

# Florida Provider Network



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

## Florida Business LEADERSHIP NETWORK

Promoting Employment for Floridians with Disabilities

### FL Businesses Supporting Diversity

## Fast Facts about the Florida Business Leadership Network

The Florida Business Leadership Network (BLN) seeks to promote two primary personnel policies: diversity policies that include people with disabilities and hiring practices that target candidates with disabilities.

The Florida BLN is sponsored by The Able Trust, also known as the Florida Governor's Alliance for the Employment of Citizens with Disabilities. The Able Trust is a nonprofit foundation that provides Floridians with disabilities fair employment opportunities through grant programs and public awareness activities.

The BLN is a free, membership network that offer employers resources for recruiting candidates with disabilities, information on disability employment issues, recognition for best disability employment practices, and exposure to an untapped market for goods and services.

Continued on page 2

### Fourth Year of Project Ready to Begin

## SCIETT Project Completes Third Year of Employment Training/TA



By Brenda Clark, Project Director

The Florida Center for Inclusive Communities – University of South Florida, has completed Year-3 of the Supported, Competitive, Integrated Employment Training Team (SCIETT) Project.

The third year of this initiative included the following staff: Lisa Friedman-Chavez, Sharrine Garrett, Vanessa Moorer, and Peter Gamache. National consultation, training, and technical assistance were provided by Dale DiLeo, James Patton, Ph.D. and Tammy Jorgensen-Smith, Ph.D. Additional training and technical assistance was provided by Mike Capps, President of Florida Association for Persons in Supported Employment, Marlene Ulisky, SSA North Florida Area Work Incentive Coordinator, and Paula Ryan, Atlanta Region Pass Cadre, Pam Hinterlong, DOE Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Florida Headquarters, and JB Black, Ph.D., Agency for Persons with Disabilities.

The SCIETT eight pilot site teams further cultivated, used, and implemented best

Continued on page 2

### Grant Participants

The grant includes a diverse representation of local community stakeholders from:

- Pensacola (Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton Counties)
- Panama City (Bay, Gadsen, Jackson, Leon, Wakulla, Washington/Holmes Counties)
- Osceola County
- Brevard County
- Daytona Beach (Volusia County)
- St Augustine (St Johns County)
- Palm Beach County
- Broward County

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Continued from page 1

# Florida Provider Network Update...

practices to support self-determination, self-education, and diverse work place environments and informal support networks within their communities. Although the climate throughout the nation continues to have high rates of unemployment among the general population, this challenge motivated these community stakeholders to break new ground and lead the way through vision and innovation.

The members of the eight pilot sites and the SCIETT Project staff partnership during this past year has resulted in a collaborative outcome of innovative ideas implemented by local community leadership. They provided a renewed significance to the relevance of local community collaboration, communication, shared beliefs and ongoing training in order to increase options for competitive and integrated supported employment options and opportunities to persons with developmental disabilities.

Each pilot site team addressed their priority needs with the development of action plans facilitated by the SCIETT Project staff. Training needs were identified and prioritized by each of the pilot site members. SCIETT facilitated professional development opportunities that addressed the top ten topics requested. SCIETT Project staff followed up with technical assistance in the local areas.

Self advocates, service users, and family members who are active members of the pilot site teams expressed their perspective about business, hiring practices, employment, services, supports, training, transition from youth to adult community life, values, and vision. Community focus groups were also facilitated through the SCIETT Project

with the findings shared with the local pilot site teams for planning, priority setting, and identifying additional needs.

Finally, SCIETT and the pilot site representatives initiated the use of information technology to increase the accessibility to training, technical assistance and networking across the State and among the Florida Provider Network. The use of this alternative access has already resulted in job leads across the State, dissemination of best practices, troubleshooting challenges, and sharing of resources.

Pilot site team members and the SCIETT Project staff are planning and scheduling for Year-4 of SCIETT effective June 1, 2009. The next year will bring new challenges, in large part due to the worsening economic situation statewide and nationally. Some of these include:

- Increase in lay-offs and closures of supported employment providers, resulting in a growing need for training and technical assistance of replacement personnel.
- Increase instances where job seekers are encouraged to seek and or accept employment in segregated group settings (e.g., sheltered workshop).
- A lack of understanding throughout the supported employment service delivery system regarding the availability of resources and services available within their respective local communities.

For more information concerning the pilot sites, action plans, news, resources, or training opportunities, please visit <http://www.flprovidernetwork.org> or email Brenda Clark at [bclark@fmhi.usf.edu](mailto:bclark@fmhi.usf.edu).

## Florida BLN Helping Employers Hire Workers with Disabilities

Continued from page 1

- ✓ Employers lead the BLN. The Florida BLN is an accredited chapter of the USBLN, which is comprised of 32 participating states organizing 43 BLN chapters nationwide.
- ✓ More than 1,000 large and small employers are members of the Florida BLN.
- ✓ Employer benefits of Florida BLN membership include a monthly electronic newsletter, disability hiring toolkits, online resources about accommodations, interviewing, tax incentives, educational and networking events, statewide recognition programs.
- ✓ Florida leads the nation in organizing local BLN chapters that emphasize opportunities for businesses to come together and address disability employment issues within their own communities.
- ✓ Local BLN Chapters engage the participation of community leaders, Chambers of Commerce, CEOs and human resource professionals, emphasizing the business principle that when an employer speaks about the benefits of hiring candidates with disabilities, other employers are eager to do the same.
- ✓ Eleven local BLN Chapters are organized or under development in Florida. These areas include Big Bend, Brevard, Broward, First Coast, Miami-Dade, Orlando, Panhandle, Panama City, Polk, SunCoast and West Palm Beach.

Lead Company:





# What Does it Take to be an Employment Specialist?

by Dale DiLeo

How often has a new employment specialist been hired, but the person didn't meet expectations on the job? Although as employment professionals, we are aware of the importance of a good job match, we often forget to take the time to ensure that one happens on our own team.

Finding and hiring the right people to enable job seekers with disabilities to have job opportunities and quality support is an important part of building an effective job placement team. Bad hiring makes life miserable for all, slows down agency outcomes and ultimately limits the individuals being served.

Not only that, if employment professionals cannot make good hiring decisions internally, how can they act as a consultant for employers on hiring? Your credibility as an employment professional is on the line with employers every day based on all the staff who work with them.

As practices of total quality management enter into our field, more work teams actively are involved in hiring their co-workers. This means everyone needs to be proficient at hiring qualified candidates, as well as supporting each other to build skills and attitudes on the job.

## Superperson: The Ideal Employment Specialist?

Good hiring begins with a knowledge of what type of person you are looking for. This means evaluating the work needs of the setting, as well as the social aspect of how work gets done. As you consider what kind of person to hire, you begin to envision the "ideal" individual, or someone who will:

- competently do the work that needs to be done
- fit in socially
- contribute positively to the work team
- be motivated by the challenge
- be satisfied by the pay available

In other words, we develop a picture of superman or superwoman, the perfect employee. Unfortunately, in the real world, there are few people who will qualify as ideal.

We are all human, with skills, personalities, moods and difficulties. The trick is to make the best decision based on a variety of factors, and to assist the person with good training and social support.

Most candidates present a range of strengths and missing skills. For those things that may be missing, you will need to consider whether:

- the person is someone who can "grow into" the job – a person with innate ability or intuitive sense who will learn quickly because of good personal qualities
- the person will be able to do the job with a reasonable accommodation – an accommodation is not a concept limited to people with disabilities, it is plain good management of resources.

Individuals who need time, support or accommodation are worth investing in, despite limited experience. Remember that you are an expert at job skill training, modification and support. These skills also can be applied to support the people that you hire.

## Competencies Needed to Provide SE Services

As part of considering what kind of person succeeds in supported employment, you should begin with a set of core competencies you expect the person to be able to master. For example, although there are numerous traits a staff person should have in providing effective job services, the following can serve as a starting point in thinking about core qualities.

### Desirable Competencies

Understanding and able to provide skills in the following:

- What supported employment is and how it works
- Business consultation (workplace diversity, productivity and supervision)
- The experience and implications of having a specific disability
- Working with families
- Career and life planning
- Marketing and job development

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# Employment Specialists: What Does It Take?

Continued from page 3

- Job analysis
- Work culture analysis
- Promoting social relationships
- Skill training and behavioral support
- Counseling
- Policy compliance
- Promoting self determination
- Job modification and adaptation
- Assistive technology
- Accessing specialized expertise

## Desirable Personality Traits

- Motivated to succeed
- Sense of humor
- Advocacy
- Problem solving skills
- Able to work cooperatively
- Respectful of others
- Able to learn and grow
- Flexibility

## Roles and Job Descriptions

The position of employment specialist is the point where SE services actually are provided. Most employment specialists have direct service roles related to the following:

- guidance in career planning
- job development and marketing
- job analysis
- job support
- job accommodations
- employer consultation
- troubleshooting
- transportation
- facilitator of social and work support

## Recruitment, Application and the ADA

Consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), employment professionals must also assure that qualified persons with disabilities are not screened out during recruitment and application. You consult with employers in this area, and also should apply the same guidelines to your own hiring. There are several ways to establish open recruitment:

- Advertise openings in a variety of formats and settings.
- Advertise in media targeted to people with disabilities and their advocates, such as the Ability Magazine or Mainstream.

- Stress the company's commitment to hiring a diverse workforce in recruitment activities.
- Recruit from job placement agencies that include people with disabilities in their potential work pool.

An open application process can be developed by the following steps:

- Simplify the application process – reduce steps to essentials.
- Redesign the job application form – most forms become overcomplicated and redundant as they evolve over time.
- Provide an application interview to obtain information from job seekers who may have difficulty with written information.

## Flexible Hiring through Job Carving

An era of tight resources means good personnel allocation. Employers, including SE programs, must hire the best people they can find and compensate them fairly. An employee earning \$25,000 may be twice as productive as one who makes \$18,000.

Learn to identify hiring needs clearly and to spell out recruitment activities to include all kinds of people. Also, be flexible, as you never know where a “star” employee will be found. Even though you have worked to clearly identify your work needs and the kind of person you are seeking, don't rule out potential workers because they do not fit the profile perfectly.

Sometimes a person will have the right personality, but will lack a critical skill for a fixed job description you have developed. For example, he or she may be unavailable at a key time or have a driving restriction.

This doesn't necessarily mean that the person must be eliminated from consideration. You might be able to carve out a position that will work for the person and for you by adjusting responsibilities, schedules or equipment.

Customizing jobs specifically for an individual is more likely to meet the individual's needs, thus making he or she more productive. If you feel the fit is an otherwise good one, this can help you open up consideration of more kinds of people.

This allows you to practice what SE preaches – hiring a greater diversity of people.



Florida Center for  
Inclusive Communities



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