



## **FLORIDA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL, INC.**

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### **Transportation for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities**

#### **The Council urges the Florida Legislature to provide resources for employment related transportation for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.**

Safe, affordable, and reliable transportation is a critical component to community inclusion for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Research has shown that having access to the community is the key to employment, education and training, independence, and self-sufficiency. Florida's transportation delivery system is very complex. In addition to a lack of subsidies for public transportation, differences in local providers, and provider availability, are examples of issues that make it difficult for individuals with disabilities to access and utilize available transportation services.

One of the major sources of funding for transportation is the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD). In their Annual Performance Report for fiscal year 2014, it states that the Commission provided 48.6 million trips statewide. Individuals with disabilities accounted for almost 5.2 million of these trips. There was \$324 million dollars available and \$2.9 million dollars were used for employment-related trips. At least 169,412 trips were denied and 36,122 of these requests were for employment trips. Moreover, 20% of Florida's counties report no provisions of transportation for employment. The report indicates that employment is not as high a priority in many counties and that lack of funding is the reason most often given for the denial of an employment trip request. Also, all the numbers indicated were reduced from the year before which could reflect a decrease in funding for the program.

Additional funding for transportation is part of the solution but access to transportation is important and can be facilitated by increasing the number of Regional Mobility Managers and replicating best practices around the state. Regional Mobility Managers provide personalized services to individuals: trip and travel training, customer service, and advocacy. The coordination of transportation services is cost-effective and can lower costs to individuals and the system. This would include fixed routes, paratransit and alternatives like van pools.

At a minimum a mobility manager study should be implemented to determine what mobility management programs we have across the state and what they offer. The following questions would be answered and provide next steps;

- Who has a structure in place that is working and can it be replicated?
- Who has the people in place but they need training?
- Who is knowledgeable and trained but need manpower?
- Who needs it all?

In addition, every community has a Community Transportation Coordinating Board. Individuals with developmental disabilities need to have representation on those boards by family members and self-advocates. These individuals can help to advocate for change, set up vanpools, and coordinate volunteer drivers.

More funding, advocate board representation and effective mobility management for reliable transportation are essential to obtain and retain employment. Transportation can link individuals to the community and the market place and give individuals with disabilities the opportunity to contribute to society.