



# **BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM PERFORMANCE**

**Reporting Period: January 1 - December 31, 2022**

## **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/caregivers, 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 its services and programs. On an annual basis, results and suggestions for improvements are reported via a management report and used in strategic and financial planning process.

## **Executive Summary**

Supported Employment provides support to adults with disabilities to find and retain employment in competitive job markets in their communities. Comprehensive services include person-centered interest assessment and job matching; pre-employment skills training and counseling; job search and placement services; and ongoing employment support including intensive on-the-job training and supervision, long-term case management, and job coaching. Empowering individuals with disabilities to participate in the lives of their communities through integrated, competitive employment of their choosing is an urgent priority for AbilityFirst.

In 2022, despite the continuing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the AbilityFirst Supported Employment program provided employment support and other services to nearly 300 youth and adults. AbilityFirst fully embraces the Employment First model: "all citizens, including individuals with significant disabilities, are capable of full participation in integrated employment and community life."

AbilityFirst continues to remove barriers to employment for all participants who want competitive integrated employment. Active programs include:

- Job development and placement services
- Job coaching services (in the community; use of job coach fades over time)
- DiscoverAbility program, pre-employment assessment and training services
- Paid internships
- Student work experience services

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)).

## Accomplishments

The Supported Employment program participants made significant progress in their efforts to obtain and retain competitive community employment last year. In 2022, 67 individuals secured competitive jobs in their communities. AbilityFirst staff members provided more than 23,500 hours of support during the year, both on-site and remotely.

**Project SEARCH** - The Project SEARCH model involves an extensive period of training and career exploration, innovative adaptations, long-term job coaching, and continuous feedback from teachers, job coaches, and employers. The cornerstone of Project SEARCH is a total workplace immersion with a host business and related agencies. Participants are on-site at the business location each day for a minimum of six hours. The partners provide consistent on-site instructors and job coaches. Individual job development and placement occur based on the participant's experience, strengths, and skills. Participants are given support with accommodations, assistive technology, and on-the-job coaching. We are happy to report that AbilityFirst successfully launched a new Project SEARCH program with the City of Hope project in May of 2022. City of Hope, one of the largest cancer research and treatment organizations in the United States, was recognized as the seventh "Best Hospital" for cancer in the nation according to U.S. News & World Report's 2022-23.

**DDS Employment Grant- Business Focus:** AbilityFirst submitted and was awarded a grant by the Department of Developmental Services in the amount of \$136,350.00 for 18 months. The project purpose is to reduce barriers and expand opportunities for competitive integrated employment (CIE), for Regional Center clients with I/DD. With extensive outreach and personal engagement, project staff will develop, strengthen, and sustain relationships with business community members to expand the pool of job opportunities for individuals with I/DD.

- **Paid Internships:** The internship program served over 11 in 2022. Of the 11 interns 2 participants were able to gain employment through their hard work with support from their coaches. Two the Paid internship participants continue their commitment into 2023.
- **DiscoverAbility** is a time-limited program and may be used for individuals who are transitioning out of other services and exploring their options for community employment. The Community Careers curriculum provides the means to help individuals focus on the job search process. Opportunities for exploration and self-discovery may include job shadowing, interest assessment and internship opportunities, leading to expanding community engagement and informed career choices. In 2022 AbilityFirst provided pre-employment assessment and career training support to 10 individuals who expressed interest to gain employment in their community.
- **DOR Disability Student/Adult Services: Work Experience Service** is an employment-based learning experience that offers students with disabilities the opportunity to explore competitive integrated work in a variety of real time work settings. Multiple, consecutive, paid work experiences may be authorized to develop and enhance work skills, including orientation to work environments. was place on hold during the pandemic. This program served 15 students and adults in 2022.

Other accomplishments of the Business and Employment Services program during 2022- include:

- AbilityFirst Supported Employment Services works hand-in-hand with Civitan Pasadena to promote employment services for individuals with disabilities. The Pasadena Civitan Club hosts an annual awards ceremony to honor local employers who support the good practice of hiring individuals with disabilities. The awards ceremony also brings in other business partners and creates opportunities to collaborate with a more diverse group of community employers. Civitan Club hosted the 2022 Employer Awards Ceremony at Villa Esperanza. The business partner honorees included Department of Rehabilitation, Vons Pavilions, and Pasadena Children’s Museum. The Pasadena Civitan Club also presented The Servant’s Heart Awards to Assemblymember Chris Holden for his support for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

<b>OTHER SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES</b>	
Total Served	296
Total Individuals receiving job coaching	156
Job Placements	67
Paid Internship Program Placements	11
Paid Internships leading to permanent jobs	2
Students/adult placed in work experiences	15

**Satisfaction Surveys**

**The percentages are based on those who answered the questions.**

Served SE clients responded to the survey.

- 2022 – 61 respondents from SE worker participant survey – 36% increase over 2021

99% of respondents rate the overall quality of services of AbilityFirst services received “good to excellent,” an increase of 1% over 2021.

92% of referral sources rated the quality of services AbilityFirst provides to individual with disabilities as “good to excellent.”