



## **Transportation Availability for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities**

**The Council urges the Florida Legislature to maintain current funding for transportation for individuals with developmental disabilities.**

**The Council supports the creation of transportation options for individuals with developmental disabilities that optimize an individual's choice of provider and route. Options could include a voucher or "smart card".**

Safe, affordable, and reliable transportation is a critical component to community inclusion for individuals with developmental disabilities. Research has shown that having access to the community is the key to independence, self-sufficiency and inclusion. Florida's transportation delivery system is very complex. 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 Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD), in fiscal year 2011, the Commission provided 51,144,402 trips statewide; however, at least 228,640 trips were denied. While the individual may need two trips every day to attend work, the denial is counted as "one" unmet need.

For persons with developmental disabilities, reliable transportation is essential to obtain and retain competitive employment. In fact, a recent survey of the individuals on the Developmental Disabilities Home and Community Based Services (DD/HCBS) Waiver waitlist showed that transportation services are the most needed service funded through the waiver. Legislative budget cuts have restricted the ability of providers to transport individuals with developmental disabilities. CTD trips for employment were down over 42 percent last year and medical trips and nutritional trips were up by 25 percent. Individuals on the DD/HCBS waiver have had funding decreases in transportation and in most cases the CDC system will not be able to help people who have lost waiver funding get to work and day activities because medical and nutritional trips are top priority.

Of those individuals with disabilities who do use the CTD system, some spend long periods of time getting to work or to other necessary appointments even though they only live short distances away. Individuals may have to take the only available route which can add an extra hour on the bus. This process repeats itself on the return trip. Some individuals will wait for the bus in the dark if they need a transfer or work late hours and those who live in one county and work in another come up against different provider jurisdictions which can add an additional connection or prohibit the use of public transportation to get to work.

In addition to more funding for transportation services, alternative methods of providing transportation to individuals with disabilities are needed. The Council and the Able Trust commissioned a transportation feasibility study, *Innovative Approaches for Increasing Transportation Options for People with Disabilities in Florida*. This study indicated that there are examples of successfully implemented transportation voucher program models in the United States. Recommendations generated from this study include the development and implementation of a transportation voucher pilot project to explore the use of vouchers in Florida. A voucher-based transportation program can be a cost-effective option to provide more consumer choice and control over individual transportation needs. This would be particularly true in rural areas of the state where transportation options are extremely limited. The Council is funding an interagency collaboration initiative to look for ways to implement a transportation voucher demonstration project.