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CONTACT: Brandon Cantarella  
(609) 951-9900

## **Community Options Partners with Binghamton Black Bears Hockey Team to Create Employment Opportunities for Youth with Disabilities**

**Binghamton, NY** – Community Options, Inc. has announced a partnership with the Binghamton Black Bears semi-pro hockey team to develop integrated employment opportunities for youth with disabilities.

Community Options is a national nonprofit that supports 5,000 people with disabilities through innovative housing and employment programs in 10 states. The partnership with the Black Bears was developed to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services to students with disabilities.

“We are excited to work with Community Options and help the youth in the community thrive and be successful,” said **Charlie Watson, General Manager of the Binghamton Black Bears**. “Our new team here has many opportunities for these students and with their skills will surely be part of our future and theirs moving forward. Maggie and the entire staff have so many talented students that fit our needs. Each student has their own skills which makes it easy for us to place them in the right situation to further their career choices.”

The Binghamton Black Bears will provide multiple opportunities for youth with disabilities to gain valuable, hands-on work experience. Opportunities include front desk clerical support, team sales, marketing, media, and communications, and assisting the equipment manager. There will also be opportunities to help on game day once the season begins.

“Thank you to the Binghamton Black Bears for partnering with Community Options and for extending a warm welcome to youth with disabilities. The skills they will learn while working with the Black Bears will help them gain future employment opportunities” said **Maggie McNamara, Director of Transition for Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) with Community Options of New York**.

In Maggie’s role as Director of Transition, she is responsible for partnering and collaborating with others to ensure students’ success after program graduation. Pre-ETS

is a job training and transition program for high school students and young adults with disabilities. Pre-ETS provides youth with real-world experience through career exploration, job trials, and work-based learning experiences.

Community Options was awarded a five-year grant from the New York State Education Department to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services to students with disabilities in the Southern Tier of New York State. Using this grant, Community Options partners with school districts, organizations, and businesses within the community. Through these partnerships, students with disabilities are given access to self-advocacy skills, developing transferrable work skills, and post-secondary counseling.

“This is a great opportunity for students with disabilities to take advantage of the services we offer and gain meaningful work experience in a fun environment,” said **Ashley Gamba, New York State Director of Employment Services with Community Options.**

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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 from 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](#).