The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council’s mission is “To advocate and promote meaningful participation in all aspects of life for Floridians with developmental disabilities.”

The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council’s Purpose:

We are committed to advocating and promoting programs, practices and innovative initiatives that enhance the independence, productivity, inclusion, and self-determination of individuals with developmental disabilities in all aspects of life.
TRANSPORTATION

The Council contributed to the work that led the Florida Legislature to provide $750,000 to fund 2 efforts designed to improve transportation for individuals with I/DD.

In 2018, the Council and Florida Self-Advocates Network’D (SAND) made transportation for people with I/DD a top priority. As a result of ongoing education and the Task Force on Transportation Disadvantaged, the state funded 2 Task Force ideas:

• An expert to improve the transportation model of the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD).

• A grant for door-to-door transportation for people with I/DD through the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, which was given $500,000. $475,000 of this amount led to a program for individuals with I/DD, which is available in Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Manatee counties.

EMPLOYMENT

The Council’s Collaborative Employment First efforts continue to improve employment practices in Florida.

The Council’s Employment First Partners reported 2 important results of their work:

First, a new law says that people in a work experience activity with the Division of Blind Services (DBS) or Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) are employees of the state for Worker’s Compensation. This means that if a person gets hurt on the job, DBS or VR will pay their medical bills instead of the employer.

Second, the state provided $750,000 in 2018 to continue to move people off the APD employment services wait list. As a result, 131 people on the waiting list got jobs, 22 people got internships, and 288 people kept their jobs with the help of employment services.

Working with other partners, the Council reported 78 improvements made to employment policies, procedures, rules, statutes, or practices during 2018.
The Council is supporting Robert Morgan Education Center and Technical College to continue building a career and technical education model for students with I/DD. In their third year of work, 35 students were in the program, 34 of whom earned at least one major skill for a job. 8 students qualified for scholarships.

28 PIP graduates finished the required 6 weekend sessions

The Council’s work helped make sure funding from the state for direct service provider rates would occur every year.

28 graduates from the 2017 Partners in Policymaking (PIP) class finished the required 6 weekend sessions in February of 2018.

The Council worked with Disability Rights Florida and both Florida University Centers of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities to help grow their leaders and people with I/DD who also want to become stronger leaders. As a result, 4 self-advocates and 4 professional leaders are working together to build their skills.

10 of 12 Project VOTE self-advocate trainers and 12 Disability Rights Florida staff who were trained in 2017 worked with local supervisors of elections to provide training. 115 self-advocates across 5 counties were trained.

249 self-advocates and 32 family members participated in leadership and advocacy activities in 2018.

In 2018, 113 people with I/DD were part of Florida Self-Advocates Network’D (Florida SAND).

Florida SAND focused on transportation and direct service provider rates.

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SELF-ADVOCACY SYSTEMS CHANGE

In 2018, Florida lawmakers asked for help from the US Government to run a program called Working People with Disabilities. This was a result of the Council’s work in 2017 on the Waiver Eligibility Income Limits Study and the Council’s 2018 Working People with Disabilities Program plan.

HOUSING

During 2018, the Council studied community-based housing and planning. The Council looked closely at the US Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) 4 programs and the factors that affect funding for these programs. This study will develop training and information to help self-advocates and families get involved in local housing planning.

WORKFORCE (DIRECT SERVICE PROVIDERS)

In 2017, the Florida Legislature approved $15.7 million for Department of Labor hourly wage adjustments and provider rate increases. In 2018, this became regular funding.

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BROAD SYSTEMS CHANGE

The Council supported Project SEARCH to grow in Florida. This program helps people with I/DD find and keep jobs that pay at least minimum wage.

- 14 new sites in 16 Florida counties. 8 of these were in rural counties.
- The total number of sites is now 37 in 26 counties.
- 315 students will likely be served in 2018-19.

Florida’s yearly employment results are in the 60-70% range, among the highest in the nation.

Project 10 became a main partner to help with Project SEARCH work.

At the end of 2018, the Council completed an online training for Route to Self-Determination.

This offers training to people with I/DD in Florida who live in rural areas or who have trouble attending trainings.