



Message from the Director

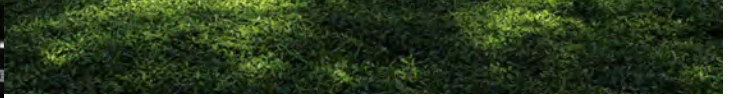
As we move into May, we recognize several important observances, including Mental Health Awareness Month, Water Safety Month, and Prader-Willi Awareness Month—each highlighting the importance of health, safety, and support for individuals with disabilities and their families. I am proud of the continued efforts of APD staff and partners across the state, from participating in the Special Olympics Law Enforcement Torch Run to recognizing Child Abuse Prevention Month and welcoming families during Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day. These moments reflect our commitment to strengthening connections and supporting our communities. I encourage families and caregivers to take advantage of resources like the APD Provider Search to find services in their local communities, and to remain mindful of safety as we head into the summer months. Thank you for your continued dedication to supporting Florida's disability community.

Observances

- National Mental Health Awareness Month
- Water Safety Month
- Prader-Willi Awareness Month
- National Mental Health Awareness Week – May 3–9, 2026
- Wear Green Day for Mental Health Awareness – May 15, 2026
- International Water Safety Day – May 15, 2026
- International Nurses Day – May 12, 2026
- Prader-Willi Awareness Day – May 15, 2026

Find the Right Support with APD Provider Search

The APD Provider Search is a user-friendly tool designed to help individuals with disabilities, families, and caregivers easily locate licensed providers and services across Florida. Users can search by location to explore available facilities and find the supports they need within their community. Information is pulled directly from APD iConnect, and providers are encouraged to keep their details up to date to ensure accuracy. Explore the Provider Search: apd.myflorida.com/resources/providersearch.htm.



Recognizing Child Abuse Prevention Month

APD joined the Florida Department of Children and Families to kick off Child Abuse Prevention Month at a statewide press conference, where Director Bob Asztalos delivered remarks and participated in a ceremonial pinwheel planting alongside community partners.

APD also hosted its own pinwheel planting at the State Office, joined by The Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida. These events help raise awareness and reinforce a shared commitment to protecting Florida's children, supporting families, and building stronger, safer communities.



Special Olympics Law Enforcement Torch Run

APD staff joined hundreds of law enforcement officers in Tallahassee for the annual Special Olympics Law Enforcement Torch Run, supporting athletes across Florida. The run concluded at Cascades Park with a ceremony celebrating the athletes and their upcoming competitions. Director Bob Asztalos delivered remarks during the press conference following the run, recognizing the impact of this statewide effort and the importance of community support for individuals with disabilities.



Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day at APD

APD welcomed families for Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day with a fun and engaging morning at the State Office. Children received personalized badges, participated in coloring activities and word searches inspired by APD artwork, and learned about the agency through a story reading or brief career overview. Deputy Director Lorena Fulcher kicked off the event with welcome remarks, highlighting the importance of public service. Following APD's activities, families joined the larger event hosted by the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, visiting activity tables and exhibits to continue a day of learning and exploration.



IMS LAUNCH: STRENGTHENING HOW WE SERVE

The Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities has officially launched our new Incident Management System (IMS) and IMS Provider Portal—an important step forward in how we partner with providers to support the safety and well-being of those we serve.

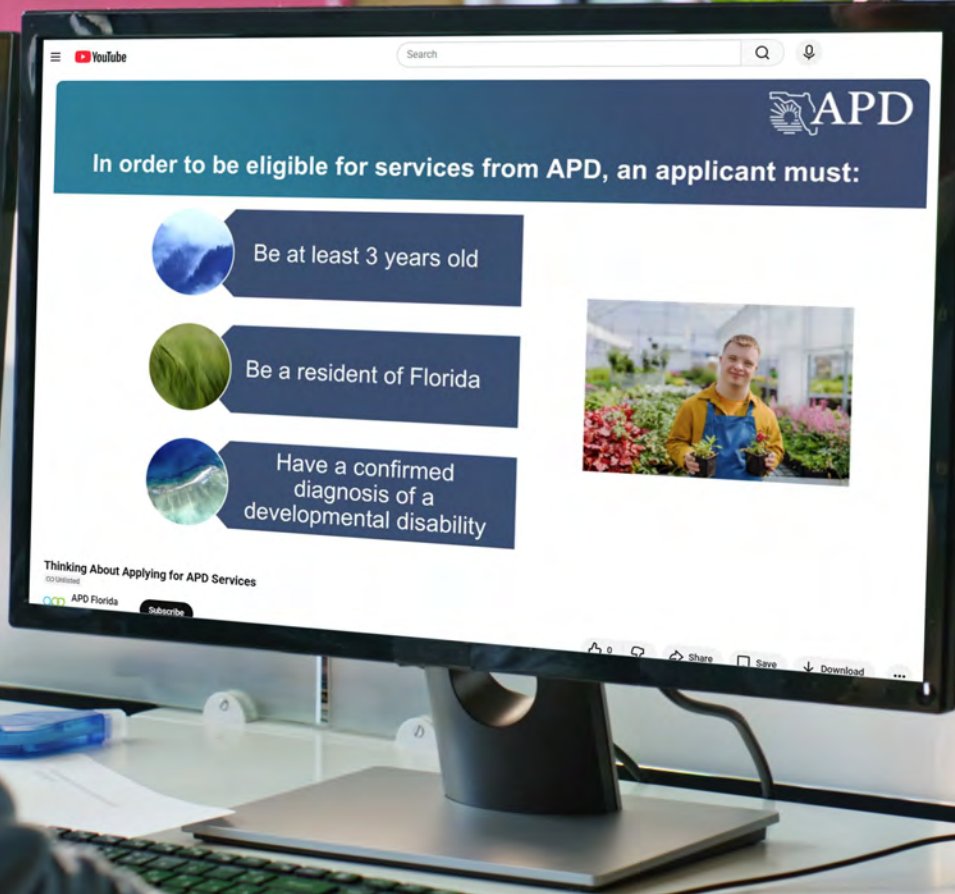
Providers can now submit incident reports directly through the portal, creating a more streamlined process with improved communication, clearer reporting, and better visibility. The portal also eliminates the need for emailed forms, offering one central place to submit, track, and manage reports.

As training begins, we encourage staff and providers to engage, ask questions, and help ensure a strong transition. This is about strengthening our partnership and improving outcomes—together.

New APD Video Series: APD Made Simple

Navigating APD services just got easier. We've launched a new video series designed to break down key topics into simple, easy-to-follow guides for individuals, families, and providers.

Our first video, *Thinking About Applying for APD Services*, covers eligibility, the application process, and helpful resources to get started. Watch at <https://youtu.be/2fzlrZBJfUI>. More videos are on the way—making APD simple, step by step!



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Rachel Ritter, a Tallahassee native, has been with the Agency since 2024. With a background in elementary and exceptional student education, she spent a decade in the nonprofit sector serving adults with disabilities before joining APD to deepen her impact on the community she cares about.

As Program Administrator for Hope Florida, Rachel leads the Hope Navigator team, which serves individuals with all types of disabilities through a personalized, community-based approach. Known for her positivity and passion, she brings a solution-focused mindset to supporting both her team and the individuals they serve



Rachel Ritter
Program Administrator, Hope Florida

Water Safety Month: Staying Safe Around Water

May is Water Safety Month, a reminder for families and caregivers to take extra precautions around pools, lakes, and beaches—especially for individuals with disabilities. Some individuals may be naturally drawn to water or may not recognize potential dangers, making close, active supervision essential. Simple steps like installing barriers, using alarms, and enrolling in swim lessons can help reduce risks and build confidence. With the right precautions, individuals with disabilities can safely enjoy Florida’s waterways all summer long.



CONTACT US:

Address: 4030 Esplanade Way, Suite 380
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0950

Toll-Free: 1-866-APD Cares (273-2273)
Phone: (850) 488-4257

