



### One Voice Brevard



### Spelling to Communicate

by Nicole Grabner, Director, One Voice Brevard

Spelling to Communicate (S2C) is a life-changing method that empowers nonspeaking individuals, especially those with autism and other motor or sensory differences, to express themselves clearly and independently. For many, this approach has opened up a world of communication that was previously out of reach.

S2C involves the use of a letterboard or keyboard, allowing individuals to point to letters and spell out words to convey their thoughts. While it may seem simple on the surface, the method is built on a deep understanding of the challenges these individuals face—not in understanding language, but in generating speech or controlling fine motor movements.

The beauty of S2C lies in its assumption of competence. It recognizes that many nonspeaking individuals are intellectually capable, even if they struggle to show it in traditional ways. By focusing on motor planning and regulation support, rather than speech, S2C allows users to participate in meaningful conversations, academic learning, and social interactions—sometimes for the first time in their lives.

Families often describe the experience as transformative. Where there was once silence or misunderstood behavior, there is now a clear, articulate voice. Students using S2C have gone on to advocate for disability rights, pursue higher education, and build deep relationships. S2C is more than a communication tool; it's a key to dignity, autonomy, and inclusion. It reminds us that everyone deserves to be heard—and that sometimes, all it takes is the right method to unlock someone's voice.

In this newsletter you will find

Spelling to Communicate (S2C)

Delegation Meetings and Alliance for Disability Unity

Managing Back To School Stress

2026 MidTerm Elections for Brevard County

Expansion of APD's IDD Pilot Program

Helping Hands Highlights

Brevard Advocacy Opportunities

Monthly Art Submission

Bill Buzz

Medicaid Primer

Resources

Events

**Event Flyers** 



# Delegation Meetings and the Alliance for Disability Unity

By Acadia Jacob, Advocacy Director, Florida Voices for Health

### Delegation meetings - Engaging in local and state policy advocacy

With the end of summer hurtling towards us, local county Delegation Meetings have in fact already commenced! If you're not familiar, these are spaces in which your state-level House Representatives and Senators meet with their community members "town hall style" to learn what issues concern them most. These meetings are already well under way in communities across Florida, and it is easier than ever to get involved thanks to our coalition network! Delegation Meetings may happen at home in your 'back yard' (or close to it!), but are actually one of the times of year when you can have the strongest impact on policymakers with the least amount of energy expended on your part.

With one public comment -- which typically takes just 2-3 minutes of your time (quite lengthy compared with how short testimony often is cut in Tallahassee) — you can educate all your local House and Senate members as well as their staff, community partner organizations, and members of local media in attendance on your health story and the healthcare priorities that matter most to you and your loved ones. We often see ripple impacts from attending these events in the form of new community partnerships, earned media coverage, and, of course, in stronger relationships with local elected officials.

Sounds simple enough, and as it should be! When it comes to figuring out logistical details and strategy, we can help take care of the rest. Florida Voices for Health offers support with preparing public testimony, individual coaching, and tangible support with funds for transportation reimbursement and more. Want training in the policy? We've got you! Want to practice public speaking? Say no more! Interested in joining us? Simply contact us via email, and I can get you started!

Delegation Meeting dates are being scheduled and announced out on an active basis, and our partners at the Arc of Florida are keeping a list (updated weekly) at: <a href="https://www.arcflorida.org/delegation-calendar">https://www.arcflorida.org/delegation-calendar</a>. If you don't see your local county mentioned, try contacting the staff of your House Representative or Senator, and they may be able to help pinpoint a date, time, and any registration details. I am also here to assist as needed! This information is not intuitively accessible, so please don't hesitate to reach out.

# Delegation Meetings and the Alliance for Disability Unity (continued)

The One Voice Brevard coalition is organizing alongside coalition members from The Arc of Florida, Disability Rights Florida, We the People, and Florida Voices for Health in an effort to have at least ONE VOICE speaking about disability issues at each county in Florida's upcoming delegation meetings. Below are flyers for the Alliance for Disability Unity as well as a map of current sign ons. We ask that you please sign on yourself here and share with your organizations and families as well.

Acadia Jaco of Florida Voices for Health can be reached at acdia@healthyfla.org



## BACK SCHOOL

### Managing Back to School Stress

by Angelika Keene, UF/IFAS Extension

#### You've Got This: Managing Stress After the School Year Starts

School has been underway for a few weeks now, and the new year's excitement is quickly giving way to stress as the routines settle in. The good news is that it is normal to feel this way as everyone is still adjusting, and it is never too late to implement helpful strategies.

#### Helpful Tips for Parents

- Keep routines steady. Consistency is key; we hear that statement, but what does that mean? It could resemble sticking with regular bedtimes, wake-up times, and after-school routines. This predictability helps reduce anxiety and makes the school day less overwhelming (University of Missouri Extension, 2025). Example: Have a "homework snack" ready each day at the same time so your child knows when it's time to transition from school to homework.
- Do weekly check-ins, Set aside a few minutes to talk with your child about how school is going—socially, emotionally, and academically. Listening without judgment helps kids feel supported and understood (APA, 2024). Example: During dinner or bedtime, ask, "What was the best part of your day? What was the hardest part?"
- Stay connected with teachers. Keeping an open line with your child's teachers can make a big difference. Share what's working well at home and ask what's helping in class. That way, everyone's on the same page and your child gets the support they need (URMC, 2025).
- Celebrate small wins. Change doesn't happen overnight—adjusting takes time. Celebrate the little wins, like finishing homework, trying something new, or making a friend. Every effort builds your child's confidence and helps them grow stronger habits (APA, 2024). Example: If your child raises their hand in class or remembers to bring home their planner, celebrate with a high five, sticker chart, or special time together.
- Don't forget your own needs. Parenting can feel all-consuming. Taking even small moments for yourself helps you manage stress and stay grounded (URMC, 2025). Example: While your child is at therapy or an activity, wait to listen to calming music, walk outside, or connect with another parent for support.



# Managing Back to School Stress

(continued)

• Final Encouragement: If this is your child's first year, remind yourself that you can do this. And if it's not, remember you've handled it before. Managing stress is a practice, and every small step counts. By keeping routines steady, checking in, and giving yourself a little breathing room, you create a calmer, more supportive space for you and your child. You've got this!

#### References

American Psychological Association. (2024). Back-to-school can be a stressful time. How to help your kids transition to school <a href="https://www.apa.org/topics/children/school-anxiety">https://www.apa.org/topics/children/school-anxiety</a>
University of Missouri Extension. (2025you'vet the back-to-school stress. <a href="https://extension.missouri.edu/news/beat-the-back-to-school-stress">https://extension.missouri.edu/news/beat-the-back-to-school-stress</a>
University of Rochester Medical Center. (2025). School year stress: Your parents. <a href="https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/news/publications/health-maYou'veschool-year-stress-tips-for-parents">https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/news/publications/health-maYou'veschool-year-stress-tips-for-parents</a>
OpenAI. (2025). ChatGPT (GPT-5) [Large language model]. <a href="https://chat.openai.com/">https://chat.openai.com/</a>



### 2026 Midterm Elections for Brevard County

by Nicole Grabner, Director, One Voice Brevard

As Florida gears up for the 2026 midterm elections, all eyes aren't just on the high-profile state and federal contests, but also on dozens of local races that could reshape city councils, county commissions, and school boards across the state. Local candidates are running on hot-button issues like affordable housing, public safety, and education policy—many of which mirror national political tensions. With new district lines being discussed and increased turnout expected, these local battles may end up having the biggest day-to-day impact on Floridians' lives.

In Brevard County, many seats are up for election. For each of the Florida House Seats in Districts 30, 31, 32, 33 and 34, a total of eleven candidates have announced so far. One of the Republican candidates has in fact, signed up to run in both a Senate and a House race, and says she will decide later in the campaign which one to pursue.

If more than one candidate of the same political party qualifies to run for a specific seat, there will be primary elections held on Aug. 18, 2026. The general election will be Nov. 3, 2026. It's going to be a busy campaign year as we begin to head into Delegation Meetings, Committee weeks, the holidays and then the next Florida Legislative Session (which is set to begin on 13 January 2026).

#### Candidate List Florida State House:

<u>District 30</u> <u>District 31</u>

Herman, Marcus (R) Vitale, Marina (R)

District 32 District 33

Hinojosa, Juan Jose (D) McDow, Daniel (D) Hodgers, Brian (R)\* Miller, Monique (R)\*

#### District 34

Brackett, Robert (R)\* (\* indicates incumbant)

For more information, please see https://votebrevard.gov

### Expansion of APD's IDD Pilot Program

### by Nicole Grabner

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD)'s Intellectual Developmental Disabilities (IDD) Pilot Program is expanding in Florida. House Bill 1103, signed into law on June 9,2025 (effective July 1,2025), initially launched in two Medicaid regions. The pilot will expand statewide to those on the APD preenrollment list by October 1, 2025, and then to all Medicaid waiver enrollees by July, 2026. This expansion will also see the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) manage the program, increasing transparency through online reporting and emphasizing voluntary enrollment.

Importantly, participation remains strictly voluntary—no automatic enrollment—with each individual needing to affirmatively opt in. The opt-in process is crucial because it protects individual choice, ensuring that people with disabilities and their families can decide whether a managed care model fits their unique needs. It also prevents forced enrollment, allowing time to evaluate the program's effectiveness and maintain trust in the system.

Transparency is another major achievement. APD must now post quarterly reconciliation reports and updates by priority category and county to its website within five days of submission, enhancing visibility into enrollment, waitlist trends, and spending. Additionally, an independent study of the iBudget algorithm is mandated, with findings due by November 15, 2025.

Under Florida Statutes 393.0662, APD must deliver quarterly reconciliation reports to the Governor and legislative leaders within 30 days after each quarter closes. However, the publicly accessible posting of these reports—including details by priority, category and county—has only been mandated more recently by legislation like HB1103. Prior to that, while APD submitted the data to officials, making those numbers publicly available was less consistent, and the precise date of the most recent public posting isn't clearly documented.

If you have concerns about the Pilot Program, please make sure that you contact your local legislators.

# Helping Hands Resource Conference Highlights by Brenda Leon, One Voice Brevard Editor

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual One Voice Helping Hands Resource Conference was a resounding success! We had over 430 attendees with 80 vendors providing valuable resources for parents and caregivers. Palm Bay Mayor Rob Medina started the Conference off by signing and reading an ADA Proclamation recognizing the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the American with Disabilities Act. Our guest speaker was JJ Homes, an amazing disability self-advocate. Brevard County Police sent two K-9 teams, and there were seven panels: Legislative Ages O-5, Grades K-12, Adult, Crisis and First Responders, Mental Health and Behavioral Community Services, and the Ministry Services Panel. Save the date for next year's conference which will be even bigger and better and once again, totally FREE: August 29, 2026, Melbourne Auditorium.



















### Brevard Advocacy Opportunities September 2025



The Power of Showing Up: Why Local Advocacy Matters

Being connected and actively participating in local town council and county commission meetings is one of the most effective ways to influence the decisions that shape your community. These meetings are where key issues—like zoning, transportation, public safety, education, and disability services—are discussed and decided.

By attending and speaking at these meetings, residents can raise awareness about community needs, advocate for inclusive policies, and ensure that underrepresented voices are heard. Even just showing up demonstrates public interest and can influence how leaders vote.

For families and individuals with disabilities, local advocacy is especially important. It's an opportunity to push for accessible infrastructure, better funding, and programs that support inclusion and independence. Your voice matters—and local government is where it can have the most immediate impact. Change doesn't always start in Washington—it often begins right in your own neighborhood.

#### BREVARD ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES SEPTEMBER 2025

Event:

County Commissioners Meeting

Event:

School Board Meeting

Event:

Palm Bay City Council Meeting

Event:

Brevard Commission on Aging

Details:

16 September at 9:00 AM; 2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way, Viera

Details:

9 September at 5:30 PM; 2700 Judge Fran Jamieson Way, Viera

Details:

4 September at 6:00 PM; 120 Malabar Rd SE, Palm Bay

Details:

11 September at 3:00 PM; 2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way, Viera More Info:

https://www.brevardclerk.us/meet ing-agendas?ID=8CC4EADA-22E2-4E2D-8E14-BE369D84A71C

More Info:

https://www.brevardschools.org/page/school-

More Info:

https://www.palmbayfl.gov/government/agendas

More Info:

https://www.brevardfl.gov/PublicMeetings



\*This list is not exhaustive. To find local meetings, please check city and county websites.

## Monthly Art Submission



This month's art submission was provided from a camper at Brevard Autism Coalition's Camp2Can. This camper is thanking the Melbourne BMW Dealership for being a sponsor of Brevard Uncorked 2025, which helped provide scholarships this year to Camp2Can

The 13-year old artists' name is Ember

### Bill Buzz

By: Nicole Grabner, Director, One Voice Brevard

Are you interested in sharing your concerns about programs changes, policy, or budgets; but aren't sure where to start? A good place to reach out to would be you r local legislators. Many people are not aware of how much governing happens in their local town councils, county commission meetings and statelevel representatives. These officials are the closest to where you live and they are there to listen to your concerns and help if they are able.

Take a look at when your next school board, town council or even county commission meeting is happening. When you attend, you can get a sense of the type of business that they discuss and figure whom to approach about your particular concern. Decisions are made by those who show up.

To find out who your state-level representatives are, check out the following websites:

1.https://www.flhouse.gov/FindYourRepresentative 2.https://www.flsenate.gov/senators



These are your representatives at the state government. As we prepare for the next Florida State Legislative Session, our legislators are in district (at their home offices) and have much more time to speak with their constituents than later in the year. Find your representatives contact information and either call, email or visit their office. The aides in the office are always super helpful and friendly and are a great resource to help you get started.

Remember, another great opportunity for advocacy is to attend and speak at your local Delegation Meeting. In Brevard County. Our Delegation Meeting (the meeting where all of our county representatives will be attending), will be happening on 30 September from 2:00 PM to 6:00 PM. To request to speak, make sure you reach out to Senator Mayfield's office to fill out an "Appearance Card" by September 19<sup>th</sup>. (Call 321-409-2025).

Tuesday, September 30 2:00 PM – 6:00 PM

Legislative Delegation: Brevard County

Brevard County Commission Chambers, 2725 Judge Fran Jameison Way, Melbourne.

To be placed on the agenda, complete an Appearance Request Form by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, September 19. Contact Senator Mayfield's office by phone at (321) 409-2025

\*For the schedule of all county delegation meetings, see the Arc of Florida's website at: https://www.arcflorida.org/delegation-calendar



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 <a href="mailto:musheno@thearc.org">musheno@thearc.org</a>.

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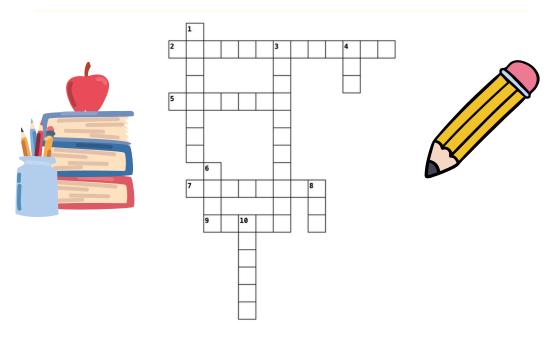
### Resources and Contact Information

- Brevard Autism Coalition; https://brevardautismcoalition.com/
- <u>Angels Bridging Gaps</u>; https://angelsbridginggaps.org/
- The Parker Foundation; https://www.theparkerfoundation.com/
- <u>S.O.A.K.</u>; https://www.soakautism.com/
- <u>Down Syndrome Association of Brevard</u>; https://www.dsabrevard.org/
- <u>UCF CARD</u>; https://ucf-card.org/
- Florida Developmental Disabilities Council; https://www.fddc.org/
- Project 10; https://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
- Bright Feats magazine
- Brevard C.A.R.E.S. Mobil Response Team 24/hour line (321) 213-O315



For more information or questions, please see our Facebook page.

### Resources and Extras

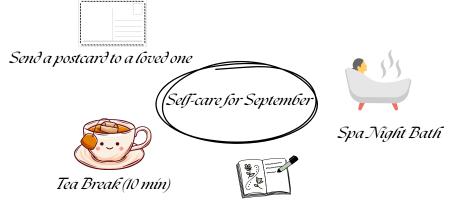


#### Across

- ${\bf 2.}~{\bf a}$  different way of doing something that takes into account a student's disability
- 5. provides education
- $\ensuremath{\mathbf{7.}}$  a person who publicly suppots or recommends a particular cause or policy
- 9. one a day keeps the doctor away

#### Down

- ${\bf 1.}$  having to do with school subjects such as reading, writing, and math
- 3. free \_\_\_\_\_ public education
- 4. individualized education plan
- 6. individuals with disabilities education act
- 8. exceptional student education
- 10. a \_\_\_ is a dream you can take anywhere joyce meyer



Begín a Gratítude Journal



For more information or questions, please see our Facebook page.



### September Events

#### Deaf Awareness Month

SEPTEMBER 2025								
JL		20	25					
s	м	т	w	т	,	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						

- The Parker Foundation presents Hey Mama!, a Mom's Retreat for those raising children with autism and special needs on September 6<sup>th</sup>, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at the Kiwi Racquet and Fitness Club in Indian Harbor Beach. Registration is via Eventbrite. See flyer for additional details.
- $\hbox{-} The Autism Theater Project presents ``The Achieve Anyway Show". Saturday, September 6^{th}, 6 p.m., at the Miramar Cultural Center, 2400 Civic Center Pl, Miramar Fl. For more information, see flyer. \\$
- Disability Rights Florida presents an "Understanding Florida's Mental Health System" a free webinar on Wednesday, September 10<sup>th</sup>, from 11 a.m to 12 noon. See flyer and register to learn more at https://bit.ly3UGGcUg
- The League of Women Voters' of the Space Coast hosts a panel discussion on Politics, Religion and Society on Saturday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, starting at 11:30. The Panel will be held at the Suntree County Club, 300 Country Club Drive, Melbourne. See flyer for more info.
- Angels Bridging Gaps Fall Session Adult group, beginning Tuesday, 5 August through Thursday, the 18<sup>th</sup> of December. Events are scheduled from 11:00 am to 2 pm. For more information, contact Angels Bridging Gaps.
- Dyspraxia DCD American hosts a free webinar entitled "IEP(s), Assessments, and Advocacy" on Tuesday, September 16<sup>th</sup>, from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. See flyer for additional information.
- EmpowerU!, an 8-week hybrid course presented by the University of Florida IFAS Extension, beginning September 15<sup>th</sup> through November 8th. Check the flyer for registration costs and additional information.
- 2025 Brevard County Legislative Delegation Meeting, Tuesday, September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., Brevard County Commission Chambers, 2725 Judge Fran Jmeison Way, Melbourne. Suspense for those wishing to make remarks is by 5 p.m., Friday, September 19th.
- Save the Date: Be A Buddy 5K, Family Health and Fitness Expo. held on Saturday, October 18<sup>th</sup>, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Free Family Health and Fitness Expo after the race. The 5K and Expo are to be held at the Space Coast Field of Dreams. See Flyer for registration and more info.
- Save the Date: Santa's North Pole Outlet for Kids and Adults, Saturday, December 5<sup>th</sup>, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Held at the Space Coast Field of Dreams in West Melbourne. See flyer for more info.
- Save the Date: The 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Brevard Uncorked, Friday, 7 November, from 8pm to 10pm, The Grand Manor, 1450 Serno Rd, Melbourne















### **Event Flyers**

**BE A BUDDY 5K** 

This forum is designed as a safe space for adults with ASD to practice social skills.

To register scan the QR https://ASDforum.eventbrite.com







### **Event Flyers**











