



BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM PERFORMANCE

Reporting Period: January 1, 2019 -December 31, 2019

Background

AbilityFirst utilizes an *Outcome Management System* to analyze information and measure program effectiveness, efficiency and level of satisfaction regarding the provision of services. AbilityFirst implements services based on outcomes identified by the individuals served, the organization's management team, referral and funding agencies, family/care givers, and business customers. The *Outcome Management System* data is collected monthly, quarterly, and annually to measure and evaluate the programs to assist with achieving the desired objectives. Input from customers and stakeholders is compiled and analyzed to determine trends and actions and help improve the quality of services by implementing changes. AbilityFirst strives for continuous quality improvement for our services and programs. On an annual basis, results and suggestions for improvements are reported via a *management report* and used in an organization-wide strategic and financial planning process.

Executive Summary

The mission of the Business and Employment Services program is to provide job training and employment for individuals with developmental disabilities with the goal of fostering greater independence, choice, and community engagement. As part of the natural evolution of our programs toward a person-centered model, and the increasing emphasis on community-based employment for individuals with developmental disabilities, we successfully accomplished our goal to transition away from the structured work center model to one based on individual interests, goals, and abilities. Both the Pasadena and L.L. Frank Work Centers ceased operation at the end of 2019. At the same time, participants prepared to move on to integrated settings with continued development of their individual person-centered plans (PCPs), exploratory and discovery activities to help identify their interests and goals. Program staff continued its efforts to identify and steward mainstream community resources, and to refine program design and staffing for the new community-based PossAbility program.

The AbilityFirst Supported Employment program provided pre- and post-employment support to empower more than 375 youth and adults to obtain and succeed in community employment.

In January 2019, AbilityFirst closed its shredding business and transferred 95% of shredding customers to The Shredders. The Shredders have become our community partner, both in the hiring of two individuals with developmental disabilities and supporting our annual fundraising committee, in addition to being a financial donor themselves.

AbilityFirst transitioned individuals into a person-centered planning process and provided participants with the fullest access possible to the community. We continue to improve our ability to remove barriers to employment for all participants who want competitive integrated employment have that opportunity. We have transitioned many of our Work Center participants from Work Centers to new and existing programs:

- Individual Employment (in the community; job coach fades over time)
- Small Group Employment (in the community; full-time job coach)
- DiscoverAbility Program (transitional, time-limited employment assessment and exploration)
- College to Career
- ExploreAbility Program (facility-based, community integration program)
- PossAbility Program (community integration program with no facility attached)

The AbilityFirst Business and Employment Services program adheres to procedures and regulations in accordance with Title 17 (California Code of Regulations), individual Regional Center policies and Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) regulations and standards. The programs are also accredited by the CARF International (formerly the *Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF)*).

Business & Employment Services Accomplishments

During the 2019 calendar year, AbilityFirst staff continued to focus and train in Person-Centered Thinking and Planning as the prerequisite for preparing participants for community-based programs compliant with the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) rule that takes effect in 2022. Over the past several years, AbilityFirst has developed and implemented several programs as alternatives to the work activity program including DiscoverAbility, PossAbility, and ExploreAbility.

The newest of these, **PossAbility**, is now vendored with all Regional Centers. The program is designed to help adults with developmental disabilities to:

- Discover what is important to them: their interests, abilities, and goals
- Learn about what is important for them to be able to achieve their goals
- Become involved in their communities in their daily lives, through volunteer work and recreational and leisure activities
- Increase social skills and form relationships with others in the community who share the interests and goals
- Develop skills and autonomy as they pursue their personal goals

This program is based on independent choice. Each individual sets, and pursues their own personal goals, with support from their support system, others who have similar interests, and the staff. An important component to the program is community volunteer opportunities. Some volunteer connections include:

- AIDS Food Store

- Habitat for Humanity Atwater Village ReStore
- A Sense of Home
- Petco Pet Adoption
- Re-Discover Center
- Salvation Army
- PAWS LA
- Midnight Mission
- Food Forward i

DiscoverAbility offers focus and direction for an individual’s job search. Opportunities for exploration and self-discovery may include job shadowing, interest assessment and internship opportunities, leading to expanding community engagement and informed career choices. DiscoverAbility is a time-limited program and may be used for individuals who are transitioning out of the work centers and exploring their options for community employment.

ExploreAbility is an adult day and community integration program. The goals of the ExploreAbility program are to help adults explore and identify what is important to them, to develop the skills necessary to achieve their goals and to be involved in their communities through volunteering and community activities. Individual support and small-group activities promote interaction and learning. It incorporates volunteering, community activities, independent living and skill-building, using a small group model.

Other accomplishments of the Business and Employment Services program during 2019 include:

- Three individuals hired at LATHER, a previous work center contract partner.
- After completing a 250-hour training and internship program in software testing, two individuals were hired into permanent positions.
- The state Department of Developmental Services awarded AbilityFirst a \$163,000 HCBS compliance grant to support continued Person-Centered Planning, Employment and Job development services for individuals in the L.L. Frank Work Center.

The Project Search training program was implemented in December 2019. Project SEARCH is a collaborative effort among AbilityFirst, Kaiser Permanente Southern California Regional Office (Kaiser), and Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD), Lanterman Regional Center and the San Gabriel/Pomona Regional Center. Five interns will be on-site and in program six hours per day, five days a week at the Kaiser Regional Office in Pasadena.

Supported Employment

- Assisted 58 individuals with disabilities to obtain jobs in integrated settings.
- Provided job coaching for 183 individuals.
- Secured an average wage of \$12.74 for all employed individuals.
- Grew our partnership with the California Department of Rehabilitation to 76 placements (7 in 2019). These services focus on finding paid work experiences for high school students with developmental disabilities. Students ages 16 -21 can work for up to 100 hours in one “experience” and can have up to three such placements in one year. In 2018, we only had seven placements.

OTHER SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES	
Total Served	394
Job Placements	58
Paid Internship Program Placements	17
Paid Internships leading to permanent jobs	10
DOR Student Work Experience Referrals	102
Students placed in work experiences	76
Individuals in group employment setting transitioned to direct hires	3

Work Center Services:

- Served 107 individuals in the work centers (Pasadena Work Center and the L. L. Frank Work Center). By the end of the year 100% of work center participants were successfully transitioned to other programs as follows:

Work Center	Transitioned to AbilityFirst programs	Transitioned to Outside programs
Pasadena	32 (6-ExploreAbility, 26 PossAbility)	17
Los Angeles	39 (9 ExploreAbility, 3- Supported Employment, 27 PossAbility)	19
total	71	36* *includes participants on waiting lists

Satisfaction Surveys

- In 2019, we saw increased satisfaction across stakeholders in all areas. We believe this is directly attributed to our focus on person-centered thinking and planning.
- On the quality of services, 93% of client workers, 100% of care providers, and 100% of referring ages rated the program as “good to excellent”
- On the safety of services, 88% of client workers, 100% of care providers, and 100% of referring ages rated the program as “good to excellent”
- 94% of clients, 100% of care providers and 100 % of referral agencies said they would recommend AbilityFirst to a colleague, family or friend.