

Florida Provider Network



University of South Florida, Division of Applied Research and Education Support
Funded by the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council

MicroEnterprise Opportunities

Florida Awarded Self-Employment Grant

The U.S. Department of Labor has awarded \$1.2 million to the Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation to increase opportunities for persons with disabilities to become entrepreneurs. The *Self-Employment for Adults and Youth with Disabilities Research and Technical Assistance Grant* will fund pilot projects and research to increase self-employment for individuals with disabilities. The project will run through September, 2009.

The project was developed with Workforce Florida, Inc., Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Florida Department of Education, Division for Vocational Rehabilitation, the University of South Florida's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Griffin-Hammis & Associates, LLC, and the National Disability Institute. The partners will evaluate three demonstration models currently being used in Florida for self-employment and entrepreneurial activities, expand technical assistance and training opportunities for interagency staff that serve persons with disabilities, and identify barriers and identify best practices to overcome them. Three sites in Jacksonville, Lakeland and Ft. Lauderdale/Miami have been selected for training and technical assistance and will serve as incubators for further expansion of the models. More information can be found at: <http://www.floridajobs.org>

Training and Technical Assistance to be Offered for '06 and '07

SCIETT Project Supported Employment Trainings Completed in Orlando, Panama



Consultant David Hammis describes the use of Social Security Work Incentives during a January training event in Panama City

The Supported, Competitive, Integrated Employment Training (SCIETT) Project is well into its second year and is now supporting six community leadership teams in their efforts to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. The six teams are:

Year 1 Pilot Sites

Pensacola
West Palm Beach

Lead Agency

Arc Gateway
Arc of Palm Beach County

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SCIETT Training Project Update...

Year 2 Pilot Sites

Panama City	Agency for Persons with Disabilities
Osceola County	Arc of Osceola County
Brevard County	Agency for Persons with Disabilities and Brevard Business Leadership Network
Ft. Lauderdale	Agency for Persons with Disabilities

Though each team has a lead agency or agencies, the teams are a cross-representative group of employment stakeholders. Members include:

- provider agencies,
- Vocational Rehabilitation,
- Agency for Persons with Disabilities,
- job seekers,
- family members,
- Workforce staff,
- school district staff,
- BLN members, and
- support coordinators

The project's second year pilot sites have both had their first training sessions, which consisted of the "Orientation to Supported Employment & Natural Supports." This training session is first because it lays the foundation of the values and philosophies guiding supported employment and the project. The Panama City session was held on 12/12/06 – 12/14/06 and included the Panama City team. The Orlando session was held on 12/18/06 – 12/20/06 and included the Osceola, Brevard and Broward County Teams. The trainers for these sessions were Tammara Geary, Lewis Persons and Beth Keeton.

Following each of these sessions, the teams went through a needs assessment. The needs assessment began with team member self-reporting on their current efforts and initiatives in supported employment, with follow-up from project staff. The assessment consists of measuring effective practices at the community, organizational and individual levels and covers such topics as marketing, individual planning, job development and on the job supports. The results of the needs assessment, in each area of the state, provided the topics for the remaining training sessions, the first two of which have been completed. The completed sessions are:

- Social Security & Benefits Planning (Panama City)
- Discovering Personal Genius (Orlando)

The remaining sessions are as follows:

Panama City

- Session 3, March 14-15: Discovering Personal Genius
- Session 4, May 9-10: Transition, Interagency Collaboration and Collaboration with Business (BLN)

Orlando

- Session 3, March 28-29: Marketing & Job Development
- Session 4, May 23-24: Advanced Job Coach Training

The trainers for these sessions include, Tammara Geary, Cary Griffin, David Guido, David Hammis, Lewis Persons and Brenda Clark.

Additional topics that were identified include Effective Teaming and Organizational Change. These topics will be addressed through the Florida Provider Network (FPN) meetings, which will provide all of the teams with the opportunity to access the training. The initial FPN meeting is scheduled for February 27 in Orlando. Dale DiLeo will facilitate SCIETT team members in discussing and sharing their issues and innovations. Group technical assistance will be provided, as well as resources and an overview of the web-based communication products that the project has developed to date.

In addition to the year 2 pilot sites, additional needs assessment work has been conducted with the year 1 pilot sites. These sites, Pensacola and West Palm Beach, will be continuing some of their work from the first year of the project and expanding into additional areas.

The Pensacola will be receiving training on "Making Supported Employment Work Financially." In addition, the project will be continuing to support the Discovering Personal Genius implementation through work with Southeastern Vocational Services and the Escambia County School District. Both the Agency for Persons with Disabilities and DOE/Vocational Rehabilitation have played a key role in keeping the initiative alive in Pensacola.

The West Palm Beach team will also be continuing their work in Discovering Personal Genius with expansion, this year, into the Palm Beach County School District. Additionally, the West Palm Beach team will be working to build capacity in the area of supporting self employment.

Self-Determination

And the Employment of People with Disabilities

By Tammara Geary

Self-determination is having control over one's own life. It includes making decisions about where, with whom and how you work, live, play, worship and shop.

It means being your own causal agent. With regard to support services, it means making decisions about what supports you want and need, using funding and resources and selecting your own support team.

It comes with responsibility.

In the employment arena, despite studies that show most people with disabilities in the US want to work, the large majority is unemployed. This results in many people relying on some form of public assistance for money and services to support daily living expenses. Public assistance may include Social Security programs, food stamps, housing assistance, fuel assistance, medical assistance and a variety of other services. This impacts the US budget and the economy.

If an additional one million people with disabilities became employed:

- SSI would decrease by \$1.8 billion
- use of food stamps would decrease by \$286 million
- taxable earned income would increase by \$21.2 billion

It seems obvious that investing in getting people to work would benefit not only the individual, but also the workplace and the society as a whole.

People with Disabilities in the Workforce

People with disabilities have the capacity to work and to be a valuable asset to any business. People with disabilities are capable of:

- working in a variety of jobs,
- earning competitive salaries and wages,
- building careers,
- having benefits as part of their compensation packages,

- learning and developing skills for the changing workforce, and
- making decisions.

So Why Is This So Important?

Because self-determination and the right to work is a substantial shift in what has historically or typically been the case, particularly for people with disabilities or any other people who are in the minority or are otherwise disenfranchised, under-recognized or undervalued.

Supported employment approaches and the evolution of customized employment strategies have shifted the way we approach and serve people with disabilities. Historically, services to people with disabilities have focused on:

Caretaking

People with disabilities have been perceived as incompetent and, therefore, in need of someone else to care for them and make life decisions on their behalf.

The shift:

People with disabilities are quite competent and capable of making life decisions. Caretakers are not needed. Support for maximizing functioning, independence and control of life is the key.

Fixing

Disability has been perceived as a malady, a deformity, a disease and something to be fixed or cured.

The shift:

Disability is a normal part of life. With aging, the incidence of disability increases. It should be treated as a personal trait or characteristic, such as height or weight, or if you can do math or not.

Becoming "Normal"

Rehabilitation has largely focused on making the person as "normal" as possible and remediating any "abnormalities."

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**Effective January 1, 2007, Florida's minimum wage is \$6.67 per hour.
Unless using a special worker certificate, employers must pay employees
at least a wage of \$6.67 per hour for all hours worked in Florida.**

Self-Determination & Employment

The shift:

“Normal” has been too strictly defined. The term needs to be more inclusive of the range of differences that exist in our multicultural society, which includes people with disabilities. The key is to find a job where the disability doesn’t impact the work and provide necessary supports.

Getting Ready

Services to people with disabilities have included a process of steps designed to prepare a person for a specific goal. For example, traditionally, if people wanted to work, they would have to be evaluated, then participate in work adjustment or go to a sheltered workshop. When they were “ready” to work in the community the job seeking process would begin.

The shift:

Many, many people who have participated in these processes were never seen as “ready,” keeping them forever out of the community workforce. If a person wants to work, he or she is ready. Through good person-centered planning, creative job development or creation, excellent job matching and provision of appropriate supports, accommodations, and technology, people gain competence and success on the job.

Proving Themselves

Along with the concept of “getting ready” comes the need to “prove” competence. This entire process sets up hoops to jump. A person must demonstrate competence before moving to the next level. Historically, people have had to prove that they can perform certain tasks, follow directions, behave appropriately and on and on before a provider would consider a job in the community workforce. The constant demand to “prove” competence all too often sets up an endless process of “getting ready to get ready.”

The shift:

Forget about what a person can’t do. Nobody ever got a job based on what they can’t do! What matters is what a person can do, and what supports, accommodation and technology are needed to make that happen. Jobs can be found or created that use the person’s strengths. Solid supports can be provided to enable people to contribute their best to the workplace. People with disabilities are perfectly capable of working.

Segregation

The unfortunate reality for many people with disabilities is a life of segregation in institutions, nursing homes, day activity centers, adult daycare and sheltered workshops. Within segregated settings, people do not have the opportunity to interact with the rest of the world or to take advantage of the richness of community life.

The shift:

People with disabilities are an asset to the workplace and the community. Segregation is rooted in the caretaking and protection mindset. People can contribute, and in doing so enrich both the lives of the individual and the community as a whole.

Professional or Expert Control

Largely the lives of people with disabilities have been directed by doctors, parents, teachers, rehabilitation counselors, residential staff and other professionals and close people in their lives. So, for example, a rehabilitation counselor would conduct an assessment and determine what types of services are available for that individual, whether or not the person would be a candidate for a job and what type of work the person would be qualified to do.

The shift:

People with disabilities can make significant life decisions and are capable of directing their own lives. This shifts the roles of professionals and other significant parties to that of support and service to individuals, working on their plans and at their direction.

The reality has been that people live and work where they are placed.

In this situation there is little ownership or control.

At its worst, job development and getting a job is a process that is done to a person or possibly for a person. It should be a process that is done with people, at their direction.

This shift is still underway and has not yet been fully realized. The inclusion of people with disabilities in the One-Stops is part of this process, bringing people from a “separate but equal” work system into the larger workforce development system of their communities.

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