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.

The Partners identified the following three areas as top collaborative priorities for 2014-15:

- Training and Technical Assistance
  - Ensure that Florida has a comprehensive training program that fosters quality integrated competitive employment for all individuals with disabilities.
- Strategic Goals and Operating Policies
  - Ensure that state level policies and procedures support employment as the first option available for people with disabilities.
- 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.

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 legislation to identify and recommend any needed changes to promote employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities
   - Review agency or organization governing and operational policies and procedures and identify any needed changes
   - Review and revise individual service planning tools or associated processes (e.g., Individual Educational Plan, Individual Plan for Employment, 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 together to support employment
3. Collect data to ensure accountability

Training and Technical Assistance

1. Ensure that Florida has comprehensive training strategies that foster 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 determine solutions
   - 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 knowledge
   - Assess and determine staff shortage and the need for new staff to provide employment training
   - 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 a shared policy statement and guidance regarding supporting people with shared eligibility (i.e., consider common application process)
- Develop a package for students aged 14+ and families that would explain the adult service system, expectations regarding employment, and address permission for shared referrals
- Update state level transition interagency agreement between APD, VR, and 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 implementation items are as follows:
     - Increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities by motivating employers to hire
     - Promote a consistent message of awareness among employers about the value persons with disabilities bring to the workforce
     - Inform employers about the resources that are available to assist with their hiring needs, including the single-point of contact
     - Increase awareness of employer incentives
     - Establish communication among agencies and organizations regarding outreach to businesses
     - Identify and recognize employers hiring people with disabilities to increase public awareness
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., Department of Economic Opportunity/Department of Revenue, unemployment compensation, Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program, etc. bounced against agency-specific data) 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 employment options, including customized employment, supported employment, and self-employment
    - Develop the capacity to promote the use of multiple assessment strategies, including non-traditional assessments that increase person-centered employment opportunities
    - Encourage career exploration
    - Facilitate access to and use of the Workforce system
    - Develop peer mentoring relationships regarding employment