The mission of the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc. is to advocate and promote meaningful participation in all aspects of life for Floridians with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The 2015 Idelio Award Winner

The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council honored Ms. Amanda Baker during the 2015 Developmental Disabilities Day at the Capitol where she received the Sixth Annual Idelio Valdes Leadership and Advocacy Award.

Named in honor of Idelio Valdes, a member of the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council and self-advocate who passed away in 2009, the awards ceremony was held at the Florida Capitol during the annual commemoration that serves as a forum to generate awareness and provide information about the importance of inclusion and services for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Ms. Baker was selected to receive the prestigious award because of her numerous community activities and personal achievements. These have included; exemplary self-advocacy work as President of Elephant Herds Self-Advocacy Group of Panama City, Parliamentarian and past Co-Chair of Florida Self-Advocates Network’D (SAND) as well as creator of the Dalton Belles Award.

“We are thrilled that Amanda was chosen as the 2015 Idelio Valdes award recipient,” said Sylvia James-Miller, Chair of the FDDC. “She is an individual who works hard all year long, leads by example, motivates and encourages everyone around her and does it all with a brilliant smile. We are all very proud of her and for her many accomplishments all year long.”
Sylvia James-Miller - Council Chair & Parent Advocate - Ocala, FL  
Tricia Riccardi - Council Co-Chair & Self Advocate - Kissimmee, FL  
Shirley Kervin - Dept. of Elder Affairs - Community & Support Services - Treasurer - Tallahassee, FL  
Rixys Alfonso - Parent Advocate - Miami Lakes, FL  
Pat Archer - Self Advocate - Boca Raton, FL  
Roni Bianco - Parent Advocate - Aventura, FL  
John “Jack” Kosik - Parent Advocate - Lakeland, FL  
Kathy Leigh - Elected-At-Large, Self Advocate - Starke, FL  
Kathy McAllister - Self Advocate - Sarasota, FL  
Mary Ellen McDonald - Disability Rights Florida - Tallahassee, FL  
Aleisa McKinlay - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DOE) - Tallahassee, FL  
Thomas (TJ) Moon - Self Advocate - Ocala, FL  
Bernadette Moran - Parent Advocate - Jacksonville, FL  
Barbara Palter - Agency for Persons with Disabilities - Tallahassee, FL  
Margaret Reilly - All Children’s Hospital - Bradenton, FL  
Frank Shalett - Self Advocate - Ft. Lauderdale, FL  
Jean Sherman, Ed.D., R.N. - Mailman Center UCEDD University of Miami - Pembroke Pines, FL  
Louis Towson, Self Advocate - Marianna, FL  
Monica Verra-Tirado, Ed.D., Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (DOE) - Tallahassee, FL  
Victoria Vangalis Zepp - Parent Advocate - Tallahassee, FL

The Council is composed of 30 members appointed by the Governor. Members represent individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their family members, agency staff and interested individuals. To learn more about the current Council members go to:

http://www.fddc.org/about/council_members

Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc.
From The Executive Director

Debra Dowds

The theme of this 2015 Annual Report, Supporting Progress in Florida, reflects all of the progress we see individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities have made in achieving meaningful participation in the community and the contribution that the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council has made to this progress. The work of the Council this past year has built self-determination and advocacy, strengthened transition and employment, improved services and supports, and supported community inclusion. We believe this work is making a significant impact in transforming fragmented approaches into a coordinated and effective system (such as with Employment First and Help Me Grow), preparing individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and families to participate in the design of the system (such as with Partners in Policy-making), and improving access to needed community services and supports (such as our legislative advocacy for iBudget Waiver waitlist funding). Together these initiatives are creating system change. System change is what will sustain this progress and is the cornerstone for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities making informed choices and decisions, pursuing meaningful and productive lives, and being fully included and integrated in all aspects of our communities. This is why we do what we do.

The Council Staff, 2015

Front Row (left to right): Christina Catledge, Deena Miller, Richard Bivins, Safee Broxton, Cindy Tan, Joyce Lubbers, Donna Phillips, Beth Romans-Corsi, Vanda Bowman.

Back Row (left to right): Margaret Hooper, Cydeon Trueblood, Holly Hohmeister, Jarl Jackson, Misty Grimm, Carolyn Williams, Debra Dowds, Lisa Taylor, Deborah Lloyd.

(Not Pictured: Sheila Gritz-Swift, Katherine Suarez Espinosa, and Jennifer Safstrom)
Council Initiatives

Child Development/Education
First Steps and Beyond
Discovery Research and Evaluation
Career and Technical Postsecondary Model
Universal Design for Learning
Project Achieve/VERTICAL Training Program
Postsecondary Replication Manual
Early Steps Evaluator Credential
Disability Awareness Through English and Language Arts

Community Living
Developmental Disabilities Wait List Strategic Plan
Developing Community Coalitions
Florida Inclusive Housing Corporation
Guardianship Alternatives:
- Training for Individuals and Families
- Restoration of Capacity
Abuse and Neglect Stakeholders Work Group
Florida Criminal Justice Study

Employment & Transportation
Project SEARCH
FYI Transition
Benefits Planning and Asset Development
Employ Me 1st
Rural Routes to Employment
Employment First Collaborative Training
Employment First Messaging Video
Transportation Voucher Pilot
Post School Outcome Guide

Health Care & Prevention
Easing Your Stress: Information for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities
Oral Healthcare Training for Caregivers
My Health Care
Nurse Practitioner Training Program
Help Me Grow Florida
Improved Coordination of Medicaid State Plan and Community-Based Services

Public Policy
Developmental Disabilities Day At The Capitol
Legislative Consortium

Self Advocacy Leadership
Youth Leadership Forum
Florida Self-Advocates Network'D (Florida SAND)
Project SALT—Self-Advocate Trainers on Leadership Skills
The Route to Self Determination
Partners in Policymaking
Medicaid Managed Care Easy Read

Please visit the FDDC Website at www.fddc.org and follow us on Facebook
### GOALS

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**TOTAL:** 3,507,930
Help Me Grow Florida had an incredibly productive year. The state coordinating office was established to provide the infrastructure for a State Help Me Grow program and to support the launch of Help Me Grow sites across Florida. Five sites operating through 2-1-1 in collaboration with community partner agencies were established. These sites included: 2-1-1 Big Bend; 2-1-1 Broward; 2-1-1 Palm Beach/Treasure Coast; United Way of Lee, Hendry, Glades; and United Way of Volusia and Flagler Counties. The sites brought Help Me Grow services to 19 counties across Florida. An additional six sites began their planning process to become Help Me Grow Florida affiliate sites. They developed their strategic plans, built community partnerships and added community-based resources to their database system, which support children ages birth through age eight. Additional state activities were accomplished through the collaboration of the Help Me Grow steering committee. A public awareness campaign was developed and included TV and radio announcements, bus stop posters, brochures, flyers and postcards. Trainings for healthcare professionals and early care and education providers were developed with the assistance of the Help Me Grow National Center. A statewide common database referral system was adopted and is being customized to capture Florida’s Help Me Grow common indicators. A third party project evaluation was conducted to provide feedback and guide future planning. Lastly, the Help Me Grow Florida website was created which provides information for families, healthcare professionals, early care and education and community providers.

Help Me Grow affiliate sites participated in numerous community outreach events which reached approximately 11,000 individuals. Care coordinators provided information, developmental and behavioral screenings and care coordination which effectively connected families to community-based services. Physician Champions and community partners joined each team to build a better coordinated systems of early detection in each community.

Preliminary data demonstrated that most callers were mothers; 42 percent reported being concerned about their child for six months or longer and 89 percent had not received previous support for a delay or diagnosis. Their main concerns included: development, behavior, communication, education, diagnosis and basic needs. Screening data indicated that 58 percent of screenings demonstrated a concern and need for a referral to community-based services. Help Me Grow will continue to learn more about gaps and barriers that families face in accessing services for their children, and we are hopeful that increasing availability of Help Me Grow will help parents address their concerns and improve timely access to early intervention services.

The upcoming year will provide the opportunity to continue the work to expand Help Me Grow in Florida and we anticipate adding four new sites to the network. With the addition of these new sites, Help Me Grow services will reach almost 50 percent of the counties in our state. This means that more Florida families will be able to benefit from Help Me Grow services.

The Help Me Grow staff believes that all children should be afforded the opportunity for early detection of developmental and behavioral delays and understands the difference that early intervention makes in improving children’s lives.

For more information on Help Me Grow Initiatives, please contact Katherine Suarez at: katherinese@fddc.org
Oral Health Care Training for Caregivers

Access to adequate dental care for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities has been identified as a critical need in Florida. Family and professional caregivers play an important role in completing the oral hygiene of the individual they care for. However, oral hygiene is often viewed as grooming rather than an essential component of overall health. This Council initiative provided training to caregivers of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities on how to perform the daily oral hygiene in a home setting using materials previously developed. Training sessions were held in both English and Spanish and each session was three hours long having a total of 206 participants. Evaluation results showed that 98% of the participants recommended the training to others and used the techniques demonstrated in the training to provide daily oral hygiene to the person they cared for.

Nurse Practitioner Education in Developmental Disabilities (NPEDD) Program

In 2015, the Council teamed up with the American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry (AADMD) to create the Nurse Practitioner Education in Developmental Disabilities (NPEDD) program. The program was an eight-hour, online training course for nurse practitioners, as well as nurse practitioner students, and was available to the public in July, 2015. Within the first month, 35 nurse practitioners in Florida had enrolled in the course, and shortly after, an additional 100 healthcare professionals (nurse practitioners, nurses, physicians and other healthcare providers) from around the US and Canada had enrolled in the course. As part of the next phase of the project, the FDDC and AADMD will be working with up to two nurse practitioner schools in the state of Florida to permanently integrate the care of adult patients with intellectual and developmental disabilities into the schools’ curricula. When fully implemented, this could impact hundreds of nurse practitioners graduating from Florida programs each year.

My Health Care Training Program

My Health Care is a training program designed to educate individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities on how to communicate with health care professionals and to identify and advocate for their own health care needs. The goal of this program has been to support, through skill building and the use of adaptive tools, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities as primary participants in all matters related to their health care and healthy living. In this training program, adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities have a role as primary participants in learning and in mentoring peers about healthy living and managing acute or chronic illness. The curriculum encompasses the following components in an interactive, multi-media format—Being prepared with questions and issues to discuss at office visits; Providing a health summary to the physician; Being assertive when communicating; Paying attention to body language; Using rating scales and visual aids to communicate health issues; Learning negotiating skills; Providing feedback to the physician; Utilizing caregivers to assist with communication; Recording communication with physician to enhance information recall and comprehension, and; Utilizing technology to improve health care communication and self-management.

For more information on Healthcare and Prevention Initiatives contact Holly Hohmeister at: hollyh@fddc.org
Supporting Employment

Employment First Florida Local Collaborative Efforts

In order to fulfill the Employment First Interagency Collaborative Agreement and ensure that all Florida communities can support their members with disabilities to obtain employment, the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council has contracted with the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston to pilot and facilitate the development of local level employment collaborative teams. Each pilot site includes local level representatives from the Division of Blind Services; school districts’ offices of Exceptional Education and Student Services; CareerSource Florida; Agency for Persons with Disabilities; Department of Children and Families: Substance Abuse and Mental Health; and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, as well as other employment stakeholders.

The announcement and site application for the Pilot sites was finalized and disseminated in February 2015. In March 2015 pilot sites in Miami-Dade, Nassau, Osceola, and Orange counties were selected because of the existing strength of their collaborative efforts. Pilot teams will receive support to assess current levels of collaboration, recommendations on strengthening local collaboration, technical assistance to develop and implement a local-level strategic implementation action plan that supports the state’s Employment First priorities, and the opportunity to interact with the other collaborates through a community of practice. Representatives from each of the pilots presented at the April 21, 2015 Employment First Grassroots Group Online meeting.

Rural Routes To Employment

The Rural Routes to Employment (RRTE) initiative completed its’ third year of implementation during 2015. The initiative provides training and support to Osceola, Lake, Suwannee, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, Walton, Santa Rosa, Hendry, Glades, Lee, Collier and Charlotte counties.

Using Community Actions Teams, Resource Mapping, Community Forums and Customized Employment Trainings, the third year of the Council sponsored initiative resulted in 58 Florida providers attending training, and 38 of those obtaining ACRE Community Employment certification. Thirty-six (36) individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities secured employment, and an additional 18 individuals with disabilities who did not meet the criterion of intellectual and developmental disabilities became employed as a result of Florida provider staff using methodologies taught through the RRTE initiative.

For more information on Council Employment & Transportation Initiatives, contact Beth Romans-Corsi at: bethrc@fddc.org
Supporting Florida Students In Transition

Project SEARCH...Real Opportunity, Real Outcomes.

The Project SEARCH high school transition program is a unique, business led, one-year school-to-work program that takes place entirely at the workplace. Total workplace immersion facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training through worksite rotations. The ultimate goal upon completion of the program is for all interns to have attained integrated, competitive employment at or above minimum wage. There are currently 21 Project SEARCH sites in Florida with average employment outcomes of 74%. In July, Project SEARCH held its International Conference in Phoenix, Arizona where 16 of the Florida sites were honored for having employment outcomes of 60% or greater.

Six of Florida’s sites received the top honor with 100% employment outcomes. These sites were Holmes Regional Medical Center; Cape Canaveral Hospital; Rosen Shingle Creek Resort; Florida Hospital Winter Park; Florida Hospital Orlando; and City of Hialeah.

2015 Project Achieve—Florida State College at Jacksonville

Project Achieve is a collaboration of FSCJ, Duval County Public Schools and the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council. The program provides a comprehensive inclusion model career and technical training program at a postsecondary institution for students from Duval, Nassau, Clay and St. Johns counties with intellectual or developmental disabilities.


In addition to Workforce Certificate program participation, Project Achieve students also received additional instruction in academics, career preparation, and self-determination. Prior to this year’s graduation, many Project Achieve students have completed internships and work experiences that add tremendous value to their employability. The goal of Project Achieve at FSCJ is to ensure that students with intellectual and developmental disabilities are able to hone their skills in a specific trade, then apply those skills to fulfilling careers that foster increased independence.

For more information on Council Education Initiatives, contact Sheila Gritz-Swift at: sheilags@fddc.org
Supporting Community Living Initiatives

The Council supports the Residential Options of Florida’s mission to empower individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to successfully obtain and maintain affordable and inclusionary housing of their choice. In order for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to make informed choices about housing options, it is critical that they have access to current information about what choices exist. One of the goals in the strategic plan for the ROOF is the development of a Statewide Housing Network with a focus on residential options for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The purpose of the statewide network is to look at the shift in housing preferences, demands for housing, best practices for creating housing and housing service programs, and filter information from a regional level to the state as a whole. It is anticipated that the statewide network will be established with a minimum of 100 individuals, representing various geographical areas, including urban and rural communities. To that end, a regional network system was established in the southwest region of the state during 2015 with additional networks to be formed in the coming year.

Abuse And Neglect

The Council supports improving the system of prevention, detection, and response to abuse and neglect for Floridians with intellectual and developmental disabilities. During 2015, an Abuse and Neglect Stakeholder Task Force was convened to implement the initial strategies identified during the previous year and help move forward Florida’s system of prevention, detection and response to abuse and neglect. The task force consisted of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and family members, representatives from Disability Rights Florida, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, the Department of Children and Families and Adult Protective Services, and other key stakeholders. The Task Force, and its’ key work groups, Public Policy, Public Awareness, Training and Education and Data Analysis met via three face-to-face meetings and regularly scheduled conference calls during this project year. Key outcomes to date included revisions to the Basic Recruit Training curriculum, which were released for use in all law enforcement training schools across the state in July 2015; revisions to APD’s Zero Tolerance training, which will be reflected in APD’s new online training system, TRAIN, and slated to be operational in 2016; preliminary development of a public awareness campaign to be rolled out in 2016; identification of a model for providing training to self-advocates; and preliminary recommendations for policy changes.

For more information on Council Community Living Initiatives, contact Safee Broxton at Safeeb@fddc.org
The Route To Self-Determination Project

The Route to Self Determination (RSD) is a training designed to promote self-determination for self-advocates, families and other community stakeholders who are underserved, underserved or live in rural areas. The overall goal is to build capacity of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities for self-determination, independence, and meaningful participation in their communities.

The RSD project conducted several “Train the Trainer” workshops during 2015. The trainings attracted professionals from many agencies in rural counties who provide support to persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In attendance were representatives from The ARC of North Florida, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS), Support Coordinators from Habilitation Management Services (HMS), and Exceptional Student Education (ESE) teachers.

The RSD Train the Trainer was developed to be interactive and the participants shared great stories and anecdotes that contributed to a holistic learning experience. One of the attendees stated in her evaluation, “The strengths of the training were the constant feedback, the videos, the length of the training and the group’s overall involvement.” Another attendee commented, “This training needs to be provided for direct care staff!”

PARTNERS IN POLICYMAKING is about systems change

Partners in Policymaking (PIP) is a leadership and advocacy training program that teaches self-advocates and family members of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to be community leaders. It's about creating, working towards, and achieving a vision of shared values.

The 2015 Partners in Policymaking class brought excitement as discussions unfolded about how systems change can come about as a result of project development. The challenges faced by so many within the Florida disability community make fertile ground in the expansion of resources, supports and inclusionary opportunities as their projects began to roll out. One of the goals of the 2015 program was to bring the initiative into the age of networking through social media. In an effort to expand PIP’s influence throughout the state, the soon to be developed YouTube channel will air video interviews with current and past graduates showcasing the impact PIP has had on their ability to influence public officials and policy specialists. This will help to open up the enormous benefits of the PIP program to virtually anyone who has access to an internet connection.

For more information on Council Self-Advocacy Initiatives, contact Ann Smith at: Anns@fddc.org
In 2015, Council members and staff continued their efforts to educate Florida’s lawmakers concerning the “Revitalizing Services for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities Plan” and encouraged them to support the Council’s issues.

Great results came out of the 2015 Special Legislative Session. Programs for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities were created or enhanced throughout the budget, illustrating the willingness of the Florida Legislature to support these programs and initiatives. Some of these programs included:

1. **iBudget Waiver Waitlist Funding** - The legislature designated $16 million dollars in general revenue for the Individual Budget waiver funding to take approximately 2,039 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities off the waitlist. This state funding will draw down $24 million dollars in federal Medicaid matching funds for a total of about $41 million dollars. The increase in funding is provided to expand the iBudget Waiver by removing the greatest number of individuals permissible under the additional funding. Priority Category Five on the waiver waitlist that represents youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities who are transitioning out of the school system will be the largest group to benefit from the additional waiver funding. Categories three and four were lowered dramatically last year, and new waitlist enrollees in these categories will also receive waiver funding.

2. **Early Steps funding** - The legislature also designated $13 million dollars in General Revenue for the Early Steps Program. This funding will be used to provide more Part C early intervention services for children ages 0-3 who have a developmental delay or an established condition that could result in a developmental delay.

3. **Help Me Grow** - $1,883,957 was provided to the Council to expand the Help Me Grow Florida Network. The network will be expanded to connect children and families with information, resources, and developmental services to enhance the health, behavior, learning and development of young children.
The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council strives to have a physical presence at events throughout the state and to support other agencies in their efforts to better educate the public on issues pertinent to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Supporting DD Events

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law 25 years ago, and the FDDC staff helped to celebrate this landmark during the Walk To City Hall and other events held in downtown Tallahassee, Florida.

The Annual Family Café held in Orlando, FL brought together thousands of individuals with disabilities and their families for three days of information, training and networking. The FDDC staff was there with an exhibit and several presentations throughout the event.

The FDDC helped to celebrate and thank the Exceptional Employer Award Recipients during the Annual Disability Employment Awareness celebration in Tallahassee, Florida.
Congratulations Partners in Policymaking, Class of 2015

The FDDC recognized and congratulated the Partners In Policy Class of 2015 during Graduation Services held in Jacksonville, Florida.