



One Voice Brevard



1 April 2025

We Are Aware...What's Next?

by Nicole Grabner, Director, One Voice Brevard

There's been a lot of attention lately, both nationally and in our own state (roughly 20 bills in the Florida House and Senate this session specifically discuss Autism), to the growing Autistic population. The statistic of 1 in 36 (CDC prevalence statistic of Autism in the United States) is very commonly known and quoted, increasing awareness over the years, while acceptance, understanding and valuing individuals with autism for their unique abilities, remains essential for fostering an inclusive society. In Florida, families are not only advocating for awareness but also working to create an environment where those with ASD are supported and embraced.

The prevalence of autism in Florida mirrors the national rate, with thousands of children diagnosed annually. According to the Florida Department of Health (FLHealthCharts.gov), approximately 5.6% of children in the state between 3 and 17 have been diagnosed with ASD, a number that has seen steady increases over the past decade. These growing numbers highlight the importance of moving beyond awareness to acceptance, a shift that involves recognizing and accommodating the diverse needs of those with autism.

Unlike other developmental disabilities, such as Down syndrome or intellectual disabilities, Autism manifests in a wide range of abilities and challenges, often without a specific intellectual impairment. Individuals with ASD may have unique strengths, including exceptional memory or attention to detail, but may struggle with social interactions and sensory sensitivities. While other developmental disabilities may involve delays in physical development or cognitive function, autism is primarily



In this newsletter
you will find:

We Are Aware....
What's Next?

DD Day Recap

Letter to Senator
Fine

Workforce
Program for
People with Autism

ASD Diagnosis

Bill Buzz/Advocacy
Alert

Legislative
Platform

Medicaid Primer,
Arc of Florida

Art Submissions

Resources

April Events

Flyers

We Are Aware...What's Next?

(continued)

characterized by differences in how individuals perceive and interact with the world around them.

While Autism awareness is an essential first step, acceptance is crucial to fostering a more inclusive society. By shifting the focus from simply recognizing autism to actively supporting those affected, we can create a world where individuals with ASD are valued for their unique contributions.

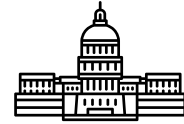
Autism Acceptance

P	P	H	S	O	C	I	E	T	Y	W	M	Q	R
T	A	D	E	F	I	N	I	T	I	O	N	G	Z
N	C	I	A	C	D	I	V	E	R	S	E	O	V
A	P	A	N	C	E	R	M	O	V	K	F	F	F
B	U	Z	P	C	C	B	K	U	H	X	L	U	R
B	I	T	L	I	L	E	B	Z	Q	L	O	N	I
U	Y	L	I	V	T	U	P	C	G	I	R	D	E
Z	A	X	L	S	A	O	S	T	Q	U	I	I	N
T	F	E	J	B	M	C	L	I	A	I	D	N	D
Z	X	Z	A	R	T	T	X	C	O	N	A	G	S
A	W	A	R	E	N	E	S	S	L	N	C	V	H
U	Y	U	A	J	L	B	O	N	V	E	A	E	I
D	U	M	T	F	C	C	F	Z	E	F	N	K	P
O	I	W	Q	B	W	O	R	L	D	Y	W	S	N

AUTISM
ACCEPTANCE
AWARENESS
BILL
CAPITOL
DEFINITION
FRIENDSHIP
INCLUSION
SOCIETY
FUNDING
FLORIDA
WORLD
LENS
DIVERSE

DD Awareness Day Recap

by Nicole Grabner



With over 1.3 million individuals in Florida living with a developmental disability, including autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, and intellectual disabilities, Developmental Disability (DD) Day provided an important platform to shine a spotlight on the growing need for inclusive policies and services. The event highlighted the unique challenges individuals with developmental disabilities face in areas like education, employment, healthcare, and accessibility.

DD Awareness Day (11 March 202) brought together individuals and organizations from across the state to advocate for increased support and opportunities. One Voice Brevard along with numerous other individuals and organizations urged lawmakers to prioritize funding for disability services, expand access to education and vocational training, and improve healthcare accessibility.

We had an incredibly busy and productive week in Tallahassee. We focused on advocating for these specific Bills:

1. [SB 112/HB 591](#) Cleared the Senate unanimously and quickly. You might have seen some press on this. The bill will have to be approved in the House to be moved to the governor for signature, and there is an allocation of around \$756,000.00.
2. [SB 370/HB 219](#) Was heard in the Senate subcommittee on Education Pre-K to 12 while we were there and passed (6 Yes; 2 No). This bill has two more subcommittees to pass in the Senate and three in the House. There is no allocation set for this bill.
3. [SB 1686/HB 1373](#) Has been assigned to committees in both the House and the Senate. There was a press conference held on the 4th Floor of the Rotunda on 13 March where both the sponsors of the Bill (Senator Smith and Representative Harris) were present to discuss its importance. One Voice Brevard's Facebook page did a live stream of the event.
4. [SB 102/HB 127](#) Was heard in the Senate subcommittee Appropriations for Education Pre-K to 12 and unanimously found favorable (9 Yes, 0 No). The Bill was moved to the Senate subcommittee on Fiscal Policy and had its first reading in the House on the Careers and Workforce Subcommittee. There is no appropriation request for this Bill.

We combined efforts with multiple agencies to schedule meetings with Legislators while we were in Tallahassee. The partner agencies included: The Arc of Florida, Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC), For All the People (FATP), and Florida Voices for Health (FVH). In total, we made a combined effort of around 25 meetings in two days with Legislators! Some of the Legislators that we met with included: Rep Greco, Rep Brackett, Rep Miller, Rep Melo, and Rep Benarroach.

DD Awareness Day Recap

(cont.)

The day before DD Day, I was invited to a **Survey Meeting** with Jeanne Farr, CEO of the National Association of the Dually Diagnosed (NADD), to discuss access to services for our I/DD population in Florida. This survey is part of the FDDC's 5-year initiative to improve and enhance resources available to families in our state.

On 12 March, I attended a **Healthcare Budget Subcommittee Hearing** in the House, where they interviewed both APD and ACHA. This hearing was very insightful and I encourage everyone to take some time to watch it. The hearing lasted almost three hours, but I wanted to include some key takeaways below:

1. I was happy to discover how many allies our community had on this panel: Rep Tant has a son on the iBudget Waiver, Rep Andrade specifically said that he wants to fully fund the waitlist, Rep Tramont has a sibling on the iBudget Waiver and has two Autistic Children.

2. Just this year APD reports that 89 people have declined to be enrolled on the iBudget Waiver. I find this information confusing especially as they didn't provide any references for this data in the hearing.

3. APD reports that it takes 3 years to fully identify what service an individual might need on the waiver.

4. APD reported that the Hope Florida Program (in partnership with APD) holds multiple outreach events in each county, frequently. I have seen no evidence of this.

5. APD reported that they sent \$360 million back to ACHA and that it would take \$1.2 billion to completely clear the waitlist as it stands right now.

6. APD will roughly send back two-thirds of their annual allocation from the State (sent to ACHA) in an effort to avoid overspending.

7. ACHA reported that \$160 million was "misappropriated" and that the State of Florida currently has \$139 million in its accounts.

8. ACHA reports that APD sent them \$650 million. (not sure if this was last year or a total of some years)

9. Rep Tant asked ACHA about ABA services provided under the Managed Care program.

10. Rep Woodson asked if the money that APD sends ACHA could be used to hire more providers of direct support coordinators.

11. The panel was not pleased with the information they learned that day and asked that both ACHA and APD return next week to continue the hearing.

I already mentioned the Press Briefing we participated in on Wednesday, but I also wanted to let you know of other press and social media that came from this past week. First, we were mentioned on the Florida Politic's page, announcing our participation in DD Day.

NPR WFIT ran an article about DD Day. Additionally, PoliticoPro ran an article about SB 112, as did Florida's Voice (the first bill of the session to pass the Senate) and the Florida Phoenix.

On Facebook, we reached almost 1,000 people (from One Voice Brevard's page) for the DD Day Bingo Card and almost 150 people with the Facebook live of the press conference.

An Advocate's Letter

By Dalton Higbee, Intern

Senator Randy Fine
1380 Sarno Road
Building C
Melbourne, FL 32935
(321) 409-2025



Dear Senator Randy Fine,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Dalton Higbee, and I am a resident of West Melbourne in Brevard County, Florida. I am writing to you today as a concerned citizen deeply invested in the future of our community.

I have had the privilege of being part of the Angels Bridging Gaps program, which has helped me become more social, and believe that you can accomplish great things if given the opportunity. I enjoy bowling, music, yoga, and line dancing. Through my experiences, I have come to recognize the challenges and opportunities that face our community, particularly in supporting adults with disabilities.

One of the changes I am particularly passionate about seeing in Brevard County is the creation of more programs for adults with disabilities. Currently, there are not enough programs available, mainly due to a lack of funding. Additionally, more job opportunities for people with disabilities are needed to ensure that everyone has the chance to contribute to their community and achieve independence. This change is crucial because many individuals with disabilities are capable of working and participating in society if given the right support and opportunities. I strongly believe that by increasing funding and resources for these programs and job opportunities, we can create a more inclusive and supportive community.

In conclusion, I urge you to consider the impact that the lack of programs and job opportunities has on people with disabilities and to support increased funding and initiatives to address these issues. Your leadership in addressing these challenges can make a significant difference in the lives of many residents in Brevard County.

Thank you for your attention on this matter. I look forward to seeing positive developments that will benefit our community. Please feel free to contact me at (321) 960-5807 or daltonhigbee@gmail.com if you have any questions or would like to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

Dalton Higbee

Workforce Program for People with Autism

by Ken Friedel, Intern



Happy April, One Voice Brevard readers! Ken Friedel here with a brand new article for you all, this time focusing on Autism Awareness And Advocacy Month in the lead-up to Autism Awareness Day at the Capitol. Out of the five bills that I was given by Ms. Nicole to look up and see if any of them interested me to write about, I knew right away that I was going to choose the one for the Workforce Program For People With Autism. And man oh man, do I have a lot to say when it comes to this particular bill! But since I'm limited to two hundred and fifty words across two paragraphs, I'll try to make this as brief as possible. With that said, on with the show!

I think Representative Kendall said it best when first pitching the bill stating that we shouldn't forget about an intelligent group of students that sometimes get overlooked; that being children with autism and how we need to include them in the workforce while assisting them in securing employment after graduation.

Kendall also states that not only would this help autistic students, but also strengthen our economy and communities because developing this program is long overdue. This really speaks to me because I have an Associate's Degree in Fine Arts in the field of graphic design and digital media, and not to mention the fact That I have had prior experience in the field when it comes to

my YouTube channel which will be celebrating twelve years this July. But despite having the degree and personal experience, there somehow doesn't appear to be enough of a calling for jobs in that field no matter where I look whether it was up in my old home of Maryland or my new home here in Florida.

On top of that, it really feels like the working world doesn't want to give me a chance as they keep telling me that I need experience no matter how many times I send in a resume. That is why I've taken on various internships this past year as well as this year with Angels Bridging Gaps as a photojournalist which I've done twice and One Voice Brevard as one of two writers for a three-month period. This way, I can show those who doubt my skill set and say that I "don't have experience" proof that I do have what it takes to make it out there in the industry. But if not, then I may just take it upon myself to start my own little photo and video editing business where I've already had one very satisfied customer.

The working world may continue to knock me down, but I will continue to get back up again and again. Because in keeping with the theme of Autism Awareness, nothing will stop me from showing the world that everyone can make a difference.

Angels Bridging Gaps Happenings



With just 2 months to go in our spring program, there are many good things to look back at and many new things to come.

Here is a list of our upcoming educational trips (they can be attended by any special needs person with a parent/caregiver, and there is a small fee to attend). Contact Phil @ABG.marketingdirector@gmail.com

April 3rd at BIG SHOTS GOLF in Vero Beach
(includes lunch)

April 22nd in Satellite Beach for an "Earth Day" beach clean-up, lunch with some city employees, and a tour of their NEW Fire Station

April 30th at Harmony Farms in Cocoa, learning all about how to care for horses, etc. (includes lunch)
The farm needs toilet paper, paper towels, 33 gal. trash bags, apples, carrots, and vanilla wafers.

May 1st will have us traveling to the McClarty Treasure Museum in Sebastian for a tour and video.
(includes lunch)

Other great happenings:

Mother-Son Date Night is May 10th from 5-8 pm. Click this link for additional information and registration. Mother-Son Date Night Space is limited, and additional sons are invited as well.

Daddy-Daughter Date Night is June 7th from 5-8 pm. It will be the same as the Mother-Son event. The link will be available on April 7th.

On April 8th and May 13th, former MLB player Coach Keith Ross will be putting together a special program for our group.

May 10th is the Melbourne Rummage Sale at their auditorium on Hibiscus Rd in Melbourne from 8 am until 1 PM. Admission is FREE, and our ABGworks will be there handling our spring clearance on clothing.

Our Summer Hangout program will be coming out shortly. This program is for the whole family. It will be held every Thursday in June and July, except for July 3rd. It will include bowling, Arts for All, Taekwondo, and 2 great tours.

June 19th is "SURFS UP DUDE", where we will visit the Florida Surf Museum, Ron Jon's Surf Shop Tour, and have lunch with some local surfers, including Kimberly House. Ahoy mateys! July 24th takes us to the Pirate Museum, where we can get your "ARRRRR" on. Who wants to jump on board? Maybe we can have Black Beard join us for lunch! I heard he likes scallywag sandwiches.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Diagnosis

by Dixie Riepl, Director, Autism Center for Development and Behavior

Parents may not always recognize their child has a serious problem such as ASD. The child may be compliant, able to socialize and communicate with others, and do many daily tasks. However, the child may have subtle difficulties that parents think will go away when the child matures. It is the best interest of the child and parent to try to get the child professional help at an early age to prevent negative behaviors, incidents, or challenges for the child as they become an adult.

If the child does not begin to babble/speak or make eye contact by the first year or two, the child's doctor can make a referral to a Florida program called EARLY STEPS. This program provides experienced and trained individuals to provide support and coaching for qualified children from ages 0 to 3 years. (There is a current bill - [SB 112/HB 591](#) - which seeks to extend this age to 4.) This individual is there as a coach to help the parent to understand how they can support their child and get them the professional services they may need. However, the individual is not there to fix the child's deficits. The parents can learn what they can do to train their child to more appropriate behaviors and daily life skills.

As a parent of a young child, pay attention to their development. Talk to the child's doctor if you have any concerns. Read the CDC guidelines that provide information regarding the stages of development and what is expected that a child can do at different stages. Keep a binder of the important documents and medical information for the child. Take short video clips of the child doing both positive and negative behaviors, tasks, play dates, etc., to help the doctor and parent with any information that can help resolve a question related to the child's development or health.

Below is a resource that may help to answer some questions regarding the ASD diagnosis:

[A Short Review on Current Understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorders](#)

(Park, HR, Lee JM, Moon HE, Lee DS, Kim BN, Kim J, Kim DG, Paek SH. [A Short Review on the Current Understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorders](#). Exp Neurol. 2016 Feb; 25(1):1-13. doi: 10.5607/en.2016.25.1. Pub 2016 Jan 28, PMID: 26924928; PMCID: PMC4766109)

Here are some Brevard County locations for ASD testing:

- Child and Family Consultants (Melbourne)
- Scott Center for Autism (Melbourne)
- AMEGO (Melbourne)
- InScope Health Group (Cocoa)
- Florida Psychological Specialists LLC (Satellite Beach)
- Cocoa Child Psychology (Cape Canaveral)
- Monarch Educational Psychological Services (Melbourne)

**This list is subject to change. For more information or current list, please see SOAK Facebook Group Files tab.*

Career Quest 2025

A Mall Adventure Like No Other!

Coming to Merritt Square Mall on Wednesday,
April 23 from 9:30 AM – 1:30 PM

Get ready for a one-of-a-kind immersive experience where students become adventurers in a live-action role-play quest designed to explore career paths, build real-world skills, and spark imagination! Career Quest 2025 brings together educators, local businesses, and community volunteers to transform the mall into a living game board where learning meets fun. Career Quest 2025 is designed for youth with disabilities ages 14-22 interested in career

exploration. Schools and learning centers may register their groups and individual homeschoolers are also welcome.

This event is a collaboration between the Autism Center for Development and Behavior, bUneke magazine, Dice Knight Adventures and other community partners. Career Quest 2025 is a celebration of inclusion, creativity, and opportunity.

For more information or to get involved, contact Diane Dickson by texting 321-355-4222 or visit <https://www.facebook.com/share/15dSKeGzXk/>



For More Information about Vocational Rehabilitation and Job Opportunities for Individuals with I/DD (Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities), please go to:
<https://www.rehabworks.org/index.html>

Unit 13: Brevard

Unit 13A and 13AA: Brevard

1970 Michigan Ave., Building A-1

Cocoa 32922-5723

Phone: 321-690-3280

Fax: 321-690-3279

Tory Lovelace, Supervisor

 [Units 13A and 13AA Cocoa Directions](#)

13B: Brevard - Melbourne

1049 Eber Road, Suite 101

Melbourne 32904-8767

Phone: 321-984-4869

Fax: 321-722-5360

Erin Schilling, Supervisor

 [Unit 13B Melbourne Directions](#)

Bill Buzz

By: Nicole Grabner, Director, One Voice
Brevard


Upcoming Legislative Events:

The 2025 Legislative Session will end on Friday,
May 2, 2025.

Currently, these are the bills that have been filed
that directly impact our community (this list is
subject to change).

For more information, please check the Florida
House and Senate website.





ADVOCACY ALERTS

504 CASE


Texas v. Becerra, is a case in which 17 states, including Florida, seek to abolish 504 federal protections. These are for people with disabilities (veterans, children, adults) and protect rights against discrimination and accessibility.

Please reach out to the Attorney General's office and ask that they drop the suit.

<https://dredf.org/protect-504/>

MEDICAID

Earlier this week, Congress passed the Budget Resolution, calling for a \$2 trillion cut over the next decade. This action has advocates concerned that cuts to Medicaid might be coming. Please reach out to your Congressional Representative and Senators to advocate for continued protection of Medicaid.



Topic Category	Bill Number	Title	Issue	Sponsor/Contact
Education	SB102/HB 127	Exceptional Student Education	Workforce credentialed program for students with Autism	Senator Gaetz
Medical	SB306/HB 389	Managed Care Plan Network Access	ACHA require contracts with Medicaid managed care plans, receive care from Medicaid providers not under contract	Senator Sharief
Medical	HB21/SB 82	Dental Therapy	Authorizes Medicaid to reimburse for dental services provided by mobile dental units	Rep. Chaney
Medical	HB975/SB 1048	Dental Services under the Medicaid Program	Revises adult dental services that are paid by AHCA as Medicaid services	Rep Nixon and Woodson
Medical	SB370/HB 219	Health Screenings for K-12 Students	Authorizing specified screenings to be performed on K-12 students after written parental notification.	Senator Sharief
Education	SB540/HB 447	Disability History and Awareness Instruction	Requiring disability history and awareness instruction, "Evin B. Hartsell Act"	Senator Collins
Medical	SB 756/HB 377	Health Insurance Coverage for I/DD	Revising "autism spectrum disorder" and "eligible individual"	Senator Burton
Medical	SB 1050/HB 1103	Agency for Persons with Disabilities	Renaming and providing two transfer of primary powers and duties of VR and DBS to APD	Senator Bradley
Medical	HB 591/SB 112	Children with Developmental Disabilities	Revising Early Steps to birth to age 4	Rep. Maggard/Senator Harrell
Law Enforc	HB 711/SB 500	Spectrum Alert	Spectrum Alert: Elopement training	Rep. Borroero/Senator Avila
Medical	SB 1062/HB 1057	Adult Day Care Centers	Medicaid reimbursement rates - 8-hour training	
Medical	SB 1060/HB 935	Medical Oversight	Est. Joint Legislative Committee on Medical Oversight, data sharing	Senator Brodeur
Housing	SB 1004/HB 1131	Housing for I/DD	Affordable Housing and Supportive Services for persons with I/DD	Senator Rodriguez
Medical	SB 862	Estimating Conference	Social Services Estimating Conference for information related to home and community based services Medicaid	Senator Smith
Legal	HB 97/SB 106	Protection of Vulnerable Adults	Process in proceedings for protection of vulnerable adults	Rep. Steele
Education	SB 1006/HB 257	Cameras in Classrooms	ESE Cameras in Classrooms in Public Schools	Rep. Chambliss
Education	HB 345/SB 460	Student Elopement	Requires Public Schools to create elopement plans (SAFE), teams	Rep. Eskamani
Financial	SB 385/SB 262	Trusts	Revises provisions relating to invasion of trust principal, claims against former trustees, community property	Rep. Oliver
Medical	SB 1086/HB 1457	Department of Elderly Affairs	Administrative changes to statute, clarifying department responsible for designating area agencies on aging	Senator Simon
Legal	HB 933/SB 1272	Guardianship	Appointing guardian identify persons entitled to information upon incapacitated person's death	Rep. Aristide
Safety	SB 568/HB 413	Swimming Safety	Drowning prevention, requires organizations to provide specified types of personal floatation devices to certain children	Senator Rodriguez
Education	SB 738/HB 47	Child Care and Early Learning Providers	Exempting public and private preschools from special assessments levied by a municipality	Senator Burton
Medical	HB 1085/ SB 1156/	Services for Medically Needy Children	Transferring operation of the Children's Medical Services Managed Care Plan from DoH	Senator Harrell
Medical	SB 1144/HB 1329	Hope Florida Program	Establishing Hope Florida by Governor, Hope Navigators	Senator Burgess
Medical	SB 1146/HB 1327	Public Records/Hope Florida Program	Providing an exemption from public records requirements for participants in Hope Florida program	Senator Burgess
Medical	HB 1109/SB 1236	Health Care Provider Participation Medicaid	Requires health care providers wanting to participate in Medicaid enroll with ACHA, be credentialed	Rep. Berfield
Medical	HB 1197/SB 1514	Anaphylaxis in Public Schools	Requires each district school to ensure emergency action plans, training for allergic reactions	Rep. Harris
Education	SB 1382/HB 859	School Readiness Program	Access to school readiness programs for economically disadvantaged households	Senator Calatayud
Law Enforc	SB 1364/HB 1273	ASD training for Law Enforcement	Requiring establishment of training relating to ASD individuals	Senator Collins
Medical	SB 1356/HB 907	Pediatric Rare Diseases	Establishing Florida Institute for Pediatric Rare Disease within Florida State University College of Medicine	Senator Burton
Medical	SB 1354/HB 633	Behavioral Health Managing Entities	Requiring DCF to contract for specified functions; to recommend transparency improvements	Senator Trumbull
Medical	SB 1686/HB 1373	Economic Self-Sufficiency for Working	Medical coverage assistance program for working individuals with disabilities	Senator Smith
Legal	SB 1710/HB 731	Prohibitions on DEI	Prohibitions and Limitations on DEI for Medical Institutions of Higher Education	Senator DiCeglie
Medical	HB 1507	Medicaid Eligibility for Adults	Medicaid Eligibility for Medical Assistance and Related Services	Rep. Joseph
Medical	SB 1736/ HB 1567	Insulin Administration by DSP	Insulin Administration by DSP, defines DSP "Direct Support Professional"	Senator Grall
Medical	SB168/HB 1207	Mental Health	Expands grant programs (training) public safety including veteran treatment	Senator Bradley
Infrastructure	SB 330/HB 419	PAUSE Act	Provides residential utility services for nonpayment during extreme heat, cold, state of emergencies	Representative Tendrich
Law Enforc	180/ SB 1566/HB 11	Emergency Preparedness	Revising provisions related to emergencies, responsibilities and funding special needs shelters	Rep Giallombardo
Medical	SB 1270/HB 299	Department of Health	Repealing provisions related to the developmental disability information clearinghouse and advisory council	Senator Collins
Infrastructure	SB 960/HB 299	Elevator Accessibility Requirement	Requires elevator car interiors to have at least one support rail that meets certain specifications	Representative Woodson
Infrastructure	SB 110/HB 1427	Rural Communities	Creates Office of Rural Prosperity and provides duties, stamp tax revenues and tele-health options for rural communities	Representative Griffiths
Education	SB 1102/ HB 877	School Readiness Program	Revises criteria for hoid to receive priority for participation in school readiness program & eligible for funding	Representative Bartleman
Education	SB 1698/ HB 1111	Certificates of Completion	Provides that only students with disabilities may earn certificates of completion	Representative Valdes
Medical	SB 1620/ HB 1439	Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders	Revises minimum standards of mobile crisis units; requires individualized treatment plan	Representative Hunschofsky
Education	SB 508/HB 423	Family Empowerment Scholarship	Requires private schools participating in the FES to provide information in writing to parents prior to enrollment	Senator Jones
Education	SPB 7030	Educational Scholarship Program	Creating an operating categorical fund for implementing the FES Program	ppropriations Com on PreK to 12

ONE VOICE BREVARD 2025 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM



ISSUE: HOUSING

With over 1,000 people moving to Florida a day, and rising costs of living, Brevard County struggles to keep up affordable and accessible housing options. We need more accessible and supported living options, including group homes.

- Create more accessible housing options
- Bring more group home options to Brevard County
- Allow tax exemption status to caregivers of disabled citizens

ISSUE: HEALTHCARE

An estimated 1.4 million people in the state of Florida lost vital healthcare coverage during the Medicaid Unwinding this past year. Healthcare access in Brevard County is a struggle for many citizens, but especially for those who require specialized care. In addition, many citizens are on the waitlist for crucial home and community-based care. Having home-based care allows our most vulnerable population the option of avoiding institutions.

- Fully fund the APD (Agency for Persons With Disabilities) Wait List
- Bring more specialized doctors to Brevard County
- Support efforts to broaden medical coverage for our already overburdened disabled population

ISSUE: EDUCATION

Brevard County has over 18,500 students enrolled in the ESE program. With the rising amount of children diagnosed with intellectual and developmental disabilities, we need better support and specialized educators to work with our children to ensure they are prepared to live their fullest life upon graduation. Each year, these students leave the school system with no real outside support for secondary education or employment.

- Create more adult programs to support our disabled students
- Ensure IEP and 504 supports are being met with each student
- Ensure special education teachers receive adequate training to work with I/DD students

AT A GLANCE

OVERVIEW:

- Homeowner Program for caregivers
- Fund the waitlist for APD
- VR rate increase and programs
- Transportation Program/Uber Access
- Adult Day Programs and Employment
- Supported housing options



ONEVOICE BREVARD

Disability Advocacy in Brevard County

One Voice Brevard is the Coalition of Advocacy efforts for our disabled population in Brevard County. Our goal is to bring every advocacy group together to speak with one legislative voice.



A LIFELINE FOR **MEDICAID** FLORIDIANS



Medicaid is a joint federal and state program that provides health insurance and access to long-term care to more than 3,901,821 Floridians, including:

Around 29% of Floridians with disabilities under the age of 65	Around 40% of Floridian children	More than 238,000 adults receiving long-term supports and services
---	---	---

What Medicaid Means for Floridians

- **Dignity and Community:** Medicaid home and community-based services (HCBS) enable 177,207 disabled Floridians to live, work, and participate in their communities.
- **Federal Investment:** The federal government spent \$22.3 billion on Medicaid in Florida in 2023—providing around 65% of the total cost of the program in the state.
- **Jobs:** Medicaid creates thousands of valuable local jobs in the health care sector and increases employment for people with disabilities.
- **Stronger Rural Hospitals:** Medicaid funding enables rural hospitals and other critical health care infrastructure to stay open and provide care to rural residents.
- 51.9% of children in small town and rural areas are covered by Medicaid.
- 14.5% of non-elderly adults living in small towns and rural areas are covered by Medicaid.

Impact to Florida's State Economy

- Cuts to federal Medicaid funding would shift costs onto Floridians, squeezing already-tight state, local, and family budgets.
- The state would be forced to make up for the loss in federal funds.
- Without adequate funding for HCBS, thousands of Floridians with disabilities would lose their independence and be forced into nursing homes or state-run institutions to survive.



66% of Florida votes oppose cuts to Medicaid funding

For more information, contact Kim Musheno at musheno@thearc.org.

2898 Mahan Drive Suite 1 • Tallahassee, FL 32308 • 850.921.0460 • www.arcflorida.org

Art Submission

This art submission was provided by our
very own Intern, Ken Friedel



Day is Done, Gone the Sun

Art Submission

This submission was provided by
Olivia Ramos, a 16-year old Junior
in High School



Weeping Queen

Resources and Contact Information

- Brevard Autism Coalition; <https://brevardautismcoalition.com/>
- Angels Bridging Gaps; <https://angelsbridginggaps.org/>
- The Parker Foundation; <http://www.theparkerfoundation.com/>
- S.O.A.K.; <https://www.soakautism.com/>
- Down Syndrome Association of Brevard; <https://www.dsabrevard.org/>
- UCF CARD; <https://ucf-card.org/>
- Florida Developmental Disabilities Council; <https://www.fddc.org/>
- Project 10; <http://project10.info/>
- Vocational Rehabilitation; <https://www.rehabworks.org/contact/area3.html>
- FLAPSE; <https://apse.org/chapter/florida/>
- The Arc of Space Coast; <https://www.arcofsc.org/>
- Promise in Brevard; <https://promiseinbrevard.com/>
- Brevard Resource Center for Disability Solutions; <https://rcdsfl.org/>
- The Family Cafe; <https://familycafe.net>
- Family Liason Project; <https://familyliasonproject.com>
- Early Steps Space Coast; <https://spacecoastes.org>
- Family Care Council Area 7; <https://fccflorida.org/area-7-fcc.html>

For Newsletter Questions or Submissions:
info@ovcfl.org





April Events

Autism Awareness Month

APRIL							2025
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
		1	2	3	4	5	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
27	28	29	30				

- Greater West Melbourne Little League, Max Rodes Softball Field 2 at 5:30 pm, April 3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th. Register for free at GWMILL.COM. See flyer for details.
- Get SOAKED for Autism, Saturday, April 5th, Fred Poppe Regional Park, Palm Bay, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. Free Family Water Day. See flyer for details.
- Sunset on the River, Saturday, April 5th, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. Fundraising event hosted by the Parker Foundation at the Parker Residence, Indialantic. Reservations required. For info email info@theparkerfoundation.com. See flyer for details.
- Tuesday, April 8th, Disability Awareness Event hosted by Eastern Florida State, 10 am to 2 pm., Building 9, King Center Rotunda. For information call Lisa Casillas, 321-433-5939
- Thursday, April 17th, starting at 7:00 p.m., Special Advocacy 101 Zoom, presented by the Down Syndrome Advocacy Foundation. Registration required. See flyer for details.
- Wednesday, April 23rd, Career Quest 2025, Merritt Square Mall, 9:30 - 1:30. For more information see article or contact Diane Dixon, 221-355-4222
- Hey Mama! Mom's Retreat, Saturday, May 3rd, from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., Kiwi Racquet and Fitness Club, Banquet Room, 30 Tradewinds Dr, Indian Harbor Beach. Register via EventBrite. See flyer for details.





APRIL 2025

DISABILITY

AWARENESS EVENT

Vendors • Giveaways • Educational Materials

Disability Awareness Week will aim to educate students, faculty, and staff about the spectrum of disabilities and how to think "Outside the Box" about what disability looks like, resources available in Brevard/Central Florida, and how barriers can be eliminated in their communities.

<p>Cocoa April 1 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. Bldg. 11- Titan Hub</p>	<p>Titusville April 3 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. Bldg. 3 – Titan Hall</p>
<p>Melbourne April 8 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Bldg. 9- King Center Rotunda Speaker Panel starts at 12 p.m.</p>	<p>Palm Bay April 10 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. Bldg. 1 – Atrium</p>

2025 Bookclub Books

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

October

November

September and December are off months.

Bookclub meets on the last Monday of the month at 7:00 PM on Zoom. See One Voice Brevard Facebook page for Zoom link and event pages for more information.

the parker foundation
For Autism and Child Development

CHALLENGER League
10th Anniversary

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:

ALL GAMES PLAYED ON MAX RODES SOFTBALL FIELD 2 @ 5:30PM:

**APRIL 3
APRIL 10
APRIL 17
APRIL 24**

CONTACT
VP@GWMILL.COM
FOR MORE INFO
ADAPTIVE T-BALL FOR CHILDREN
4 TO 12 YEARS OLD WITH
AUTISM OR SPECIAL NEEDS

**REGISTER FOR FREE AT GWMILL.COM
OR SCAN THE QR CODE**

GWMLL Challenger League T-ball – Registration Now Open!

Games: Thursdays, 5:30 PM – 6:30 PM

Dates: April 3rd, 10th, 17th, and 24th

Location: Max Rodes Softball Field 2

Description: This adaptive T-ball program is designed for kids ages 4-12 with ASD's, special needs, and their siblings. The games will be a fun way to engage, build teamwork, and enjoy the outdoors. Registration is FREE! Uniforms are provided by GWMLL, and players should bring their own gloves, or borrow one at the games.

To register, visit: www.gwmll.com

GET SOAKED FOR AUTISM

JOIN US



Bounce houses, foam, water slides,
cotton candy, popcorn -
all free for our special needs families



soakautism.com



soakfamilies@gmail.com

the parker foundation
For Autism and Child Development

SUNSET on the River

JOIN US
APRIL 5TH, 2025
SATURDAY | 4PM TO 8PM
THE PARKER RESIDENCE
INDIANLANTIC, FLORIDA
RESERVE YOUR POOLSIDE/LAWN CABANA AND
BOTTLE SERVICE. DJ, LIVE/SILENT AUCTION,
FASHION SHOW
INFO@THEPARKERFOUNDATION.COM

Sunset on the River Fundraising Event – Saturday April 5th, 2025
Time: 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Location: Parker Residence Indianlantic, Florida
Description: Poolside Fundraising event that will host Poolside/Lawn Cabana's, Open Bar DJ's, Char Good, Tomas Lopez, Live/Silent Auction, Delicious tapas, desserts and beverages by The Palm at Kiwi. A Fashion Show curated by Caribbean Chic, vendors representing local businesses and live art exhibits/interactive art experiences by Derek Gores, Olivia Womack and more surprises to amuse and entertain guests as we celebrate the Parker Foundation and 10 years of service to Brevard County, FL!
For Sponsorship Info SEE BELOW or email: Info@TheParkerFoundation.com

Space Coast Homeschool Expo

**New Date
& Location!**

**Saturday
April 12, 2025
12-4 PM**



- ★ Homeschool Programs
- ★ Curriculum Sale
- ★ Youth Entrepreneurs
- ★ Local Vendors
- ★ Sponsor Opportunities



Hosted By:

PEARSON'S
Active Learning Studio

EMMANUEL
MELBOURNE, FL

Email: wooten.charlene@gmail.com

Call/Text: 321-345-9062

2800 W Eau Gallie Blvd, Melbourne, FL 32935

APRIL
WEBINAR
SPECIAL EDUCATION
ADVOCACY 101
with Melissa Goldhammer
THURSDAY, APRIL 17
7:00 PM EST
ZOOM

Join us for a FREE online workshop to learn valuable advocacy tips and parent rights in the special education process. We will be discussing the procedural safeguards notice and more.

This workshop is open to all families of children with Down syndrome or other developmental disabilities.

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER

or scan here

DSAF workshops are funded through a grant from Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). In order for us to maintain this funding, and

continue supporting families, we need to clearly show that we are serving families

who currently have TABS numbers and have Family Support Services (FSS). Thus, if

you applied for and received a TAB number through OPWDD, we will be asking you

for that information when you attend our grant sponsored events.

dsaf03@gmail.com
www.dsafonline.org

dsaf03@gmail.com



FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY
Center for Autism and
Related Disabilities

Autism Acceptance Month

- Apr 1-30 Art & Autism Expo Exhibit at the City of Boyton Beach
- Apr 1-30 PEPSA: Finding Their Voice: AAC Strategies To Empower Students With Complex Communication Needs
- Apr 2 Florida Atlantic College of Social Work and Criminal Justice with CARD: Especially Blended
- Apr 2 Preparing Your Preschooler For Kindergarten
- Apr 3 ASD/Mental Health Task Force - Understanding The Intersection Of OCD & Autism
- Apr 7 Get With The Plan: Understanding IEP & 504 Plans
- Apr 8 Classroom Behavior/Positive Reinforcement
- Apr 8 iRISE2 Mentoring Program - Mentor Information Session
- Apr 8 Art & Autism Expo Gallery Opening
- Apr 9 Hot Off The Press: Upcoming Events and FAU CARD News in the Treasure Coast
- Apr 9 Transition Chat With Lauren
- Apr 15 Florida Atlantic University Galleries Paint & Sip with CARD
- Apr 16 The ABC's of ABA
- Apr 22 Florida Atlantic Meet & Greet with CARD & University Galleries at the Breeze Way
- Apr 24 SLP's ESE Resource Fair
- Apr 30 Summer Break Success For Children With ASD
- Apr 30 Toilet Training Tips For Parents

www.autism.fau.edu

561.213.5751

card@fau.edu

