



Program Accessibility Plan

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) administers a variety of programs designed to help all Floridians prosper. DEO's Division of Workforce Services receives federal financial assistance from the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) and, therefore, must ensure universal and meaningful access to its programs and services for individuals with disabilities. This plan outlines DEO's strategy for ensuring that LEP individuals obtain meaningful access to the services and programs funded by USDOL.

II. LEGAL AUTHORITY

Section 188 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) prohibits discrimination on the basis of a disability in programs operated by, and activities provided by, recipients of WIOA Title I financial assistance, or by "one-stop" partners. Section 121(b)(1)(xi) of WIOA define state UI programs as required one-stop partners. WIOA nondiscrimination regulations provide that covered entities must not directly, or through contractual, licensing, or other arrangements, us standards, procedures, criteria or administrative methods that have the purpose or effect of subjecting qualified individuals with disabilities to discrimination on the basis of disability.

In addition, the regulations of WIOA require that a state UI agency make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures when the modifications are necessary to avoid discrimination on the basis of disability, unless making such modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program, or activity. The regulations also require state UI programs and other covered entities to take appropriate steps to ensure that communication with beneficiaries, registrants, applicants, eligible applicants/registrants, participants, applicants for employment, employees, and members of the public who are individuals with disabilities are as effective as communications with others.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance, which includes state UI programs. Finally, Title II of the American with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, prohibits public entities from discriminating against qualified individuals with disabilities or from excluding such individuals from participating in or denying benefits of their services, programs or activities.

III. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Individuals with disabilities are those who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual; a record of such an impairment; or being regarded as having such an impairment.

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Examples of populations likely to include LEP individuals who are served by DEO and its providers include, but are not limited to:

- Unemployed or dislocated individuals seeking reemployment assistance (RA) benefits, job search assistance, job training services, or job placement services;
- Youth seeking summer employment, career counseling, or job readiness assessment assistance; or
- Migrant and seasonal farm workers seeking placement or information regarding protections afforded to them.

IV. OBLIGATIONS TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

To ensure access for individuals with disabilities DEO is obligated to ensure accessibility and provide accessible notice and information about alternative means of receiving services for individuals who need them. This allows disabled individuals to be effectively informed about and able to meaningfully access the aid, benefit, service, or training provided by DEO.

V. ENSURING MEANINGFUL ACCESS

DEO ensures that the design, development, and maintenance of its web-based service delivery systems provide maximum accessibility for people with disabilities. All online systems are compliant with section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, as well as other best practices for ensuring maximum web-accessibility.

For individuals unable to access or use a web-based system, DEO offers alternative options for accessing information and benefits. DEO's Reemployment Assistance program maintains a special telephone service to serve those claimants who cannot use the online system. DEO advertises the availability of this service through the one-stop system and local community partners. DEO's call center utilizes the Florida Telecommunications Relay service, which provides a multitude of services for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf/blind, or speech disabled.

Additionally, DEO has placed staff in the 111 one-stop centers located throughout Florida. These staff members are available to provide in-person assistance to all individuals seeking DEO's services. Each one-stop center also has "accessible workstations" available for individuals with disabilities. These work stations are outfitted with software and hardware designed to assist individuals with disabilities (e.g., Sorenson Relay, zoom to text, Dragon Naturally Speaking, etc.).

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VI. STAFF TRAINING

DEO provides periodic, mandatory training for staff who serve customers or members of the public and ensures that all workforce system staff are knowledgeable of the contents of this plan. The training addresses topics such as the rights of disabled individuals, procedures for responding to telephone calls from disabled individuals, the procurement of disability services, and the processing of disability complaints. DEO staff are also trained so that they can identify barriers and provide alternative access points for persons with disabilities.

VII. MONITORING AND UPDATES

DEO's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) periodically assesses the needs of those with disabilities in conjunction with its nondiscrimination monitoring. The OCR also provides insight, tips, and training to the state's 24 LWDBs during onsite equal opportunity reviews. The OCR surveys staff and customers on the frequency with which assistive services are utilized, whether individuals believe any changes should be made in the way services are provided or the providers that are used, and whether individuals believe the disability assistance services needed are in place meet the needs of the needs of the communities in the area.