

By the Committee on Governmental Oversight and Accountability;  
and Senator Richter

585-02126-15

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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; providing an  
10          effective date.

11  
12 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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

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

26           (3) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the Employment First Act is to  
27 prioritize employment of individuals with disabilities and to  
28 change the employment system to better integrate individuals  
29 with disabilities into the workforce. The Employment First Act

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30 encourages a collaborative effort between state agencies and  
31 organizations to achieve better employment outcomes for  
32 individuals with disabilities.

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

36 (a) The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation of the  
37 Department of Education.

38 (b) The Division of Blind Services of the Department of  
39 Education.

40 (c) The Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student  
41 Services of the Department of Education.

42 (d) The Agency for Persons with Disabilities.

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

45 (f) The Department of Economic Opportunity.

46 (g) Workforce Florida, Inc.

47 (h) The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council.

48 (i) Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities.

49 (j) Other appropriate organizations.

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

55 (a) Establishing a commitment by leadership of the state  
56 agencies and organizations to maximize the resources and  
57 coordination to improve employment outcomes for individuals with  
58 disabilities who seek publicly funded services.

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59       (b) Developing strategic goals and benchmarks to assist the  
60 state agencies and organizations in the implementation of this  
61 agreement.

62       (c) Identifying financing and contracting methods that will  
63 help to prioritize employment for individuals with disabilities  
64 by state agencies and organizations.

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

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

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

71       (g) Identifying accountability measures to ensure the  
72 sustainability of this agreement.

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