

Proposed Employment First Collaborative Training Initiative

Need for the Project

An emerging need has been identified by the Employment First Collaborative Team and Council staff for collaborative training, technical assistance and resources for agency and organization staff engaged in securing and supporting employment for individuals with disabilities. Of seven categorical areas identified by the Employment First Collaborative Team, which are among the practices identified by the Institute for Community Inclusion as having a high level of evidence for improving employment outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, training and technical assistance was identified in the top three priority areas by the nine collaborating Partners. The Partners represent signatory parties to Florida's Employment First Interagency Agreement, and include the Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities; Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services; Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; Florida Department of Education, Division of Blind Services; Florida Department of Economic Opportunity; Workforce Florida, Inc. d/b/a CareerSource Florida; Florida Department of Children and Families, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Office; Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc.; and the Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, Inc.

Description of the Project

This project will ensure that Florida has comprehensive training strategies within a training toolkit that foster quality integrated competitive employment for all individuals with disabilities, including individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The training will be targeted to agency and organization staff charged with all facets of employment for individuals with disabilities.

The training materials will address and include on the following:

- Evidence-based and promising practices in employment for individuals with disabilities
- Assessment for employment purposes focused on interests, skills, and preferences, including non-traditional assessment that fosters person-centered planning
- Job development strategies, including non-traditional methods, and incorporating recommendations for messaging from the Employment First Communications Subcommittee
- Job site analysis
- Job matching
- Job site training, including systematic instruction/task analysis for individuals with more significant training needs
- Peripheral aspects of employment (i.e., advocacy on and off the job site, transportation, benefits planning and asset development, accommodations and modifications, etc.)
- Ongoing supports
- Data collection and reporting

The project will also address systemic issues related to employment and make recommendations for the following:

- The provider will assist with identification of how individual agency or organization planned or existing training could be enhanced through collaborative efforts.
- The provider will choose priority areas as necessary via shared agency and organization competencies and assist with development of an interagency plan for joint training activities.
- The provider will develop and propose strategies for delivering training to new and existing staff consistently and in multiple formats to reinforce retention of critical learning elements.

- The provider will assist Partners in determining the best strategies for increasing the number of staff who have knowledge of benefits planning and asset development, particularly with regard to work incentives.
- The provider will work with staff to determine the best mechanisms for assessing staff shortage and the need for new staff to provide employment training.
- The provider will assist with development or identification of how to increase workshops or resources available during annual conferences that promote employment for people with disabilities.
- The provider will assist Partners in clarifying the roles of staff and providers in facilitating employment, including development of provisions of written guidance.
- The provider will make recommendations and provide guidance and support for qualifications for direct services and support professionals, considering national employment practices, and assist with review and revision of existing qualifications as indicated.

Project Services to be Provided

- The provider will use the Employment First Collaborative Team for the Advisory Committee, and will meet in conjunction with the Employment First Collaborative Team in person and by teleconference during portions of their monthly meetings for all facets of product development.
- The provider will identify evidence-based and promising practices in employment training and resource provisions at the national and state level.
- The provider will create matrices of national and state training materials and resources, including face-to-face trainings, online modules, and print and electronic resources.
- The provider will use existing Florida matrices on training and resources as a springboard for their work.
- The provider will identify gaps in training and propose solutions.
- The provider will develop a comprehensive toolkit to include national and Florida resources for training new and existing direct service personnel. The toolkit will minimally include the following:
 - Evidence-based and promising practices in employment for individuals with disabilities
 - Assessment for employment purposes focused on interests, skills, and preferences, including non-traditional assessment that fosters person-centered planning
 - Job development strategies, including non-traditional methods, and incorporating recommendations for messaging from the Employment First Communications Subcommittee
 - Job site analysis
 - Job matching
 - Job site training, including systematic instruction/task analysis for individuals with more significant training needs
 - Peripheral aspects of employment (i.e., advocacy on and off the job site, transportation, benefits planning and asset development, accommodations, etc.)
 - Ongoing supports
 - Data collection and reporting
- The provider will work collaboratively with agency and organization staff to pilot the materials in a minimum of two diverse locations in Florida.
- The provider will provide an edited, final version of the training toolkit.

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