

Strategic Plan 2005-2010

Driven by the desire to better serve individuals with disabilities and for AbilityFirst to continue to prosper and flourish over the next five years and beyond, our Board of Directors has approved a comprehensive five year Strategic Plan. A Strategic Planning Committee comprised of board members and executive staff led the process beginning in the fall of 2004 and the Board of Directors approved the final plan September 15, 2005.

The committee began by evaluating the successes and challenges of our 2002-2005 Strategic Plan. Under the direction of Shueman Troy Associates, the committee explored current national and local trends in the disabled community. Philosophically at the state and federal level, emphasis is currently placed on community-based services that embrace individual choice. The National Core Indicator Project is a well-established effort that has been adopted by 20 states and the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disability Services. This movement measures results by evaluating to what extent people with disabilities are living lives similar to their non-disabled peers.

Shueman Troy Associates also conducted confidential surveys with internal and external groups directly linked to AbilityFirst including clients, parents of clients, staff members, Board members, and staff from four California Regional Centers. All of the groups surveyed praised AbilityFirst staff for their caring attitude and dedication to those they serve. Another common theme among all groups surveyed was that individuals with disabilities should have more opportunities to interact with their non-disabled peers.

The strength of the 2005-2010 Strategic Plan is in the fact that it focuses on four major strategic directions. These directions integrate our commitment to modernizing our services and strengthening our infrastructure with the need to continue to increase our financial strength as an agency.

executive summary

MISSION

AbilityFirst provides programs and services to help children and adults with physical and developmental disabilities realize their full potential throughout their lives.

The strategic directions are as follows:

Modernize Services
Professionalize Delivery of Services
Build Organizational Capabilities
Increase Financial Strength

MODERNIZE SERVICES

Develop and provide progressive and effective services that address recognized needs of individuals with disabilities in collaboration with referring agencies and funders.

AbilityFirst will be more innovative and partner with our stakeholders to provide the services and supports required for individuals with disabilities to reach their goals. State and federal agencies that provide the majority of our funding are increasingly emphasizing and requiring individualized services versus group services, integrated services versus segregated services, and community-based supported employment rather than work centers. Our Board of Directors and senior management have embraced these fundamental philosophies of "participation" and now we must address how to alter our programs and services to better implement these concepts.

We will significantly expand our supported employment programs and serve more students with disabilities as they leave high school. The supported employment model brings the individual with a disability into mainstream jobs with the assistance of a job coach as opposed to a work center where a group of individuals with disabilities come together to perform onsite work. AbilityFirst will actively help adults transition from our work centers to supported employment as well. We will also increase the opportunities for residents in our group homes to interact in the community with their non-disabled peers and support those residents who choose to move to independent living with support.



executive summary

Our after-school socialization programs will increasingly foster interactions between our program participants and their same-age non-disabled peers. By injecting this integrated model into existing programs and by providing new programs that address the socialization needs of a rapidly growing number of children and adults with Autism, we expect to be recognized as a leader among service providers and a preferred provider by Regional Centers.

PROFESSIONALIZE DELIVERY OF SERVICES

Deliver and measure outcomes by building knowledge, skills and systems.

Based on national trends, it is critical that AbilityFirst as an agency emphasize individual choice, personal outcomes, and service outcomes. We commit to providing more training to program managers and staff in order to promote integrated services that embrace individual choice. Management and staff will be provided with new tools to assist in developing community participation and inclusion across all AbilityFirst programs. Outcomes measures will be established and evaluated to ensure growth and success.

BUILD ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES

Achieve appropriate balance between headquarters and program sites, provide training, define clear lines of authority and responsibilities, and implement best practices across sites.

We will redefine our structure establishing clearer lines of communication and authority. Internal communication will be improved via the creation of an intranet, an ideal form of communication for an agency of our size, spread throughout a large geographical area. The intranet will encourage the exchange of ideas between staff members and consequently increase efficiency and quality in the delivery of services. Additionally, each site will be responsible for developing a work plan with measurable goals and objectives while training will be provided in order to help staff meet these set goals.

INCREASE FINANCIAL STRENGTH

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Safeguard financial position and ensure continuing funds for our mission and future programs.

In order to ensure that AbilityFirst will have longevity in providing services for individuals with disabilities, it is imperative that new financial programs be instituted. We will build a planned giving program and infrastructure. The number of major donors will be increased and current donors will be encouraged to increase their level of giving. By increasing the number and diversity of Board members, we will further develop the AbilityFirst Foundation. We have committed to drawing less than 4% annually from our investment portfolio. Programs and services will be created to address the growing need for socialization programs for individuals with Autism and individuals with behavioral challenges, which will increase state funded revenue. The utilization of real estate will be examined and maximized by reviewing property value and usage. We will explore appropriate new sources of revenue and significantly grow our document destruction business.

CONCLUSION

Management will measure the effective execution of this plan monthly by monitoring site-based work plans. Executive staff will review progress quarterly and reconvene the Strategic Planning Committee as necessary to revise or alter goals. The Board of Directors will review the plan semi-annually. AbilityFirst has been providing services to individuals with disabilities for the past 80 years and will continue providing services long into the future. The implementation of the Strategic Plan is an ambitious endeavor that will ensure that AbilityFirst grows and changes just as we have over our long history of service to people with disabilities, and that we provide quality programs that are innovative and in-synch with the wants and needs of those we serve.

Our sincere appreciation goes to the Strategic Planning Committee who spent countless hours collecting research and drafting the new plan. The committee consisted of board members Marshal Chuang, Charles Cofield, George Fifield (co-chair), Maria French, Marjorie Heller, John Kelly (co-chair), Mordena Moore, and Patricia Vick and executive staff Lori Gangemi, Richard Greenig, and Becky Tschirgi.

We welcome your input and look forward to your support as we steer our course for the future.

