

**University of Florida/Gainesville  
Center for Autism and Related Disabilities  
Final Report and Year End Summary**

**2022-2023**

Submitted by

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Director

**University of Florida (UF)/Gainesville**  
**Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD)**  
**Final Report and Year End Summary**  
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**UF/Gainesville CARD Current Registry**

	<b>Registry Data as of June 30, 2023</b>	<b>Registry Data as of June 30, 2022</b>
<b>Registry Total</b>	<b>6,580</b>	<b>5,845</b>
Alachua	2,335	2,049
Bradford	166	141
Citrus	495	443
Columbia	362	315
Dixie	64	59
Gilchrist	122	115
Hamilton	48	40
Hernando	454	421
Lafayette	28	23
Levy	264	234
Marion	1,619	1,450
Putnam	296	271
Suwannee	213	185
Union	114	99
0-2	52	28
3-4	242	212
5-15	2,652	2,375
16-21	1,495	1,377
22+	2,139	1,853
<b>Annual New Registrations</b>	<b>811</b>	<b>652</b>
<b>Annual Registry Losses</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>19</b>

In accordance with section 1004.55, Florida Statutes (F.S.), and Rule 6A-7.0335, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), the University of Florida (Gainesville) CARD provided nonresidential resource and training services for persons of all ages and levels of intellectual functioning with a documented diagnosis of autism, a pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified, an autistic-like disability, a dual sensory impairment or a sensory impairment with other disabling conditions. Services were coordinated with local and state agencies and school districts in an effort to not duplicate services. UF/Gainesville CARD worked closely with its partner agencies across the state of Florida to ensure high quality and equitable local, regional and statewide service provision in accordance with Rule 6A-7.0335, F.A.C., and consistent with the long-standing mission and values of the Florida CARD, a Florida Department of Education (FDOE) program since 1993. UF/Gainesville CARD primarily provided services within its 14-county region in North Central Florida, but also collaborated with other CARD centers and state agencies/projects on regional (e.g., regional trainings, Partnership for Effective Programs for Students with Autism [PEPSA] program) and statewide initiatives (e.g., annual CARD conference, development of online training content, support of state performance plan indicators and support for the reading initiative). Service delivery was consistent with the other six Florida CARD centers and was coordinated in the collective development of our projects' annual service plans and via phone/video conferences with CARD directors and FDOE's CARD liaison. CARD UF/Gainesville participates regularly in many multiagency leadership activities in our community and throughout our region. Additional data are recorded in the statewide Project Tracking System (PTS).

This report is a summary of activities completed by UF/Gainesville CARD during the period of July 1, 2022, through August 31, 2023.

An abbreviated quantitative summary which reflects UF/Gainesville's CARD activities across all relevant variables specified in our grant award agreement with FDOE follows. Detailed registry data, programmatic activity and constituent contact data can be found in the project tracking system (PTS) database. ***Please note that all planned activities were completed, and all deliverable goals were met or exceeded.***

In accordance with Rule 6A-7.0335, F.A.C., UF/Gainesville CARD implemented a plan that included the following:

- 1. A staffing plan with, at minimum, individuals with expertise in autism or autistic-like behaviors and individuals with expertise in sensory impairments.**

UF/Gainesville CARD prides itself on having a highly qualified multidisciplinary staff with impressive longevity in terms of years of service to the project. Our project staff members are professionals with expertise in the following discipline areas: education, psychology, speech and language pathology, occupational therapy, and behavior analysis. Our director and associate director have been with the project since its inception in 1993. This continuity of leadership has contributed a high level of expertise and administrative stability to our project, which has certainly served to enhance our project performance and outcomes, despite budget constraints. Our project leaders are also extremely productive in terms of scientific and service grant writing, fundraising, publications and presentations, and are recognized locally,

nationally and internationally as experts in our fields. The success in securing external funding in past years has allowed us to maintain impressive levels of service delivery in response to increased demands for services. In FY 2022-23, CARD UF/Gainesville secured continuing professional development for our professional staff members through virtual platforms and facilitated their face-to-face participation in our annual CARD statewide conference and other relevant meetings.

**2. A direct service plan that must address individual and family assistance in the home, community and school. The project shall not supplant responsibilities of other state and local agencies.**

UF/Gainesville CARD provided extensive individual and direct family assistance (IDFA) across contexts (home, school and community) in FY 2022-23. IDFA is defined by the CARD centers as any contact with any individual and/or family in reference to a specific CARD constituent. Included among these data, in addition to direct home, school and community-based family support, is participation in CARD-sponsored activity groups (e.g., CARD Adult Support Groups, My Friends social group, UF Impact Autism, Parent Support Group, etc.). Families are advised of the range of services provided by UF/Gainesville CARD and how to access those services when needed. Detailed information on how to access CARD services is also available on our website (<http://www.card.ufl.edu>). All new families are encouraged to come to one of our tele-conference or on-line family orientation sessions where they learn about CARD services and supports. Included in our assistance to individuals and families are visual supports to aid communication. IDFA contact data are collected regularly, entered into CARD’S uniform reporting database, summarized quarterly and entered into the FDOE PTS for quarterly and annual reporting.

**Summary of Annual IDFA Data**

Total IDFA contacts delivered	7,796
Total number of individuals served annually	14,433

**3. A technical assistance (TA) and consultation services plan for providing specific intervention and assistance, utilizing all available community resources, to clients of the project, the clients’ family, school districts, and other service agencies and individuals as appropriate.**

UF/Gainesville CARD provided substantial TA services throughout our community in FY 2022-23. TA is defined by the CARD centers as assistance requested by a school, agency or program and may or may not be related to a specific CARD constituent. Agencies requesting such services are directed to a TA request form on our website (<http://card.ufl.edu/formscontact/requests-from-schools/>). Once a completed form is received at our office, a CARD staff member with expertise relevant to the TA request is assigned to contact the agency, assess need and determine a plan of action. School support requests from families are coordinated with our district contacts, the individual school administrator and the

classroom teachers. TA contact data are collected regularly, entered into UF/Gainesville’s CARD uniform reporting database, summarized quarterly and entered into the PTS for quarterly and annual reporting. TA partnerships with Bradford, Citrus, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Suwannee and Union school districts continued and grew in FY 2022-23. In addition to TA and consultation to our local school partners and medical providers, UF/Gainesville CARD has continued its partnership with local Early Steps providers to realize our mutual goal of enhancing services for children under 3 years of age and their families.

**Summary of Annual TA Data**

Total TA contacts delivered	3,950
Total number of individuals served	7,218

**4. A professional training program plan that includes developing, providing and evaluating pre-service and in-service training in state-of-the-art practices for personnel who work with the populations served by the project and their families.**

UF/Gainesville CARD provided extensive local and regional trainings for professionals in FY 2022-23 in an attempt to ensure that all professionals working with CARD constituents are trained in state-of-the-art “best practices” and are highly qualified. Face-to-face or virtual meetings were held with ESE directors or their designees for all 14 districts served by UF Gainesville CARD in order to assess priorities and develop collaborative professional development plans. All UF/Gainesville CARD trainings are open to all interested parties in the community, including family members, at no charge. Schools and agencies requesting training are directed to a training request form on our website (<http://card.ufl.edu/formscontact/training-requests/>). Once a completed form is received at our office, a CARD professional with expertise relevant to the training request is assigned to contact the agency, assess the need and determine a plan of action. Many UF/Gainesville CARD professional development programs were offered online in FY 2022-23 to increase access for educators and families. Additional learning opportunities are available for viewing on our website including a web page on Employment Resources (<http://card.ufl.edu/resources/for-adults-with-asd/employment-resources/>). We continued to update our website Learning Opportunities this year and to package our training resources in a convenient and easy to use e-learning format. Professionals and families have access to professional development on a variety of topics related to ASD that they can complete at their own pace and in their own time. Training data, including participant demographic information and participant evaluations, are collected and reviewed regularly. Participant data from all professional development sessions presented in this report are inclusive of regional center staff (coded in PTS as Discretionary Project Personnel) and constituency board members (coded in PTS as either Parent/Guardian, Family Member, Caregiver or Adult with Disabilities), as well as other types of individuals served. Regional trainings conducted in collaboration with the Partnership for Effective Programs for Students with Autism (PEPSA) include our 2022 Summer Literacy Institute. Additional PEPSA training

programs were offered throughout the year and the UF Autism Annual Conference was offered in June 2023.

In FY 2022-23, CARD staff provided surveys to a sampling of professional development participants at 50 separate workshops. Those surveys received responses from 434 participants. The participants were asked four questions for them to rate on a 1 to 6 Likert scale. The questions and results were as follows:

1. To what extent did the training increase your knowledge?  
78% responded with a 5 or 6 (with 6 being “greatly”)
2. To what extent did the training meet its intended objectives?  
87% responded with a 5 or 6 (with 6 being “greatly”)
3. To what extent will you use what you learned from the training?  
84% responded with a 5 or 6 (with 6 being “always”)
4. To what extent will you recommend the training to others?  
89% responded with a 5 or 6 (with 6 being “always”)

**Summary of Annual Parent and Professional Training/Workshop Data: Local and Regional**

Total number of annual local trainings and workshops	167
Total number of participants	5,061
Collaborative planning meetings with district ESE personnel	14
Total number of annual regional trainings and summer institutes	2

**5. A public education plan to increase awareness of the public about autism, autistic-like disabilities of communication and behavior, pervasive developmental disorders, dual sensory impairments, and sensory impairments with other disabling conditions.**

UF/Gainesville CARD hosted or participated in numerous public education and awareness events throughout our catchment area in FY 2022-23, including regional community resource and health fairs, autism awareness events and many other opportunities to increase public education and awareness. Partnerships with schools and other community organizations including the Alachua County Library, the Santa Fe College Teaching Zoo and the UF Impact Autism club are vital to our public education mission. Specific events and related data can be found in the PTS.

**Summary of Annual General Public Education/Awareness Data**

Total number of general public education events	69
Total number of participants	12,487

**6. Description of its working relationship with and support of the constituency board, as defined in s. 1004.55, F.S.**

UF/Gainesville CARD continued its close collaborative relationship with its constituency board in FY 2022-23. The constituency board reviewed annual program goals and hosted quarterly meetings with staff to review programmatic and budgetary priorities. The constituency board operated in accordance with approved by-laws and board members participated actively in fundraising events to help support UF/Gainesville CARD operations. Finally, board members participated in relevant trainings related to their own and their family’s needs and interests throughout the year, including the annual CARD conference. In January 2023, UF CARD board members met with constituency board members from all other CARD centers at the annual conference through virtual technology.

**7. Provide appropriate nutritional information to parents of children served by the centers in accordance with the requirements stated in General Appropriations Act 2015.**

In FY 2022-23, UF/Gainesville CARD disseminated appropriate nutritional information to constituents at least quarterly in various formats. Information on nutrition tips, food refusal, picky eating, events/resources for free or low-cost nutritious foods and related research projects at the University of Florida was sent to families via email, CARD e-news and social media on thirteen separate occasions reaching 2,292 individuals. Additional nutritional resources were provided through the UF/Gainesville CARD lending library for families to access.

**Summary of Annual Nutrition Information Provided**

Total number of healthy nutrition information programs provided	8
Total number of participants/families served	2,292

**9. Community Leadership in ASD**

UF Gainesville CARD staff participated in community leadership activities throughout FY 2022-23. These activities included monthly videoconference meetings with other CARD Directors, quarterly meetings with our Constituency Board, and a variety of community interagency meetings. A total of 34 community leadership meetings with 419 participants were achieved and recorded this year. UF/Gainesville CARD maintained collaborations with the local medical community, particularly the UF College of Medicine and Shands Hospital. A resource and referral database of medical providers by discipline has also been maintained. UF/Gainesville CARD staff has participated in training UF medical students, psychiatry residents, pediatric residents and child psychiatry fellows and has provided assistance to families and physicians at the UF Child and Adult Psychiatry Autism Clinics and Developmental Pediatrics clinic throughout the year.

**Summary ASD Leadership Activities**

Total Meetings	34
Total number of individuals participating	419

**School District Needs Summary for 2023-24**

Throughout the year, CARD UF/Gainesville surveyed educators and families from each school district in our region to determine anticipated professional development and technical assistance needs. District Exceptional Student Education Directors or their designees as well as representatives from other Discretionary Projects and agencies in our region were asked for suggestions related to CARD collaboration, and professional development needs for the 2023-24 school year. The following districts and agencies participated in our survey, and/or in our Zoom meeting on April 26, 2023: Alachua County Schools, Columbia County Schools, Gilchrist County Schools, Hamilton County Schools, Hernando County Schools, Levy County Schools, Florida Diagnostic Learning Resource System (FDLRS) Springs, FDLRS Gulfcoast, Florida and Virgin Islands Collaborative (FAVI). Data shared in the meeting, specific survey results, and professional development requests for FY 2023-24 are presented below.

**Services to school districts July 1, 2022 - April 24, 2023.**

UFG CARD Services 7/1/2022 - 4/24/2023								
School District	Professional Development Activities		Technical Assistance Requests		3-22 Y/O Registered with CARD		Constituents Registered with CARD	
	2021-2022	2022-2023	2021-2022	2022-2023	2021-2022	2022-2023	2021-2022	2022-2023
<b>Alachua</b>	6	14	47	54 (31)	1272	1479	1966	2227
<b>Bradford</b>	1	0	3	8	114	131	138	162
<b>Citrus</b>	4	4	20	24	395	337	425	477
<b>Columbia</b>	2	1	11	28 (2)	221	265	304	352
<b>Dixie</b>	7	0	5	3	34	43	57	64
<b>Gilchrist</b>	0	9	5	33	82	85	113	119
<b>Hamilton</b>	1	0	2	5	28	35	39	48
<b>Hernando</b>	1	3	21	23	297	322	409	440
<b>Lafayette</b>	0	0	0	1	16	19	22	26
<b>Levy</b>	2	3	13	23	159	185	228	256
<b>Marion</b>	4	1	14	27 (3)	994	1121	1413	1569
<b>Putnam</b>	1	0	10	4 (1)	182	201	266	288
<b>Suwannee</b>	0	2	1	11	147	171	182	208
<b>Union</b>	0	2	5	16	73	86	99	113
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>4014</b>	<b>4480</b>	<b>5661</b>	<b>6349</b>



The above table represents the number of Professional Development activities conducted and Technical Assistants requests received by UF CARD from public (private) schools. The table also shows the increases in requests for CARD services and number of constituents from the previous year.

**Comments and Suggestions for ways that UFG CARD could further improve our collaboration with your agency or district in 2023 - 2024.**

Rosalind Hall-Levy: Definitely a need, some staff do not have a real understanding of what it looks like and means to have ASD and the behaviors can be escalated. The sooner the teachers have the do's and don'ts to support early on is critical. The teachers are communicating for help.

Kudos to whole CARD team especially Greg and Danielle for the wealth of information kindness and knowledge is so helpful over many years. One thing she would like to encourage is the PEPSA partnership being utilized by more teachers to participate. Those endorsements have made a lot headway and progress. May 30th last day, Dr. Hall is retiring. She must sit out for one year but after that she will be around to continue her passion. Especially paraprofessional training ideally a teacher [able to have para and teacher involved in initial training] there is something about them being together nearing the same message and collaborating is a responsibility for everyone and there is more buy in for all when they hear the same language being there matters you can ask questions and get clear direction free of interpretation. Start where you can have dual educators at the table, go back to the school to plan and execute may lead to less explosive situations when the teacher/para is not present. The needs are great, and CARD is a positive support between families and the school system to be team members in student support. Parents can give up when there are too many barriers, so the resources CARD provides are very helpful.

Paraprofessional training-outside of school hours to not remove them from class but to work to support their training. This is challenging because every district varies in schedule of training. Touch base with school districts individually to see what will work. Principals trade out days and there may be some options to get it on the calendar early. May need to be more individually delivered for flexibility to reach all districts in a time that is convenient for them.

FDLRS Update - Alachua, Dixie, Levy, Marion, Citrus Counties - family services number of calls with children who have recently been diagnosed looking for support and CARD services are regularly shared.

Gilchrist-Heather Beach-Have been keeping Danielle Liso busy and are so very thankful for her! Increasing number of students coming from out of state or coming from no school background who are really struggling. Paraprofessional training is crucial and, they spend the most time with students with special needs, and that is exciting. Just surviving the number of increasing students currently.

Hamilton County-Charlotte Nettles-Increased number of identified students. Utilizing resources and making those connections to resources is crucial.

Sarah Merchant Hernando-Lots of success when they have reached the end of their capability the TA goes in and it has been extremely helpful to get new ideas. Partnering with FIN for free ASD

endorsement for teachers in the County. The rate of 11% growth per year so the need is high and the struggle to meet those needs is great but helpful with CARD partnerships.

Krsiti Feagle, Columbia County updates-they have quite a few student care attend events. Classroom teachers are having a hard time managing the adults. Some training is needed in small groups and 1;1, or 1;3 AND WHAT THAT LOOKS LIKE. The time to manage adults (paraprofessionals) is becoming an issue.

FAVI-Angel Perez-Works with professionals who work with 0-22 y/o vision/hearing loss with or without other dx. Covers the whole state and districts get free services if they are registered with FAVI. Working on new training opportunities. Communication Matrix module upcoming and upcoming Literacy that targets children with any disabilities. They are happy to be there for you and your students anytime.

## **8. Summary of Supplemental Activities in Support of Program Objectives**

UF/Gainesville's CARD personnel have been very successful in supporting the ever-expanding scope of our project and our growing community needs, despite budgetary constraints. The past success of our staff in obtaining external funds has been a source of supplemental programmatic support. In FY 2022-23, we continued our collaboration with colleagues from the UF Department of Applied Physiology and Kinesiology on funded research projects. Previously successful fundraising events including our annual UF Stomp the Swamp and Elks Club Splash Day events were resumed this year with the help of our UF students and compassionate community members. Our CARD UF/Gainesville Annual UF & Autism: Going Greater Conference was also successfully continued in 2023 and plans are already being developed for our 2024 conference.

UF/Gainesville CARD continues to strengthen its program through the cultivation of strategic community partnerships. In FY 2022-23, we continued building on the close relationships we have with our school districts, expanded our efforts with our local Early Steps programs, continued our collaboration with local diagnosticians and enhanced our community outreach efforts through numerous CARD adult and teen social groups. Our website, e-news and social media provide current information on CARD activities and items of public interest on a regular basis. Monthly CARD orientation sessions for new constituents and support groups for parents are well received and appreciated. UF/Gainesville CARD continues to provides referrals to physicians, therapists and agencies as needed.

Throughout the year, UF/Gainesville's CARD staff worked to further develop our collaboration with school districts, with exceptional student education directors and other agency representatives (e.g., Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System, Project 10, Florida Inclusion Network, SEDNET, etc.) to plan for professional development needs in our region. We were also pleased to co-sponsor the Annual Statewide CARD Conference and to facilitate a variety of family and professional development workshops. Many of our information and training sessions were made available on-line including new presentations recorded for future viewing and additions to the CARDcast (podcast) series on our website.

On-line workshops focused on Alternatives to Seclusion and Restraint and ASD Information for School Administrators have been important offerings for educators.

Throughout FY 2022-23, our entire UF/Gainesville CARD team further developed our ability to reach educators, families and constituents through remote platforms using the University of Florida's HIPAA compliant Zoom licenses. In addition to hosting family support groups to provide guidance on best practices for keeping their children safe and engaged meaningfully at home, we have continued our individual assistance to families and technical assistance consultations to teachers and other educational personnel. To this end, UF/Gainesville CARD staff video-conferenced with educators from the 14 districts in our region and conducted numerous face-to-face and video classroom observations in public, private and charter schools. In conjunction with the 6 other CARD centers across all of Florida, our innovative team has continued to create useful resources for clients, families and school-based personnel to help them better meet the needs of those with autism and related disabilities. Our regular offerings including support groups for families, teens, adults with autism and college students have all continued without interruption. Telehealth technology also allows CARD UF/Gainesville staff to deliver consultation and support with the North Florida medical provider community including UF Health Pediatrics and Psychiatry increasing the safety of all and increasing healthcare access to those at a distance from UF Gainesville.