


**Date:** July 18, 2022

Agenda Item No. 2(B)(10)  
September 1, 2022

**To:** Honorable Chairman Jose “Pepe” Diaz  
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

**From:** Daniella Levine Cava   
Mayor

**Subject:** Report Regarding EmployABILITY 305 - Directive No. 220192

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This report is in response to Resolution No. R-230-22, sponsored by Commissioner Raquel A. Regalado, adopted by the Board of County Commissioners (Board) on March 1, 2022, directing the County Mayor or County Mayor’s designee to develop a plan to increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, including neurodivergent individuals, with Miami-Dade County and with vendors who do business with Miami-Dade County; and requiring a report.

### **Summary**

Miami-Dade County will establish a program to promote accessibility and inclusion for individuals with disabilities, including neurodivergent individuals, in the County’s employment programs. The establishment of this program complements my Administration’s priorities of providing ample opportunities to grow and succeed within the County, as outlined in the Thrive 305 Action Plan. The program will strive to ensure our workplaces are truly diverse and inclusive for all employees and residents, especially those with disabilities.

### **Background**

In the Fall of 2021, the Human Resources (HR) Department, in collaboration with the Mayor’s Office and the Internal Services Department’s Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Office, began developing a program to provide more employment opportunities to individuals with disabilities, both in the community and within the County workforce. Building upon past efforts, the program, **EmployABILITY 305**, emerged and will be implemented in three phases. Attached is a detailed description of the EmployABILITY 305 program for your review. HR anticipates the formal launch of the program to be October of 2022 to align with the National Disability Employment Awareness month celebration that commemorates the many and varied contributions of people with disabilities to America’s workplaces and economy.

### **Action Items**

Key actions to support EmployABILITY 305 within the County include the following:

- Launch a public awareness campaign geared toward increasing community awareness of disability issues.
- Provide various trainings related to how to interact and communicate with individuals with disabilities to not only the community, but also our County workforce. , among other topics.
- Targeted recruitment and placement to increase the number of applications we receive for open positions from individuals with disabilities, and thus potentially increase the number of placements awarded to those individuals.
- Create an internship program specifically for individuals with disabilities, which we hope will provide opportunities for the disabled community that will lead to unsubsidized, sustainable, and meaningful employment.

- Create an affinity group made up of volunteer individuals with disabilities to serve as a resource for developing strategies to promote career growth and assist the County with improving representation of people with disabilities in the County's workforce.
- Encourage vendors to employ individuals with disabilities, including those with neurodivergent disorders, by including that as a criterion in the evaluation and scoring of qualitative proposals. The criteria will consider vendors' social and equitable fair labor standards which contribute to a diverse workforce, including individuals with disabilities and neurodivergent persons, attributing to the development of vendors' workforce and employees' well-being. The language will also be included in the general terms and conditions for bid documents which are awarded solely based on price.
- Identify opportunities to participate annually in the National Disability Employment Awareness Month celebrations.

Pursuant to Ordinance No. 14-65, this report will be placed on the next available Board agenda. Should you require additional information, please contact Arleene Cuellar, Director, Human Resources Department, at 305-375-1589.

Attachment

- c: Geri Bonzon-Keenan, County Attorney  
Gerald K. Sanchez, First Assistant County Attorney  
Jess M. McCarty, Executive Assistant County Attorney  
Office of the Mayor Senior Staff  
Department Directors  
Arleene Cuellar, Director, Human Resources Department  
Jennifer Moon, Chief, Office of Policy and Budgetary Affairs  
Yinka Majekodunmi, Commission Auditor  
Basia Pruna, Director, Clerk of the Board  
Eugene Love, Agenda Coordinator

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## **BACKGROUND**

People with disabilities are the nation's largest minority; crossing all racial, gender, educational, socioeconomic, and organizational lines. In Miami-Dade County, there are over 270,259<sup>1</sup> individuals with disabilities, about 10% of the population. These include individuals with all sorts of disabilities from physical, sensory, psychiatric, neurological, cognitive and intellectual. Yet, people with disabilities experience unemployment at a rate far above the national average, even though they have continually proven themselves to excel in performance and reliability.

Miami-Dade County has long been committed to maintaining a workforce that reflects our diverse community. We recognize that individuals with disabilities are often not provided with the same opportunities to gain meaningful employment. In order to ensure that our workplaces are truly diverse and inclusive for all employees and residents, including those with disabilities, the Human Resources Department has developed **EmployABILITY 305**. This program is designed to identify barriers to employment of persons with disabilities, take proactive steps to overcome those barriers, provide the support necessary to promote success, accessibility and inclusion in the County's employment programs.

In order to accomplish these objectives, the program will be implemented in three separate phases. Our hope is that the program is so successful that it becomes the roadmap for businesses to use to create similar opportunities for individuals with disabilities in the private sector.

### **Phase I**

#### **Marketing**

Phase I of the program will begin with a public awareness campaign to increase awareness of disability issues within the community with the aim of changing negative attitudes about individuals with disabilities, highlighting barriers needed to be torn down to create an inclusive society, correcting myths about individuals with disabilities, and the steps the County will take to contribute to making the County, not just the workplace of choice for individuals with disabilities, but the community of choice for residents with disabilities.

The HR Department will work with Communications to issue a press release about the program and marketing materials, which will be advertised on public transportation and in public buildings. Additionally, the Human Rights & Fair Employment Practices Division (HRFEP) will work collaboratively with the ADA Office to create and make available program information/materials to targeted audiences and partners in the community.

#### **Training**

HRFEP, with assistance from the ADA Office and the Commission on Disability Issues, will create a training course for individuals who participate in the program to learn skills to assist them in working in a professional environment and effective communication techniques.

HRFEP also recently launched the Disability Awareness Training, which helps tackle the misconceptions about the abilities of workers with disabilities and the risks of hiring them (i.e. reasonable accommodations are too costly, workers with disabilities have excessive absences and drive up health insurance coverage costs). Employees will learn the culture and special needs of different disabilities, learn new skills to navigate any uncomfortable situations and learn how to interact and communicate with people with disabilities in a professional setting, which will promote awareness, respect, good communication and sensitivity. HRFEP will strongly encourage any supervisors or employees working with an individual with a disability to participate in this training.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul, S., Rafal, M., & Houtenville, A. (2020). *2019 State Report for Florida County-Level Data: Prevalence*. Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire, Institute on Disability.

HRFEP will also rollout a new, free Disability Awareness Training workshop for the community. As a spinoff to the County employee training, HRFEP will hold monthly hour-long workshops via Zoom, to educate the community on how disabilities impact lives, the challenges that are encountered, and what it is like for someone living with a disability. The workshop will also address questions about disabilities, provide tips on communicating with individuals with disabilities in a respectful manner, promote enhanced tolerance and acceptance, and show individuals with disabilities in a positive light. HRFEP will also partner with community business organizations to promote this training to local small business owners.

## **Phase II**

### **Internships**

Individuals with disabilities will be able to apply for year-long paid internship opportunities with the County. Each County department will be strongly encouraged to host at least one intern; however, departments that have 1,000 employees or more will be asked to host two (2) interns. The proposed salary of each position will be \$31,200 (\$15.00 an hour for a full-time intern position), which is more than the SSI Federal Benefit Rate for 2022.

HR will work with the Office of Management and Budget to identify funding opportunities, prioritize this program and secure funding each fiscal year. Once the funding source is approved, the Mayor's EmployABILITY 305 Program can be kicked off.

All departments will be asked to create a meaningful, supervised, practical internship project(s) within their departments. Interns will be given the opportunity to network; receive real world work experience; receive work-related references, and; develop marketable skills. Additionally, while the internship will not guarantee future employment, we hope that this internship will serve as a feeder program for the recruitment of qualified individuals with disabilities – a “disability talent pool” - into the County workforce. If not, then at least it will provide opportunities for the disabled community that will lead to unsubsidized, sustainable, and meaningful employment.

HRFEP will be tasked with overseeing the internship program and performing the administrative functions related to these internships.

Interns will be scheduled for New Hire Orientation and a No Wrong Door presentation so that they can learn additional information about County employment and County services. Additionally, County employees working with the interns will be required to participate in HRFEP's Disability Awareness Training.

### **Targeted Recruitment and Placement**

The County will create partnerships with disability-related community advocacy and support organizations and disability resource centers at the local colleges and universities to facilitate targeted recruitment initiatives, which in turn will increase the number of applications we receive for open positions from individuals with disabilities. Additionally, the Recruitment Section of the HR Department will host job fairs targeted towards individuals with disabilities. These will be facilitated on County property so that there is no cost incurred and so the facility is accessible. Moreover, Recruitment will ensure that all postings are shared with disability-related publications and websites, along with mainstream ones.

When posting for open positions, HR will ensure that essential job functions are included in the job description. For any applicant that voluntarily discloses their disability, the County will ensure that a staff member from the Human Rights and Fair Employment Practices Division will be

present during the interview and assist the hiring manager as necessary during the recruitment process.

**Accommodations**

Most accommodations incur no cost, and those that do have a cost of approximately \$500 on average. These types of accommodations may be able to be paid for by the County’s Reasonable Accommodation Fund. Each employee/intern will be told about the Reasonable Accommodation Request Process at New Employee Orientation in order for them to know that they have the option to request this at any time during their tenure with the County.

**Phase III**

**Career Development**

**EmployABILITY 305** will create an affinity group consisting of volunteer County employees with and without disabilities to serve as mentors to the **EmployABILITY 305** interns and to other County employees with disabilities. The group will also advise on the development of training and information programs; represent the County at public forums; serve as a resource group to identify and eliminate barriers to employee success; help develop strategies to promote career growth for persons with disabilities; establish linkages to disability focused community organizations; share their personal employment experiences; and assist the County with improving representation of people with disabilities in the County’s workforce. HRFEP will promote participation in this group by creating stories in the weekly “What’s New” newsletter; posting marketing materials in County buildings; and through information provided to Department Directors and Departmental Personnel Representatives.

**Procurement**

In accordance with adopted sustainability policies, the Internal Services Department, Strategic Procurement Division, will further encourage County vendors to employ those with neurodivergent disorders, and to develop hiring and management practices that will increase the neurodiversity of its workforce.

This policy shall not be a condition of contracting with the County. However, it will become a part of the criteria for sustainable procurement processes in the evaluation and scoring of proposals submitted for Request for Proposals. The criteria will consider vendors social and equitable fair labor standards which contribute to a diverse workforce, including individuals with disabilities and neurodivergent persons, attributing to the development of vendors’ workforce and employees’ well-being. The language will also be included in the General Terms and Conditions of the Invitation to Bid document

**National Engagement**

National Disability Employment Awareness Month is held each October to commemorate the many and varied contributions of people with disabilities to America’s workplaces and economy. As an employer of choice in Miami-Dade, the County will work with internal and external partners to identify opportunities, including community outreach and training, to participate in this national celebration.

**THRIVE305**

This program will also tie in closely with the THRIVE305 Equity objective, “Initiative 10.1: Create jobs and internships within County government for youth.” EmployABILITY305 aims to increase economic opportunities for disadvantaged communities by creating an internship program embedded in all County departments for youth to learn about the workings of local government and provide the County with a pipeline of young, engaged local talent that can grow and lead within the County’s government.