

Community Inclusion

... What Do I Do?

Individuals and their families need to develop a plan for the future that includes the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) if you qualify for services. In addition, everyone needs to expand the community resources that already exist and develop new resources. For individuals on the wait list, do not sit around and wait to receive APD services. The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) is only one funding source.

State and Federal laws support the rights of children and adults (with and without disabilities) to participate in the community. Many roads have been opened in the last several years because family members have invested their time and energy to the importance of inclusion for everyone.

*People want
ordinary lives in the community.
Some people
may need a little more support
than usual to achieve that goal!*

*How fortunate the person
who has a friend to help them achieve
successful inclusion.*

Department of Education:

The Department of Education, offers special education classes and it is important these services be utilized for the benefit of a student. Families need to work with the school system. When a special education student becomes 14 years old, they should have a Transition Plan in their Individual Education Plan (IEP) to encourage the direction of the student through high school years and beyond.

Attend IEP meetings and know the teachers your child has during the day. Support the system and your child, as much as you can, to show them your commitment for your child's success. *Believe in your child's future!* <http://www.fldoe.org>

Department of Vocational Rehabilitation:

The Department of Vocational Rehabilitation works with the Department of Education on the transition plans for special education students while they are in school. A lot of emphasis has been placed on

employment and preparation for employment in the last couple of years. Make sure these goals are in your child's IEP. Statistics have shown the importance of these goals. After a child leaves the school system it can be much more difficult to establish an employment support system. Expect the professionals to meet this goal for your child, regardless of the disability.

The Department of Vocational Rehabilitation also provides services for adult individuals with developmental disabilities. They may provide assessment, training and job coaching. They are located in every community in Florida. Contact them directly to receive services. <http://www.rehabwork.org>

Social Security Administration (SSA):

Benefits for Social Security and Medicaid may be available for adults and children. It is important qualifications be reviewed. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) monthly benefits could be used to help pay for some assistance or private services.

Employment is community inclusion and the accomplishment of being paid is a powerful tool. The vision of employment for individuals with disabilities often becomes clouded with fear and confusion. Educating individuals and their representatives about SSA work incentives (pages 14-15) has become a priority. Many people take a pay check for granted, yet employment and a pay check for individuals with developmental disabilities can change their lives. <http://www.ssa.gov>.

Socialization:

Non-Programs: Do not limit your socialization opportunities to "programs" for people who happen to have a disability. Being "A Part" of the community means having choices. If necessary, some parents volunteer temporarily as a mentor for success. Success can be achieved and is healthy and rewarding for everyone.

Programs: Special Olympics gives children and adults an opportunity to socialize and gain activity skills. Local community organizations or families often initiate programs for individuals with developmental disabilities. Many of these programs are started by a family member seeking social activities. These could transfer into inclusive opportunities.

For additional information, Ask your APD office for community resources to help you get connected (page 6) or call the Family Care Council hot line.