

## **Connections Guide**

*This project is provided by the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc., supported in part by grant numbers 1901FLSCDD-01 and 2001FLSCDD-01 from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects with government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official ACL policy.*

*Funded by the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council.*

*Welcome!*

This guide will help you start your adult life.

Are you looking for a job or making plans to live on your own? This guide can help!

**Who is This Guide For?**

People with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families.

**What is This Guide For?**

The Connections Guide will help you with many parts of adult life, including:

Employment

Community

Education

Transportation

Self-Advocacy

Housing

### **EMPLOYMENT FIRST INITIATIVE**

“Employment First” means that having an:

- Integrated job
- In the community
- That pays at least minimum wage
- Or is paid through self-employment

Should be the first choice for people with I/DD.

### **Florida’s Employment First Partners**

- Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities

- Florida Department of Education
- Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Division of Blind Services
- Florida Department of Economic Opportunity
- CareerSource Florida
- Florida Department of Children and Families, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Office
- Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc.
- Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, Inc.
- The Arc of Florida, Inc.
- Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged

To learn more, go to: [employmentfirstfl.org](http://employmentfirstfl.org)

## ***Employment***

### **AGENCY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (APD)**

APD Can Help People with These Disabilities

- Intellectual disabilities
- Autism
- Spinabifidacystica or myelomeningocele
- Cerebral palsy
- Prader-Willi syndrome
- Down syndrome
- Phelan-McDermid syndrome

APD helps people with I/DD and their families to live, learn, and work in their communities.

The agency also teaches the public about employment for people with disabilities.

*HOW TO REACH APD*  
[resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory](http://resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory)

Find help and programs in your area. APD Resource Guide - Call the Number for Your County:

**850-487-1992** Bay, Calhoun, Escambia, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Wakulla, Walton, or Washington

**904-992-2433** Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Clay, Columbia, Dixie, Duval, Flagler, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Nassau, Putnam, St. Johns, Suwannee, Taylor, Union, or Volusia

**407-245-0440** Brevard, Citrus, Hardee, Hernando, Highlands, Lake, Marion, Orange, Osceola, Polk, Seminole, or Sumter

**800-615-8720** Charlotte, Collier, DeSoto, Glades, Hendry, Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, or Sarasota

**844-766-7520** Broward, Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee, Palm Beach, or St. Lucie

**305-349-1478** Dade or Monroe

*Contact APD for Help With:*

- Supported employment and supported living
- Employment Enhancement Project
- Medicaid Home and Community- Based Services Waiver through iBudget Florida
- Consumer Directed CarePlus
- Individual and Family Supports funding for non-waiver customer expenses

To learn more: [apd.myflorida.com/about/faqs.htm](http://apd.myflorida.com/about/faqs.htm)

## ***Employment***

### **VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VR)**

You may be able to get VR services if:

- You have a physical or mental disability.
- Your disability makes it hard for you to start or keep a job.
- You need VR's services to get or keep a job.

A VR Counselor will answer your questions.

To find out what services VR can offer you, make an appointment with a local VR office. If you have records from schools, doctors, or jobs, bring the records with you to your VR appointment.

### ***Helping People Find Good Jobs***

### Examples of VR Services:

- Vocational Evaluation and Planning
- Career Guidance
- Job Coaching
- Job Placement
- On-the-Job Training
- Training and Education After High School
- Job Site Accommodations
- Supported and Customized Employment
- Assistive Technology and Devices
- Medical and Psychological Assessment
- Time-Limited or Psychological Treatment

### VR Offices

To find a VR office:  
800-451-4327 or [RehabWorks.org/office\\_directory.shtml](http://RehabWorks.org/office_directory.shtml)  
On the website, click on your area to find a VR office.

If you receive Social Security Disability Insurance or Supplemental Security Income for your disability, you can probably get VR services.

### VR Helps With:

- General Employment Services
- Supported Employment Services
- Pre-Employment Transition Services
- Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf/Blind Services
- Florida's Ticket to Work Program

### ***Employment***

#### **CAREERSOURCE FLORIDA**

CareerSource Florida has Career Centers across the state. These Career Centers are paid for by the U.S. Department of Labor.

CareerSource Centers offer services including:

- A Disability Navigator to help guide you through the system.

- Money to provide special services for people with disabilities.
- Special training.
- Support for employers who hire people with disabilities.

The CareerSource Florida network partner in your area has many services to help you connect to a rewarding career. Visit [abilitieswork.employflorida.com](http://abilitieswork.employflorida.com) to get started.

### ***CAREERSOURCE FLORIDA: SOLUTIONS THAT WORK FOR YOU***

- Career Services: How to find a job that suits you.
- Education Services: Training programs and schools.
- Community Services and Benefits: Health, welfare, nutrition and money.
- Youth Services: Jobs and other paths beyond high school.
- Job Seeker Services: Finding a new job and how to develop a good resume and cover letter.
- Labor Market Services: Trends in the labor market.
- Disability Services: Employment, health, and money services.
- More Resources: Statistics, college career centers, state and local partners.

For help connecting with career and training opportunities, please visit [abilitieswork.employflorida.com](http://abilitieswork.employflorida.com)

### ***Home Life***

#### **HOME LIFE**

Options include apartments, condominiums, townhomes, houses, or mobile or manufactured homes.

Home ownership may be the right option for you if you have enough income.

Renting a home is a common choice for people with limited incomes or who want the flexibility. Rent assistance is sometimes available.

Finding affordable housing can be hard. A supported living coach or agency can help.

Supported Living provides people with individualized help to choose where and how they want to live in homes of their own.

A supported living coach or support coordinator, using in-home supports and community resources, can help people live on their own and be a part of the community.

### ***Education and Training***

#### **UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES**

Many schools in Florida offer programs with extra help for students with I/DD after high school. Some programs offer scholarships and other help with costs.

For more information:

Florida Consortium on Inclusive Higher Education:  
[fcihe.com/resources/programdevelopment/credential-guidance](http://fcihe.com/resources/programdevelopment/credential-guidance)

The Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities (FCSUA) at the University of  
Central Florida:  
[fcsua.org/E\\_postsecondary.php](http://fcsua.org/E_postsecondary.php) and [fcsua.org](http://fcsua.org)

Florida Comprehensive Transition Programs approved for federal financial aid:  
[studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements/intellectual-disabilities](http://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements/intellectual-disabilities)

State Universities:  
[flbog.edu/universities](http://flbog.edu/universities)

Florida Colleges:  
[fldoe.org/schools/higher-ed/fl-college-system](http://fldoe.org/schools/higher-ed/fl-college-system)

Commission for Independent Education:  
[fldoe.org/policy/cie](http://fldoe.org/policy/cie)

#### **CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION**

Success Story

*"I knew I could do it, but it was tough,"* said Josh. Today, Josh works in the automotive service industry.

Josh Duncan went to Florida State College at Jacksonville with the help of Project Achieve. This project was initiated through funding by the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council.

Explore a CTE program at a Florida College:  
[fldoe.org/schools/higher-ed/fl-college-system](http://fldoe.org/schools/higher-ed/fl-college-system)

Explore a CTE program at a Florida Technical College:  
[fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/dist-ps-instit.stml](http://fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/dist-ps-instit.stml)

## ***Self-Advocacy***

### **FLORIDA SELF-ADVOCATES NETWORK'D**

Self-Advocacy is when people speak for themselves instead of having someone else speak for them.

Florida Self-Advocates Network'D, or FL SAND, is a state- wide network of self-advocacy groups.

FL SAND is led by Self- Advocates who are active in speaking up for themselves. They promote rights, work for systems change. and create community inclusion.

People involved in Self-Advocacy help each other work for change.

They work on both big goals, like closing institutions, and individual issues, such as supporting someone with their personal concerns.

To learn more: [flsand.org](http://flsand.org) or contact [flsand@gmail.com](mailto:flsand@gmail.com)

## ***Disability Rights***

### **DISABILITY RIGHTS AND ISSUE RESOLUTIONS**

Issues with Social Security disability determination or appeals?

Call 1.800.772.1213.

Issues with Americans with Disabilities Act?

Call the Commission on Human Relations at 1.800.342.8170  
or the ADA Hotline at 1.800.514.0301.

## Issues with Housing?

Call Disability Rights Florida at 800-342-0823 / 800-346-4127 (TDD).

- Information and referrals
- Self-advocacy support
- Technical assistance
- Investigations into complaints of abuse, neglect, and rights violations
- Assistance with Social Security Representative Payees and their beneficiaries.
- Dispute support
- Negotiation and mediation support
- Advocacy services
- Litigation (lawsuits)

To learn more: [disabilityrightsflorida.org](http://disabilityrightsflorida.org) or 800-342-0823.

## Resources

Agency/ Organization	Resource Services and Supports	State	Local	Contact
Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD)  APD's iBudget Waiver program for Florida Medicaid  Directory of Resources for people with I/DD in Florida	APD provides services to people with I/DD in the areas of living, learning, and working.	✓	✓	<a href="http://apd.myflorida.com/about/faqs.htm">apd.myflorida.com/about/faqs.htm</a> 1-866-APD-CARES/1-866-273-2773  <a href="http://apd.myflorida.com/ibudget">apd.myflorida.com/ibudget</a> 1-866-273-2773  <a href="http://resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory">resourcedirectory.apd.myflorida.com/resourcedirectory</a> 1-866-273-2773
CareerSource Florida	Provides job counseling, training and placement assistance	✓	✓	<a href="http://careersourceflorida.com">careersourceflorida.com</a> 850-692-6887
Centers for Independent Living	Provides help in all aspects of independent living, including jobs	✓	✓	<a href="http://floridacils.org/LocateYourLocalCIL">floridacils.org/LocateYourLocalCIL</a> 850-575-6004 Toll Free 1-866-575- 6004

	PCA Services Program: Assistance to working adult Floridians.	✓	✓	<a href="http://floridacils.org/pca-services-program">floridacils.org/pca-services-program</a>
	Florida Youth Leadership Forum: Leadership training for high school students with disabilities.	✓	✓	<a href="http://floridacils.org/youth-leadership">floridacils.org/youth-leadership</a>
Disability Rights Florida	Information and referral, self-advocacy support, complaint investigation/resolution, advocacy	✓	✓	<a href="http://disabilityrightsflorida.org">disabilityrightsflorida.org</a> 850-488-9071 or Toll Free 1-800-342-0823 or TDD 1-800-346-4127
Down Syndrome Association of Central Florida	Resources on education, health and employment for people with Down Syndrome		✓	dsacf.org 407-478-5621
Florida Alliance for Assistive Technology (FAAST)	Provides assistive technology to eligible people	✓	✓	<a href="http://faast.org">faast.org</a> 850-487-3278 Toll Free 1-888-788-9216 TTY 877-506-2723
Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities at University of Central Florida	Support for on-campus college experiences that lead to employment	✓	✓	<a href="http://fcsua.org">fcsua.org</a> 407-823-5225
Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD)	Provides transportation services to people with disabilities	✓	✓	<a href="http://ctd.fdot.gov/ctcsbycounty.htm">ctd.fdot.gov/ctcsbycounty.htm</a> 850-410-5700 TD Helpline 1-800-983-2435
Florida Department of Education	State University System	✓	✓	<a href="http://fbog.edu">fbog.edu</a> 850-245-0466
	Florida Colleges	✓	✓	<a href="http://fldoe.org/schools/higher-ed/fl-college-system">fldoe.org/schools/higher-ed/fl-college-system</a> 850-245-0407
	Florida Career and Technical Education and Adult Education	✓	✓	<a href="http://fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu">fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu</a> 850-245-5071
	Division of Blind Services	✓	✓	<a href="http://dbs.myflorida.com">dbs.myflorida.com</a> 850-245-0300
Florida Developmental Disabilities	Change policy and create services to support independence, inclusion, and	✓		850-488-4180/800-580-7801 TDD 850-488-0956/888-488-8633 <a href="http://FDDC.org">FDDC.org</a>

Council, Inc. (FDDC)	decision-making of individuals with I/DD in all aspects of life			
The Florida Housing Coalition	For an affordable Housing Resource Guide	✓	✓	<a href="http://flhousing.org/publications">flhousing.org/publications</a>
Florida Housing Finance Corporation	Help to apply for a loan to buy a home	✓	✓	<a href="http://floridahousing.org">floridahousing.org</a>
Florida Housing Search	Free resource to find affordable rental housing	✓	✓	<a href="http://FloridaHousingSearch.org">FloridaHousingSearch.org</a> 877-428-8844
Local Public Housing Authorities	Apply for rent help through a Housing Choice Voucher		✓	<a href="http://hud.gov/resources">hud.gov/resources</a> 800-955-2232
Social Security's Ticket to Work	National program that pays local providers to help SSI/SSI client get jobs and keep them	✓		<a href="http://choosework.net">choosework.net</a> 866-968-7842
Vocational Rehabilitation	Provides services to people with disabilities including assessment, education, training, and accommodation	✓	✓	<a href="http://rehabworks.org/office_directory.shtml">rehabworks.org/office_directory.shtml</a> 1-800-451-4327
Work Incentives Planning and Assistance	Benefits Planning for Social Security Beneficiaries and Recipients		✓	<a href="http://ssa.gov/work/WIPA.html">ssa.gov/work/WIPA.html</a> 1-866-968-7842 Voice 1-866-823-2967 TTY

*Thank You*

We would like to pay our respects to our colleague, Barbara Butz, who initially developed this document with the Capstone Group in 2015. Barbara passed away in November of 2019. The guide was updated in 2020 by Dale DiLeo Consulting, Inc.

Special thanks to the following people for their guidance and input:

- Warren Davis, CareerSource Florida
- Cherie Hall, Disability Rights Florida
- Eddie Hall, FDDC Council Member and Self-Advocate
- Kiersten Lee, Agency of Persons with Disabilities
- Jan Pearce, Vocational Rehabilitation
- FDDC Council Staff

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