

SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
SENATE, No. 4102

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

ADOPTED DECEMBER 9, 2021

Sponsored by:

Senator STEPHEN M. SWEENEY

District 3 (Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem)

Senator M. TERESA RUIZ

District 29 (Essex)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senators O'Scanlon, Singleton and Turner

SYNOPSIS

Establishes Direct Support Professional Career Development Center; makes appropriation of \$450,000.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Substitute as adopted by the Senate Higher Education Committee.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 12/20/2021)

1 **AN ACT** concerning the establishment of a center for direct support
2 professionals by the New Jersey Community College Consortium
3 for Workforce and Economic Development, supplementing
4 chapter 64A of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes, and making
5 an appropriation.

6

7 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
8 *of New Jersey:*

9

10 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

11 a. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities strive
12 to live active, engaged lives within the community.

13 b. Community inclusion is shown to promote the best outcomes
14 and quality of life for people with intellectual and developmental
15 disabilities.

16 c. Direct support professionals (DSPs) provide critical services
17 and supports for people with intellectual and developmental
18 disabilities and without these services community inclusion for
19 many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities would
20 not be possible.

21 d. However, the system of services and supports that people
22 with intellectual and developmental disabilities rely on for
23 becoming contributing citizens in their communities is facing an
24 ongoing workforce crisis; harming the ability of people with
25 intellectual and developmental disabilities to access services. This
26 strain is further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

27 e. The DSP workforce crisis, that is evident across the nation,
28 is characterized in several ways, including high turnover, difficulty
29 recruiting, and no discernable career path, all of which threatens the
30 number and quality of available services and supports for people
31 with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

32 f. This crisis calls for the establishment of a career path
33 aligned with ongoing professional development in order to instill
34 competence, confidence, and investment in the workforce that
35 contributes to the well-being and quality of life of people with
36 intellectual and developmental disabilities by providing an
37 opportunity for career development, advancement, and learning new
38 skills.

39 g. The Direct Support Professional Career Development Center
40 shall have two objectives. First, the Center shall conduct a pilot
41 that focuses on DSP recruitment and retention for students “at-risk”
42 of not completing a traditional high school program and, as such,
43 not only will benefit people with intellectual and developmental
44 disabilities but also “at-risk” students who otherwise may not have
45 access to a career opportunity.

46 h. The Direct Support Professional Career Development Center
47 shall provide support to existing and new DSPs with incentives to
48 remain in the field and further their education.

1 2. The Direct Support Professional Career Development Center
2 shall be established at the New Jersey Community College
3 Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development in
4 partnership with a trade association serving organizations that
5 employ direct support professionals. It shall be the purpose of the
6 center to provide a potential career path to high school students at-
7 risk of failing to graduate in addition to existing direct support
8 professionals, thereby assisting with recruitment and retention of
9 this critical workforce.

10 The center, through partnerships with local school districts, shall
11 identify and recruit high school students “at risk” of not graduating
12 from high school who have not pursued vocational education or any
13 other alternative education program, and who are interested in
14 learning about and serving people with intellectual and
15 developmental disabilities. The center shall provide participating
16 students with a two-year program that offers mentorship and
17 training regarding the responsibilities of direct support
18 professionals and a potential job opportunity upon graduation. The
19 program shall provide online training in addition to on-site training
20 and mentorship with experienced direct support professionals
21 employed by participating agencies that serve individuals with
22 intellectual and developmental disabilities.

23 Upon completion of the program, a participating student shall
24 receive academic credits and the school district at which the student
25 is enrolled shall apply the credits towards the district requirements
26 for high school graduation. The student shall be offered an
27 opportunity to interview for employment as a direct support
28 professional at the agency where the student received on-site
29 training. The agency shall interview the student for a position with
30 compensation that reflects the experience and training received
31 through the program.

32 In addition to “at risk” students, the Direct Support Professional
33 Career Development Center shall work with existing and future
34 direct support professionals to identify their educational goals
35 including credentialing, an associate’s degree, and a bachelor’s
36 degree.

37

38 3. The Direct Support Professional Career Development Center
39 established pursuant to section 2 of this act shall employ a career
40 counselor.

41 a. The career counselor shall provide ongoing support to
42 participating high school students as well as direct support
43 professionals, including providing the student with assistance in
44 finding appropriate postsecondary programs or in connecting the
45 student with a provider agency that serves people with intellectual
46 and developmental disabilities.

47 b. The career counselor shall assist in the establishment of a
48 Career Development Program pursuant to section 4 of this act.

- 1 4. In collaboration with the New Jersey Council of County
2 Colleges, a Career Development Program is established for new and
3 existing direct support professionals at the Direct Support
4 Professional Career Development Center established pursuant to
5 section 2 of this act. The Career Development Program shall assist
6 individuals employed as a direct support professional with the
7 pursuit of a college degree. It shall be the purpose of the Career
8 Development Program to create a career path for the recruitment
9 and retention of direct support professionals.
- 10 The New Jersey Council of County Colleges shall, as part of
11 New Jersey's Workforce Development initiative, develop
12 curriculum specific to the field of intellectual and developmental
13 disabilities including an associates' degree and bachelors' degree.
14
- 15 5. a. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Office
16 of the Secretary of Higher Education the sum of \$450,000 for the
17 purposes of fulfilling the provisions of this act.
- 18 b. The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education shall
19 distribute a grant to the New Jersey Community College
20 Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development in
21 partnership with a trade association serving organizations that
22 employ direct support professionals to establish the Direct Support
23 Professional Career Development Center by such criteria as are
24 determined by the Secretary of Higher Education.
25
- 26 6. This act shall take effect on the 180th day after the date of
27 enactment.