

**MEMORANDUM**

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**DATE:** December 19, 2006  
**TO:** APD Area Administrators  
**FROM:** Shelly Brantley, Director  
**SUBJECT:** Zero Tolerance Clarification: Same-Sex Living Arrangements

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As you know, the State of Florida launched the Zero Tolerance Initiative in September 2003 as a means by which to combat sexual violence committed against persons with developmental disabilities. Since that time, the Zero Tolerance Initiative has expanded to now serve as our Agency's aggressive and proactive multi-pronged approach to dealing with the national problem of **all** forms of abuse, neglect, and exploitation committed against individuals with developmental disabilities.

Some individuals have previously suggested that our Agency consider encouraging or even requiring same-sex living arrangements as a means by which to prevent client-on-client sexual abuse. While our ultimate goal is preventing such occurrences in the first place, available research does not support the assumption that same-sex living arrangements inherently prevent sexual violence between persons with developmental disabilities who live together.

The most common location in which sexual abuse occurs is in their home (whether that home be an APD-licensed residential facility or the consumer's own home/apartment). Therefore, all living arrangements for persons with developmental disabilities should be considered and evaluated on a case by case basis in terms of the level of risk which is presented. This risk evaluation can and should include the characteristics and histories of everyone living in the home.

Thank you in advance for your ongoing cooperation with our Zero Tolerance-related activities. If you have any questions or concerns regarding specific issues in your area or need additional information regarding our efforts to prevent sexual violence perpetrated against the consumers we serve, please feel free to contact Tom Rice at (850) 414-7649. In addition, for the most accurate and up-to-date information on the activities under the Zero Tolerance Initiative, I encourage you to continue referring consumers, waiver support coordinators, service providers, families, guardians, and others to the Zero Tolerance link on our website at [http://apd.myflorida.com/clients/zero\\_tolerance.htm](http://apd.myflorida.com/clients/zero_tolerance.htm)

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