

FLORIDA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL, INC.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2007

In the first year of its five-year plan, the Council's efforts have had a positive impact in the areas of health care, transition, inclusion, employment, and skill development for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Community Living and Service Coordination Task Force

- *Guardianship Training for Attorneys & Families*

This project provided three regional training workshops for families, consumers, attorneys and other professionals, on guardianship options, special needs trusts and wills as they relate to people with developmental disabilities. A total of 318 people were trained at one of the three workshops held during the course of the project year. Of this number, 174 were self advocates and family members, 50 were attorneys, and 94 were other professionals. The overall goal of this project was that, once trained, these attorneys would be willing to charge more reasonable rates for legal services to Floridians with developmental disabilities and their families.

- *Micro Enterprise Training & Technical Assistance (METTA)*

The Council provided over 11 statewide workshops dealing with microenterprise (small business) development for people with developmental disabilities and their families. Approximately 271 consumers, family members and professionals received general training on microenterprise development through this contract. During the second year, project staff provided technical assistance to the first 10 entrepreneurs in implementing their business plans, and selected five additional individuals with developmental disabilities to participate in the project. These individuals worked on person-centered planning, market testing and developing a business plan. By the conclusion of the contract year, five individuals were able to start their own microenterprises.

Education and Child Development Task Force

- *Florida Low Incidence Personnel Preparation (FLIPP)*

The FLIPP project increased and improved the capacity of educators in Florida to effectively implement inclusive practices for Florida students with severe disabilities. The project is designed to increase both the number and quality of teachers serving students with disabilities. This project resulted in continuing the development of a

statewide infrastructure within the state university system to provide the courses needed for State Endorsement in Severe Disabilities to college students and teachers. Imbedded in these courses are strategies to promote inclusion of all students with disabilities. The project offers graduate courses using synchronous distance education technology to connect campuses. Over the course of the project's term, 79 people received training. This project also prepared teachers to utilize evidence-based practices in their classrooms. The project will be continued through a federal grant.

Employment Task Force

- *Supported Competitive Integrated Employment*

The Supported Competitive Integrated Employment Training Teams (SCIETT) project provided up-to-date training and technical assistance to six community leadership teams located in Osceola, Brevard, Broward, Bay, Escambia and Palm Beach counties. A consortium of state and nationally recognized consultants in supported employment provided training and technical assistance on the values and philosophy of supported employment to these six teams. The teams also learned effective practices to provide quality supported employment services to individuals and families with developmental disabilities. The consortium also provided technical assistance in the areas of self-employment, in writing a Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS), and in coordinating community efforts. Project staff provided technical assistance through on-site training, emails, and hands-on collaboration.

As a result of the SCIETT Project, providers and advocacy groups, particularly in rural areas, are better equipped and trained to provide quality services and up-to-date training in supported employment to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

- *For Your Information Transition Website*

The FYITransition website consists of informational resources on effective practices in transition from school to employment and is structured to be user-friendly for students with developmental disabilities, family members and professionals. The website includes voice-over, interactive features, links to stakeholders, success stories, multi-media presentations, mini courses on career development, a discussion board, and a user evaluation form. This website was designed as an informational tool to assist individuals with disabilities and their families to successfully transition from school to work by providing easy access to resources for successful transition. Based on the feedback from the user evaluations, the FYITransition website is useful, informative, and engaging. The enhancement includes mini-courses written in accessible language with interactive activities and quizzes, scheduled chats and shared stories. As a result of the FYITransition website, individuals with developmental disabilities and families are more informed as it relates to transition from school to work.

Health Care/Prevention Task Force

- *Transition Website – Spanish Translation*

In 2006, the University of Florida developed a Health Care Transition website and expanded it in 2007 to include a Spanish translation. The English home page was accessed more than 2,000 times during the 12-month project period and the Spanish site was accessed almost 400 times during the seven-month operational period. Dr. John Reiss, who was in charge of the project, included information about the Health Care Transition project and the availability of the Council's web-based training in more than 15 state, regional, and national presentations.

- *Infant Mental Health*

The Infant Mental Health Project produced focus groups, training materials, a tool kit to conduct social marketing campaigns to raise public awareness of the mental health needs of children birth to age five, and a report on the consequences of poor social and emotional development. This tool kit was distributed to a statewide network of infant mental health providers, and the contractor has been contacted by other groups throughout the country seeking the materials as well. The contractor also provided information to legislators advocating for prevention and early intervention services. This led to a House Resolution recognizing May 8, 2007, as "Children's Mental Health Day" in Florida. Through the support of the FDDC, the Florida Infant Mental Health Association has been able to develop a successful statewide network of children's mental health services providers.

Special Projects

- *Florida Youth Leadership Forum*

The Florida Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) is an annual career and leadership training program that is both educational and motivational for high school students with disabilities. The 2006 YLF was held in Tallahassee. 60 high school juniors and seniors with disabilities participated as delegates at the forum. 18 returning delegates were advanced to "Junior Staff" status, and 15 alumni of the Forum served as co-facilitators.

The Council has a long history of partnering with The Able Trust on this successful event which works to reduce the dropout rate of youth with disabilities and improve their participation in employment-related activities. The Youth Leadership Forum brings together young people with disabilities who demonstrate leadership potential and helps prepare them for the future. By serving as delegates from their communities, students with disabilities cultivate leadership, citizenship and social skills.

The Florida Youth Leadership Forum offered peers with common challenges and experiences the opportunity to learn from one another. The Forum included educational programs that cover topics such as the history of the disability movement, personal

leadership plans, career opportunities, and academic and community resources. Delegates learned leadership by example through meetings with disability community leaders, business professionals and government dignitaries. In addition, social and recreational opportunities enabled delegates to network and learn from each other.

Participating students had the opportunity to hear from a number of speakers, the vast majority of whom also have disabilities, who covered topics such as academic and career options, self-advocacy, community resources such as technology and independent living, volunteerism and personal leadership. Students had the opportunity to meet community leaders and attend a Mentors Luncheon to network with adults with disabilities and learn what can be accomplished as career goals. All delegates developed specific action plans for their personal leadership development that they can use to help them prepare for life after high school.

- *First Steps*

The First Steps publication is one of the Council's most requested resources. This project revised the First Steps publication to assist parents in coping with emotions resulting from a disability diagnosis and to acquaint them with updated state resources and local services. The disability system can be difficult to navigate and this publication provides a valuable resource to help parents as they begin their journey with their children who have developmental disabilities.