



State of Florida  
Statewide Advocacy Council  
Betty Busbee, Chair  
Craig Rappel, Vice Chair  
William E.C. Marvin, Executive Director



Dear Governor Bush, President King and Speaker Byrd:

The Florida Statewide Advocacy Council is pleased to present this report for the year 2001-2002.

In many ways, this has been a great year for the Council. For the first time, all 15 positions were filled and kept filled by the Governor. Also for the first time the Statewide and Local Advocacy Councils developed work plans and are diligently working on them during the year 2002-2003 with great success. A stronger and more technically advanced training program for Local Advocacy Councils has been developed and implemented. Most importantly, over 19,000 complaints were handled resulting in over 1,700 investigations and monitoring of over 4,225 programs and facilities. This was a 600 percent increase over last year's monitoring.

Of significant importance this last year was the continuation of an investigation into the use of psychotropic drugs in foster children with specific concentration on children under the age of five. The full report on the investigation is near completion; however, the Council has released a report on problems discovered during the review of foster care records and is awaiting action plan by the Department of Children and Family Services. As a result of the 2000-2001 closing of G. Pierce Wood Memorial Hospital, a state operated mental health facility, the State and Local Advocacy Councils continue to monitor the ability of the communities to provide appropriate and adequate services to our consumers who have mental illnesses. Members have also been actively involved in the "Redesign" of the programs for persons who have developmental disabilities. Since many of the consumers of state services reside in assisted living facilities, an effort is being made to encourage statewide participation in the Attorney General's Operation Spot Check program. By participation in this program, Council members have been involved in the closing of nine undesirable facilities that had been licensed to care for some of Florida's most vulnerable citizens.

In the coming year, the Council plans to address some needed statutory revisions in order to more succinctly clarify our role and address the issues of independence, access and staffing. Your support in this endeavor will be needed for the benefit of those persons who we are mandated to represent.

We thank you Governor, President, and Speaker for your continued support and funding. The over 370 Gubernatorial appointed Local Advocacy Council members and the Statewide Advocacy Council members have contributed over 300,000 hours of volunteer time at a value of over six million dollars to the State of Florida in protecting the constitutional and other rights of Floridians whom receive state services.

The Council will continue to vigorously pursue its charge to be a third-party to protect and advocate for the rights of clients through monitoring, investigating and advocating for a better quality of life for Floridians with unique needs. We will also continue to provide recommendations for improving the service delivery system and we stand ready to assist you in reviewing any areas you request.

Sincerely,

Betty Busbee,  
Chair