

WHAT ARE THE FLORIDA STATEWIDE AND LOCAL ADVOCACY COUNCILS?

The Statewide and Local Advocacy Councils (hereinafter referred to as SAC and LAC) system is a consumer protection mechanism for people receiving services from state agencies in Florida. The idea of citizen councils for human rights protection was conceived at Miami Sunland in 1972, in reaction to abusive conditions at that facility. The councils were implemented at other facilities for individuals with mental retardation and eventually were codified into law in 1975 to serve as a third party mechanism to protect the rights of participants in all programs in what was then the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services.

The 370 plus volunteer members appointed by the Governor, investigate complaints about abuse and deprivations of human and constitutional rights, monitor and investigate reports of abuse, monitor programs and facilities that are operated, funded, or contracted by state agencies, review research projects involving human subjects, and generally advocate for the welfare of individuals who are in the care and custody of state agencies in the social service area or private vendors under contract to the state.

The appellate body for the LACs is the Statewide Advocacy Council (SAC). This council of 15 volunteers appointed by the Governor, receives appeals on complaints that the LACs have not been able to resolve at the local level. SAC may address complaints that are a threat to the life, safety or health of individuals, or that are multi-service area in scope without a district appeal. After investigation by SAC, these issues may be referred to the secretary or agency head, or to the Governor for action. SAC members also oversee the LACs and supervise the operation of the LAC system.

Complaints about services provided by a state agency or one of its providers may be directed to the LAC in the appropriate service area or by calling 1-800-342-0825.

