



NEWS RELEASE

AbilityFirst Completes Merger With FVO Solutions to Further Support People with Developmental Disabilities

(PASADENA, Calif.) Feb. 18, 2021 – With 95 years of experience and more than 50 years in Pasadena, **AbilityFirst** (formerly known as the Crippled Children’s Society) has completed its merger with **FVO Solutions, Inc.** (formerly known as Foothill Vocational Opportunities). The two longstanding leading nonprofit organizations operate under the widely-recognized AbilityFirst name effective today.

“After thoughtful discussion and due diligence, we celebrate a major milestone having merged with FVO Solutions” said AbilityFirst CEO Lori Gangemi. “There is an incredible opportunity to expand each of our exceptional services while ensuring that people with disabilities and their families have a wider access to a variety of programs that can help to transform their lives.”

By joining forces, AbilityFirst and FVO Solutions deliver critical and transformational support services to an expanded population of more than 2,000 people with developmentally disabilities and their families in Los Angeles County during a time when the unemployment rate is at a historic high as a result of the global pandemic. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, nearly 80% of individuals with developmental disabilities are unemployed, adding to the growing number of unemployed people in Los Angeles County.

“Through our enhanced programs we offer people with developmental disabilities employment preparation, training, and experience needed to lead full productive lives as active members of our community,” said Gangemi.

The AbilityFirst and FVO Solutions merger provides innovative, person-centered employment opportunities for more individuals with developmental disabilities living in Los Angeles County. AbilityFirst will expand its programs: ExploreAbility, DiscoverAbility and PossAbility. Now, with FVO Solutions under AbilityFirst, the organization provides its participants with wider access to FVO Solutions’ enterprising manufacturing program, which has been renamed to AbilityFirst Manufacturing Program.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenging time for many companies and nonprofits, the merger of AbilityFirst and FVO Solutions allows the two organizations to consolidate operations,

maximize operational efficiency by reducing duplicate expenses, and increase service to its participants by expanding programs.

Together, AbilityFirst and FVO Solutions are better positioned to advocate for people with developmental disabilities in Los Angeles County and support efforts toward diversity, equity and inclusion.

The combined organization is led by AbilityFirst CEO Lori Gangemi, and remains headquartered on Green Street in Pasadena. AbilityFirst looks beyond disabilities, focuses on capabilities and expands possibilities. To learn more about AbilityFirst, visit abilityfirst.org.

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About AbilityFirst's Three Expanded Programs

ExploreAbility is a licensed 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. The program is designed to help individuals access their communities in their daily lives, work, recreational and leisure activities. It incorporates volunteering, community activities, independent living and skill-building, using a small group model. ExploreAbility is currently offered at the AbilityFirst Joan and Harry A. Mier Center in Inglewood and the AbilityFirst Lawrence L. Frank Center in Pasadena.

PossAbility is intended for adults who want to enhance their skills and independence, and to participate in their communities. Individuals in the program are empowered to set and pursue personal goals with an emphasis on employment readiness and increased community connections, including volunteering. The program is offered in Pasadena and Los Angeles. The PossAbility 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 to them to achieve their goals
- Become involved in their communities in their daily lives, work, volunteering and leisure activities
- Make friends, increase skills and participate with others who share the same interests and goals
- Enhance their skills in the areas of job readiness and employment, communication, socialization, independent living and healthy living skills

DiscoverAbility is a program that allows participants to complete in-depth assessments and career exploration by trying out new work experiences and volunteer opportunities on their journey to becoming employed.

About AbilityFirst

AbilityFirst provides a variety of programs that have a common mission: to help people with disabilities realize their full potential throughout their lives. As we celebrate more than 95 years of service, we are focusing our efforts on programs that are proven to have the greatest impact on a person's success: basic life skills

enhancement through our children's and adult programs; higher education and employment readiness; and independent living and social and recreational programming.

AbilityFirst looks beyond disabilities, focuses on the capabilities of each individual and breaks through any preconceived limitations, opening up a world of possibilities. Preparation, socialization, communication, education – all leading to helping people achieve their personal best. To learn more visit abilityfirst.org

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