

# Florida Employment Enhancement: Strengthening the System of Support

A White Paper from the Florida Developmental Disabilities Network Leadership  
Development Program



This project is provided by the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc., supported in part by grant numbers 1801FLBSDD, 1901FLSCDD-01, and 2001FLSCDD-01 from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects with government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official ACL policy.

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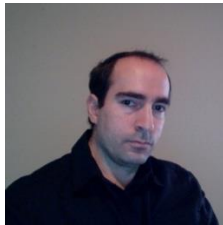
## A Note about the Authors

In 2018, the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council funded the Florida DD Network Collaborative Leadership Program, a program designed to develop a diverse Cadre of current and emerging leaders with and without disabilities. The Cadre represented statewide initiatives and Developmental Disabilities (DD) Network Partner Institutions.<sup>1</sup> Six leaders participated in Year 2 of the program, representing DD Network Partners, including the Mailman Center University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) at the University of Miami and the Florida Center for Inclusive Communities at the University of South Florida. Cadre Members also included leaders in several statewide organizations and initiatives, including the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, New Horizon Support Group, and business, Empower Possibilities.

Between December 2019 and August 2020, the six participating leaders worked collaboratively to identify barriers and solutions to improve quality employment services for Floridians with developmental disabilities. The work of the Cadre Members was supported by five mentors representing the Florida DD Network and state and national disability organizations.

Cadre Members identified and outlined five recommendations to improve the skills and knowledge of employment specialists and job coaches working in the Florida DD System. The Cadre Members' intention is that these recommendations facilitate action to improve employment services for Floridians with developmental disabilities.

## Florida DD Network Collaborative Leadership Development Program Cadre Members and Authors



Jairo Arana | Clinical Program Coordinator, University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics, Mailman Center for Child Development | Board Member of UM-NSU CARD | Self-Advocate



Cody Bowman | Cashier, Bealls, Inc. | Senior at the University of South FL | Spinalpedia Intern | Self Advocate



Natalie Jean | Ombudsman, Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Lead of Self-Advocacy Activities | Self Advocate



Arizona Jenkins III | Founder and President of New Horizon Support Group | FL SAND Fellow | FL SAND Advisor | Mentor | Disability Consultant | Public Speaker



Danielle McGill | Founder of Empower Possibilities | Disability Consultant, Advocate, and Public Speaker



Mindy Stevens | Program Director, Center for Autism and Related Disabilities, Florida Center for Inclusive Communities/UCEDD-University of South Florida-Tampa

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<sup>1</sup> Florida Developmental Disabilities Council Inc., Disability Rights Florida, Florida Center for Inclusive Communities UCEDD, Department of Child & Family Studies, College of Behavioral & Community Sciences, University of South Florida, and the Mailman Center for Child Development University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities at the University of Miami

## Executive Summary

In Florida, approximately one-third of working-age people with disabilities and one-quarter of people with intellectual disabilities are employed, compared to three-quarters of working-age Floridians who do not have a disability.

This White Paper was developed to inform the Florida Developmental Disabilities (DD) Network and System about current strategies and practices that can enhance employment opportunities for Floridians with disabilities. The issue of employment for people with developmental disabilities is multifaceted, involving many industries and systems of support. This paper was developed to provide recommendations that will improve the skills and knowledge of employment specialists and job coaches in Florida.

**Goal of this White Paper** | improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities in Florida by strengthening the effectiveness of employment specialists and job coaches.

### **Objectives of this White Paper** |

- Improve training and resources available to employment specialists and job coaches and human resources (HR) personnel
- Holistically enhance the quality of employment specialists and job coaches by establishing accessible competencies as well as standardized tools to assess competencies in action
- Build collaboration among disability and non-disability specific networks focused on employment to encourage broader utilization of established quality practices in Florida employment services

**Recommendations of this White Paper** | It is the hope of the Florida DD Network Leadership Development Program Cadre that these recommendations will provide actionable strategies that encourage targeted efforts by current and future Florida DD systems coalitions and leaders.

1. Ensure that the set of core competencies for employment specialists and job coaches is accessible and available for self-advocates and service recipients
2. Create a balanced scorecard to assure that the assessment of employment outcomes is meaningful to people with disabilities
3. Enhance a toolkit for employment specialists and job coaches to better include the service recipient in the training and process
4. Improve training for employment specialists, job coaches, and HR Personnel
5. Encourage partnering of employment specialists and job coaches across the Florida system

*A Note on Language: Throughout this paper, the Cadre Members will use people-first language, which refers to the person first and the disability second (for example, people with disabilities, instead of disabled people). The White Paper will also refer to people with disabilities as 'people' and 'individuals' to be concise.*

## Introduction

Employment is a crucial part of adulthood that many people with disabilities cannot access. From research at the state and national levels, we know that people with disabilities are disproportionately underemployed<sup>i</sup>. We also know that disparities in employment for people with disabilities are due to systemic issues founded in segregation and discrimination. Forbes attributes it to 'institutionalized discrimination'<sup>ii</sup>, the Arc of the United States to 'low societal expectations that foster job discrimination'<sup>iii</sup>. People with disabilities want to work. People with disabilities can achieve competitive, integrated employment. People with disabilities improve the organizations that hire them<sup>iv</sup>.

### Competitive, Integrated Employment: What We Mean

Everyone has a different meaning for competitive, integrated employment, and these variations lead to varied employment outcomes for people with disabilities. Throughout this paper, the Cadre defines competitive, integrated employment in the following ways:

- Competitive, meaning that people are employed in competitive roles and earn the same wages as people without disabilities in similar roles.
- A good fit with the skills and abilities of the person who is employed, meaning that people have the opportunity to choose from a full scope of employment options that match their interests, strengths, and career goals.
- Chosen by the person who is employed rather than the agency that supports them; people's opinions about where and how they work takes precedence over the opinions of anyone who is hired to help them get a job.
- Community-based, meaning that people work in the same agencies, offices, or environments as people without disabilities.
- Reflect a career instead of 'just a job,' meaning there is room for career development, professional growth, and promotion. There are opportunities to move from a part-time position to a full-time position, eliminating the glass ceiling for people with disabilities.

This paper was developed to inform the Florida DD system of current obstacles to employment for Floridians with disabilities, as well as to promote potential solutions that will enhance employment opportunities. The issue of employment for people with developmental disabilities is multifaceted, involving many industries and systems of support. This paper will address one area that has a profound impact on the opportunities and access a person has to gain and sustain competitive, integrated employment, employment services; the effectiveness of employment specialists (see note on the following page for a definition of effectiveness) and job coaches. Ultimately, the goal of this paper is to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities by increasing the active role of the job seeker and strengthening the skills and knowledge of the employment specialist and job coach.

## Effective Employment Specialists and Job Coaches: What we Mean

For the purposes of this White Paper, effective employment specialists and job coaches are defined by the outcomes that they help people achieve as well as the satisfaction that people with disabilities have with their services. Specific indicators are listed below.

1. Effective employment specialists and job coaches help people with disabilities achieve desired employment outcomes.
  - People get the job they want (doing the work they want to do for the company they want to work for).
  - People are supported to have a career (instead of getting a short-term job).
  - People get a job that offers opportunities for career advancement, promotion, and income growth.
  - People work in competitive integrated environments (instead of enclaves, workshops, or places that hire only people with disabilities).
2. Effective employment specialists and job coaches satisfy the expectations of people with disabilities.
  - People with disabilities lead the process of selecting and gaining employment; the employment specialist supports people with disabilities to lead the process.
  - People with disabilities feel that the employment specialist really knows them.
  - People with disabilities feel that the employment specialist believes in them.
  - People with disabilities feel that the employment specialist helps them understand what they need to get the job they want.
  - People with disabilities feel that the employment specialist helps them succeed in their job.
  - Employment specialists are responsive to people with disabilities.
  - People with disabilities would recommend them to other people with disabilities who are seeking employment.

## Components of this White Paper

This paper will provide an overview of current employment trends related to people with disabilities in Florida. The paper will also describe the current strengths and opportunities for improvement within the employment service system for people with developmental disabilities. This comprehensive overview will help the reader understand why it is so essential to improve the skills and knowledge of professionals in employment services.

The paper will also provide recommendations to improve employment services, specifically the skills and knowledge of employment specialists and job coaches. These recommendations have been developed by the Cadre of leaders participating in the Florida DD Network Collaborative Leadership Program. They build on current, evidence-based, and promising practices that have improved employment experiences and outcomes for people with developmental disabilities in Florida and nationally. The hope is that these recommendations will provide a framework for future action.

## Employment for People with Disabilities: Current Data and Issues

People with disabilities are the largest minority group in the United States. Of the 70 million families in America, 20 million have one or more family members with a disability<sup>v</sup>. Nationally, one in four individuals have a disability. In Florida, 28.1% identify as having some type of disability<sup>vi</sup>.

Employment is a critical issue that impacts all aspects of the lives of adults with disabilities. Competitive, integrated employment facilitates inclusion and autonomy and is linked with an overall higher quality of life<sup>vii</sup>. Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE), in their collaborative report for ThinkWork! summed up the importance of employment for people with disabilities in three points:

- 'Having a job builds confidence. People see what we have to offer.
- Working allows us to give to the community and not just to be seen as taking.
- When we make our own money, we can take care of ourselves. Life takes money. When we make money, we are in charge, and no one can tell us how to spend it<sup>viii</sup>.'

### National Scope

Most people with disabilities do not have access to the support they need to enter and remain in the workforce. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2019, about 2 in 10 working-age<sup>2</sup> people with disabilities were participating in the labor force, compared to 8 in 10 with no disability. The US Department of Labor also reports that the unemployment rate of people with disabilities, at 7.8%, is double the rate of people without disabilities, 3.6%<sup>ix</sup>. The disparities are greater for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD)<sup>x</sup>. The National Core Indicators Project found, in 2016-2017, only 15% of people with I/DD interviewed were employed in an integrated job<sup>xi</sup>.

People with disabilities who are employed often receive lower pay, have less job security, have less choice about where and how they work and do not have the same opportunities for training and advancement as people without disabilities<sup>xii</sup>. Today, while people across the country face furloughs and layoffs due to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, job loss has disproportionately impacted people with disabilities. The Kessler Foundation and nTIDE report that approximately 20% of people with disabilities have become unemployed between March 2020 and April 2020, compared to 14% of people without disabilities (Chart 1, from the nTIDE report, shows the rates of change in employment due to COVID-19)<sup>xiii</sup>.

Chart 1: Rates of Change in Employment during the COVID 19 Pandemic



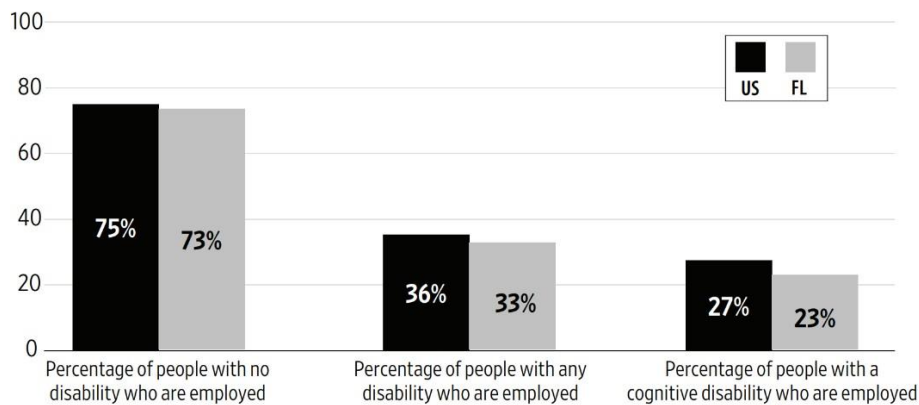
\* PWD – People with disabilities; PWOD – People without disabilities

<sup>2</sup> Defined as age 16-64 by the Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment.

## Employment in Florida

In Florida, employment rates for people with disabilities are on par with national trends. In 2017, 73% of working-age people who did not have a disability were employed. Significantly fewer people with disabilities had the same employment opportunities; 33% of people with all disabilities, and only 23% of people with intellectual disabilities had jobs<sup>xiv</sup>.

Chart 2: Employment Rates Nationally and in Florida



Source: American Community Survey

## Why People with Disabilities are Underemployed

There are many reasons that people with disabilities have fewer opportunities to access competitive, integrated employment. One reason, and the focus of this White Paper, is the inadequate access that many people with disabilities have to quality employment services and qualified employment specialists and job coaches. Historically, service systems were designed to institutionalize and segregate people from society. Over time, these systems have evolved into facility-based day services, such as sheltered workshops, congregate day habilitation services, and center-based pre-vocational support. These traditions of congregation and segregation go against the nature of gainful employment and the philosophy of inclusion and community participation. They have limited people with disabilities by separating them from experiences and opportunities that facilitate employment, such as participating in advanced education and certification, building personal and professional connections and networks, and belonging to their chosen communities<sup>xv</sup>.

Current employment services are intended to support people with disabilities to find, apply for, gain, and maintain jobs that align with their interests and strengths. However, many employment services fail to support people with disabilities to have jobs that reflect their preferences and talents and provide fair wages and inclusive work environments. A statement from the Arc of the United States noted, *'Systemically, public resources fund service hours rather than outcomes and are often neither sufficient nor flexible enough to allow collaboration and blending of employment funding streams'*<sup>xvi</sup>.

Employment rates in Florida demonstrate that these issues are prevalent in the Florida DD system as well. Change is needed to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

A meaningful way to improve the quality of employment services is to enhance the skills and knowledge



of employment specialists and job coaches. Numerous studies have demonstrated that direct support professionals, including those working in employment specialist and job coach positions, can be a catalyst to community connections and quality outcomes for people with disabilities<sup>xvii</sup>. Currently, the quality of employment support that a person with DD receives in Florida depends, largely, on the training, support, and oversight that the employment specialist and job coach receive. However, these factors are not consistent across services in Florida. Better training, resources, and competency standards for employment specialists and job coaches are needed to ensure consistent access to quality employment services across the state.

## Available Employment Resources in Florida

In Florida, there have been efforts, including toolkits, initiatives, and services developed to improve the skills and knowledge of employment specialists, job coaches, and providers. This White Paper includes several resources to demonstrate the statewide investment in employment for Floridians for Disabilities. The Cadre Members believe that these resources, organizations, and initiatives can serve as future partners to expand on the recommendations from this White Paper.

**Career Source Florida | Partnering with the Department of Economic Opportunity, CareerSource Florida** is a statewide workforce policy and investment board with more than 24 local workforce development boards and 100 career centers throughout the state.

**Employment First Florida** | Florida is an Employment First State with a legislative mandate and an 11-member interagency partnership. In 2011, The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, with support from the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) and the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS), developed an Employment First Initiative in the state called EmployME1st (known as Employment First Florida). Employment First Florida has developed resources, including toolkits and first-hand accounts from people with disabilities who are employed to enhance employment outcomes in Florida.

**InclusionFlorida** | is a hub for Floridians to find information and resources to participate in their communities more fully. Hosted by the Florida Center for Inclusive Communities at the University of South Florida, InclusionFlorida promotes access, choice, and support. InclusionFlorida includes an employment section with resources for planning, accessing quality supports, and understanding benefits.

Nationally, there are several organizations committed to integrated employment for people with disabilities; two organizations leading the field in practice and research include the Association for Supporting Employment First (APSE) and the Research and Training Center for Advancing Employment for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities at the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston. These organizations and others have defined standards for effective employment support and developed certifications to ensure the knowledge and skills of employment specialists and job coaches. Notable certifications include the APSE Certified Employment Support Professional Credential, the Association for Community Rehabilitation Educators Certificate of Achievement in Employment Services, and the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals Employment Support credential.

Agencies and Initiatives Focused on Improving Employment in Florida (links to agency websites below)

Agency for Persons with Disabilities

The Arc of Florida

Association for Persons with Disabilities

Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

CareerSource Florida

Center for Independent Living

Disability Rights Florida

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Employment First Florida

Florida APSE

Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities

Florida Chamber of Commerce Employment Resources

Florida Commission on Transportation for the Disadvantaged

Florida Department of Children and Families, Substance Abuse and Mental Health

Florida Department of Economic Opportunity

Florida Developmental Disabilities Council

Florida Division of Blind Services

Florida SAND

HR Florida Council (a SHRM Affiliate)

Inclusion Florida

Self Reliance, Inc. Center for Independent Living

## Goal and Objectives of this White Paper

The Florida DD Network Leadership Development Program Cadre recognizes that the current resources, toolkits, and information available are crucial to improving employment services offered to Floridians with disabilities. Many of these collaborative efforts have been the lynchpin to competitive, integrated employment for people with DD across the state. The Cadre has also identified several opportunities to enhance available resources. Specifically, they have focused on innovative and evidence-based ideas that can improve the competency and capacity of employment specialists and job coaches.

This White Paper was developed to provide recommendations that will improve the skills and knowledge of employment specialists and job coaches in Florida. It is the hope of the Florida DD Network Leadership Development Program Cadre that these recommendations will provide actionable strategies that encourage targeted efforts by current and future Florida DD systems coalitions and leaders.

The Overarching Goal of this White Paper is to **improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities in Florida by strengthening the effectiveness of employment specialists and job coaches.**

The recommendations offered below seek to meet the following objectives related to the goal above:

- Improving training and resources available to employment specialists, job coaches, and HR personnel
- Holistically enhancing the quality of employment specialists and job coaches by establishing accessible competencies as well as standardized tools to assess competencies in action
- Building collaboration among disability and non-disability specific networks focused on employment to encourage broader utilization of established quality practices in Florida employment services

Chart 3: Goal, Objectives, and Recommendations

Goal: Improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities in Florida by strengthening the effectiveness of employment specialists and job coaches.				
Objective 1: Improve training and resources available to employment specialists and job coaches, and HR personnel		Objective 2: Holistically enhance the quality of employment specialists and job coaches by establishing accessible competencies as well as standardized tools to assess competencies in action		Objective 3: Build collaboration among disability and non- disability-specific networks focused on employment to encourage broader utilization of established quality practices in Florida employment services
Recommendation 1: Ensure that the set of core competencies for employment specialists and job coaches is accessible and available for self-advocates and service recipients.	Recommendation 2: Create a balanced scorecard to assure that the assessment of employment outcomes is meaningful to people with disabilities.	Recommendation 3: Enhance a toolkit for employment specialists and job coaches to better include the service recipient in the training and process.	Recommendation 4: Improve training for employment specialists, job coaches, and HR Personnel.	Recommendation 5: Encourage partnering of employment specialists and job coaches across the Florida system.

## Recommendations

The Florida DD Network Collaborative Leadership Development Program Cadre Members focused their year-long project on improving employment outcomes for people with disabilities by strengthening the effectiveness of employment specialists and job coaches. To do this, the Cadre developed a series of recommendations.

The year the Cadre took on this project marked the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, signed July 26, 1990, by President George H.W. Bush. In the words of Justin Dart, Jr.<sup>3</sup>, "Father' of the ADA" the ADA "is only the beginning. It is not a solution. Rather, it is an essential foundation on which solutions will be constructed<sup>xviii</sup>."

It is the intention of the Cadre Members to advocate for the implementation of the stated goal by building it on the essential foundation championed by our predecessors. As such, people with disabilities should be at the forefront of this process, including the development and implementation of the recommendations that follow.

### **Recommendation 1: Ensure that the set of core competencies for employment specialists and job coaches is accessible and available for self-advocates and service recipients**

The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, in collaboration with the Employment First Florida collaborative partners and The Center for Social Capital, Inc. dba Griffin-Hammis Associates, created the first edition of the Employment First Collaborative Training Toolkit in 2016 and the second edition in 2018. The collaborative partners considered the practices identified by the Institute for Community Inclusion that have a high level of evidence for improving employment outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Training and technical assistance were two of those practices, and the concept for a training toolkit was established. The Employment First Collaborative Training Toolkit outlines a set of core competencies for employment specialists and job coaches that was agreed upon by Florida's key Employment First partner agencies and organizations

It is important that individuals with disabilities are knowledgeable of the core competencies. The first recommendation is to adapt this toolkit into an educational resource for people with disabilities to support self-determination by understanding the role of employment specialists and job coaches and presenting the profession as a possible career or job opportunity.

A more tangible and simplified edition of the toolkit will assist the individual in making informed choices regarding service expectations they should have of the employment specialist and job coaches. This edition should be composed of essential parts of each section and written in plain language. It should also include a career component in each domain at the end of each section. This addition can help individuals determine if the role of an employment specialist, job coach, or a more customized role is a career opportunity they would like to pursue. Again, the goal is to enhance a product to better inform individuals with disabilities about their opportunities and build the skillset and knowledge of employment specialists and job coaches.

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<sup>3</sup> As president of Tupperware Japan, Justin Dart, Jr., who acquired polio as a child, hired women and people with disabilities to empower them and create social change.

## **Recommendation 2: Create a balanced scorecard to assure that the assessment of employment outcomes is meaningful to people with disabilities**

The second recommendation is to create a balanced scorecard to ensure that the assessment of employment outcomes is meaningful to people with disabilities. A balanced scorecard is important for quality improvement and outcome measures. For some agencies, "quality" is measured by meeting a quota of people with disabilities hired. This narrow expectation absolves the agency from person-centered responsibilities. The preferences and abilities of the individual are ignored, as well as the needs of the individual once hired, and their job retention, or even helping the individual expand on their professional growth. Organizations that provide employment services tend to focus on test scores to determine an individual's ability. The guiding objective of creating the scorecard centers on serving the person with a disability by providing a consistent quality of service among employment specialists and job coaches across agencies statewide.

This recommendation, developing a scorecard, demonstrates the importance of the relationship between employment specialists, job coaches, and people served. The scorecard will address missing gaps between employment services, employers, and individuals with disabilities. It will produce accountability while ensuring an ability-centered approach. This information within the scorecard will give insight into the ability of a person while communicating expectations of the occupation they seek and accountability of employment services. As a result of these components, the scorecard will enhance inclusive/diversity training for employment specialists and job coaches while illustrating employment guides, data, or research regarding employment among people with I/DD. Individuals with disabilities may use this scorecard when establishing a plan with employment specialists and job coaches. Appendix A provides a sample of the balanced scorecard.

## **Recommendation 3: Enhance a toolkit for employment specialists and job coaches to better include the service recipient in the training and process**

To inform this recommendation, Cadre Members reviewed existing toolkits focusing on enhancing employment for people with disabilities. Cadre Members also conducted informal interviews with several people with disabilities who were currently employed about their experience with their employment specialists and job coaches. The results of the review and interviews are summarized in Appendix B.

The third recommendation is to enhance a toolkit for employment specialists and job coaches through Employment First Collaborative Training. This recommendation will address how to increase the job seeker's involvement and better include the person with disabilities in the training and process of creating the content and the training of that content. This is to enhance the training for employment specialists, job coaches, and HR Personnel. It is important that the set of core competencies for employment specialists and job coaches be accessible and available for self-advocates, as well.

Being in the workforce means more than just getting a job. People employed are valued contributors, appreciated, like the place of employment, and look forward to being there. Toolkits and resources for the employment specialist and job coach must include training and technical assistance focused on increasing the active role of the job seeker, the person with a disability who is seeking employment. Examples of this are included in the Florida Employment First Training Collaborative Toolkit. Every

person who participated in an informal interview said it is important for job seekers to have an active role in the job search. Their input and thoughts about how to increase the active role of the job seeker and strengthen the skills and knowledge of the employment specialist and job coach are summarized in the acronym ALL: Ask, Listen, and Learn (ALL)<sup>4</sup> about the job seeker, not just the job placement. More time, training, and technical assistance must be included in current and future toolkits so that the employment specialist and job coach can focus on the development of their skills around increasing the active role of the job seeker to lead to employment that is a good fit and of interest for the job seeker.

Ultimately, the Cadre recommends that an employment specialist and job coach toolkit include strategies, steps, and resources to train on how to gather information to understand the interests, preferences, and priorities of the job seeker. Understanding the job seeker will help to find, get, and keep desired employment.

#### **Recommendation 4: Improve training for employment specialists, job coaches, and HR Personnel**

The fourth recommendation is to enhance training for employment specialists, job coaches, and HR personnel who hire individuals with developmental disabilities throughout Florida. Specifically, the Cadre suggests a three-pronged approach to enhance training.

First, the Cadre suggests incorporating or enhancing inclusivity and diversity training. The components of the suggested enhanced, inclusivity, and diversity training will focus on interviewing, accommodating, and maintaining the tasks of a position in which individuals with disabilities apply. This suggestion is designed to increase the knowledge of the employer, employment specialist, job coach, and HR personnel through instruction and training. As a result, this suggestion will support organizations to adopt ability-centered approaches when seeking or hiring Floridians with disabilities.

Today, there is a lack of education and understanding related to benefits and incentives for people with disabilities seeking employment or those currently employed. To address this issue, the second suggestion for state agencies, including vendors, is to provide training for employment specialists, job coaches, and HR personnel about the impact of Medicaid, SSI, and SSDI for a job seeker or employee with a disability. This training will include a section on the benefits and incentives related to competitive, integrated employment. Further, the definition of competitive, integrated employment for most employment specialists, job coaches, and employers is different. Due to the variety of goals or objectives associated with competitive, integrated employment, it has various meanings to different groups. The training will provide employment specialists, job coaches, and HR personnel with a well-rounded understanding of how competitive, integrated employment is defined. The training will be taught by experts in the topic as well as individuals with disabilities.

The third suggestion to enhance training for employment specialists, job coaches, and HR departments is to include training on the effects of being employed full-time vs. part-time for individuals with disabilities. This will allow individuals to assess their needs or situation to make better-informed choices and have clearer service expectations.

Overall, the objective is to enhance the current product so individuals with disabilities can use the skills

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<sup>4</sup> This acronym was originally developed by the Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility <https://asklistenlearn.org/>.

of decision-making and self-determination when opportunities arise. In turn, the recommended training will continue to build the skillset and knowledge of employment specialists and job coaches who serve people with I/DD in Florida.

### **Recommendation 5: Encourage partnering of employment specialists and job coaches across the Florida system with the Society of Human Resources Management**

The fifth recommendation is to create statewide partnerships between employment specialists, job coaches, and organizations within and external to the disabilities service sector that can enhance knowledge and delivery of employment services. One recommended statewide partner includes (but is not limited to) the Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM).

Building these partnerships would strengthen the effectiveness of employment specialists and job coaches by creating allies within the workforce and companies across Florida. This means exposing the employment specialists and job coaches to the allies who do the actual hiring. SHRM has ten districts that cover the state of Florida (find local chapters [here](#)).

Trainers from the Employment First Collaborative Training should consider training members of SHRM chapters in Florida. It is beneficial to work with people in human resources since they do the hiring. They make for a potential partner/ collaborator/ally since part of the purpose of their role is to make their workplaces more diverse and more welcoming for employees, and that includes people with disabilities. The next step would be to collaborate on training on the following two topics: 1) tips around disability sensitivity and awareness; 2) accommodations and dispelling myths about hiring people with disabilities.

The Cadre recommends linking employment specialists, job coaches, and their supervisors, with people in human resources (specifically, SHRM) to collaborate. The lack is not in people with disabilities wanting jobs, but in traditional corporate culture intentionally seeking out and employing and retaining people with disabilities.

### **Conclusion**

Employment is a crucial part of adulthood. It provides a sense of purpose, value, and independence. Individuals with disabilities do not just want a job but a career. Our goal is to work alongside our non-disabled peers in an integrated, competitive employment setting. Throughout our employment project, we, as a Cadre member team, developed recommendations through various resources and information that can contribute and enhance an employment specialist's and job coach's effectiveness when assisting an individual's journey through the employment process.

These recommendations were developed over the past two years by a group of individuals with disabilities that work and advocate in the field of disability. This White Paper can be utilized as a resource for state agencies and organizations that pertain to employment services, employers, employment specialists, and job coaches. At the end of this phase of the project, our objective is to establish an ability centered approach when individuals are seeking and maintaining integrated, competitive employment.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Recommendation Two

The Cadre developed a Sample Scorecard to illustrate the metrics that may be used to implement the second recommendation. The Sample Scorecard includes questions that the person with a disability will answer to evaluate their employment services, a checklist to select and assess employment specialists and job coaches, and a guide to rate the employment specialist's and job coach's overall quality.

Scorecard		
Questions	Job Seeker list	Rating
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. How is [name of employment specialist/job coach] doing?</li><li>2. During planning, do your objectives pertain to your job goals?</li><li>3. Is your employment specialist/job coach considering your abilities and talents when searching for job/career opportunities?</li><li>4. Did your employment specialist explain the different types of employment?</li><li>5. Do you feel confident with the knowledge of your rights as a job seeker and prepared for interviews?</li></ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Treats me with dignity and respect</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Focuses on what I can do</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Helps me learn my strengths and abilities, as well as what makes me unique and about tools that support me when doing my job</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Assists me with job exploration (examples: job shadowing, internships, interviewing someone who does the same type of job I want to do)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Understands accommodations, self-disclosure, and ADA laws</li></ul>	<p><b>OVERALL RATING</b> <b>A, B, C, D, F,</b> <b>EXCELLENT, GOOD, BAD,</b> <b>PERCENTAGE.</b> (The rating may be useful to determine the competency of the employment specialist, but should not be considered the sole source to determine which employment specialist to choose.)</p>

*Sample section of scorecard from job seeker's perspective. This Cadre group wants to develop a measure rating scale by a qualified and diverse group. The goal of a rating scale is to ensure accountability among all parties or entities.*



## Appendix B: Recommendation Three

To inform this White Paper, the Cadre Members reviewed a nationally utilized toolkit. They interviewed people with disabilities to identify the current strengths and gaps in existing training and support for people with disabilities seeking employment.

**Toolkit Reviewed |** The Cadre Members reviewed the Job Coach Training Guide from the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTAC) Toolkit as well as the Employment First Collaborative Training Toolkit, developed by Griffin-Hammis Associates and funded by the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc.

**Results of the Informal Interviews with Employed People with Disabilities |** Four people were interviewed, some with jobs and some looking for jobs by Cadre Members. Each person responded to the following questions:

- What do you want to see in an employment specialist and job coach?
- What do you want an employment specialist and job coach to know?
- Is it necessary for an employment specialist and job coach to know their clients' strengths & weaknesses?

Respondents shared that their successful employment was a good match with what they want as an employee. They shared that they had an active role in their job search supported by their employment specialist or job coach. The employment specialist or job coach asked them lots of questions, listened to them, and learned what was most important to them to find the best fit for their employment. People we spoke with who did not have employment success did not have the same experience with their employment specialist or job coach. They were "placed" in a job without considering the employment specialist or job coach asking, listening, and learning about their interests, preferences, priorities, lived experiences, family, or background. It is important to ask the job seeker how you can help as opposed to assuming anything about the person. The job seekers that we talked with said that they feel more empowered when asked how you can help instead of others assuming and making decisions about their needs and types of jobs they want. It is important to get to know the job seeker in all aspects of their life. That information is essential to advocate for competitive, integrated employment. This is especially helpful in situations where a job seeker may not have the tools, resources, and support to advocate for themselves.

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