

## Press Release

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CONTACT: SCOTTIE HOWELL (850) 414 - 0488

**Agency for Persons with Disabilities Announces Participation in National Governors  
Association Policy Academy**  
*~~ Delegation to help develop policy solutions to improve outcomes ~~*

**TALLAHASSEE** - The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) announced Friday that a delegation from Florida has been selected to participate in the National Governors Association (NGA) Policy Academy on Improving Outcomes for Young Adults with Disabilities.

"We are very excited for Florida to be represented at this academy," said Shelly Brantley, Director of the Agency for Persons with Disabilities and leader of the Florida delegation. "Florida is already a leader in innovative programs for person with disabilities. This gives us the chance to build on current efforts as well as gain new perspectives from other national leaders.

"Services for persons with disabilities is a priority I share with Governor Bush," said John Winn, Commissioner of Education. Florida has a wealth of experience and knowledge to share, but we are always open to new ideas and approaches."

The NGA Policy Academy brings together teams from different states to examine issues relating to youths with disabilities and form policy solutions for better outcomes. Teams from Florida, Connecticut, Kansas, Colorado, Montana, and Washington have been selected to participate.

"This is a great opportunity for the Florida delegation to not only learn from other teams and bring back a lot to the state, but to also share our ideas," said Dr. Alex Penn-Williams of the Florida Department of Education. "We can incorporate our innovations into national policy. It also complements the work Governor Bush's Blue Ribbon Task Force and Implementation Group is doing."

Florida's delegation is a cross-representation of agency representatives, stakeholders, advocates, consumers and legislators. Joining Director Brantley and Dr. Penn-Williams are: Senator Steven Wise, MD; Curtis Austin, President and CEO of Workforce Florida; Gary J. Weston, Executive Director of the Advocacy Center for Persons with Disabilities; Beth Kidder, Bureau Chief of Medicaid Services at the Agency for Health Care Administration; Bill Palmer, Division Director of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Department of Education; Nila Benito, parent advocate; Alex Brown, self advocate; and Michele Poland, Educational Policy Analyst for the Bureau of Special Education and Student Services.

Advocates such as team member Nila Benito see the prospects for positive impact at home. "It represents a new opportunity for Florida to be at forefront of maximizing the potential of youth with disabilities to contribute to their communities with real jobs and a better life."