

**Employment First**  
FLORIDA



Employment First Florida Success Stories: Employment Services

### **Florida Self-Advocacy Central: An Online Bridge Connecting Self-Advocates**

Members of FL SAND (Florida Self-Advocates Network'D), a statewide network of local self-advocacy groups, wanted to develop a website for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), service professionals, and family members. They created FSACentral.org as a news hub. The site features information and resources to improve the quality of life of people with IDD, as well as policy development updates and advocacy talking points.

Self-advocates can use FSACentral to become informed, educated, and motivated to make change, whether or not they are members of FL SAND. The site is useful for all Floridians with IDD and those who support them, whether or not they have a local support network.

FSACentral has a small staff of writers who submit articles at least monthly. Kelli Munn from Organizational Management Solutions, a company providing training and technical assistance to FL SAND, copyedits and posts the content, and solicits articles from more writers.

Website staff communicate regularly with state agencies and organizations to gather their news and activities. FSACentral also encourages self-advocates to write blog posts about the work they are doing in their communities, and to suggest topics that the team should write about.

Recent posts include a search for award nominations, a letter-writing campaign about wait-list experiences, notices of possible changes in health care, and tips for people with disabilities planning a cruise.

The writers are aware that employment is an important issue for self-advocates. They plan to post information about becoming employed and about managing earnings and benefits. Meanwhile, they encourage self-advocates to write to FSACentral about what they would like to see on an employment page. They also encourage self-advocates to write about their experiences and advice advocating for employment services.

Lessons learned:

The scope of content on FSACentral is broad, but the articles are all framed in terms of advocacy. Kelli Munn explained, "We want FSACentral to be the go-to source for news,

information, and resources for all self-advocates in the state, regardless of affiliation with a [self-advocacy] group.”

For more information, contact:

Kelli Munn: [kmunn@cox.net](mailto:kmunn@cox.net)

The Employment First Florida Success Stories Series highlights examples of innovative employment services, creative state agency employment practices, and individual employment success stories in Florida. The series is a product of the EmployMe1st project, a joint project of the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston, and the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services.

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