



New York (NY) WIOA Matrix

Employment First State Leadership Mentor Program (EFSLMP)

Through the Employment First policy, the State seeks to build on important economic development investments to ensure that individuals with disabilities equally benefit from the improving economy and have sustained opportunities to engage in the competitive labor market. Specifically, the State aims to increase the employment rate of individuals with disabilities by 5%; decrease the poverty rate of individuals with disabilities by a comparable 5%; and engage 100 businesses in adopting policies and practices that support the integrated employment of individuals with disabilities. The driving force behind this initiative is the principle that everyone has the right to work.

The Employment First policy commission has made the following recommendations:

1. **Cultural Modeling:** New York State agencies can model the integrated employment of individuals with disabilities. Whether through enhancements to the governor’s programs to hire persons/veterans with disabilities (sections 55-b and -c of New York State Civil Service Law), or through community-based organizations directly hiring individuals, a strong culture of employment first must be established.
2. **Energizing the “Demand-Side” of the Equation:** Redesign and reinvigorate the New York Business Leadership Network to pursue the aggressive goal of engaging 100 business partners. A business first platform can be established through promoting existing tax credits, supporting businesses to pursue federal contracts, and harnessing the power of New York’s regional economic development efforts.
3. **New York Employment Services System (NYESS):** The NYESS system has already distinguished New York as the leader in moving individuals with disabilities into the world of employment as the largest Social Security Administration Ticket to Work (TTW) network in the nation. Ensuring the full adoption of the system across community providers and state agencies will utilize the power of New York’s integrated employment case management system to comprehensively monitor and support employment outcomes in New York State.
4. **Benefits Advisement:** Benefits systems are complex and only limited resources are available to help individuals accurately understand eligibility requirements and the impact of employment on benefits. New York State can utilize emerging tools like Disability Benefits 101 (DB101) and a network of “life coaches” to expand benefits advisement. (Pages 99-101)

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Consistent with the strategic visions and goals advanced in the Combined Plan, the State is committed to enhancing program alignment and service delivery. The State has established an Interagency Work Group to analyze service delivery strategies and identify opportunities for improvement across all participant populations including Out-of-School Youth (OSY). The work group, in collaboration with the Employment First State Leadership Mentorship Program (EFSLMP), has established a Vision Quest project with the stated goal “to develop alignment between agencies servicing youth to assure quality services and that youth do not fall through the cracks.” The Vision Quest project is initially focused on improving services for youth with disabilities or multiple barriers to employment following the Integrated Resource Team (IRT) model developed under the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) Project. The State seeks to expand the IRT model to OSY without regard to their disability status and provide the same level of service integration demonstrated in our multiple DEI projects. The WIOA expanded maximum age (up to age 24) of OSY and the increased flexibility in the provision of Youth services found in the Final Regulations increases the opportunity to serve OSY in a Career Center environment and more fully engage the required and optional partners found therein. The State believes that combining the system level intervention of the Interagency Work Group with the customer level coordination of services provided through IRTs creates an optimal service environment for OSY that will lead to improved outcomes. (Page 134)

ACCES–VR has a longstanding working partnership with the Office for People with Development Disabilities (OPWDD). Collaborative projects and initiatives are ongoing. In 2014, NYS established an Employment First policy. This policy outlines several strategies and demonstrates NYS’s full commitment to inclusion for people with disabilities. To accomplish the vision and goals there are collaborative efforts that require participation for all State agencies. Many of these strategies build upon the existing linkages. Over the past several years OPWDD, OMH and ACCES–VR have been providing targeted training to employment staff on the delivery of high quality evidence–based employment services to individuals with disabilities. To more fully support the goals of Employment First, an expansion of this training is being planned. ACCES–VR will continue to work with OMH and OPWDD as well as NYS CB on supported employment guidelines to ensure the appropriate and smooth transitions for individuals with disabilities. (Pages 196-198)

NYSCB will encourage staff to provide in-service presentations for OPWDD and OMH staff regarding blindness, vision rehabilitation therapy, orientation and mobility, as well as job site accommodations. NYSCB recognizes that collaboration with these partner state agencies is integral to the employment success of individuals served by multiple agencies. These partners are currently collaborating on Governor Cuomo’s Employment First initiative and have already begun to address barriers that currently exist in the provision of services between agencies. NYSCB will continue to participate in these initiatives advocating for individuals who are legally blind receiving NYSCB services and will continue to work to provide seamless services to consumers in conjunction with our partner state agencies. (Page 271)

Customized Employment

Additionally, ACCES–VR has initiated outreach activities in conjunction with the July anniversary of the American with Disabilities Act with its downstate IES, City University of New York, and the Mayor’s Office in NYC. There were two “Champions for Change” events held in 2015. Discussion

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is underway with the State Rehabilitation Council about how they can further support ACCES–VR IESs to establish new relationships with business and enhance customized employment options.

ACCES–VR is also working with our provider agency partners as well as the NYS Department of Labor and NYS Commission for the Blind, to explore additional services, supports, or projects that could engage businesses that have had limited experiences with hiring people with disabilities. (Page 195)

ACCES–VR will include in its new CRS contracts to start in 2017, opportunities and funding for providers to develop customized employment opportunities. Training will also be provided to providers regarding provision of this service. (Page 195-196)

The following themes emerged from the meetings, as well as from other verbal and written information obtained from participants:

- Employment: need more collaboration of stakeholders, providers and State agencies.
- Businesses: need to be educated about hiring individuals with disabilities and available financial incentives credits.
- ACCES–VR: should consider enhancement of the self–employment advisement committee. Recommendation is to explore how local businesses could be further engaged and could share their knowledge.
- Supported Employment:
 - Effective program, but providers are concerned about the impact of the milestone system. Perhaps a tier system could be considered. Also, need to reevaluate retention measures under the milestone system.
 - Best practices with customized employment should be identified with a focus on replication and more engagement of business in the process. (Page 209)

Scope of Supported Employment Services

Supported Employment services are comprised of on–going services, including customized employment, needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability in supported employment, that:

- Are provided singly or in combination to assist an eligible individual to achieve a competitive integrated employment;
- Are based on a determination of the needs of the individual and as specified in the IPE; and
- Are provided by ACCES–VR for up to 24 months, unless an extension necessary to achieve the employment outcome identified in the IPE.

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Supported employment services provide all the services necessary to assist the person with:

(Page 269)

NYSCB has also supported and participated in activities being implemented under the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG), and serves on the steering committee to the MIG. Activities under the MIG which will particularly benefit individuals in supported employment are pilots of customized employment approaches, development of a statewide employment data base “New York Employment Services System (NYESS),” and expansion of the availability of work incentives advisement.

NYSCB staff regularly attend the Empire State Association of Persons in Supported Employment (APSE) conference to dialogue with providers, consumers and advocates, and keep abreast of evidence-based practices. (Page 269)

Braiding/Blending Resources

No specific disability related information found.

Section 188/Section 188 Guide

ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners), will comply with section 188 of WIOA (if applicable) and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) with regard to the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. This also must include a description of compliance through providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. Describe the State’s one-stop center certification policy, particularly the accessibility criteria. (Page 99)

Accessibility

Accessibility is an important component within the public workforce system. New York State assures that all partners in the workforce development system described in this plan recognize the importance of the physical, programmatic, and communications accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities and English language learners in the Career Centers.

Under WIA, NYSDOL’s Methods of Administration outlined the policies, procedures, and systems NYS designed and put in place in order to provide a reasonable guarantee that NYS and its recipients of Title I WIA funds complied with the Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity

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requirements of WIA Section 188 and its implementing regulations. It is still available online at <https://www.labor.ny.gov/agencyinfo/moa/moa.shtm> and will be revised in the coming months to reflect the new WIOA regulations.

Additionally, NYSDOL will revise a Technical Advisory (TA) on the topic of “Accessibility of One-Stop Systems to Individuals with Disabilities.” The TA on this topic, released under WIA on May 16, 2000, will be revised to reflect new accessibility regulations under WIOA. (Page 102)

DEI/Disability Resource Coordinators

Additionally, ACCES-VR continues to develop local strategies to increase access to employment services for individuals with disabilities. There are 13 Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) Projects in the upstate NY LWDA that focus on Employment Networks (ENs) and services related to assessment, benefits advisement, and placement. ACCES-VR liaisons meet periodically with DRCs to better understand and coordinate cross-systems services; to better meet the needs of individuals with disabilities; and to increase support in maintaining employment after a consumer’s closure from VR services. The DRCs are responsible for providing and improving targeted services to individuals with disabilities, as well as improving the capacity of all workforce staff in their respective sites to provide the best possible services to the disability population. All 13 pilot sites are registered as ENs under the Ticket to Work program, with the intent to get individuals off SSA benefits and back to work.

New York State ACCES-VR jointly conducts a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) with its State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) every three years to determine the rehabilitation (and other) needs of residents with disabilities and to identify gaps in VR services. ACCES-VR uses this information to shape policy, procedures, training, operations, and practice. The next assessment will be conducted for the FY2017 State Plan. (Page 37)

Consistent with the strategic visions and goals advanced in the Combined Plan, the State is committed to enhancing program alignment and service delivery. The State has established an Interagency Work Group to analyze service delivery strategies and identify opportunities for improvement across all participant populations including Out-of-School Youth (OSY). The work group, in collaboration with the Employment First State Leadership Mentorship Program (EFSLMP), has established a Vision Quest project with the stated goal “to develop alignment between agencies servicing youth to assure quality services and that youth do not fall through the cracks.” The Vision Quest project is initially focused on improving services for youth with disabilities or multiple barriers to employment following the Integrated Resource Team (IRT) model developed under the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) Project. The State seeks to expand the IRT model to OSY without regard to their disability status and provide the same level of service integration demonstrated in our multiple DEI projects. The WIOA expanded maximum age (up to age 24) of OSY and the increased flexibility in the provision of Youth services found in the Final Regulations increases the opportunity to serve OSY in a Career Center environment and more fully engage the required and optional partners found therein. The State believes that combining the system level intervention of the Interagency Work Group with the customer level coordination of services provided through IRTs creates an optimal service environment for OSY that will lead to improved outcomes. (Page 134)

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Other State Programs/Pilots that Support Competitive Integrated Employment

Identifying and piloting career pathways and postsecondary transition program models based on participation in the national OCTAE initiative, Moving Pathways Forward; innovative development steps being funded through CUNY in 2016 to develop career pathway pilots and professional development resources; expansion of two dedicated adult education teacher websites to house career pathways instructional resources and supports; and re-purposing of seven RAEN center work plans.

MOVING PATHWAYS FORWARD provides targeted technical assistance services to assist all states in the development and implementation of their career pathways systems and facilitate local programs' provision of career pathways services. States have access to resources and guidance to assist them in assessing their career pathways-related needs, identifying goals for their project activities, and determining planning steps to strengthen and expand key career pathways system components, including:

CROSS-AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS AND INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT (Page 35)

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- **Recommendation:** ACCES-VR evaluate the need and potential service options to provide social pragmatic speech therapy services for people on the autism spectrum; identify other consumer groups that require these services, and consider offering the services under the current Core Rehabilitation Services (CRS) services system.
- **ACCES-VR Response:** ACCES-VR has a management workgroup charged to develop and assess a program design for the development of the recommended services. Some service options to address social speech and communication skill development for individuals on the autism spectrum will be made available through the established procurement processes. A pilot is planned with City University of New York (CUNY). Results from this pilot may inform of future opportunities, and may result in an Autism Center for CUNY students. Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee (QAI) (Page 180)

There is a pilot program in New York City for ten juniors from one high school in each of four boroughs working with a single provider contract for work readiness, work experience development, and an optional paid internship. Preliminary results indicate that 64 students were referred. There were 56 work readiness participants; 52 completed the work readiness, and there were 43 internship participants.

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Internal staff training on Counseling and Guidance with the youth population is being developed to enhance the VRC's skill set and to provide tools to improve the VRC's ability to work effectively with youth. Topic areas to be covered include counseling youth, transitioning from an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), career maturity, the teen world, teens as involuntary consumers, and maximizing use of assistive technology most specifically for job exploration, transition or postsecondary education programs, work-based learning, and workplace readiness training.

ACCES-VR plans to develop a request for proposal (RFP) in 2017 for a pre-college summer experience to provide the opportunity for high school students to participate in a program on a college campus during the summer between their junior and senior year to learn critical safety and social factors, learn self-advocacy skills, complete a writing assignment in the style and process of a college paper and gain skills and experience to make an informed decision about college. Data from the Office of Special Education is being reviewed to identify potential numbers of applicants for VR services. (Page 188)

In addition, given the expectation that business must be dually addressed as both a customer and partner of the State vocational rehabilitation program in building employment opportunities for people with disabilities (Section 109 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended), ACCES-VR has explored options for expanding services to business. Many activities will flow from that strategic exploration. One specific initiative is with the New York City Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) in collaboration with the Poses Family Foundation titled, NYC: AT WORK. This is a 3-year pilot project (hereafter, Project) being designed to focus on the following goals:

1. Increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities by educating businesses about disability awareness and employing people with disabilities;
2. Enlist businesses that successfully employ people with disabilities to mentor and provide technical assistance to other businesses;
3. Seek commitment of businesses to adopt policies and practices within their organizations around outreach to and the hiring and training of people with disabilities; and,
4. Successfully place a minimum of 200 individuals with disabilities in competitive integrated employment each year. ACCES-VR will direct the work of the Project that is funded with vocational rehabilitation dollars to ensure compliance with federal regulations, and will continuously monitor the deliverables and outcomes to ensure adherence to Project goals and timelines. (Page 195)
 - Move job ready consumers quickly into ACCES-VR placement services or DOL's job placement services.
 - Maintain a data bank of job ready consumers and actively promote those candidates to business through local Chambers of Commerce, Society for Human Resource Managers events, and local workforce development activities.
 - Promote and enhance On-the-Job training and Work Try Out opportunities.

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- Develop stronger local partnerships with school districts and postsecondary institutions.
- Provide experiential learning and work experiences through summer, part-time and temporary work experience.
- Explore use of customized employment techniques and other promising practices.
- Explore supports, including use of innovation and expansion funds, for a pilot project, to further enhance self-employment opportunities.
- Collaborate with the DDPC, OPWDD, the Office of P-12 Education on implementing better methods for youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities to obtain and maintain employment; continue collaborative planning with OPWDD on their Pathways to Employment 1915b/c waiver option.
- Provide benefits counseling at several key points in the VR process.
- Train ACCES-VR counselors who serve as liaisons to mental health programs on OMH Individual Placement with Supports (IPS) model, implementation and provide on-going technical assistance. (Page 226)

During the past year, Lighthouse Guild, based in New York City, entered into discussions with NYSCB regarding the need for intensive Braille training for individuals who expect to use Braille in work settings. It has become apparent that for consumers planning to enter the workforce in administrative and professional settings, Braille proficiency must exceed the training that can be offered through Vision Rehabilitation Therapy (VRT). Lighthouse Guild is currently testing a pilot program that combines introduction of Braille skills during VRT and continued skill building through Vocational Training.

Two other providers, Visions Services for the Blind and Helen Keller Services for the Blind, received a 3-year grant from the Lavelle Foundation to identify emerging business sectors in the New York City metro area. Awardees of this grant will develop training programs for those in partnership with employers, and provide training for individuals who are blind, leading to employment. It is expected that at the conclusion of the grant, training programs initiated under the grant that have resulted in successful employment for individuals who are blind and consumers will be sponsored by NYSCB through its vocational training and placement programs. NYSCB continues to encourage its providers to develop new vocational training options utilizing a similar business-centered approach. (Page 305)

Financial Literacy/Economic Advancement

7. Support and promote the Business Enterprise Program in order to increase employment opportunities and successful outcomes.
8. Increase provision of work incentives advisement to consumers by training counselors on the impact of work on SSI and SSDI and the importance of benefits advisement and financial literacy (Page 298).

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8. Referrals for benefits advisement continue to increase. As a result the number of vendors approved to provide this service increased in FY 15. Select Independent Living Centers provide benefits counseling to active consumers on a pro bono basis thus further increasing the availability and use of the service. In New York City, a financial literacy program for college students was conducted in collaboration with Barclay Bank. NYSCB consumers and District Office Staff attended this program which provided useful information for consumers as they move to enter the workforce. (Page 307)

Benefits

In 2016-17, a variety of professional development programs will continue to be delivered to Literacy Zones to assist in meeting their learners' academic and personal needs. Literacy Zone professional development will be provided in multiple ways including training for case managers so that they can be resources regarding assessments leading to a NYS HSE diploma, career ladders, one-stop referrals, core partner connections, and the Benefits Toolkit. (Page 30)

In 2016-17 New York State will continue to focus on the ways all funded adult literacy programs work with individuals with disabilities. Many of the 49 Literacy Zones formed partnerships with the Independent Living Centers, which provide one-stop services to families with an individual with a disability. The New York State Education Department developed an electronic universal benefits manual that supports all programs including those that serve individuals with disabilities. This resource is updated annually and provides contemporary support to case managers providing services to individuals with disabilities. (Page 31)

- Career Centers will all have the MyBenefits (mybenefits.ny.gov) web site short cut icon on all resource room computers and partner staff will be trained on how to promote and use the site with customers. MyBenefits was developed to help increase access and awareness of various public benefit programs. (Page 54-55)

NYSCB entered into a Partnership Plus Agreement, which enables consumers with a Social Security Ticket to Work to obtain VR services from NYSCB, as well as broad access to community providers to assist in the coordination of Social Security payments and other benefits and services.

Eleven non-profit organizations across NYS were approved as vendors to provide benefits advisement and support the development of economic self-sufficiency. The increased access to DRCs and other ENs increases support in maintaining employment after a consumer's closure from VR services.

NYSCB uses funds to contract with two private agencies for individuals who are blind to provide pre-college programs for NYSCB consumers entering their senior year of high school. The program goal is to provide students the opportunity to refine their academic, social, and independent living skills before beginning college. (Page 57)

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Over the next three years, NYESS and NYS DDPC will develop an integrated web-based platform called DB101. This system will be integrated with NYESS, CareerZone, and JobZone to provide accurate, up-to-date information and benefits calculators so participants can better assess how going to work will impact their access to publicly funded healthcare and income support like Supplemental Security Income, Social Security Disability Insurance, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, housing assistance, and other public benefits. (Page 77)

4. **Benefits Advisement:** Benefits systems are complex and only limited resources are available to help individuals accurately understand eligibility requirements and the impact of employment on benefits. New York State can utilize emerging tools like Disability Benefits 101 (DB101) and a network of “life coaches” to expand benefits advisement.
5. **Medicaid Buy-In for Working People with Disabilities (MBI-WPD):** New York can integrate the MBI-WPD program into the online New York State of Health application portal, automating and standardizing eligibility determinations and referring applicants who require additional assistance. (Page 100)
 - **Disability-related training:** including professional conferences in mental health, developmental disabilities, deafness and hearing impairments, the medical and vocational aspects of HIV/AIDS; and substance abuse disorders. Training included post-traumatic stress disorder; traumatic brain injury; epilepsy; mood disorders; personality disorders; autism spectrum disorders; anxiety disorders; addiction; managing challenging behavior; visual acuity; multiple sclerosis; bullying; workforce investment home modifications, and neuropsychology.
 - **Supported employment:** including professional conferences. Training was provided for supported employment; counseling skills for direct service providers; documentation and record keeping; job retention and career development; and benefits advisement. An initial training program on the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model and recovery from mental illness has evolved into an on-going Recovery-Oriented Vocational Rehabilitation Community of Practice. (Page 204)

ACCES-VR continues to develop local strategies to increase access to employment services for individuals with disabilities. There are 13 Disability Employment Initiative Projects at the upstate NY local workforce areas that focus on Employment Networks and services for VR consumers related to assessment, benefits advisement and placement. ACCES-VR liaisons meet periodically with the Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs) to better understand and coordinate cross-systems services and to better meet the needs of individuals with disabilities.

ACCES-VR and the Research Foundation for Mental Hygiene (RFMH), representing OMH, have signed a Partnership Plus Memorandum of Agreement. Through this agreement, ACCES-VR can coordinate the Ticket to Work assignment with RFMH, which is acting as a statewide administrative employment network. ACCES-VR is also negotiating the data sharing agreement provided by OMH as part of their collaboration with DOL to transform the One-Stop Operating System into a data and case services system. The system includes all the components of the New York Interagency Supported Employment Reporting Data System (NYISER) that was replaced in 2012 by the New York Employment Services System (NYESS) for its supported employment providers. The NYESS is a combined data warehouse and information sharing system for state and community agencies and a job matching/labor exchange system for consumers and businesses. (Page 212)

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Individuals on SSI/SSDI make up 28 percent of all active cases or 13,882 individuals. Those who were considered to have a most significant disability were 70.9 percent of those served in all VR statuses. While individuals receiving SSI/SSDI were only 23.8 percent of all employment outcomes in FFY 2012, the employment rate for these individuals did increase. ACCES–VR is working with the SRC to examine data on consumers who receive SSI and SSDI, and is increasing the use of benefits planning services as a strategy to increase outcomes. (Page 216)

Individuals who are Deaf, Deaf–Blind, Hard of Hearing or Late Deafened The Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation in the Fifth Edition 2008 Model State Plan (MSP) for Rehabilitation of Persons who are Deaf, Deaf–Blind, Hard of Hearing or Late Deafened report that “Hearing loss is the most prevalent, chronic, physically disabling condition in the United States today.” The National Institute on Deafness and other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) reported in June 2010 that approximately 17 percent (36 million) of American adults report some degree of hearing loss; 15 percent (26 million) of Americans between the ages of 20 and 69 have high frequency hearing loss due to exposure to loud sounds or noise at work or in leisure activities and 4,000 new cases of sudden deafness occur each year in the United States. Hearing loss is becoming more prevalent among the general population. These losses can impact the employment status of individuals, depending on the level of loss. In FFY 2012, ACCES–VR served a total of 3,023 (3.3 percent) individuals who had a primary impairment of deafness, hearing loss, other hearing impairment and deaf–blindness, almost one third more than the number served in FFY 2009. Of these, 63.8 percent were considered to have a most significant disability. In FFY 2012, 612 individuals who were deaf, hard of hearing or deaf–blind achieved an employment outcome. This is 5.1 percent of all employment outcomes. (Page 216)

- Provide benefits counseling at several key points in the VR process.
- Train ACCES–VR counselors who serve as liaisons to mental health programs on OMH Individual Placement with Supports (IPS) model, implementation and provide on–going technical assistance.
- Inform training program providers and the postsecondary education sector about incentives for hiring people with disabilities to encourage those entities to directly assist individuals with disabilities in obtaining employment. (Page 226)

This past year ACCES–VR participated in a joint presentation with NYS Department of Labor to discuss financial incentives credits available to business. ACCES–VR is also working to identify federal contractors/subcontractors, and to obtain the most current information regarding the changes in the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) rules, which advance the recruitment of qualified candidates with disabilities. ACCES–VR ensures that key staffs across the state are prepared to provide customized training to the business community on the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities, through their participation in the American Disabilities Act (ADA) Trainer Network. This no–cost service is a valuable resource to businesses as they strive to diversify their workforces with qualified candidates with disabilities. (Page 237)

Partnership Plus

In Spring 2014, NYSCB entered into a Partnership Plus agreement with the Research Foundation for Mental Health. Partnership Plus assures that consumers with a Social Security Ticket to Work

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are able to obtain the services they need from NYSCB and that as they complete their services with NYSCB, they are given access to broad network of community providers from whom they can select to coordinate issues related to Social Security payments and other benefits and services.

NYS PROMISE Initiative

NYSCB is on the steering committee for New York State PROMISE (Promoting the Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income), a research project developed to improve transition-to-adulthood outcomes for eligible youth who receive supplemental security income (SSI). This five-year initiative strives to increase access to services for eligible youth and their families to improve academic and employment outcomes, increase financial stability, and reduce reliance on SSI. The priority for the steering committee is to engage local and state partners in defining a broad strategic approach that starts to describe a system of person and family centered intervention. NYSCB actively participates in the steering committee to assess services that are provided to legally blind students through other New York State organizations. (Page 260)

In 2012 NYSCB began entering into agreements with nonprofit organizations for the provision of benefits advisement services. Fifteen vendors have been approved for the provision of benefits advisement services throughout New York State. Providers of these services include agencies chartered primarily for provision of services to individuals who are blind, independent living centers, and other agencies that have engaged staff who are trained and certified by the Social Security Administration, by the Cornell Institute of Labor Relations, or by Virginia Commonwealth University. Many of these providers offer advisement not only on Social Security benefits, but also on a host of other benefits which may be affected by entering employment. (Page 267)

Further, modeling likelihood of successful case closures for NYSCB consumers receiving public benefits, it was observed that mental health impairments continues to negatively predict successful case closures for this group of individuals. Receipt of vocational training, high tech devices, computer training, job-related services and job placement services were all positively related to successful employment outcomes for individuals receiving public benefits. Despite these positive relationships between the specific services and outcomes, overall only 6-10 percent of consumers receiving public benefits access these services. Other factors identified in the overall model, also continue to predict positive outcomes for NYSCB consumers receiving public benefits. (Page 281)

Further, challenges continue to persist for achieving employment outcomes for clients who receive public benefits. Though many services (e.g., high-tech devices) appear to positively impact outcomes, only small proportions receive such services. It is likely that efforts such as New York State PROMISE initiative will be helpful in highlighting leading practices and service delivery models to inform program and policy development across various service systems.

Having mental health illness as a secondary condition continues to jeopardize the likelihood of success in the current system. This variable impacts both consumers receiving and those not receiving public benefits. This finding indicates a need to build capacity of practitioners in providing services to people with mental health illnesses. (Page 282)

3. Few received training on job placement, Independent Living (IL), placement services from other agencies, how to target business outreach, and benefits and work incentives counseling. These are also topics on which staff reported needing training. (Page 288)

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8. Increase provision of work incentives advisement to consumers by training counselors on the impact of work on SSI and SSDI and the importance of benefits advisement and financial literacy (Page 298)
3. By supporting increased use of benefits planning through Independent Living Centers, DRC's and other qualified resources, NYSCB anticipates that more consumers will choose careers, and work hours, which will allow them to go off SSA benefits and achieve economic self-sufficiency. In addition, NYSCB has signed a Partnership Plus agreement with the OMH Administrative Employment Network. This will increase opportunities for consumers to obtain continued support to maintain their jobs after case closure. NYSCB works with ACCES-VR to allocate contract capacity for Supported Employment services to try to assure the services are available to individuals with the most significant disabilities seeking those services. (Page 302)
4. Mental health impairment as a secondary condition was identified by the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment CSNA) as an indicator for unsuccessful closure. NYSCB increased relationships with Office of Mental Health (OMH) and the Office for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) on both the local and state level. The receipt of public assistance benefits was also identified as an indicator for unsuccessful case closure. Benefits advisement service referrals and providers were increased and are expected to reduce this gap. The Needs Assessment also found that individuals who received high-tech devices were more likely to be successfully closed. A new adaptive technology center (ATC) contract was implemented. The contract guidelines set high standards for the delivery of ATC evaluation and training services.
5. NYSCB consumers participated in an employment based medical records program at Baruch College. District Offices have conducted outreach on their own and collaborated with ACCES-VR to expand vocational training opportunities for NYSCB consumers. Both core partners met with Human

Resource hiring managers interested in matching consumers with hard to fill positions in their local businesses.

6. NYSCB reviewed the vocational training programs currently delivered through community rehabilitation partners and determined that two types of vocational skills training are needed; one to support consumers in increasing employability and a second to meet the demands of emerging labor markets. The first type of training is focused on those consumers planning to enter fields such as customer service, office administration, and other clerical occupations and the potential need to acquire advanced skills levels in Braille, keyboarding, note taking, computer applications and other office practices. The second type of vocational skills training is related to meeting the needs of a particular business or business sector and is developed in conjunction with a business or group of businesses representing a sector which is expected to have a high demand for employees over the next five to ten years. NYSCB will continue to develop and explore the need for new programs and training opportunities. (Page 305)
8. Referrals for benefits advisement continue to increase. As a result the number of vendors approved to provide this service increased in FY 15. Select Independent Living Centers provide benefits counseling to active consumers on a pro bono basis thus further increasing

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the availability and use of the service. In New York City, a financial literacy program for college students was conducted in collaboration with Barclay Bank. NYSCB consumers and District Office Staff attended this program which provided useful information for consumers as they move to enter the workforce.

9. Working with the National Industries for the Blind, new call centers and other service sector employment opportunities for NYSCB consumers have been developed this year. A new call center was opened in Brooklyn and actively hired consumers from NYSCB. Management staff at the call centers as well as counselors continually monitor front line staff at these call centers to provide any necessary support to the consumers employed there and to assist them in advancing their employment skills. (Page 307)

School to Work Transition

VR Transition Policy ACCES–VR collaborated with the Office of Special Education and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) in 2008 to revise the 421.00 Youth in School – Transition Referral, Planning and Services Policy, to ensure a common understanding of transition requirements and responsibilities and to assist with building a collaborative partnership between transition specialists, school districts and ACCES–VR district offices throughout the state. The policy provides information about the requirements, roles and responsibilities of VR in preparing students with disabilities for successful employment. ACCES–VR, with the SRC, reviews the policy periodically to determine its current relevance. While much of the policy remains up-to-date, a revision is planned for the end of this year to ensure compliance with the requirements under WIOA, including pre-employment transition services and the use of assistive technology. This policy establishes an affirmative role for VRCs working with students in transition from school to work, a critical time for young adults with disabilities. The policy delineates the referral process of students with disabilities two years prior to their expected school exit. (Page 186)

NYSCB and the New York State Education Department collaborate on a regular basis to provide guidance to educational agencies and vocational rehabilitation personnel responsible for facilitating transition services, and to provide information about consultation and technical assistance resources to assist schools and related community support entities in planning for transition of students who are legally blind. At the state level, both agencies have designated personnel that provide oversight and leadership for the development of policies, procedures, interagency training and other state-level partnership activities for transition services. At the local level, VR counselors work closely with school district staff and local school districts have transition to work specialists that collaborate together. NYSCB will continue to work closely with schools to enable the smooth transition of students who are legally blind from school to work. (Page 279)

Data Collection

The Core Programs are required to regularly report to the Federal government and public on program performance to keep the system accountable and transparent in the pursuit of the State's workforce vision and goals. Although WIA also required performance reporting, WIOA seeks to improve accountability across all core programs by requiring that they report on a set of uniform measures. At the onset of WIOA implementation, setting of performance goals for programs

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without an institutional history of these measures or an established method for collecting needed data to report these measures will be a challenge. The Core Programs are working to share existing data collection and analysis methods to identify and establish good data sources and to work through necessary administrative clearances to meet new WIOA requirements. In particular, programs under Titles II and IV of WIOA are in the process of gathering the necessary information to establish valid and reliable data for the required performance measures. The preliminary performance goals that have already been established are included in Table 1 below. (Page 42)

B. DATA-COLLECTION AND REPORTING PROCESSES USED FOR ALL PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING THOSE PRESENT IN ONE-STOP CENTERS*

The Core Programs are working closely together to identify and establish appropriate data sources and gaining the necessary administrative clearances to meet the WIOA requirements. Titles II and IV are in the process of gathering the necessary information to establish valid and reliable data for the required performance measures. (Pages 77-78)

As discussed previously, NYSDOL, in partnership with NYS OMH, developed and implemented NYESS. NYESS is made up of various computer applications and data sets. Employment related data collection is accomplished by all NYESS partners using the existing NYSDOL case management system, OSOS. Legacy data sets from the partners and current data sets, which include but are not limited to, OSOS; vocational rehabilitation agencies; DOH; Social Security Administration (SSA); and others are pulled together in a data warehouse. A web-based reporting portal designed and maintained by OMH will provide cross-agency report card like information to the general public (aggregate data) and to the individual agencies and their contracted partner staff. (Page 84)

- Provide on-going training for supervisors. Supervisors are brought to a central location at least biannually for a three-day training. The trainings focus on the multiple roles of a supervisor and provide updates on policy, data collection and more to ensure good communication.
- Improve the quality of supported employment services by training ACCES-VR and supported employment providers on updated supported employment policy, procedures and guidelines to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of the supported employment program.
- Provide a Management Community of Practice. ACCES-VR is collaborating with Cornell University, Employment Disability Institute for the provision of a community of practice training project for management level staff. (Page 228)

Secondary Data Analysis of Consumer Information System

The primary purpose of analyzing NYSCB's Consumer Information System is to identify factors related to successful case closures and employment outcomes for NYSCB clients. Specifically this analysis explored the following research questions:

- a. What are the demographic and services-related factors that predict successful employment outcomes for NYSCB consumers? How do these vary by NYSCB district offices? How do

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local labor market conditions (e.g., county-level employment rate for people with disabilities) impact employment outcomes for NYSCB consumers?

- b. How do these differ between transition-age youth and adult population?
- c. How do these factors impact successful outcomes for NYSCB consumers who receive public benefits compared with their non-beneficiary peers? (Page 280)

Small Business/Entrepreneurship

- 9. **Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship:** Expanding upon the New York State Education Department's Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) model of engaging New York State entrepreneurial assistance programs and/or small business development centers will facilitate the development of small businesses operated by individuals with disabilities.
- 10. **Expanded Access to Assistive Technology:** Increasing access to assistive technologies through a strategic partnership with the Office for Children and Family Services (OTDA), ACCES-VR, and the Justice Center administered Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities (TRAID), the inventory of employment-related devices can be expanded and training increased on the use of such devices. (Page 101)

NYSCB also connects with businesses on a regional level through direct outreach by district managers and district office staff. Regional and small businesses are best accessed through a regional approach and local NYSCB staff that live and work in the community are often the best resource. District offices will continue to develop relationships with businesses through internships, Work Experience Training opportunities and Work Try-Outs. NYSCB will also continue to collaborate with ACCES-VR Regional Workforce Coordinators to connect with businesses that have interest in working with VR program individuals. NYSCB has held collaborative meetings with local businesses human resources hiring managers, and will continue to foster these relationships through ongoing meetings on a regional basis. NYSCB will use these connections to make matches between consumer's skills and local job openings. (Page 270)

NYSCB developed a collaborative relationship with SUNY Small Business Development Center in the Albany area. Self-employment plans submitted to home office for review have increased during FY 15. Staff participated in self-employment training that focused on the contents of a business plan during the Vision Rehabilitation Institute. The training was well attended and received positive reviews. In addition, training on the NYSCB Self-Employment policy took place in October 2015 at the Statewide Counselor meeting. (Page 307)

Career Pathways

WIOA reforms planning requirements, previously governed by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), to foster better alignment of Federal investments in job training, to integrate service delivery across programs and improve efficiency in service delivery, and to ensure that the workforce system is job-driven and matches employers with skilled individuals. One of WIOA's principal areas of reform is to require States to plan across core programs and include this planning process in the Unified or Combined State Plans. This reform promotes a shared understanding of the workforce needs within each State and fosters development of more comprehensive and

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integrated approaches, such as career pathways and sector strategies, for addressing the needs of businesses and workers. Successful implementation of many of these approaches called for within WIOA requires robust relationships across programs. WIOA requires States and local areas to enhance coordination and partnerships with local entities and supportive service agencies for strengthened service delivery, including through Unified or Combined State Plans. (Page 4)

- Focusing leadership funds on the key requirements of WIOA through approval of new annual workplans for the RAEN and NRS Accountability specialist and work charges of NYSED state ACCES-Adult Education staff.
- Continuing to implement a new High School Equivalency diploma for New York that serves as a gateway credential for employment, training, career pathways and postsecondary transition, and providing in-depth training of master teachers and turnkey training for 5,500 adult education teachers.
- Adapting state and WIOA-funded professional development to support career pathways, postsecondary transition, integrated education, and integrated English literacy and civics education. (Page 34)

Local partnerships, which form the foundation of the workforce delivery system, are especially effective in meeting the workforce needs of New York's diverse population. Local plans describe how these partnerships will be coordinated to enable all customers to receive the full range of employment and training programs and supportive services, especially those that lead to jobs in high-wage, high-growth occupations along career pathways. The needs of individuals with multiple barriers to employment are being addressed quickly and thoroughly due to the wide spectrum of service providers joined together under the local workforce system. The New York State Office for the Aging, NYSED (including ACCES-VR), the New York State Department of Health (DOH), OCFS (including NYSCB), the Office for Alcohol and Substance Abuse (OASAS), the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), the State University of New York (SUNY), NYSDOL, and local community based organizations apply knowledge gained through regular communication, partnership collaborations, and cross-training to develop comprehensive service strategies to address the varying needs of our common participants. With the functional alignment approach and common customer flow in the Career Centers, partners are more aware of each agency's involvement with the participant instead of working in a vacuum. This greatly helps reduce duplication of services to participants. (Page 52)

Employment Networks

Additionally, ACCES-VR continues to develop local strategies to increase access to employment services for individuals with disabilities. There are 13 Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) Projects in the upstate NY LWDA's that focus on Employment Networks (ENs) and services related to assessment, benefits advisement, and placement. ACCES-VR liaisons meet periodically with DRCs to better understand and coordinate cross-systems services; to better meet the needs of individuals with disabilities; and to increase support in maintaining employment after a consumer's closure from VR services. The DRCs are responsible for providing and improving targeted services to individuals with disabilities, as well as improving the capacity of all workforce staff in their respective sites to provide the best possible services to the disability population. All 13 pilot sites are registered as ENs under the Ticket to Work program, with the intent to get individuals off SSA benefits and back to work. (Page 37)

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New York State continues to be at the forefront in the area of serving individuals with disabilities with the implementation of NYESS and the opportunities the system allows. For example, in February 2012, the federal Social Security Administration announced that NYESS (www.nyess.ny.gov) was designated as the first statewide Employment Network in the United States. ENs are designated by the SSA to assist individuals with disabilities to find competitive jobs. The statewide EN designation allows SSA the ability to collaborate directly with New York to document employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities holding a Ticket-To-Work, and demonstrate the effectiveness of the Ticket-To-Work program. As a statewide EN, NYESS creates a network of providers working with multiple state agencies using a single, real-time employment data/case management system. This statewide effort generates thousands of dollars in incentive payments to be reinvested in expanded job supports for individuals with disabilities. (Page 102)

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ACCES-VR and the Research Foundation for Mental Hygiene (RFMH), representing OMH, have signed a Partnership Plus Memorandum of Agreement. Through this agreement, ACCES-VR can coordinate the Ticket to Work assignment with RFMH, which is acting as a statewide administrative employment network. ACCES-VR is also negotiating the data sharing agreement provided by OMH as part of their collaboration with DOL to transform the One-Stop Operating System into a data and case services system. The system includes all the components of the New York Interagency Supported Employment Reporting Data System (NYISER) that was replaced in 2012 by the New York Employment Services System (NYESS) for its supported employment providers. The NYESS is a combined data warehouse and information sharing system for state and community agencies and a job matching/labor exchange system for consumers and businesses. (Page 212)

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3. Promote business awareness of NYSCB workforce programs and business services through print, broadcast and electronic media to include social media, and continue to promote awareness of NYSCB through personal face-to-face contacts with businesses.
4. Continue to work with the National Employment Team (NET) of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and other employment networks to improve employment options for NYSCB consumers.
5. Work to build partnerships with America's Job Centers as well as the four core partners, to increase access to services needed by NYSCB consumers. (Page 298)

* All enclosed information is cited directly from final state plan as of February 23, 2017

Find your local state plans here: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rsa/wioa/state-plans/index.html>