

Concept Report

Vocational Support Services for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

Purpose of the Proposed Request for Proposal (RFP)

In accordance with Section 3-16(j) of the New York City Procurement Policy Board (PPB) Rules, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (“NYC Health Department” or “the agency”) is issuing this Concept Report (“Concept Paper”) in advance of issuing a Request for Proposals for a new client services program. Specifically, the NYC Health Department is planning to issue an RFP for Vocational Support Services for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities.

Those eligible for services are individuals believed to have or who have been determined to have a “Developmental Disability” (DD) as defined by New York State Mental Hygiene Law §§1.03(22). This means a disability of a person which:

- a)
 1. *is attributable to intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, neurological impairment, familial dysautonomia, Prader-Willi syndrome or autism;*
 2. *is attributable to any other condition of a person found to be closely related to intellectual disability because such condition results in similar impairment of general intellectual functioning or adaptive behavior to that of intellectually disabled persons or requires treatment and services similar to those required for such person; or*
 3. *is attributable to dyslexia resulting from a disability described in subparagraph one or two of this paragraph;*
- b) *originates before such person attains age twenty-two;*
- c) *has continued or can be expected to continue indefinitely; and*
- d) *constitutes a substantial handicap to such person's ability to function normally in society.*

Individuals enrolled in New York State (NYS) Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) services are ineligible for the services provided through the contracts that would result from this RFP. However, they may utilize the proposed services while awaiting enrollment in OPWDD.

The NYC Health Department seeks to award contracts to providers with demonstrated experience delivering equitable and high-quality services to individuals with developmental disabilities. The Department anticipates awarding approximately 5 contracts, one contract per borough.

In response to this Concept Paper, the NYC Health Department is particularly interested in public feedback regarding:

- The proposed geographic distribution of contracts to ensure equitable access across communities.
- The proposed staffing and service delivery requirements to support high-quality care.
- The proposed budget and budget justification to confirm that resources are aligned with program goals.

Background:

The NYC Health Department is issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to expand access to vocational support services for individuals with developmental disabilities (DD) as defined by New York State Mental Hygiene Law §§1.03(22). These services are essential to improving opportunities for employment and skill development for individuals with DD.

The need for these services continues to grow. During 2019–2021, the prevalence of any diagnosed developmental disability in US children aged 3–17 years increased from 7.40% in 2019 to 8.56% in 2021.¹ While data is limited for the adult population, one recent study estimates approximately 8.4% of people in the US, overall, had a developmental disability.²

Data from the New York State OPWDD demonstrate approximately 131,000 people with developmental disabilities in 2023 received OPWDD services, of which, 36% (47,500) reside in NYC.³

In NYS, findings from the 2023 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) show approximately 11.5% of adults have a “cognitive disability,”⁴ a broader measure that includes but is not limited to developmental disabilities. Additionally, NYS education data from 2023 show approximately 230,000 school-aged children have an Autism, Learning Disability, or Intellectual Disability diagnosis.⁵

Findings from the 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates⁶ reveal a similar pattern when examining “cognitive difficulty,” with 933,088 NYS residents and 376,597 NYC residents reporting a cognitive difficulty.

Additionally, the 376,597 NYC residents represent 4.7% of the city population, an increase from the 2018 ACS 5-year estimates⁷ when 331,130 (4.2%) of NYC residents reported having a cognitive difficulty.

¹ Zablotsky B, Ng AE, Black LI, Blumberg SJ. Diagnosed developmental disabilities in children aged 3–17 years: United States, 2019–2021. NCHS Data Brief, no 473. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2023. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.15620/cdc:129520>

² Residential Information Systems Project (2023). People with IDD in the United States. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, RISP, Research and Training Center on Community Living, Institute on Community Integration. Retrieved from: <https://risp.umn.edu>.

³ Office for People With Developmental Disabilities. Medicaid Summary: County Data. New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities, 2024, <https://opwdd.ny.gov/data/medicaid-summary-county-data>.

⁴ Disability Status, New York State Adults, 2023. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Number 2025-12. Albany, New York: New York State Department of Health, Division of Chronic Disease Prevention, Bureau of Chronic Disease Evaluation and Research, April 2025.

⁵ New York State Education Department. Data Summaries – Number of New York State Children and Youth with Disabilities Receiving Special Education Programs and Services. P-12 SEDCAR, 2024., <https://www.p12.nysed.gov/sedcar/goal2data.htm>.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce. "Disability Characteristics." American Community Survey, 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1810.

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce. "Disability Characteristics." American Community Survey, 2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1810.

The prevalence of cognitive difficulty when examined by county shows variances and potentially higher concentrations of need in certain boroughs. Bronx reported the highest rate at 7.4% (97,049 individuals), followed by New York County at 4.7% (73,122), Kings County at 4.3% (106,164), Queens County at 3.8% (83,092), and Richmond County at 3.7% (17,170).

Although data specific to developmental disabilities is limited, the growing prevalence of cognitive difficulties, which includes developmental disabilities, underscores the urgency of this initiative. By investing in clinical services tailored to individuals with developmental disabilities, the NYC Health Department aims to promote equitable access to care, reduce isolation, foster independence, and strengthen inclusion for people with DD across all five boroughs.

Goals and Objectives

The goal for this procurement is to provide time limited services designed to assist eligible individuals with DD in preparing for and/or maintaining competitive or self-employment.

The objectives for this procurement are to:

1. Assist New Yorkers with developmental disabilities to prepare for, obtain, and/or maintain competitive employment.
2. Offer a sufficiently broad range of vocational services to meet the individualized needs of people with DD in NYC.
3. Implement best practices for vocational services provided to individuals with DD.
4. Optimize use of available resources through monitoring of service utilization; and provide person-centered, customized services with appropriate levels of care and carefully designed to meet the diverse functional needs of program participants.

Service Model

The NYC Health Department expects that each provider will serve no fewer than 15 unduplicated program participants annually.

The NYC Health Department anticipates making approximately 5 awards from the RFP, one contract to serve each borough. Providers interested in serving multiple boroughs would need to submit separate proposals in accordance with the RFP's competition pools, and when a provider is eligible for award in multiple competitions, the NYC Health Department would reserve the right to determine the number of awards and service areas. The NYC Health Department reserves the right to allocate awards and adjust service expectations based on demonstrated need and geographic distribution.

1) Program Information

- a. *Eligible Program Participants*: The selected providers must provide vocational support services to eligible individuals who are legally eligible to work in the US and are 18 or older. Eligible individuals will be NYC residents with a "Developmental disability" as defined by New York State Mental Hygiene Law §§1.03(22).

In addition, individuals also meet one of the following criteria:

- Ineligible for Medicaid
- Not eligible for Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) services
- OPWDD-eligible but not eligible to participate in OPWDD HCBS Waiver programs
- Eligible for or receiving OPWDD Waiver services but unable to access OPWDD vocational services (may be considered for enrollment on a case-by-case basis with prior approval from the NYC Health Department)
- Individuals who are currently awaiting determination of OPWDD eligibility for similar services may be enrolled in order to provide timely services and smooth transition from previous programs or high school.

b. *Required/ Allowable Services:* Eligible clients may receive services for up to 24 months. Services are cumulative and may be delivered consecutively for the 24-month period for individuals that have not identified employment and/or are undergoing customized employment. Additionally, this may be provided in intervals according to individualized service needs. Selected providers must provide:

- Initial Assessment -- Includes information from sources relevant to an individual's status and history, including intake, medical and psychosocial information. Also includes a vocational assessment.
- Service Plan -- providers must develop an individualized service plan in collaboration with the individual that is based on the initial assessment, including recommendations for employment positions and / or training activities.

A range of vocational programs can be proposed, such as:

- Pathway to Employment: A short-term service focused on helping individuals explore their interests and strengths, gain work experience, and create a career plan.
- Community-Based Prevocational Services (CBPV): Involves activities like volunteering, developing general work skills, and gaining work-related experiences in the community.
- Employment Training Program (ETP): Combines community work experiences with service provider classes and industry-specific training programs to prepare individuals for employment.
- Supported Employment (SEMP): Provides ongoing support to help individuals gain and maintain employment in the community. Intensive services are available before employment, and extended services are for those who are already employed.
- On-the-job support: Services that provide assistance once an individual has secured employment, such as job coaching, to help them succeed in their role.
- Job readiness classes: Training on important skills like conflict resolution, dressing for work, and other job-related topics.
- Job development and coaching: Services to increase employability skills and help find suitable job opportunities.

The NYC Health Department anticipates prioritizing proposers who propose a program that includes three or more vocational support services, such as:

- Vocational Skills Assessments
 - Career Interest Assessments
 - Job Shadowing, Internships, or Community Work Experiences
 - Researching Career Options/ Job Development and Matching
 - Resume and/or Job Interviewing Preparation
 - Benefits Counseling
 - Travel Training
 - Intensive Job Coaching
 - Job retention strategies
 - Career advancement strategies
 - Foster independence on the job
- c. *Hybrid Funding for Program Enhancement* Programs may request additional funds to support program enhancements above and beyond their core services. Enhancement funds can constitute up to 10% of the total funding requested. These enhancements may be related to (1) Training (Workforce or Collaterals/Community), (2) Enhanced Collaboration, (3) Program Expansion (increasing capacity, adding a new service or enhancing a current service with evidence-based practices), and/or (4) Transportation. Proposals should include a detailed plan with activities and outcomes/ measures associated with the requested enhancement(s). Examples include:
- Specialized Staff Training: Allocate funds for ongoing, specialized training for job coaches, particularly for dual-diagnosis and complex support needs (Russell, D., 2021)
 - Employer and Community Training and Outreach/ Engagement: Support training programs to prepare employers and communities for inclusive hiring practices.
 - Transportation stipends

(1) Anticipated Requirements

Providers will be prepared to deliver services in one or more of the five (5) boroughs in New York City and will promote health and racial equity and social justice in the delivery of such services.

The NYC Health Department expects that providers will have at least three (3) years of successful experience providing vocational services to individuals with DD.

Providers must be current providers of OPWDD-sponsored vocational services, such as pre-vocational or supported employment program (SEMP) providers, or a provider with experience providing vocational services, such as Access-VR, to individuals with DD in NYC within the past five (5) years.

Providers will provide services that are based on ongoing assessments, individualized and appropriate to individuals identified strengths, needs and expressed interests and, where applicable, as described in service plan reviews.

Providers will maintain operating hours that maximize accessibility for clients and their caregivers, including evening and weekend hours, where indicated and feasible.

Providers must identify eligible clients for enrollment into the proposed program. Providers will determine each individual's insurance status, including eligibility for OPWDD vocational services or Access-VR, prior to the initiation of any services under the proposed program. Awarded providers may use NYC Health Department funds to complement existing funding but may not supplant those funds. In cases where existing programs are NYC Health Department-funded and simultaneously funded by OPWDD or other sources, DOHMH would expect proposers to describe this in their proposal.

DOHMH would expect that RFP proposers will provide a detailed plan that describes its organizational strategy and approach to racial equity and social justice through programming and operations and ensuring that services are equitable and responsive to program participants needs in an effort to address racial health gaps and improve health outcomes for all New York City residents. For more information regarding racial equity and social justice please visit <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/race-to-justice.page>.

DOHMH anticipates that contractors will submit data in the format and system specified by DOHMH on a monthly and quarterly basis and will participate in ongoing data collection, racial equity activities, and program evaluation as required by DOHMH and other City systems.

Proposed Term of the Contract(s)

DOHMH anticipates that the term of each contract resulting from this RFP will be nine years in duration, contingent on the availability of funding. As of the release date of this Concept Report, the anticipate contract start date is January 1, 2028.

Proposed Procurement Timeline

The proposed RFP would be issued through the PASSPort system, and proposals will only be accepted through PASSPort. It is anticipated that the RFP issuance date will be in Winter 2026/2027, with proposals due 45-60 after the RFP issuance date, and anticipated award decisions in Spring 2027.

Planned Method of Evaluating Proposals

DOHMH anticipates that proposals will be evaluated based on: the extent to which proposers demonstrate relevant organizational experience; the proposed approach to the scope of services; the proposed approach to data management, monitoring and reporting; demonstration of organizational capacity and qualifications; and the proposed approach to budget management.

Anticipated Number of Contracts and Funding Information

DOHMH anticipates awarding approximately five contracts from the RFP. DOHMH estimates that the annual value of all contracts will be \$890,943, subject to funding availability.

Use of PASSPort and Prequalification

To respond to this future RFP and all other Human/Client Services RFPs, organizations must have an account and an Approved PASSPort HHS Accelerator PQL qualification status in PASSPort. Prequalification applications and proposals in response to RFPs will ONLY be accepted through PASSPort. If you do not have a PASSPort account or Approved PASSPort HHS Accelerator PQL Application, please visit [nyc.gov/passport](https://www.nyc.gov/passport) to get started. If you have any questions about your PASSPort HHS Accelerator PQL status or for assistance with creating a PASSPort account, please go to <https://www.nyc.gov/site/mocs/about/help.page>.

Contact Information /Deadline for Questions/Comments

Written comments on this Concept Report are invited by June 15, 2026, at 5:00pm EST. Please email RFP@health.nyc.gov and indicate "DD Vocational Concept Report Comments" in the subject line of the email.