

## **Employment First Collaborative Team Meeting/Conference Call**

February 11, 2014  
1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc.  
124 Marriott Drive, Suite 203  
Tallahassee, Florida 32301

### **Minutes**

#### **Members Attending**

Dehryl McCall  
Diane Vacca  
Jennifer Evans  
Judy White  
Kirk Hall  
Kristin Panella  
LeeAnn Herman  
Nancy Boutot  
Sheila Gritz-Swift  
Shila Salem  
Steve Dunaway  
Allison Cohen-Hall  
Suzanne Sewell  
Jan Pearce

#### **Welcome and Introductions**

The meeting began shortly after 1:00 p. m. Shelia Gritz-Swift welcomed everyone and quick introductions were made around the table.

#### **Status Updates**

##### *-Governor's Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities*

Shelia reported on the great meeting, which included a diverse employer representation, many self-advocates, and providers, likely totaling over 100 participants. She noted that transportation was presented as a key barrier. She noted that her update on Employment First was well-received, and the Commission requested she be prepared to present on the strategic action plan as well as baseline and target data for improvement at the next Commission meeting in May. Shelia noted that Employment

First is a systems change initiative, with no immediate employment outcomes likely, but a process leading to eventual change that should impact employment outcomes positively in the future.

Steve asked when funding was provided to individuals for transportation, was it considered taxable income. LeeAnn responded by noting that if the money is used to directly cover expenses it was not considered income.

*-Employment First Florida Grassroots Group*

Shelia noted that over 100 people registered for the webinar last week. Allison Cohen-Hall noted that the cap was due to funding and concerns that too many people would make it unwieldy. She added that a repeat webinar will be scheduled. Shelia noted that an Employment First Florida webpage is now on the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council website. Right now, the page has placeholders only with the exception of content from the Grassroots webinar.

Shelia asked participants to think about the design of both the messaging and the logo. It was suggested that perhaps there could be contest held in the schools and community for individuals with disabilities to come up with one. It was also suggested that perhaps employers could judge the submissions. Dehryl provided kudos for employer buy-in to the effort.

*- Interagency Cooperative Agreement Draft Template*

Sheila asked that all feedback be provided by February 21, so that the final draft can be sent to the respective agencies' and organizations' legal counsel. She noted that it had already cleared DEO's legal counsel with just a few wording and formatting changes suggested. In response to Steve's question about when the final would be sent out, Shelia responded that it would be no later than February 24<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup> in order to comply with "next steps" presented to the Coalition and Commission. Judy noted that legal should have until March 24 to review and return. The question was raised as to whether someone would have to review it in-house before legal, which may be the case for some agencies or organizations. Shelia added that there would be more edits, and we are still targeting the final sign off by May.

*-Employment First Web Page*

Shelia noted that the web page had already been discussed. (See above.) She also shared that an email account has been set up at [EmploymentFirstFlorida@yahoo.com](mailto:EmploymentFirstFlorida@yahoo.com) primarily for use by the Grassroots Group.

*-Communications Subcommittee*

Judy summarized the planned meeting. She noted that it was determined that a self-advocate named Davie was willing to work with them. She noted that the next meeting will be held on March 6, when they will review what has been done and determine how to move forward, adding that not everyone was comfortable with what was decided before. Sheila noted the work of the Arizona Developmental Disabilities Council on Employment First as a possible example from which to borrow in terms of

messaging. She referred to their 'Messaging to Employers' as an example of what works, though the orientation would need to be changed to all disabilities and not just developmental disabilities. She added that she and Richard Bivins, the Communications Coordinator for the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council will be providing a presentation to the local Chamber of Commerce on Employment First. She suggested that reach-out efforts should be made to local and regional Chambers as well to gain feedback. Sheila noted that the Chamber would be holding free social marketing trainings in March.

*-State Employment Leadership Network (SELN)*

Allison, Steve, and Nancy briefed participants on the SELN. Allison noted that the SELN meeting with APD was "inspirational." She raised the possibility of its site visit in April coinciding with the Employment First monthly meeting, and/or being on the phone with us at the March meeting. Shelia reviewed what the SELN is all about and how it will complement the Employment First efforts. Steve noted that membership was open to other agencies in Florida. Updates on future meetings and calls will be sent to our team.

*-Other*

Nancy gave an update on ASPE, noting that membership was open to students, and that it provided conferences and training. She suggested membership for the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council as lead on Employment First. Judy noted that Workforce Florida was now CareerSource Florida. She added that there had been a discussion about Employment First and of a re-focus on careers as part of transition planning.

**\*Draft Strategic Implementation Action Plans: Identifying Collaborative Goals**

Sheila noted that Allison had reviewed and tweaked the template, and that the document will be forthcoming.

Allison noted she had reviewed individual agency and organization plans, observing that there were many crossovers. She noted that she had taken the crossovers and put them into one place on an Excel template so as to identify shared goals, lay out a timeline, and establish responsibilities. She also noted that some goals were specific to particular agencies and organizations.

Regarding the shared goals document, she noted that each agency has its own goals document, but that the intended focus was on collaboration. Thus, the document starting point was for shared goals. Allison then discussed the topic of shared goals. She noted that in order to create categories, broad goals needed to be identified. She also noted that shared goals and opportunities included insuring that state policies and procedures supported Employment First. This requires review of state plans and policies to insure compliance. She pointed out that although this is something all needed to do, it would have to be done individually. Allison added that we need to determine what is really a shared goal or not.

Suzanne asked if we were supposed to be drafting or reviewing the goals documents now. Allison said that participants should be tweaking them and sharing them. Allison also said that an Excel worksheet would be used to place finished goals, while a Word document would be used for common goals and what each agency will do for them.

The draft was then reviewed, and individual changes were made. Sheila said she would send the draft out for people's review in two weeks. It would then be revised and suggested changes included by February 27. (Changes should be sent to Allison.) These changes should include both shared goals and new ideas.

Steve noted the fact of the U. S. Department of Justice (DOJ) findings on the policies and practices of other states. Discussion followed about whether Florida would also receive a "findings" (including those from the U. S. Department of Labor - DOL) and if Employment First would help Florida avoid such action. It was suggested that a review of other such findings might be useful in determining what Florida needed to do to not have a 'findings' determination made. Sheila said that she would send out the DOJ findings report for participants' review.

A fifteen minute break was taken at this point.

**\*Review of Transition and Employment Recommendations from the Waitlist Strategic Plan and Identification of Potential Strategies to be integrated into our Work.**

Sheila began the discussion on this topic by asking the question about what should be included or not. (See attached PDF.)

**\*Next Steps**

*-Baseline Data and Targets for Improvement*

Sheila asked everyone to come to the next meeting with their ideas for data sources that they will use. Also what they envision as targets to be achieved. Judy noted how the Department of Education is required to report to the Federal government collected data on graduates who are enrolled in higher education, or other post-secondary education, and who are competitively employed, or are otherwise employed – this based on a strict definition of employment.

Sheila asked if reports on where individuals are employed, wages, etc. are available. However, it was determined that this data was not available, although special runs might be done of collected data. The question was raised as to what indicators need to be looked at to find out whether the Employment First effort was a success.

**\*Adjournment**

Shelia reminded everyone on the need to finalize the Strategic Implementation Action Plans and the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p. m.