

By Senator Richter

23-00853-15

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1                   A bill to be entitled  
2       An act relating to the employment of individuals with  
3       disabilities; providing a short title; providing  
4       legislative intent; providing a purpose; requiring  
5       specified state agencies and organizations to develop  
6       and implement an interagency cooperative agreement;  
7       requiring the interagency cooperative agreement to  
8       provide the roles, responsibilities, and objectives of  
9       state agencies and organizations; authorizing the  
10      state agencies and organizations that are parties to  
11      the interagency cooperative agreement to adopt rules;  
12      providing an effective date.

13  
14 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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16       Section 1. (1) SHORT TITLE.—This act may be cited as the  
17 “Employment First Act.”

18       (2) LEGISLATIVE INTENT.—The Legislature finds that  
19 employment is the most direct and cost-effective means to assist  
20 an individual in achieving independence and fulfillment;  
21 however, individuals with disabilities are confronted by unique  
22 barriers to employment which inhibit their opportunities to  
23 compete fairly in the labor force. It is the intent of the  
24 Legislature to provide a framework for a long-term commitment to  
25 improving employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities  
26 in this state through the implementation of the Employment First  
27 Act.

28       (3) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the Employment First Act is to  
29 prioritize employment of individuals with disabilities and to

23-00853-15

2015848\_\_

30 change the employment system to better integrate individuals  
31 with disabilities into the workforce. The Employment First Act  
32 encourages a collaborative effort between state agencies and  
33 organizations to achieve better employment outcomes for  
34 individuals with disabilities.

35 (4) INTERAGENCY COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT.—The following state  
36 agencies and organizations shall develop an interagency  
37 cooperative agreement to implement the Employment First Act:

38 (a) The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation of the  
39 Department of Education.

40 (b) The Division of Blind Services of the Department of  
41 Education.

42 (c) The Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student  
43 Services of the Department of Education.

44 (d) The Agency for Persons with Disabilities of the  
45 Department of Children and Families.

46 (e) The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program of the  
47 Department of Children and Families.

48 (f) The Department of Economic Opportunity.

49 (g) Workforce Florida, Inc.

50 (h) The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council.

51 (i) Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities.

52 (j) Other appropriate organizations.

53 (5) ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.—The interagency cooperative  
54 agreement shall outline the roles and responsibilities of the  
55 state agencies and organizations identified in subsection (4).  
56 The objectives of the interagency cooperative agreement must  
57 include all of the following:

58 (a) Establishing a commitment by leadership of the state

23-00853-15

2015848\_\_

59 agencies and organizations to maximize the resources and  
60 coordination to improve employment outcomes for individuals with  
61 disabilities who seek publicly funded services.

62 (b) Developing strategic goals and benchmarks to assist the  
63 state agencies and organizations in the implementation of this  
64 agreement.

65 (c) Identifying financing and contracting methods that will  
66 help to prioritize employment for individuals with disabilities  
67 by state agencies and organizations.

68 (d) Establishing training methods to better integrate  
69 individuals with disabilities into the workforce.

70 (e) Ensuring collaborative efforts between multiple  
71 agencies to achieve the purposes of this act.

72 (f) Promoting service innovations to better assist  
73 individuals with disabilities in the workplace.

74 (g) Identifying accountability measures to ensure the  
75 sustainability of this agreement.

76 (6) RULEMAKING.—The state agencies and organizations that  
77 are parties to the interagency cooperative agreement may adopt  
78 rules to implement this act.

79 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2015.