Work to Eliminate the Developmental Disabilities Home and Community Based Services Waiver Waitlist

The Council urges the Florida Legislature to support a specific funding plan that provides a meaningful long-term commitment to significantly reduce the number of people on the Developmental Disabilities Home and Community Based Services (DD/HCBS) Waiver waitlist.

The Council also requests the Legislature’s support of increased opportunities for non-waiver supports and services.

Individuals with disabilities who are on the DD/HCBS Waiver waitlist have been waiting for many years with little or no services to assist them in living in their community. Their choices range from institutionalization to asking family members to give up their jobs to assist them with their personal care, transportation and oversight of their daily lives. Now, with an unprecedented economic downturn, the list is growing larger due to families having fewer financial resources of their own. The urgency to serve individuals on the waitlist is compounded by the inescapable demographics of aging caregivers and a consumer population that will accelerate demand over the next several years. The Legislature is reluctant to increase state programs at a time when state revenues are down so the average wait for services is getting longer.

As of July 1, 2011, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) reports there are 20,376 children and adults waiting for services. Examples of those waiting are parents who rely on a larger array of children’s Medicaid therapy and personal care services, which are not available when a child reaches adulthood. Caregivers and families rely on these services to adequately care for individuals with developmental disabilities who live in their home and to assist them in working and taking part in their community. In addition, aging caregivers may not be able to offer all the assistance they could in the past and want to ensure their loved ones have a stable home before they die. According to statute, APD can only serve individuals in crisis in slots that open from attrition. Last year, APD served 493 individuals in crisis. Given a similar rate of new enrollees per year, it will take over 30 years to serve the individuals now on the waitlist.

The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council continues to encourage the Florida Legislature to make a firm, long-term commitment to meet this growing unmet service need. The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, the ARC of Florida, The Agency for Persons with Disabilities and the Florida Family Care Council are working together to develop a strategic plan that will provide a comprehensive approach to move forward in addressing the waitlist problem.

The Council wants to see individuals with developmental disabilities who are on the waitlist receive the services they need, but the process should not cause a crisis to individuals currently receiving services by shifting the funding from the individuals currently receiving services to those on the waitlist.