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## **Community Options New York Receives \$1.5 million Grant to Support Students with Disabilities**

BINGHAMTON, NY – Community Options New York, Inc. was announced as a recipient of a \$1.5 million grant from the New York State Education Department to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to over 1200 students with disabilities over the next five years. Service implementation of the grant will begin in January 2020 for approximately 250 students in Broome County and surrounding areas.

“This is a great opportunity to support students with disabilities in the Southern Tier of New York State,” said Ashley Gamba, State Director of Employment Services for Community Options. “We look forward to supporting the local school districts and to help students with disabilities plan for their future and post-secondary success.”

Youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities have the lowest rates of education, employment or work preparation after high school. Although mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), schools have fallen behind with assisting students in the development of transition plans that prepare them for real work and as a result, most adults with disabilities are unemployed or underemployed. To date, there are one million students with intellectual and developmental disabilities trapped in an education system that was not made for them. The Community Options Pre-ETS curriculum will provide students with disabilities a person-centered approach to help prepare them for life after high school.

“Having the opportunity to bridge the gap from school to employment for so many students with disabilities is incredible and we are excited to get to work on this grant,” said Jill Lovuolo, Executive Director for Community Options New York of Southern Tier. “We have long-standing relationships with the business community and institutions of higher education and this funding will allow us to build on our collaborative efforts to support more students.”

Community Options New York of the Southern Tier was established in 1994 to provide residential and employment support services to individuals with disabilities in the Broome County and surrounding areas. Community Options New York has successfully placed over 200 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in competitive employment; NOT sheltered workshops. Across the state, Community Options New York supports over a thousand people in employment services and supports, including pre-vocational, pre-employment, work readiness and supported employment.

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About Community Options, Inc.:

For over 30 years, Community Options has developed housing and employment supports for people with disabilities – serving thousands of people through over 40 offices across 10 states. Community Options provides advocacy assistance to empower people with disabilities because all people – regardless of ability level – should live and work in the community with dignity, choice and self-determination. For more information please visit our website: [www.comop.org](http://www.comop.org) and to follow along with the #AllItTakes campaign, search #AllItTakes on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.