



FLORIDA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL, INC.

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Transportation Availability for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

Accessible, affordable, and reliable transportation is a critical component to community inclusion. Research has shown that having access to the community is the key to many aspects of independence, self sufficiency and inclusion. Florida's transportation delivery system is very complex. Multiple funding streams from various federal, state and local agencies, differences in local providers, and issues related to provider jurisdiction are just a few of the things that make it difficult for individuals with disabilities to access and utilize available transportation services.

According to the Transportation Disadvantaged Commission, in fiscal year 2007 the Commission provided 51,532,055 trips statewide, however 781,850 trips were denied due to lack of funding, lack of vehicle availability or some other reason. Unfortunately, many Floridians with disabilities are unable to use the Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) system. Of those individuals with disabilities who do use the TD system, some spend long periods of time getting to work or to other necessary appointments even though they only live short distances away.

For persons with developmental disabilities, reliable transportation is essential to obtain and retain gainful and meaningful employment. In fact, a recent survey of the individuals on the Developmental Disabilities Home and Community Based Waiver waitlist showed that Transportation Services are the most needed service that the waiver provides. Legislative budget cuts will further restrict the ability of providers to transport individuals with developmental disabilities.

In addition to more funding for Transportation Disadvantaged, alternative methods of providing transportation to individuals with disabilities are needed. The current Transportation Disadvantaged System cannot handle the transportation need of Florida's individuals with disabilities on its own. General research on the transportation voucher model indicates that there are examples of successfully implemented transportation voucher program models in the United States. A voucher-based transportation program may be a viable option to providing more consumer choice and control over individual transportation needs. This would be particularly true in rural areas of the states where transportation options are extremely limited. Transportation options that maximize an individual's choice in obtaining transportation that will best meet their needs are the best solution. This idea uses the same principals of self-determination for transportation as are used for other community services.

The Council supports increasing funding for the Transportation Disadvantaged program, improving the availability of dependable and affordable quality transportation, and creating more transportation options. These options ideally include provisions that optimize an individual's choice of provider and route, such as a voucher system that could reimburse any available provider.