

Education Opportunities for Students with Disabilities

Session Law 2015-241, Section 11.19.(a)



**Report to the
Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services
and
Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee**

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

November 27, 2017

Executive Summary

Under Session Law (SL) 2015-241, Section 11.19.(a), Education Opportunities for Students with Disabilities, the North Carolina General Assembly charged the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), through its Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services (DMH/DD/SAS), with reporting to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services concerning postsecondary education and employment opportunities for people with disabilities. This is the third and final report.

This provision directed six entities to undertake implementation activities relative to both postsecondary education and employment opportunities. These entities are DMH/DD/SAS; Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR); Division of Social Services (DSS); the Department of Public Instruction (DPI); the University of North Carolina (UNC); and the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS). The entities were to work “in consultation with the North Carolina Postsecondary Education Alliance, community stakeholders, and other interested parties.”

To support its approach to a provision of considerable breadth, in this final report, DMH/DD/SAS built upon the policy framework and facts set out in the 2016 report and continued to work with a diverse stakeholder group, inclusive of all agencies named in the legislation, the Postsecondary Education Alliance, and families and young adults. In the final report, DMH/DD/SAS follows the 2016 report rationale and interprets the Session Law’s use of “people with disabilities” to be, by age, students and youth with disabilities, 14 through 24. Also, as set out in the 2016 report, for purposes of the *postsecondary education* prong of the legislation, the target population of students and youth are those with intellectual disabilities (ID)¹ who plan to enter the community college or university system as *non-matriculating* students. In the final report, for purposes of the *employment* prong of the legislation, DMH/DD/SAS adopts the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) definition of people with “the most significant disabilities,”² a definition inclusive of students and youth with ID. The final report continues to view “employment” against the WIOA’s optimal outcome of competitive integrated employment.³ Lastly, DMH/DD/SAS reads the intent of the Session Law as assuming a linkage between postsecondary education and training and the favorable outcome of competitive integrated employment for the target populations.

In the 2017 report, DMH/DD/SAS reviews and responds to the requirements of the Session Law. It does so in consultation with the Advisory for Education and Employment Opportunities for Students with Disabilities, comprised of all agencies named in the legislation, inclusive of the Postsecondary Education Alliance, families, and youth. In collaboration with the Advisory and

in consultation with each agency named in the legislation, DMH/DD/SAS puts forward a series of recommendations. The report concludes that the mandate of SL 2015-241, Section 11.19(a), while unfunded, intensified efforts to realize the law's intent within the Department of Health and Human Services, DMH/DD/SAS, DVR, and DSS; the Department of Public Instruction, Exceptional Children Division; the NC Community College System; the University of North Carolina, and the Postsecondary Education Alliance.

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Education Opportunities for Students with Disabilities

Session Law 2015-241, Section 11.19(a)

November 15, 2017

Our state's economic future depends on the quality of its workforce. We must ensure that our public education system is world-class and our students receive the best education possible. North Carolina cannot afford to fall behind other states in education.⁴

Workplaces embracing diversity by welcoming the talents of all people, including people with disabilities, are a critical part of our effort to build an inclusive community and strong economy, proving that inclusion drives innovation... In addition to the State of North Carolina and local government, the business community, and the general public, individuals and their families benefit greatly from increased employment of people with disabilities and share the responsibility in achieving this goal.⁵

*Roy Cooper, Governor
The State of North Carolina*

I. Introduction

Under Session Law (SL) 2015-241, Section 11.19(a), Education Opportunities for Students with Disabilities, the North Carolina General Assembly charged the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), through its Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services (DMH/DD/SAS), with reporting to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services concerning postsecondary education and employment opportunities for people with disabilities. This is the third and final report.

This provision directed six entities to undertake implementation activities relative to both postsecondary education and employment opportunities. These entities are the DMH/DD/SAS; the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR); the Division of Social Services (DSS); the Department of Public Instruction (DPI); the University of North Carolina (UNC); and the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS). The entities were to work “in consultation with the North Carolina Postsecondary Education Alliance, community stakeholders, and other interested parties” to:

- (1) Assess gaps and system needs to support transitions of people with disabilities to adulthood.
- (2) Develop a program and fiscal policies to expand and sustain postsecondary education and employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
- (3) Plan and implement approaches to public awareness about postsecondary education and employment for people with disabilities.
- (4) Plan and implement joint policies and common data indicators for tracking the outcomes of people with disabilities after leaving high school.
- (5) Consider options for technology to link agency databases.

The DMH/DD/SAS convened a diverse, stakeholder advisory group to assist it in implementation of the law and hosted the Advisory for Education and Employment Opportunities for Students with Disabilities for four quarterly meetings during 2017.

To support its approach to a provision of considerable breadth, in this final report, DMH/DD/SAS built upon the policy framework and facts set out in the 2016 report and incorporates that report by reference⁶. The policy framework is comprised of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA); the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)⁷; the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Community Settings Rule; and the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (HEOA); and a set of principles that are consistent with those articulated by Congress in the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000, Public Law 106-402 (DD Act).⁸

The rationale for the target population addressed largely tracks the rationale set out in the 2016 report. In the 2017 report, DMH/DD/SAS continued to interpret the Session Law's use of "people with disabilities" to be, by age, students and youth with disabilities from ages 14 through 24. As stated in the 2016 report's section on target population selection, for purposes of the *postsecondary* education prong of the legislation, students and youth are those with intellectual disabilities (ID)⁹ who plan to enter the community college or university system as *non-matriculating* students. In the final report, for purposes of the *employment* prong of the legislation, the DMH/DD/SAS uses students and youth with "those with the most significant disabilities."¹⁰ This is consistent with Rehabilitation Act and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA); is the definition that the DVR has long worked under; and includes students and youth with ID. The final report continues to view employment against the WIOA's optimal outcome of competitive integrated employment.¹¹ DMH/DD/SAS retains, in the 2017 report, the assumption of a linkage between participating in postsecondary education and training and the favorable outcome of competitive integrated employment for the target populations.

In this report, the DMH/DD/SAS assesses the requirements of the Session Law against current practice and policy in the State. It does so in consultation with the Advisory for Education and Employment Opportunities for Students with Disabilities, comprised of all agencies named in the legislation, inclusive of the Postsecondary Education Alliance, families, and youth. In collaboration with the Advisory and in consultation with each agency named, we put forward: 1) system strengths; 2) an agency- or organization-specific assessment of gaps and system needs; 3) agency- and organization-specific programs and fiscal policies that are in place to expand and sustain postsecondary education and employment opportunities; 4) recommendations relative to, and endorsed by, each of the participating agencies or organizations, with the potential to expand and sustain postsecondary education and employment opportunities, going forward; 5) existing approaches to public awareness and recommendations for future efforts; 6) recommendations regarding data indicators for tracking outcomes of the target populations, post high school; and 7) options for technology to link agency databases.

We conclude that the mandate of SL 2015-241, Section 11.19(a), while unfunded, intensified efforts to realize the intent of this Session Law within the Department of Health and Human Services, DMH/DD/SAS, DVR, and DSS; the Department of Public Instruction, Exceptional Children Division; the North Carolina Community College System; the University of North Carolina, and the Postsecondary Education Alliance. Our work together has promoted partnership and collaboration; encouraged the sharing of information; and identified viable strategies to strengthen and create new opportunities that will benefit students and youth, their families, and the State of North Carolina.

II. Principles Informing Response

The United States Congress noted in the DD Act that disability is a natural part of the human experience that in no way diminishes one's right to participate fully in all aspects of community life. The North Carolina Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services (DMH/DD/SAS), Department of Health and Human Services, embraces policies, practices, programs and approaches that are consistent with this belief. The DMH/DD/SAS, within available resources, advances programs and policies that support equal opportunity, full participation, and economic self-sufficiency.

Equal Opportunity. We support equal opportunities for the individuals and families we serve. This means treating each person and family as unique; making assessments that are based on best practice, evidence, and science; and promoting services and supports provided in the

community in the most integrated, inclusive setting and in a manner respectful of and appropriate to an individual's needs, in the context of family and culture.

Economic Self-Sufficiency. We are committed to developing and promoting services and supports that encourage self-sufficiency, including a priority on assisting people to achieve competitive integrated employment and to succeed in building assets to support life goals.

Full Participation. We seek to advance the full participation of the people we serve in the communities of which they are part. We strive to engage people in decision-making at the individual and systems level; promote self-determination, recovery, and self-advocacy; develop practices to promote informed choice; and celebrate individual and family engagement in the everyday life of community.

The DMH/DD/SAS and the members of the advisory for Session Law 2015-241, section 11.19(a) acknowledge the innovative collaborations and partnerships across this State. These are already supporting the intent of this legislation. We applaud the students and youth, families, teachers, administrators, agencies, colleges and universities, and policymakers who are working together to offer students with the most significant disabilities the opportunity to participate in postsecondary education programs and to secure competitive employment in inclusive work places. We trust that the 2015 – 2017 reports, offered to the North Carolina General Assembly under this legislation, will assist the State in bringing forward a new, brighter future for all North Carolinians.

III. System Strengths

In 2015, the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD) released *Creating Productive Futures for Youth and Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*,¹² developed over three years by the Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts at Boston. This report identified system strengths, relative to the transition to postsecondary education and competitive employment outcomes for youth with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (I/DD). These are as follows:

- The advocacy community in the State has evidenced strong support for meaningful employment outcomes for people with I/DD.
- The NCCDD promulgated an Employment First Policy¹³ that has been endorsed by many providers.
- State agency staff have developed exceptional working relationships and understand the policies of each agency.

- The Postsecondary Education Alliance is one of the largest networks in the country to focus on expanding inclusive postsecondary options for students with an intellectual disability.
- The State has a Business Leadership Network.¹⁴
- State agencies have committed champions. Throughout the state agencies, many engaged and committed staff are eager to be part of the solution as North Carolina works to improve employment outcomes for young people with I/DD.
- There are pockets of excellence that can be replicated and expanded.
- North Carolina's Association of People Supporting Employment First for All (NC APSE)¹⁵ chapter is one of the largest in the country and has the highest number of staff who have passed the Certified Employment Support Professional™¹⁶ examination.
- Individuals and families want individual employment and full participation in their communities.
- Innovation and promising practice can be found throughout North Carolina. There are school districts, local partnerships, postsecondary education programs, and progressive community agencies helping people get their own jobs.

The work of the agencies named in this Session Law builds on these shared strengths.

IV. Agency and Organization Responses to Session Law

The following sections of this report consider, against the law's requirements, the efforts and accomplishments of each of the agencies named in Education Opportunities for Students with Disabilities. The report also addresses the work of the Postsecondary Education Alliance,¹⁷ a coalition of organizations and individuals committed to advancing higher education options for students with intellectual disabilities. For each agency, the report tracks the directives of the Session Law regarding: a) gaps and system needs to support transitions to adulthood; and b) programs and fiscal policies that expand and sustain opportunities; it concludes with c) recommendations regarding employment and postsecondary education. Sections regarding public awareness, data indicators and outcomes, and linking agency databases follow. Where public awareness efforts or data collection are more particular to an agency or organization, these elements appear in the agency- or organization-specific segment of the report.

V. Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services

a. DMH/DD/SAS Gaps and System Needs to Support Transitions to Adulthood

Federal and state policy are not fully aligned to advance competitive integrated employment outcomes for people with the most significant disabilities. People with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (I/DD) are among those seeking work at minimum wage or higher in the integrated work places of their peers who do not have identified disabilities. In 2015-2016, North Carolina’s National Core Indicator (NCI) survey¹⁸¹⁹ indicated that 87% of respondents—all people with I/DD--reported not having a paid job in the community. The national average is 81%. Of the 87% of North Carolinians surveyed, 19% had community employment as a goal in their service plan, compared to 30% across other NCI states. Fifty nine percent (59%) of North Carolina respondents reported wanting a paid job in the community, compared to 47% across NCI states.²⁰

Significant numbers of individuals work at a wage below the federal minimum standard.

According to the Department of Labor’s Wage and Hour Division, as of July 1, 2017, North Carolina’s employers held 4,592 certificates issued under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act²¹ and another 575 for “patient workers”²², for a total of 5,167. The 14(c)certificates authorize the payment of subminimum wage to workers who have disabilities.²³

Through Section 511, the WIOA imposes requirements on employers who hold wage certificates to pay minimum wage to people with disabilities under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). These requirements must be satisfied before an employer may hire youth with disabilities at subminimum wages or continue to employ individuals with disabilities of any age at the subminimum wage level.

b. The DMH/DD/SAS supports programs and fiscal policies that expand and sustain postsecondary and employment opportunities by:

Working in collaboration with Adult Developmental Vocational Programs (ADVPs).²⁴

DMH/DD/SAS supports robust stakeholder engagement to effect successful transitions from facility-based services to integrated community and competitive integrated employment activities.

Supporting dissemination of evidence-based and promising policies and practices. The Division has participated, for the past three years, in the Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), US Department of Labor.

The DMH/DD/SAS used ODEP technical assistance to inform, consistent with the initiative taking place under this Session Law, its work with stakeholders.

Hosting the Employment Stakeholder Group. In response to the data and trends noted above, in state fiscal year 2016, DMH/DD/SAS began a series of meetings with providers in the state, inclusive of representatives of 14(c) minimum wage certificate holders and other employment stakeholders. Through this group, the DMH/DD/SAS promoted alignment of its service definitions with policy articulated in the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid's Home and Community Based Settings Rule²⁵ and the Workforce Innovation and Improvement Act (WIOA). Alignment of service definitions, e.g., for competitive integrated employment, will promote the legislative mandate to track outcomes for students and youth with disabilities across agencies.

The Employment Stakeholder Group also reviewed state-funded service-definitions with the intent of increasing community life engagement, access to benefits counseling, and access to career exploration. A national subject matter expert from the US Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), under ODEP's Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program, assisted this initiative and the DMH/DD/SAS between January and August of 2017. The Employment Stakeholder Workgroup's work, inclusive of ODEP's recommendations, are reflected below.

Promoting understanding of the definition of competitive integrated employment within North Carolina's employment stakeholder community. The passage of the WIOA in 2014 saw changes to key employment definitions and standards. The DMH/DD/SAS has provided technical assistance and support to promote integration of these changes into policy and practice.

Collecting data, along with other states in the country, relevant to secondary and postsecondary education for students with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (I/DD). The information is reported in the annual National Core Indicators Survey and addresses both secondary and postsecondary education. It is noteworthy that of the individual sample surveyed in 2015-2016, 7% of people with I/DD reported that they had had some college (national average 4%) and 5% reported a college degree or higher (national average 5%).²⁶

Participating actively in the Postsecondary Education Alliance. The involvement in the Alliance of DMH/DD/SAS and its partner agencies, DVR, DPI/Exceptional Children Division, and NC Community College System, has helped to strengthen the connectivity between postsecondary education and employment for students and youth with ID and other significant disabilities.

c. Recommendations Regarding Employment and Postsecondary Education: Lead Agency, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services

Promulgate a vision about quality employment and inclusive postsecondary education for people with the most significant disabilities. This vision should be inclusive of examples of good employment and higher education practices and desired outcomes. Adoption of this policy position will, over time, likely result in cost savings for the I/DD system and advance quality outcomes for adults with I/DD.

Consider conducting a cost analysis of the benefits of competitive integrated employment. This analysis would document the savings that are realized when people are competitively employed and the changes that may occur, as a result, in their reliance on state-funded services and/or other benefits.

Promote policies that advance competitive integrated employment. Explore the alignment of funding rules and payment methodologies to prioritize and incentivize competitive integrated employment and promote the advancement of opportunities for competitive integrated employment to people in segregated work and non-work day settings.

Encourage the state's involvement in innovative, systems change endeavors to advance employment opportunities for students/youth with ID.

Promulgate best and evidence-based policies and practices in competitive integrated employment. These should be broadly consistent across populations and tailored to meet individual needs.

Promulgate an administration-wide position statement on competitive integrated employment and inclusive postsecondary education as a pathway to employment and inclusive community living for students and youth, ages 14 to 24. Incorporate these statements into agency strategic plans and policies.

Consider innovative uses of existing services to support participation in postsecondary settings. The following are adapted from the 2017 recommendations to the State of ODEP's Subject Matter Expert, whose technical assistance informed the efforts of the Employment Stakeholder Work Group. In collaboration with the Division of Medical Assistance (DMA) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), as appropriate:

- **Consider revisions to the Supported Employment service definition to create two, separate definitions.** Under the proposed service definitions, "competitive integrated employment-individual" would be available to any beneficiary, ages 16 and older, for whom competitive integrated employment has not been achieved, and/or has been

interrupted or intermittent. The definition also includes supported employment-small group. These services would be provided in a manner that promotes integration and interaction, in regular business, industry and community settings for groups of two to four individuals who are working or seeking work. The proposed outcome of this service is to obtain and/or maintain individual competitive integrated employment.

- **Consider adding a new service to support individuals in increasing their understanding of employment interests, options, and skills; as well as to support individuals in building the skills and aptitudes that develop and maintain competitive integrated employment.**
- **Develop and propose qualifications for Direct Support Professionals for Supported Employment services.** Such qualifications should be inclusive of either the minimum number of hours of training on pre-determined topics prior to providing services *or* specified modules of the College of Employment Services.
- **Promote competency-and values-based training in employment services, inclusive of training on work incentives, for Direct Support Professionals.**
- **Consider modifying the Day Supports service definition.** The definition could be modified to include career and employment exploration as an expected activity for transition of working-age individuals receiving the service. Modification would likely increase interest in pursuing competitive, integrated employment and reduce reliance on facility-based models of service.
- **Consider modifying the Community Networking service definition.** Presently, this service is critical to students building skill sets in postsecondary settings to live an inclusive lifestyle in the community. The definition could be strengthened to promote career and employment exploration as an expected activity for transition and working-age individuals receiving the service.
- **Explore adding a time-limited, targeted form of work incentives benefits counseling to the definition of Supported Employment-Individual Services.** Consider modeling the service after the Tennessee Medicaid waiver service of Benefits Counseling.
- **Align the Medicaid 1915(b)(3) service definitions concerned with employment and employment-related services with the Innovations Waiver and state-funded service definitions.**
- **Continue efforts to achieve rate consistency for Supported Employment-Individual Services and Supported-Employment-Small Group Services.** Consistent and adequate rates promote hiring and retention of qualified staff. Clear definitions of best practices and funding strategies that will ensure provider stability can assist those served in becoming more independent and requiring less support.

VI. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

a. Gaps and Systems Needs to Support Transitions to Adulthood

Mandated services afford an opportunity and a challenge to build capacity. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) authorized a new category of transition services that are likely to be of real assistance to youth with significant disabilities. These services, known as Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS)²⁷ have potential to “expand and sustain postsecondary education and employment opportunities” for students and youth, ages 14-21, with disabilities. The provision of PETS to North Carolina’s students with disabilities, and the tracking of these services, requires substantial capacity-building for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). Under the WIOA, DVR must allocate fifteen percent (15%) of its federal Vocational Rehabilitation grant to the provision of PETS, to those students with disabilities who are eligible or *potentially* eligible for the DVR program. DVR estimates that the legislation expands its service footprint by increasing the Division’s youth population, ages 14 - 21, from approximately 24,000 youth served in 2015 to more than 64,000 youth.

Longer periods of time in service also require expanded capacity. The WIOA extends the period of supported employment from a maximum of 18 months to a maximum of 24 months. The state must manage larger numbers of persons in pursuit of competitive, integrated employment, for longer periods of time.

New services exclude many postsecondary education students with ID. The federal definition of PETS explicitly includes students in postsecondary education; however, the services are only available to those students who are in recognized postsecondary credential or certificate-awarding programs or students who are simultaneously enrolled in secondary programs, under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and *matriculating* postsecondary programs.²⁸ Thus, PETS are not available to many students with intellectual disabilities (ID), who are enrolled in North Carolina’s *non-matriculating* community colleges or university-based, postsecondary education programs.

b. The DVR supports programs and fiscal policies that expand and sustain postsecondary and employment opportunities by:

Assuming new leadership roles. The WIOA is establishing a larger leadership role for North Carolina’s DVR programs, as youth transition from school to adult life.²⁹ DVR’s staff has a strong command of and commitment to implementing the WIOA fully.

Creating new paths to competitive integrated employment. The WIOA identifies the need to assure that individuals, including those with the most significant disabilities, are encouraged and permitted to pursue competitive integrated employment. This mandate places an emphasis on youth with disabilities, ages 14 - 24. In response, DVR is working to develop

policies and practices that create clear paths for individuals to pursue competitive integrated employment, beginning with PETS. These paths are supported by strong agency and community partnerships, including those partners named in SL 2015-241, Section 11.19(a).

Implementing incentives to support competitive integrated employment. The WIOA prohibits employers who are Federal Labor Standards Act (FLSA) section 14(c) certificate-holders from hiring and paying those workers with a disability, 24 years of age or younger and hired after July 22, 2016, a subminimum wage *unless* the employer has reviewed, verified, and maintained copies of documentation that the youth has completed three requirements. These requirements are transition services under IDEA and /or PETS; vocational rehabilitation; and career counseling and information and referral—each a service designed to improve access to competitive integrated employment.³⁰

The WIOA furthermore prohibits employers with section 14(c) certificates from continuing to pay a subminimum wage to anyone with a disability, regardless of age, unless the Designated State Unit (in North Carolina, DVR) provides that person with career counseling, information and referrals every six months during the first year of employment, and annually thereafter.

Actively supporting the growth of Project SEARCH™. This international model, first introduced to the state by the NC Council on Developmental Disabilities, engages students in an internship in their senior year of high school with the goal of competitive work. It has an 80% success rate and involves multiple collaborators, e.g., host business; DVR; the school system; the NC Community College System; Local Management Entities-Managed Care Organizations (LME-MCOs); and Community Rehabilitation Programs. The 14 Project Search™ sites in North Carolina, inclusive of those receiving support from DVR, collectively served approximately 100 students in preparing for and obtaining employment in the 2016-2017 school year.

Providing financing for postsecondary education. DVR implemented policies in May 2015 to permit partial, financial sponsorship of postsecondary training expenses for eligible DVR clients enrolled in non-degree conferring programs for students with I/DD. Sponsorship has been approved for six (6) in-state, public colleges, universities, or community colleges and two (2) out-of-state colleges/universities. The policies also permit DVR to provide supported employment services, subsequent to a student's participation in these postsecondary programs, if needed by the individual.

Expanding support for work-based learning. In September 2016, DVR implemented revised internship policies. The policies significantly increased the categories of individuals with disabilities who could participate in Division-sponsored internships. This policy change included a significant expansion to students with disabilities. The policy, furthermore, decreased the regulatory burden and liability for host businesses, and added a workplace skills training component for individuals who require soft skill supports to participate in an internship.

Realizing the promise of the WIOA's PETS program. In September 2016, DVR issued a Request for Applications (RFA) for organizations and agencies to provide the WIOA PETS to students with disabilities. DVR has awarded up to \$3.2 million for initiatives that provide two or more of the following Pre-Employment Transition services to students in the State: (1) job exploration counseling; (2) work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities, or experience outside of the traditional school setting (including internships); (3) counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education; (4) workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living; and (5) instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring.

Enhancing accountability with data. DVR is collecting key data. The WIOA's proposed performance accountability measures for the Youth Program are as follows:³¹

- The percentage of program participants who are in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment, during the second quarter after exit from the program.
- The percentage of program participants who are in an education or training program or in unsubsidized employment in the fourth quarter after exit.
- The median earnings in the second quarter after participants exit from the program.
- The postsecondary credential attainment and high school completion of program participants who have exited from the Youth Program under the WIOA, Title I.
- The percentage of participants who, during a program year, are in education or training programs that lead to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment, and who are achieving measurable skill gains.

c. Recommendations Regarding Employment and Postsecondary Services: Lead Agency, DVR

Strengthen collaboration between the Centers for Independent Living (CILs)³² and Local Education Agencies (LEAs). The cross-disability Centers for Independent Living (CILs) have a focus on youth that is mandated under Rehabilitation Act. Students could benefit from CILs expanding their training with LEAs on youth transition services, specific to both competitive integrated employment and postsecondary education.

Encourage the CILs and the NC Council on Developmental Disabilities to assist in promoting practices and policies that advance Competitive Integrated Employment.

Promote high school work experience and high parental expectations as a research-based practices. The biggest predictors of post-school employment for youth with disabilities are work experience during high school and parents who expect a student will work. National studies indicate that Vocational Rehabilitation funds spent on youth *before* they have exited

high school result in improved employment outcomes. Work with stakeholders to use PETS as a tool to improve the transition of students with disabilities from school to postsecondary education or an employment outcome. Work with families and students to promote higher expectations about post-high school outcomes.

Encourage expansion of partnerships to allow for customized employment and supports for career exploration that are tailored to the unique interests and abilities of each youth. To this end, DVR has entered into a technical assistance agreement with the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) to promote model fidelity in customized employment³³ among its stakeholders.

Use person-centered approaches to access in-demand employment opportunities. The WIOA emphasizes both demand-side (employer) strategies and improved and coordinated services to job seekers with barriers, including youth with disabilities. This dual-customer approach is reflected in the provision of PETS work-based learning experiences; in the scope of services provided as a part of an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE); and in the vocational rehabilitation common performance measures, especially those associated with credential attainment and effectiveness in serving employers. DVR should continue to leverage partnerships developed through networks--such as local workforce development boards, the NC Business Leadership Network, local Chambers of Commerce, and the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation's (CSAVR) National Employment Team (NET)--to be informed of the needs of business. This effort will best prepare and market NC's talent pool of individuals with disabilities. DVR's use of the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP)³⁴, a talent matching database commissioned by CSAVR, will be a means for connecting young job seekers with skilled positions at major companies across the nation who value workforce diversification.

Consider pursuing authorized PETS activities. If funds are available after providing the *required*³⁵ PETS activities, the DVR may further the goals of this legislation by pursuing additional activities that are *authorized*³⁶ under the WIOA. These include:

- Implementing effective strategies to increase the likelihood of independent living and inclusion in communities and competitive integrated workplaces;
- Developing and improving strategies for individuals with intellectual disabilities and individuals with significant disabilities to live independently, participate in postsecondary educational experiences, and obtain and retain competitive integrated employment;
- Providing instruction to vocational rehabilitation counselors, school transition personnel, and other persons supporting students with disabilities;
- Disseminating information about innovative, effective, and efficient approaches;

- Coordinating activities with transition services provided by Local Education Agencies under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;
- Applying evidence-based findings to improve policy, procedure, practice, and the preparation of personnel, to better achieve the goals of this section of the WIOA;
- Developing model transition demonstration projects;
- Establishing or supporting multistate or regional partnerships involving states, Local Education Agencies, designated state units, developmental disabilities agencies, private businesses, or other participants to achieve the goal of this section of the WIOA; and
- Disseminating information and strategies to improve the transition to postsecondary activities of individuals who are members of traditionally unserved populations.

Consider use of PETS funds in after-school programs to incorporate discussions about jobs and careers and potentially introduce some pre-vocational training.

Collaborate with higher education programs to expand access to DVR’s postsecondary education funding for students with ID. DVR funds postsecondary education in a student’s final semester of college. Its policy increases students’ access to training support services by funding a portion of room and board expenses when the student participates, during the final year, in the work-based learning component of a CTP/TPSID program. Ideally, students would be able to receive employment supports throughout postsecondary education; however, more information and data about the outputs and outcomes of the programs are necessary for DVR to determine appropriate sponsorship rates. The development, across inclusive postsecondary education programs, of common performance measures and industry-recognized certification would assist the DVR in making this policy change.

Promote policy change to afford students with ID access to PETS in postsecondary education programs. Work with the UNC postsecondary education programs to seek clarification from the US Department of Education, Think College at the Institute for Community Inclusion, and/or the national accreditation work group regarding access to Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) for students in Comprehensive Transition Programs (CTPs)³⁷ and Transition Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSIDs)³⁸. The DVR has begun this effort. It recently submitted to the US Department of Education a request that the definition of “student with a disability” be expanded to include postsecondary education students enrolled in postsecondary education programs with the TPSID or CTP designation.

VII. Division of Social Services

a. Gaps and Systems Needs to Support Transitions to Adulthood

The Division of Social Services (DSS) is not part of the Unified State Plan under the WIOA. The WIOA's mandates strongly accrue to the benefit of students and youth with disabilities and promote collaboration to achieve the Act's goals.

b. The DSS supports programs and fiscal policies that expand and sustain postsecondary and employment opportunities by:

Offering methods to finance educational and vocational goals. The WIOA-funded youth programs align well with the DSS's Chafee program (LINKS). LINKS assists youth who are currently or were formerly in foster care to complete postsecondary education and training. The Education and Training Voucher component of the program offers young people, currently or formerly in foster care, with a method to finance educational or vocational goals. NC Reach Scholarships (SL 2007-323) apply to the cost of attendance at the undergraduate level at any of the 16 branches of the University of North Carolina (UNC) or at any community college and include case management services.

Building public awareness of the Education and Training Voucher program. Orphan Foundation of America, DBA Foster Care to Success, engages in community outreach to build public awareness of the voucher program and identify qualified applicants. This includes providing information to current and former foster youth; county child welfare agencies; youth organizations and service providers; and colleges, high schools, and other entities that are connected to youth.

Additionally, Foster Care to Success engages in awareness activities relating to the NC Reach program, e.g., outreach to eligible foster youth; former foster youth adopted out of care after the age of 12 or who aged out of care at 18; adoptive parents; foster families; social workers; state universities and community college financial aid staff; and others through training and events throughout the state. Foster Care to Success also maintains websites with information regarding both programs and distributes printed materials to stakeholders and youth-serving organizations throughout the state.

Supporting youth to remain in foster care until age 21. North Carolina General Statute 108A-48 extends the provision of foster care benefits to young adults between 18 years of age and up to 21 years of age, giving youth additional, family unit assistance to enter postsecondary education or employment.³⁹ This allows youth to live outside a licensed foster care facility in a college or university dormitory or other independent living arrangement. Expansion of foster care also allows young people who cannot complete educational or employment requirements due to a medical condition or disability to remain in foster care to age 21. This policy assists in

providing youth with the family support they need to secure employment or enter postsecondary education.

c. Recommendations Regarding Employment and Postsecondary Services: Lead Agency, Division of Social Services

Increase outreach to students and youth with ID and other significant disabilities about opportunities for inclusive postsecondary education and competitive integrated employment.

Continue to enhance services to young adults with ID, particularly those who are in DSS's Foster Care 18-21 program, to increase access to postsecondary education and employment opportunities.

Participate in discussions regarding implementation of the Unified State Plan under the

WIOA. DSS's informal participation will strengthen partnerships among DMH/DD/SAS, DVR, DPI and the NCCCS, to the benefit of students and youth with the most significant disabilities who are in foster care.

VIII. Exceptional Children Division, Department of Public Instruction

a. Gaps and Needs to Support Transition to Adulthood

Information about opportunities for students with significant disabilities is not consistently available in schools. The secondary education system does not make available standardized materials on competitive employment for students with the most significant disabilities or inclusive postsecondary education for students with intellectual disabilities (ID).

Schools have not optimized opportunities to raise expectations for students with significant disabilities. Raising expectations must start in elementary school, well before students reach transition age under the nation's special education law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Relative to some states, transition starts early in North Carolina. There is, however, no requirement that transition start any earlier than age 14. Given the length of time children and their families are engaged with schools, schools are uniquely positioned to provide high-quality information and resources that set expectations and support young people on a pathway to higher education and employment. A developmentally appropriate, life-span approach to the production and dissemination of public awareness materials within the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) could offer clear and consistent messages to students with the most significant disabilities and families about the value of and options for pursuing postsecondary education and competitive employment.

Students served in the Exceptional Children Division programs face a “graduation gap.” DPI’s data indicates that there is a gap in the graduation rate in North Carolina between students in the general population and those with an Individualized Education Program (IEP).⁴⁰

Professional development programs that prepare teachers for expanded responsibilities in the transition process are needed.

Transition services vary from community to community. Standard program options and transition services vary in quality from one Local Education Agency (LEA) to the next.

b. The Exceptional Children Division, Department of Public Instruction, supports programs and fiscal policies that expand and sustain postsecondary and employment opportunities by:

Providing technical support for the Individuals with Education Act (IDEA). IDEA offers a strong framework for implementing SL 2015-241, sec. 11.19(a). The IEP mandated by IDEA requires, for example, measurable, postsecondary education goals based on age-appropriate transition assessments that are related to training, education, employment and, where appropriate, independent living skills. IDEA further requires provision of the services needed to assist the child in reaching those goals.

Managing transition services, beginning at age 14. In North Carolina, transition services start at age 14, in contrast to states that do not make these services available until age 16.

Preparing students with significant disabilities for work and or postsecondary education. DPI’s Occupational Course of Study prepares students with intellectual and other disabilities for work and/or postsecondary education. The course of study requires school-based, community-based, and paid employment work hours.

Promulgating strong data collection strategies. DPI tracks outcomes, post high school, through its State Performance Plan. Data collection is required for certain key indicators that are relevant to transition to postsecondary education and employment.

- Indicator 13, Secondary Transition, assesses for youth with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), aged 16 and above, the presence of 1) a plan that includes appropriate, measurable, postsecondary goals that are annually updated and based upon an age-appropriate transition assessment; 2) transition services that will reasonably enable the student to meet those postsecondary goals; and 3) annual IEP goals related to the student’s transition service needs.
- The State Systemic Improvement Plan includes a focus on improving the graduation rate for students with IEPs.

- Indicator 14, Post-School Outcome Survey, addresses competitive employment and postsecondary education. Under this indicator, DPI collects data on the “percent of youth who had IEPs, are no longer in secondary school and who have been competitively employed, enrolled in some type of postsecondary school, or both, within one year of leaving high school.”
- Within the next two years, the Exceptional Children Accountability Tracking System (ECATS) Indicator 14 survey results will be entered in the ECATS at the district level. This will allow LEAs and Charters immediate access to data for program planning purposes.

Participating in data collection partnerships. DPI has participated in NC SchoolWorks,⁴¹ a five-agency partnership to automate cross-agency reporting for each student in the state’s postsecondary education systems.

Promoting transition best practices. In the coming year, the Exceptional Children Division plans to use the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) predictors to develop and pilot a tool that incorporates the transition process in grades pre-K through 12, assisting, in the early grades, the setting of expectations for positive, post-school outcomes.

The State Transition Plan supports best practice. It includes the identification of a Transition Lead for every LEA and Charter serving the 8th - 12th grades; the development of a Transition Toolkit with resources for teachers, students, and families; transition topic webinars for teachers and school staff; and, the development of a Transition Leads network and coaching component.

Implementing provisions of the WIOA to the benefit of secondary students. Coordination in the provision of services is addressed in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between DPI and DVR. The MOA specifies how students with disabilities, including those who are potentially eligible for DVR services, will be identified and served in compliance with federal regulations. Because of the WIOA’s Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS), more students in high school now have access to career and technical education and/or are able get a job while in high school, likely leading to better employment outcomes.

c. Recommendations Regarding Employment and Postsecondary Services: Lead Agency, Exceptional Children Services, Department of Public Instruction

Strengthen public awareness among students, families, teachers and administrators of options for competitive integrated employment and postsecondary education. DPI should develop a fact sheet for families that underscores the importance of expecting and advocating for competitive employment outcomes for their children with the most significant disabilities. This same information sheet should include information about postsecondary education

opportunities, with links to, e.g., Think College⁴² and the NC Postsecondary Education Alliance. The fact sheet should be given to families at the time the child's first IEP is written.

Provide families with information about work incentives for those receiving or applying for Supplemental Security Income (SSI)⁴³ disability benefits. Special rules make it possible for people with disabilities receiving Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to work and still receive monthly payments and Medicare or Medicaid. Social Security calls these rules "work incentives." Among these incentives are, e.g., the Student Earned Income Exclusion,⁴⁴ Continued Medicaid Eligibility,⁴⁵ and the Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS).⁴⁶ Helping families to understand that individuals can work in integrated settings and continue to receive benefits is critical to effecting systems change.

Provide families with information on the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Account.⁴⁷ NC ABLE, managed by the North Carolina Department of Treasury, is a part of a federal program that helps individuals with disabilities save while preserving their SSI and Medicaid. Those savings may be used for "disability qualified expenses." ABLE account savings can be used to support both postsecondary education and employment goals. Information about ABLE accounts should be provided to families, in the context of IEP meetings, at the time the child's first IEP is written.

Strengthen internet access to information. Build on the *Roads to Learning and Earning* website for students with disabilities, originally funded to Western Carolina University by the NC Council on Developmental Disabilities.⁴⁸

- DPI is presently tailoring this tool to be responsive to all 14 disability categories it is required to address.

Consider the development of training for North Carolina educators specific to the transition needs of students with disabilities. Several universities in North Carolina, e.g., the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, offer a pre-service course specific to transition. Other options in the country include:

- University of Massachusetts Boston: www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/advisories/TSEguidelines.pdf
- Lesley University: www.lesley.edu/endorsement/transition-specialist/
- Bowling Green State University: www.bgsu.edu/education-and-human-development/school-of-intervention-services/special-education/graduate-programs-in-special-education/secondary-transition-certificate.html

Such training could build capacity around access to inclusive postsecondary education and competitive integrated employment.

- **Develop protocols for student-directed IEPs.** Notably, DPI has offered a Transition Institute on this topic. An excellent resource for self-directed transition planning was developed by the University of Oklahoma: www.ou.edu/content/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow/transition-education-materials/student-directed-transition-planning.html.

Review Indicator 14 data with DMH/DD/SAS and DVR as it becomes available. This practice can promote the identification of steps that will lead to continued improvement.⁴⁹

Highlight successful transitions to postsecondary education and/or to employment partnerships among education, other agencies, and businesses.

- **Inform families of the benefits of DVR's services.** This counseling should occur before the student becomes eligible for vocational rehabilitation services. The discussion about the services available from the DVR should begin at IEP meetings when the student reaches the age of 14 and annually thereafter.
- **Consider ideas from Cleveland County School District's transition program.** This program is a team-based approach to transition. Once a month, adult service providers and others from the community meet to hear students present their needs and wants. The input is then factored into the student's IEP and services. This design brings the student, providers, and other community members to the table early in the transition process and helps to bridge the transition from school to competitive employment. Self-advocacy strategies are part of the curriculum, and students have access to assistive technology, such as iPads, to assist with instruction. A transition specialist, a job coach, and occupational preparation teachers support the classroom teachers. Students are linked to adult services as early as their sophomore year and encouraged to get on the Medicaid Registry of Unmet Need as soon as possible.⁵⁰

Explore dual enrollment to assist in funding the participation of students with ID in postsecondary education programs. Explore the potential for using IDEA funds to support the participation of students with ID in university-based, inclusive postsecondary education programs or NCCC's Continuing Education programs.⁵¹

Encourage each high school to have an annual transition fair.

Connect transition goals with economic goals. Employ, where appropriate, the *Upward to Financial Stability* training, developed under funding from the NC Council on Developmental Disabilities by the National Disability Institute.

IX. The University of North Carolina System

a. Gaps and Needs to Support Transition to Adulthood

There is an unmet need in the University of North Carolina (UNC) System for postsecondary programs that accept students with intellectual disabilities (ID). The NC Department of Public Instruction reports that 717 students with ID-Mild exited high school in 2016; however, in that year, fewer than 80 college-age students with intellectual disabilities were served by universities across North Carolina.⁵² The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) had 106 applications for Academic Year 2017-2018 for its Integrative Community Studies Program (formerly, Beyond Academics™)⁵³. Twenty (20) of those students were enrolled. While some students were accepted at colleges other than UNCG or were not able to attend for financial reasons, the ratio of unmet need appears to be approximately 80% on the UNCG campus. Acceptance rates from other programs in the UNC System are similar. According to the Think College data base for this year, Appalachian State's Scholar's with Diverse Abilities' acceptance rate was 27%; (18 applicants for 5 slots) and Western Carolina University's University Participants (UP) program had an 18% acceptance rate (22 applicants for 4 slots).⁵⁴ In sum, about four out of five students who are seeking to access higher education in UNC's inclusive postsecondary education programs for people with ID are not able to do so.

The cost of postsecondary education is a barrier for many. Since the advent of inclusive postsecondary education programs for students with ID is a relatively new phenomenon, few families have saved money for college for these young people.

Funding inclusive postsecondary education programs for students with ID is inadequate. Enrollment counts control the amount of a state dollars a university receives. When a student is non-matriculating, the university receives no funds from the North Carolina General Assembly. While students with ID pay tuition, the higher education programs that serve them struggle to identify funds to cover support services and core staff, especially when model demonstration grant funding ends.

The culture of the educational practices in higher education creates barriers for students with ID. Curriculum, physical layout, and teaching and testing methods create significant barriers to access, retention, and graduation for many students with disabilities, particularly those with the most significant disabilities.

Disability service providers must adapt to support young adults, post college. Young adults with ID are likely to make significant gains in their level of independence during the college years. Post college, service providers must adapt, so as not to increase unnecessarily students' and youths' dependence on service systems.

Research is necessary to identify evidence-based and best practice approaches for meeting the needs of students with ID. There is emerging evidence that postsecondary education for students with ID may reverse unemployment, low wages, reliance on more costly services, levels of isolation and dependence on parents and family members. Still, there is a need for both qualitative and quantitative research and consistent data collection, across sites, to bolster early findings.

Programs must ensure a return on investment. Sending any student to college involves a significant expenditure of time and money. Across programs for students with ID, a measurable and meaningful return on investment will help to grow options and opportunities. There is a need to articulate clear expectations for students and youth, families, and schools themselves and to evaluate programs on an on-going basis.

It is not clear how expansion of inclusive postsecondary education programs will occur in the UNC System. There is no mandate from UNC as to serving students with ID.

b. The University of North Carolina (UNC) supports programs and fiscal policies that expand and sustain postsecondary and employment opportunities by:

Serving as a beacon for diverse and growing postsecondary education options for students with ID. The UNC System is responding to advocacy from the State’s high school graduates with ID and their families. North Carolina has three Comprehensive Transition Programs (CTPs)⁵⁵ that help to set a high standard. Importantly, students in CTPs can access federal financial aid to help pay the cost of college attendance. North Carolina also has several, model programs: a four-year program at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and two, two-year programs at Appalachian State (Scholars with Diverse Abilities) and Western Carolina University (University Participant Program). With the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) and these programs, there are close to 30 postsecondary education programs for students with ID throughout North Carolina.

Planning for new programs in inclusive postsecondary education is underway. These include those at UNC-Pembroke and UNC-Wilmington. A steering committee at UNC-Chapel Hill is developing a program that will be known as Higher Education, Employment, Living Success-University Participant or HEELS UP. As UNC-Chapel Hill is ranked high for autism research, this program’s expertise can bring innovative approaches to addressing the learning needs of students with ID who are on the autism spectrum.

Exploring innovative means of funding postsecondary education programs for students with ID. Promoting innovation around the time of the passage of the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, the NC Division of MH/DD/SAS awarded three “Transformation Grants” to the State’s first higher education program for students with ID, Beyond Academics at the University

of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG). The funds, which closely followed on a 2007 grant to Beyond Academics from the NC Council on Developmental Disabilities, assisted UNCG to develop, implement and study a system of support services for students with ID attending college. Today, the non-profit service provider supporting UNCG's program uses both state funds and Medicaid Home and Community Based Services funds through the NC Innovations Waiver.

c. Recommendations Regarding Employment and Postsecondary Services: Lead Agency, University of North Carolina

Promote the adoption of principles of Universal Design for Learning in higher education. The design of education products and environments to meet the needs of potential students with a wide variety of characteristics, without the need for adaptation or specialized design, will benefit many students, faculty and community members, not just those with disabilities.⁵⁶

Examine need and barriers to inclusive postsecondary education. UNC's General Administration should examine the unmet need for and barriers to increased access to inclusive postsecondary education programs for students with ID. Based on this examination, the General Administration should consider innovative policies and practices that could address the growing interest of students with ID in participating in UNC programs.

Leverage Medicaid and state funds and employ innovative approaches to support students with ID in postsecondary education. Students need services and supports on campus. Build capacity with both Medicaid and state-funded services to tailor supports to individual needs. Explore ways that Medicaid services (e.g., community navigators, services provided by Direct Support Professionals) can be more broadly applied or adapted to support individuals in postsecondary education settings and in the workplace.

Strengthen connections with NC Independent Colleges and Universities. Representatives from the NC Independent Colleges and Universities Association served on the Advisory. These programs represent an untapped resource for the development of postsecondary education programs for students with ID.

Incorporate outcomes data for postsecondary students with ID to increase awareness and support. While the sample size is still small, for students in the UNCG Beyond Academics program, there has been a 56% average decrease in individualized supports used while a student is enrolled in the program. Additionally, six months after graduation, for the years 2014 and 2015, 61.5% of Beyond Academics students were employed, comparing highly favorably with national data on other students with ID.⁵⁷

Explore better approaches to cross-system service coordination. The services available on campus from Disability Services Offices (DSO) and other college-based programs and disability

services (e.g., through Medicaid, DVR, and DMH/DD/SAS), through Local Management Entities-Managed Care Organizations (LME-MCOs) and their provider networks, are not always coordinated. This is, in part, because the systems may not be familiar with what each offer nor have sufficient experience creating the integrated complement of services and supports unique to each student. As a result, accessing necessary academic, personal assistance, and residential services and supports, when and where postsecondary students with ID need them, is challenging. The issue is one faced by other students with complex disabilities. Collaboration among students, families, the DSO, and LME-MCOs/providers to make the best use of available services/supports from each system and more seamlessly integrate these into college life could greatly support student success.

Begin collaborating with service providers early in the student’s postsecondary years.

Transition, post college, will be more successful if providers are given the opportunity to fine tune their support services while the student is still in college.

Provide students with ID with the supports and experiences necessary to seek and sustain competitive integrated employment through the State’s postsecondary education programs.

Increase opportunities for postsecondary education for youth with significant disabilities that include competitive integrated work experiences.

Strengthen the operational infrastructure. Support the development and implementation of common outcomes measures and an accredited standard for postsecondary education programs for students with intellectual disabilities.

- Consider adoption, across all UNC programs, of the Model Accreditation Standards for Higher Education Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability.⁵⁸

Strengthen the collaboration to achieve inclusive community outcomes in inclusive postsecondary education. Initiate collaborations with DMH/DD/SAS, DVR, DPI, DSS, NCCCS and DMA to create a shared, interagency, “policy pathway” for students with ID who choose postsecondary education programs as a part of the transition to adulthood.

X. North Carolina Community College System

a. Gaps and Needs to Support Transition to Adulthood

Insufficient funding. Appropriations to the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) to implement the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act -Adult Education and Family Literacy Services program (WIOA-AEFLA) are not sufficient to cover the State’s 58 Community Colleges.

Lack of a systemic approach to programming. NCCCS does not yet have a systemic approach to meeting the postsecondary and employment needs of students with the most significant disabilities.

Data Gaps. While Community Colleges offer transition opportunities to students and youth with ID, data is not collected about the programs and student outcomes.

Pathways to competitive integrated employment limited in some communities. Smaller Community Colleges are challenged to implement pathways to competitive integrated employment.

b. The NCCCS supports programs and fiscal policies that expand and sustain postsecondary and employment opportunities by:

Using the WIOA-AEFLA funds to promote collaboration: These funds:

- Align adult education and literacy activities with other core programs and community partners through partnership with NCWorks, the State’s workforce development network.
- Expand the professional workforce development system to include administrative and data support staff.
- Deliver technical assistance through state-level, subject area specialists, disseminating research on evidence-based practices related to employment skills, integrated education and training, instructional technology, partnership development, and core program alignment.
- Collaborate with Transition Lead staff, through DPI, to inform families and students with ID of local community college program offerings.

Promoting strategies that support students with low skills, including those with intellectual disabilities, in achieving workforce success.

- The WIOA’s funds also support NCCCS’s College and Career Readiness programs. These programs offer services to students with intellectual disabilities (ID) through the Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs. The services include contextualized instruction; integrating content standards; assisting adults to become literate; teaching the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and economic self-sufficiency; and transition to postsecondary education and training.
- Several Community Colleges across the state have developed work-based learning models for students with ID, known as Career Colleges. The Career Colleges offer a one-year to two-year, postsecondary certificate program for adults with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (I/DD).

- Five community colleges offer other, innovative programs specific to students with I/DD. Project SEARCH™ is offered to students with I/DD as a transition program from high school to employment. It serves young adults with I/DD, ages 18-30.

Transitioning to a career pathway model in which students will be required to enroll in classes that develop knowledge, skills, and abilities related to future careers. These changes, required by the WIOA, will result in a robust, statewide network of postsecondary institutions that will build the capacity of the workforce, including those with I/DD.

Advancing curriculum development for students with ID through the WIOA's Unified State Plan. NCCCS is partnering with, e.g., NCWorks, DVR, and DPI to enhance its offering for students with ID.

Building a foundation to serve learners through the WIOA's Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (WIOA-AEFLA). The WIOA-AEFLA, administered through NCCCS, requires that grant recipients consider how they will serve learners at the lowest skill levels. Funded activities form a solid foundation for continued efforts to address postsecondary education for students with ID.

Monitoring and evaluating the quality and improvement of Adult Education and Family Literacy Services. This process relies on the WIOA-AEFLA funds and includes data analysis, as well as onsite monitoring, regarding administrative and instructional best practices. It also expands the implementation of the NC Adult Education Content Standards consistently across all providers

Facilitating the provision of technical assistance in employment. The WIOA-AEFLA providers in the NCCCS are provided with technical assistance in developing employment strategies, inclusive of assistance for students with ID. NCCCS makes support available by facilitating ongoing webinars and showcasing effective programs, such as Project SEARCH™, Transitions Academy, and Career College.

c. Recommendations Regarding Employment and Postsecondary Services: Lead Agency, North Carolina Community College System

Restructure services for students with the most significant disabilities to focus on inclusive, job-driven training opportunities. Such opportunities will lead to better employment outcomes for individuals with I/DD. Emphasize training that is structured, time-limited, and aligned with the employment opportunities available in the various regions of the state.

Advance NCCCS's no cost Adult Basic Education (ABE) program as an option for more students with ID. Increase collaboration with DPI in Individual Transition Team meetings under IDEA to

inform families and students with ID of the program offerings at their local community colleges that offer work-based skills for employment opportunities.

Develop employer-based competencies for Project SEARCH™ to develop an industry-recognized credential for the program. An industry-recognized credential will allow a collaboration between NCCCS' Continuing Education and Basic Skills programs to benefit of the Project SEARCH™ program. The Basic Skills funding will support classroom instruction and the Continuing Education funding will support the apprenticeship component of the program. Such a collaboration will support a full-time instructor to assist the students through the instruction and apprenticeship site opportunities.

Explore an articulation agreement between the NCCCS and UNC for students with ID.

Postsecondary education options for individuals with ID exist both within the NCCCS and within the UNC system. The current NC Comprehensive Articulation Agreement has as its objective the smooth transfer of student credits between the two systems. An agreement tailored to NCCCS's and UNC's work with students with ID could similarly facilitate the smooth transfer across these postsecondary programs. This would both increase options for students with ID and enhance the educational advancement to assist in obtaining competitive integrated employment.

Engage Workforce Boards. Strengthen collaboration with the Workforce Board in each community college to learn about and identify employment opportunities for students with most significant disabilities.

XI. Postsecondary Education Alliance and Other Stakeholders

This legislation required DMH/DD/SAS and other agencies within the Administration to work “in consultation with the North Carolina Postsecondary Education Alliance, community stakeholders, and other interested parties.” The DMH/DD/SAS did so by forming an advisory inclusive of this cohort.⁵⁹

The North Carolina Postsecondary Education Alliance, coordinated by the Carolina Institute for Developmental Disabilities⁶⁰, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, is comprised of nearly 150 stakeholders representing students, families, educators, agency and inclusive postsecondary education administrators, a legislator, and other community members. It advocates for both existing postsecondary programs for students with ID and autism, as well as continued expansion of these programs. The Alliance's goal is to expand and improve inclusive, postsecondary education opportunities for individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (I/DD), leading to successful outcomes in employment and

independent living. All agencies named in SL 2015-241, sec. 11.19(a) are members of the alliance.

a. Gaps and Needs to Support Transition to Adulthood

No comprehensive plan. The State does not have a comprehensive, interagency plan to increase the number of students with intellectual disabilities served in inclusive postsecondary programs.

Insufficient data. There is insufficient data to assess the policy impact of inclusive postsecondary education for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

No standardized credential. There is no standardized, inclusive postsecondary education credential for students with intellectual disabilities (ID).

No approach to accreditation. There is no standard accreditation for inclusive postsecondary programs for students with ID.

Public awareness is limited. Information about options for inclusive postsecondary education for students with ID is limited.

Inadequate linkages to business. Linkages between business and industry and inclusive postsecondary education programs need to be stronger.

b. The Postsecondary Education Alliance supports programs and fiscal policies that expand and sustain postsecondary and employment opportunities by:

Sharing Information. The Alliance's efforts include hosting quarterly meetings, disseminating quarterly newsletters and other information, and providing technical assistance. Specifically, the Alliance shares information and resources among colleges and universities about national standards and successful outcomes; increases awareness among families, teachers, and transition coordinators of postsecondary options for North Carolinians with intellectual disabilities and autism; and offers periodic, capacity-building workshops.

Collaborating with a regional network of postsecondary education alliances. The NC Postsecondary Education Alliance is a founding member of the South Eastern Postsecondary Education Alliance (SEPSEA). The Fifth SEPSEA Capacity-Building Institute (CBI) is scheduled to be held in North Carolina in 2019, creating the opportunity for many more North Carolina stakeholders to learn about postsecondary education for students with ID.

c. Recommendations Regarding Employment and Postsecondary Services: Lead Organization, Postsecondary Education Alliance

Develop and promulgate a plan for strengthening the coordinative functions necessary to expanding inclusive postsecondary education options for students with ID and/or autism.

- Consider collaborations across the North Carolina Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (NC AIDD) Network. The Postsecondary Education Alliance is coordinated by the Carolina Institute for Developmental Disabilities (CIDD) at UNC-Chapel. Together, the CIDD, the NC Council on Developmental Disabilities, and Disability Rights North Carolina form the federally funded NC AIDD Network.⁶¹ The NC network and its federal funds could assist the State in developing and implementing a plan to promote inclusive postsecondary education for students and youth with ID and, in that plan, could prioritize competitive integrated employment as the desired outcome for transition-age youth as they move towards adulthood.
- Collaborate with the Think College National Coordinating Center and North Carolina stakeholders to:
 - Coordinate the provision of technical assistance on development, evaluation, and improvement of programs, including technical assistance and professional development to university faculty and community college instructors; university and community college system administrators; advocacy groups; LME-MCOs; and Local Education Agencies (LEAs).

Examine the policy impact of postsecondary education for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

- **Conduct program evaluations using quantitative and qualitative methodologies.** Potential partners may include the UNC System; the Think College National Coordinating Center⁶²; the NC Department of Public Instruction (DPI); the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) at UNC-Charlotte; the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR); the Division of Social Services; the Division of MH/DD/SAS; the NC Community College System; the Division of Medical Assistance; and the Exceptional Children Assistance Center (ECAC).
- **Consolidate follow-up data on student outcomes and analyze impacts.** Establish and gain support for requisite data sets, to be collected on each student participating in the program, for every year of the program and at least one year after exiting the program.

Identify agreements from other states in which institutions of higher education and state and local agencies have subscribed to means of coordinating funds to support inclusive postsecondary education. Assist the Postsecondary Education Alliance in learning more about opportunities for coordinating funding to support postsecondary education for students with

ID, using, e.g., the Medicaid State Plan, Medicaid waiver programs, Early and Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT),⁶³ other insurances, and loan programs.

Promote the awarding of a recognized, postsecondary educational credential. As more colleges begin to include students with ID, it is important to assign value to what students are achieving in postsecondary education. A meaningful credential is an essential part of assessing the potential value of a college experience, as well as proving qualifications to employers after graduation. Think College⁶⁴ has developed a Credential Action Planning tool that assists program staff to address each step in the credential development process.⁶⁵ Promote the use of this tool in North Carolina.

Work with Think College to support implementation in North Carolina of the model National Criteria for Accreditation Standards. The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (HEOA) required the Think College National Coordinating Center to convene a workgroup to develop and recommend model criteria, standards, and components of higher education programs for students with intellectual disability. The National Coordinating Center Accreditation Workgroup issued its report in 2016, addressing model accreditation standards for higher education programs for students with ID.⁶⁶ Coordinate with the workgroup to disseminate the report and to support implementation of the standards in the State.

Participate in efforts to raise awareness and disseminate information about programs to parents, students, teachers, administrators, transition coordinators, and others. Assist the agencies named in SL 2015-241, sec. 11.19(a) in public awareness efforts about the benefits of postsecondary education for students with ID and autism and competitive integrated employment.

Strengthen linkages with the NC chapter of the Business Leadership Network (NCBLN) to advance employment opportunities for graduates of inclusive postsecondary education programs. The NCBLN's mission is to help businesses drive performance through disability inclusion in the workplace, supply chain and marketplace. It provides a platform for businesses and employers who are sourcing talent from the community to network with agencies that provide employment services and/or human services to people with disabilities.⁶⁷

XII. Approaches to Public Awareness

The directive in this legislation to “plan and implement approaches to public awareness about postsecondary education and employment for people with disabilities” is challenging. Pervasive, negative, societal beliefs about people with disabilities are longstanding. A well-documented history of discrimination and prejudice have too often resulted in lowered

expectations. This is particularly true for people with significant and often life-long disabilities. Despite this backdrop, the facts are compelling and the individual stories of success, in higher education settings and the workplace, are even more so. This, and the policy landscape created by the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, the WIOA, and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid's Home and Community Based Settings Rule all favor an investment in public awareness.

The Advisory to Education Opportunities for Students with Disabilities notes the following, all with implications for any public awareness effort:

- **Access to information is key.** Without having access to timely information, specific to an individual's life and choices, youth and families may believe that competitive employment or postsecondary education are not viable options and fail to choose these.
- **Information is necessary across the life span.** Families need support from allies at school and in the community, from elementary school forward, to help students/youth see the benefits of competitive work and inclusive postsecondary education.
- **Information access should include material on asset development and financial capability strategies.** Families need information about how to access various funding sources and how to take advantage of supports such as ABLE Accounts⁶⁸ and other asset building strategies. This information, embedded in a public awareness campaign, could assist in opening the doors to higher education opportunities for more students with ID.

The Advisory and DMH/DD/SAS offer the following, general recommendations around public awareness:

Leverage state policy statements. Utilize, e.g., Governor Cooper's 2017 Proclamation in Honor of Disability Employment Awareness Month.⁶⁹ Continue the effort begun under this policy statement to offer a unified message, across agencies.

Tapping existing resources. For example:

- Spotlight the resources of the Job Accommodation Network, an ODEP-funded technical assistance center providing free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations for applicants and employees with disabilities.
- Raise awareness of the services provided by Centers for Independent Living. These are consumer-controlled, community-based, cross-disability, nonprofit agencies that provide an array of independent living services, including services that can help with employment.

- Point individuals and families to state assistive technology programs. North Carolina's program⁷⁰ provides information on tools and services that can help a person with a disability perform activities that might otherwise be difficult, whether at home or in the workplace.
- Explore interagency partnerships as a means for introducing new strategies. One example is apprenticeship. This is a growing strategy for connecting workers with the skills they need to get jobs. The Department of Labor's Office on Disability Employment Programs (ODEP) is promoting inclusive program models for apprenticeship. The Apprenticeship Works Guides⁷¹ introduce youth, educators, service providers, and businesses to the benefits and opportunities of inclusive apprenticeship. The program includes online information about inclusive apprenticeship programs for Youth; Educators/Service Providers; and Business.

Direct employers to resources. Use public awareness efforts, across agencies, to direct employers to resources, such as:

- The ADA National Network, which provides information, guidance and training on how to implement the Americans with Disabilities Act. Post links to resources for employers.
- ODEP's Resources for Employers page. This website provides tools to help recruit, retain, and advance people with disabilities in the workplace.
- The Campaign for Disability Employment is a collaborative effort to promote positive employment outcomes for people with disabilities by encouraging employers and others to recognize the value and talent they bring to the workplace.
- For Human Resources professionals, the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Employer Practices Related to Employment Outcomes Among Individuals with Disabilities. This center has looked at the literature and surveyed human resources professionals on the effect of inclusive human resources and practices.
- California Employment Consortium for Youth and Young Adults with Intellectual and Other Developmental Disabilities (CECY), funded by the US Administration for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (US AIDD), has posted several videos that illustrate how employers are successfully integrating and supporting employees with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Aim policymakers and providers toward resources. Use public awareness efforts, across agencies, to pinpoint resources for policymakers and providers, such as:

- The US Administration on Community Living's Profiles in Integrated Employment. This site highlights stories and best practices from agencies and states charting the path

towards integrated employment for people with disabilities and offers [tips for employment service providers transitioning to an integrated employment model](#).

- Tap into the [National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth \(NCWD/Youth\)](#), an effort that assists state and local workforce development systems to better serve all youth, including youth with disabilities.

Share resources with families and youth. Use public awareness efforts, across agencies, to support families and youth in identifying resources to learn about postsecondary education options for students with ID and to develop career awareness among students with ID and other significant disabilities, such as:

- Future Quest Island at <https://www.futurequestisland.org/#screen-login> is a web-based program for middle school students to develop career awareness, identify future goals, while also focusing on self-advocacy and technology skills.
- Think College National Coordinating Center Institute for Community Inclusion at <https://thinkcollege.net/>. Think College is a national organization dedicated to developing, expanding, and improving inclusive higher education options for people with intellectual disability.

Engage self-advocates. Actively involve people with disabilities in all aspects of any public awareness campaign. Youth and young adults with disabilities, in postsecondary settings and at work, must master the skills necessary to advocate for themselves. Learning, for example, how the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act⁷² can support participation in higher education and employment is vital.

Share stories. Share stories of individual successes, both in college and in the workforce. These can fundamentally alter societal expectations. Pairing the stories with data strengthens the effectiveness of a public awareness campaign.

Work across the life span. Tap the tools and resources developed, e.g., by the US AIDD's Community of Practice: *Supporting Families Throughout the Lifespan* (www.supportstofamilies.org)⁷³ to raise families' awareness of resources that can advance educational and employment goals within a developmental framework.

Publicize NC's Disability History and Awareness Month. In conjunction with October's Disability History and Awareness month, each local board of education in North Carolina is required to provide instruction on disabilities, people with disabilities, and the disability rights movement.⁷⁴ The instruction often incorporates presentations from individuals with disabilities or other knowledgeable guest speakers and is creating positive change in society's perception of people with disabilities.

Join efforts to raise expectations. Participate in interagency, public awareness activities aimed at raising the expectations of students and youth, families, teachers, service providers, employers, and community members regarding the availability of inclusive, postsecondary education options and the employability of people with significant disabilities.

Promote accessible transportation. Use public awareness campaigns to promote efforts to make transportation more accessible to people with disabilities. Accessible, affordable transportation means more options to work, to go to school, and to participate in community life.

Emphasize strategies to achieve financial wellbeing. Provide education to address real and perceived disincentives to employment caused by concerns about loss of healthcare benefits (e.g., Medicaid) and/or cash benefits.

Publicize the availability of Achieving a Better Life Experience Act⁷⁵ (ABLE) accounts. Focus particularly on the ways that savings for qualified disability expenses under the Act may support postsecondary and employment goals.⁷⁶ Include outreach to the Hispanic/Latino communities.

Actively engage business and industry. Work with the NC Business Leadership Network (NCBLN) to convey the capacities of youth with disabilities when postsecondary education and career paths are tied to workforce needs.

Use NC 211. Provide North Carolina 211⁷⁷ with information on competitive integrated employment and postsecondary education opportunities.

Since the inception of this Session Law, important developments have occurred to raise public awareness. In 2017, Governor Roy Cooper released a proclamation on the employment of people with disabilities. He stated, “North Carolina and local government, the business community, and the general public, individuals and their families benefit greatly from increased employment of people with disabilities and share the responsibility in achieving this goal.”⁷⁸ Shortly following the proclamation, the NC Council on Developmental Disabilities launched its *Everybody Works NC* campaign. Kicked off by business leaders and disability advocates at the NCBLN Conference, the campaign challenges North Carolina businesses to consider the untapped talents of people with disabilities when hiring, while urging discouraged job seekers with disabilities to rejoin the workforce. As part of the campaign, the state’s Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is expanding its outreach efforts to serve the disability community throughout the state, and is raising awareness of its pre-employment screening and placement services, on-the-job training, assistive technologies and ongoing supports. Public awareness efforts such as these represent a growing investment in creating new and positive societal assumptions about people with disabilities.

XIII. Joint Policies and Common Data Indicators for Tracking Outcomes

In addressing the directive to “plan and implement joint policies and common data indicators for tracking the outcomes of people with disabilities after leaving high school,” DMH/DD/SAS and the Advisory to Education Opportunities for Students with Disabilities make several observations. Post-high school data indicators, related to these outcomes categories and currently tracked by the entities named in SL 2015-241, sec. 11.19(a), vary with the activities and missions of the agencies--and with the developmental point in the life of the individual at which the agency has contact and/or provides services. For example:

- The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) tracks the educational attainment and employment status of students served by the Exceptional Children Division one year after their high school graduation/exit year.
- The NC Community College System (NCCCS) and the UNC system’s postsecondary programs for students with ID collect data on educational history and level and employment status at program entry. Some track employment status and type after graduation.
- The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation’s (DVR) individual record on those it serves includes public support and employment-related services data, as well as educational credentials and enrollment, employment status and type, and wages after exit.
- The Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services (DMH/DD/SAS) maintains service claims data for Medicaid, federal block grant, and state-funded physical health, mental health, and intellectual/developmental disability services for individuals of all ages, school enrollment, and employment status.

It is these facts that lead the DMH/DD/SAS and the Advisory to this initiative to observe the following:

Agencies collect data against different definitions of disability. Additionally, funders frequently prescribe the measures that are used. While identifying “common data indicators” is not feasible, sharing data that relates to common goals for an agreed upon target population(s) is possible.

There are consistent measures across much of the workforce system. The WIOA includes common performance measures, or “primary indicators of performance,” for its six core programs: Title I Youth program; Title I Adult program; Title I Dislocated Worker program; Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy program; Title III Employment Services program; and Title IV Rehabilitation Services program. Most measures are consistent across all six programs. This is the broadest application to date of common measures across the workforce system, promoting more integrated programming and accountability at the state and local levels.⁷⁹ Youth in the

foster care system would not be included since the DSS is not part of the Unified State Plan under the WIOA.

The Department of Commerce (DOC) collects data relevant to both education and employment. DOC collects data on the number of individuals who: earned a credential; were served by the Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS) or the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS); earned a credential and who were served by DWS or DHHS; were enrolled in additional education or training; were employed; and were enrolled or employed.

Students with the most significant disabilities may not be captured in these data sets at the secondary level. In high school, students with the most significant disabilities may be in a certificate program. In this case, the student is not on the credentialed, diploma pathway that may be referenced in some indicators.

Data sets are developing in UNC's higher education programs for students with ID. The UNC System's postsecondary education programs for students with ID are increasingly maintaining data through graduation, such as use of public supports, independent living status, and community participation /social connections. As noted above, for students in the UNCG Beyond Academics program, there was a 56% average decrease in individualized supports used while a student is enrolled in the program. Additionally, six months after graduation, for the years 2014 and 2015, 61.5% of Beyond Academics students were employed, compared with national data on students with disabilities.⁸⁰

New data sets in the NC Community College System (NCCCS) include students with the most significant disabilities. On July 1, 2017, the NCCCS began to track some data on students with ID. Much of this data is collected through the Department of Commerce. These data sets include: the number of individuals who earned a credential; the number of individuals who were served by the Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS) or the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS); the number who earned a credential who were served by DWS or DHHS; the number enrolled in additional education or training; number employed; and number enrolled or employed.

Shared performance measures could improve accountability. Shared measures could enable the caliber of evaluation for program planning and development that is essential to achieving improved outcomes for students with disabilities.

To develop recommendations in this area, the DMH/DD/SAS convened a Data Work Group that crossed all agencies named in SL 2015-241, sec. 11.19(a). That group noted that higher educational attainment is associated with higher employment rates for students with any disability, including those with the most significant disabilities. Moreover, individuals who take college courses, but do not graduate from college, have better employment outcomes than those

without any postsecondary education. National experts in disability and education, the Work Group noted, also generally emphasize enrollment in postsecondary education, the attainment of a postsecondary degree or other credential, and employment, along with a subsequent reduction in the receipt of public supports and decrease in poverty, as measures related to education and employment outcomes for students and youth with disabilities.

The DMH/DD/SAS and the Advisory to the initiative offer these recommendations:

Focus efforts to track outcomes on key indicators. Regarding post-high school outcomes of students and youth with disabilities with ID and/or significant disabilities, ages 14 to 24, move towards tracking outcomes on indicators pertaining to: 1) enrollment in postsecondary education or training; 2) attainment of an industry-recognized postsecondary degree or other credential; 3) employment status and earnings; and, 4) as an adult, poverty status and receipt of public supports. Such measures are salient outcomes for students and youth with ID who have participated in postsecondary education programs.

Implement standardized indicators where possible. The most promising opportunities for standardizing post-high school outcomes indicators may exist with respect to programs and agencies that already track similar outcomes and/or that serve individuals with disabilities at developmentally similar points in time. Adopting, for example, standardized indicators related to individuals' educational attainment after separation could ensure, going forward, that comparable outcomes data are available for individuals regardless of the higher education program attended. It is noteworthy that some agencies and programs already track similar, post-high school outcomes.

XIV. Options for Technology to Link Agency Databases

Education Opportunities for Students with Disabilities, SL 2015-241, sec. 11.19(a), directed the DMH/DD/SAS and other entities named in the legislation to “consider options for technology to link agency databases.” Since the passage of this legislation, there have been two major developments achieved through interagency partnerships and in collaboration with the Government Data Analytics Center (GDAC), Department of Information Technology (DIT).

The first of these is the data expansion and enhanced output capacity of the North Carolina Common Follow-up System (CFS). Funding for the enhancement was awarded to the Department of Commerce (DOC) in 2013 from the US Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration's Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI). In July 2014, the DOC Labor and Economic Analysis Division (LEAD) launched the North Carolina Tool for Online Workforce and Education Reporting (NC TOWER), a powerful, online, information delivery tool. NC TOWER shows performance measures for educational programs for each of the University

of North Carolina's 16 universities and for all curriculum programs at each of the 58 colleges of the North Carolina Community College System. These measures include employment rates, average wages, and median wages for each program, as well as employment and wage measures by industrial sector of employment. It is possible that this technology might be leveraged to produce measures specific to individuals with disabilities, and by type of disability; however, this would require such individuals to be identified by the college or as such in the dataset.

DOC LEAD also reports from the CFS on the outcomes of participants in North Carolina's publicly funded employment and training programs, including: the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Work First and Vocational Rehabilitation programs (Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind); the DOC Wagner-Peyser Act and the WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs; and the NCCCS Career and Technical Education Programs, Workforce Continuing Education Training programs, Small Business Center, Human Resources Development program, and Adult Basic Skills programs. Measures include post-exit employment rates, mean and median wages, industries of employment, and whether the individuals that exit publicly funded education, employment, and training programs participate or enroll in additional education, employment, and training programs, post exit. The data sets submitted by contributing agencies have been greatly expanded as of July 2017, and the CFS, as a technology to link databases, may be leveraged to show the outcomes of individuals with disabilities and by disability type *if* the identifying information required for analyses is or can be provided by contributing agencies.

Additionally, in the 2016 report to the North Carolina General Assembly, DMH/DD/SAS discussed the NC SchoolWorks initiative and the NC Common Follow-Up System, inclusive of the role in each of the GDAC. We noted that NC SchoolWorks allowed North Carolina to integrate longitudinal education and workforce data; track student performance across time and educational institutions and into careers; and enable more effective evaluation of education programs and institutions. A system of this type can enable queries that draw upon multiple databases and generate responses without compromising confidential information.

Going forward, the technologies described in this section could support longitudinal, cross-sector tracking of a cohort--such as children and/or students with intellectual disabilities--against specified performance measures and program evaluation tools."

The DMH/DD/SAS and the Advisory to this initiative make the following recommendations:

Explore the potential for linking individual-level data across agencies, including those that track and maintain indicators pertaining to different outcome categories.

Promote efforts to produce manageable, accessible, and meaningful outcomes data, such as:

- Identify the specific indicators to be incorporated into the data collection systems of each agency named in Session Law 2015-241, sec. 11.19(a).
- Conduct an inventory of the unique individual identifiers currently used within each agency's data collection system. Determine which identifiers, if any, would need to be added to facilitate inter-agency data linkages.
- Implement necessary agency data systems changes.
- Establish inter-agency data sharing agreements.
- Identify system resources, personnel, and mechanisms required to compile, maintain, and display/share the data.

XV. Conclusion

Session Law 2015-241, Sec. 11.19(a), provided six agencies and institutions, joined by the Postsecondary Education Alliance and diverse community stakeholders, with an opportunity to effect system changes with pervasive effects on the lives of students and youth with intellectual and other significant disabilities. While unfunded, the two-year effort brought together policymakers, advocates, interested stakeholders, students, youth, and families to form the Advisory for Education and Employment Opportunities for Students with Disabilities. The DMH/DD/SAS, joined by co-chairs from UNC and DVR, engaged national and state experts in dialogue with the group over a series of eight meetings. Members were informed of emerging and evidence-based practices in inclusive postsecondary education for students with intellectual disabilities and competitive integrated employment for people with the most significant disabilities. The Advisory benefitted particularly from the life experiences with these programs of the families and youth who both presented to the group and who were among its members. The linkages among higher education, successful employment outcomes, and increased independence and community inclusion were apparent in emerging data and in the lives of participants in some of the State's most innovative programs. The recommendations put forward promote inclusive postsecondary education and competitive integrated employment, leveraging new partnerships and existing resources to promote innovation, accountability, and heightened public awareness. In closing, the Advisory recommends that it convene semi-annually, as a legislative and policy committee of the Postsecondary Education Alliance, to review the State's progress on these recommendations.

APPENDIX A

Membership of the Advisory for Education and Employment Opportunities for Students with Disabilities

November 15, 2017

1. **Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services** – Jason Vogler, Senior Director (member) – jason.vogler@dhhs.nc.gov; Holly Riddle, Policy Advisor (alternate) – holly.riddle@dhhs.nc.gov
2. **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Division of Services for the Blind and Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing** – Tara Myers, Director (member) – tara.myers@dhhs.nc.gov; Stephanie Hanes, Program Specialist for Transition and Employment Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (alternate) – stephanie.hanes@dhhs.nc.gov
3. **Division of Social Services** – Lisa Cauley, Section Chief, Child Welfare (member) – lisa.cauley@dhhs.nc.gov; Erin Conner, Social Services Program Coordinator (alternate) – erin.conner@dhhs.nc.gov
4. **Department of Public Instruction, Exceptional Children Division** – William J. (Bill) Hussey, Director (member) - bill.hussey@dpi.nc.gov; Beverly Colwell, Consultant for Intellectual Disabilities and Secondary Education (alternate) - Beverly.Colwell@dpi.nc.gov
5. **The University of North Carolina System** – Terri Shelton, Vice Chancellor of Research and Economic Development, University of North Carolina at Greensboro (co-chair) - shelton@uncg.edu; Joan Johnson, Executive Director, Beyond Academics, University of North Carolina at Greensboro (alternate) - jjohnson@beyondacademics.org
6. **NC Community College System** – Amy Cooke, Director of Program Operations, Programs and Student Services Division, College and Career Readiness (member) – cookea@nccommunitycolleges.edu; Trudie Hughes, Education Program Administrator, College and Career Readiness, Coordinator for Serving Students with Special Needs (alternate) - hughest@nccommunitycolleges.edu
7. **NC Postsecondary Education Alliance** – David Westling, Western Carolina University (member) - westling@email.wcu.edu; Deborah Zuver, Carolina Institute for Developmental Disabilities (alternate) – Deborah.Zuver@cidd.unc.edu

8. **Community Stakeholders and Other Interested Parties** – I. Azell Reeves, former chair and member Exceptional Children’s Assistance Center; vice-chair, Consumer Family Advisory Committee (CFAC), Sandhills Local Management Entity-Managed Care Organization; former member, NC Council on Developmental Disabilities; ex-officio member, Exceptional Children’s Parent Advisory Council, Guilford County Schools; member, NC Department of Public Instruction Special Education Stakeholder Collaborative (member) - reev5205@bellsouth.net; Marlyn Wells, Exceptional Children’s Assistance Center (alternate) - mwells@ecacmail.org
9. **Community Stakeholders and Other Interested Parties** - Katie Savage, founder of UNC-Chapel Hill’s organization for students with disabilities (member) – kcsavage@unc.edu; Tiffany Bailey, Director, Accessibility Resources and Service, University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill and member, Association for Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) (alternate) - tmbailey@email.unc.edu
10. **Community Stakeholders and Other Interested Parties** - Matthew Potter, graduate, Wake Forest University, 2009; former member, Board of Directors of CenterPoint Human Services; member, Triad Community Center Community Advisory Board; member, NC Stakeholder Engagement Group for Medicaid Reform (member) - pottmm5@gmail.com; Jeff Payne, Alliance Behavioral Healthcare (alternate) – jpayne@alliancebhc.org
11. **Community Stakeholders and Other Interested Parties** - Kay McMillan, senior, North Carolina State University. Planning Committee, NC Youth Leadership Forum, 2010–present; Youth planning committee for the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living Conference (APRIL), 2012–2013; intern, Alliance of Disability Advocates Center for Independent Living, 2011- 2013 (member) - knmcmil2@ncsu.edu; Sierra Royster, Youth Programs Coordinator, Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (alternate) – april-sierra@att.net
12. **Community Stakeholders and Other Interested Parties** – Damie Jackson-Diop, Chair, NC Mental Health Planning Council; member, Employment First North Carolina Steering Committee; Co-Chair, Community of Practice on Children and Emerging Young Adults, State Collaborative on Children, Youth and Emerging Young Adults; member, Employment First North Carolina Steering Committee; Alternatives to Guardianship-Education Team; alumnus, Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Program (member) - damiejack@gmail.com; Virginia Fogg, Disability Rights North Carolina (alternate) - virginia.fogg@disabilityrightsn.org
13. **Community Stakeholders and Other Interested Parties** - NC Independent Colleges and Universities (NCICU) – Hope Williams, President, NC Independent Colleges and Universities (member) - williams@ncicu.org; Thomas West, Vice President for Government Relations and General Counsel, NCICU (alternate) - west@ncicu.org
14. **Community Stakeholders and Other Interested Parties** - NC Government Data Analytics Center (GDAC), NC Department of Information Technology – Sondra Phillips, Business

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15. **Community Stakeholders and Other Interested Parties** - Department of Commerce – Catherine Moga Bryant (member); Agreta Limerick, Employment and Training Specialist, Workforce Solutions (alternate) - alimerick@nccommerce.com

16. **Community Stakeholders and Other Interested Parties** - Member of the NC General Assembly – Senator Chad Barefoot, Member, Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services (member) – Chad.Barefoot@ncleg.net; Eric Naisbitt, Legislative Aide (alternate) – barefootla@ncleg.net

17. **Community Stakeholders and Other Interested Parties:** - Member of the NC General Assembly - Representative Tim Moore, Speaker of the House (member) – Tim.Moore@nc.leg.net; Shelby Armentrout, Education Policy Advisor (alternate) – Shelby.Armentrout@nc.leg.net

APPENDIX B

Membership of the Postsecondary Education Alliance

2016-2017

Harriet Able - Frank Porter Graham Institute, UNC-CH
Christie Arney - Caldwell Community College
Mary Todd Allen - Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools
Stephanie Antkowiak - The Arc of High Point
Nellie Aspel - Cleveland County Schools; professor, UNCC
Nancy Bagatell - School of Allied Health, UNC-CH
Tiffany Bailey, Accessibility Resources and Services, UNC-CH
Simon Bloor - Accessibility Resources and Service, UNC-CH
Dorea D. Bonneau - UNC-Pembroke
Elizabeth Byars – TEACCH® Autism Program
Doreen Byrd, Exceptional Children Assistance Center
Nicolette Campos - UNC-Pembroke – Disability Support Services
Alan Chase - Envisioning Youth Empowerment Retreat
Debra Childress - 3C Institute
Michelle Clark – Council for Exceptional Children
Beverly Colwell - Exceptional Children Division, NC DPI
Chris Cordiero - PSEA Alumnus, CIDD, UNC-CH
Ann Cox - Frank Porter Graham Institute, UNC-CH
Betsy Crais - Division of Speech & Hearing, UNC-CH
Jennifer Diliberto - School of Education, UNC-CH
Robyn Dorton - Self-Advocate Trainer, Project STIR, CIDD, UNC-CH
Bryan Dooley - Self-Advocate; Advancing Strong Leadership in DD, NC Council on
Developmental Disabilities, Disability Rights North Carolina
Mandy Earnest – Pathway to Accessible College Experience PACE-College of the Albemarle
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Wanda Fletcher – PACE, College of the Albemarle
Nancye Gaj - NC Community College System
Becky Garland – Family Advocate
Mike Graves - Family Advocate, Autism Society of North Carolina
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Michelle Hall - Transition Programs, Wake Technical Community College
Stephanie Hanes - NC Vocational Rehabilitation

Lalenja Harrington - Beyond Academics™, UNCG
Trudie Hughes - NC Community College System
Kara Anne Hume - Frank Porter Graham Institute, UNC-CH
David Ingram - NC Division of MH/DD/SAS
Rep. Verla Insko - NC House of Representatives
Monica Isbell - Career College, Alamance Community College
Sharon Jackson - Cleveland Co. Schools; Council for Exceptional Children
Joan Johnson - Beyond Academics™, UNCG
Deborah Keenan - Dare to Learn, Dare County
Kelly R. Kelley - University Participant (UP) Program, WCU
Jackie Kelty – Family Advocate, Postsecondary Education Alliance
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Mary LaCorte – Exceptional Children’s Assistance Center
Barbara Leach - Family Support Program, UNC-CH
Freda Lee - NC Race to the Top, NC DPI
Mya Lewis – NC Division of MH/DD/SAS
Sharon Little - Union County Schools
Lynne Loeser - Exceptional Children Division, NC DPI
Susan Lombardo - East Chapel Hill High School
Nance Longworth - Academic/Disability Resources, Davidson College
Renate Macchirole – PACE, College of the Albemarle
Eric Marshburn - Beyond Academics™, UNCG
Lorrie Marro - Carrboro High School
Kathy Martinez – Transition Program, Cape Fear Community College
Sherry Mergner - School of Social Work, UNC-CH
Melinda Plue - The Arc of NC
Tonya Monroe - Career College, Randolph Community College
Duncan Munn – Board Member, Beyond Academics™, UNCG
Natalie Murr - Trainee, LEND, CIDD, UNC-CH
Andrea Neal, Fayetteville State University
Paul Offen - Self-Advocate; former LEND trainee, CIDD, UNC-CH
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Meredith Owens – Catawba Co. Schools
April Oxendine - Robeson County Public Health; UNC-Pembroke
Ann Palmer – Family Advocate; CIDD, UNC-CH

Daya Patton - Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools
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ENDNOTES

¹ Intellectual disability (ID) is a subset of developmental disability. Intellectual disability is characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior, which cover many social and practical skills. Intellectual disability originates before the age of 18. “Student with intellectual disability” means a student with such an impairment, who is currently or was formerly eligible for a free appropriate public education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

² For a discussion of this term, see <http://www.thearc.org/document.doc?id=5183>.

³ Competitive integrated employment means full or part-time work at minimum wage or higher, with wages and benefits like those of people without disabilities performing the same work, and fully integrated with co-workers without disabilities. Retrieved on October 10, 2017 from [http://www.nasddd.org/uploads/documents/Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act2.pdf](http://www.nasddd.org/uploads/documents/Workforce%20Innovation%20and%20Opportunity%20Act2.pdf).

⁴ Retrieved on October 20, 2017 from <https://www.roycooper.com/education/>.

⁵ Governor Roy Cooper, October 2017 Proclamation for Disability Awareness Month. Retrieved on October 20, 2017 from <https://governor.nc.gov/gov-cooper-declares-october-2017-disability-employment-awareness-month>.

⁶ The 2016 Report on SL 2015-241, section 11.19(a), Education Opportunities for Students with Disabilities, may be found online at <https://files.nc.gov/ncdhhs/SL%202015-241%2C%20Sec%2011.19.%28a%29%20Education%20Opportunities%20for%20Students%20with%20Disabilities.pdf>.

⁷ United States Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (2016). The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Retrieved August 30, 2016 from <https://www.doleta.gov/wioa/>.

⁸ Public Law 106-402 may be found online at https://www.acl.gov/sites/default/files/about-acl/2016-12/dd_act_2000.pdf.

⁹ Intellectual disability (ID) is a subset of developmental disability. *Intellectual disability* is characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior, which cover many social and practical skills. Intellectual disability originates before the age of 18. *Student with an intellectual disability* means a student with a such an impairment, who is currently or was formerly eligible for a free appropriate public education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. sec. 1400 (2004).

Chapter 122-C, section 12(a) of the North Carolina General Statutes defines developmental disability as a severe, chronic disability of a person which:

a. Is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or combination of mental and physical impairments;

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- b. Is manifested before the person attains age 22, unless the disability is caused by a traumatic head injury and is manifested after age 22;
 - c. Is likely to continue indefinitely;
 - d. Results in substantial functional limitations in three or more of the following areas of major life activity: self-care, receptive and expressive language, capacity for independent living, learning, mobility, self-direction and economic self-sufficiency; and
 - e. Reflects the person's need for a combination and sequence of special interdisciplinary, or generic care, treatment, or other services which are of a lifelong or extended duration and are individually planned and coordinated; or
 - f. When applied to children from birth through four years of age, may be evidenced as a developmental delay.

The federal definition of developmental disability, PL 106-402, sec. 102(8), differs in some respects from North Carolina's statutory definition. The federal definition is applied differently to children and does not, as the state statute does, include people with a traumatic head injury that is manifested after age 22.

For some purposes, this report refers to people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities, using the abbreviation, I/DD. In other cases, the report refers only to the subset of people with intellectual disabilities, using the abbreviation ID. Specifically, ID is used in the discussion of postsecondary education to reference a subset of people with I/DD who have not, historically, had access to higher education opportunities. The distinction between I/DD and ID is relevant to this report for several reasons. First, some people with developmental disabilities (DD) have an intellectual disability (ID) while others do not. Second, the report confines the discussion of the *postsecondary education* prong of the legislation to a group of students and youth who have not, historically, had access to higher education until recently. Third, the discussion of *employment* rests on the definitions that are broader than either ID or I/DD. These set out in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the requirements of employment services, set out in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014, for youth with significant disabilities.

The Rehabilitation Act defines an individual, including youth, who has a significant disability as a person who: has a severe physical or mental impairment that seriously limits one or more functional capacities (such as mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome; can be expected to require multiple vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period of time; and has one or more physical or mental disabilities (e.g., autism, blindness, cerebral palsy, deafness, head injury, intellectual disability) or a combination of disabilities assessed to cause comparable substantial functional limitation. While the Rehabilitation Act originally focused on individuals with significant disabilities, the WIOA places added emphasis on youth with disabilities,

including those with significant disabilities. The WIOA defines youth with disabilities as individuals, ages 14-24, who meet the above criteria.

Some programs in North Carolina may be specific to one of these populations, while others address the needs of all these populations or, in some cases, address the broadest population category, that of people with disabilities. The term “people with disabilities” is defined under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The term includes all people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (I/DD), as well as many other people with disabilities.

¹⁰ For a discussion of this term as it concerns youth, see <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rsa/publications/csavr-2016-supported-employment.pdf>. Most people with ID and some people with DD would be included in the term people with “the most significant disabilities.” The latter group may include, e.g., people with traumatic brain injury, a severe and persistent mental illness, a chronic illness, or dual diagnoses.

¹¹ Competitive integrated employment means full or part-time work at minimum wage or higher, with wages and benefits like those of people without disabilities performing the same work, and fully integrated with co-workers without disabilities. Retrieved on October 10, 2017 from [http://www.nasddds.org/uploads/documents/Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act2.pdf](http://www.nasddds.org/uploads/documents/Workforce%20Innovation%20and%20Opportunity%20Act2.pdf).

¹² This report appears online at <http://www.communityinclusion.org/rss/nc.pdf>.

¹³ Employment First refers to policies, procedures and infrastructure that promote employment in the general workforce as the first and preferred outcome in the provision of publicly funded services for all working age citizens with disabilities, regardless of level of disability. Such policies result in increased integrated employment in the general workforce for citizens with disabilities. Retrieved on October 11, 2017 from <http://apse.org/employment-first/statement/>.

¹⁴ The NC Business Leadership Network’s mission is to help businesses drive performance through disability inclusion in the workplace, supply chain and marketplace. Retrieved on October 11, 2017 from <http://www.ncbln.org/>.

¹⁵ See <http://apse.org/chapter/north-carolina/>

¹⁶ The Certified Employment Support Professional™ program creates national guidelines to validate and support training currently provided in the field. The certification program falls under the oversight of the Employment Support Professional Certification Council, established by the APSE Board of Directors. Retrieved on October 11, 2017 from <http://apse.org/certified-employment-support-professional/>.

¹⁷ See <http://www.cidd.unc.edu/psea/>.

¹⁸ National Core Indicators (NCI) is a collaborative effort between the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS). The purpose of the NCI initiative is to support NASDDDS member agencies to gather a standard set of performance and outcome measures that can be used to track their own performance over time, to compare

results across states, and to establish national benchmarks regarding people with I/DD. NASDDDS. (n.d.). Retrieved August 31, 2016 from <http://www.nasddds.org/about-nasddds/>.

¹⁹ Retrieved on October 11, 2017 from <https://www.nationalcoreindicators.org/states/NC/>

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Retrieved on September 25, 2017 from <https://www.dol.gov/whd/specialemployment/CRPlist.htm>.

²² Retrieved on September 25, 2017 from <https://www.dol.gov/whd/specialemployment/PatientWorkerList.htm>.

²³ Retrieved on September 25, 2017 from <https://www.dol.gov/whd/specialemployment/CRPlist.htm>.

²⁴ Adult Developmental Vocational Programs provide activities to prepare people with I/DD and others to live and work as independently as possible. ADVP services may include personal and community living skill development; Adult Basic Education; training in cognitive, communication and motor skills and use of leisure time; vocational evaluation and adjustment; work skills training; and paid employment. At present, the work skills training and paid employment provided under the auspices of ADVPs are not precluded from affording individuals a subminimum wage.

²⁵ CMS. Final Rule: Medicaid HCBS. (2014, January 29). Retrieved August 31, 2016 from <https://www.medicare.gov/medicaid/hcbs/downloads/final-rule-slides-01292014.pdf>.

²⁶ National Core Indicators. Retrieved August 31, 2016 from <http://www.nasddds.org/about-nasddds/>.

²⁷ The WIOA defines eligibility for PETS as: students with disabilities who are enrolled in school and either have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) under IDEA or are individuals with disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and who are not younger than the earliest age for the provision of transition services under IDEA and not older than 21. The PETS services represent a program with potential to “expand and sustain postsecondary education and employment opportunities” for students and youth with disabilities, including those with I/DD. The *required* PETS services are: Job exploration counseling; work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships) that is provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible; counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education; workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living; and Instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring.

²⁸ Recognized postsecondary credential has the meaning given to the term in section 101 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

²⁹ The WIOA Youth Program considerably expands the role of Vocational Rehabilitation. Eligibility is as follows:

- 1) Out-of-school youth must be aged 16-24, not attending any school, and meet one or

more additional conditions, which could include: school dropout; within age of compulsory attendance but has not attended for at least the most recent complete school year calendar quarter; holds a secondary school diploma or recognized equivalent and is low-income and is basic skills deficient or an English language learner; subject to the juvenile or adult justice system; homeless, runaway, in foster care or aged out of the foster care system, eligible for assistance under Section 477, Social Security Act, or in out-of-home placement; pregnant or parenting; an individual with a disability; low income person who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment.

- 2) In-school youth must be aged 14-21, attending school, low income, and meet one or more additional conditions, which could include: basic skills deficient; English language learner; an offender; homeless, runaway, in foster care or aged out of the foster care system; pregnant or parenting; an individual with a disability; person who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment.

The WIOA's five new Youth Program elements include: (1) financial literacy; (2) entrepreneurial skills training; (3) services that provide labor market and employment information in the local area; (4) activities that help youth transition to postsecondary education and training; (5) education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster. Department of Labor. Fact sheet: Youth program. Retrieved September 5, 2016 from https://www.doleta.gov/wioa/Docs/WIOA_YouthProgram_FactSheet.pdf.

³⁰ U.S. Department of Labor. (2016, July). Fact sheet #39 H: The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and limitations on payment of subminimum wages under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act. Retrieved August 31, 2016 from <https://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs39h.pdf>.

³¹ The WIOA, PL 113-128, sec. 116(b)(2)(A)(i).

³² Centers for Independent Living are consumer-controlled, community-based, cross-disability, nonprofit agencies that provide an array of independent living services, including services that can help with employment.

³³ Customized employment is defined by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) as, competitive integrated employment, for an individual with a significant disability, that is based on an individualized determination of the strengths, needs, and interests of the individual with a significant disability, designed to meet the specific abilities of the individual with a significant disability and the business needs of the employer, and carried out through flexible strategies. Smith, T.J., Dillahunt-Aspillaga, C. & Kenney, R. Implementation of customized employment provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act within

vocational rehabilitation systems. Retrieved September 2, 2016 from <http://www.apse.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2015-APSE-poster.-Implementation-of-customized-employment-provisions-of-the-WIOA-within-Vocational-Rehabilitation-systems.pdf>.

³⁴ For more information on TAP, see <https://tapability.org/>.

³⁵ See <http://www.wintac.org/topic-areas/pre-employment-transition-services>.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Requirements for becoming a CTP are defined in the Higher Education Act of 2008. For a discussion of these requirements, see Think College online at <https://thinkcollege.net/think-college-learn/comprehensive-transition-programs/requirements-comprehensive-transition-programs>.

³⁸ Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability, or TPSID, are model demonstration projects funded by the [US Department of Education](#). See Think College online at <https://thinkcollege.net/tpsid>.

³⁹ Retrieved on October 11, 2017 from <http://ncacdss.org/wp-content/uploads/CSC-presentation-11-9-16-FC-18-to-21-Erin-Baluyot.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Of students with an IEP, approximately 1% are individuals with an intellectual disability. Among that group, those in the Exceptional Children Division's Significant Cognitive Disabilities population are not counted in the graduation rate. These students receive a Graduation Certificate, rather than a diploma.

⁴¹ This project closed out on June 30, 2017.

⁴² Think College is a national organization dedicated to developing, expanding, and improving inclusive higher education options for people with intellectual disability. See <https://thinkcollege.net/about/what-is-think-college>.

⁴³ The Supplemental Security Income Program (SSI) makes cash assistance payments to aged, blind and disabled people (including children under age 18) who have limited income and resources.

⁴⁴ If you are under age 22 and regularly attending school, the Social Security Administration does not include up to \$1,790 [2017 amount] of earned income per month when it calculates a Supplemental Security Income payment amount.

⁴⁵ See <https://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/1619b.htm>.

⁴⁶ See <https://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/pass.htm>.

⁴⁷ For more information, see <https://savewithable.com/nc/home.html>.

⁴⁸ See <http://www.rtle.org/> and <https://www.facebook.com/RTLENC/about>.

⁴⁹ NC is on a sampling reporting plan, with the largest five LEAs reporting annually and all others reporting on a five-year sampling basis.

⁵⁰ See also the Institute for Educational Science's Communicating Interagency Relationships and Collaborative Linkages for Exceptional Students (CIRCLES) project at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, <http://circles.uncc.edu/>. The project offers promise for improving the interagency coordination at the administrative leadership level, the school level, and the individual team level, with a goal of improving post-school outcomes for students.

⁵¹ More information on dual enrollment may be found at <https://thinkcollege.net/topics/dual-enrollment>.

⁵² According to the National Longitudinal Study (NLTS2),⁵² of the 50% of youth who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) who *wanted* to go to college, one year after graduation, only 30% of these students had taken college classes. In another study, only 18% of students with an IEP were enrolled in college, compared to 40% of their peers without disabilities.⁵²

⁵³ See www.beyondacademics.uncg.edu.

⁵⁴ See *Up to Date* (June 2017) for more information on Western Carolina's University Participant Program at <https://www.dropbox.com/s/5y52uhnhere5ego/UPtoDatefinal.pdf?dl=0>.

⁵⁵ Students with intellectual disabilities attending a postsecondary education program with the designation of "Comprehensive Transition Program" can use federal financial aid to help pay the cost of attendance. Think College (n.d.). *Becoming a comprehensive transition program*. Retrieved August 26, 2016 from <http://www.thinkcollege.net/topics/becoming-a-comprehensive-transition-program>.

⁵⁶ Universal Design for Learning means a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways in which students are engaged. It also reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students. See *Universal Design in Higher Education: Promising Practices* at http://www.washington.edu/doit/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Universal%20Design%20in%20Higher%20Education_Promising%20Practices_0.pdf

⁵⁷ See UNCG Beyond Academics program evaluation information at https://beyondacademics.uncg.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Insight_29_F.pdf.

⁵⁸ Report on Model Accreditation Standards for Higher Education Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability: A Path to Education, Employment, and Community Living. See this 2016 report at https://thinkcollege.net/sites/default/files/files/resources/AccredReport_WEB_F425.pdf.

⁵⁹ See Appendix A for the membership of the Advisory to Education and Employment Opportunities for Students with Disabilities.

⁶⁰ The Carolina Institute on Developmental Disabilities is funded under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act, PL106-402, as North Carolina's Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities.

⁶¹ AIDD Network programs exist in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the territories.

⁶² Think College, Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts at Boston is a national organization dedicated to developing, expanding, and improving inclusive higher education options for people with intellectual disability. Designated by the US Department of Education as the national coordinating center for these programs, Think College supports evidence-based and student-centered research and practice by generating and sharing

knowledge, guiding institutional change, informing public policy, and engaging with students, professionals and families. Retrieved on October 3, 2017 from <https://thinkcollege.net/about/what-is-think-college>.

⁶³ Medicaid's Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit covers a program of regular wellness visits called Health Check in North Carolina.

⁶⁴ See <https://thinkcollege.net/about/what-is-think-college>.

⁶⁵ See

<https://thinkcollege.net/sites/default/files/files/resources/credential%20action%20planning%20tool.pdf>.

⁶⁶ National Coordinating Center Accreditation Workgroup (2016). Report on Model Accreditation Standards for Higher Education Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability: A Path to Education, Employment, and Community Living. Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion.

⁶⁷ Retrieved on October 3, 2017 from <http://www.ncbln.org/>.

⁶⁸ For more information, see <https://savewithable.com/nc/home.html>.

⁶⁹ Governor Cooper's proclamation may be found at

<https://files.nc.gov/governor/documents/files/Disability%20Employment%20Awareness%20Month.pdf?0YgCxhbKLewJQLm3MIACidZa5pRNWric>.

⁷⁰ North Carolina Assistive Technology Program: <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/vocational-rehabilitation-services/north-carolina-assistive-technology-program>.

⁷¹ See <https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/Apprenticeship.htm>

⁷² Section 504 is a part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. It prohibits discrimination based upon disability. Section 504 covers students in postsecondary education settings, but works in a manner that is significantly different from IDEA.

⁷³ The National Community of Practice for Supporting Families of Individuals of I/DD began in 2012 as a project funded by the US Administration for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities to build capacity through a community of practice across and within these states to create policies, practices and systems to better assist and support families that include a member with I/DD across the lifespan.

⁷⁴ NCGS 115C-81.

⁷⁵ ABLE Accounts are tax-advantaged savings accounts for individuals with disabilities and their families, created because of the passage of the Stephen Beck, Jr. Achieving a Better Life Experience Act of 2014. The beneficiary of the account is the account owner, and income earned by the accounts will not be taxed. Source: <http://www.ablenrc.org/about/what-are-able-accounts>.

⁷⁶ See, e.g., <https://www.nctreasurer.com/able/Pages/default.aspx>.

⁷⁷ NC 211 is an online- and phone-based information and referral service provided by United Way of North Carolina and available in all 100 North Carolina counties.

⁷⁸ Retrieved on October 5, 2017 from

<https://files.nc.gov/governor/documents/files/Disability%20Employment%20Awareness%20Month.pdf?0YgCxbKLeWJQLm3MIACidZa5pRNWric>.

⁷⁹ The primary indicators for youth may be found at <http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/publication-1/Relationship-between-WIOA-Performance-Measures-and-AQCP-Career-Pathway-Metrics-1.pdf>

⁸⁰ See UNCG Beyond Academics program evaluation information at <https://beyondacademics.uncg.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/factsheet.2016.pdf>.