



Abilities of Florida

A ServiceSource Affiliate

CONSUMER HANDBOOK



Welcome to Abilities of Florida!

Abilities of Florida, A ServiceSource Affiliate is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to providing rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities and special needs.

CONTENTS

Mission Vision Values	3
Abilities of Florida Programs and Services	4
Qualifications of Staff	5
Business Hours/Appointments	5
Dress Code/Parking	5
Solicitation on Abilities of Florida Property	5
Holidays and In-Service Days	6
Severe Weather	6
Smoke and Drug Free Workplace	6
Health & Safety Measures	6
Emergencies/First Aid	7
Personal Information Changes	7
Personal Phone Calls/Cell Phone	7
Weapons in the Workplace	7
Consumer Bill of Rights	8
Abuse Reporting	9
Consumer Responsibilities	9
Abilities of Florida Responsibilities	9
Confidentiality	10
Entrance, Transition, and Exit Criteria for Services	10
Input from Consumers	11
Complaint/Appeal Procedure	11
Client Assistance Program (CAP)	13
Affirmative Action	13

Abilities of Florida was established in 1959 in Clearwater, Florida. In 2002, we affiliated with ServiceSource, a nonprofit organization with a mission to facilitate services and partnerships to support people with disabilities, their families, caregivers, and community members to build more inclusive communities. ServiceSource comprises multiple affiliated 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations working in concert to build more inclusive communities for people with disabilities. Learn more at www.abilities.org.



Abilities of Florida

A ServiceSource Affiliate

Mission

The mission of ServiceSource and its affiliated organizations is to build more inclusive communities by facilitating services, resources, and partnerships to support people with disabilities, their families, caregivers, and community members.

Vision

We envision communities that are inclusive and welcoming of the full diversity of their members of all abilities, in all aspects of community participation.

Values

In all that we do, we recognize that we are a bridge to community. Our values comprise iBridge:



The iBridge Logo

The internal iBridge logo reminds us that we are a bridge to community for the people we serve.



Abilities of Florida Programs and Services

- **Vocational Evaluation Services**

- Traditional Comprehensive Evaluation
- Discovery

- **Job Placement Services and Pre-Employment Services**

- Pre-Placement Training
- Job Development
- Job Placement
- Short-term Job Coaching
- Supported Employment
- On-The-Job (OJT)

- **Youth Transition Programs**

- Career Camps
- Peer Mentoring
- High School High Tech Programs

- **Warrior Bridge**

- Placement and support services to wounded Veterans and Veterans with disabilities

- **Opportunity Calls (Call Center Training Program)**

- **Social Security Administration Programs (SSA)**

- Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA)
- Benefits of Work Program (WIPA) for VR customers
- Ticket to Work (TTW)

- **Housing Services**

- For people with disabilities subsidized by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and
- Low-income rentals through Homes for Independence (HFI)

Each program has different referral and funding sources. Vocational Evaluation, Employment Services, Career Camps, Peer Mentoring, and the Benefits of Work services are provided by referral from Vocational Rehabilitation.

Qualifications of Staff

The qualifications of staff are based on requirements of the individual job position and specific program. Many of the Abilities of Florida staff have undergraduate and graduate degrees. In addition to the required education, staff receives ongoing training in areas of safety, personnel issues, diversity, human rights, confidentiality, industry and workplace practices, and the current rehabilitation modalities and strategies focused on serving the special needs of consumers. Our experienced rehabilitation team works together to support consumers on the job and have contingency plans in place to provide backup and support in case of a staff member's absence, or tardiness.

Business Hours

Abilities of Florida is open Monday –Thursday 8:00 am to 5:00 pm
Friday 8:00 am to 4:00 pm

Appointments

Please contact Abilities of Florida staff prior to your appointment if you are going to be late or absent. If you cannot reach your Abilities of Florida staff person, leave a message on his/her voice mail.

Dress Code

Consumers need to inquire if there is a dress code for their appointment or training. It is expected that all consumers will be well groomed while in attendance.

Parking

Cars are to be parked within the designated lines in the parking lot. If you have a permit for handicapped parking, please display it on your mirror.

Solicitation on Abilities of Florida Property

Consumers are not permitted to take up a collection or solicit for any charges, parties or other purposes on Abilities of Florida property. No staff member is allowed to accept gifts from any consumer.

Holidays and In-Service Days

Abilities of Florida observes ten holidays each year. These include: New Year's Day; Martin Luther King Day; President's Day; Memorial Day; Independence Day; Labor Day; Veteran's Day; Thanksgiving and the day after; and Christmas Day. In-service days are scheduled periodically for training of Abilities of Florida staff and will be announced in advance.

Severe Weather

In general, during periods of severe weather, Abilities of Florida will follow the policy of the county. If the county closes the schools for severe weather, Abilities of Florida will also be closed. The Executive Director of Abilities of Florida or his/her designee may also determine whether services will be available if schools are not in session. If you are concerned that weather will affect your services, please contact the Abilities of Florida number for the site at which you are receiving services. If the location is closed due to weather, the telephone greeting will give you information.

Abilities of Florida is a Smoke and Drug Free Workplace

Abilities of Florida follows a drug-free workplace policy. Any legal or illegal substance that alters an individual's normal behavior and results in intoxication is not allowed. Substance abuse includes misuse of legally prescribed drugs, selling, trading, giving away, possession, or offering for sale illegal or prescribed drugs, including alcohol. Abilities of Florida prohibits smoking and distribution or sale of smoking materials in all work sites that it owns, leases, and/or operates. Smoking is permitted only outside the building, 15 feet away from entrances and building air intake vents.

Health & Safety Measures

Your health and safety are a top priority! Abilities of Florida follows the protocols recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and World Health Organization (WHO) to the greatest extent possible to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Employees and visitors are required to follow these recommendations while at Abilities of Florida. Information will be communicated to you prior to starting services. If you have concerns or questions, please contact us.

Emergencies

In the event of any emergency situation while you are in an Abilities of Florida facility, follow the staff person's instructions to either evacuate the building or seek shelter in the building. The facility will evacuate all visitors due to: fire; potentially violent situations; bomb threats; or power failures. When directed to, please evacuate by the posted routes and seek a safe shelter after you have exited the building. If directed to shelter in the building (possibly due to severe weather) follow the posted routes to the shelter area or ask staff to assist you to a safe area. Sheltering in the building is only done when leaving the building puts your safety at high risk.

First Aid

Abilities of Florida staff at all locations has First Aid training if you are injured while at any facility. First Aid supplies are generally available in the common areas (like a lunchroom or lounge area). Please seek help from the staff if you have a minor injury that needs attention. If more than first aid is needed the staff will contact 9-1-1 for emergency transportation to a medical facility.

Personal Information Changes

Please notify your Abilities of Florida staff person if you move or change your phone number.

Personal Phone Calls/Cell Phone Use

Consumers are not permitted to receive personal phone calls while receiving services, except in case of emergency. If you need to contact someone by telephone, please check with the Abilities of Florida staff for assistance. Abilities of Florida has a TDD available for your use.

Weapons in the Workplace

For the safety of all staff and consumers, weapons are not allowed at any facility that is owned, leased or operated by Abilities of Florida. No one may carry firearms or weapons of any kind in the facility unless they are an on-duty law enforcement officer. If you are aware of weapons within the facility you must report it to an Abilities of Florida staff person immediately.

Consumer Bill of Rights

You have the right to:

1. Privacy and confidentiality regarding your personal information, disability, and services you receive.
2. Full information about the services available to you through Abilities of Florida or other resources and the time needed to make decisions.
3. Make informed choices regarding your services by having access to the information and the time needed to make decisions.
4. Respect your ideas, dreams, choices and contributions.
5. Fully participate in the development of your services, including how the services are provided, the staff you work with, how information is shared, involvement in research projects, and the right to make changes or withdraw your consent.
6. Receive services which are conducted with ethical standards. Report conflicts of interest or questionable employer behavior.
7. Have access to your records maintained by Abilities of Florida.
8. Receive services which are free from discrimination based on sex, race, color, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, marital status, political affiliation, disability or veteran status.
9. Be in an environment free from abuse, financial or other exploitation, retaliation, humiliation, and neglect.
10. File a complaint if you are dissatisfied with your services, or feel your rights were not protected. Filing a complaint will not result in retaliation or barriers to services. Refer to Complaint and Appeal Procedure on page 12.
11. Appoint an individual or legal representative, advocate, or self-help support services.

Abuse Reporting

Abilities of Florida follows the abuse policy and procedures outlined in the Florida Statutes. Abuse investigations are performed by the state protective services and/or aging and adult services agencies. A copy of the legislation is in the Abilities of Florida personnel office.

The toll-free state Abuse Registry number is **1-800-962-2873** or TDD **1-800-453-5145**.

Consumer Responsibilities

Consumers are responsible for:

1. Notifying appropriate staff member of any changes to address, phone number or employment status.
2. Being actively involved in your individualized service plan.
3. Attending all scheduled appointments.
4. Following through with goals as listed on the individualized service plan.
5. Providing documentation needed or requested by Abilities of Florida.
6. Notifying Abilities of Florida when you no longer wish to receive services.

While you are receiving services through Abilities of Florida you are expected to participate in the program, follow the rules within the facility you visit, and work in cooperation with the Abilities of Florida staff.

Abilities of Florida Responsibilities

The Abilities of Florida staff is responsible for:

1. Maintaining an environment in which you can develop skills, attitudes, abilities and habits to the maximum degree for a more fulfilling and independent life.
2. Encouraging all consumers to speak openly on subjects regarding their rehabilitation program.
3. Keeping all consumers informed about pertinent activities at Abilities of Florida.

4. Making respect, fairness and courtesy an integral part of all relationships.
5. Keeping all consumers informed of their progress in their program.
6. Maintaining a safe and clean environment at all sites.
7. Making realistic recommendations and assist you in developing your individual goals to optimize your abilities.
8. It is the responsibility of Abilities of Florida to maintain a safe environment and to protect the people we serve against any threats to harm self or others. If a threat is communicated to Abilities of Florida staff this will be reported to the police and appropriate crisis and protective agencies will be informed.

Confidentiality

The consumer/employee files are of a confidential nature and will not be disclosed under any circumstances with the exception of the following:

1. Subpoenas from a court of proper jurisdiction.
2. Outside agencies, physicians, psychologists, insurance carriers, etc. requesting information that provide a written release which is signed by the consumer/employee.
3. During a medical emergency or an emergency situation in which it is felt the consumer/employee is dangerous to himself or others, the proper authorities must be contacted immediately.

Entrance, Transition and Exit Criteria

To participate in services at Abilities of Florida you must be:

- Referred through one of several referral sources;
- At least 16 years of age; and
- Independent in taking medication, feeding and toileting (with or without an attendant). Ambulatory or mobile with the use of a wheelchair.

Abilities of Florida does not provide attendant services, manage or monitor medications, or provide transportation to and from services. Referrals are accepted on a first come, first serve basis and if initiated, a waiting list would

function in the same manner. The final decision for acceptance for persons referred to the Employment Services program is made by the Department Manager. During the initial contact, Abilities of Florida staff will provide you with a start date. The services you receive are at no out-of-pocket cost to you, other than what you may need for your personal needs. If needed Abilities of Florida staff can direct you to other available resources (transportation, advocacy, public assistance, and other benefits for which you may be eligible).

If you would like to transition from one service to another, Abilities of Florida staff will work with you and your referral source to determine eligibility and if this service will meet your overall goals. Your services will continue until you have either reached your objectives. Services may be interrupted due to absenteeism, or because you no longer wish to receive services. If there are any changes in the funding of your services, Abilities of Florida will work with referral sources and other community organizations to resolve these.

Input from Consumers

Abilities of Florida strives toward exceptional service delivery. Depending on the program, you may be asked to complete questionnaires, or surveys and work with staff to design the services you need. An individualized plan will be developed with your goals, services, and expected outcomes. Service frequency and settings are included in this plan. This plan is reviewed regularly with you for any changes and to ensure your satisfaction with the services you receive.

Upon completion of your program, you may be asked to complete a satisfaction survey. The information you provide will help us to improve. Your input will be anonymous unless you wish to speak with someone regarding your experience with Abilities of Florida.

Complaint/Appeal Procedure

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organization, its policies, services or staff, where a response or resolution is expected. This might be formal such as a written/emailed complaint, or informal such as a discussion with a staff member expressing dissatisfaction, or how services can be improved.

Filing a complaint will not affect the services being received or result in retaliation. If, at any time in the process, you feel you need help with the

process you may choose an advocate or contact the Client Assistance Program on page 13.

Abilities of Florida is committed to a mutually beneficial approach to resolving complaints, so that each party is heard, understood, and respected. A consumer has the right to file a formal complaint at any time. It is their responsibility to write down exactly what happened so that it can be investigated. The person under investigation (if applicable) has a right to know what the outcome of the investigation is within a reasonable amount of time. Supervisors (or the investigating authority) have the right to complete a thorough investigation without being hindered by the parties involved.

Step 1 – Verbal Complaints

A consumer who has a complaint should first discuss it with an Abilities of Florida staff within 5 working days after the incident that led to the complaint. If the complaint is settled to the mutual satisfaction of the consumer and the Abilities of Florida staff, the matter will be considered resolved.

Step 2 – Written Complaint

If the consumer is not satisfied with the results of the discussion with the Abilities of Florida staff, he/she can submit a formal complaint in writing or alternative format to the Abilities of Florida staff within 5 working days after the discussion; failure to submit a written complaint within that time period for any reason will be considered adequate grounds to dismiss the complaint. The Abilities of Florida staff must respond to the written complaint within 3 working days after receiving it in writing.

Step 3 – Appeal to the Department Manager or Director

If the consumer is not satisfied with the resolution of the complaint by the Abilities of Florida staff, the consumer may appeal the decision to the Department Manager or Director in writing or alternative format; the appeal must be submitted within 5 working days after the consumer has been given notice of the Abilities of Florida staff's decision. The Department Manager or Director must render his/her decision on the appeal, by written notice, within 3 working days after receipt of the appeal.

Step 4 – Appeal to the Executive Director

If the consumer is not satisfied with the resolution of the complaint by the Department Manager or Director, the consumer may appeal that decision to the Executive Director in writing or alternative format; the appeal must be submitted within 5 working days after the consumer has been given notice of the decision. The Executive Director must render his/her decision on the appeal, by written notice, within 3 working days after receipt of the appeal. The decision of the Executive Director is final.

If the consumer is not satisfied with the resolution of the Executive Director, the consumer may appeal the decision by contacting:

Disability Rights Florida
2728 Centerview Dr., Suite 102
Tallahassee, FL 32301
(850) 488-9071; Toll Free 1-800-342-0823
TDD 1-800-346-4127
www.disabilityrightsflorida.org

Client Assistance Program (CAP)

Please be advised that there is a Client Assistance Program (CAP) in Florida. As a consumer of services, you are eligible for assistance under CAP. CAP staff can give advice and provide clarification or assistance with the services provided by Abilities of Florida. If you are dissatisfied with services, CAP staff can work with you and Abilities of Florida to resolve the problem. They may also assist you with an Administrative Review or Fair Hearing.

Services are free and CAP is independent of all state agencies providing services to individuals with disabilities. CAP is a statewide program and can be contacted by calling toll free:

1-800-342-0823 (voice) or 1-800-346-4127 (TDD).

Affirmative Action Statement

Apart from the application of disability preferences, when all other factors are equal, it is the policy of Abilities of Florida that no person seeking employment shall be appointed, promoted, demoted, terminated, favored or discriminated against because of age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, race, national origin, or political or religious opinions.

Employment and training practices provide that all individuals be recruited, trained, hired, assigned, advanced, compensated and retained on a basis of their qualifications and treated equally in these and all other respects without discrimination. It shall be considered the responsibility of every supervisor and/or employee to further the implementation of this policy and ensure conformance by his/her subordinates. Abilities of Florida supervisory personnel and others responsible for hiring or training must take affirmative action to eliminate any possible discrimination towards trainees, employees and applicants for employment. Abilities of Florida is required by Federal Law to comply with the following:

TITLE VI OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964

Prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin when offering or providing health, welfare or social services.

TITLE IX OF THE EDUCATION AMENDMENTS OF 1972

Prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in admission, treatment or employment in educational/training programs.

SECTION 504 OF TITLE V OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973

Prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in admission, treatment or employment in health, welfare or social services.

THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITES ACT OF 1990

Prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in the employment service delivery and accessibility of programs. Any trainee who believes that he or she has been discriminated against on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex or disability may file a complaint with:

**Department of Children & Families
Office of Civil Rights:**

1317 Winewood Boulevard
Building 1, Room 110
Tallahassee, FL 32399
(850) 487-1901

**Architectural & Transportation
Barriers Compliance Board:**

1331 F Street NW, Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20004-1111
(800) USA-ABLE (872-2253)
(800) 993-2822 (TTD)
(202) 272-5434 (V/TT)