

WORKIN' THE SESSION 2024

2024 FLORIDA LEGISLATIVE SESSION

FLORIDA SAND FELLOWS
BREAKING BARRIERS TRAINING ACADEMY



LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY 2024

- The purpose of Developmental Disabilities Awareness Day is to bring awareness of developmental disabilities to legislators.
- Disability groups advocate throughout the legislative session: January 9 – March 8.
- There are many ways to advocate from your local community – being at DD Day is not essential!
- The FDDC is encouraging FL SAND groups and other self-advocates to use the resources on their advocacy page to work throughout the session.

FL SAND Priorities

HOT ISSUES THIS YEAR!

1. Inclusion of the iBudget waiver in the Social Service Estimating Conference
2. Increase in support for Waiver Support Coordinators
3. Consideration of a Medicaid Buy-in Option for workers with disabilities
4. Passage of the Supported Decision-Making Bill (HB 73 & SB 446)



FL SAND Legislative Priorities 2024

FL SAND is a network of 15 grassroots, self-advocacy groups that represents people with disabilities throughout the state of Florida. We advocate for disability rights and inclusion for all and represent hundreds of self-advocates in Florida. You can learn more about us at FLSAND.org, or reach us at contactflsand@gmail.com.

FL SAND supports Medicaid Home- and Community-Based services (HCBS) that provide people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families access to independence and life in the community. HCBS provide assistance with everyday activities, like bathing, dressing, making meals, and so many more. The problem is there isn't enough funding in Florida's Medicaid waiver programs to support everyone who needs services. This means that over 23,000 individuals who have been pre-enrolled for services have not received them and others, who are in crisis and need services immediately, are having trouble finding providers. Priorities #1-3 below offer solutions to the strain on HCBS and Medicaid in Florida. FL SAND also continues to support the passage of a bill to establish Supported Decision-Making for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



#1 Inclusion of the iBudget Waiver in the Social Service Estimating Conference

Predicting and managing costs is essential through estimating the need for increased services for individuals currently enrolled in the iBudget waiver. The main factors contributing to increased services needs include the recipients aging and aging caregivers, crisis situations, and graduation from high school. **FL SAND is asking legislators to begin including the iBudget waiver program in**

the Social Service Estimating Conference to ensure adequate funding for waiver recipients experiencing crisis.

#2 Increase Support for Waiver Support Coordinators

Require a well-trained support coordination workforce that uses the best techniques identified by case management experts to address the needs of individuals with I/DD. The State needs to encourage employment of people to provide support coordination services that are essential to create and implement a person-centered service plan for people on the iBudget waiver. Incentives can include rates commensurate with experience and training, along with streamlined reporting systems, and reduced burdensome regulations. This will increase the availability of qualified support coordinators and improve workforce stability.



#3 Consider a Medicaid Buy-in Option for Workers with Disabilities

With Disability Rights Florida and other agencies, FL SAND supports the introduction of Senate Bill 212 by Senator Joe Gruters to establish and implement a Medicaid Buy-in program for Floridians with disabilities. If passed by the 2024 Florida Legislature, this legislation would create an optional state Medicaid benefit group specifically for workers with disabilities who have earnings in excess of maximum income eligibility levels. **FL SAND is grateful for the Working People with Disabilities Program for those on the iBudget waiver and is excited about the possibility of income limits being further increased through a buy-in option.**

Medicaid buy in would allow many more people with disabilities the opportunity to work and earn to their full potential without the fear of losing vital Medicaid Services. Buy in also allows people with disabilities to contribute to Florida's economy by paying Medicaid premiums. Specifically, the legislation provides that the Medicaid Buy-in program "must provide full Medicaid benefits to eligible individuals and limit any premiums or cost sharing to a certain percentage of an individual's income, as determined by [the Agency for Health Care Administration]."

#4 Passage of the Supported Decision-Making (SDM) Bill — HB 73 & SB 446

We continue to partner with other agencies such as Disability Rights Florida and the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council in supporting Supported Decision-Making as an alternative to full guardianship for people with disabilities. Offering Supported Decision-Making in Florida as an alternative to guardianship will indicate that legislators believe in and champion the rights and autonomy of individuals with disabilities. Emphasizing collaboration and assistance from trusted advisors in decision-making over traditional guardianship models creates a more inclusive and person-centered system. Supported Decision-Making ensures that decision-making processes respect individual choices and preferences.



This flyer was created by the FL SAND Fellows Leadership Program, a project provided by the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc., supported in part by grant numbers 2101FLSCDD and 2201FLSCDD from the U.S. Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Washington, D.C. 20201 as part of financial assistance awards totaling \$3,540,940 with 100% funded by ACL/HHS. 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 and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by ACL/HHS or the U.S. Government.



OTHER ISSUES TO WATCH

- No one waits for services. Elimination of the waitlist (FDDC priority)
- Addressing the behavioral needs of people with I/DD through Mobile Response Units & finding providers and new funding for Intensive Behavioral (IB) and Behavior-Focused (BF) group homes (FDDC priority)
- Rate increases for all iBudget waiver providers (APD returned millions to the state in past years, presumably because there are not enough providers)
- Oversight of the Managed Care Pilot and opposing managed care expansion beyond pilot counties until data is available to evaluate the pilot's successes
- Prevocational services/Adult Project Search
- Track chairs for state parks
- Increased dental coverage of adults with I/DD– need providers

VIRTUAL ADVOCACY IS EFFECTIVE!

- Appointments with legislators/aides will be by phone or over Zoom.
- Virtual advocacy is more efficient because it eliminates transportation and accessibility issues we as people with disabilities may have.
- We still have the ability to advocate to our elected officials, and that's the most important thing!

THE VIRTUAL VISIT PROCESS



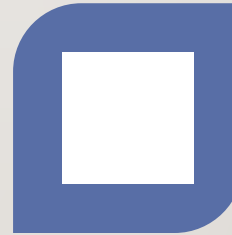
CALL OR EMAIL YOUR
LEGISLATOR'S OFFICE
TO REQUEST A
CONFERENCE CALL
OR ZOOM
APPOINTMENT



BE ON TIME TO
APPOINTMENT



PLAN WHAT
YOU'RE GOING TO
SAY BEFOREHAND



SEND A THANK
YOU NOTE OR
EMAIL BRIEFLY RE-
STATING ONE KEY
MESSAGE

Find legislator contact information on
FSACentral.org>Resources>
Policy & Legislative Action -- enter your
address to find your representatives

MAKING THE APPOINTMENT

- Let them know you are a constituent – someone who votes in their district
- You may only be able to meet with a Legislative Aide, but that's OK
- Have a 30 second speech saying why you want to meet with them
- Tell them you'll send them a Zoom link or phone number for the appointment
- If you can't schedule an appointment, you can always try a different day (recommended) or send a follow-up email instead.

PREPARE FOR YOUR APPOINTMENT

- Resources
 - www.flsand.org, Click on drop-down labeled About > Legislative Advocacy to find legislative resources including your FL SAND priorities
 - Your parents, providers, other self-advocates who have worked with legislators before
- Prepare a message with no more than 3 key points
- Prepare a story from your life related to one of the priorities. The goal is to touch their hearts – It's ok to write and read your story, or send them a written copy.
- Email priority sheets ahead of time so they will have them for the appointment.

PREPARING FOR YOUR APPOINTMENT

CONTINUED...

- Test Zoom technology before the appointment to make sure everything is working, lit well (use lamps or natural light in front of your face), and you are comfortable.
- Charge your devices and have any materials ready. Priorities should be emailed to legislators ahead of time.

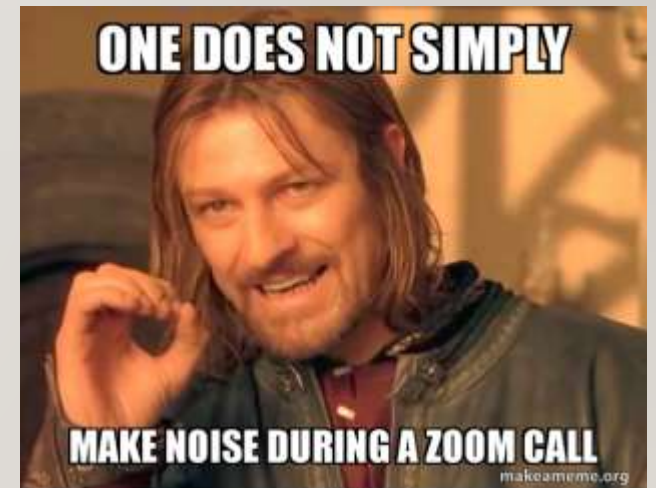


PREPARING FOR YOUR APPOINTMENT

CONTINUED...

- Select a place with as few distractions as possible (turn off the TV, avoid eating, if others are nearby ask them to be quiet).
- Remember that we all need to be professional and prepared. Practice what you're going to say with a friend or family member. Groups can have practice sessions.
- Be prepared but also be yourself!

[Leg visit 2 \(vimeo.com\)](https://vimeo.com)



**PREPARING:
DRESS TO
IMPRESS!**

FL SAND SHIRT IF YOU HAVE ONE

**SHIRT AND TIE, SHIRT AND JACKET
(NO TIE), NICE BLOUSE**

**NO SHORTS OR JEANS IF YOU MEET IN
PERSON IN A HOME TOWN OFFICE**

[Leg visit 2 \(vimeo.com\)](#)

DURING THE APPOINTMENT

- Again, keep your message to 3 points and stay on topic
- Don't forget your personal story—and make sure its relevant to a priority
- If possible, screen share materials: FL SAND priorities flier
- Thank the individual(s) for their time

ADVOCATE THROUGHOUT THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION AT KEY POINTS

1. Stay current on progress via FL SAND and FSACentral Facebook pages. Search #FloridaDDAdvocacy2024
2. Subscribe to FSACentral.org news (scroll to the bottom on the page to subscribe).
3. Sign-up for emails at disability organizations like FDDC.org, disabilityrightsflorida.org, arcflorida.org, familycafe.net. You'll get their legislative updates.
4. Family Café “Let’s Talk”: Friday afternoon call with special guests.

ADVOCATE THROUGHOUT THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION AT KEY POINTS (CONT'D)

5. Follow bill progress:
 - Senate: www.flsenate.gov
 - House: [Bills for the Regular Session 2024 | Florida House of Representatives \(myfloridahouse.gov\)](http://Bills%20for%20the%20Regular%20Session%202024%20|%20Florida%20House%20of%20Representatives%20(myfloridahouse.gov))
6. Respond to calls for action! E.g. calls and emails to committee members, your legislators, etc. before key votes.
 - Prepare what you are going to say before you call. It's OK to read and leave a voice message if no one answers.

ADVOCATE THROUGHOUT THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION IN YOUR COMMUNITY



Don't forget about other legislative resources available to you ...

- FDDC Advocacy Resource Guide and Tool Kit: www.fddc.org/dd-awareness-day/#toolkit
- This resource provides ideas for advocating in your community such as hosting a developmental disabilities awareness day

QUESTIONS?
CONTACTFLSAND@GMAIL.COM