

The Big FIVE Agencies in Florida

Supporting Students with Disabilities and Their Families

A Training for School Staff | St. Johns County School District

Presenters: Kaley Presnell and Jennifer Argentina



DIVISION OF BLIND SERVICES



Florida Department of Education | dbs.fldoe.org

Agenda

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- Slides 9-10: Center for Independent Living
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- Slides 13-14: Other Resources for Families

Learning Outcome

- Equip teachers with the skills to effectively present the “Big Five” during IEP meetings, ensuring families are connected to outside agencies before exiting St. Johns County School District.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

Overview: Helps individuals with disabilities prepare for, gain, or retain employment.

Who They Serve: Students and adults with physical, emotional, or intellectual disabilities.

Key Programs: Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), Supported Employment, Job Placement Assistance

Eligibility: Must have a documented disability that creates barriers to employment.

Contact (St. Johns County):

VR Office

1955 US-1 South, Suite 110

St. Augustine, FL 32086

Phone: (904) 825-0452

Website: <https://www.rehabworks.org>



VR: Key Points to hit at IEP meetings

Students with an IEP or 504 Plan are eligible for Pre-ETS beginning at age 14.

Pre-ETS provides services such as job exploration, resumé preparation, postsecondary education counseling, self-advocacy training, and real-world work experiences.

Students who are determined eligible for deferment are encouraged to apply.

Agency for Persons with Disabilities

Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD)

APD supports individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities across Florida by providing access to Medicaid waiver services and community-based supports.




Key Programs: Medicaid Waiver (iBudget), Supported Living, Adult Day Training, Transportation

Who They Serve:

To qualify for services, individuals must have a documented diagnosis in one of the following categories:

- Autism
- Intellectual Disability
- Cerebral Palsy
- Phelan-McDermid Syndrome
- Prader-Willi Syndrome
- Spina Bifida Cystica or Myelomeningocele
- High Risk for Developmental Disability (ages 3–5)



<p>Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) Medicaid Waiver</p> <p>Why Apply?</p> <p>The Medicaid Waiver (iBudget / APD Waiver) is a funding program that helps adults with disabilities get services and supports after high school. In some cases, APD will also fund services for minors. It is not automatic for minors. APD will look at severity, impact, and safety.</p> <p>In Florida, APD manages this waiver and uses an iBudget system to pay for approved services.</p> <p>The waiver can help with things like daily living support, job coaching, supported living, respite, transportation, day programs, residential programs, and other supports that help a person be more independent in the community.</p> <p>The Medicaid Waiver is not the same thing as Medicaid. A person may receive Medicaid health insurance and still not have a Medicaid Waiver. Medicaid pays for healthcare and doctor visits.</p> <p>The Medicaid Waiver pays for community-based disability support services. These are two different programs. Families can apply while their child is still in school.</p> <p>There is 100% a waitlist for the waiver. When a person applies and is found eligible, they will be assigned a priority category (1-7) based on their needs. This number does not mean denial, it just determines their position on the waitlist and how quickly they may move forward.</p> <p>Getting on the waitlist before exiting school is an important step. The earlier you apply, the better.</p>	<p>APPLY NOW</p>  
<p>What To Gather Before You Apply</p> <p>Be sure to collect all of the documents you need BEFORE you turn in your application.</p> <p>You will need proof of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identity• Florida residency (where you live)• Diagnosis <p>The next pages will explain what documents can be used for each disability.</p> <p>Most important: If you have a diagnostic evaluation that was completed while your child was still developing (before age 18), please include it. This is the strongest and most helpful document.</p> <p>It's very important that this diagnostic report was completed by a licensed medical doctor (M.D. or D.O.) or a licensed clinical psychologist, not a school psychologist.</p> <p>School-based psychoeducational evaluations are helpful to understand learning needs, but they do not replace a medical or clinical diagnostic evaluation for eligibility purposes.</p>	<p>Scan the QR code to learn more or click here to visit the APD website.</p> 

APD: Key Points to hit at IEP meetings

Families should start learning about APD early.

Why apply early? You must be approved and on the waitlist in case your student has a crisis.

Being on the waitlist gives families options to move up as needs change.

Important for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Intellectual Disabilities (IND): An outside psychological evaluation is needed before age 18.

What does APD help pay for?

APD can help fund things like: Respite care, Supported living, Therapies, Other adult disability supports.

Why this matters - APD is the main long-term funding source that supports eligible young adults after they exit high school upon turning 22. Getting connected early helps make sure there is no gap in services when school ends.

Florida Division of Blind Services (DBS)

Overview: Assists individuals who are blind or visually impaired in achieving independence and employment.

Who They Serve: Children, teens, and adults with visual impairments.

Key Programs: Transition Program, Independent Living Services, Orientation & Mobility Training

Eligibility: Florida residents with a documented visual impairment.

Contact (St. Johns County):

Jacksonville District Office

Phone: (904) 348-2730

[Local DBS Offices](#)



DIVISION OF BLIND SERVICES



Florida Department of Education | dbs.fldoe.org

Website: <https://dbs.fldoe.org>

DBS: Key Points to Hit at IEP Meetings

If the student is blind or visually impaired, the family should contact DBS early.

They provide services such as mobility training, orientation services, and job-readiness supports for students with vision related needs.

The student will need to complete an application for services through DBS and Vocational Rehabilitation. They work together to coordinate services.

Center for Independent Living (CIL) – Northeast Florida

Overview: Supports individuals with any disability in becoming more independent in the community.

Who They Serve: People of all ages and disabilities.

Key Programs: Life Skills Training, Peer Mentoring, Advocacy, Transition Services, Assistive Technology

Eligibility: Open to all individuals with disabilities — no income or insurance requirements.

Contact (St. Johns County):

CIL Jacksonville Office

Phone: (904) 399-8484

<https://www.cilj.com>



CIL: Key Points to Hit at IEP Meetings

Like Vocational Rehabilitation, they offer a menu of services. Programs focus on building self-advocacy skills, independent living readiness, and meaningful participation in the community. Contact the local office directly to learn how they can support your student.

There are no income or insurance requirements.

Florida Center for Students with **UNIQUE ABILITIES**

Overview: Supports inclusive postsecondary education programs for students with **intellectual disabilities** in Florida colleges.

Who They Serve: Students with intellectual disabilities aged 18–26.

Key Programs: Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition Programs (FPCTPs)

Eligibility: Documentation of intellectual disability; application required per institution.

Contact (St. Johns County): Programs may be available at nearby colleges (e.g., FCTC, UNF, FSCJ) [Find Programs](#)

Website: <https://fcsua.org>

Note: Students **must end their deferment and exit high school** to participate in an FCSUA program.



FCSUA: Key Points to Hit at IEP Meetings

FCSUA programs are for students with intellectual disabilities.

Students must end deferment to enroll in an FCSUA program, and they may choose this option after completing deferment.

The Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities supports students in transitioning to college and building skills for employment and adult life.

HOPEFLORIDA

Overview: Connects families with care coordinators for individualized support

Who They Serve: Helps navigate community resources, benefits, and family services

Key Support: Offers guidance on finding programs for housing, employment, transportation, mental health, and more.

- Works alongside agencies like APD, VR, DCF, and local nonprofits
- Available to all Florida families, regardless of income or disability category

Website: <https://hopeflorida.com/>



How Families Can Prepare Early

- Start early—reach out to agencies between **ages 14–16**
 - **Earlier when a student meets eligibility criteria for APD**
- Include **postsecondary, employment, and independent living goals** in the IEP
- Request that **agency representatives** be invited to IEP or transition meetings
- Explore **funding and scholarship options** through APD, VR, and FCSUA

Tool for Sharing...

Scan for the one-page guide



Special Program Contacts

Access

P. Specialist (and supports Behavior Specialists and Techs): Lisa Thacker 16064

Elem. P. Specialist : Deb Stubee 16063

Secondary P. Specialist: Kaley Presnell 16062

Secondary P. Specialist: Ann Diaz 16050

Coach: Erin Cozzi 16076

Behavior

P. Specialist: George Freeman 16066

P. Specialist: Tori Carnall 16065

Coach: Chris Tuccillo 16084

Life Work

Life Work Coordinator: Jennifer Argentina 13433