ASSEMBLY, No. 4385

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JULY 6, 2020

Sponsored by:
Assemblywoman JOANN DOWNEY
District 11 (Monmouth)
Assemblywoman VALERIE VAINIERI HUTTLE
District 37 (Bergen)
Assemblyman ERIC HOUGHTALING
District 11 (Monmouth)

Co-Sponsored by:
Assemblyman Benson

SYNOPSIS

Requires DHS to perform study regarding status of training and certification opportunities for direct support professionals.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 8/27/2020)

AN ACT concerning direct support professional training and certification programs.

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

1. a. The Commissioner of Human Services, in collaboration with the Commissioner of Children and Families, the Commissioner of Labor, and the NJ Partnership for Direct Support Professional Workforce Development, shall implement, or contract with a third party to implement, a comprehensive study regarding the status of training and certification opportunities for the State's direct support professional workforce. The purpose of this study shall be to conduct an analysis of the quality, availability, and utilization of direct support professional training and certification programs in the State, and to provide recommendations regarding improvements to such programs that will better support and develop the direct support professional workforce.

The study, at a minimum, shall:

(1) review the existing direct support professional training and certification requirements;

(2) identify current direct support professional training and certification programs offered in the State and evaluate each program's ability to meet the requirements reviewed in paragraph (1) of this subsection;

(3) analyze the accessibility of each program by considering such factors as cost, location, time offered, and length of commitment;

(4) gather utilization data for each program, including attendance information and completion rate;

(5) assess whether the existing direct support professional training and certification programs are sufficient to support the demand for direct support professionals in the workforce;

(6) establish a means to receive and incorporate stakeholder input; and

(7) recommend improvements regarding the direct support professional training and certification programs offered in the State, as well as any legislative proposals, in response to the findings of the study.

b. The Commissioner of Human Services, in collaboration with the Commissioner of Children and Families, the Commissioner of Labor, and the NJ Partnership for Direct Support Professional Workforce Development, shall report the findings and conclusions of the study, as well as any recommendations issued pursuant to paragraph (7) of subsection a. of this section, to the Legislature, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), within 18 months of the effective date of this act.

c. As used in this section:

"Direct support professional" means an individual who provides direct, non-medical supportive assistance, on a daily basis, to a person who has a physical, intellectual, or developmental disability, with the aim of helping the person to: become better integrated into the community or the least restrictive environment; more effectively understand, communicate, and advocate for, the person's individual needs and desires; identify and participate in positive employment, job coaching, and training opportunities; make informed choices, and better understand the options and possible consequences of choices relating to physical health, safety, and emotional well-being; address challenging behaviors through a person-centered approach; successfully engage in the basic activities of daily living; identify and participate in activities that promote a healthy lifestyle; and otherwise lead a self-directed and autonomous life.

2. This act shall take effect immediately and shall expire upon the submission of the report by the Commissioner of Human Services pursuant to subsection b. of section 1 of this act.

STATEMENT

This bill requires the Commissioner of Human Services, in collaboration with the Commissioner of Children and Families, the Commissioner of Labor, and the NJ Partnership for Direct Support Professional Workforce Development, to implement, or contract with a third party to implement, a comprehensive study regarding the status of training and certification opportunities for the State's direct support professional workforce. The purpose of this study is to conduct an analysis of the quality, availability, and utilization of direct support professional training and certification programs in the State, and to provide recommendations regarding improvements to such programs that will better support and develop the direct support professional workforce.

The study, at a minimum, is required to:

(1) review the existing direct support professional training and certification requirements;

(2) identify current direct support professional training and certification programs offered in the State and evaluate each program's ability to meet the requirements reviewed in paragraph (1) of this subsection;

(3) analyze the accessibility of each program by considering such factors as cost, location, time offered, and length of commitment;

(4) gather utilization data for each program, including attendance information and completion rate;

(5) assess whether existing direct support professional training and certification programs are sufficient to support the demand for direct support professionals in the workforce;

(6) establish a means to receive and incorporate stakeholder input; and

(7) recommend improvements regarding the direct support professional training and certification programs offered in the State, as well as any legislative proposals, in response to the findings of the study.

Within 18 months of the effective date of the bill, the Commissioner of Human Services, in collaboration with the Commissioner of Children and Families, the Commissioner of Labor, and the NJ Partnership for Direct Support Professional Workforce Development, is required to report the findings and conclusions of the study, as well as any recommendations issued pursuant to the bill, to the Legislature.

Under the bill, a "direct support professional" means an individual who provides direct, non-medical supportive assistance, on a daily basis, to a person who has a physical, intellectual, or developmental disability, with the aim of helping the person to: become better integrated into the community or the least restrictive environment; more effectively understand, communicate, and advocate for, the person's individual needs and desires; identify and participate in positive employment, job coaching, and training opportunities; make informed choices, and better understand the options and possible consequences of choices relating to physical health, safety, and emotional well-being; address challenging behaviors through a person-centered approach; successfully engage in the basic activities of daily living; identify and participate in activities that promote a healthy lifestyle; and otherwise lead a self-directed and autonomous life.