



Employment First FLORIDA

Making Employment the First Option




Employment Definition

The Executive Order **defines employment** as follows:

“...integrated employment, including supported employment, customized employment, and self-employment, where an individual is paid by an employer at minimum wage or greater or receives earnings through one’s self-employment business, fully integrated in the community workforce, with a goal of maximum self-sufficiency.”




Employment First

- Declaration of both philosophy and policy
- Employment is the first and preferred outcome for all individual with disabilities.
- Includes integrated employment, supported employment, customized employment, and self-employment.
- At or above minimum wage.
- Systemic improvements across agencies.




Interagency Agreement

May 7, 2014, [Employment First Initiative Interagency Cooperative Agreement](#), was signed and represents unprecedented interagency collaboration.





Executive Order

October 8, 2013, Governor Rick Scott issued [Executive Order 13-284](#), where he reaffirmed his commitment to employment as “the most direct and cost-effective means in helping an individual achieve independence and self-fulfillment, which should be the primary objective of public assistance programs wherever possible.”




Nine Partner Agencies and Organizations

Employment First Florida





Workgroups

Employment Partnership Coalition: High level decision making group

Employment First Collaborative Team: Facilitation and implementation

Employment First Florida Grassroots Group: composed of self-advocates and local stakeholders representing a cross-section of persons with various disabilities; quarterly webinars to ensure voice of stakeholders is heard.



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Project SEARCH...How does it fit in?

➤ Definition of Employment

Employment First:

integrated employment, including supported employment, customized employment, and self-employment, where an individual is paid by an employer at minimum wage or greater or receives earnings through one's self-employment business, fully integrated in the community workforce, with a goal of maximum self-sufficiency."

Project SEARCH:

- Employment in an integrated setting
- Year-round work (not seasonal employment)
- 16 hours/week or more
- Minimum wage or higher



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Priorities

Training and Technical Assistance

Ensure that Florida has a comprehensive training program that fosters quality integrated competitive employment for all individuals with disabilities.

Strategic Goals and Operating Policies

Ensure that state level policies and procedures support employment as the first option available for people with disabilities.

Interagency Collaboration

Ensure that Florida has a strong network of partners that work collaboratively to promote employment as the first option for individuals with disabilities



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Project SEARCH...How does it fit in?

➤ Fidelity Components

1. The outcome of the program is integrated employment for each participant.
2. Collaboration: Project SEARCH is a partnership with support and resources from Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Community Rehabilitation Provider, Developmental Disability Services Agency and family members.
3. Program is business led.
6. Braided funding is in place between the non-business partners.
7. There is total immersion of interns and /or employees in the host business
9. A majority of Project SEARCH interns are made eligible for long-term follow along services before the program begins or early in the program.



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Employment First Act

Signed into law January 21, 2016



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#1 The outcome of the program is integrated employment for each participant.

Integral piece of the definition of Employment First nationally and Florida's definition of employment as stated in our Executive Order.



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#2 Collaboration: Project SEARCH is a partnership with support and resources from Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Community Rehabilitation Provider, Developmental Disability Services Agency and family members.

Florida Commitment....

- Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
- Department of Education, Vocational Rehabilitation
- Agency for Persons with Disabilities
- Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc.
- 10 Local School Districts
- 11 Supported Employment Providers
- 21 Business Sites



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#3 Program is business led

Many businesses host more than one site and have asked us to expand even more

- Florida Hospital
- Health First
- Hilton Hotels
- Martin Memorial Healthcare
- City of Miami

Business owners presenting at state conferences about the benefits having a Project SEARCH site has had on their organization and it's culture.

- Harris Rosen, Rosen Shingle Creek Resort. Key note speaker at the Visions Transition Conference.

Employment First focus on messaging to employers.



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Florida Project SEARCH Sites

- Baptist Hospital
- Gulf Breeze Hospital
- University of West Florida
- Shands Hospital
- Holmes Regional Medical Center
- Health First Cape Canaveral Hospital
- Police Department-Operations Bureau
- Marin Memorial Medical Center
- Bethesda Hospital West
- Miami Police Department
- Zoo Miami
- Hialeah Police Department
- Rosen Shingle Creek
- Florida Hospital Orlando
- Florida Hospital East Orlando
- Winter Park Memorial Hospital
- Florida Hospital-Altamonte
- Hilton Orlando/Altamonte Springs
- All Children's Hospital



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For Employers

Abilities Work Web Portal and Help Desk

Collaborative effort between CareerSource and VR

Aimed predominantly at employers to provide information and resources to help hire individuals with disabilities. Also has information for job seekers.

Abilities Work Help Desk 1-844-245-3405

AbilitiesWorkHD@vr.fldoe.org

Abilities Work Web Portal

AbilitiesWork@EmployFlorida.com



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Expansion

2015-2016

- Osceola County

2016-2017

- Lee County
- Duval County
- Volusia County
- Polk County

2017-2018

- Pinellas County
- Columbia County

Interest

- Indian River County
- Okaloosa County
- Walton County
- Monroe County
- Leon County
- Hillsborough County



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#6 Braided funding is in place between the non-business partners

- School districts providing funding for teacher and job coaches
- Supported Employment provider funding job coaches
- Vocational Rehabilitation funds supported employment services for interns, adjusting payment structure to increase the sustainability of Project SEARCH.
- Agency for Persons with Disabilities providing additional follow along or training through Employment Enhancement Program (EEP) dollars.



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#7 There is total immersion of interns and or employees in the host business.

Training of providers is an Employment First priority: Ensure that Florida has a comprehensive training program that fosters quality integrated competitive employment for all individuals with disabilities.

Best practice competencies that were adopted include many of the same areas as the Project SEARCH curriculum to include: on site, real world work experiences.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requirements for pre-employment training



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Pre-Employment Transition Services under WIOA

Services Include:

- Career Exploration and Counseling
- Work Readiness Training
- Community-Based Work Experience
- Self-Advocacy Instruction
- Peer Mentoring
- Postsecondary Educational Counseling



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#9 A majority of Project SEARCH interns are made eligible for long-term follow along services before the program begins or early in the program.

Vocational Rehabilitation has provided training and technical assistance to their local offices and school districts to ensure prospective candidates are identified during the Project SEARCH application phase so that funding determination can be made prior to placement.



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Project SEARCH Alignment with WIOA

- Career counseling is conducted and guidance provided by the school district and VR.
- Students explore three or more internships exploring a variety of work clusters and/or types of work to build skills that lead to meaningful work..
- The school district delivers work readiness and related educational training at the host business.
- Community rehabilitation providers deliver hands-on instruction and job coaching.
- Students learn to Advocate for their needs with supervisors and co-workers.
- On completion, students are hired or begin their job search with providers.



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Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act

WIOA:

- Assures youth have access to the education and skills needed to compete and succeed in the 21st century.
- Defines how state agencies will fund and support youth.
 - ✓ 15% of the VR federal allocation is set-aside for in-school youth with disabilities.
 - ✓ 75% of designated Workforce funds is to serve out-of-school youth.
- Pre-Employment Transition Services are provided to youth with disabilities while they are still in high school



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Additional benefits...

- FDDC funding of training and technical assistance which provides opportunity for reduced licensing fees and continued training for sites.
- Employer messaging and education efforts aid in finding business partners.
- Employment First website provides resources to all stakeholders.
- Employment First website is a place to highlight success stories.



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Employ Me First

- Facilitation of Grassroots webinars
- Technical assistance and guidance to the Employment First teams
- Employment First Marketing: Logo and website
- Collaborative Pilots



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Contact Information

If you are interested in learning more about Project SEARCH or in starting a site, please contact me:

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Interagency Collaboration

Employment First Florida Interagency Collaborative Team Pilots

- Miami-Dade County
- Nassau County
- Central Florida Career Coalition



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Self-Assessment

➤ Where are we now...

Coordination-Cooperation or Collaboration?

Impact Areas:

Service Techniques	Policies and Procedures
Program Development	Customer Information- Forms and data
Staffing	Vendors/Providers
Physical Location	Funding
Training	



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