



CAPITOL UPDATE

March 17, 2025



March 17, 2025 - Volume 25, Issue 4

March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

March is Disability Awareness Month, and for those who did not get a chance to travel to Tallahassee for Developmental Disabilities Awareness Day, there is still time for you or your group to engage in an activity to promote developmental disability awareness. For example, you can contact your local representative's offices and tell your story or join a local group and access the media to share information. [Check out our Advocacy Tool Kit here.](#)

The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC) hosted Developmental Disabilities Awareness Day on March 11, 2025, and we successfully joined with other disability groups and advocates using exhibit tables and appointments with lawmakers to educate them, as well as the public, on important issues that impact individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

Highlights of the day included supporting [HB 1529](#) by Tramont in the Health Care Facilities and Systems Subcommittee, that would enhance home health care services provided by family caregivers. The Home Health Aide for Medically Fragile Children Program (HHAMFC Program) was created by the legislature in 2023 to allow family caregivers to be paid to provide home care for their medically fragile children. The purpose was to relieve the home health

care staffing shortage and its impact on medically fragile children and their family caregivers and to provide an opportunity for family caregivers to receive training and gainful employment. Currently, the program is active; however, participation in the program is low due to concern over the potential loss of Medicaid eligibility if a family caregiver's income exceeds Medicaid eligibility income limits due to employment income earned through the program. The bill requires the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA), within 30 days of the bill becoming law, to apply for a federal waiver to disregard the income earned by a HHAMFC.

Another highlight was educating lawmakers on the importance of providing incentives to ensure that there are support coordinators to start federally required person-centered plans for individuals coming off the iBudget waitlist. A person-centered plan must be in place to determine services like personal support and behavioral supports, etc. that may be needed. Individuals received funding last year to come off the waitlist, but there is a shortage of key providers in most areas of Florida. That results in many people facing delays in accessing services.

Finally, the Council talked with lawmakers about continuing transportation voucher programs through the Transportation Disadvantaged system. Access to affordable and reliable transportation services continues to be a top-ranked barrier to full participation in the community by Florida's citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Key barriers include limited access to on-demand, 24-hour a day service; limited availability of transportation for a variety of trip purposes; and cost-prohibitive trip charges. These factors impede the ability of individuals with developmental disabilities to secure and maintain employment, pursue post-secondary education or training, and access the greater community for the purposes of shopping, dining, paying bills and engaging in recreational and leisure activities. One cost effective opportunity is the transportation innovation voucher programs. The FDCC provided federal seed funding to get these programs started. Several have received municipal funding, and the funding provided through innovation grants. The Council is advocating for continued grant funding for high performing programs as well as initial grant funding for new voucher programs.

Below are bills the Council supports or tracks. Keep in mind that bills usually must pass through three or four committees before getting to the full House or Senate chambers. Once in a chamber, bills are read three times before final passage and then sent to the other chamber for acceptance to end up with one bill to send to the Governor.

When the Governor receives a bill, he can sign it, let it become law without his signature, or veto the bill. The Legislature can overturn a veto the next time they meet by two thirds vote of both chambers.

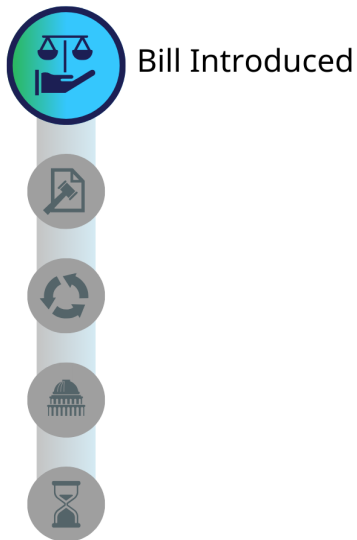
Please click on bill links to track a bill's full journey through the legislative process.

CAPITOL UPDATE: KEY



New for 2025: next to each bill, you will see a graphic that indicates the stage at which the bill is in the legislative process.

Important Bills to Watch



[SB 460-Student Elopement by Arrington](#)

Summary of Original Filed Text - 02/03/25

The bill would create a framework for addressing student elopement in Florida public schools by establishing various requirements for planning and response.

The bill defines "elopement" as the act of a student with disabilities leaving supervision and mandates each public school to set up a School Staff Assistance for Emergencies (SAFE) team and a comprehensive elopement plan.

The bill specifies that the school principal and assistant principal, along with at least five other appointed members, will constitute the SAFE team. This team is responsible for developing, updating, and enacting the elopement plan.

The elopement plan would include detailed procedures for immediate actions following an elopement, a structured search plan including a search grid of critical areas, and a communication strategy among all school personnel, security, and law enforcement.

There is directive language that the elopement plan be submitted annually to the district school board and authorizes the State Board of Education to adopt rules to implement the provisions effectively.

Identical Bill

[HB 0345 Student Elopement by Eskamani](#)

[SB 112-Children with Developmental Disabilities by Harrell](#)

Summary of Original Filed Text - 02/05/25

This bill expands the scope and services of



Senate Floor

healthcare and educational programs for children with developmental disabilities in Florida.

It amends the Cinotti Health Care Screening and Services Grant Program to include autism under eligible services and it creates the Early Steps Extended Option, extending eligibility for existing early intervention services until a child's fourth birthday.

The bill mandates local program offices to prepare for children's transitions out of the Early Steps Program.

This bill establishes guidelines and funding priorities for startup grants managed by the University of Florida Center for Autism and

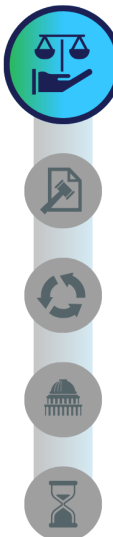
Neurodevelopment aimed at supporting schools and summer programs for children with autism.

It directs the Commissioner of Education to review and report on educational curricula for developmental disabilities, enhancing training for professionals with a focus on supporting students with autism.

Identical Bill

[HB 0591 Children with Developmental Disabilities by Maggard](#)

See the FDDC Legislative Platform



Bill Introduced

[HB 377-Health Insurance Coverage for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities by Tant](#)

Summary of Original Filed Text - 02/04/25

The bill revises definitions related to health insurance coverage for individuals with developmental disabilities, impacting Medicaid options and law enforcement training. It updates the definition of "autism spectrum disorder" to match the most recent edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders by the American Psychiatric Association.

The bill changes the definition of "eligible individual" to expand criteria beyond age restrictions, focusing on the diagnosis of a developmental disability without specifying the age at diagnosis.

The bill reenacts specific statutes to adapt to the updated definitions impacting

optional Medicaid services and law enforcement training regarding autism spectrum disorder and retains clauses regarding the adjustment of services based on budgetary constraints and the need for legislative approval for the implementation of new Medicaid services.

Identical Bill - Moving Through Committees

[SB 0756 Health Insurance Coverage for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities by Burton](#)



Bill Introduced



[HB 447 - Disability History and Awareness Instruction by Salzman](#)

Summary of Original Filed Text - 02/06/25

This bill mandates comprehensive disability history and awareness instruction in schools, replacing prior optional guidelines with required educational content.

The bill designates the act as the "Evin B. Hartsell Act." It requires that for a two-week period, students receive intensive instruction on individuals with disabilities, including disability history and the disability rights movement. The instructional content across educational levels includes:

- Grades K-3: Conversations on bullying and activities teaching about physical disabilities.
- Grades 4-6: Provides information and activities related to autism spectrum disorder.
- Grades 7-9: Includes content and activities about hearing impairments.
- Grades 10-12: Focuses on different types of learning and intellectual disabilities, with practical activities to illustrate these conditions.

The bill allows district school boards to collaborate with the Evin B. Hartsell Foundation for curriculum development.

Identical Bill

[SB 0540 Disability History and Awareness Instruction by Collins](#)

[HB 413 - Swimming Safety by Gossett-Seidman](#)

Summary of Original Filed Text - 02/05/25

This bill enhances water safety requirements and regulations for children, particularly those with autism, at public swimming areas and prohibits organizations from allowing children access to public bathing places or pools without swimming proficiency verification from a parent or legal guardian.

The bill requires organizations to provide U.S.



Bill Introduced



Coast Guard-approved personal flotation devices (for public bathing places and pools) to children identified as non-swimmers or at-risk and allows organizations to refuse water access to children without the required documentation and penalizes organizations for non-compliance by allowing disciplinary actions, including administrative penalties.

This bill includes changes to the "Residential Swimming Pool Safety Act," now part of a broader "Swimming Pool and Public Water Safety Act," reinforcing safety barriers and pool standards.

Similar Bill

[SB 0568 Swimming Safety by Rodriguez](#)



Moving Through Committees



[SB 102 - Exceptional Student Education by Gaetz](#)

Summary of Original Filed Text - 12/17/24

A bill mandates the development and implementation of a workforce credential program for students with autism spectrum disorder by the Department of Education. It mandates the Department of Education to develop and implement a workforce credential program by January 31, 2026, specifically designed for students with autism spectrum disorder to aid in securing employment upon graduation.

Requires the program to allow students to earn badges that demonstrate the acquisition of skills needed by employers, with each badge

representing five discrete skills, including workplace safety.

Specifies that the validation of each badge must be done by two members of the instructional staff who specialize in exceptional student education.

SB 102 directs the Department of Education to produce an annual report from 2026 through 2030, which includes details on the badges offered, data on post-graduation employment, student participation rates, and other relevant outcome data.

Similar Bill

[HB 0127 Exceptional Student Education by Kendall](#)

[SB 1156 - Home Health Aide for Medically Fragile Children Program by Harrell](#)

Summary of Original Filed Text - 02/25/25



Bill Introduced



This bill revises training and operational requirements for the Home Health Aide for Medically Fragile Children Program to improve care and coordination.

The bill specifies family caregiver training to include minimum hours of theoretical instruction, skills tailored to the child's care needs and directed clinical training. It also establishes a Medicaid fee schedule for home health aides at a minimum rate of \$25 per hour with a daily cap of 12 hours per child, requiring justification for additional hours.

The bill mandates a swift federal approval process for Medicaid waivers or amendments to include private duty nursing and home health providers in the program and exempt home

health aide income from public assistance eligibility considerations.

Lastly, the bill requires an annual program assessment detailing caregiver satisfaction, support needs, hospitalization rates, adverse incidents, and comparison data between home health aides and registered or licensed nurses.

Similar Bills - Passed First Committee

[HB 1529 Home Health Aide for Medically Fragile Children Program by Tramont](#)



Moving Through Committees



[SB 412 - Repair of Motorized Wheelchairs by Smith \(C\)](#)

Summary of Original Filed Text - 01/30/25

This bill establishes requirements for the availability of motorized wheelchair repair resources under the "Motorized Wheelchair Right to Repair Act."

The bill mandates that original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) provide documentation, parts, and tools necessary for diagnosing, maintaining, or repairing motorized wheelchairs, including updates, on fair and reasonable terms.

The purpose of the bill is to offer more options for wheelchair repair and the bill stipulates that any contractual provisions attempting to waive or limit OEM obligations under this act are void and enforces violations of these provisions under the Florida Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act.

Similar Bills

[HB 0311 Repair of Motorized Wheelchairs by Eskamani](#)



Bill Introduced



[SB 1050 - Agency for Persons with Disabilities by Bradley](#)
Summary of Original Filed Text - 02/24/25

This bill proposes the transfer of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Federal Rehabilitation Trust Fund, and Blind Services from the Department of Education to the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) with the intention of enhancing services for those with disabilities. At first glance this merger could mean better collaboration for individuals with developmental disabilities who need help with job training and finding a job.

The bill would change Chapter 393 F. S., which is currently exclusive to those with developmental disabilities to "Persons with Disabilities." This change would include

individuals with all disabilities in the statute dedicated to those with developmental disabilities. This broadening terminology underlines concerns that this will divert attention and resources from programs specifically designed for developmental disabilities.

There are orders for the establishment of a transition advisory working group, with designated transition coordinators from both the APD and the Department of Education to ensure smooth operational transition. There seems to be no mention of individuals with disabilities, stakeholder groups and families having representation on the transition and implementation planning groups.

Finally, both Vocational Rehabilitation and APD are struggling to serve clients. Advocates report that both agencies have long wait times and a shortage of providers. This may not be the best time to merge these agencies together. There are 34 other states that have combined their developmental disability agency with Vocational Rehabilitation. The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council is still trying to understand the impact this new combination will have on individuals with developmental disabilities in Florida.

Identical Bill

[HB 1103 Agency for Persons with Disabilities by Kincart Jonsson](#)

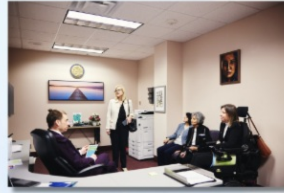


ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

Make an impact in your local community to support developmental disabilities advocacy.



- PLAN A LOCAL DD DAY EVENT
- HOW TO TELL YOUR STORY
- CONTACT THE MEDIA
- CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATORS



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