pay for those services, even with a doctor's prescription, and a valid nursing care plan. We have had at least one consumer move from a group home he had been his home for 20 years into an ICF/DD -institutional setting because APD could not pay for needed behavioral services.

Solutions:

- a. Stop additional funding cuts to the already devastated Medicaid Waiver funding system administered by APD and AHCA. The current budget does not fund adequate services to protect the health and safety of people that receive Medicaid Waiver benefits. It does not address the wait list containing 21,000 Floridians.
- b. 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. Often these two agencies are contradictory to each other causing confusion and errors that result in provider fines and paybacks.
- c. Offer regulatory relief to community providers whose rates have been reduced over the last decade. Over burdensome and unclear provider handbooks and other regulations add dramatically to the cost of providing services, result in errors and billing paybacks, and fines with little impact on the actual quality of care.
- d. Support the Internet Sales Tax Initiative. This legislation will allow the state to collect its fair share of sales tax, which can be used to balance the state budget and protect local providers, and businesses where our clients live, and work.

Issue #2 Fund Transportation so Floridians with I/DD aren't blocked from services

Stop cost plan (I-Budget) reductions that remove or reduce funding for transportation to services which are determined to be necessary for individuals with I/DD to remain and be a part of 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 #3 - 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 and human rights and is 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 their development. Institutionalization is very expensive for Florida taxpayers.

Issue #4 – Respect Individuals with I/DD and remove the R-word from Florida Statutes

The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities has changed the diagnosis of 'mental retardation' to 'intellectual disabilities' in federal law. Many other states have also made the important change.

Solution: Support legislation to strike the term 'mental retardation' in Florida statutes and replace it with 'intellectual disabilities'

Issue #5 Secure the future of Floridians with I/DD through Savings Program

The years after a student with a developmental disability ages out of the educational 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 DD Program and Savings Plan for families of Floridians with I/DD Much like the Florida Prepaid College Fund the Prepaid DD 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.

