



CREATING A 2023 DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AWARENESS DAY IN YOUR COMMUNITY

“To advocate and promote meaningful participation in all aspects of life for Floridians with developmental disabilities”

The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC) will launch its statewide grassroots advocacy campaign for Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month at the Capitol on Tuesday, March 14, 2023. The campaign’s mission is to support advocates in working with media outlets and their local community members to successfully advocate with Florida legislators. Advocacy priorities include the importance of investing in Home and Community Based Services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities that includes adequate funding for critical services and programs, additional funding for the iBudget waitlist, and educating legislators and the public about the challenges and opportunities facing Floridians with disabilities.

Media and Advocacy Kit Overview

Effective communication is critical in advocating with lawmakers to maintain funding for services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities. A successful media campaign will engage the media and educate the public on issues affecting individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, caregivers, and friends. The Media and Advocacy Kit provides the information and tools needed to implement a grassroots advocacy campaign in communities throughout Florida.

This Media and Advocacy Kit is designed to provide the information and tools needed to implement this campaign in communities throughout Florida, thereby increasing the overall impact and helping ensure adequate services and a good quality of life for Floridians with developmental disabilities.

With your help and all our voices raised together, we will ensure that the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, caregivers, and friends, will not be ignored.

Public Awareness and Media Strategies

The following strategies can be used to generate media coverage and increase public attention to a Developmental Disabilities Day in local communities.

Press Conference and Rally

Press conferences and rallies are used to announce major news events or bring attention to an important issue. A sample Press Release and Suggestions for Organizing a Local Developmental Disabilities Awareness Day are available in Attachment A. For a successful press conference and/or rally, organizers should:

- Choose a location that relates to the reason for the press conference and is accessible to the media and the public.
- Schedule the press conference before noon.
- Two to three days before the event, announce the press conference using a press release and phone calls to the media.
- Select two or three individuals knowledgeable on the issues to make brief statements.
- Prepare handouts with copies of the statements, along with information and statistics to reinforce your position.
- Allow time for questions from the media.



Suggestions for Organizing a Press Conference/Rally

- Determine the issue to be addressed at the press conference/rally.
- Determine the location and get permission to hold your event there.
- Determine who will attend and send invitations at least two weeks in advance of the event.
- Assemble a media packet to distribute at the event that includes a press release, background information on the speaker(s), and a summary of the issue(s).



Adoption of Resolution/Proclamation

- Request issuance of a resolution, proclamation, or designation of **(local date)** as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Day 2023 from your local city and/or county commission several ways.
- If you personally know a city or county commissioner, or the mayor, ask them to issue a proclamation or resolution. While it is best for a chairman or mayor to request a resolution, any commissioner can put in a request.
- If you don't have a personal contact, call the main phone number for the commission or council office, and find out the process for issuing a resolution or proclamation. Explain your request and the key issues. Ask for an email address to send information and let them know you have sample language for the proclamation/resolution prepared.
- Once you have agreement, confirm when it will be scheduled on a meeting agenda. You and as many other advocates as you can find should attend the meeting to show your support. Frequently, they will not just designate the day, but they may also wish to present the official proclamation to you on behalf of your organization. Be sure to have someone take a picture of you receiving the proclamation. Email the picture to: Margaretd@fddc.org and make sure to send a personal message (**letter or email**) to the commissioner or whoever assisted you, expressing your sincere gratitude.
- A sample Proclamation/Resolution can be found at in Attachment B.

Editorial Board Visits

The intended outcome of an editorial board meeting with the editor of your local newspaper is to have the editor write an opinion piece about your organization, event, or idea. When establishing and holding an editorial board meeting, advocates should:

- Call the newsroom or television station two to three weeks in advance and ask to speak to the person in charge of scheduling an editorial board meeting.
- Review your key message before the meeting and have handouts of the press release, issue summary and key facts.
- Have a copy of the proclamation or resolution for Developmental Disabilities Awareness DAY that has been issued at the city or county level.
- Have clear notes about why it is a good idea for the newspaper to support your position, issue, or topic.
- Maintain good eye contact to engage your audience
- Send a thank-you note following the meeting.

Submit an Op-Ed Piece

- Written opinion-editorials, also known as op-ed pieces, are located on or near the editorial page in a newspaper. Op-eds give companies, organizations, and people of the community a chance to present their views to the readership of a newspaper. Op-eds should clearly advocate a point, provide adequate research to support the point and suggest a call to action. Op-eds should be informative, persuasive, and compelling. Different news outlets have specific guidelines on how to submit op-eds; the best place to find instructions is on the newspaper's website. Submit your Op-Ed to "Guest" or "My View" columns in your local paper.
- Always follow up with the editor after submitting an op-ed piece. If an editor publishes your piece, it is customary to thank them for the inclusion. If they are not interested in publishing the piece, thank them for their time and consideration. If there is no response to the initial submission, send a timely follow-up email. To submit an op-ed, call your local daily print news outlet and ask for contact information for the editorial page editor.
- A sample Op-Ed piece can be found at Attachment C.

Submit a Letter to the Editor

- Letters to the editor are a good way to present ideas, promote a campaign or respond to a previously published article. Letters to the editor are brief opinion pieces reflecting the viewpoint of the author. When writing a letter to the editor, it is best to keep the length to 150 words or fewer and no more than 200 words. Letters to the editor can be sent via email or submitted through the newspaper's website. Include your name, address, phone number and email address at the bottom of the letter as a signature of authenticity.
- To submit a letter, call your local daily or weekly newspaper or check online for letter submission information. Be sure to read through the submission guidelines before sending.
- A sample Letter to the Editor can be found at Attachment D.

Broadcast Interviews

- A great way to share awareness messages and educate the local community about Developmental Disabilities Awareness Day is to participate in radio or TV interviews. Advocates, individuals, or family members affected by developmental disabilities and/or other advocates can be scheduled to appear on television and radio public affairs programs, news/feature segments, guest/interview shows and "talk" shows. Advocate efforts will most likely be best spent focusing specifically on television and radio public affairs programs, news/feature and guest-interview shows and local news and talk radio programming as interviews of this nature are typical for this type of programming.

- To find out about local TV and radio programs, including airtime, host, format, etc., visit the websites of your local stations or call the station and ask to speak to the news director or program director. During your call, explain the nature of your inquiry and briefly describe Developmental Disabilities Awareness Day and why the listeners or viewers of his/her station might be interested in learning more about it.

Social Media Engagement

- Social media provides timely news and industry information along with opportunities to meet and interact with people that are interested in a company, group, or organization. Social media is about building relationships with others that have common interests, occupations, or skills. Social media can be used to reach out to third-party organizations, fellow advocates, and members of the community to share and receive important information. For the Developmental Disabilities Awareness Day campaign, social media sites are used to share campaign messages and raise public awareness and recognition.
- There are many different social media sites that can be used to promote Developmental Disabilities Awareness Day including [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [LinkedIn](#).
- Sample Social Media Messages can be found Attachment E.

Meet With Your Legislator

To locate contact information for your local legislators go to www.flsenate.gov for a list of senators and to www.myfloridahouse.gov to find your representative. It's best to make an appointment to speak with your legislator. If you are unable to make an appointment, you could stop by your legislator's local office, explain to an available staffer that you live in the legislator's district and ask if the legislator has a few minutes to talk. It is realistic to expect to spend only 5 to 10 minutes with your legislator so have all your information ready. During the meeting, you should:

- State the purpose of your visit.
- Identify your affiliated organization and briefly explain its mission.
- Be clear about the legislation you are supporting/opposing.
- Convey your position concisely (use personal examples if possible).
- Give the legislator a chance to explain their perspective on the issue.



- Let the legislator know you will stay in touch.
- Leave concise, useful information that will remind the legislator of your visit and act as a resource for him/her.
- Following the meeting, write a note or letter to your legislator, thanking them for their time and stating your position succinctly and politely.



Write a Letter to Your Legislator

- If you can't make a personal visit with your legislator, write a letter or email stating your position on a particular piece of legislation and asking for their support.
- A sample Letter to Your Legislator can be found at Appendix F.

Attachments

Attachment A: Press Release/ Suggestions for Organizing a Press Conference/Rally

Attachment B: Sample Proclamation/Resolution

Attachment C: Op-Ed

Attachment D: Letter to the Editor

Attachment E: Social Media Messages

Attachment F: Letter to Your Legislator