

Report Summary

In 2004, Florida's Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) launched a five-year employment initiative, with the goals of: (a) 25% of Adult Day Training (ADT) recipients employed by July 1, 2009; and (b) 50% of all individuals receiving developmental disabilities waiver services who indicate a desire to work employed by July 1, 2009. Recent data, however, suggest a relative decline in the percentage of individuals in integrated employment in Florida. From a high of 30% in 1999, FY 2011 data provided by APD indicates that only 20% of individuals served by APD received integrated employment services (Butterworth et al., 2012).

The decline in the percentage served in integrated employment occurred despite APD's five-year employment initiative, and suggests that a sustained and long-term effort will be needed if Florida is to accomplish the goals of an Employment First initiative. Florida recently established new goals and objectives for 2010–2015, and plans to monitor achievement by each area (APD 5 Year Employment Plan, 2010).

As an advocate for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in Florida, the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDCC) issued a Request for Proposals to help Florida understand Employment First efforts across the nation, and support coalitions and initiatives that promote Employment First. Employment First means that employment is the first option considered for people with IDD, instead of day programs, center-based programs, or sheltered workshops. The Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) and the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disability Services (NASDDDS) partnered to develop a proposal to help Florida understand national efforts and to develop an Employment First initiative in the state.

This report reflects Year One activities for this project. The report is divided into three sections: 1) a summary of the history of Employment First and analysis of specific state Employment First initiatives and policies; 2) findings from a comprehensive data-collection effort in Florida related to employment for people with IDD; and 3) a draft implementation plan and draft marketing framework with suggested goals, objectives, timelines, and benchmarks for establishing a comprehensive and sustainable Employment First Initiative.

The goal of the report is to translate the lessons learned from the Employment First states into strategies for effective implementation of an Employment First initiative in Florida.