



FLORIDA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL, INC.

124 Marriott Drive, Suite 203, Tallahassee, Florida 32301-2981

Phone (850) 488-4180 • Toll-Free (800) 580-7801

Fax (850) 922-6702 • TDD (850) 488-0956/(888) 488-8633

Deinstitutionalization for individuals with Developmental Disabilities

The Council asks that the legislature require the Agency for Persons with Disabilities to create and implement a comprehensive five year plan to reduce the number of individuals with developmental disabilities who reside in Florida's remaining institutions.

Florida must continue the directive stipulated in Florida Statute (F.S.) Chapter 393 of removing individuals from unnecessary institutional placements and abating the use of large institutions.

Today, thirteen states and the District of Columbia are institution free. Florida is in the top 25% of states who have successfully closed some institutions for individuals with Developmental Disabilities and found community placements for their residents, predominantly as a result of legal action in the past.

However, the two remaining institutions, Sunland Marianna and Tacachale in Gainesville remain open and house a combined 657 residents. Many of the residents could be successfully moved into the community. Since 2009, the total number of residents in these institutions is only down by 62.

The legislative intent for Florida's services for individuals with developmental disabilities as stipulated in Chapter 393 is very clear. It is to implement programs to enable individuals with developmental disabilities to achieve their greatest potential for independence and productive living and to allow individuals with developmental disabilities to live as independently as possible in their own homes or community. More specifically, section 393.062 states that institutions are ineffective in bringing individuals with developmental disabilities to their maximum potential and that the design and delivery of Florida's service system should include abating the use of large institutions (section 393.13 F.S.)

The allocation of resources is a major issue because serving people in institutions on average costs more than providing services for individuals in the community and in smaller settings. The average cost of community based living is a cost effective alternative to living in a state institution, but even more importantly, living in the community provides individuals with the opportunity to enjoy individual rights and the dignity of experiencing freedom that most people take for granted.

The Council believes that Florida needs to continue its efforts to remove individuals with developmental disabilities from unnecessary institutional placements and to abate the use of large institutions by requiring the creation and implementation of a comprehensive five year plan to reduce the number of individuals with developmental disabilities residing in Florida's two remaining institutions and to implement the intent and direction of statute 393.13