

Employment First Florida Introduction and Overview

Beginning in 2011, [The Institute for Community Inclusion \(ICI\)](#) and the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disability Services (NASDDDS) partnered with the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc. to help Florida understand national efforts and to develop an Employment First initiative in the state. The goal of the effort is to translate the lessons learned from existing Employment First states into strategies for effective implementation of an Employment First initiative in Florida that will ultimately improve employment for persons with disabilities.

In year one, the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) developed a National and Florida Findings Report. The Florida Findings Report was based on Florida's experiences, strengths, and needs and included document review, in-person and web-based forums, key informant interviews, and an online survey. The lessons learned from Employment First states are being considered in the context of Florida's support system, and led to development of a draft Implementation and Marketing Plan towards an Employment First initiative in Florida. The overarching goal of Florida's effort is to ensure broad participation from Florida stakeholders to develop and support a sustainable implementation and marketing plan that can contribute to greater employment opportunities for Floridians with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

During year two of implementation, collaborative efforts led to broader work on Employment First among state agencies and organizations charged with improving employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. The efforts have broadened to include all individuals with disabilities and tremendous work has been done and is underway by collaborating partners to fully implement Employment First. Outcomes during year two have included reporting progress to the Governor's Commission on Jobs for Floridians with Disabilities; formalizing an Employment Partnership Coalition, Employment First Collaborative Team, and Employment First Florida Grassroots Group; obtaining an Executive Order signed by the Governor; developing an Interagency Cooperative Agreement among selected partners that is pending signatures; and beginning to draft a formal strategic action implementation plan and baseline data with targets for improvement.

For more information, contact Sheila Gritz-Swift, who is facilitating the efforts via email at sheilags@fddc.org or phone (850) 488-4180.