



# One Voice Brevard



1 March 2025

## Developmental Disabilities Awareness Day - Tallahassee

by Nicole Grabner, Director, One Voice Brevard



On March 11th, Developmental Disability Awareness Day at the Capitol in Tallahassee will serve as a crucial moment to highlight the importance of inclusion, advocacy, and support for individuals with developmental disabilities. The event brings together lawmakers, advocates, and families to raise awareness about the challenges faced by people with disabilities and to promote policies that enhance their quality of life.

The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC) plays a pivotal role in this event, championing the rights and needs of individuals with developmental disabilities across the state. Through initiatives like Developmental Disability Awareness Day, the Council continues to advocate for legislative changes that will positively impact people with developmental disabilities, empowering them to lead independent and meaningful lives. This day of advocacy is essential in fostering a more inclusive and supportive Florida for all.

Other agencies and nonprofits like The ARC of Florida, We The People, and Florida Voices for Health will all have informational tables set in the capital's Rotunda. Advocates from across the state will gather for a day of advocacy and awareness. At the time of the draft of this article, there are at least 30 different bills that are being tracked that have an impact on our community.

### In this newsletter you will find:

IDD At the Capitol

Intern Article  
by Ken Freidel

Cerebral Palsy  
Awareness

Intern Article by  
Dalton Higbee

Dual Diagnosis and  
Early Intervention

Down syndrome  
Awareness

Alone Together

Doug Flutie 5K Race

Bill Buzz/Advocacy  
Alert

Legislative Platform

National Night to  
Shine

Resources

Events

Event Flyers

---

# A Little About Me

by Ken Friedel, Intern



Happy March, One Voice Brevard readers! Ken Friedel here with a brand-new article for you all, this time focusing on Developmental Disability Awareness in the lead-up to our "DD Day" At The Capital. So, among the three themes offered to me for this month's article, I decided to write about what I wish the world knew about me. And after reading what I have to say, I hope everyone can learn to understand me better.

So, anyone who's ever known me either from when I originally lived up north in Maryland as a kid or after moving to Florida a few years back knows that I am an adult fan of Thomas The Tank Engine. Now, I'm sure that there are a lot of people like you outside of the fandom who are totally confused as to why an adult fandom for Thomas The Tank Engine exists. And yeah, when I say the words out loud, I get it since it's weird on the surface and it is without argument something that is aimed at kids. I'm not trying to argue that kids aren't the main demographic of this, but there are also many other things that are aimed at kids and have adult followings. Such examples of what I'm talking about include Mario, SpongeBob, Sonic, Transformers, The Muppets, Disney and Sesame Street. No one bats an eye if an adult likes those since it's just generally accepted. But mention you like Thomas and people now suddenly have standards. I can't be the only one who sees the hypocrisy there, right?

We're all adults here and we all have our weird niche interests. I'm not trying to argue that Thomas The Tank Engine is something truly mind-blowing or anything it's not, but I think the reason why it's so looked down upon lately is because the franchise itself has become so neutered to young kids for so long that it's

just become the norm of what people associate Thomas with. These days, people just naturally associate Thomas with the likes of Peppa Pig or Bob The Builder because that's the age group it's clumped with. But the thing is it wasn't like that before. This fandom exists because of Thomas' roots and because of the very specific visions of Thomas' creator Reverend Wilbert Awdry and the show creators Britt Allcroft and David Mitton. We are here because of the original Railway Series books and those first five seasons of the television series when Thomas was something not made just for kids. It was a series made for anyone of any age and that's obvious to anyone who dares to watch it. In every single element present in it from the way the stories are written to the language and verbose dialogue used to the characters' development and incredibly in-depth backstories, including the lifelike visuals to the set design to the way it's narrated and to the absolutely extraordinary soundtrack that has no business being as good as it is.

Now, I am by no means trying to convince you to "join our cult", so to speak. All I'm trying to do here is spread the message of why we as fans appreciate Thomas The Tank Engine and sort of explain why it has such a big fan following. We like it for its model work, we like it for its music, we like it for its characters, we like it because we like trains, and we like it because it has such an interesting history. It's really as simple as that. This was not some soulless show that was made to have a corporate mascot

---

---

# A Little About Me

(continued)

to sell merchandise. It has sadly become that, but Thomas in its purest form was a vision of one man who had a true passion for trains and wanted to share that passion to the world using personified steam engines to do it and all the stories and characters and the universe he created with them are untouchable. The Reverend Wilbert Awdry did not talk down to children. The stories he made were as much for the adults that read the stories to the kids as they were for the kids themselves, and those first five seasons of the television series were very true to that vision. Anyone who has even a

passing interest in trains can see the appeal of Awdry's creation. And I hope that with this article, I was able to help you all see it too. But if you're still not sure, then I recommend checking out the documentary "An Unlikely Fandom: The Impact Of Thomas The Tank Engine" whenever it gets released to the public. I got to be interviewed for the film, and the journey I've taken with this film is one that I will never forget. This little blue engine has done more for me in my life than I can even put into words. I am an adult Thomas The Tank Engine fan, and I'm proud to be one.

## Cerebral Palsy Awareness Month

by Nicole Grabner

March is Cerebral Palsy Awareness Month, a time to raise awareness about cerebral palsy (CP) and support individuals living with this condition. CP is a group of neurological disorders that affect movement, muscle tone, and coordination, caused by brain damage or abnormal brain development, usually before or during birth. This condition affects 1 in 345 children in the United States. To signify this awareness, organizations show support using a green ribbon.

During this month, various organizations, families, and individuals come together to promote understanding, share resources, and highlight the challenges faced by those with CP. Activities include educational campaigns, fundraising events, and social media initiatives

that help spread awareness and advocate for better accessibility, treatment, and support services. In Miami, for example, there will be an awareness walk sponsored by Samantha's Purpose.

Cerebral Palsy Awareness Month serves as a reminder of the importance of inclusivity, compassion, and the ongoing need for research to improve the quality of life for those affected by CP. Every action, no matter how small, can make a difference.



---

# What I Wish the World Knew About Me

by Dalton Higbee, Intern

I wish the world knew that I am more than my disability. Living with a disability doesn't define who I am—it's just one part of my story. People often judge me before they even take the time to get to know me. But if they did, they'd see that I have talents, aspirations, and the will to succeed. One of my biggest passions is that I'm a fast typer, and I work hard to improve at it every day. I don't want to be seen or heard only for my weaknesses—I want people to acknowledge my strengths too.

One of the hardest experiences I've had was feeling underestimated. I remember a time in high school when I was eager to join an after-school activity, but someone assumed I wouldn't be able to handle it. Instead of giving me a chance, I got overlooked. That moment left me with no choice. It made me understand that people sometimes define me by my challenges instead of my abilities. But I

know what I had the capability of doing, and I wished more people believed in me, too. It would be this: Don't assume—ask. Take the time to get to know me. See me for who I truly am, not just for the challenges I face. I am capable, I am determined, and I deserve to be included.

Fortunately, at Angels Bridging Gaps, it has been a different case, as I get to learn, enjoy, and participate in new skills and activities provided by them.

I also wish the world knew that I want independence and for people to have faith in me. Sometimes, I need support, but that doesn't mean I can't make my own choices. I want to be included in conversations, decisions, and opportunities just like everyone else. A little encouragement, a little patience, and an open mind can make a huge difference. If I could tell the world one thing,



## Developmental Disability Awareness

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

ADHD  
AUTISM  
CEREBRALPALSY  
DOWNSYNDROME  
IDD  
EPILEPSY  
HEARINGLOSS  
PRADERWILLI  
SPINABIFIDA  
TBI  
BIPOLAR  
VISIONLOSS  
FRAGILEX





# Dual Diagnosis and Early Intervention

by Dr. Dixie Riepl

---

A child diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) may also experience additional diagnosis (co-occurrence, co-morbid or dual diagnosis) such as sleep disorders, gastrointestinal problems, epilepsy, and sensor disorders which appear early in the child's life. Additional co-morbid disorders or behaviors may become evident as the child grows and develops. These additional or co-morbid disorders may include: Attentional Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Anxiety Depression, or other related disorders.

It is important to remember that children with ASD do not all have the same symptoms, disorders, or characteristics. There is a wide range of characteristics that can occur. That is why it is called Autism Spectrum Disorder. Also, as the child becomes an adult, hopefully, they have had help learning how to manage their behaviors and daily life skills so that they can have the most productive and successful life possible.

Some children are not diagnosed with ASD as a child. In some cases, their characteristics are not as evident at that time and parents may feel they can successfully manage the child's daily life and challenges. Many doctors are reluctant to refer a child for a Neurological evaluation for ASD prior to the age of three. Parents and the doctors may say "he/she will grow out of it." and delay diagnosis and treatment. However, we now see in society that many adults who were not diagnosed as a child find that as an adult

some of their challenges or behaviors appear to be much like that of a person with ASD characteristics. Therefore, many professionals associated with the work with ASD children encourage parents and doctors to initiate a Neurological evaluation by age three if there is any indication that the ASD characteristics exist. It is in the best interest of the child and all give them their best change for a successful life ahead.

Early intervention is key for a child with ASD due to their unique diagnosis which often causes them to miss the social and communication cues that most individuals pick up naturally. A child with ASD has a very stringent idea about many of their routines in daily life. They may be very picky about what they eat and routines around each meal of the day. This is a big red flag for parents as they must teach the child early about what dangers are in the house, yard, neighborhood, etc. The ASD child may prefer to play by themselves or parallel play with children without fully engaging with a back and forth social interaction.

An ASD child may become obsessive over a toy, a disappointment, an incident or an activity. The behavior associated with such an incident may become extreme with some level of violence. These children often do not understand "no!". Parents must, early on, learn how to distract from such occasions and be able to quickly offer a similar alternative.

---

# Dual Diagnosis and Early Intervention

(continued)

---

One such strategy is to always give the child only two options. Each option provides some form of what results the parent wants, but seems different to the child. Another strategy to help manage the behavior and activities of an ASD child is to use a timer for when they begin and end an activity. The time signal is especially useful when a child is obsessed with the computer, games, toys, activity, etc.

The best advice that you can receive regarding a child with ASD is to pursue Early Intervention in every way possible. The Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) program is a proven method to help ASD children learn how to manage their daily living skills,

behaviors and routines. The parent should go to a local ABA center to meet with the director to discuss his/her child's specific needs. Listen to what programs are available and how they use ABA strategies and principles to help the child improve his/her ability to take care of their own personal needs and learn how to interact with others. Do not think that you can isolate your child at home and you are enough to teach your child daily life skills, etc. Getting your child involved with other children in school, community events, church, and with family activities is the best thing that you can do to prepare your child for a productive and joyful life ahead..

## Down Syndrome Awareness

by Nicole Grabner

March is Down Syndrome Awareness Month, a time to celebrate individuals with Down syndrome and raise awareness about the challenges they face. In the United States, about 1 in 640 children are born with Down Syndrome. Down syndrome occurs when a person has an extra copy of chromosome 21, leading to developmental delays and varying degrees of intellectual disability. Organizations show support for Down Syndrome with ribbons that have blue and yellow colors.

In Florida, organizations like the Down Syndrome Association of Central Florida and the Down Syndrome Association of Brevard work tirelessly to offer resources, advocacy, and community support. Early intervention programs, inclusive education, and employment opportunities have significantly improved the lives of

individuals with Down syndrome in the state. In fact, the Down Syndrome Association of Brevard will be hosting its annual "Down for Derby Gala" on 3 May this year to help raise funding and spread awareness.

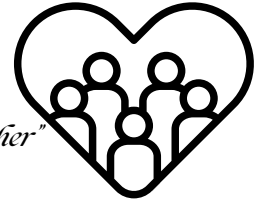
While there has been progress, continued awareness is essential to eliminate stigma and create a more inclusive society. Events and initiatives during Down Syndrome Awareness Month in Florida aim to promote acceptance, highlight achievements, and inspire positive change for individuals with Down syndrome.



# Alone Together

by Joseph Werner, OTD, OT/L, Director

*"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together"*  
African proverb



The United States population is growing more and more diverse whether we accept that or not. That diversity includes people with disabilities, and family members supporting, and caring for their loved ones.

I have been an Occupational Therapist for 43 years. The last 32 years has been as the owner of Child and Family Consultants in Melbourne. The great majority of my career as a health care provider has been oriented towards pediatric care. I have seen huge changes in health care and the provision of health care services. For example, as a young occupational therapist working at St. Vincent's Hospital in New York City, it was rare to see a child whose primary diagnosis was Autism. One of the first children I worked with was Matthew, an active, mischievous 8-year-old with a bright smile who was believed to have an unusual condition called Asperger's syndrome. He was believed to have this diagnosis because he fit the text book description which was he was white, blue eyed, from western European decent, and he had a combination poor social skills and difficulty with everyday conversation and communication. I have also witnessed the direction of medical care transitioning from a healing and well-being practice to that of primarily a business. I can still remember debates at St. Vincent's hospital that the problem of medicine in the United States was that it needed to be more of a business. One thing that has not changed and is more prevalent today than ever, is that there is strength in numbers. Toughness and resilience are not just individuals prevailing over burdens expected and unexpected, but groups of people from diverse backgrounds and experiences sharing stories, collaborating on goals, and then putting in

the time, energy emotion to make things happen. Apollo 11 took three men to the moon, but it took 400,000 people working behind the scenes, and a nation that believed in and valued that dream to achieve the first footprints on the Moon. It can take a couple hundred people coming together at a 5K race to increase autism awareness, it can take a petition with 1,000 names to get the attention of a politician, but what if we can bring all of the people and families affected by disabilities such as Autism, Down Syndrome, Blindness, Dementia, Mental Health Disorders and other disabilities to come together as a force in Brevard County to address issues such as funding for mental health, accessible housing for people with varying degrees of independence, reliable respite care, support for caregivers and family members, accessible and safe transportation to and from medical facilities, and jobs, employment for options and training just to name a few of what can often be seen as intractable problems. Certainly, these were all major issues when I arrived on the Space Coast in 1989, and to this day Brevardians are still fighting to overcome these problems.

Often people with disabilities have had to work hard alone to get the health care and support services they need, dealing with frustrating and infuriating roadblocks from the insurance industry, lack of funding and prioritizing the needs of people dealing with disabilities from the state of Florida, and lack of resources. The solution is to

# Alone Together

(continued)

---

find ways of uniting, building networks, overcoming the obstacle of time to communicate and collaborate. The unifying goal may also be to rethink disabilities not as conditions to be cured or eliminated but to think of everyone as part of a diversity that exists across humankind. How can we support not only people with autism but everyone with a neurodiversity (which actually means most if not all of us). We need to come together in numbers that go beyond individual groups working alone. We need to focus our definition of health as not only being remediation of illness and disease but health is well-being and the ability to participate in the community, take care of your needs and be able to socialize, and find supports from our community. The goal is not conformity but functioning and a life with meaning, productive as possible and satisfaction.

This will take a new paradigm. A paradigm of everyone respecting each other, looking past our differences, not getting dragged down in us versus them, and seeing how we are all similar and often or in the future will have similar needs. There are upwards of 657,000 Brevardians. What if we had 25,000 or 50,000 people contacting their state and local representatives, sending e-mails to the Governor or the Attorney General, and communicating on these issues and personal stories via the internet. If we can connect and communicate than not even the sky is the limit. March is Developmental Disabilities awareness month, followed by Autism awareness month in April, and Mental Health awareness month in May. There is no better time to get started.



---

# Doug Flutie 5K Race for Autism Awareness

by Nicole Grabner

22 February at Satellite Beach in Melbourne hosted the annual Doug Flutie 5K Race for Autism Awareness, drawing an impressive crowd of 649 registered participants. The event, organized to raise awareness for autism, brought together community members, families, and supporters in a shared mission to promote understanding and inclusion. Runners and walkers alike enjoyed a beautiful Florida morning as they completed the 5K course, all while supporting the Flutie Foundation's work in providing resources for individuals with autism and their families.

The race was not just about competition but about fostering a sense of unity and advocacy for autism awareness. Doug Flutie, a former NFL star known for his dedication to the cause, was present, as the event continued to honor his commitment to making a difference. The funds raised will go directly toward initiatives that support autism programs and services, making this event a meaningful and impactful occasion for all involved.







# Bill Buzz

By: Nicole Grabner, Director, One Voice  
Brevard

## Upcoming Legislative Events:

The 2025 Legislative Session begins on Tuesday,  
March 4, 2025.

Developmental Disability Awareness Day at the  
capital is scheduled for 11 March 2025.

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

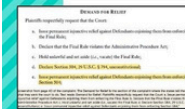
For more information, please check the Florida  
House and Senate website.



## 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/>

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.

### MEDICAID



### AIRLINE CASE

In February, multiple airlines (American, Delta, Southwest, etc.) filed suit against the Department of Transportation regarding wheelchair accessibility rules.

For more information, please see:  
<https://fortune.com/2025/02/21/airline-lawsuit-transportation-department-rule-wheelchair-user-protection/>



STRONGER  
TOGETHER

Topic Category	Bill Number	Title	Issue	Sponsor/Contact
Education	SB 102/HB 127	Exceptional Student Education	Workforce credentialed program for students with Autism	Senator Gaetz
Medical	SB 306/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	HB 21/SB 82	Dental Therapy	Authorizes Medicaid to reimburse for dental services provided by mobile dental units	Rep. Chaney
Medical	SB 370	Health Screenings for K-12 Students	Authorizing specified screenings to be performed on K-12 students after written parental notification.	Senator Sharief
Education	SB 540/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. Borrero/Senator Avila
Medical	SB 1062/HB 1057	Adult Day Care Centers	Medicaid reimbursement rates - 8-hour training	Senator Rodriguez
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	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	HB 385/SB 262	Trusts	Revises provisions relating to invasion of trust principal, claims against former trustees, community property	Rep. Oliver
Medical	SB 1048/HB 975	Medicaid Coverage for Dental Services	Revising optional dental service covered by Medicaid, requires ACHA to reimburse adult dental services	Senator Jones
Medical	SB 1086	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	Hope Florida Program	Establishing Hope Florida by Governor, Hope Navigators	Senator Burgess
Medical	SB 1146	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	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	Medicaid coverage assistance program for working individuals with disabilities	Senator Smith

# 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](mailto:musheno@thearc.org).

2898 Mahan Drive Suite 1 • Tallahassee, FL 32308 • 850.921.0460 • [www.arcflorida.org](http://www.arcflorida.org)

---

# National Night to Shine



---

# 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](mailto:info@ovcfl.org)





# March Events

MARCH							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	31						

- Sunday, 2 March, Down Syndrome Association of Brevard at Brevard Zoo (See Flyer Below)
- On Monday March 3, 10 and 17, 6-7 p.m. Barnyard Challenge, Youth Development Program,, UF/IFAS Brevard County Extension Office, 3695 Lake Drive, Cocoa. Cost \$25.00. For more info, see flyer.
- Tuesday, 4 March, 9:00 - 10:30 a.m., and Monday, 31 March, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m., ASD Overview, Suntree Business Center, 3270 Suntree Bldg, Melbourne, FL. See Flyer for more information.
- Sunday, 9 March, Samantha's Purpose 2K Run, Walk and Stroll, Coral Reef Park, 7895 SW 152nd St, Palmetto Bay, Fl. \$40 Registration fee. on line. See Flyer for details
- Tuesday, 11 March, Developmental Disability Awareness Day, Tallahassee (Virtual attendance schedule to come. Check our Facebook page for updates.)
- 17-21 March, Brevard Autism Coalition "Adventure Coffee" Prevocational Adventure Camp, email [brevardautismcoalition@gmail.com](mailto:brevardautismcoalition@gmail.com) for more information
- Friday 21 March, World Down Syndrome Day 9th Annual Virtual Race. You can register at the following link: [https://ndss.org/racing\\_for\\_3-21](https://ndss.org/racing_for_3-21)
- Monday, March 31st, 7:00 p.m. One Voice Brevard Book Club Meeting. See Zoom info on flyer.





