

**Rick Scott**  
GOVERNOR



**Jesse Panuccio**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** CareerSource Florida and Regional Workforce Boards  
**FROM:** Lois A. Scott, Chief, Bureau of One-Stop and Program Support  
**DATE:** June 25, 2015  
**SUBJECT:** Florida's Employment First Initiative

The purpose of this correspondence is to inform our workforce partners of Florida's state-level efforts to prioritize employment for individuals with unique abilities and provide guidance for embracing these collaborative efforts at the local level where employment outcomes are achieved.

Last Fall, 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 state agencies<sup>1</sup> signed the [Employment First Initiative Interagency Cooperative Agreement](#), committing to improve competitive employment outcomes for individuals with unique abilities. This five-year agreement represents unprecedented interagency collaboration to ensure that state programs that serve individuals with unique abilities help them achieve successful employment and independence in their communities. This state partnership created a website, [Employment First Florida](#), to disseminate information about its activities. A single point of contact was established to provide information about hiring individuals with unique abilities, as well as additional resources for job seekers and employers, the [Florida Abilities Work portal](#) in Employ Florida Marketplace (EFM).

Finally, we want to inform you of our interagency communication efforts to promote more employment opportunities within the business community. This is a statewide effort to promote a consistent message of awareness to employers and assist with the recruitment of qualified applicants. This year, we will coordinate efforts with our state and local partners to inform more employers of the opportunities individuals with unique abilities offer their workforce and community.

This effort aligns with Florida's implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA increases access to high-quality workforce services to individuals with unique abilities to prepare them for competitive integrated employment. It requires better employer engagement and promotes physical and programmatic accessibility to employment and training services for individuals with unique abilities. Employment First establishes a framework for the kind of interagency collaboration required by WIOA by bringing together core programs as well as other partners who assist job seekers with unique

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abilities. In the coming months, the partners will provide more specific information on these collaborative initiatives and offer ways for you to get involved.

We hope this information is helpful and look forward to working with you in carrying out this long-term, collaborative commitment to empowering individuals with unique abilities to compete in Florida's economy!

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<sup>1</sup> CareerSource Florida, and the Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Department of Education (Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, Division of Blind Services, and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation), Department of Economic Opportunity, Department of Children and Families (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Office), Developmental Disabilities Council, and Association of Rehabilitation Facilities.