



RICK SCOTT  
GOVERNOR

*Better Health Care for all Floridians*

ELIZABETH DUDEK  
SECRETARY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Contact:** AHCA Communications Office  
[AHCACommunications@ahca.myflorida.com](mailto:AHCACommunications@ahca.myflorida.com), 850-412-3623

**SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT:**  
***Miami Herald AGAIN Mischaracterizes Parent Choice and Services Available for Medically Complex Children***

**Claim:** "...Gov. Scott's appointees, abetted by legislative shortsightedness, have worked diligently to rip these challenged children from parents who have cared for them for years and stash them in adult nursing homes far from home, where they languish and pay an exorbitant amount of money to keep them in abominable conditions."

**Fact:** The decision as to where a child receives services is made by the parents. Florida is not aware of a single child who is currently residing in a nursing facility contrary to the wishes of the family or legal guardian due to the unavailability of skilled nursing, or any other Medicaid service, authorized by federal law for the State to provide in the home.

**Claim:** "...while cutting services that would allow them to receive less-expensive care at home."

**Fact:** Medical services provided in the home to Medicaid recipients under the age of 21 are an entitlement and there has been no "cutting services." The only Medicaid services that could potentially be affected by State budgetary decisions are optional and non-medical Medicaid Waiver services. There is no evidence that even a single child has been institutionalized, or is at actual risk of institutionalization, due to an inability to access non-medical Medicaid waiver services due to state funding limits. Rather, Florida has an extensive array of such optional Medicaid waiver services available to these recipients. As to medical services in the home, in Florida, medically complex Medicaid recipient children are entitled to receive medically necessary private duty nursing, personal care services, and other medically necessary services in their home up to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The critique of the State's purported underfunding of waivers resulting in unacceptable wait lists is misplaced. Medically complex children under the age of 21 are entitled to receive every medical service identified by the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) as required by federal law and as incorporated into the Florida state Medicaid plan – which is approved by federal CMS. There are no Medicaid-eligible children whatsoever on any waiting list to receive private duty nursing, personal care services, or other medically necessary services in the home.

No funds have been cut for in-home services and each child is individually assessed for the amount and scope of care they receive.

**Claim:** "During Ms. Dudek's tenure, severely disabled children whose parents lovingly, willingly took care of them at home, with state-funded home healthcare services to help, have been sent to nursing homes, languishing with little mental stimulation, exercise or education."



**Fact:** The State is required by federal law to provide parents an option of whether to bring or keep their child in the home or in a nursing facility. If a change is to be made to take away the parents' choice as to where their child is placed, it must be through a change in federal law, not a lawsuit against the State of Florida. The choice of location where a child receives services is made by the parents. If the child is in a pediatric nursing facility or pediatric wing and the parent or legal guardian wants the child to transition home, AHCA's care coordinators are actively supporting that transition and AHCA's quality improvement organization, eQHealth Solutions, Inc., is ensuring that those medically necessary supports are authorized. In cases where the child is in the custody of the state, medical foster care is the first choice if it is available.

**Claim:** "...the state has cut millions of dollars from programs that help parents take care of their challenged children at home. To add to the insult, Florida rejected \$40 million in federal funds that would have helped these children remain home or return there to their parents."

**Fact:** Florida has not rejected federal funding for children's services. Florida's application for the *Money Follows the Person* grant focused on identifying adults in nursing facilities to potentially move into the community. This \$40 million grant did not address medically complex children since all medically necessary services for children are already paid for under the current Medicaid program.

*The Agency for Health Care Administration is committed to better health care for all Floridians. The Agency administers Florida's Medicaid program, licenses and regulates more than 45,000 health care facilities and 37 health maintenance organizations, and publishes health care data and statistics at [www.FloridaHealthFinder.gov](http://www.FloridaHealthFinder.gov). Additional information about Agency initiatives is available via [Facebook \(AHCAFlorida\)](#), [Twitter \(@AHCA\\_FL\)](#) and [YouTube \(/AHCAFlorida\)](#).*

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