

FCIC Trainee Profile



SERGIO RIVERA

Tell us a little about yourself (name, age, where are you from, your disability, education, any other details you'd like to share)

My name is Sergio Rivera. I'm originally from Brooklyn, New York and I was born with Spina Bifida. I received a BA in Political Science from Brooklyn College. I'm a life-long Yankees fan and a socially awkward cinophile. I'm particularly fond of science fiction. Science fiction introduces the audience to different ways of thinking about the world from multiple perspectives, making the far-fetched come to life on screen.

How did you become interested in working with FCIC?

As someone who is disabled, I quickly arrived at the realization that the job market can be an intimidating space that is full of uncertainty. Add to that a severe case of imposter syndrome, my job search became more narrow than most. Ultimately, navigating through the professional world became even more daunting for me as time went on.

With the help of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and The Grow Group I was introduced to the Florida Center for Inclusive Communities. I immediately identified with FCIC's mission, and felt it was the perfect fit for me. From my own personal perspective, there's nothing more exciting than opening yourself up to new opportunities that inspire and challenge you. Working with FCIC has allowed me to easily navigate through an environment of uncertainty.

I have been able to achieve personal and professional growth, while helping others achieve their goals, improve their self-confidence, and address any internal struggles that might be holding them back—whether it's a self-imposed mental block or a personal struggle.

I can help other people with disabilities succeed and exceed their own expectations in multiple areas. Obviously, people with disabilities can and should be able to seek professional opportunities. However, certain social structures still exist in the United States and continue to be perpetuated. These barriers often discourage people with disabilities from pursuing



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successful careers. When it came to pursuing my own career after college, I too was met with said barriers. When it came to joining the workforce, I was hesitant for years. My hesitancy stemmed from my fear of losing vital benefits that supported many aspects of my daily living. Confronting the idea of pulling the social safety net that played a fundamental role in my survival proved to be extremely disheartening and terrifying. Going from being dependent to independent seemed improbable. FCIC helped me to become more independent and confident in my own abilities.

What was the most valuable lesson you learned through your training experience with FCIC?

Never stop learning. I've learned that you will always encounter people who have more experience than you throughout your career. It initially shook me to my core. In several ways, it made me doubt myself, and it shouldn't. Learning from people with more experience and knowledge has helped me grow personally and professionally. By adopting a learning attitude throughout the entirety of my life I have become a more rounded, educated, and fulfilled individual.

How did the training with FCIC prepare you for work or college?

Training with FCIC has allowed me to ascend from the bottom of the career ladder. I have been able to amass valuable knowledge and experience throughout my training. I've learned the value of being observant, asking questions, and taking measured risks. Receiving constructive criticism from my supervisor and coworkers has proven to be invaluable. Their feedback has helped me to learn more about my strengths and weaknesses. Their observations have also allowed me to embrace my shortcomings and to learn from them. Furthermore, I've been able to develop and fine-tune professional skills such as teamwork, time management, communication, and adaptability.

Would you recommend the program to others? Why?

Yes, of course! Thanks to FCIC I have been able to gain real hands-on work experience. With FCIC you're given the opportunity to apply the knowledge you acquired in a classroom—in a real work environment. By taking part in team meetings, completing tasks, and collaborating with coworkers on certain projects I've been able to experience how things work in a chosen field. Ultimately, I've been able to narrow the experience gap and smooth out my transition into the workforce.