



# DirectCourse

ONLINE CURRICULA FOR LIFE IN COMMUNITY

College of Direct Support

## PARTNER PROFILE **AbilityFirst**

### Southern California's AbilityFirst Enjoys Long Relationship with CDS

For over a decade, [AbilityFirst](#), a Los Angeles based not-for-profit supporting people with disabilities, has relied on the [DirectCourse/College of Direct Support \(CDS\)](#) to provide much of its training to their staff. AbilityFirst serves children and adults through a variety of programs, including after school and adult day programs, employment services, and resident care, supporting over 2,000 people. AbilityFirst also manages two group homes, six community centers, and two work centers throughout Los Angeles County, as well as Camp Paivika in the San Bernardino National Forest, one of the first fully accessible camps in this country.

An organization with this many clients and staff, whose headquarters, homes, centers, and camps function span hundreds of miles, faces a challenge when it comes to training. Before using CDS online curriculum, too often training meant, gathering employees, new or old, to one site, which can be daunting, especially for a small non-profit, and usually means scheduling challenges and long face-to-face sessions in which most or all of the training was completed at once. When overloading a new hire with all of their training at the beginning, crucial information is often forgotten, resulting in problems later on.



## “One of the reasons we moved to the College of Direct Support is to have consistent training for our staff,” says Kelly Privitt, Senior Director of Quality and Data Management at AbilityFirst.”

But with CDS online training, AbilityFirst is able to handle training their staff in a manner that is totally flexible to their unique needs. In addition to the convenience of online training, AbilityFirst is able to tailor the curriculum to suit their organization’s specific needs.

“One of the reasons we moved to the College of Direct Support is to have consistent training for our staff,” says Kelly Privitt, Senior Director of Quality and Data Management at AbilityFirst. “Part of our staff is transient, meaning they work for us at an entry level position, maybe 3 hours a day max, five days a week, and they often have a high turnover rate. CDS allowed us to ensure that as we transitioned people in and out they were receiving the same training.”

According to Privitt, the CDS online courses guaranteed that all of AbilityFirst’s training uses a common language, so that the basic training is the same across the board, whether an employee is with the organization for weeks or months or years, or is working full- or part-time.

Perhaps most appealing to Privitt is the fact that the College of Direct Support curriculum is also adaptable to her organization’s needs. “We developed our own content as well,” Privitt says. “For instance, our risk management person does what we call ‘training short.’ This is a fifteen-minute fire extinguisher training module, to use one example, followed by a test, so we have documentation.” With these “training shorts” that use CDS, AbilityFirst is able to bring people together once every three months for face-to-face training, which has been augmented by the online work they’ve already done.

Privitt adds that when someone begins working at AbilityFirst, they start with new hire orientation, using specific modules

from the CDS curriculum. “They get a full day of training,” she notes. “Their first day at our headquarters involves processing, paperwork, mandated reports and training. When they go to their center, we have a list of things that they have to do. They’ll be getting training specific to their job. In that first quarter we have a very clear use for the College of Direct Support. We as an agency looked at all of the CDS modules, and decided that the first five would go to every employee no matter the job. We roll those out on a quarterly basis. After the five we diversify depending on your position you have and your department.”

“CDS also gives us a lot of time,” Privitt adds. “We have some staff that are working 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, such as in a group home or camp. We have people who work full time jobs elsewhere and then part time for us.” Whatever the schedule, CDS gives organizations like AbilityFirst flexibility, allowing them to have training in which not everyone has to show up in one location, but can complete training online, freeing up resources. “And with CDS, it allows us to focus on the training that must be face-to-face. Every training has that component, and we can narrow this part down to a quarter or half of the training, instead of all of it. This makes it much easier on the schedule!”

Organizations like AbilityFirst have seen numerous benefits with The College of Direct Support. With our ever evolving content, developed by the Research and Training Center on Community Living at the University of Minnesota, and our state-of-the-art learning management tool, the Elsevier Performance Manager, your organization will have the most up-to-date, trusted information that is convenient and affordable. For more information on how CDS can help your organization, please visit our website.