

**FL SAND's**  
**Breaking Barriers Training Academy presents . . .**

**HANDOUT**

# WORKING THE SESSION 2026

2026 FLORIDA LEGISLATIVE SESSION TRAINING FOR SELF  
 ADVOCATES

**THE FLORIDA SAND FELLOWS, PRESENTERS**



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## LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY AND DD DAY 2026

**DD Day is February 10, 2026.**

The purpose of Developmental Disabilities Awareness Day is to tell Florida State Legislators about the needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

DD Day 2026 will feel more like the DD Days before COVID. There will be a rally outside with speakers. The FDDC is not providing funding to FL SAND but groups are encouraged to bring a small delegation if they have funds for travel.

If you come to DD Day in person visiting legislators is a must. You can also help deliver messages from other self-advocates through the FL SAND My Story Project.

If you can't attend DD Day, there are many ways to advocate from your local community – being at DD Day is not essential!

Like in other years, the FDDC is also encouraging self-advocates to use the resources on their advocacy page to work throughout the session—you can find the links on your handout. CS

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## Moving On . . .

### FLORIDA LEGISLATURE & LAW MAKING OVERVIEW

- ✓ Who are Lawmakers
- ✓ How a Bill Becomes a Law
- ✓ How Programs Get Funded
- ✓ How to Follow Session Progress

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## WHO ARE FLORIDA LAWMAKERS

MEN & WOMEN  
IN FLORIDA WHO  
ARE ELECTED TO  
WORK TOGETHER  
TO CREATE AND  
CHANGE LAWS

- ✓ The Governor
- ✓ State Senators (legislators)
- ✓ Members of the State House  
of Representatives  
(legislators)

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## HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW IN FLORIDA

An idea becomes a bill! Citizens or groups tell a legislator their ideas for solving a problem. A legislator introduces the idea in the form of a bill in his or her chamber of the legislature.

Bill is published in the House or Senate Journal. This is considered the "1<sup>st</sup> Reading." Our state constitution requires bills be read 3 times.

The bill is referred to committee(s), as soon as after the first reading. The bill is discussed in committee(s) and if supported by the committee will go back to the House/Senate floor for the "2<sup>nd</sup> Reading."

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## HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW IN FLORIDA (CONTINUED)

The House/Senate will vote on the bill after "3<sup>rd</sup> Reading" and the bill either passes or fails.

When a bill passes one chamber it goes to the next chamber where it goes through the same process. A bill can go back and forth between houses until a consensus on wording is reached.

Once a bill passes both the House and the Senate, it goes to the Governor's desk for signature.

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## HOW THE STATE BUDGET IS FORMED



Agencies submit budget requests to the Governor.



The Governor writes his/her budget based upon agency needs and his/her goals for the state.



The House and Senate negotiate items in the budget and pass a final budget bill at the end of the session.



The Governor signs the budget (but he can take items out of the final budget).

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## Moving On . . .

### LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

- ✓ Each year disability agencies draft a list of important topics to speak to legislators about
- ✓ These topics are often called legislative priorities
- ✓ Because we are self-advocates we're going to focus on FL SAND's priorities

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## FL SAND Legislative Priorities 2026

FL SAND is a network of 13 grassroots, self-advocacy groups that represents people with disabilities throughout the state of Florida. We advocate for disability rights and inclusion for all and speak for thousands of self-advocates in Florida. You can learn more about us at [FLSAND.org](http://FLSAND.org), or reach us at [contact@flsand@gmail.com](mailto:contact@flsand@gmail.com).

### #1 Keep APD's iBudget and CDC+ Programs Strong

With the FDDC and other agencies, we urge the legislature to provide funding and oversight to keep the iBudget program strong. This includes

- Ensuring people with I/DD and their families have reliable choices beyond managed care when deciding how to receive the care and support they need.
- Lawmakers and APD working together to improve how services are planned and managed to ensure resources are used as intended and accountability is strong.
- Improving support for and increasing the number of Waiver Support Coordinators so APD clients have choices in who provides their care.
- Continuing to support and encourage self-direction in services through the CDC+ program and Participant Directed Option in managed care.



### #2 Solve the Transportation Dilemma

We support a transportation bill and funding to solve the persistent, debilitating problems of insufficient reimbursement rates for providers and local paratransit systems not providing efficient door-to-door options and rides that cross county lines. People with disabilities cannot be fully included in the community if they cannot cross county lines to work and see their doctors.

### #3 Address Affordable Housing

FL SAND urges legislators to appropriate funds to increase the availability of affordable housing for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. FL SAND supports increased appropriations to the Florida Housing Finance Corporation (FHFC) to continue its competitive grant program for affordable housing for individuals with I/DD; the utilization of low-income housing tax credits along with grants to support development of larger I/DD affordable rental properties, when appropriate; and enhanced collaboration among state agencies to create a comprehensive strategy promoting housing stability, self-sufficiency, and community access for the I/DD population.



This project is provided by the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc., supported in part by grant number 2501FLSCDD from the U.S. Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Washington, D.C. 20201 as part of financial assistance awards totaling \$4,438,400 with 100% funded by ACL/HHS. Grantees undertaking projects with government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official ACL policy and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACL/HHS or the U.S. Government.

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## OTHER PRIORITIES AGENCIES WILL BE TALKING ABOUT THIS YEAR

1. For people with disabilities to be represented on disaster preparedness policy-making groups.
2. Right to Repair (wheelchair) bill—we understand there will be another bill similar to the one that gained some steam last year.
3. Bill to strengthen the Working People with Disabilities program at the state level. Is expected to require training for DCF personnel and for Working Peoples to be offered to clients who qualify (vs. folks having to be self-informed and ask for it).
4. Other issues that pop up during the session.

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## Moving On . . .

### TELLING YOUR STORY TO LEGISLATORS

- ✓ Legislators take priorities seriously but they also want to hear from the people who vote for them.
- ✓ The FL SAND Fellows and FDDC have developed projects to help get your story in front of your elected representatives even if you can't go to DD Day.

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### FL SAND "MY STORY" PROJECT

Self-advocates in Florida can complete an online form that asks them to write about difficulties ("their story") they may be encountering with transportation and/or finding accessible housing (FL SAND priorities).

The information they fill in on the form will be used to create a letter that can be delivered to legislators on DD Day along with the FL SAND priorities. They can also put their photo on the letter.

Fellows and FL SAND members attending DD Day in person can help deliver the forms to legislators.

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# THIS IS WHAT THE LETTER WILL LOOK LIKE

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Please help resolve the debilitating issues surrounding transportation for people with disabilities in Florida.  
Florida Self-Advocates Network 'D'  
[www.flsand.org](http://www.flsand.org) - [contactflsand@gmail.com](mailto:contactflsand@gmail.com)



My name is Chatequa Pinkston  
I live in Hillsborough County  
I am a Self-Advocate (person with a disability) who votes.

I need paratransit services for essential daily needs like getting to work, doctors' appointments, and the grocery store. However, most paratransit services only provide rides within county lines and struggle to provide efficient door-to-door service that gets people with disabilities to appointments or work in a reasonable time window.

My county's transportation system can be difficult to use for several reasons. First, the only way to schedule a trip is by telephone, and there are no confirmations sent by text message. Sometimes the phone wait times are long before I can speak to an agent. Another issue is that on occasions I have been on the bus for long periods of time and have missed meetings for my job. All of these issues could be solved via more funding.

We urge the legislature to invest in innovation to solve the persistent, debilitating problems of insufficient funding for para-transportation. Having to wait outside in the heat or cold, sometimes in unsafe locations, because your ride drops you off 45 minutes before your office opens or 30 minutes after it closes, is something most Floridians would agree is not acceptable, yet this is what many people with disabilities face much more often than they should. People with disabilities cannot be fully included in the community if they cannot cross county lines or get to work, school, doctors' appointments, the grocery store, or church in a way that allows them the same freedom and safety as others in the community.

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## FDDC "PRESERVE OUR CHOICE" PROJECT



The FDDC project is focused on making sure people with disabilities on the iBudget waiver continue to have choices when it comes to their services.



They are looking for self-advocates on the waiver to tell legislators how important these services are to their lives. They also want people waiting for services (on the waitlist) to tell legislators why they need services.



They also have an online form you can complete that will generate a paper form that the FDDC will deliver to your legislators on DD Day. There's a link to the online form on the handout.

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## Moving On . . .

### MEETING WITH LEGISLATORS

- ✓ Making appointments
- ✓ Tips for meeting with your elected representatives

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## IN-PERSON ADVOCACY AND VIRTUAL ADVOCACY ARE EQUALLY EFFECTIVE!

### **In person (on DD Day or in hometown offices)**

- Appointments with legislators/aides for DD Day should be made ahead of time.
- Be patient and persistent. Sometimes legislators will not make appointments until a few days before DD Day.

### **Virtual Appointments (on Zoom)**

- Appointments with legislators/aides will be by phone or over Zoom.
- Virtual advocacy can be more efficient because it eliminates transportation and accessibility issues people with disabilities may have.
- This is a great way to advocate to our elected officials if we can't travel to Tallahassee!

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## LEGISLATIVE VISIT PROCESS

- Find legislator contact information on [FSACentral.org](https://FSACentral.org)>Resources>Policy & Legislative Action
- Enter your address to find your representatives and their contact information



Call/email your legislators' offices to request an appointment (in person, phone, Zoom)



Plan what you're going to say beforehand



Be on time to appointment!



Send a thank you note or email briefly re-stating one key message



*Tip! Use contact form on the legislator's page if you can't find email.*

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## MAKING THE APPOINTMENT

- Let them know you are a constituent – someone who lives and votes in their district. Let them know you'll be at DD Day or would like to make a virtual appointment to meet with them.
- You may only be able to meet with an aide, but that's OK.
- Have a 30 second speech saying why you want to meet with them.
- Tell them you'll send them a Zoom link or phone number for a virtual appointment. Be flexible with your dates for virtual appointments– try to work around their schedule.

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## PREPARE FOR YOUR APPOINTMENT

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- Resources
  - FDDC contact your legislators tool kit:  
<https://www.fddc.org/dd-awareness-day/> (scroll down)
  - Your parents, providers, other self-advocates who have worked with legislators before
- Prepare a message with no more than 3 key points
- Prepare a story from your life *related to one of the priorities*. The goal is to touch their hearts – It's ok to write and read your story or send them a written copy.
- For virtual appointments, email your priority and story sheet ahead of time so they will have them for the appointment.

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## PREPARING FOR A VIRTUAL APPOINTMENT CONTINUED...

- Test Zoom technology before the appointment to make sure everything is working, lighted well (use lamps or natural light in front of your face), and you are comfortable.
- Charge your devices and have any materials ready. Priorities should be emailed to legislators ahead of time.
- Select a place with as few distractions as possible (turn off the TV; avoid eating; if others are nearby, ask them to remain quiet).

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## PREPARING: DRESS TO IMPRESS!

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FL SAND Shirt if you have one

Shirt and tie, shirt and jacket (no tie), nice blouse

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No shorts, jeans, or leggings if you meet in person in a hometown or Capitol office

## AFTER THE APPOINTMENT

- Thank the individual(s) for their time
- Follow up with them at key points during the session (before votes)

**Mock Legislative Visit video:** <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/802222589>

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## ADVOCATE THROUGHOUT THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION AT KEY POINTS

1. Stay current on progress via FL SAND and FSACentral Facebook pages. Search #FloridaDDAdvocacy2026.
2. Subscribe to FSACentral.org news (scroll to the bottom of the page to subscribe).
3. Sign-up for emails at disability organizations like FDDC.org, disabilityrightsflorida.org, arcflorida.org, familycafe.net. ***You'll get their legislative updates!***
4. Family Café "Let's Talk": Friday afternoon call with special guests.

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ADVOCATE  
THROUGHOUT  
THE  
LEGISLATIVE  
SESSION AT KEY  
POINTS (CONT'D)

5. Follow bill progress:
  - Senate: [www.flsenate.gov](http://www.flsenate.gov)
  - House: [www.flhouse.gov](http://www.flhouse.gov)
6. Respond to calls for action! E.g. to call/email committee members, your legislators, etc. before key votes. FL SAND and other agencies often ask self-advocates to reach out to legislators with key messages.
7. Stay connected via the FL SAND Monthly Advocacy call: [www.flsand.org/monthlycall](http://www.flsand.org/monthlycall); Read you FL SAND Digests; and follow legislative updates on social media.

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ADVOCATE  
THROUGHOUT  
THE  
LEGISLATIVE  
SESSION *IN*  
*YOUR*  
*COMMUNITY*



Don't forget about other legislative resources available to you . . .

- FDDC Advocacy Resource Guide and Tool Kit: <https://www.fddc.org/dd-awareness-day/> (scroll down)
- This resource provides ideas for advocating in your community such as hosting a developmental disabilities awareness day.

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## HOW TO ACCESS THE FL SAND AND FDDC PROJECT FORMS

- [www.FLSAND.org/mystory26](http://www.FLSAND.org/mystory26)
- [www.fddc.org/our-voices-matter/#my-story-form](http://www.fddc.org/our-voices-matter/#my-story-form)

## FL SAND PRIORITIES AND OTHER LEGISLATIVE RESOURCES

- [www.FLSAND.org/2026legislative](http://www.FLSAND.org/2026legislative)

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## CONNECT WITH THE SELF-ADVOCACY MOVEMENT IN FLORIDA



### [www.FSACentral.org](http://www.FSACentral.org)

Florida Self-Advocacy Central – Florida's go to source for self-advocacy news and information

Subscribe on the website to receive updates

Search "Florida Self-Advocacy Central" on Facebook or go to [facebook.com/fsacentral](https://facebook.com/fsacentral)



### [www.FLSAND.org](http://www.FLSAND.org) [contactflsand@gmail.com](mailto:contactflsand@gmail.com)

Search "Florida Self-Advocates Network'D" on Facebook or [facebook.com/groups/flsand](https://facebook.com/groups/flsand)



### **AMPLIFY! Monthly Advocacy Call on Zoom**

The first Monday of each month at 7 PM ET

Details are on [FLSAND.org](http://FLSAND.org) Monthly Call page



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QUESTIONS?  
CONTACTFLSAND@GMAIL.COM



**Breaking Barriers Training Academy**

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