



Position Statement

One way the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC) works on behalf of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) is to educate legislators about issues that are important to people with I/DD and their families. One of the most important issues to people with I/DD and their families is for lawmakers to:

Support and expand home- and community-based services for people with I/DD.

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Issue

People with (I/DD) and their families want to live within their communities, as independently as possible, no matter how much support they need.

Sometimes, when they go through their regular health care providers, people with I/DD and their families cannot find the services and providers they need.

Traditional Medicaid and other insurance providers meet only immediate medical care needs. They do not pay for ongoing personal support, therapies, and nursing care.

With waiver programs, Medicaid home- and community-based services (HCBS) provide support to people who need assistance with everyday activities like bathing, dressing, and making meals.

However, there is not enough funding in many Medicaid waiver programs. In Florida, more than 23,000 people who have been pre-enrolled for services have not received them. Other people who are in crisis and need services immediately are having trouble finding providers.



The alternative is segregated institutional care. This type of care costs more, and it limits people and their choices. Institutional care forces people to live away from their family and friends without access to the care they need to live in their own homes and communities.

Recommendations

The FDDC is focused on advocating for the following components of a strong home- and community-based services system.

Include the iBudget waiver in the Social Service Estimating Conference.

It is important to correctly plan for how much money will be needed to make sure that people with I/DD receive the help they need through the iBudget waiver. The Social Service Estimating Conference is an effective tool for helping to plan costs related to increased service needs due to aging caregivers, aging waiver recipients, and an individual's graduation from high school.



No one waits for services from the iBudget waiver.

Florida should provide a system that will make it easier to deliver services to people with I/DD who need assistance. In Miami-Dade County, 600 people waiting for I/DD services will volunteer for a new program that combines services from the Long-Term Care Waiver and the iBudget Waiver. The program will also include traditional medical care. The FDDC will watch this program for quality services, person-centered care, and measurements of results.



Require the employment of well-trained support coordination staff.

These professionals should use the best techniques found by case management experts to address the needs of people with I/DD and to create person-centered service plans. To keep people interested in these jobs, staff should be paid well, and should use easy reporting systems and not be limited by excessive regulations.



Address the behavioral needs of people with I/DD. There are two recommendations in this area:

A) People with I/DD who have both co-occurring mental illness and behavioral problems are having serious challenges finding behavioral services, even when they are in crisis.

Involuntary commitments through the Baker Act and voluntary hospitalizations are rising because families and providers are unable to care for those in crisis at home.

One solution is a successful intervention by a mobile response team that includes a behavior analyst trained to help those with I/DD. The mobile response team's role is to assess, calm, and stabilize a person in their current home setting, if possible. The team can decide if a psychiatric inpatient admission is needed as a last resort.

B) Finding providers and new funding for Intensive Behavioral (IB) and Behavior-Focused (BF) group homes is recommended. Training and hiring experienced behavior therapists with higher pay will help people with I/DD to stay in their own homes, in community settings, and in settings that offer behavioral support. This will prevent having to go to institutions.