Title 18A.
Chapter 64A.
Article 6.
(Rename)
Career
Development
Program
§§1-5
C.18A:64A-82 to
18A:64A-86

P.L. 2021, CHAPTER 421, ***approved January 18, 2022***
Senate Committee Substitute ***(First Reprint)*** for
Senate, No. 4102

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

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

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

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

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

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

d. [1]DSPs support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in their own homes, family homes, provider-managed residences and programs, in the community, and workplaces. They support individuals with the activities related to daily living, including personal care, health and well-being, behavioral and mental health, relationship building, home and community participation, achievement of goals, and a variety of other individual needs. They require the ethics, skills, and competency to effectively provide these supports.

e.[1] However, the system of services and supports that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities rely on for

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.
Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:
[1] Assembly AAP committee amendments adopted January 6, 2022.

becoming contributing citizens in their communities is facing an ongoing workforce crisis; harming the ability of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to access services. This strain is further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

[1][e.]** f.[1]** The DSP workforce crisis, that is evident across the nation, is characterized in several ways, including high turnover, difficulty recruiting, and no discernable career path, all of which threatens the number and quality of available services and supports for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

[1][f. This crisis calls for the establishment of a career path aligned with ongoing professional development]** g. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has awarded Money Follows the Person funds (MFP) to the Department of Human Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) to address the DSP crisis through a process facilitated by DDD and the Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities, Rutgers, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School to establish core competencies for New Jersey and related training. The federal MFP funding and this act represents a recognition of the need for a Direct Support Professional Career Development Program aligned with national and State core competencies[1] in order to instill competence, confidence, and investment in the workforce that contributes to the well-being and quality of life of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities by providing an opportunity for career development, advancement, and learning new skills.

[1][g.]** h. Efforts of the Direct Support Professional Career Development Program will be aligned with the competencies developed and adopted by New Jersey.

i.[1] The Direct Support Professional Career Development **[1]**[Center]** Program[1] shall have two objectives. First, the **[1]**[Center]** program[1] shall conduct a pilot that focuses on DSP recruitment **[1]**[and retention for students "at-risk" of not completing a traditional high school program and, as such, not only will benefit people with intellectual and developmental disabilities but also "at-risk" students who otherwise may not have access to a career opportunity]** of high school or county college students, but may also be open to individuals pursuing a change in career, and oversee implementation of one-year paid fellowship opportunities. The program shall be responsible for determining and evaluating the criteria for fellowship recipients, and selecting new fellows on an annual basis[1].

[1][h.]** j.[1] The [1]second objective of the[1] Direct Support Professional Career Development **[1]**[Center]** Program[1] shall [1]be to[1] provide support to existing and new DSPs with **[1]**[incentives to remain in the field and further]** educational programming and experience that help them build skills and competency while

working in the field and further[1] their [1][education] professional development[1] .

2. The Direct Support Professional Career Development [1][Center] Program[1] shall be established [1][at] by[1] the New Jersey Community College Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development [1][in partnership with a trade association serving organizations that employ direct support professionals] at one of its Centers for Workforce Innovation as part of the New Jersey Pathways to Career Opportunities Initiative. The program shall also establish two additional program sites, one located at a county college in the northern region of the State, and one located at a county college in the southern region of the State. The Secretary of Higher Education, in consultation with the New Jersey Council of County Colleges, shall select the location for the program's additional sites.

The program shall be guided by an advisory council that includes representatives from target school districts, county colleges, and One Stop Career Centers, and representatives from each of the following stakeholder groups: people with disabilities, family members of people with disabilities, direct support professionals, frontline supervisors, and service provider leadership. The advisory council shall work in partnership with the Division of Developmental Disabilities in the Department of Human Services and the Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities, Rutgers, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

The Secretary of Higher Education, in consultation with the President of the New Jersey Council of County Colleges, shall appoint the members of the advisory council. Members of the advisory council shall serve without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for their actual and necessary expenses[1].

It shall be the purpose of the [1][center] program[1] to provide a potential career path to [1][high school students at-risk of failing to graduate] individuals interested in human services and allied health career fields[1] in addition to existing direct support professionals, thereby assisting with recruitment and retention of this critical workforce.

The [1][center] program[1], through partnerships with local school districts, [1]county colleges, and One Stop Career Centers,[1] shall identify and recruit [1][high school students "at risk" of not graduating from high school who have not pursued vocational education or any other alternative education program, and] individuals[1] who are interested in learning about and serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The [1][center] program[1] shall provide participating students with a [1][two-year] one-year fellowship[1] program that offers mentorship and training

regarding the responsibilities of direct support professionals and a potential job opportunity upon graduation. The program shall provide online training in addition to on-site training and mentorship with experienced direct support professionals employed by [1]**[**participating**]** collaborating[1] agencies that serve individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

[1]**[**Upon completion of the program, a participating student shall receive academic credits and the school district at which the student is enrolled shall apply the credits towards the district requirements for high school graduation. The student shall be offered an opportunity to interview for employment as a direct support professional at the agency where the student received on-site training. The agency shall interview the student for a position with compensation that reflects the experience and training received through the program.**]**[1]

In addition to [1]**[**"at risk"**]**[1] students, the Direct Support Professional Career Development [1]**[**Center**]** Program[1] shall work with existing and [1]**[**future**]** potential[1] direct support professionals to identify their educational goals including credentialing, an associate's degree, and a bachelor's degree.

[1]The Direct Support Professional Career Development Program shall collaborate with local One Stop Career Centers to provide opportunities for unemployed and underemployed workers to receive training to pursue employment in the field of Direct Support.[1]

3. The Direct Support Professional Career Development [1]**[**Center**]** Program, and each additional program site,[1] established pursuant to section 2 of this act shall [1]**[**employ a career counselor**]** provide career counseling[1].

[1]**[**a.**]**[1] The career [1]**[**counselor**]** counseling[1] shall provide ongoing support to participating [1]**[**high school**]**[1] students as well as direct support professionals, including providing the student with assistance in finding appropriate postsecondary programs [1], support with completion of the Direct Support Professional Career Development Pathway established pursuant to section 4 of this act,[1] or in connecting the student with a provider agency that serves people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

[1]**[**b. The career counselor shall assist in the establishment of a Career Development Program pursuant to section 4 of this act.**]**[1]

4. [1]**[**In collaboration with the New Jersey Council of County Colleges, a Career Development Program is established for new and existing direct support professionals at the Direct Support Professional Career Development Center established pursuant to section 2 of this act. The Career Development Program shall assist individuals employed as a direct support professional with the

pursuit of a college degree. It shall be the purpose of the Career Development Program to create a career path for the recruitment and retention of direct support professionals.

The New Jersey Council of County Colleges shall, as part of New Jersey's Workforce Development initiative,**]** In collaboration with the Division of Developmental Disabilities in the Department of Human Services and entities focused on promoting the self-determination and full participation of people with disabilities, the Center of Workforce Innovation, and each additional program site, shall implement a competency-based Direct Support Professional Career Development Pathway, in alignment with the Money Follows the Person Direct Support Professional Capacity Building effort and**[1]** develop curriculum specific to the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities including **[1][**an**]** a certificate,**[1]** associates' degree**[1]**,**[1]** and bachelors' degree.

[1]The Career Development Pathway shall assist individuals employed as a direct support professional increase their skills, achieve competency in the field, and as part of the certificate program, earn fully transferable course credit applicable toward an associate's degree in a human service or relevant healthcare field at any county college. It shall be the purpose of the Career Development Pathway to improve the recruitment, competence, and retention of the direct support professionals workforce.**[1]**

5. a. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education the sum of **[1][**$450,000**]** $1,000,000**[1]** for the purposes of fulfilling the provisions of this act.

b. The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education shall distribute a grant to the New Jersey Community College Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development **[1][**in partnership with a trade association serving organizations that employ direct support professionals**]**[1] to establish the Direct Support Professional Career Development **[1][**Center by such criteria as are determined by the Secretary of Higher Education**]** Program at a Center for Workforce Innovation, and at the program's additional sites, distribute fellowship funding to cover living expenses for participating individuals, and establish a fund for existing direct support professionals to cover costs associated with furthering their education. No more than 10 percent of the funds appropriated pursuant to this section shall be used for administrative expenses. The Secretary of Higher Education shall approve any budget pursuant to this act**[1]**.

6. This act shall take effect on the **[1][**180th day after**]** first day of the sixth month next following**[1]** the date of enactment.

Establishes Direct Support Professional Career Development Program; appropriates $1,000,000.