



## **BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM PERFORMANCE**

**Reporting Period: January 1, 2018 -December 31, 2018**

### **Background**

AbilityFirst implements and operates its services based on goals identified by the individuals served, the organization's management team, and feedback from referral and funding agencies, family members and caregivers, and business partners and customers. This report summarizes the progress of the AbilityFirst Business and Employment Services Programs in 2018, based on data collected through our *Outcome Management System*.

### **Executive Summary**

The mission of the AbilityFirst Business and Employment Services program is to provide job training and employment for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities, to foster autonomy, choice, and community engagement. We believe that employment is crucial to individuals' ability to pursue their interests and goals as participating, engaged members of their communities. The Business and Employment Services program includes two work activity programs (in Pasadena and Downtown/South Los Angeles), and the supported employment program (with offices in Long Beach and Pasadena). Supported employment includes the DiscoverAbility module, a transitional, time-limited employment assessment and exploration option for individuals who want additional support in identifying their employment interests and goals.

In 2018, our plans to transform our programs toward a person-centered model based on individual interests, goals, and abilities continued and accelerated. As previously announced, we intend to close our two work centers by early 2020, in anticipation of new federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) regulations regarding home and community-based services (HCBS) that become effective in 2022. In 2019 the work centers will operate with incremental reductions in contracted work as we assist our participants to transition to new jobs or to other programs in integrated settings. AbilityFirst has recently launched several new community-based programs for adults, including individuals transitioning out of the work centers.

The Business and Employment Services program adheres to procedures and regulations in California Code of Regulations, Title 17, individual Regional Center policies and Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) regulations and standards. The programs are also accredited by *CARF International* (formerly the *Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities*) (*CARF*). The programs' primary funding sources are program fees paid by Regional Centers and the DOR. Ongoing program evaluation and outcomes reporting are conducted in accordance with Title 17, Regional Centers, DOR, and CARF requirements and standards.

## **2018 Program Highlights**

During 2018, the AbilityFirst staff continued to implement person-centered thinking and planning (PCTP), particularly for individuals in the work centers. PCTP focuses specifically on a person's interests and goals, working with a support team selected and invited by him or her. This process incorporates the values of independence, rights, choice, autonomy and opportunities for integration, and reflects what is important to the individual, how he or she wishes to live, and the introduction of changes that will move him or her towards those aspirations. By the end of the year, virtually all the individuals in the work center had completed their person-centered plans.

## **Work Center and Transition-Related Accomplishments**

- We achieved or made significant progress toward realizing our transition plan milestones.
- We launched of **ExploreAbility**, a new community-based programs for adults in Pasadena. By the end of the year, 16 individuals had transitioned from the Pasadena Work Center to ExploreAbility.
- Six individuals moved from the L.L. Frank Work Center to the existing ExploreAbility program in Inglewood.
- We inaugurated **PossAbility**, a completely community-based program, as a pilot program in Pasadena, and offered the opportunity for 12 individuals from the work center to participate. At the end of the year, the program was vendored by the Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center. It will be launched in South/Downtown Los Angeles in early 2019.
- Five adults transitioned from the work centers into **supported employment** in their communities, and two joined the AbilityFirst **College to Career** program to pursue their academic and career goals at Pasadena City College.
- Another 18 individuals left the work centers to join programs offered by **other organizations**.
- Individuals in the work centers earned wages totaling more than **\$325,000** in 2018.
- At year-end, **108 people were enrolled at the two AbilityFirst work centers, and 47 were employed or participating in other community-based programs.**

## **Supported Employment Outcomes**

In 2018, the AbilityFirst **supported employment program** made significant progress in equipping adults who have intellectual/developmental disabilities to obtain choice-based community employment. It assisted **81 individuals to secure competitive integrated employment** at an average wage of \$12.00, an increase of nearly 20% over 2017 placements. In all, the supported employment and DiscoverAbility programs **assisted more than 394 individuals** (24% more than the previous year). Newly placed workers achieved a 70% 90-day retention rate. Individuals in supported employment earned wages of nearly **\$565,000**.

AbilityFirst successfully implemented the **paid internship program** offered through the Department of Developmental Services to provide time-limited employment at various community businesses to gain work experience and skills for future employment. We developed 22 internship positions, seven of which resulted in job offers. We also launched a **student services paid work**

**experience**, a new collaboration with DOR that provided paid internships for 16 students between the ages of 16 and 24 years.

### **Other Business and Employment Services Accomplishments**

- In our satisfaction surveys, overwhelming majorities of participants, family members/care providers, and referring agencies rated AbilityFirst services as good to excellent.
- 100% of business partners gave our services a good to excellent rating. A like number said they would recommend AbilityFirst to a colleague or friend.

Empowering and educational workshops were held at both work centers for individuals and family members/caregivers on the topics of: employment and benefits, person-centered thinking, and the ABL Act (a new tax-advantaged savings account option for individuals with disabilities). Each workshop highlighted the new AbilityFirst programs for adults, and featured individuals who have made successful transitions from the work centers. Other workshops for participants included self-advocacy and voting rights.

AbilityFirst received significant financial support for our transition efforts and person-centered program initiatives:

- HCBS compliance funding from the South Central Los Angeles Regional Center supported the salary of a job developer and related administrative costs, to help individuals from the L.L. Frank Work Center pursue community employment. As a result, three individuals secured competitive integrated employment, and one completed orientation for a volunteer role at a library which has the potential to become a paid position.
- Corporate and foundation grant support included:
  - A two-year foundation grant to help with work center transition-related costs;
  - Gifts from Albertsons and The Vons Foundation, Bank of America Foundation, TJX Corporation, and Union Bank Foundation for the supported employment program.