

Employment First Initiative

2014-15 DRAFT Collaborative Strategic Action Implementation Plan

This collaborative strategic action implementation plan is designed to reflect a commitment among agency and organization Partners to the Employment First Initiative Interagency Cooperative Agreement for the period from July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015 to maximize resources to improve employment outcomes for persons with disabilities seeking publically funded services.

Strategic Goals and Operating Policies

1. Ensure that state level policies and procedures support employment as the first option available for people with disabilities
 - Review existing state or organizational plans to ensure alignment with Employment First efforts
 - Review enabling legislation to ensure maximum compliance in a manner that promotes employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities
 - Review agency or organization governing and operational policies and procedures and identify any needed changes
 - Revise individual service planning tools or associated processes (i.e., IEP, IPE, support plan), where applicable, so that individuals are asked about interests in employment at intake, at the start of any assessment process and during all planning meetings

Financing and Contracting Methods

1. Remove or minimize barriers in existing rate setting and/or contracting policies and procedures
2. Ensure that billable activities, service definitions, and provider contracting structures work in tangent to support employment

Training and Technical Assistance

1. Ensure that Florida has a comprehensive training program that fosters quality integrated competitive employment for all individuals with disabilities
 - Update existing matrices on training and resources
 - Identify how planned or existing training could be enhanced through collaborative efforts
 - Identify gaps in training and then provide information to Partners on key topics

- Choose priority areas as necessary via shared competencies and develop an interagency plan for joint training activities
- Develop and deliver training to new and existing staff consistently and in multiple formats to reinforce retention of critical learning elements
- Increase the number of staff who have work incentive counseling training or certification
- Increase workshops or resources available during annual conferences that promote employment for people with disabilities
- Clarify the roles of staff and providers in facilitating employment, including provisions of written guidance
- Provide guidance and support for qualifications for direct support professionals- consider national employment practices, and review and revise existing qualifications as indicated

Inter-agency Collaboration

1. Ensure that Florida has a strong network of partners that work collaboratively to promote employment as the first option for individuals with disabilities
 - Continue to facilitate Employment First planning
 - Coordinate or provide input into the development of an Employment First portal
 - Increase the use of Integrated Resource Teams
 - Develop shared policy statement and guidance re: supporting people with shared eligibility (i.e., consider common application process)
 - Develop a package for students aged 14+ and families that would explain adult service system, expectations regarding employment, address permission for shared referrals
 - Update state level interagency agreement between APD, VR, BEESS regarding shared responsibilities for supporting employment, and add other agencies or organizations as deemed appropriate

Long-term Communications Plan

1. Increase/coordinate outreach to employers
 - This action step will be coordinated through the Communications Subcommittee. Key items to consider beyond those identified in the interagency cooperative agreement are as follows:
 - Increase awareness of employer incentives
 - Establish communication among agencies regarding outreach to businesses

- Identify and post employers hiring people with disabilities to highlight public awareness, promote recognition and promote increased public use of those businesses
2. Increase/coordinate outreach to individuals and families

Performance Measurement, Quality Assurance, Program Oversight (data)

1. Articulate performance measures for employment activities
 - Review quality assurances practices
 - Identify common employment data variables so that individuals tracked throughout multiple systems can be cross-walked and tracked longitudinally and ensure data sharing agreements if determined necessary
2. Create and implement data systems to capture and report accurate integrated employment outcome information
 - Develop provider level data requirements with automated capacity to reduce staff time required, increase accuracy, compatibility with state agency systems, etc.
 - Improve or develop individual, agency or organization specific data systems, where applicable
 - Develop cross-agency data sharing capacity and related data sharing agreements (e.g., DEO/DOR, unemployment compensation, FETPIP, etc. bounced against agency specific) if determined necessary
3. Make relevant data available and accessible to all stakeholders
 - Post reports online to improve access
 - Create cross-agency linkages to post results for easy access
 - Develop tools for provider report cards that can be shared with individuals

Services and Service Innovation

1. Promote the use of service innovations
 - Promote self-employment and supported employment, including customized employment
 - Develop capacity to deliver Discovery as an alternative to traditional assessment strategies where appropriate
 - Explore using career exploration as a specific service for individuals on waiting lists
 - Increase access to the Disability Navigator program
 - Develop peer mentoring relationships regarding employment

Collaborative priority areas of focus for 2014-15 identified by the Employment First Collaborative Team are as follows:

Training and Technical Assistance

- Ensure that Florida has a comprehensive training program that fosters quality integrated competitive employment for all individuals with disabilities (In top three, eight partners – Item 1 for four; Item 3 for four)

Strategic Goals and Operating Policies

- Ensure that state level policies and procedures support employment as the first option available for people with disabilities (In top three, five partners; item 2, three partners)

Interagency Collaboration

- Ensure that Florida has a strong network of partners that work collaboratively to promote employment as the first option for individuals with disabilities (In top three, five partners; Item 1 for four)

Four referenced data in top three; three referenced service innovations in top three.