

Capitol Update

April 20, 2015 Volume 15, Issue 8

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Additional Funding for Early Steps

Early Steps is administered by Children's Medical Services (CMS) in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C. The Early Steps Program provides Florida's infants and toddlers, from birth to 36 months, who have a developmental delay, or a condition that places them at risk for developmental delay, with early intervention services and supports that improve a child's chances to develop to their full potential by achieving their developmental milestones. Research shows that achieving these milestones is essential to developing a child's ability to learn, speak, and move at optimal levels later in life. Early intervention is designed to support families and caregivers in developing the competence and confidence to help their child learn and develop. Families and professionals work together to develop an Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP) that is based on the unique needs of the child and the child's family.

The Council and other advocates are asking the legislature for an increase of \$5 million dollars for the Early Steps program.

The program needs an estimated \$3 million dollars to support the increase in children enrolled in Early Steps and the increase in children referred to Early Steps. An estimated \$2 million dollars is needed for more service coordination to decrease the Service Coordinator caseloads to be closer to the national average.

In summary, the program needs more funding due to the following factors;

- **Increased enrollment:** Florida's enrollment for 2013-2014 increased 5% causing a significant reduction in the service dollars available to spend per child.
- **Increased referrals:** Increased referrals and the skyrocketing number of children with complex needs, including those with autism, have strained the program's operating capacity.

- **High caseloads:** Coordination of services across early childhood education, child welfare, family support and economic resources is a high priority that is often obstructed due to high caseloads in Early Steps. The national average for Part C caseloads is 1:38 while Florida struggles with caseloads of 1:65 or more. We request an increase in funding in order to lower caseloads to 1:55.

Our staff and Council members hear from families whose children have participated in the Early Steps Program and are now young adults who are participating in post-secondary activities and programs. These families attribute their children's success in large part to the important early intervention services that their children received when they were infants and toddlers. In addition, there are many parents, whose babies were born with health challenges or developmental delays, who are grateful for the progress of their three year olds who are successfully graduating from the Early Steps program. Please click [here](#) for a recent success story.

As part of a recent study, RAND researchers synthesized what is known from the scientifically sound research literature about the short- and long-term benefits from early intervention programs, the features that are associated with more effective programs, and the economic gains that accrue from investing additional resources in early childhood. Their cost-benefit analyses show that investing in early intervention services has measureable positive outcomes, with a rate of return as high as a seventeen dollars for every dollar spent! For example, if school outcomes improve, fewer resources may be spent on grade repetition or special education classes. Improvements in school performance can lead to subsequent economic success in adulthood and the government will benefit from higher tax revenues and reduced outlays for social welfare programs.

The Council and other advocates are asking the legislature for an increase of \$5 million dollars for the Early Steps program.

Currently, the Florida House budget has no extra funding for Early Steps and the Florida Senate has almost \$3.3 million new dollars for Early Steps in their budget.

If you want to share your opinion on this issue, contact your [legislators](#) and let them know how you feel about the Early Steps program.

Two committees of importance are the [Health care Appropriations Committee in the House](#) and [the Health and Human Services Appropriations Committee in the Senate](#). If you want to share your opinion about this program, you can contact members of these appropriations committees as well.

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Budget Update

As reported last week in the Capitol Update, the issues of Medicaid expansion and the question of renewing the Low Income Pool (LIP) program have ground the state budget process to a halt. Lawmakers have been unable to resolve their differences over whether to expand Medicaid healthcare coverage. The House and Senate remain \$4.8

billion apart on FY 2015-16 budget allocations and a special session now seems inevitable.

The latest budget development is the report that Governor Scott intends to sue the federal government for coercing the state to expand Medicaid. The Governor believes the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is attempting to force Florida to expand Medicaid by withholding LIP dollars unless expansion occurs, effectively linking the two issues. Scott contends a 2012 US Supreme Court decision made Medicaid expansion optional for states and that CMS is attempting to coerce Florida into expansion by withholding the \$2 billion LIP program.

The legislative leadership will be negotiating their differences and an agreement could be reached at any time. Advocacy efforts are not wasted even though the most important budget agreements have not been met. Our opinions will not only indicate our stance for specific budget issues but the importance of reaching an agreement.

SB 146 - Relating to Autism by Ring, Cosponsor: Sachs

Summary

This bill requires that a physician refer a minor to an appropriate specialist for screening for autism spectrum disorder under certain circumstances and requires that certain insurers and health maintenance organizations provide direct patient access to an appropriate specialist for screening for evaluation or diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. The bill also requires that certain insurance policies and health maintenance organization contracts provide a minimum number of visits per year for screening for or evaluation or diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. Effective Date: July 1, 2015.

The Council voted to support this bill.

Actions

12/12/14 SENATE Referred to Health Policy; Banking and Insurance; Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government; Fiscal Policy

03/31/15 SENATE Favorable by Health Policy; 6 Yeas, 1 Nay

04/01/15 SENATE Now in Banking and Insurance

Similar Bills

HB 0023 - Relating to Autism by Cruz

12/19/14 HOUSE Now in Health Innovation Subcommittee

SB 330 - Relating to Missing Persons with Special Needs by Dean CS Sponsors: Criminal Justice

Summary

This bill and HB 69 have changed considerably. They no longer have provisions for immunity from civil liability for certain persons who comply with a request to release information concerning missing persons with special needs to appropriate agencies. The bill no longer requires the Department of Law Enforcement, contingent on funding, to provide electronic monitoring devices to certain persons with autism spectrum disorder and other disabilities and no longer requires the Agency for Persons with Disabilities to make an annual report concerning such individuals to the department.

The bill also had required the Department of Children and Families, contingent on funding, to provide electronic devices but this was removed. The bill stands as a four county pilot program in Representative Porter's area with the help of the CARD center at the University of Florida. Specifically, the pilot project is in Baker, Columbia, Hamilton, and Suwannee Counties and will be known as "Project Leo" to provide personal devices to aid search-and-rescue efforts for persons with special needs in the case of elopement. The bill is named Effective Date: 7/1/2015

Actions

01/28/15 SENATE Referred to Criminal Justice; Judiciary; Children, Families, and Elder Affairs; Appropriations

03/02/15 SENATE Favorable with CS by Criminal Justice; 4 Yeas, 0 Nays

03/03/15 SENATE Committee Substitute Text (C1) Filed

03/24/15 SENATE Favorable by Judiciary; 10 Yeas, 0 Nays

04/09/15 SENATE Favorable with CS by Children, Families, and Elder Affairs; 6 Yeas, 0 Nays

04/10/15 SENATE Committee Substitute Text (C2) Filed

04/13/15 SENATE Now in Appropriations

Identical Bills

[HB 0069 - Relating to Missing Persons with Special Needs by Porter](#)

04/14/15 HOUSE Favorable by Judiciary Committee; 17 Yeas, 0 Nays

HOUSE Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading

[SB 152 - Relating to Disability Awareness by Ring CS Sponsors: Education Pre-K - 12](#)

Summary

This bill requires rather than authorizes, each district school board to provide disability history and awareness instruction in all K-12 public schools beginning in 2016-2017. Presentations by individuals with a disability are to be included in the disability history and awareness instruction; the bill also requires each public school to establish a disability history and awareness advisory council; providing membership on the council; providing responsibilities of the council; providing meeting times for the council. **The Council voted to support the parts of the bills that require rather than authorize, each district school board to provide disability history and awareness instruction in all K-12 public schools beginning in 2016-2017. And the Council voted to add the flexibility of being able to provide this instruction anytime during the school year instead of just the first two weeks of October.**

Actions

SENATE Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading

Similar Bills

[HB 0123 - Relating to Disability Awareness by Cortes \(J\)](#)

01/08/15 HOUSE Now in K-12 Subcommittee

[HB 71 - Relating to Service Animals by Smith \(J\) Cosponsor: Sprowls](#)

Summary

This bill requires a public accommodation to permit use of a service animal by an individual with a disability under certain circumstances. The bill provides conditions for a public accommodation to exclude or remove a service animal. The bill revises penalties for certain persons or entities who interfere with use of a service animal in specified circumstances and the bill provides a penalty for knowing and willful misrepresentation with respect to use or training of a service animal. **The Council voted to support this bill.**

Actions

03/27/15 HOUSE Read Third Time; Passed (Vote: 112 Yeas / 0 Nays)

04/01/15 SENATE In Messages

Similar Bills

[**SB 0414 - Relating to Service Animals by Altman**](#)

04/15/15 SENATE Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading

[**SB 206 - Relating to Financial Literacy Program for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities by Hukill Cosponsors: Detert, Gaetz \(D\), Sachs, Soto, Galvano**](#)

Summary

This bill establishes the program within the Department of Financial Services. The bill requires the department to develop and implement the program in consultation with specified stakeholders; providing for the participation of banks, credit unions, savings associations, and savings banks. The bill requires the program to provide information and other offerings on specified issues to individuals with developmental disabilities and employers in this state. The bill requires the department to establish on its website a clearinghouse for information regarding the program and to publish a brochure describing the program. Effective Date: 10/1/2015. **The Council voted to support this bill.**

Actions

03/23/15 SENATE Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading

Similar Bills

[**HB 7085 - Relating to Financial Literacy Program for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities by Regulatory Affairs Committee**](#)

HOUSE Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading

Compare Bills

[**SB 7022 - Relating to Individuals With Disabilities by Governmental Oversight and Accountability**](#)

04/02/15 HOUSE In Messages

[**SB 256 - Relating to Identification Cards by Sobel**](#)

Summary

This bill requires the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles to issue an identification card(at the request of parent ,guardian or individual with a developmental exhibiting a special designation (a capital D) for a person who is diagnosed by a licensed physician as having a developmental disability. The bill requires payment of an additional fee of \$10 and proof of diagnosis. It authorizes the

issuance of a replacement identification card that includes the special designation without payment. Effective Date: 7/1/2015. **After several lengthy discussions, the Council did not take action on this bill and will watch it.**

Actions

01/15/15 SENATE Referred to Transportation; Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development; Appropriations

04/02/15 SENATE Favorable by Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development; 9 Yeas, 0 Nays

SENATE Now in Appropriations

Identical Bill

[HB 0519 - Relating to Identification Cards by Murphy](#)

02/05/15 HOUSE Now in Highway & Waterway Safety Subcommittee

[SB 380 - Relating to Persons with Developmental Disabilities by Bradley](#)

Summary

This bill requires the Agency for Persons with Disabilities to allow an applicant whose parent or guardian is a member of the United States Armed Forces, the Florida National Guard or the United States Reserve Forces to receive Medicaid home and community based waiver program services under certain conditions. Effective Date: 7/1/2015. **The Council voted to support this bill.**

Actions

01/23/15 SENATE Referred to Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security; Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services; Appropriations

02/17/15 SENATE Favorable by Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security; 4 Yeas, 0 Nays

03/11/15 SENATE Favorable with CS by Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services; 7 Yeas, 0 Nays

03/13/15 SENATE Now in Appropriations

Similar Bills

[HB 0177 - Relating to Persons with Developmental Disabilities by Hill](#)

03/16/15 HOUSE Now in Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee

[HB 437 - Relating to Guardians for Dependent Children who are Developmentally Disabled or Incapacitated by Adkins Cosponsors: Van Zant CS Sponsors: Children, Families & Seniors Subcommittee](#)

Summary

This bill requires continued review of necessity of guardianships for young adults; requires updated case plan developed in face-to-face conference with child, if appropriate, and other specified persons. The bill provides requirements for DCF when court determines there is good faith basis to appoint guardian. The bill provides that probate court has jurisdiction over proceedings for appointment of guardian advocate if petitions are filed for certain minors subject to Ch. 39, F.S., proceedings when such minors have reached specified age; provides that such minor has same due process

rights as certain adults and provides that if child is subject to proceedings under Ch. 39, F.S., parents may act as natural guardians unless court finds that it is not in child's best interests or their parental rights have been terminated. Effective Date: July 1, 2015. **The Council is supporting this bill.**

Actions

04/16/15 HOUSE Read Third Time; Passed (Vote: 114 Yeas / 0 Nays)

Similar Bills

[SB 0496 - Relating to Guardians by Detert](#)

04/16/15 SENATE Favorable with CS by Appropriations; 18 Yeas, 0 Nays

[SB 642 - Relating to Individuals with Disabilities by Benacquisto, Banking and Insurance](#)
[Cosponsors: Sobel CS Sponsors: Banking and Insurance](#)

Summary

General Individuals with Disabilities; Creating the "Florida Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act"; requiring the Florida Prepaid College Board to establish a direct-support organization known as "Florida ABLE, Inc."; authorizing the organization to use certain services, property, and facilities of the Florida Prepaid College Board; providing that specified moneys, assets, and income of a qualified ABLE program, including the Florida ABLE program, are not subject to attachment, levy, garnishment, or certain legal process in favor of certain creditors or claimants, etc. Effective Date: Upon becoming a law

Actions

04/01/15 SENATE Read Second Time; Amendment Adopted (474044); Read Third Time; Passed (Vote: 38 Yeas / 0 Nays), Immediately Certified;

SENATE Engrossed Text (E1) Filed

HOUSE In Messages

Compare Bills

[HB 0937 - Relating to Trust Funds/Florida ABLE Trust Fund/State Board of Administration by Rodrigues \(R\)](#)

04/01/15 HOUSE Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading

[HB 0939 - Relating to Pub. Rec./Florida Prepaid College Board/Florida ABLE, Inc./Florida ABLE Program by Rodrigues \(R\)](#)

04/06/15 HOUSE Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading

Similar Bills

[HB 0935 - Relating to Individuals with Disabilities by Rodrigues \(R\)](#)

04/06/15 HOUSE Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading

Linked Bills

[SB 646 - Relating to Public Records/Information Held by the Florida Prepaid College Board, Florida ABLE, Inc., and the Florida ABLE program by Benacquisto](#)

04/01/15 HOUSE In Messages

[SB 644 - Relating to Florida ABLE Trust Fund/State Board of Administration by Benacquisto](#)

04/01/15 HOUSE In Messages

SB 7030 - Relating to Postsecondary Education for Students with Disabilities by Higher Education

Summary

This bill creates the "Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition Program Act"; establishing eligibility requirements for enrollment in the Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition Program. The bill establishes the Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities and establishes a Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition Program Scholarship for certain qualified students. HB 7091 does not include the scholarship provision. Effective Date: Upon becoming a law. **The Council is supporting this bill.**

Actions

04/01/15 SENATE Read Second Time; Amendment Adopted (569682); Read Third Time; Passed (Vote: 38 Yeas / 0 Nays); Immediately Certified
SENATE Engrossed Text (E1) Filed
HOUSE In Messages

Similar Bills

HB 7091 - Relating to Postsecondary Options for Students with Disabilities by Higher Education & Workforce Subcommittee

04/02/15 HOUSE Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading

SB 848 - Relating to Employment of Individuals With Disabilities by Richter

Summary

This bill would be called the "Employment First Act" and require specified state agencies and organizations from the Executive Order to develop and implement an interagency cooperative agreement. This bill also requires the interagency cooperative agreement to provide the roles, responsibilities, and objectives of state agencies and organizations. This text is also in **SB 7022 (next below)**. Effective Date: 7/1/2015. **The Council wrote this bill.**

Actions

02/20/15 SENATE Referred to Governmental Oversight and Accountability; Commerce and Tourism; Appropriations
03/10/15 SENATE Favorable with CS by Governmental Oversight and Accountability; 4 Yeas, 0 Nays
03/12/15 SENATE Committee Substitute Text (C1) Filed
SENATE Now in Commerce and Tourism

Similar Bills

HB 1083 - Relating to Employment Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities by Rooney

04/08/15 HOUSE Favorable by State Affairs Committee; 14 Yeas, 0 Nays
HOUSE Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading

SB 7022 - Relating to Individuals With Disabilities by Governmental Oversight and Accountability Cosponsors: Galvano

Summary

This is a proposed committee bill (PCB) for individuals with disabilities. The bill revises definitions and defines the term "individual who has a disability". The bill revises the state's equal employment opportunity policy to include individuals who have a disability and requires each executive agency to annually report to the Department of Management Services regarding the agency's progress in increasing employment among certain underrepresented groups. The bill requires the department to develop and implement certain programs geared toward individuals who have a disability. The language of the Employment First bill and the financial literacy bill were added to this bill as well as an opportunity to earn a Unique Partners credential for employers. Effective Date: 7/1/2015. **The Council is supporting this bill.**

Actions

04/01/15 SENATE Read Third Time; Passed (Vote: 38 Yeas / 0 Nays)

04/02/15 HOUSE In Messages

Compare Bills

[SB 0206 - Relating to Individuals with Disabilities by Hukill](#)

03/23/15 SENATE Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading

[HB 0177 - Relating to Persons with Developmental Disabilities by Hill](#)

03/16/15 HOUSE Now in Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee

[SB 0848 - Relating to Employment of Individuals With Disabilities by Richter](#)

03/12/15 SENATE Now in Commerce and Tourism

[SB 1246 - Relating to Individuals with Disabilities by Deterf](#)

03/27/15 SENATE Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading

[HB 1083 - Relating to Employment Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities by Rooney](#)

04/08/15 HOUSE Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading

[HB 7085 - Relating to Financial Literacy Program for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities by Regulatory Affairs Committee](#)

03/31/15 HOUSE Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading

[HB 7099 - Relating to Individuals with Disabilities by Economic Affairs Committee](#)

03/31/15 HOUSE Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading

[SB 1008 - Relating to Seclusion and Restraint on Students with Disabilities in Public Schools by Flores](#)

Summary

This bill requires that manual physical restraint be used only in an emergency when there is an imminent risk of serious injury or death to a student or others. The bill prohibits the use of manual physical restraint by school personnel who are not certified to use district-approved methods for applying restraint techniques. The bill also prohibits school personnel from placing a student in seclusion. The bill requires that parents be notified of a school district's policies regarding the use of manual physical restraint. Effective Date: 7/1/2015. **The Council is supporting this bill.**

Actions

02/18/15 SENATE Filed

02/27/15 SENATE Referred to Education Pre-K - 12; Appropriations Subcommittee on Education; Rules

[SB 802 - Relating to Vocational Rehabilitation by Gaetz \(D\)](#)

Summary

This bill provides for the future repeal of the designation of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation as the administrative unit for purposes of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, subject to legislative review of a required report. The bill also requires the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to initiate, by a specified date, a performance improvement plan designed to achieve specified goals. The bill requires the division to develop and implement a pilot program to improve the state vocational rehabilitation program. HB 1153 was amended to only include performance measures that are consistent with The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) regulations. HB 1153 no longer has the repeal language or the pilot language. The bills are no longer identical. The Effective Date: 7/1/2015. **The Council is monitoring this bill**

Actions

04/14/15 SENATE Read Third Time; Passed (Vote: 35 Yeas / 0 Nays); Immediately certified
HOUSE In Messages

Compare Bills

[HB 1153 - Relating to Vocational Rehabilitation Services by Ingoglia](#)

The Council is supporting this bill.

04/09/15 HOUSE Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading

[SB 7048 - Relating to Developmental Disabilities by Children, Families, and Elder Affairs](#) **[Cosponsors: Detert](#)**

Summary

This bill clarifies when the Agency for Persons with Disabilities will provide services to children with disabilities in foster care. The agency administers the Home and Community Based Services Medicaid waiver to provide services beyond those available under the traditional Medicaid program. The bill revises section 393.065, F.S., which establishes categories of priority groups to be added to the waiver. The waiver program currently has a waiting list and this bill clarifies the priority category 2 relating to children in foster care. The Agency for Persons with Disabilities will provide disability specific services to children in extended foster care, ages 18 to 21. The community-based care agencies, under contract with the Department of Children and Families, will continue to provide room and board to children with disabilities in extended foster care.

The bill would have an estimated fiscal impact of approximately \$3 million on the Agency for Persons with Disabilities. Costs for the community-based care agencies would be reduced. This language is being added to the APD implementing bill which will last for one year. An attempt was made to add this language to a Guardianship bill but it was withdrawn. The bill is effective July 1, 2015. **The Council is supporting this bill.**

Actions

03/12/15 SENATE Submitted as Committee Bill by Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

SENATE Committee Bill Text Filed

03/17/15 SENATE Referred to Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services; Appropriations.

SB 7044 - Relating to Health Insurance Affordability Exchange by Health Policy and CS
Sponsors: Appropriations

Summary

This bill creates the Florida Health Insurance Affordability Exchange Program or FHIX in the Agency for Health Care Administration. The bill provides patient rights and responsibilities. The bill provides for the development of a long-term reorganization plan and the formation of the FHIX Workgroup. Effective Date: Upon becoming a law. **The Council is supporting this bill.**

Actions

03/05/15 SENATE Filed

03/10/15 SENATE Submitted as Committee Bill by Health Policy; 9 Yeas, 0 Nays

03/17/15 SENATE Favorable with CS by Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services; 8 Yeas, 0 Nays

03/26/15, SENATE Favorable with CS by Appropriations; 18 Yeas, 0 Nays

03/27/15 SENATE Committee Substitute Text (C1) Filed

03/30/15 SENATE Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading