

# **SECTION 1**

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW FOR RFP #2015-EM-12700**

**TITLE: Progressive Employment Practices:  
Project SEARCH Technical Assistance and  
Training**

## **SECTION 1: BACKGROUND, NEED AND PURPOSE, STATEMENT OF WORK, SYSTEMS CHANGE, AND REQUIRED PROPOSAL CONTENT**

### **1. Background**

The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc. (FDDC), also known as the "Council", a non-profit corporation organized pursuant Chapter 617, Florida Statutes, was authorized by Section 393.002 Florida Statutes, and Executive Order of the Governor (E.O. 95-478), empowered the Council to act as the "state designated agency" to administer the funds under Part B of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (Public Law 106-402). The administrative service provisions for the Council are found in federal regulations Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-110 and 45 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 74.

The developmental disabilities formula grant funds come from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and are administered by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). Funds are authorized by P.L. 106-402: Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000, and are cited in 42 U.S.C. 6000, et. seq., as amended. Funds are made available to the states to be used for improving the quality, extent, and scope of the broad range of community services needed by persons with developmental disabilities. Priority is given to those persons whose needs are not otherwise met under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, or other health, education, or welfare programs.

In accordance with the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. s. 6001(8), developmental disabilities is defined as a severe, chronic disability of an individual which: A) is attributable to mental or physical impairment or combination of mental and physical impairments; B) is manifested before the person turns age twenty-two; C) is likely to continue indefinitely; D) results in substantial functional limitations in three or more of the following areas of major life activity: self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living, and economic self-sufficiency; and E) reflects the person's need for a combination and sequence of special, interdisciplinary, or generic care, treatment, or other services which are of lifelong or extended duration and are individually planned and coordinated; except that such term, when applied to infants and young children means individuals from birth to age nine, inclusive, who have substantial developmental delay or specific congenital or acquired conditions, may be considered to have a developmental disability described above, if, without services and supports, they have high probability of meeting those criteria later in life.

### **2. Need and Purpose**

There are currently 21 Project SEARCH sites in Florida. Since 2007, Project SEARCH has made significant progress in Florida, not only adding more sites but gaining statewide backing from Vocational Rehabilitation and the Agency for Persons with Disabilities for funding and programmatic support. While the state has made substantial gains, there are still many opportunities to improve the likelihood that interns will gain positive employment outcomes upon completion of the Project SEARCH program.

Currently, the Florida Project SEARCH sites average around 60% employment outcomes. While this figure is at least twice the national average for all transition-aged youth, the ultimate goal of Project SEARCH is 100% employment outcomes. One way to move the Florida sites closer to this goal is through ongoing communication and training.

During the first five years of the Project SEARCH project, the Council funded a statewide coordinator position. This individual facilitated networking among existing sites and provided technical assistance for potential new sites.

While the funding of the statewide coordinator position has ended, technical assistance and training remains critical to ensure continued communication and training between the Florida Project SEARCH sites. For instance, the issue of funding streams was identified as an emerging need for training and information. This issue came to light during the recent funding constraints of Vocational Rehabilitation which resulted in a shutdown of services for a limited time. An Order of Selection was implemented which also brought forward the need for better communication between providers, school districts and Vocational Rehabilitation to ensure prospective Project SEARCH interns are eligible for services through Vocational Rehabilitation. The ability to have funding for conference calls and face-to-face meetings allowed stakeholders across the state to collaborate and share ideas on how to sustain the program when faced with a limited funding stream. Continued conversations such as this and collaboration on sustainability are needed to ensure the success of the Project SEARCH programs in Florida.