Interagency Cooperative Agreement  
Employment First Initiative

Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities  
Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services  
Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
Florida Department of Education, Division of Blind Services  
Florida Department of Economic Opportunity  
CareerSource Florida  
Florida Department of Children and Families, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Office  
Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc.  
Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, Inc.  
The Arc of Florida, Inc.

I. Parties:
The parties to this Interagency Cooperative Agreement are the Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities; Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services; Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; Florida Department of Education, Division of Blind Services; Florida Department of Economic Opportunity; CareerSource Florida; Florida Department of Children and Families, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Office; Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc.; Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, Inc.; and The Arc of Florida, Inc. The parties may be referred to herein as “Partner” or “Partners.”

II. Background:
On October 8, 2013, Governor Rick Scott signed Executive Order 13-284 mandating the creation of an interagency cooperative agreement among specific state agencies and other disabilities service organizations to ensure the continuation of a long-term commitment to improving employment outcomes for persons with disabilities. A formal five-year interagency cooperative agreement was executed on May 7, 2014 with an effective date of July 1, 2014. CS/HB 7003: Individuals with Disabilities was passed by the Florida Legislature and signed by Governor Rick Scott with an effective date of July 1, 2016. The legislation was codified in Florida Statute as the Employment First Act in section 413.80, Florida Statutes.

III. Legislative Findings and Intent:
The legislative findings and intent state that “employment is the most direct and cost-effective means to assist an individual in achieving independence and fulfillment; however, individuals with disabilities are confronted by unique barriers to employment which inhibit their opportunities to compete fairly in the labor force. It is the intent of the Legislature to provide a
framework for a long-term commitment to improving employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities in this state through the implementation of this act.”

IV. **Purpose:**
The general purpose of this interagency cooperative agreement, aligned with the Employment First Act, “is to prioritize employment of individuals with disabilities and to change the employment system to better integrate individuals with disabilities into the workforce. This act encourages a collaborative effort between state agencies and organizations to achieve better employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.” The agencies and organizations that are parties to this agreement are fully committed to working together to improve the number and percentage of growth in competitive employment for individuals with disabilities. For the purpose of this agreement and as defined in Executive Order 13-284, “employment” is defined as 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 outcomes shall be based on each individual’s measurable vocational goals, skills and abilities with the intent to also meet the expectations and hiring needs of the employer.

The specific purpose of this interagency cooperative agreement is to outline roles and responsibilities of the Partners to accomplish the desired outcomes. The intent is to:

- Formalize the efforts that have been accomplished to improve employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities;
- Establish a commitment among state agencies and community organizations to maximize resources and coordinate with each other to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities seeking publicly funded services;
- Develop strategic goals and benchmarks to assist the state agencies and organizations in implementing this agreement;
- Identify financing and contracting methods that will help to prioritize employment for individuals with disabilities among the array of services paid for or provided by state agencies and organizations;
- Establish training methods to better integrate individuals with disabilities into the workforce;
- Ensure collaborative efforts between multiple agencies and organizations to achieve the intent of the Employment First Act;
- Update and implement a long-term communications plan to 1) increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities by motivating employers to hire, 2) promote a consistent message of awareness among employers about the value individuals with disabilities bring to the workforce, and 3) inform employers about the resources that are available to assist with their hiring needs, including the single point of contact;
• Promote service innovations to better assist individuals with disabilities in the workplace; and
• Identify accountability measures to ensure the sustainability of this agreement.

V. Scope:
The scope of work is statewide. To most cost efficiently coordinate activities within this interagency cooperative agreement, the following structure will be used:

• Employment Partnership/Statewide Stakeholder Coalition (Coalition):
  o Shall be composed of the agency head or organization’s leadership charged with the overall administration of the agency or organization with responsibilities that include employment of individuals with disabilities. Additional members of the Coalition include the Partners, which should be individuals charged with oversight of employment programs and policies.
  o Will meet biannually, in person or via conference call, with the agency head or organization’s leadership or designee participation. The Coalition is charged with advising and making recommendations that will inform the work of the state-level Employment First Collaborative Team and Grassroots Group to achieve the purpose and desired outcomes set forth in this Interagency Cooperative Agreement and to ensure continuous improvement.

• State-Level Employment First Collaborative Team:
  o Shall be composed of program staff assigned by the Partners’ leadership.
  o Shall meet in person or via conference call on a bi-monthly basis.
  o Shall be responsible for identifying systems, practice barriers and potential solutions to address those barriers that prevent or hinder individuals with disabilities from obtaining employment.
  o Shall seek and recommend innovative funding, training solutions, and best practices to close program gaps and ensure continuous improvement.
  o Shall review, create or make recommendations on state statutes, rules, and agency or organizational policies.
  o Shall provide general recommendations to the Coalition for its decision making process.

• Grassroots-Level Group:
  o Shall be composed of self-advocates and local stakeholders representing a cross section of individuals with various disabilities
  o Shall meet via webinars or conference calls on a quarterly basis to ensure the voice of stakeholders is heard and to share information.

VI. Specific Roles and Responsibilities of the Partners:
All Partners will:
• Appoint a minimum of one designee to attend Coalition meetings in the absence of the Partners’ leadership.
• Appoint a minimum of one representative to attend State-Level Employment First Collaborative Team meetings.
• Develop and implement methods for identifying and addressing the following:
  o A commitment among Partners' leadership to maximize resources and coordinate with each other to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities seeking publicly funded services;
  o Strategic goals and benchmarks to assist the Partners in implementing this agreement;
  o Financing and contracting methods that will help to prioritize employment for individuals with disabilities among the array of services paid for or provided by the Partners;
  o Training methods to better integrate individuals with disabilities into the workforce;
  o Collaborative efforts between multiple agencies and organizations to achieve the intent of the Employment First Act;
  o A long-term communications plan to 1) increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities by motivating employers to hire, 2) promote a consistent message of awareness among employers about the value individuals with disabilities bring to the workforce, and 3) inform employers about the resources that are available to assist with their hiring needs, including a single point of contact; and
  o Promoting service innovation.
• Identify baseline employment outcome data for individuals with disabilities served by their agency or organization, if the Partner is a direct service agency or an organization with contracts for direct services, and set targets for improvement.
• Report annually to the Governor's office and the Coalition on Partner-determined accountability measures and results from targets for improving the employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities.

VII. **General Terms of the Interagency Cooperative Agreement:**

**Term.** The term of this Interagency Cooperative Agreement shall begin on July 1, 2019, or the date the last signature is obtained, and end on June 30, 2024. The agreement will require formal renewal to remain in effect beyond June 30, 2024.

**Point of Contact.** One Partner will serve as the point of contact and assume responsibility for facilitation and coordination. The point of contact shall be determined annually by a majority vote of the Coalition. The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc., shall be the point of contact for year one, July 1, 2019, or the date the last signature is obtained, through June 30, 2020.

**Limited Authority.** Nothing in this Interagency Cooperative Agreement is intended to imply that any Partner would provide services to individuals with disabilities beyond the individuals they are mandated to serve as defined in Florida Statute. Nothing in this Interagency Cooperative Agreement shall be construed to give the Partners any authority, express or implied, over the operations of the agencies or organizations involved.
Termination. Any of the Partners may terminate its participation in this Interagency Cooperative Agreement at any time by giving thirty (30) days’ written notice to all Partner agencies or organizations of such termination and specifying the effective date thereof.
By signing this Interagency Cooperative Agreement, each Partner is accepting and agreeing to abide by and complete the responsibilities delineated in this Interagency Cooperative Agreement.

Barbara Palmer
Executive Director
Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities
Date: 8/22, 2019
Monica Verra-Tirado, Ed.D
Bureau Chief
Florida Department of Education
Bureau of Exceptional Education and
Student Services
Date: August 15, 2019
Allison Flanagan
Director
Florida Department of Education
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Date: 9/13, 2019
Robert L. Doyle, III
Director
Florida Department of Education
Division of Blind Services
Date: 9/16, 2019
Ken Lawson
Executive Director
Florida Department of Economic Opportunity
Date: 2-18-2020 2019
Michelle Dennard
President and Chief Executive Officer
CareerSource Florida
Date: 8/6/19, 2019
Ute Gazioch
Director
Florida Department of Children and Families
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Office
Date: 02/03/2020
Suzanne Sewell
President and Chief Executive Officer
Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, Inc.
Date: August 16, 2019
Kirk Hall
Chief Executive Officer
The Arc of Florida, Inc.
Date: Dec. 6, 2019
Addendum to Interagency Cooperative Agreement, Employment First Initiative

Page 1, Heading, is replaced with the following to add the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged:

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Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc.
Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, Inc.
The Arc of Florida, Inc.
Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged

Section I, Parties, is replaced with the following to add the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged:

The parties to this Interagency Cooperative Agreement are the Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities; Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services; Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; Florida Department of Education, Division of Blind Services; Florida Department of Economic Opportunity; CareerSource Florida; Florida Department of Children and Families, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Office; Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc.; Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, Inc.; The Arc of Florida, Inc.; and Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged. The parties may be referred to herein as “Partner” or “Partners.”

On the last page of the agreement, a signature block is added for Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged.

David Darm
Executive Director
Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged
Date: December 31, 2019