



DSP

Collaboration among community colleges, state agencies, and employers aims to tackle New Jersey's DSP workforce shortage.

**Direct Support Professionals
Career Development Program**

June 13, 2024



About Bergen Community College

- Three Campuses - Northernmost County in New Jersey
- Majority-Minority Institution and Hispanic-Serving Institution
- Over 12,000 Degree Seeking Students Enrolled this Spring
- 10,000+ Enrolled in Continuing Education and Workforce Development
- Recognized as one of the 20 “Most Promising Places to Work in Community Colleges”

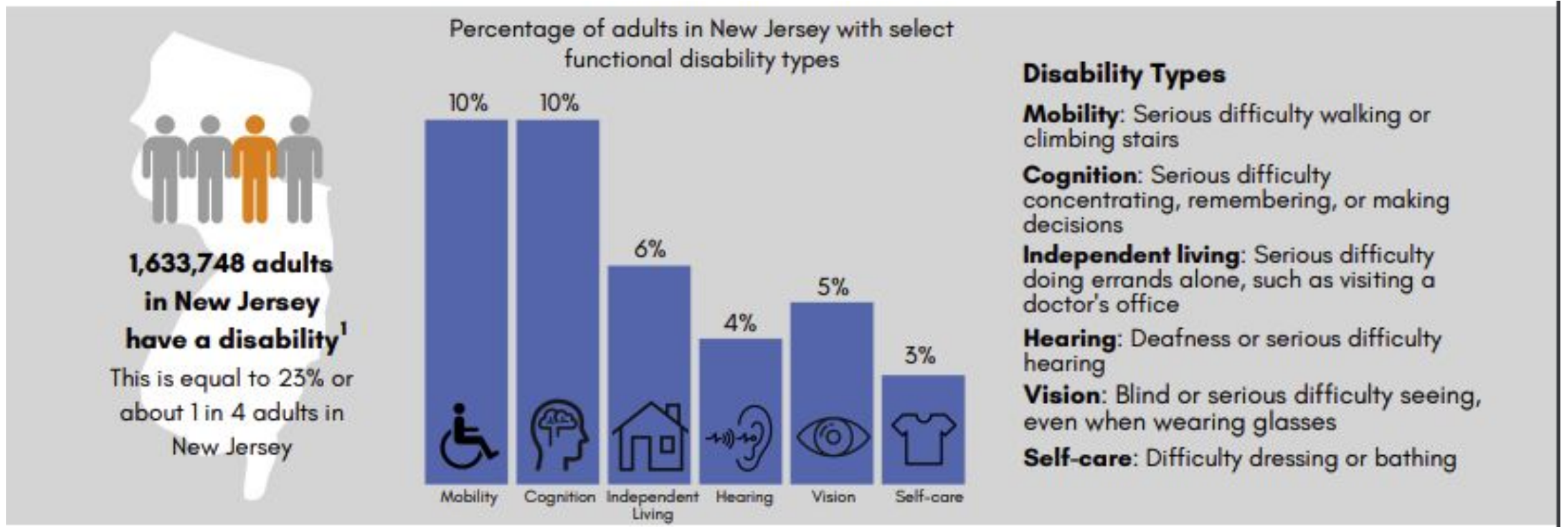


About Rowan College of South Jersey

- Two Campuses - Cumberland & Gloucester serving over 10,000 enrolled in degree and continuing education programs
- Ranked as one of the Community College Week's Fastest Growing community college
- First Community College to have School of Medicine / 2nd School of Medicine opening on our Cumberland campus Fall 2024
- RCSJ named Top 150, eligible for Aspen Institute's Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence



Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in New Jersey



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What is a DSP?

- A Direct Support Professional (DSP) helps people with intellectual and developmental disabilities participate in home and community life.
- DSPs work in homes, group homes, day programs, and the community.
- DSPs assist with learning new skills, personal care, daily living activities, health and safety, community connections, employment and relationships.



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What is a DSP?

[Video Clip about DSPs](#)

Source: <https://dspnj.org/>



The State of DSPs in New Jersey

Despite:

- Since 2019, the State has increased wages for DSPs by \$4.75 an hour
- As of 2021, average New Jersey DSP starting wage: \$16.06 an hour

Pay Rate Remains a Significant Issue:

- Cost of Living
- High Turnover
- Competition with Other Industries

Source: 2021 National Core Indicators Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities State of the Workforce Survey Report



The Issues

FAMILIES: Needs of individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities and their families

EMPLOYERS: Improve DSP retention rate

DSPS: Access to credentials that lead to job mastery and upward mobility (increased confidence)



Collaboration to fill the needs in the NJ DSP Workforce



Two College Collaboration

Bergen Community College and
Rowan College of South Jersey

Co-develop scope of work and
curriculum

Share learnings and best practices

Both serve as regional providers for
the program



Goals

Provide current DSPs with credentials for job mastery and career advancement.

Help NJ Employers retain more new DSPs in the profession.

Create pathways to meaningful careers with family-sustaining wages.



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DSP Career Development Program

June 2023 - June 2024



Collaborate with NJCCC and NJACP using the OSHE Grant.

Offer free DSP competency training, including college-level courses/certifications, for students.

Individualized support for student success

Fellowships and stipends

Work-based learning experiences

Partner with agencies for student internships and DSP employment



Current Students

Total 37 students

- Fall 2023 Cohort: 19
- Spring 2024 Cohort: 18

Career changers (home caregivers, teacher assistants, retail salespersons, patient care technicians)

Current community college students

Individuals with family members with disabilities

Current and former DSPs

High school students minimum age 18

Immigrants



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BCC Program Components: Social Work Focused

- DSP Certificate course
- The State mandated College of Direct Support (CDS) Training
- Two College Courses: Intro to Human Services / Intro to Social Work
- National Healthcareer Association PersonAbility Training
- Mental Health Association of NJ Mental Health First Aid Training
- CPR Training
- 80-hour Internship and one-year employment as DSPs

Bergen Community College Program Outcome

Colleges created a DSP Program leading to credentials and pathways to an Associate of Science Degree.

12 students from the Fall 2023 cohort will graduate from the DSP program in June 2024.

5 students are employed as DSPs at partner agencies.

5 students will pursue degrees in Social Work.

RCSJ Program Components: Sociology or Allied Health focused

- DSP Certificate course
- The State mandated College of Direct Support (CDS) Training
- Career Pathway:
 - Two College Courses: Intro to Sociology / English / Oral Communications
 - Certified Nursing Assistant certification
- National Healthcareer Association PersonAbility Training
- Mental Health Association of NJ Mental Health First Aid Training
- CPR Training
- 80-hour Internship and one-year employment as DSPs

Rowan College of South Jersey Program Outcome

Colleges created a DSP Program pathways leading to credentials and Associates of Science Degree

RCSJ created a DSP program with two pathways, credit and non-credit, based on employer needs.

7 students from the Fall 2023 cohort will graduate from the DSP program in June 2024.

4 students are employed as DSPs at partner agencies.

Program Challenge

Student recruitment

Student retention and support

Partnership with appropriate agencies



BCC Student Recruitment

of applicants: 179

of students who came for interviews: 52

of accepted students: 41

of current enrolled students: 23

of dropped out students: 18



RCSJ Student Recruitment

of applicants: 49

of students who came for interviews: 27

of accepted students: 21

of current enrolled students: 14

of dropped out students: 7



Student Retention and Support

Overloaded with work in a short time.

Been out of school for a while.

Struggling to keep up with college courses.

Not proficient with online learning technology and platforms.

Schedule conflicts for their jobs and family commitments.



Partnership with Appropriate Agencies

High demand in hiring DSPs

Agency waiting list

Partnership Agreement with four (4) agencies at each college

Capacity to support students for internship

Adequate compensation and working environment to acknowledge credentials

Appropriate accommodation for current DSPs to continue their education



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Thank you!

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