

EMPLOYMENT FIRST FLORIDA 2019-20 ANNUAL REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS



**Annual Report
2019-20**
employmentfirstfl.org



This project is provided by the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc., supported in part by grant numbers 2101FLSCDD and 2201FLSCDD 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.

INTRODUCTION

***This report
discusses the work
of 11 different Florida
organizations.***

Employment First is a group effort in Florida to make sure that people with disabilities can get and keep good jobs.

Employment First is based on a 2016 law that says jobs are very important for people with disabilities.

This report discusses the work of 11 different Florida organizations that worked on Employment First during 2019 and 2020.



LOW EMPLOYMENT MEANS MORE POVERTY

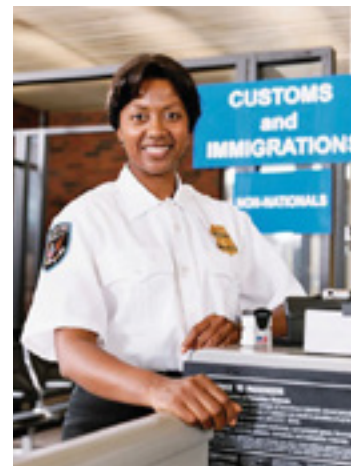
When people with disabilities are included in the workforce, it is better for everyone.

However, it can be hard for people with disabilities to get and keep jobs.

People with disabilities in Florida are employed less than people without disabilities.

People with disabilities in Florida are more likely to be poor because it is hard for them to get and keep jobs.

***Changing this
is very important.***



INFORMATION ABOUT EMPLOYMENT RATES

The American Community Survey (ACS) collects information about people and jobs.

The survey showed these results in 2019:

Percentage of People Employed

	<i>Nationwide</i>	<i>Florida</i>
<i>No Disability</i>	76%	75%
<i>Disability</i>	38%	36%
<i>Cognitive Disability</i>	30%	27%

Percentage of People Living Below Poverty Level

	<i>Nationwide</i>	<i>Florida</i>
<i>No Disability</i>	10.7%	10.1%
<i>Disability</i>	24.4%	24%
<i>Cognitive Disability</i>	28.4%	25.6%

WHY WE NEED EMPLOYMENT FIRST

People with disabilities can find it hard to get good jobs.

Employers may not understand...

...what having a disability means.

...that people with disabilities can work well.

...that people with disabilities also have strengths.

People with disabilities...

...may not use tools designed to help them look for jobs.

...may worry they will lose benefits if they earn money working.

WHY WE NEED EMPLOYMENT FIRST (CONTINUED)

Employment First is doing important work in Florida.

Employment First Florida helped change more than 12 employment policies and rules in 2019-2020.

People with disabilities in Florida now have better chances of getting and keeping good jobs.



EMPLOYMENT FIRST PARTNER AGENCIES

11 agencies worked together on
Employment First.

- ***Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD)***
- ***Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Student Education (BESE)***
- ***Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)***
- ***Florida Department of Education, Division of Blind Services (DBS)***
- ***Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO)***
- ***CareerSource Florida***
- ***Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF), Substance Abuse and Mental Health (SAMH) Office***
- ***Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc. (FDDC)***
- ***Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, Inc. (FARF)***
- ***The Arc of Florida, Inc.***
- ***Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged***

The last 2 in the list are new
partners. They joined in 2019.

PARTNER AGENCY TEAMS

The Employment First Partner Agencies are broken into 3 teams that meet regularly:

- ***The Employment First Partnership Coalition (state level partner agency and organization leaders).***
- ***The Employment First Collaborative Team (state level partner agency and organization staff).***
- ***The Employment First Grassroots Group (self-advocates and local stakeholders). Stakeholders have included educators, local agency and organization staff, families, etc.***



AGENCIES WORKING TOGETHER



A great deal of work is involved with making Employment First a reality.

The Employment First partners have a 5-year agreement to work together.

The Employment First partners' goals are:

- ***Help people with disabilities find jobs.***
- ***Make sure agency staff work closely together.***
- ***Create goals to keep everyone moving forward.***
- ***Create training to help people with disabilities get jobs.***
- ***Find money for job programs for people with disabilities.***
- ***Look for new ideas and new ways of doing things.***
- ***Make sure there are ways to measure results.***

EMPLOYMENT FIRST PARTNERS' ACCOMPLISHMENTS

During 2019-20, the Employment First Partners made good progress in:

Making sure the partnership continues and grows.

- ***In 2019 the partner agencies signed a new 5-year agreement to continue working together.***
- ***2 new agencies were added to the agreement.***

Giving students a chance to learn on the job.

- ***Students graduating high school need to learn how to work.***
- ***The partner agencies worked with the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) to give students ages 14-21 on-the-job training while they are still in school.***

Creating training tools for people who work to help people with disabilities.

- ***An Employment First Collaborative Training (EFCT) Toolkit was created to help people in the employment services field deliver better services to people with disabilities.***
- ***An Employment First Empowerment Toolkit was developed to help everyone make employment the first option for people with disabilities.***

EMPLOYMENT FIRST PARTNERS' ACCOMPLISH- MENTS (CONTINUED)

In 2019-20, Florida's Employment First Partners showed leadership and worked together in all areas.

Florida's Employment First efforts are paving the way to better job opportunities for Floridians with disabilities.

Florida's programs provide a good example for other states wishing to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

58

The partners revised, created, or improved 58 employment-related policies and procedures this year.

Each partner's work is described on the next pages.

2,410 **IN COMPETITIVE
EMPLOYMENT**

Wait List Money.

Florida gave \$900,000 to APD for the Employment Enhancement Program in 2019-20.

This money helped students and adults on APD's waiting list find jobs and internships.

The results were even better than the year before:

- ***126 on the waiting list got jobs***
- ***11 found internships***
- ***342 kept their jobs***



AGENCY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (CONTINUED)

APD Staff Training.

APD staff are trained that employment is the first and best option for people with I/DD.

APD continues to improve how it keeps track of how many people with disabilities get jobs and how well they are doing in their work.

APD works with VR to support career counseling for people in sheltered workshops earning below minimum wage.

The goal is to help people with I/DD find paid jobs in their communities.

***Disability Employment Awareness Celebration.
Every year, APD honors employers. 2019 winners were:***

- ***Accuform Manufacturing***
- ***Aramark Dining Services at Jacksonville University***
- ***Army and Air Force Exchange Service***
- ***Bob's Space Racers***
- ***Chartwells at the University of Miami***
- ***Cleveland Clinic Martin Health***
- ***The Home Depot***
- ***Florida Department of Revenue***
- ***Golden Corral***
- ***The Chocolate Spectrum***
- ***Wawa, Inc.***
- ***ZVRS of Clearwater***

49,661

CUSTOMERS SERVED!

In 2019-2020, VR helped 5,389 people with disabilities find or keep a job.

These workers earned an average of \$12.07 per hour.

VR has partnered with 61 staff known as Community Work Incentive Coordinators.

Community Work Incentive Coordinators offer benefits planning services to VR customers for the national Social Security “Ticket to Work” program.

VR works closely with 12 employment networks to delivery ongoing support services.

VR helps even people with the most serious disabilities go to work using “Supported Employment.”



THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (CONTINUED)



VR's "Project SEARCH" program helps students with disabilities in their last year of high school develop job skills.

Almost 75% of people in this program get jobs.

34 businesses across the state offer Project SEARCH.

VR Supported Self-Employment Services help VR customers to own their own business.

VR's Business Relations Program Team reaches out to employers on behalf of people with disabilities.

In 2019-2020 the Business Relations Program Team served 467 employers at 572 locations.

75%
Almost 75% of people in Project SEARCH get jobs.

THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (CONTINUED)



VR's Pre-Employment Transitions Services (Pre-ETS) help students in high school.

Services include career exploration, self-advocacy training, community work experiences, and more.

Pre-ETS opened the STAR portal so that school districts can submit referrals to VR electronically.

Pre-ETS served 26,387 students in 2019-2020. VR's Work-Based Learning Experience Contracts helped students in 32 school districts who would not have otherwise received any work experience.

Through Inclusive Postsecondary Education

(IPSE) Programs, VR worked with 20 colleges in Florida to help students leaving high school attend college.



822

**EMPLOYED
Goal Exceeded!**

DBS focused on making connections between employers, DBS Employment Specialists, CareerSource Florida, and education organizations.

The people DBS helped employ earned an average of \$16.85 per hour.

In 2019-20, there were 2019 new employer contacts.

This results in:

- *More qualified people applying for jobs.*
- *Blind or visually impaired people receiving more help from specialists.*
- *Blindness awareness training.*
- *On the job training and internships.*
- *Community connections.*
- *Tax incentives.*



THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DIVISION OF BLIND SERVICES (CONTINUED)

The DBS Bureau of Business Enterprise (BBE) helps people start their own business in food service.

During 2019-20, the BBE program had 117 licensed blind vendors managing 142 vending facilities.

People who run these companies have average

incomes of over \$62,000 per year.

The United States Social Security Administration paid DBS back for the cost of services provided to people with disabilities.

In 2019-2020, DBS was paid back more than \$2.7 million.





FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY



23,582 PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES SERVED

The CareerSource Florida network includes 24 teams and more than 100 career centers.

Some of these centers are employment networks with the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work program.

The Florida Unique Abilities Partner Program recognizes employers who

want to provide good job opportunities to people with I/DD.

DEO has more than 180 statewide partners that participate in the Unique Abilities Partner Program.

The Abilities Work Portal (abilitieswork.employflorida.com) provides job listing tools for employers and people looking for jobs.

DEO has more than 180 statewide partners that participate in the Unique Abilities Partner Program.

180



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY (CONTINUED)



Success Story #1

CareerSource Capital Region (CSCR) helped a woman named Linda.

Linda was unable to find a job during the COVID pandemic and soon became homeless.

CSCR worked closely with Linda and gave her training and job help.

Today Linda has a good job and a permanent home.

Success Story #2

CareerSource Central Florida helped a man with computer skills who had a visual disability. He was offered training in customer service.

He was hired into a good job, has his own apartment, and is looking forward to the future.





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AND MENTAL HEALTH
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DCF OFFICE OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH

1,485

PERSONS SERVED IN SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

The Department of Children and Families (Department) Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (SAMH) provides employment services through Supported Employment and Mental Health Clubhouse Services.

A Clubhouse is a community-based membership

organization designed to support people living with mental illness.

In 2019-20, SAMH gave \$1.5 million to 13 Clubhouses.

With this funding, Clubhouses provided employment services to 1,201 Floridians.

731

731 received pre-employment supports.

280

280 received employment supports.



OFFICE OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE
AND MENTAL HEALTH
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DCF OFFICE OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH (CONTINUED)

SAMH supported community-based and peer supports.

With community-based and peer supports, people get help from others that they work with.

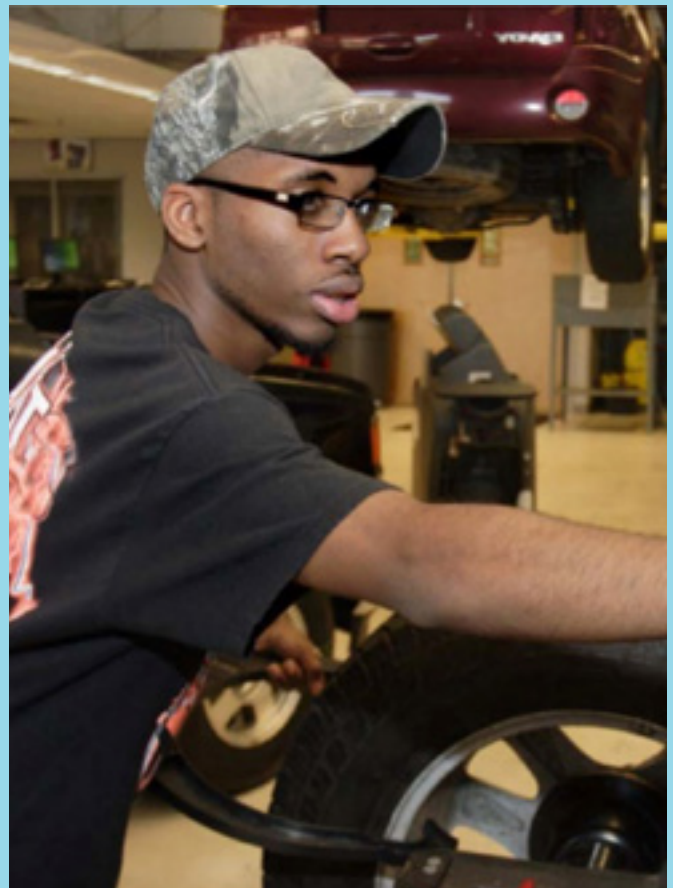
These programs are called Recovery Community Organizations, and there are 30 of them across the state.

SAMH supported Certified Recovery Peer Specialists (CRPS) through scholarships, training and system development.

During 2019-20, the Peer Support Coalition of Florida provided 106 participants with various trainings.

In 2020 there were 684 CRPSs, an increase of 34% since 2015.

SAMH holds quarterly peer specialist job fairs.



140 INDIVIDUALS EMPLOYED

The Project SEARCH high school transition program is a one-year internship in a business setting for students with disabilities.

There are 41 Project SEARCH sites in Florida and Florida leads the nation with the greatest number of Project SEARCH sites.

78.8% of people who participate in Project SEARCH get jobs.

The Employment First Website provides important information to support community jobs: employmentfirstfl.org.

Local level Employment First pilot sites, including the Nassau, Osceola, and Treasure Coast Interagency Councils, helped youth prepare for careers after high school.

An Employment First Florida Employment Empowerment Toolkit was developed.

[Final-toolkit-emp-first-1.pdf \(employmentfirstfl.org\)](#)

The toolkit is a guide to provide support for employment for people with disabilities. The guide helps many people, including:

- *Job seekers*
- *Families*
- *Teachers*
- *Case managers*
- *Employment staff*
- *Direct support staff*

FLORIDA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL, INC. (CONTINUED)

The Employment First Collaborative Training Toolkit provides training to 6 partner agency sites.

80 people completed training on the toolkit.

In addition:

- ***33 people completed the course to get an Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) certificate in Community Employment with special focus on Customized Employment.***
- ***5 people completed the full Practicum component.***



FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF REHABILITATION FACILITIES

1,181 INDIVIDUALS EMPLOYED

Florida ARF's RESPECT of Florida program offers services and items produced by individuals with disabilities to government agencies.

Most people who work with RESPECT earn minimum wage or higher.

The average pay for people who work with RESPECT is \$10.43 per hour.

About 76% of people working through RESPECT worked at integrated work sites.



FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF REHABILITATION FACILITIES (CONTINUED)

RESPECT awarded two microenterprise grants in 2019-2020.

Florida ARF worked with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and the Agency for Persons with Disabilities to move people out of day programs.

Florida ARF brings people together to talk about the best ways to help people with disabilities get and keep good jobs.

Florida ARF provides Employment Outcomes Professional (EOP) training to help people with disabilities compete for better jobs.





FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF REHABILITATION FACILITIES (CONTINUED)

People working through RESPECT Employment Centers and earning minimum wage or above totaled 988 individuals (84%).

RESPECT wages are \$10.43 per hour, compared to Florida's minimum wage of \$8.56 per hour.

Florida ARF continues to serve on the Employment First Interagency Collaborative Team.

Florida ARF works with VR to help youth with disabilities transition to life after school.



CONCLUSION

Individuals with disabilities want to participate in the workforce.

Florida will be a better place by helping them to do so.

In 2019-2020, the Employment First Initiative

helped more people with disabilities find jobs and make more money.

It also helped employers understand how hiring workers with disabilities will make them better employers.

Employment First has worked to:

- Help employers understand the power of workers with disabilities***
- Provide employers what they need to hire and help workers with disabilities***
- Help state and local government with new employment practices***



Employment First Florida is meeting the challenge of making employment the best way to independence for people with disabilities.