

**Promoting the Readiness of Minors in  
Supplemental Security Income (PROMISE)**

**CFDA 84.418P**

*Submitted by the  
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*On behalf of the  
New York State Office of Mental Health*

*With the support of the  
New York State New York State NYESS Coordinating Council*

*And*

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August 19, 2013

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## **A. Quality of the project design**

Over the past two decades, New York State (NYS) has been actively and collaboratively engaged in systems change across three primary domains: 1) to develop a comprehensive employment system to reduce barriers to work and improve employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities; 2) to enhance the post-school adult outcomes of youth with disabilities, by collaboratively advancing evidence-based secondary transition practices at the regional, school district and individual student levels; and, 3) to support the return-to-work efforts of individuals with disabilities who receive Social Security Administration (SSA) disability benefits under the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).

These domains have been supported by numerous federal and state initiatives including: the US Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS)-sponsored Transition Systems Change grant; the SSA-sponsored State Partnership Initiative (NYWORKS); two Youth Transition Demonstrations (YTD); the Benefits Offset National Demonstration (BOND); and, three cycles of funding for the National Work Incentives Support Center (WISC); the US Department of Labor (DOL)-sponsored Work Incentive Grant, Disability Program Navigator Initiative, and Disability Employment Initiative; three rounds of funding from the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) for Medicaid Infrastructure Grants (MIG, NY Makes Work Pay); the NYS Education Department (NYSED) sponsored Model Transition Program (MTP); and three multi-year cycles of the statewide Transition Coordination Site network. Most recently, NYS has sponsored the Statewide Transition Services Professional Development Support Center (PDSC); the NYS Developmental Disability Planning Council (DDPC)-sponsored Transition Technical Assistance Support Program (T-TASP), NYS

Work Incentives Support Center (NYS WISC), and NYS Partners in Policy Making (PIP); the NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH)-sponsored Career Development Initiative; and others.

The growing statewide and gubernatorial emphasis on employment for New Yorkers with disabilities developed over the past two decades stemming from these initiatives, supported by service innovations and shared vision across state agencies and employment stakeholders, establishes a strong foundation for implementing and sustaining a research demonstration to “Promote the Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income” (PROMISE). The NYS PROMISE will build upon NYS’ past successes and significantly support NYS in removing systems, policy and practice barriers for transition-age youth who receive SSI and their families. The NYS OMH through the Research Foundation for Mental Hygiene (RFMH), with their management partners the New York Employment Support System (NYESS) Statewide Coordinating Council (SCC) and Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute, along with the proposed research demonstration site community, join the NYS Governor’s Office in designing and implementing a series of statewide strategic service interventions to support the transition and employment preparation of youth ages 14-16 who receive SSI.

NYS is uniquely positioned at this point in time to undertake this comprehensive research initiative. Building on the past systems change and research initiatives highlighted above, as well as work completed under a cross-systems strategic plan over the past five years to design and implement a comprehensive employment system to close the employment gap through executive, legislative and budgetary action, NYS now has the internal capacities and systems to address the unique set of gaps and weaknesses which remain for child SSI recipients and their families. The alignment of these high-level state activities, with the submission and support for this application, demonstrates NYSs commitment and understanding the challenges and barriers to

transition and employment faced by SSI youth and their families (see Appendix A, Letters of Commitment and Willingness to Collaborate pp. A-1 – A-16).

***1. Extent to which the MDP identifies and plans to address gaps and weaknesses in current State service systems for child SSI recipients and their families***

The NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTADA) reports that the number of individuals under the age of 18 who receive SSI continues to grow exponentially in NYS, with the highest prevalence rates occurring in highly rural counties and New York City. (OTADA, 2013). The data presents a composite of a child who receives SSI as an individual who rarely leaves the SSA rolls (Hemmeter, Kauff & Wittenburg, 2009; Hemmeter & Gilby, 2009), has low educational and employment attainment, rarely participates in vocational rehabilitation (Rangarajan, Fraker, Honeycutt, Mamun, Martinez, O’Day, & Wittenburg, 2000), experience higher rates of incarceration (Quinn, Rutherford, Leone, Osher & Poirier, 2005), and higher school dropout rates, and often does not have access to transition support services (Hemmeter, Kauff, & Wittenburg, 2009). Similarly, their families have low education achievement, other family members with disabilities, and lack information to aid them in increasing their self-sufficiency (Fraker & Rangarajan, 2009; Loprest & Wittenburg, 2005). This data does not augur well for the current way our state and local systems prepare and equip SSI youth and their families. To radically shift this composite, several strategies must be considered: 1. Students must receive person-centered transition planning, services and supports leading to adult living, learning and earning success; 2. Students must be connected to state and local services and supports that ensure sustainable adult success; 3. Students must have access to meaningful educational programs and be provided incentives to stay in school; 4. Families must be provided opportunity to enhance their educational achievement; 5. Families must be connected to career

planning and employment services; 6. Students and families need to be incorporated as essential features of the transition planning process; and, 7. Students and families need to understand their rights, and have access to information to aid them in making informed choices and enhancing their financial well-being and economic self-sufficiency.

Critical to the design of a successful NYS PROMISE model demonstration program is the extent to which it incorporates the strategies identified above, and naturally engages the education system, intersecting with local communities and other transition stakeholders. The NYS PROMISE is built on the these naturally inherent stakeholders and structures available within local communities to support the successful post-school transitions of youth with disabilities: local education agencies and their personnel; networks of local community disability service providers; workforce development systems; regional parent training and information centers; independent living centers; literacy zones; postsecondary education institutions; work incentive planning and assistance programs; and regional transition specialists. Building on New York State's 20-plus year track record in supporting transition and employment systems change and research demonstrations targeting transition-aged youth, as well as beneficiaries of disability benefits, the NYS PROMISE will be guided by the NYESS SCC which recently built and implemented a statewide shared data exchange across all state disability and employment agencies -- launching the country's first state-administered Employment Network under the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program.

While many of the strategies identified above are locally-considered, each holds significant implications at the systems level for development of state policies and procedures that support these outcomes. The following subsections map these strategies and current system gaps and weaknesses experienced in NYS that the NYS PROMISE will seek to address.

A.1.1. Students must receive person-centered transition planning, services and supports leading to adult living, learning and earning success. The New York State Education Department (NYSED) reports annually on the State Performance Plan (SPP) to the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) to evaluate its efforts to implement the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The SPP, submitted every six years, includes measurable and rigorous targets across 20 indicators. In NYS, in 2005, just 35% of individualized education programs (IEPs) included coordinated, measurable, annual IEP goals and transition services that would reasonably enable students to meet the post-secondary goals (SPP Indicator 13). In 2009 a more rigorous definition was established:

“...IEP that includes appropriate measurable post-secondary goals that are annually updated and based upon an age- appropriate transition assessment, transition services, including courses of study, that will reasonably enable the student to meet those post-secondary goals, and annual IEP goals related to the student’s transition service’s needs. There also must be evidence that the student was invited to the IEP Team meeting where transition services are to be discussed and evidence that, if appropriate, a representative of any participating agency was invited to the IEP Team meeting with the prior consent of the parent or student who has reached the age of majority.” (20 U.S.C. 1416(a)(3)(B))

Despite this more rigorous standard, NYS has steadily improved the percentage of IEPs that have passed the SPP 13 standard – to 89% for 2012. However, that still leaves an 11% point gap toward 100% compliance, as mandated within SPP 13. Although there is no data to indicate the disability characteristics, the implication is that these remaining IEPs represent the most challenging variables, including SSI youth with the most significant disabilities. Further compounding this is the fact that transition planning for youth with disabilities is only cross-

referenced only in policy documents between special education and the vocational rehabilitation program at the State level. Other state disability agency policies do not clearly intersect with the IDEA or NYS special education law—providing for much needed policy and practice linkages.

A.1.2 Students must be connected to state and local services and supports that ensure sustainable adult success. Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) between state disability agencies exist in NYS as it relates to transition. However, schools are obligated to provide transition services to school-aged youth under IDEA, with some services being picked up by state agencies in the student’s last year of school. Given that the transition mandates of IDEA are for the most part unfunded, schools are left with little to no resources to acquire services from community transition partners. While the Ticket to Work Program did provide a vehicle for schools to acquire resources to provide services and supports leading to employment, it did so only for students who had been re-determined eligible for SSI as an adult. New York State’s Model Transition Program (MTP, to be discussed later in greater depth) did provide a vehicle in NYS for linking the 60 demonstration site schools with community services, proving the efficacy of a partnership-based transition model. However, the model was not taken to scale due to the economic downturn and state funding deficits.

A.1.3 Students must have access to meaningful educational programs and be provided incentives to stay in school. NYS has had noted improvements in the dropout rates of students with disabilities compared to their nondisabled peers. However, there is still a 5.4 percent gap. The highest dropout rates are still experienced in the larger metropolitan settings and rural high need districts. While NYS has achieved their annual performance benchmark in this area, Free and Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment could benefit from more experiential and extended learning opportunities. Identifying and creating incentives for children

who receive SSI to stay in school is critical. While NYS has recognized increases in SSA work incentive utilization rates over the course of the NY Makes Work Pay initiative. The Section 301 work incentive continues to be and unknown work incentive and underutilized. Section 301 allows a child SSI recipient who is actively participating in a vocational rehabilitation program to maintain their benefits until they have completed their program—not only bridging the age-18 redetermination process but connecting youth to much needed adult service providers prior to graduation.

A.1.4 Families must be provided opportunity to enhance their educational achievement, and connect to career planning and employment services. The NYSED and Board of Regents have made considerable investment in expanding adult general literacy and financial literacy through the development of Literacy Zones. Literacy Zones are a reform initiative to close the achievement gap in urban and rural communities of concentrated poverty and high concentrations of families and individuals with limited literacy or English language proficiency. Literacy Zones are intended to provide a systemic focus on meeting the literacy needs of communities, from birth through adult. The over 30 Literacy Zones and their satellite sites can provide pathways out of poverty for individuals and families, in the following areas: a continuum of literacy services from early childhood through adult, including strong support for parent involvement in their child's literacy development at home and engagement with the school system; assistance and support for at-risk youth to enable them to complete high school and succeed in postsecondary education or advanced training; postsecondary transition that enable out-of-school youth and adults to attain a high school equivalency diploma and succeed in postsecondary education; programs that enable out-of-school youth and adults who are receiving public assistance, food stamps, or families with family incomes less than 200% of poverty to

obtain and retain employment; incarcerated transition for youth and adults returning to the community from incarceration; pathways to citizenship and English language proficiency for limited English language adults; workforce development programs, including apprenticeship, career and technical education, and career pathways; and other supports. Unfortunately, many of the Literacy Zones have yet to saturate local schools, and further, local schools have yet to identify the importance of not just serving students, but also their families. While Literacy Zones are becoming a more integrated community resource, other state disabilities agencies have yet to access and build on these critical services and supports.

A.1.5 Families must be connected to career planning and employment services. NYS has access to a rich array of workforce development services and supports available through many of the state disability and labor systems. Up until a few years ago, these systems often worked in isolation, and did not share data. With the design and implementation of the NYESS, NYS became the first state to have a central, integrated and universal data management system across disability and labor-focused state agencies focused on employment services and supports. While community providers have become more familiar with this new system, and been equipped to use it, the system has yet to reach its full potential from a case and data management perspective. Through use of the system, individuals can access not only the services and supports provided by the central agency they are working with, but also the workforce development system. While the majority of adult service delivery systems are integrated, schools have yet to be integrated within this system. Through the use of Literacy Zones, Parent Training Centers, Independent Learning Centers (ILCs) and other community resources, parents and family members of SSI youth can be referred, access, and participate in various career planning and employment service systems. NYESS provides a vehicle for integrating their case management across systems.

A.1.6 Students and families need to be incorporated as essential features of the transition planning process. Given the pre-stated value of person-centered planning, it becomes obvious that students and their families must be critical partners in the transition planning process. It is students and their families who will inherit the successes and failures of transition planning and related services. The National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS-2) studied the impact of family involvement across three dimensions (Newman, 2005): 1. Frequency of helping with homework; 2. Frequency of participating in school-based activities—combining parent responses to questions about the three types of involvement that are most highly correlated: frequency of attending a school meeting, attending a school or class event, and volunteering at the school; and, 3. Attendance at an IEP meeting. (p. 4-1). They found that family members who participate in one of these dimensions likely participate in the other two. Building on this research, the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center and Post-School Outcomes Center (NSTTAC) incorporated family involvement strategies into its “Predictor Implementation Self-Assessment” (NSTTAC, 2013). These strategies will be facilitated through our key partnership with New York’s Parent Training Centers located in each targeted community, and include providing transition-related information through a variety of means, linking parents to support networks, providing multiple avenues to gain parent input, establishing a welcoming atmosphere, community events/fairs, teaching education/agency staff about cultural competency, parent representation on interagency councils, and meaningful involvement in IEP development -- which includes transition planning. In addition, parent leadership to promote more effective participation in these processes, as well as turnkey development of additional parents will be supported by identifying select parents in each region of the NYS PROMISE for participation in

the blended learning Partners in Policy MDP in NYS, sponsored in part by the New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (NYS DDPC).

Along those same lines, student involvement is essential in the transition planning and implementation process. Moving beyond simple regulatory requirements around student involvement in IEP development, the NYS PROMISE will advance a more aggressive approach to school and community participation by advancing “[Citizen-Centered Leadership](#)” This is a highly interactive web series for professionals and family members, an invitation to join a growing number of people who are concerned with preserving the integrity of landmark advances in the inclusion movement while stepping away from the traditional practices that hold youth with disabilities back from full citizenship expression. As a result, the NYS PROMISE will move beyond implementation of standard inclusive practices, creating a cultural dialogue that will result in measurable and meaningful youth participation, leadership, and citizenship.

A.1.7 Students and families need to understand their rights, and have access to information to aid them in making informed choices and enhancing their financial well-being and economic self-sufficiency. The road to adulthood is paved with obstacles and challenges for SSI youth and their families. Not only do they have the complexity of understanding the context of their lived experience of disability, but also the complexity of over 250 disability programs administered by the federal government—each with their own sets of rules, regulations, and unintended consequences stemming from cross program contamination. This is further compounded by the complexity of the special education process, and fact that they receive SSI. Understanding the interplay of these programs is critical for students and families in helping them to make informed choices regarding the future, their financial well-being, and economic self-sufficiency. Training and technical supports will be available across the three NYS

PROMISE regions from Neighborhood Legal Services, Inc. and the Parent Training Centers to address these needs. In addition, EDI will build local capacity for work incentives planning and assistance through provision of scholarships to equip ten new certified work incentive practitioners (WIP) each year of NYS PROMISE.

The services and supports to be provided to the treatment group of the NYS PROMISE have been designed to meet the needs represented by not only the child SSI recipient and their family, but also to address systems gaps and weaknesses serving as barriers to adult success for this population.

**2. *Extent to which the MDSs interventions are likely to meet the needs of child SSI recipients and their families and achieve the desired outcomes***

Not all schools look alike. For instance, in New York City the monolithic 69<sup>th</sup> Regiment Armory contains a high school-age special education classroom where students learn academic skills within a context of building, construction, and remodeling. The building itself is ancient and in constant need of repair; the building superintendent is therefore happy to have students learn marketable skills while making improvements to his physical plant.

On a recent Public Broadcasting System (PBS) television show (WCNY, 2011), the teacher of the special education program can be seen teaching students basic arithmetic and geometry by asking the student to plan an upcoming job to re-tile a restroom. “What is the square footage?” he asked. “How many boxes will we need?” Given a budget of \$300.00, “...can you buy enough tile?” Students in this program learn to build to code, use power tools, and work as a team. Each finished product is a demonstration of an array of skill mastery that cannot be equaled in a traditional classroom setting.

Carlos was one a recent graduates of this program. In the PBS broadcast, he can be seen remodeling a Bronx area barbershop. Carlos got the job because he saw the shop owner attempting to do the work himself, and pointed out a better way of accomplishing the work. The owner asked Carlos how he learned these skills. Carlos said, “Look, I go to trade school for this.” The shop owner asked him to show up for work the next day at 9:00 am. From Carlos’ point of view, career development was an ongoing process that combines ambition, learning practical skill, and a long-term view of things: “I want to work in a big-ass building and build stuff.” *Carlos’ school at the Armory combined meaningful academic instruction, individualized planning and work-based learning, resulting in successful community employment.*

Developing an effective transition model is a matter of integrating research-based practices into a productive sequence of activities over a period of many years. The exact sequence of activities may vary from location to location; however, the quality of the activities must meet certain standards to achieve desired results. The model we will advance through NYS PROMISE will be responsive to environmental and student characteristics. This flexibility is a key factor when considering replication and sustainability at a national level. After comparing the results of 16,000 New York State students with disabilities to a national data set (NLTS-2), Cornell’s EDI put forward a discrete list of student practices that work in combination to improve the chances for post-school success (Karpur, Golden, Brewer, 2013). For the purposes of this intervention, these practices have been adapted for use with students ages 14-16, with disabilities, who are current SSI recipients.

The set of outcome-based services and other support services for the intervention group for the NYS PROMISE will be targeted for 1000 students ages 14-16 across NYS and incorporate research-based practices, in alignment with NYS and national research (Brewer, et al., 2011,

Karpur, Brewer, & Golden, 2013, Test et al., 2009). In alignment with Trainor's writing on cultural capital (2008), this project will build on a multi-dimensional approach that aligns community presence, participation and work for pay, to assist students and their families exceed expectations and rise out of poverty and dependency. These practices will exceed the regulatory requirement of the IDEA, and are provided by coordinated community agency service providers in partnership with local schools through an outcomes based payment schema (see Appendix A, Outcomes Payment Schema p.A-58 – A-61). The outcomes based payment schema was derived in large part from core rehabilitation services definitions from the NYSED, ACCES-VR. The schema includes service definitions, outcome requirements, required staff qualifications, and payment amounts. While the original ACCES-VR core service definitions were vetted statewide with local providers, the proposed NYS PROMISE outcomes-based service structure will be reviewed and approved prior to implementation with the NYESS SCC. Generally speaking, these services will include:

**1. Participation in career development activities**

- 1.1. Age-appropriate transition assessment, with individualized career counseling
- 1.2. Soft skills employment-related instruction within integrated work settings

**2. Preparation for community living**

- 2.1. Independent living skills training within home and integrated community settings
- 2.2. Financial literacy training
- 2.3. Assistive technology assessment and training

**3. Work-based learning and paid employment**

- 3.1. Situational, work-based assessment and portfolio development
- 3.2. Customized work experiences and job placements with on-the-job training.

3.3. Family employment information and referral services and supports

#### **4. Individualized planning with students and their families**

4.1. Family training on student engagement, increased post-secondary education expectations, rights, and advocacy

4.2. Benefits, work incentives, and asset accumulation planning and assistance

4.3. Person-centered planning and citizen-centered leadership development

These services will be provided to the NYS PROMISE intervention group, based on a comprehensive person-centered process that engages students, family members, educators and community partners in a sustainable, process-transforming systems, organizations, and lives. The outcomes-based service system will be operationalized through the NYESS system, with referrals for prescribed services issued by the local schools to vendored local providers registered in the NYESS system for provision of NYS PROMISE services.

In addition to the core intervention services highlighted above, several additional complimentary training and technical assistance services will be made available to local partners engaged in the research demonstration sites. To build local student and parent leadership, work incentive planning, and person-centered planning capacities, the NYS PROMISE is building on existing statewide training and technical assistance capacities. ***Partners in Policy Making Training.*** To hone the development of student, parent and family leaders, the NYS PROMISE will be providing six scholarships each year to engage local potential student, parent and family leaders across the three NYS PROMISE regions in the statewide Partners in Policy Making initiative, sponsored in part by the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council. The Partners in Policy Making initiative is an innovative model of leadership training for individuals with disabilities and their parents and family members, designed to provide state-of-the-art knowledge

about issues and policies related to the experience of disabilities, and to develop participant competencies to become more effective in influencing policy development at all levels. To learn more about this initiative, visit <http://www.nyspip.org>. ***Citizen-Centered Leadership Development Training***. To support the local advancement of community inclusion and citizenship of people with disabilities in the three targeted geographic areas, 20 scholarships each year will be provided to local service providers, parents and family members of students with disabilities to engage in leadership development, community-building, and employment and organizational planning as they relate to supporting the ideals of citizenship with and on behalf of people with disabilities who are often socially excluded. Participants will complete a 15 week blended learning experience, during which they will actually work with two students with a disability to support them in planning for and engaging in their community. To learn more about this initiative, visit, <http://www.cclds.org>. ***Work Incentive Practitioner Certification***. The NYS PROMISE will equip 10 new certified work incentive practitioners each year across the three geographic regions to enhance the availability of work incentive planning and assistance supports to the intervention group. These practitioners will be solicited from local partners and schools, and be vendored under the NYESS system. To learn more about the 15-course distance learning certification program, visit <http://www.edionline.org>.

The flexible, high quality services contained within New York's model rests on the shoulders of previous efforts. What follows brings NYS' research on transition into alignment with national research and leading practices.

- 3. Extent to which the applicant documents that proposed services and supports are based on the best available evidence including, where available, research that has***

*demonstrated statistically significant positive effects using the strongest possible study designs such as those that meet the standards of the What Works Clearinghouse*

New York State has been a leader in incorporating national standards and research in transition and career development for youth with and without disabilities. The findings of the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (1992) were adopted by the NYS Board of Regents as the NYS Learning Standards on Career Development and Occupational Studies. The Taxonomy for Transition Programming (Kohler, 1996) was adapted by the NYSED in 1997 as the Transition Quality Indicators, for use in State-funded websites: TransQUAL Online and TransitionSource.org. The NYS DOL has worked closely with the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability (NCWD) for Youth on the Work Readiness Credential and Mentoring. Through the NYSED's Office of Special Education, 15 regional Transition Specialists provide training and technical assistance to school districts across New York State, and are directed to use the materials on evidence-based practices from the NSTTAC website to improve student outcomes and performance on the State Performance Plan. To summarize, NYS is committed to the utilization of evidence-based practices and national standards in transition and career development for youth with disabilities.

In 2008, the NYSED contracted with Cornell's EDI to evaluate the activities and outcomes of 60 school-community collaborations, and 16,000 students statewide. The results of this evaluation were compared with data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2, with funding provided by the NYS OMH (Karpur, Golden, Brewer, 2013). What was learned through this process is in alignment with the evidence-based practices, as identified by NSTTAC. We found that 25% of the post-school employment-related outcome is explained by participation in paid work experience. Similarly, 18%, 17%, 13%, and 9% of the post-school

employment-related outcomes were explained by having postsecondary education-related IEP goals, participation in career development activities, participation in in-school work experiences, and services received by partner agencies respectively. These results have formed the basis of the NYS PROMISE outcomes-based payment system and overarching strategy and intervention, as detailed in the previous section. The NYS PROMISE proposed interventions are in alignment with the “What Works Clearinghouse” documented research on work-based learning, and NSTTAC evidence-based practices on student participation in planning, career development activities, structured work experiences, community living skills, and family involvement. We look forward to adding more evidence in the area of community agency involvement by testing an outcomes-based payment system within a collaborative framework.

#### ***4. Extent to which the budget is adequate to support the proposed MDP***

The budget is adequate and cost-efficient to accomplish the NYS PROMISE objectives through the mix of federal support, cost-effective contractual agreements with Cornell’s EDI, the local schools serving as Research Demonstration Sites (RDS), and other subcontracted partners, and their contributions of facilities, equipment, library services, technology, distance learning facilities, and Internet connectivity. The budget has been developed in accordance with federal guidelines and the mission and objectives of the NYS PROMISE. The prime and all subcontractors have a strong history of efficient and economical management of other federal and state-sponsored projects. We believe that success in these activities is critical to the ultimate success of the NYS PROMISE. Based on our past experience, as well as the experiences of our proposed subcontractors, we are confident that the funds we have allocated to these efforts are sufficiency to achieve such success, but are clearly not excessive.

A detailed budget for the initial three years of the project, and two option years, with accompanying budget narrative is presented in the beginning of this application. The scope of work for the NYS PROMISE defines a set of clear activities, and associated partners that could easily exhaust available funds. Hence, the budget necessarily puts constraints on what we will be able to commit to at application. Significant cost efficiencies are gained for the NYS PROMISE by having it centrally located within a state agency, with the primary subcontract going to the NYS PROMISE management partner, Cornell University's Employment and Disability Institute. Together, the management partners have over 80 combined years of experience in the management of federally-funded projects—including three funded, multiple cycle NIDRR-sponsored Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers, and a number of Field-Initiated Research Projects, to the most recent multi-cycle Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, NY Makes Work Pay, and other systems change efforts.

We have allocated funds to achieve our objective of making the most of the funds available in several ways. The majority of salary resources allocated will be used to support a core group of research, project management and technical assistance staff. Building on the research, dissemination, outreach and administrative infrastructure of this team allows us to leverage our prior experience and related research and dissemination resources to maximize the output of the NYS PROMISE starting in the first month of Year One. We are also drawing upon the extensive expertise of others as collaborators in areas where, as required by this model demonstration program, we want to draw upon the site-specific parent training centers, literacy zones, independent living centers, community provider, one stop center, and school RDS networks that we have been able to assemble. Additionally, we have maximized cost efficiencies by centralizing the outcomes based payment schema through NYESS—reducing administrative

redundancies that would be experienced by individual research demonstration sites processing individual payments to local service providers and partners. The selection of local schools as research demonstration sites will also result in added cost efficiencies given their geographic proximity, clustered in three regions of the state.

We have budgeted costs based on our experience in running similar research, training and technical assistance demonstrations. We have allocated approximately 28 percent of the budget to research, 19 percent to training and technical assistance, 16 percent to partnership development, and 37 percent for the actual intervention services for the treatment group. The significant existing research, training, and technical assistance mechanisms within our NYS PROMISE partners will allow the NYS PROMISE to move forward immediately without costs others would incur to build infrastructure. Cornell's EDI has extensive expertise in research, training, dissemination, and technical assistance, which will enable us to draw upon existing research tools, websites, and instrumentation used under past transition research demonstrations. These platforms for online information dissemination and technical assistance reporting will enable us to use the resources allocated to this project for maintenance, and upgrades, rather than for ground-up development, realizing a significant savings of time and funds.

We have also allowed for funds to cover the following additional key activities and expenditures: 1) travel expenses to attend sponsor-required meetings; 2) sufficient printing supply expenses for participant outreach and recruitment, training, technical assistance, and branding activities, including alternative formats; 3) sufficient meeting expenses to support all NYS PROMISE events, including accommodations for participants with disabilities; 4) sufficient teleconferencing and distance learning technology expenses to support ongoing staff meetings,

NYESS SCC meetings, and other proposed events; and, 5) travel reimbursements for project community members to attend the semi-annual learning communities in Albany, NY.

**5. *Extent to which the MDP has clearly articulated a model of partnership, coordination, and service delivery***

A core management team will oversee the implementation and evaluation of the NYS PROMISE. This core management team includes the OMH (serving as the lead for grant management / state agency coordination), the Research Foundation for Mental Hygiene (RFMH, performing as the contract facilitation/grants administration partner on behalf of state government), Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute (in both a research and statewide coordinative role), and the New York Employment Services System Statewide Coordinating Council (NYESS SCC) (see Appendix A, NYS PROMISE Organizational Chart p. A-67). The NYS PROMISE is based on a nationally-informed, systems-focused, and locally-based model of partnership—recognizing that partnerships and activities in the transition planning process are mirrored at the systems, organization, and individual level.

Nationally-informed. Through a national network of research, training and technical assistance partners, the NYS PROMISE will ensure that the project community has access to cutting edge new knowledge that may be emerging at the national level through other federally-sponsored research initiatives. In addition, the project leads will maintain ongoing communication with several critical research centers to share not only challenges experienced in project implementation, but also new knowledge that might inform the research center's own research agendas. Letters of support from national centers and collaborators that NYS PROMISE partners have worked with are provided in Appendix A, National Technical Assistance Network Partners Letters of Support (pp.A-17- A-29). This will include, but not be limited to: the National

Drop Out Prevention Center for Youth with Disabilities; the Northeast ADA Center; the National Employer Technical Assistance Center; the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth; the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC); the Employer Practices Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (Employer Practices RRTC); the Pathways Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (Pathways RRTC); and others.

Systems-centric. In recognition of the multi-faceted nature of partnerships, and building on NYS' past five years of developing state level infrastructure to support a comprehensive employment system, the current NYESS SCC will be used to oversee and guide the NYS PROMISE. The NYESS SCC, originally established as the Employment Subcommittee of Most Integrated Settings Coordinating Council under Chapter 551 of the Laws of 2002 in response to the Olmstead Decision, morphed under the NY Makes Work Pay MIG as a statewide coordinating workgroup to monitor the progress of and evaluate the implementation of the NYESS. The state level group includes representation from the OMH; the NYSED Office of Career and Continuing Education Services – Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR), the Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH); the Department of Labor (DOL) Workforce Development System; the Department of Health, Office of Medicaid Management (OMM); the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTADA); the Office for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), the NYS Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC); as well as an array of representation from state trade associations and local service provider sectors including community rehabilitation programs (CRP), One Stop Centers, ILCs, and others. They serve to surface, identify, and propose solutions to policy and practice barriers to successful employment outcomes for New Yorkers with disabilities. While in the past the NYSED Office of Special Education was represented, with a recent NYSED re-organization,

a representative has yet to be appointed for participation. This group, coordinated currently by the OMH, will expand its focus to include the NYS PROMISE, and establish a series of policy and practice priorities to remove barriers and obstacles to the employment and post-school success of SSI children and their families. Appendix A, State Agency/NYESS State Coordinating Council Letters of Support (pp. A-1 - A-16) provides letters of support of the primary state stakeholders regarding the NYESS SCC.

In addition, the NYS PROMISE will build on the existing work, and meaningfully engage, the NYS Transition Services Professional Development Support Center (PDSC) under the direction of David Brewer at Cornell's EDI, which provides ongoing training, technical assistance, evaluation and web resources to NYSED-funded Transition Specialists throughout the state. This statewide support network is charged with ensuring the compliance of NYS local education agencies with federal IDEA transition mandates, and promoting most effective, and evidence-based practices. The PDSC provides a long-term sustainable vehicle for disseminating new knowledge and evidence-based practices acquired through the NYS PROMISE. A letter of commitment from the PDSC is provided in Appendix A, NYS Transition PDSC Letter of Commitment pp. A-30-31.

Locally-based. The NYS PROMISE will be implemented through 20-25 Research Demonstration Sites (RDS). Clustered regionally in the western-, capital- and NYC-regions, these sites will be local school-based and include an array of local and regional partners to ensure the successful implementation of the NYS PROMISE, including: school district personnel; existing regional transition planning councils; three state- and federally-funded Parent Training Centers (two upstate and one downstate-mandated partners); NYSED-funded Transition Specialists; Literacy Zones; ILCs; Community Rehabilitation Programs; SSA-sponsored Work

Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) programs; DEI personnel and One Stop Centers; and, others. We will work with the external MDP evaluator to finalize school districts within the identified regions to ensure economic and demographic representation (see Appendix A, Research Demonstration Sites Letters of Willingness to Collaborate pp. A-40 – A-55) for a sample of district commitments we initially obtained). It is expected that Cornell EDIs long-term relationships with local districts and schools through the NYS Transition Services PDSC, will expedite recruitment of the final RDS within the first 30 days of award.

Local schools serving as research demonstration sites (RDS) have been proposed for selection based on prior statewide research and district performance on critical transition key performance indicators to ensure access to high performing school districts to ensure consistency in school-based transition planning, allowing the impact of the intervention to be isolated. The proposed counties identified for the NYS PROMISE are economically and geographically diverse, yet have high SSI prevalence rates among youth (see Section B and Appendix A, Table of NYS Regions Selected and Counties with SSI Prevalence p. A-66). Selected schools will be provided access to resources to:

- *Collect Data on All Students* – All students who are a part of this (PROMISE and control group) will have their activities planned and recorded by school district personnel (or their official designees) through a highly secure and confidential online data collection system. Our goal is to make this data collection as user and mobile device friendly as possible, while maintaining the standards that will be put forth by a national evaluator (to be determined). The NYS PROMISE will draw on NYS’ previous experience with secure and confidential online data collection on 16,000 students through the Model Transition Program in 2008.

- *Participate in Training Events and Focus Groups* – Participating schools and their community agency partners will attend initial training on all NYS PROMISE project content, procedures and processes. The NYS PROMISE staff are sensitive to the time educators spend out of the classroom, and will use distance learning tools (e.g., WebEx and TransitionSource.org) whenever possible to share and discuss PROMISE-related issues. We anticipate annual two-day statewide events to be held in Albany for school/agency staff to learn detailed information about the NYS PROMISE, to celebrate successes, and address challenges. There may be regional focus groups to be held six months after each statewide event, as a follow-up, to understand local and regional issues and solutions.
- *Acquire Needed Intervention Services* – Participating schools will be provided the ability to refer students for work-based assessment, training and placement services with community partners through the NYESS system. Payments for outcomes achieved will be processed by RFMH minimizing school responsibilities—while at the same time modeling a transition outcome-based ticket approach.
  - i. *An explicit and comprehensive strategy, with actions that are expected to result in achieving the goals, objectives, and desired outcomes of the MDP*
  - ii. *Measurable goals and benchmarks that are supported by quantitative projections of the accomplishments for each activity and that are attainable given the number of activities to be accomplished and the project period, as well as a timetable with target dates for achievement of the benchmarks and goals.*

The four main goals of the PROMISE MDP are: increased educational attainment for the child SSI recipients and their parents; improved rates of employment, wages/earnings, and job retention for the child SSI recipient and their parents and increased total household income and

long-term reduction in SSI payments. In the proposed intervention, we have translated these broad goals into six operational goals as follows: 1) Develop, enhance and monitor state, regional and local partnerships to enhance educational, employment and economic outcomes of SSI youth and their families; 2) Design, deliver, monitor and evaluate a set of intervention services targeted to enhance educational, employment and economic outcomes of SSI youth and their families; 3) Conduct participant outreach and recruitment; 4) Design, deliver and evaluate training and technical assistance; 5) Conduct formative and summative evaluation of intervention implementation and effectiveness. 6) Communicate and report project findings to project stakeholders; assemble documentation for model replication purposes. In the following table, we align these goals with specific objectives, activities, broad categories of personnel responsible, target dates and timeframes, as well as the main outcomes articulated in our project logic model, detailed later in Section 6. (See Appendix A, Table of Project Goals and Objectives with Measurable Indicators and Timeframes pp. A-69 - A-72)

***6. Quality of the logic model, project implementation plan, and timeline, including the extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the demonstration activities and the quality of that framework.***

For the NYS PROMISE, the array of services provided to the intervention group will be clearly defined to the program participants. However, the ways in which those interventions are combined will vary from site to site, and from student to student, based on the individual needs of students, and the needs of their families. The control group will receive a set of services as they naturally occur, resulting in a variety of service constellations. Per our previous experience with these complex service delivery mechanisms, NYS PROMISE research will be guided by a

conceptual framework as illustrated in Appendix A, NYS PROMISE Conceptual Framework p. A-73.

To operationalize this conceptual framework, NYS will implement a logic model approach as a consistent way of understanding, implementing, and evaluating the NYS PROMISE, both the individual research demonstration sites and collectively. A logic model helps to identify specific program elements – i.e., program inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes – within the framework of a program theory and articulates the hypothesized inter-relationships between these program elements (Cooksy, Gill, & Kelly, 2001; McLaughlin & Jordan, 1999). The model is used to help focus the evaluation on a selected, concise set of key model elements. Logic models provide means to understand program success through the consideration of various data elements in relation to one another (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989; Campbell & Fisk, 1959). The latter is especially useful in the assessment of program impact as the program outcomes are explained within the context of the level of implementation of specified interventions (Steckler & Linnan, 2002; Trochim, 1985). The program theory for the NYS PROMISE evaluation framework was based on both the federal and NYS desired outcomes of the PROMISE initiative. A more detailed logic model is provided in Appendix A, Logic Model (p.A-74).

Based on this logic model, we have developed broad questions to guide the evaluation of this intervention. The first two are “black box” questions, examining the net effect of the interventions provided. The remaining evaluation questions examine change processes inside the “black box”. These broad questions include:

- 1) Did the intervention result in *improved practices and policies* at the state, regional, local levels?

- 2) Did the intervention result in *improved education, employment and economic outcomes for SSI youth and their parents* as compared with their peers in the control group?
- (3) Did training and technical assistance *increase horizontal collaboration and coordination across agencies providing services at the state, regional and local levels*? If yes, how did this work?
- (4) Did connecting state, regional and local partners to feedback and data from the continuous quality improvement system result in *critical reflection and more customized technical assistance at the state, regional and local levels*? Specifically what changes resulted?
- (5) Did the intervention result in *improved participation by SSI youth and their parents in transition planning and services as compared with their peers in the control group*? What local factors & strategies are most associated with increased participation?
- (6) Did the outcomes-based funding system *improve services at the local level*? If so, how did this work?
- (7) Did youth and parents *improve their attitudes, awareness, knowledge and skills*?
- (8) What was the experience of treatment group SSI youth and their parents navigating the transition process? How did their experiences compare with those of the control group?
- (9) Were local educational agencies, local providers, treatment group SSI youth and parents satisfied?

The heterogeneity of transition strategies and issues particular to each site (e.g., organizational commitment, competing priorities to address educational accountability, existing

knowledge pool and experience in transition program implementation) pose challenges to program evaluation efforts. In order to assess the impact of various transition strategies applied in varying RDS and in alignment with the logic model framework, a mixed-method multi-level data collection strategy will be implemented. The instruments and corresponding data collection strategies can be classified into two groups: (a) Global tools for collecting similar information across all RDS and the 2,000 students, and (b) In-depth studies for collecting project-specific information necessary to bridge various elements of the logic model.

The NYS PROMISE Plan of Operation is designed to ensure that all activities – research, training, and technical assistance – accomplish the intended outcomes of the initiative. The key elements of our Plan of Operation are a clear management structure as highlighted in Sections A.5, C.1, and C.2, well-defined responsibilities, use of the NYESS SCC, access to relevant state and partner resources, systematic and timely communication, and execution of project activities, and confirmed partnerships with national technical assistance organizations, state-level partners, and local research demonstration sites. Individual timelines by task and daily staff allocation for completion of project activities are included in Appendix A, Time Sequenced Plan of Operation and Staff Allocation by Task (pp. A-82 - A-96). The time afforded to each activity is adequate for completion of the tasks outlined and the production of deliverables.

The Plan of Operation is well structured but allows for flexibility. Our Year One activities, including final site selection, participant outreach and recruitment, training and technical assistance, research and evaluation, progress reporting, and other activities, were chosen to allow the core management team, NYESS SCC members, and the OSEP Project Officer to make deliberate decisions about study progress and continuous quality improvement in subsequent years of the project, and how to improve project efforts. It is also likely that over the course of the project, changes in local and state practices, economics, policy and service provider systems, or new

information from other state and national research in areas related to PROMISE may hold implications for the focus of the NYS PROMISE study and project community, as well as our Plan of Operation. A part of our activities will be to identify and evaluate these events and new information arising from them. In consultation with the OSEP Project Officer and the NYESS SCC, we will bring our resources to bear upon these issues and events as appropriate, informing our own research, and, we hope, influencing state and national policy to influence more positive employment outcomes of SSI youth and their families.

**B. Quality of participant recruitment plan**

***1. Extent to which the MDP has clearly articulated a realistic outreach and recruitment plan that is likely to lead to at least 2000 child SSI recipients and their families giving consent to participate in the MDP***

The purpose of the NYS PROMISE is to use a randomized controlled design to rigorously evaluate the impact of strategies for improving transition to adulthood outcomes for SSI children by: a) leveraging existing youth service infrastructure and enhancing their capacities through training, technical assistance and integrated information systems; b) improving interagency collaboration at state-, regional-, and local-levels for providing coordinated set of services for young people and their families, and c) increase the effective use of evidence-based practices in transition to adulthood. We propose to implement the intervention across three different geographic areas of NYS to ensure we study the impact of program strategies across local macro-economic and socio-demographic variations, further improving the generalizability of the results to NYS and nationally. Specifically, we propose to recruit local education agencies (LEA) across three regions of NYS—Western NY, the Capital Region, and the New York City (NYC) area. With the total population representing one third of NYS, these three regions were also prioritized based on following factors: (a) higher prevalence of SSI youth; (b) strong

infrastructure for supporting transition to adulthood program activities; (c) prior relationships with program leaderships and regional provider networks; and (d) variations in the socio-geographic conditions (e.g., urban vs. rural; multiethnic vs. homogenous).

Examination of the American Community Survey data for the years 2009 through 2012 indicate a higher than average state-wide prevalence of persons with disabilities in these three regions, ranging from 10 to 12 percent, compared with the average prevalence of 8 percent for NYS overall. These three regions combined are home to more than 40 percent of youth in the age range of 14 – 16 years who are receiving SSI benefits. The employment rates for people with disabilities vary across these three areas, from 27 percent in the Bronx/Manhattan Region, 31 percent in Western NY, and 37 percent in the Capital Region. These macro-level variations in employment rates of persons with disabilities indicate varying labor market opportunities for people with disabilities that might have an impact on employment outcomes for SSI youth. Studying impact of proposed interventions across varying macro-level contexts will offer insights into feasibility of different approaches in transition to adulthood under varying conditions with a high potential for generalizability.

Cornell University, research project implementation team, and management partners on this project, have substantial engagement in these regions through training and technical assistance in transition to adulthood practices under the NYS Transition Services PDSC sponsored by the NYSED (see Appendix A, NYS Transition PDSC Letter of Support pp. A-30 - A-31). The schools in the selected regions have also participated in a large-scale demonstration program known as MTP that aimed to improve interagency collaboration and specifically the school-VR partnership to support transitioning young people with disabilities. Several of the schools across these three regions were identified as high- and mid-performing sites in the MTP

project based on their student outcomes. In the MTP project, Cornell EDI's research team helped broker key relationships between local service providers and the school districts that have continued even after the project completion. Additionally, EDI collected data on 16,000 young people in transition to adulthood and provided training and technical assistance to schools and school districts in this program to enhance their capacities in improving the quality of transition programming and building capacities of schools in implementing data-based decision making in program development—with recent analysis indicating the success of this approach (Karpur, Brewer and Golden, 2012). This previous history of engagement with the schools in NYS, and especially in these three regions provides opportunity for conducting systematic outreach and recruitment working in collaboration with the schools and local provider networks.

*Overview of transition programs in the study regions.* **Western New York** includes the City of Buffalo and surrounding areas, both urban and rural. As former participants in the SSAs YTD, this region of NYS has a deep understanding of how interagency collaboration can support work-based learning, and work incentive utilization. There is a long history of school agency regional planning, dating back to the 1970s. Most recently four western NYS-based private foundations have been meeting to discuss sustainable funding priorities on issues of transition for youth with disabilities. With foundation support, Cornell's EDI has conducted a focus group and survey to develop a local logic model, advancing sustainable innovations through shared leadership between school and agency partners. Based on this study, EDI found that over 40 percent of the transition programs have been established for more than ten years and 88 percent served youth between the age groups of 14-16 years old. Seventy one percent indicated partnerships with other youth and adult serving agencies such as ACCES-VR, OPWDD, community-based providers of rehabilitation services and local area businesses. A majority of

these programs also have strong support from school leadership to implement a coordinated set of transition activities. These programs provided high quality career development activities and increased parental engagement in transition planning. Despite existing collaborations with local providers, these programs indicated several policy and practice-level barriers in referring students for services and often implicated a lack of cross-system understanding. In short, based on this study it is apparent that the Western NY Region offers an existing infrastructure in transition that has a potential to be enhanced through the efforts of NYS PROMISE and forms a strong rationale to for recruitment of study participants.

The **Capital Region of NYS** contains a diverse cross-section of urban, suburban, and rural schools with a student population as diverse as its settings. The largest of these school districts is Albany City School District. Albany City has been actively developing many new career development, age-appropriate transition assessment, and work-based learning opportunities for students with disabilities. For the past 10 years, school districts in the area have taken part in a person-centered planning process, with support from a local community rehabilitation provider. This collaborative program ties individualized student plans with related work-based learning opportunities for students with disabilities. Overseeing and encouraging all of these efforts is a regional interagency leadership group, made up of educational leaders, vocational rehabilitation, independent living, and local rehabilitation agency representatives. The Capital Region has been consistently leading the statewide averages in State Performance Plan Indicator 13 results due in no small part to the sophistication of its school-agency partnerships and quality of professional development activities.

Current educational reform efforts in **New York City** incorporate a strong building principal model combined with accountability measures/consequences, and a variety of options

for professional development and customized assistance. In the past, the New York City educational system was organized by boroughs, with schools receiving administrative support, training, and technical assistance based essentially on geography. Now, schools are organized by clusters; schools annually elect to belong to one of six cross-city clusters based on its thematic structure, and the rigor and relevance of the cluster's professional development offerings.

Transition services for New York City's students with disabilities are supported at the school building level through designated transition coordinators, and through city-wide services. District 75 is a city-wide program that serves students with the most significant disabilities in both integrated and segregated settings. The amount and quality of transition services varies widely by building and by student. To create a more consistent experience across all students, New York City has a regional transition leadership group made up of educational leaders, vocational rehabilitation, centers for independent living, community rehabilitation program providers, and parent centers. This group meets regularly to share information and develop common procedures. Currently they are working to improve the referral process to the state vocational rehabilitation agency.

*Identification of sampling frame.* Collectively, we estimate 6,787 SSI youth in the age group of 14-16 years across the three NYS regions. Out of this, we will recruit the required sample of 2,000 SSI youth in the age group of 14-16 years, which is nearly 29 percent of the available target population. A prior recruitment process in the YTD indicated a 39 percent participation rate for initially contacted families from the sampling frame. Based on this statistic, we will conduct an outreach to 5,500 youth and their families over the two year period to achieve the sample size of 2,000. With existing outreach capabilities across various project partners, prior experience of Cornell's EDI in enrolling over 16,000 young people in the MTP and preliminary

commitment letters from potential school partners (see Appendix A, Research Demonstration Sites Letters of Willingness to Collaborate, pp. A-40 – A-55) we will have an ability to recruit this critical mass of sample required for the study. In each of the three regions, EDIs researchers will be partnering with the Parent Training Centers (PTC)<sup>1</sup> in Western NY, the Capital Region, and New York City in assisting with the recruitment process.

If selected for funding, the NYS PROMISE partners will work with SSA to seek access to administrative data identifying youth receiving SSI in NYS and secure their contact information. From this data, a list of 14-16 year old youth receiving SSI benefits residing across the three regions in NYS will be generated<sup>2</sup>. The schools with 80 – 100 SSI youth will be contacted to seek their interest in participation in the study. Articulation agreements with Schools including specific performance benchmarks will be established, yielding approximately 20-25 schools participating as Research Demonstration Sites (RDS).

In addition to the critical mass strategy of selecting schools with 80-100 SSI youth, the existing infrastructure of schools to implement transition programming as well as leadership commitment will be assessed through in-person visits by the NYS PROMISE research team members to ensure inclusion of schools that have adequate capacities for implementation of

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<sup>1</sup> PTCs are NYS and federally-funded programs that provide resources for parents of children with disabilities to help their engagement in their child's education and connect them with needed services by working in collaboration with Schools and local service provider networks. The PTCs of Western NY Region and Bronx/Manhattan Region have an extensive experience and collaborations necessary for us to connect with the Schools and partner providers. Further, the PTC of Western NY has participated in SSA's Youth in Transition Demonstration (YTD) project and have developed infrastructure for targeting families of SSI youth.

<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that as SSA data is refreshed periodically, all contacts made using this data will be flagged to avoid any repeat overtures and contact new recruits for the NYS PROMISE.

transition to adulthood strategies while considering them as RDS. This strategy will help us in limiting the geographic spread of the study population and help project implementation efforts by dedicating NYS PROMISE resources to 20-25 schools/RDS across the state for leveraging existing infrastructure in transition to adulthood for youth receiving SSI.

Initial outreach letters will be sent to families of SSI youth attending the schools who agree to participate in the study with the purpose of seeking their assent and sensitizing them regarding the project. Through the initial outreach letter, parents will also be requested to attend the community workshops planned by the PTCs in partnership with Schools. In addition to overtures at individual family-level, public service announcements will be made on public radio stations. EDI has prior experience in preparing content on transition to adulthood for local public broadcasting stations in two upstate media markets and will lead the effort on developing the contents for this announcement. Further, a roster of contacted SSI youth families will be provided to the schools to follow-up with the youth and their families encouraging their participation as well as for providing the recruitment packets.

*Training and capacity building for recruitment.* The PTCs in collaboration with other EDI partners, will work with each identified RDS for securing firm commitments in form of articulation agreements for participating in this study. The letters of support attached in Appendix A, Regional Parent Training Centers Letters of Commitment pp. A-37 – A-39 offer examples of type of commitments that will be sought from schools within the framework of articulation agreements. Further the schools will identify a person in their system that will be serving in the role of case manager and will be entrusted with the responsibility of distributing the recruitment packets to their students identified as potential participants. Recognizing additional roles played by the school person in case management and data collection, the NYS

PROMISE has set aside funds to compensate the schools for a case manager, and other assigned personnel for their additional work. The RDS case manager and the regional PTC personnel will be the local and regional contact persons, respectively, providing technical assistance and responding to the questions that the young person's family may have in relation to the NYS PROMISE.

The school case managers and PTC personnel will be trained on the process of recruitment including the research approach of NYS PROMISE through a combination of in-person and online webinar training. All training materials will be archived for refresher training as well as for onboarding any new school case managers in recruitment process. The contents of this training will include a detailed description of recruitment packet materials and process of obtaining informed consent from parents and/or SSI youth. Further, this training will include basic information on protection of human subjects in research data collection and detailed introduction to various data collection systems within the NYS PROMISE.

The PTCs, in collaboration with school case managers, will hold community-based workshops for parents and families of SSI youth in the identified RDS regions to prime them about the NYS PROMISE and seek their engagement in the enrollment process. The contents for this workshop will be made available in accessible formats and in common language to ensure clear communication of project goals, randomization process, data collection strategies, expectation regarding their and SSI youth engagement in the study. The contents of informed consent forms will be reviewed with parents and any further clarification regarding project goals and processes will be provided. Families, including the young person, attending the workshop will be provided with recruitment packets after attending the workshop. Also, the school case managers will provide recruitment packets to young people identified within the sampling frame to take home

to discuss with their parents and seek their informed consents for participation. All signed informed consents with participant intake form designed by the national evaluator will be collected and assembled by the school case manager and sent to Cornell's EDI where data will be electronically entered into a database, which will be provided to the national evaluator for random allocation of subjects into treatment and control groups.

*Recruitment packet contents and training.* The participant recruitment packets will contain, but not be limited to:

(a) One page non-technical description of the NYS PROMISE project, its goals, purpose, partners and approach;

(b) Resource links to project website including contact information for;

(i) PTC, RDS, and Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute research team personnel for queries about the project

(ii) Cornell IRB for questions concerning data confidentiality

(iii) Implementation partners in the NYS PROMISE, including EDI and OMH leads

(iv) Toll-free phone numbers for Neighborhood Legal Services, Inc. for any additional advice regarding the project

(c) Parent informed consent form – describing the goals and purpose of the project, types of data collected on youth and parents, data confidentiality and security process, description of randomization process, types of program services, ability to voluntarily withdraw from providing information and/or participation in the project, and risks and benefits of participation

(d) Program intake form – the contents of this form, largely determined by the requirements from the National Evaluator, can potentially include contact information, current

needs in transition to adulthood services and planning, and experiences within their local transition programs

(e) Refusal to participate form – indicating reasons for refusal to participate. Information contained in this form will be critical for assessing any sampling bias in the recruited samples.

As required within the RFP, all steps of recruitment will be conducted in consultation and guidance from the national evaluator.

*Tracking and monitoring recruitment.* Every recruitment packet provided to the families of SSI youth will bear a unique serial number. The school case manager will be provided access to the enhanced version of Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute’s Transition Impact Data (TID) system, where the school case managers will be able record the unique recruitment packet serial number for each potential SSI youth within their RDS. This will help in enhancing tracking capability of school case managers.

The school case managers will send all recruitment packets with signed informed consent and intake forms to Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute, where the intake data will be entered in the TID system (see below) and case records for SSI youth will be established. These records will be then available to school case managers during the study for the purposes of tracking program participation and outcomes for SSI youth in the study. TID data system is equipped to generate customized reports at RDS-level to help with tracking referrals. Recruitment targets for RDS case managers will be reviewed on a monthly basis and strategies will be discussed to ensure recruitment targets are met continually. The PTC personnel will connect with families who are non-responsive for more than 60 days after the initial contact made by school case manager. Families deciding against participating in the study will be encouraged to send in the refusal to participate form that will be archived in the TID data system.

Further, the intake data entered electronically into the TID data system will be transferred periodically to the National Evaluator for the purpose of random allocation to treatment and control group. Recruitment targets are illustrated in Table 1. The lower targets for initial two quarters are to provide time for initial contact and other community based events priming potential participant families about the NYS PROMISE.

Table 1 NYS PROMISE Participant Enrollment Targets

Project Quarter	Enrollment Target
1st Quarter	100
2nd Quarter	200
3rd Quarter	200
4th Quarter	300
<b>Total</b>	<b>2000</b>

*Potential barriers.* As a large proportion of the families of youth with SSI benefits are likely to come from families with limited English language skills, it is likely to pose barriers in recruitment for the project. In order to address this language barriers, Cornell’s EDI will make all printed materials available in Spanish language as well and public service announcements and workshops will be provided in English and Spanish languages. Working in collaboration with regional PTCs and schools will provide abilities to customize informational materials to match the needs of their communities. All the data collection surveys for parents and/or youth will be provided in English and Spanish languages to ensure maximal participation and accuracy of information.

Another anticipated challenge with the project is the perception and concern among parents of SSI youth of losing benefits as a result of engaging in work. This is a complex challenge and will be addressed by tailoring materials in consultation with the NYESS SCC,

Regional PTCs and schools. Importantly, the focus of the project will be to highlight the benefits of work and offer case examples of individuals who have successfully transitioned from public benefits to the world of work. Working in collaboration with regional and local partners will further help in addressing specific concerns of families regarding the project goals. The project website, recruitment packet materials, community workshop materials and other informational approaches will incorporate frequently asked questions list to ensure that prevailing concerns among parents and youth are addressed adequately. Cornell's EDI will also draw on their expertise in the area of benefits counseling and financial literacy planning to address some of these concerns. The PTC of Western NY participated in a similar YTD initiative and much of their practical knowledge in recruitment and barriers will be leveraged and incorporated in the recruitment strategies.

Parents and families of youth receiving SSI will be provided with access to multiple sources of information from PTCs, schools, Cornell 's EDI research and project implementation team, NYESS SCC, and local providers regarding the project to alleviate any concerns and provide accurate information on benefits of participation. Additionally, these information systems will continue to be available throughout the project period where parents and/or young people can discuss their concerns. However, we anticipate existing perceptions towards work and employment as one of the important challenges in recruitment and participation in this study. Our approach to collect reasons for refusal to participate in the study will provide information to understand any bias resulting from such perceptions towards the project purpose and goals in the recruitment process. Similar data will also be collected from parents and/young people who voluntarily withdraw from participation for estimating this bias and studying its contributions to assessing outcomes.

*Retention and loss to follow-up.* Project activities will aim to enhance retention and minimize loss to follow-up by establishing multiple channels of communication with the parent and youth. The PTCs and schools will continually interact with the participant families to fill their information needs. Cornell's EDI will periodically implement parent and young person satisfaction survey to understand participants' satisfaction and concerns with the project, and secure information on unmet service needs that will be communicated to the RDS who will work with their local network providers to ensure fulfillment of their needs. Monthly project management meetings with regional partners will cover discussions regarding retention and loss to follow-up for developing a customized plan to ensure such instances are minimized. PTC resource person's local connections with parents will be leveraged to contact families that voluntarily withdraw from the project and concerns of the families in project participation will be addressed. Further, these concerns will be continually discussed in the monthly management team meetings to ensure development of customized strategies in information and communication with project participants. Further, to proactively sustain parent/family engagement in the project, periodic aggregated progress reports will be shared with PTCs who will hold community-based events with families to share progress reports and respond to any concerns expressed by families. Through this process, PTCs will also help in identifying parents/families that are at risk of dropping out to enable further follow-up by Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute's research team to encourage retention.

However, since these families tend to move frequently due to logistical and personal reasons, there will be some attrition in the study sample. If a young person moves from one RDS area to the other, their data records will be reassigned to the new location and the school case manager of the new location will be informed of this move. Further, contact information on

school case manager of the old location will be provided to the case manager in the new location to foster communication necessary for case coordination and planning. In cases where a family may move from one school region to another for NYS PROMISE, every attempt will be made to contact the participant family to secure their ongoing participation in the data collection efforts and information regarding local network providers will be shared to ensure their access to coordinated services. Recognizing the key role of school case managers in recruitment and retention, NYS PROMISE is dedicating resources to support school case manager's time and will provide refresher training and technical assistance as needed. Further, EDI technical assistance professional staff has extensive background in field-based data collection and research project management. These professionals will continually be in contact with the school case managers reviewing the recruitment and retention statistics and offer strategies. All movement of project participants will be recorded in the TID data system to enable tracking and reporting. In situations where family choose to withdraw from the study, every attempt will be made to seek information on refusal to participate form and this will be entered in the TID data system for aiding further analysis of outcomes.

Based on the prior YTD estimates of attrition<sup>3</sup> and Cornell's experience in large primary data collection efforts in NYS transition programs, we anticipate an attrition rate of 10 – 12 % of the sample over the time of the project. While conducting periodic data reviews, any differential attrition across the treatment and control groups will be identified, reported, and customized strategies will be developed to address such differential attrition in the sample. Any project

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<sup>3</sup> Facts from OSEP's National Longitudinal Studies: The self-determination of youth with disabilities (June 2005). Menlo Park, CA: SRI International. Available at [www.nlts2.org/fact\\_sheets/nlts2\\_fact\\_sheet\\_2005\\_06-2.pdf](http://www.nlts2.org/fact_sheets/nlts2_fact_sheet_2005_06-2.pdf).

participant families withdrawing from project in their first three months of participation will be replaced with available eligible participant pool to ensure the critical sample requirement of 2000 sample is met.

**C. Quality of management plan and personnel**

***1. Adequacy of the management plan that is designed to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget***

The OMH, through the RFMH will administer the NYS PROMISE under the leadership of John Allen (OMH co-Principal Investigator). The initiative will be guided by a core management team consisting of John Allen, Principal Investigator; the OMH Project Director (TBD); RFMH Contract Officer; Co-Principal Investigators, Thomas Golden and Arun Karpur of Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute (see Appendix A, Letters of Commitment and Willingness to Collaborate pp.A-3 – A-34); and, a representative(s) of the NYESS SCC. The core management team will convene regular monthly face-to-face and/or distance meetings to monitor ongoing project progress and deliverables. Activities of the project will be reported on a monthly basis to the NYESS SCC, and ad hoc work groups pertaining to specific NYS PROMISE deliverables will be established as needed and at the discretion of the NYESS SCC in consultation with the NYS PROMISE core management team.

All management and implementation of specific objectives and activities will be coordinated by the members of the core management team in cooperation with the NYESS SCC. In the first 30 days, the core management team will participate in a post-award teleconference with the OSEP project officer. In addition, the core management team will participate in a one-and-a-half day kick off meeting to be held in Washington, DC, and an annual meeting with the assigned OSEP project officer each year after. The core management team will also attend a one-

day intensive review meeting in Washington DC during the last half of the third year of the project period. In addition, the core management team will attend a three-day project director's conference in Washington DC. Subsequently, the core management team will also maintain regular and ongoing contact and collaboration with the external Model Demonstration Program evaluator, including their participation in semi-annual project learning communities to be held in Albany, NY.

Thomas Golden and Arun Karpur at Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute will lead the development, maintain, and monitor progress of a detailed NYS PROMISE work plan and utilize a task control system that provides a process for internal quality control of all project activities through a written on line reporting system that details accomplishments to date as compared to proposed timelines and allows for the identification of unexpected challenges and group problem solving. On a monthly basis, all project community core management staff will meet via teleconference to review progress and identify for the NYESS SCC any need for strategic intervention. This will include leads at the PTCs, schools, Cornell's EDI, OMH, and other representatives as assigned by the NYESS SCC. The John Allen will provide annual progress reports to the OSEP project officer as required, and Arun Karpur will provide quarterly data reports from the RDS to the NYESS SCC for review to assist with assessment of accomplishments to date including the need for any changes in specific activities or in allocation of resources. The NYS PROMISE Staffing Chart is provided in Appendix A, Staffing Chart p. A-97. The OMH/RFMH will maintain a performance management system to ensure that the NYS PROMISE activities are on schedule, within budget and that high quality deliverables are produced.

2. *Adequacy of the partnerships with the State or consortium that are designed to achieve project objectives*
  - i. *An overall management plan for the partnerships, including mechanisms for coordinating across agencies and organizations—including clearly defined roles and responsibilities for each partner*

As articulated in Section 5.A, the NYS PROMISE has existing relationships and partnerships with the NYESS SCC, and other RDS partners to ensure achievement of the project objectives. The NYS PROMISE has partnerships occurring at multiple levels which require not only appropriate management but nurturing. From a management perspective, the core management team is comprised of four primary partners including the OMH, serving in the role as the lead for grant management with responsibility for cross-state agency coordination; the RFMH, serving in the role as contract facilitator with responsibilities for grants administration with all project partners on behalf of state government, including facilitation of outcome-based payment under NYESS; Cornell University's Employment and Disability Institute serving in both a research and statewide coordinative role, with responsibility for design, monitoring, equipping, and evaluation of each RDS; and, the NYESS SCC serving in both an advisory and evaluative role with responsibility for identifying and resolving policy and practice barriers to the NYS PROMISE outcomes.

From a cross-agency partner management perspective, John Allen will serve in a lead coordinative role, with Thomas Golden and the team at Cornell's EDI providing support for regular monthly meetings of the NYESS SCC. Mr. Allen will also provide regular and intermittent updates to the Governor's Office on progress of the MDP, and needs that may arise for Executive Administrative support. As articulated in letters of support provided in Appendix

A, State Agency Letters pp. A-2 –A-16, core state members of the NYESS SCC has articulated not only their past statewide efforts in supporting transition and employment more broadly, but also specific roles and responsibilities they will play in the implementation of the NYS PROMISE.

From a RDS management perspective, Arun Karpur will oversee program fidelity, data collection, and analysis, supported by a research team from Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute. Thomas Golden will oversee RDS capacity building, supported by a training and technical assistance team from Cornell. Each RDS will appoint a lead who will serve as management interface with Cornell’s EDI in their supervisory role over the RDS. Subsequently, those leads will be responsible for identifying who in their school and/or district will play four important roles—outreach and recruitment, case management, data entry, and service coordination. It is expected that these roles will be filled by personnel who naturally conduct these roles. For example, it is expected that Chairs of Committee on Special Education will serve in primary case management and service coordination role. This local team will be supported by a regional case manager employed by the PTCs with responsibility to maintain a directory of specific RDS personnel and their roles, work collaboratively with EDI’s research team to ensure program fidelity, identify RDS needs, convene monthly meetings with the RDS to trouble shoot cases, monitor progress of participant recruitment, and maintain a directory of local service provider partners.

This entire project community of partners will be supported through regular scheduled coordinative meetings, as well as a semi-annual project learning community that will be convened twice a year in Albany, NY.

- ii. The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project involve the collaboration of appropriate partners, including at least three of the required partners, to maximize the impact of the MDP;*

All project partners have been identified and secured based on the requirements of the PROMISE RFP. Membership of the NYESS SCC encompass all required state level members, and statewide representatives of local partners. (See Appendix A, Governor and State Agency Letters as well as Cornell EDI, RDS and PTCs Letters of Support pp. A-1 – A-57). No exemptions to the required list are requested. Over the course of the NYS PROMISE, the NYESS SCC will continue to conduct environmental analysis to identify other key state stakeholders, such as the Region II SSA Office for example, which should be included at the state and local levels of partnership.

- iii. The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project.*

As referenced earlier, partner commitment has been demonstrated as evidenced in Appendix A, Letters of Commitment and Willingness to Collaborate pp. A-1 - A-57. In addition, several state agencies have articulated MOUs in the past regarding transition that are currently operational in NYS. In addition, these partners have long-standing history of strategic relationships around issues pertaining to transition planning for youth with disabilities, employment systems, and return-to-work of SSA beneficiaries. The NYS PROMISE partners have recently concluded collaborative work together to design implement and evaluate New York State’s Comprehensive Employment System with the support of the Governor’s Office, through a Medicaid Infrastructure Grant sponsored by the USDHHS, CMS. This work has led to the ongoing collaboration / coordination among the state partners resulting in NYS exceeding their goals

under a five-year comprehensive employment strategic plan designed and implemented under the MIG by creating the country's first shared administrative data set (NYESS—coordinating disability administrative data across several state disability agencies, housed within the NYS DOL. This led to NYS also being designated the first in the nation, statewide comprehensive “Employment Network” under SSA’s Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program. The NYS PROMISE collaborative will build on this work, and utilize the NYESS and the statewide administrative Employment Network (EN) infrastructure for project tracking and coordination among state agencies, as well as the required outcomes based funding schema.

*iv. A system for holding partners accountable for performance in accordance with MOU, letters of intent, or other commitments among the partners;*

Beyond the accountability measures already established through the NYESS SCC in regard to working effectively as a cross-agency workgroup, and individual contributing state agencies’ commitment to specific performance benchmarks they are required to achieve by their federal counterparts, it is expected that over the course of the five year project, that existing MOUs may be altered, and that new MOUs may be established. For example, under past work in NYS, the NYSED, ACCES-VR established a new MOU with the DOL to continue support for the Disability Program Navigator initiative, and to collaborate on the Disability Employment Initiative. Under the NY Makes Work Pay MIG, NYS established a certification standard for benefits and work incentives planning which exceeds the national standard employed by SSA. All state agencies on the NYESS SCC (formerly the MISCC Employment Subcommittee) participated in development and vetted the standard. Further, beyond the two state vocational rehabilitation agencies building this standard into their contracted services definitions, the OPWDD built this standard into a new RFP they established for supported employment

providers to enhance the employment outcomes of individuals with severe disabilities currently participating in day habilitation programs. This is but two examples of how cross-agency collaborative work has resulted in more formal articulation of services and supports.

**3. Capacity of the project to execute necessary data collection protocols and requirements in a high-quality manner, including:**

- i. Implementing a process to collect the data needed to track the required outcome measures, project-specific measures, and other necessary information over time and across partner agencies and organizations;**
- ii. Adequately documenting project activities, referrals, services, and supports received by each child SSI recipient and his or her family, and any resulting State systems change; and**
- iii. Cooperating with the national evaluator on all matters necessary to undertake rigorous evaluation and measurement of the project.**

The NYS PROMISE approach and interventions will observe outcomes at multiple levels: (a) SSI youth and family; (b) RDS; (c) Regional and state-level coordinating councils. Specific outcomes are indicated in the program logic model. Research data collection systems developed by Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute will help in collecting systematic longitudinal data helping in tracking outcomes at these various levels within the project.

*Tracking program participation and needs of SSI youth and family.* Outcomes at SSI youth and family-level will be tracked using: (a) Transition Impact Data (TID) system; (b) Youth and/or parent phone surveys, and (c) Qualitative longitudinal follow-up study of SSI youth and parents.

The **Transition Impact Data (TID) system** is a web-based data collection tool designed to quarterly catalogue the information on indicators of progress for students participating in the RDS program activities<sup>4</sup>. These indicators were developed based on a review of existing literature. Purpose of the TID system is to generate information on every enrolled SSI youth at each of the RDS regarding their program participation in career development activities, transition planning, work-based learning, and participation in paid/unpaid work while in secondary school. Currently, the TID system captures data across the following domains: (a) youth background information; (b) individualized education program participation; (c) academic and vocational training participation; (d) employment and/or work experiences; and (e) referrals made and services received from partner providers. The TID data system is designed to capture quarterly update across these domains. However, newer elements will be added (e.g., intake form) to suit this system to the needs of NYS PROMISE. Further, working in collaboration with the National Dropout Prevent Center, the TID system will capture information on key variables that will help in calculating the risk of high school dropout for SSI youth. This system will also be expanded for the purposes of this project to include program intake forms and capture more specific project elements relevant to the NYS PROMISE approach.

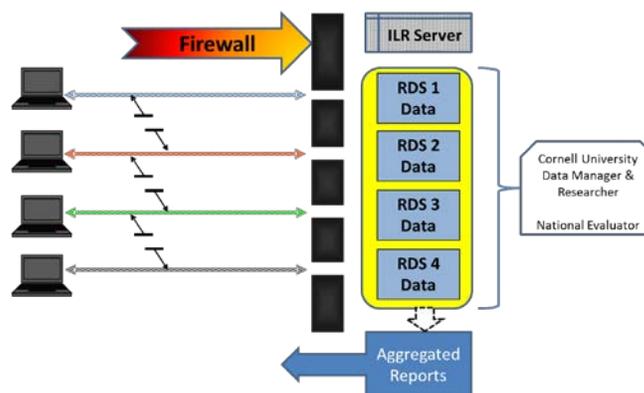
The data on each SSI youth participant will be updated on a quarterly basis by the RDS case manager, with a unique log-in and password, drawing on multiple sources of information and customized aggregated reports will generated at the state, regional and RDS-levels. Tabular information, charts and diagrams will be generated to longitudinally track the participation in transition activities. This data system will also assist in creating an archive of longitudinal data

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<sup>4</sup> Reviewers are invited to access this tool at <https://www.ilr.Cornell University Employment and Disability Institutecornell.edu/edi/tid2/login.cfm> with username – ‘promise’ and password ‘promising’.

on SSI youth that can be utilized in establishing the evidence of program effectiveness. Features of the TID system enable automatic generation of electronic data that will be share with the national evaluator for the purposes of research. Further, data entry in the TID system is done over a secure connection, which means it is impossible for any unauthorized party to intercept data when it is entered and submitted. Customized levels of access to youth data helps establishing varying levels of access to data and automatic generation of aggregated reports at RDS, regional and state-levels further minimizes need to access data consisting of personally identifiable information. The data is stored on a remote HIPAA<sup>5</sup>-compliant firewall protected secure Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute server and password protected access ensures data encryption in transmission over the internet. The TID system was successfully utilized to collect data in the MTP project on 16,000 youth across NYS in compliance with FERPA<sup>6</sup> and existing structures of this system will be further customized to meet the information needs of the NYS PROMISE. Figure 1 illustrates the data security feature and access levels for TID system.

Figure 1: TID System Data Security Illustration



<sup>5</sup> The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996

<sup>6</sup> The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974

The purpose of **youth and/or parent/guardian surveys** is to collect information on SSI youth's: (a) self-determination and independent living skills; (b) expectations for educational achievement and employment; (c) knowledge and attitudes towards public benefits and work; and (d) satisfaction with services received and unmet service needs for youth and families. This survey will be administered multiple times, specifically in Year 1, Year 3, and Year 5 and will be conducted as phone interviews. The Survey Research Institute at Cornell University will lead the efforts in collecting data based on phone interviews. Contact information for each participant will be derived from the in-take. If the SSI youth is below 16 years, only parent/guardian will be interviewed. Survey content areas for SSI youth and parent/guardian are represented in Table 2. This survey will be administered in both English and Spanish languages depending on the preference of the SSI youth and their family.

Items related to self-determination and independent living skills, derived from the Arc Self-determination Scale, will measure young person's proficiencies across the domains of autonomy, self-regulation, self-realization, and psychological empowerment. This section will specifically track select items across the different domains of self-determination, similar to the approach within the National Longitudinal Transition Study 2, as these items are most relevant to the purpose of NYS PROMISE (Wehmeyer & Kelchner, 1995; OSEP, 2005). Items related to parent/guardian or SSI youth expectations will be derived from similar sections in the National Longitudinal Transition Study 2 and will focus on their expectations of the young person completing secondary school, postsecondary employment, education and independent living. This strategy provides us access to items that have been standardized in national surveys and provide a future opportunity to conduct any comparative analysis to study the program effects (Karpur, Brewer, & Golden, 2012).

The items related to knowledge and attitudes towards public benefits and work will help in tracking youth and parent/guardian’s changing perception regarding public benefits and employment over the time of the project. Specific elements of the intervention – i.e., training for benefits and work incentives planning and assistance, would lead to changes in attitudes and knowledge about work and work incentives among SSI youth and their families encouraging engagement in work and utilization of work incentives laying foundation for becoming self-reliance and independence. The items related to satisfaction with received will examine the levels of parent and youth’s satisfaction with specific services received and will inquire about other needed services to support their transition to adulthood plans. These items will inform the RDS and service provider networks on the perceived quality of services and unmet services to help customize service packages to meet the desires of SSI youth and their families. This section will also inquire on barriers to necessary services and will likely inform further policy refinement and new policy development for increasing their access to these services.

**Table 2: Contents of youth and parent/guardian survey**

	Youth < 16 years	Youth ≥16 years
Self-determination and independent living skills	P/G	Y
Expectations for educational achievement and employment	P/G	Y + P/G
Attitudes towards receipt of public benefits	P/G	Y + P/G
Satisfaction with services received and unmet service needs	P/G	Y + P/G

The **Qualitative longitudinal follow-up study of SSI youth, parents** aims to understand in depth the experiences and developmental processes undergone SSI youth and their parents in

the treatment and control groups as they navigate the transition process and beyond. This part of the study will recruit a geographically and economically stratified, random sample of 20 treatment group youth and their parents and 10 control group youth and their parents. The purposive sampling strategy, intended to capture a range of different youth and parent voices, will randomly select one family from each of the RDSs, with adjustments to balance the mix of low, middle and high socioeconomic status families.

The first round of interviews will be conducted at or about the time of program enrollment, with annual re-interviews until the end of the project. Open-ended questions asked in person or by phone will be designed to obtain rich descriptions of transition process from youth & parents' point of view. While the questions will be open-ended and neutral, the resulting narrative data will be analyzed with certain priori dimensions in mind, such as the degree to which youth and parents experienced services as being person-centered and coordinated across agencies, and whether their experience of services was positive or negative, and the intensity of their responses to different services and experiences. De-identified responses will be thematically coded using these and other, potentially emerging themes. In addition to this cross-sectional analysis, narrative responses will be analyzed holistically, so that 5-year journeys through the system of treatment group families may be compared with those for control group families. Each year, results will be presented in the aggregate, and compared with project goals for family outcomes to inform formative and summative evaluation of the project.

*Tracking referrals, services and implementation.* The NYS PROMISE will track referrals, services received and implementation using the following sources: (a) The NYESS administrative data; (b) RDS Program Fidelity Assessment Tool Kit; (c) Online Technical Assistance tracking system.

The **NYESS data system** provides with a single point to access all employment-related services and supports, including job matching with the approximately 90,000 jobs currently posted by employers in the NYS Job Bank to all New Yorkers with disabilities. This system was established through to support from the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant to help integrate various employment service providing systems in NYS to ensure better coordination of services, tracking of referrals and service provision. Providers of employment-related supports and services licensed by or contracting with one of the participating state agencies sign up to use this new system for the purposes of case management<sup>7</sup>. Built on the foundation of Oracle Database, this system also provides a Mediated Graphic User Interface (GUI) for end users including individuals with disabilities to assist with resume development, and match skills sought by businesses/employers for specific jobs with the skills possessed by job seekers, assist with entitlements screening and enrollment, generate tax credit claiming documentation for businesses/employers that hire individuals with disabilities through the system, and more importantly, generate outcomes-based payment claiming documentation associated with helping individuals with disabilities achieve certain employment outcomes.

The NYESS data system collects information on rich array of consumer demographic and background information including services received across different agency providers and

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<sup>7</sup> Currently, the following agency providers signed up for using the NYESS system include, NYS Department of Labor, NYS Office of Mental Health, NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities, NYS Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services, NYS ACCES-VR, NYS Office For the Aging, NYS Division of Veterans Affairs and NYS Commission on the Blind (formerly CBVH). Currently, the NYESS director is developing agreements for the NYS Office for Temporary Disability Assistance, NYS Office of Children and Family Services, and NYS Department of Health and their providers to join this system.

including tracking of referrals. All the RDS schools will be required to join the NYESS provider network to be able to generate electronic referrals to local provider agencies enrolled in NYESS under the NYS PROMISE MDP for outcome-based intervention services. The NYESS data is warehoused at the OMH servers and will be available to periodically track referrals and generate reports at RDS, regional and state-level comparing the services provided to SSI youth and their families in the treatment and control groups. In addition to the NYESS data system, the TID system also provides RDS case manager to document referrals made and services received by SSI youth.

The **RDS Fidelity Assessment Tool Kit** will include indicators for monitoring and tracking fidelity of RDS transition to adulthood programs to a set of best-practices. Primarily drawing on – Predictor Implementation School/District Self-Assessment tool and Quality Indicators of Exemplary Transition Programs – the instruments in the tool kit will monitor fidelity to program structure as well as processes.

Utilizing the past 25 years of research in transition to adulthood program outcomes, the NSTTAC, compiled a set of practices that are likely to have positive impact on postsecondary outcomes for youth with disabilities. Based on this correlational research synthesis the NSTTAC along with the National Post-School Outcomes Center developed a benchmarking tool for programs to conduct self-assessment for identifying critical program elements that were identified to be correlated with positive postsecondary outcomes. This tool, however, considered only the structural elements of transition to adulthood program. The Quality Indicators of Exemplary Transition Programs developed by Morningstar (2011), provides process-based dimensions of transition to adulthood programs. These indicators are rooted in the principles of

person-centered planning and student and family-engagement in transition plan development and activities.

Further, as one of the approaches of NYS PROMISE is to work with existing transition to adulthood programs and engender process of continuous quality improvement in programming, it is likely that schools will have variations in transition programming structure and processes that have emerged as a result of the local context (e.g., leadership structure, local school needs, community needs, etc.). Our design of fidelity instruments will incorporate items for documenting adaptations in programming at RDS and assist in studying impact of these on outcomes for SSI youth and their families. These adaptations are likely to inform innovations that are contextually relevant and contribute to generalizability of the study results. In addition to expertise in transition to adulthood within the NYS PROMISE project team, the national technical assistance network will be tapped to ensure that various program structural and process-related elements are captured adequately.

After developing the RDS Fidelity Assessment Tool Kit, a team of highly trained faculty members from Cornell's EDI will collect data through their periodic research training and technical assistance (TA) site visits. Data will be collected using this tool starting at the end of Year 1 and then annual each year to document fidelity to best-practices. Also, validity and reliability of this tool will be assessed and any adjustments will be made to the items. Once finalized in Year 2, the tool will be administered with an online component consisting of items assessing fidelity of program structure to best-practices followed by a site visit to document fidelity of process and local adaptations. Data from these site visits will be electronically archived for rigorous qualitative analysis. In addition to collecting data on fidelity to best-practices for intervention group, the Cornell faculty members will collect information on the

treatment-as-usual condition. This strategy will help in identifying program elements unique to the treatment group and also help in estimating the true difference in intervention dosage as well as controlling for spill-over effect in analytical modeling. Also, this strategy will help in computing Achieved Relative Strength index<sup>8</sup> that can further used as a potential mediator in examining intervention effect.

The **Online Technical Assistance Tracking (OTAT) system**, password-protected data management system, will be utilized across all key personnel and subcontractors for capturing data on training and technical assistance. Developed by EDI, this system will include essential project data including, but not necessarily limited to:

- A report generator that can easily collapse essential program information into concise and comprehensive reports.
- Technical assistance information, including contact type, date of intervention, duration, provider, topic, description of services rendered, result of intervention/outcome, next steps, participant identifiers (personal and project), and a link to have individual participants do an online evaluation of supports provided and impact.
- Training information including logistics and location, type of training, topic; training materials used, participant registrations information including demographics, identification of participant coursework completed, trainer information, accommodations requested, room block information, shipping information, number of contact hours of event, number of participants requesting CEUs and/or CRC re-certification credits, summaries of completed training quality assessments.

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<sup>8</sup> Achieved Relative Strength is an index that is calculated as difference in the achieved fidelity between treatment and control conditions divided by their pooled standard deviation.

- Online needs assessment instruments and data;
- Electronic copies of all technical assistance and training tools.
- Automated teleconference/meeting agenda and minute creator. This online tool can create an agenda from the ground up identifying date, time, location, dial-in information, items for discussion, associated expected outcomes for each item, time frames for each and a section to record outcomes and next steps. Individuals can be electronically invited to attend meetings/teleconferences and they will receive an automated agenda as well as draft and final minutes following the event. All agendas/minutes are archived for easy ongoing access.

A sample Online Technical Assistance Tracking system portal for the NYS PROMISE is provided in Appendix A (p. A-98).

*Tracking systems-level changes.* Overall goal for tracking systems-level changes is to study the extent to which various youth serving agency partners can collaborate to provide seamless support systems for SSI youth and their families to achieve postsecondary employment, educational and economic outcomes. Brokering partnerships and building interagency capacities at local RDS-level and at the state agency-level to form meaningful collaborations remains to be one of the critical elements of NYS PROMISE. Therefore, research will focus on documenting and tracking the process of collaboration over time at local and state-levels. The local-level collaborations will be assessed using online survey method, whereas the state-level collaborations will be measured using qualitative tool. This approach will yield information not only on studying impact of local and state-level collaborations on program outcomes for the treatment group, but also help in understanding if there state-level collaborative efforts impact local-collaborative networks leading to better service delivery to SSI youth and their families.

Measuring local-level collaborations will be done using a tool developed by Frey et. al. (2006) – called the **Levels of Collaboration Tool**. Within this tool, collaboration is considered to be consisting of various stages where agencies/service providers work towards a common goal. This tool, based on theoretical framework of Hogue (1993), identifies five different levels of collaboration – networking, cooperation, coordination, coalition, and collaboration. Each stage is described with a set of criteria that can be used by individuals across agencies to indicate their level of collaboration. These criteria are developed across the dimensions of purpose, structure and process. Appendix A, Levels of Collaboration Tool p. A-99 illustrates these criteria and their respective definitions. This tool will be customized into an online environment and will be administered on a semi-annual basis to local RDS networks (including RDS, field offices of VR, CBVH<sup>9</sup>, OMH, OPWDD, and other agencies, community-based provider of rehabilitation services and other organizations). Extent of collaboration can be reported based on the number of collaborative partners for each entity in the group as well as the mean score on the tool for each entity within the network. This information informs to the extent of cohesion among local partners and provides more information for conducting specific technical assistance to improve local-level collaborations.

The collaboration within the NYESS SCC at the NYS-level will be studied using the Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric (SAFAR) framework developed by Gadja (2004). This framework examines the levels of collaboration across purpose, strategies and tasks, leadership and decision-making, and interpersonal and communication domains (see Appendix A, Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric p. A-100 for details) for collaborating agencies. As recommended by Gadja (2004), the NYESS SCC will meet at the project initiation

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<sup>9</sup> New York State Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped

to discuss and establish benchmarks using SAFAR indicating the current collaborative context and articulating projected levels of intergration over the first year of the project. Specifically, the agency representatives will be asked to articulate their level of intergration over one year and clearly identify actions that would lead to that level over one year with objective markers to assess progress. The SAFAR framework will be revisted annually to document the progress and identify areas of training and technical assistance to help improve the level of collaboration among the constituent agencies represented in the NYESS SCC. These steps will also ensure accurate documentation and tracking of collaboration through out the project period documenting successes and barriers. Specifically, these steps will help in tracking changes in existing policies and devleopment of new policies ensuring cross-agency collaboration and will further help in implementation of outcomes-based payment system with high fidelity to the specific milestones.

*Cooperating with the national evaluator.* Approach to collecting data in the NYS PROMISE is to make available high quality data that can lend itself to rigorous evaluation and statistical analysis conducted by the national evaluator. To ensure timely and seamless transmission of project-specific information all data recorded will be digitally archived and made available periodically as per the specification of the national evaluator. The Research Director of NYS PROMISE at Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute will maintain continuous channels of communication with the national evaluator and will serve as a point person in managing the request for data types and formats described by the national evaluator. Supported by Research Assistant and other research team members, the Research Director will generate global statistics regarding the accuracy of data including missingness and attrition analysis, generate summary analytical reports as requested by the national evaluator, and also

prepare metadata and data dictionaries for accurate interpretation of various data elements. A research data collection process guide will also be prepared to share the approaches on data collection with the national evaluator. The national evaluator will be continually consulted to ensure all required elements for evaluation of the overall PROMISE program is collected within the current project. Further, the Cornell partners will ensure that the data is collected accurately by periodically reviewing electronic data across various project activities, outputs and outcomes and generating performance statistics that can be used for any further field-level training and technical assistance to improve clarity in data sets. By examining the psychometric properties of various tools used within this project, the Cornell's partners will ensure data collection on measures accurately and in a valid manner lending itself for high quality evaluation. As this project will collect confidential data at individual-level, the Research Director will help in developing memorandum of understanding clearly articulating the process of secure data transfer for national-level evaluation.

#### ***4. Quality of key personnel***

All NYS PROMISE partners are equal employment opportunity (EEO) employers who value diversity in the workplace as a means of not only ensuring the most qualified staff, but also representing the varying perspectives of our audience. All NYS PROMISE organizations have written EEO policies, guidelines on recruitment and hiring of individuals with disabilities, nondiscrimination policies, and an established accommodation and retention process.

- i. A qualified and sufficient staff to accomplish the goals of the project, including the techniques proposed to ensure that an adequate supply of qualified staff are enlisted in a timely manner***

Appendix A (pp. A-101 – A-184) contains curriculum vitae of key personnel. Appendix A (pp.A-82 - A-96) also contains a Time-Sequenced Daily Staff Allocation Chart by Task. The NYS PROMISE will be staffed by a multi-disciplinary, multi-site team. A staffing chart is provided in Appendix A, Staffing Chart p. A-97. The project team has a broad array of expertise including policy analysis and management; both qualitative and quantitative research methods; human and organizational learning; vocational rehabilitation; benefits, work incentives and asset accumulation planning and assistance; transition planning and workforce development policy; employment support systems for people with disabilities; independent living; financial literacy, general literacy; and human resources/employer consulting.

- ii. ***The extent to which there is evidence that key project staff, by virtue of their training or professional experience, have the requisite knowledge to design, implement, and manage projects of the size and scope of the proposed project***

All key project staff, by virtue of their education, and professional training and experiences, have the requisite knowledge to design, implement, and manage the NYS PROMISE. Following are highlights of specific roles to be played by key personnel, and or partners, and evidence of the appropriateness of their assignment to this project. A rubric of other federal initiatives these personnel are currently assigned to is provided in Appendix A, Personnel Assigned to Other Federal Initiatives Rubric (pp. A-185).

**OMH MDP Staffing (see Appendix A, pp. A-101 - A-128 for resumes of key OMH personnel):**

***Co-Principal Investigator/State System Coordinator: John Allen (FTE .20 Y1-5) In-kind Support.*** Mr. Allen will be a member of the core management team; be responsible for serving as the liaison to the Governor’s Office/Executive Branch; direct and facilitate the monthly NYESS Coordinating Council meetings; communicate and report to the United States

Department of Education (USDOE); and, supervise OMH personnel and maintain linkages with state disability agencies. Mr. Allen has extensive experience in the field, most recently serving as Co-Principal Investigator for the New York Makes Work Pay initiative—facilitating the growth of a number of tools in NYS to impact the overall employment rate of individuals with disabilities—including creating the NYESS system, a comprehensive cross-systems case management system, in partnership with the NYS DOL, as well as seven other state agencies.

***Project Director: Andrew Karhan (FTE .50 Y1-5) In-kind Support.*** Mr. Karhan will be responsible for the overall direction of the grant, and ensure all project deliverables, including oversight of the Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute subcontract, provision of immediate supervision to the RFMH/OMH project team, and scheduling and implementation of core management team monthly meetings. Mr. Karhan will also support the NYESS SCC , monitoring overall grant outcomes, interface with State Agency project partners, and coordinate the development of the NYESS project database, outcome measurement, and reports. Finally, he will work with the Project Coordinator and Subcontract Director at Cornell’s EDI to develop, oversee and monitor progress of the overall project work plan. Mr. Karhan brings over 17 years of leadership experience in vocational rehabilitation, benefits planning and organizational/systems development to the project. Mr. Karhan currently functions as the Director of Employment Policy for the NYESS, and is known for his strong leadership and vision related to the management of NYESS.Mr.

***Deputy Director of Programs: TBD (FTE 1.0 Y1-5).*** The Deputy Director of Programs will support the Mr. Karhan in all fulfilling all functions associated with the Project Director’s role; will provide direct supervision and leadership to the Provider Network Coordinators associated with the project, and provide the overall state-wide support and vision to those staff to

coordinate with the State partner agencies to ensure these roles are utilized effectively. The Deputy Director will also participate in the facilitation of the Statewide NYESS Coordinating Council, as well as the regional planning councils. The Deputy Director will have at minimum a master's degree in a related field, and five years of experiencing directing multi-site demonstration projects or multi-million dollar grants, and leadership experience.

***Provider Network Coordinators: TBD (FTE 2.0 Y1-5).*** The Provider Network Coordinators will work closely with the PTCs, RDS, and Cornell University to recruit and support the local provider network in each research demonstration geographic area. The Provider Network Coordinator will work with Cornell staff to develop a provider recruitment training program, conduct initial orientation training, and provide all technical assistance support to local providers for signing up as a vendor in the NYESS, and work with Cornell to ensure the relevance and accuracy of the online statewide service provider portal housed at [www://transitionsource.org](http://www://transitionsource.org). They will conduct ongoing needs assessment of the local provider community; assess service delivery gaps, and direct project resources to build community capacity. Both positions will require a master's degree in a disability/business-related field, and demonstrated ability and experience in interfacing with multiple partners across NYS.

***NYESS IT Project Director: John Brooks (FTE .50 Y1-5) In-kind Support.*** Mr. Brooks will be responsible for ensuring the NYESS Data Management components related to the project. Mr. Brooks, currently oversees the IT team who work on all technical aspects of NYESS including the overall system architecture, data modeling process, report development, and project planning. Mr. Brooks brings over 30 years of experience to the project, the last 15 of which were specifically related to providing vision, leadership, design, testing, and ongoing updates to the America's One Stop Operating System (OSOS). John is the NYESS Unit's liaison with

Information Technology staff for data modeling, reporting, and enhancements to NYESS. Specifically, he will provide oversight to the other OMH IT personnel.

**Data Architect: Rob Wolfe (FTE 1.0 Y1-2; .50 Y3-5).** Mr. Wolfe will serve as the Data Architect, and advocate for using data as the asset for providing strategic direction for all data integration and data movement activities. Mr. Wolfe comes to the project with over 25 years of experience in the field, and currently serves as the Data Architect for NYESS. Mr. Wolfe has served as the data architect for several major State-wide, cross systems initiatives, where he has consistently demonstrated exemplary work, that has ultimately led to better outcomes related to the availability and flexibility of the data models. He will work with the Information Technology (IT) Project Director to create and maintain data domains to aid in the improvement of data quality, so that associated It personnel have the infrastructure in place to meet the overall project data reporting and systems billing processing requirements.

**Business Analyst: Mark Bour (FTE 1.0 Y1-2; .50 Y3-5).** Mr. Bour will be responsible for working with the NYESS IT Project Director, and the Report Developer for building and monitoring the appropriate data tracking functions into the NYESS system in order to track project outcomes. He will establish the rules associated with any reports that are developed, draft all supporting documentation related to these procedures, and monitor and process all payment requests through the NYESS. Mr. Bour has a B.S. in Management from the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and comes to the project with over five years of experience as a Senior Business Analyst.

**Report Developer: Sarath Mudigonda (FTE 1.0 Y1-2; .50 Y3-5).** The report developer will work under the direction of the IT Project Director to develop all necessary reports associated with key data and outcome measurements associated with the project. Sarath will

interface with the Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute research team to design and monitor NYESS administrative data set reporting, and contribute to the Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute quarterly reports that will be shared with the NYESS SCC. He will also work with the National Evaluator and Cornell Research Director, to ensure relevance of data collected and integration with the national evaluation.

***Administrative Assistant: TBD (FTE1.0 Y1-5).*** The OMH administrative assistant will provide administrative and clerical support to all OMH NYS PROMISE MDP key personnel. The Administrative Assistant will assist in setting up statewide and regional meetings, trainings, and other functions. Other duties will include basic administrative functions like collecting data, data entry, answering phones, drafting correspondence, as well as other duties.

**Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute Staffing (see Appendix A, Resumes of Key NYS PROMISE Personnel pp. A-129 - A-163 for resumes of key Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute personnel):**

***Co-Principal Investigator/Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute Subcontract Director: Thomas P. Golden (FTE .50 Y1-5)*** As the Subcontract Director, Mr. Golden will be responsible for overall oversight and management of the EDI subcontract, including assigned personnel; monitor both the statewide and EDI work plan; assist John Allen in statewide coordination with state partners; be responsible for the management of all capacity building, training and technical assistance activities at Cornell's EDI, and will lead subcontracting and collaboration with our partner organizations. He will also design and implement the semi-annual project learning communities; participate in the core management team; and oversee the Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute budget, and contribute to project reporting and coordination with the NYESS SCC. Mr. Golden has 20-plus

years of experience on faculty at Cornell, managing and directing both state and federal multi-million dollar research and training initiatives—most recently the NY Makes Work Pay MIG. As the Associate Director of the EDI and Teaching Faculty in the Disability Studies Program in the ILR School at Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute, his practice, research and publication have focused on social insurance policy; transition planning for secondary education students with disabilities; and, organizational development and systems change with an emphasis on facilitating inclusive communities for individuals with disabilities. served three terms on the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Advisory Panel, and is currently completing his dissertation in Human and Organizational Learning at The George Washington University

***Co-Principal Investigator/Research Director: Arun Karpur (FTE .50 Y1; .75 Y2-5).***

Dr. Karpur will be responsible for overseeing all aspects of the research and evaluation data collection efforts throughout the project, and be responsible for the management of all aspects of research and evaluation—including tracking of project deliverables and working with the national evaluator in establishing high quality data for demonstrating impact of the NYS PROMISE approach. Dr. Karpur will also be responsible in managing a team of highly qualified researchers at Cornell for developing new tools in data collection, validation and reliability checks of these tools, ensure quality of data including minimizing data voids and attrition. Dr. Karpur has over 10 years of experience in program evaluation and public policy research in the area of transition to adulthood for youth with disabilities. He has led several evaluation projects at NYS as well as at national-levels to assess the impact of strategies enabling positive postsecondary outcomes for youth with disabilities. He has expertise in primary data collection as well as analysis of extant data sets. Trained as a medical doctor and an epidemiologist, Dr. Karpur has previously participated in field randomized clinical trial designs in the area of

substance abuse and suicide prevention while working as researcher within the Preventive Science and Methodology Group (PSMG) at the University of South Florida, Tampa, FL. He developed protocols for randomization, treatment allocation and outcomes tracking while working within the PSMG and contributed to development of statistical models evaluating effectiveness of program interventions. More recently, Dr. Karpur led the evaluation efforts on collecting data on 16,000 youth with disabilities in NYS.

*Research and Program Evaluation: David Brewer (FTE .50 Y1-2; .30 Y3-5); Luz Semeah (FTE .25 Y1; .50 Y2-5); Val Malzer (FTE .50 Y1; .99 Y2-5); William Erickson (FTE .50 Y1-5); Zafar Nazarov (FTE .50 Y1-5); Sarah von Schrader (FTE .20 Y1; .30 Y2-5); Margaret Johnson (FTE .30 Y1-5); Deborah Sellers (FTE .10 Y1-5)* The NYS PROMISE aims to collect high quality data at multiple-levels to enable analysis for studying the effectiveness of its program approaches on postsecondary employment, education, and economic outcomes for SSI youth and their families. A significant component of research and evaluation will include development of new tools and products to be implemented for the purposes of primary data collection.

*Mr. David Brewer*, who currently leads the efforts in the area of training and technical assistance in transition through NYS-funded Professional Development Services Center (PDSC) in Transition to Adulthood, will work closely with the web-team for ensuring timely production of data collection instruments with online component. Mr. Brewer has over two decades of experience working with youth with disabilities and their families, and he has led in development of several data collection products for the purposes of evaluation. He is currently leading the sub-contract work with the NSTTAC and is leading the efforts in helping this national center to organize its web-site and resources.

*Dr. Luz Semeah* and *Ms. Val Malzer* will serve as the Technical Assistance and Fidelity Monitoring team. Dr. Semeah received her doctorate in Apparel, Housing, and Resource Management from Virginia Tech and specializes in examining accessibility to equitable housing for people with disabilities. She has expertise in field-based data collection and will serve in the role for conducting field-based technical assistance and help in assessing fidelity of RDS to best-practices in transition to adulthood. She will be joined by Ms. Val Malzer who has a master's degree in public policy. Ms. Malzer had supported previous transition to adulthood evaluation initiative in NYS as program coordinator. Together, Dr. Semeah and Ms. Malzer will be conducting site visits to each of the RDS across the NYS provide technical assistance for interpreting quarterly reports on student and parental engagement in transition planning, activities and outcomes. They will help sites interpret the results from the collaboration survey and help in brokering partnerships to improve RDS capacities in building and sustaining relationships with local provider networks. They will also implement the program fidelity assessment tool and collect data on the fidelity of RDS to best-practices in transition to adulthood. The research and evaluation efforts will be further supported by *Mr. William Erickson*, who has served as Research Specialist on several National and NYS funded initiatives at Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute. He will provide research support in managing the data collected in the project, provide regular feedback on the quality of the data including data voids and attrition. He will coordinate with Dr. Semeah and Ms. Malzer in working with the RDS to ensure high quality data is collected. Mr. Erickson will work closely with the Research Director in preparing data files to suit specifications of the national evaluator. *Dr. Zafar Nazarov* is an economist currently supported several of Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute's efforts in program evaluation and public policy research.

Dr. Nazarov will provide his analytical assistance in analysis of the data collected in the NYS PROMISE initiative and work the Research Director for examining the impact of NYS PROMISE on transition to adulthood outcomes. He will also provide research design support.

**Dr. Sarah von Schrader**, Associate Director of Research at Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute, will provide her expertise in designing data collection instruments and conducting psychometric analysis within the project. Her expertise in the area of educational measurement and statistics will serve the project needs in assessing the reliability and validity of various elements in data collection tool and will further help in refining tools to accurately capture the data elements. **Dr. Margaret Johnson** has expertise in program evaluation and public policy research. She is a Research Associate Evaluation Specialist at EDI and adjunct faculty for the Cornell Institute of Public Affairs, teaching public and nonprofit evaluation. Her training and experience is in policy analysis and mixed methods evaluation. Dr. Johnson will support the implementation of program evaluation efforts and will help in evaluating the efforts of the project across inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes. She will work with Research Director in establishing benchmarks for ensuring timely implementation of project activities and generating progress reports for the sponsors. **Dr. Deborah Sellers**, Director for Research and Evaluation, Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research at Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute, will serve as an expert consultant to advice efforts in research and program evaluation. In addition to her expertise in program evaluation, Dr. Sellers has managed large-scale group randomized studies and lend her expertise by periodically participating in research team meetings, providing inputs in recruitment and outreach strategies, reviewing approaches for data collection and establishing continuous quality feedback reports for RDS and program partners.

***Training and Organizational Development: Hannah Rudstam, Wendy Strobel, and Ray Cebula (FTE: 20% Y1-3, 10% Y4-5).*** To support both organizational and individual capacity building, a series of online, Just-In-Time (JIT) toolkits will be developed for use across the project intervention. This will include the design, production, testing, launching, dissemination and evaluation of four primary online toolkits. This will include a toolkit on: benefits, work incentives and asset accumulation planning and assistance; employer engagement in work-based learning and incentives for hiring students; transition planning 101; and, financial literacy. Each tool will include tutorials, real-time skills assessment, online calculators, information and referral, and other resources. ***Dr. Rudstam, Ms. Strobel, and Dr. Cebula*** have over 75 years of cumulative experience in promoting employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities with expertise in the areas of financial capability planning, employer practices, employment services provision, transition planning, assistive technology, universal design, and partnership building. In their role, they will work with the web and media team to design the online toolkits which will provide the entire project community with 24/7 access to critical information and resources, and also be available to provide ongoing technical assistance to local providers, employers, students, their families, and schools.

***Project Coordinator: Michelle Podolec (FTE: 95% Y1-5).*** In this role Ms. Podolec will be responsible for design, monitoring and updating of the overall NYS PROMISE MDP workplace. She will work collaboratively with all program and research assistants to track deliverables, and will schedule and implement bi-weekly sprint meetings with the Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute-based web and media team. In addition, she will assist in scheduling essential core management and statewide meetings, and support Mr. Golden in designing, scheduling and implementing the semi-annual project learning communities.

Finally, she will also support OMH in the development of annual project reporting to OSEP. Ms. Podolec has over years of experience implementing full-scale sponsored programs at Cornell. She has coordinated and completed IRB applications, supported project reporting, and provided high level executive support in prior positions.

***Support Personnel:*** Key Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute personnel will be supported by a ***Web and Media Development Team (FTE: 195% Y1-2 ; 175% Y3 ; 150% Y4 ; 125% Y5)*** that will be responsible for design, production, testing, and ongoing monitoring and archiving of all web and media productions. This will include: project web portal; online data management sites; distance learning; project branding and style guides; and, production scheduling and monitoring. In addition, a ***Program Assistant (FTE .95%)*** and a ***Research Assistant (FTE .95%)*** will support the training and organizational development and research teams respectively. This will include responsibilities associated with scheduling, recruitment for, implementation, and evaluation of all training and technical assistance interventions; design, production, and work plan monitoring of research instruments and tools; and, general project administrative support.

**MDP Partners Staffing:**

In addition to the key personnel detailed above, the NYS PROMISE MDP will engage several critical partners having the essential expertise and experience to support the successful implementation of the demonstration. Resumes of partner key personnel are provided in Appendix A, Resumes of Key NYS Promise Personnel pp. A-163 - A-184. Research Demonstration Sites and key personnel in each site will not be finalized until award, in collaboration with the national evaluator.

*Neighborhood Legal Services (FTE .62 Y1-5)* will play two primary roles in the NYS PROMISE: 1) Staffing a Toll-Free Technical Assistance (TA) Line; and 2) Preparation of information materials for students, families and providers. The Neighborhood Legal Services (NLS) subcontract will be managed by Senior Attorney James Sheldon, and staffed by three Paralegals/Work Incentives Counselors (Krista McDonald, Marta Santiago, and Jessica Abott), on a rotating basis, to take calls on a toll-free TA line. They will take calls from students, parents/guardians, local service providers, and schools in the three regions served by the project. Callers will be offered information, relevant materials (or links to them), and appropriate referrals for services. The focus of the TA line service will be on the following subject areas: federal disability benefits (Social Security and SSI), health insurance coverage (Medicaid, Medicare, and private insurance), work incentives, asset accumulation, financial literacy, and planning for the transition to adult education (including higher education), adult work, and career goals. NLS has over 10 years of experience delivering similar services through a work incentives hotline as part of several other statewide initiatives. In connection with their work on WIPA and BOND, each of the listed staff has gone through a suitability clearance process to allow them to handle personally identifiable information of Social Security and SSI beneficiaries if that becomes relevant in this project. Mr. Sheldon is also a nationally-acclaimed writer on SSA disability benefits and work incentive issues and long-time partner of EDI. He will contribute his expertise and experience to guide the authoring and production of informational materials

*Regional Parent Training and Information Centers (FTE 6.25 Y1; 5.6 Y2; 5.2 Y3; 5.1 Y4-5)*. Three Regional Parent Training Centers will support the NYS PROMISE. This includes: the Resources for Children with Special Needs (RCSN); the Parent Network of Western New York (PNWNY); and, the Parent Network of the Capital Region (Wildwood Programs, Inc.).

Both RCSN and PNWNY are OSEP-funded federal Parent Centers. Each Parent Center will focus on supporting families in each of the three research demonstration regions. The personnel allocations and budgets are proportional to the number of participants to be recruited from each of the regions. A larger allocation is included for curriculum development for PNWNY due to their expertise in transition to adulthood related topics, and a larger allocation for RCSN for low literacy/visual content for is allocated to RCSN because of staff capacity. The overall purpose of the Parent Center role is to promote participating families to support successful outcomes for their children in transition to employment. They will provide families with information and tools to develop the vision, confidence, skills, and knowledge to create a positive vision for the future, navigate multiple complex systems, get the supports they need, and move toward economic self-sufficiency. Specifically, there are five roles and responsibilities for PTC staff to play for the NYS PROMISE. Each of the PTCs will have the following three primary functions: Regional Technical Assistance; Trainer, and Family Support Coach. These functions might be assumed by the same individual, especially in smaller subcontracts such as PNCRNY. In addition, there will be Curriculum Developer at PNWNY and RCSN and a Graphics Designer at RCSN. During Y1 and 2, PTC Regional Technical Assistance Coordinators will support recruitment and outreach efforts to enroll and retain schools and individuals in the MDP. PTCs will conduct orientations, help obtain consents; provide a trusted resource for families of participants; and, recruit neighborhood organizations as training sites. All participant families will be provided with a “tool-kit” including checklists, basic information, fact sheets, and organization supports. During Y1, there will be a focus on initiating family-focused technical assistance to the RDSs, training NYS PROMISE staff and participating agencies in effective family collaboration, and building the local teams to support family needs. Family Support Coaching, to begin during Y1 and

continue through the duration of the project, is a key component of the PTC role. PTCs will provide information and coaching to help families navigate public systems, connect with local resources, advocate effectively, and move toward self-sufficiency. The Family Support Coach will be a parent of a child with special needs, and thus provide a meaningful and credible connection for families through the project and beyond. The PTC Training program begins towards the end of Y1 and continues through the project. PTC Trainers will deliver workshops on transition to adulthood, accessing community resources and advocacy skills. Each workshop will be conducted at least once for each 50 participants in the native language of the family or with translation in partnership with schools and community organizations. Trainers will be expert in the content as well as delivering engaging, participatory experiences for adult learners. During Y2, Parent Center staff will collaborate with Cornell to develop digital curriculum based on the workshop materials. Throughout the project, PTC staff will meet with RDS's to provide technical assistance on family issues to keep families enrolled, engaged, and supported. Training, family support coaching, and regional coordination will continue throughout the project, along with updates to curriculum and materials. The services and products will be sustainable beyond the life of the project as they will become embedded in the parent center services and enhance PTC competencies to service core competences.

***Research Demonstration Sites (Y1-5).*** To support the implementation of this research demonstration, 20-25 research demonstration sites will be selected in collaboration with the national evaluator upon award in three geographic regions of NYS (Western, Central and NYC). Research demonstration sites selected in this study will perform the following roles and responsibilities to ensure project success: *1. Conduct outreach and participant recruitment activities*, such as mailings, phone calls, information meetings, and/or home visits to obtain

consent, resulting in achievement of district participation goals toward the required sample size;

*2. Build partnerships with local community providers* to ensure access of students in the intervention group to work-based assessment, training and placement services, as well as other services leading toward successful post-secondary adult outcomes; *3. Provide service coordination and referral* of students in the intervention group to local community providers, with money set-aside at the state level to pay for these services and supports; *4. Provide ongoing case management and data collection* using required online instrumentation; *5. Participation in intermittent meetings with Regional Case Managers* employed through the Parent Training Centers to ensure participant retention, coordinate efforts regionally, benchmark performance, and trouble-shoot cases; *6. Work with the assigned Regional NYSED-sponsored Transition Specialist* to access ongoing technical assistance and training support to enhance IDEA-mandated transition capacity of the district for all students; and *7. Assign a lead point person* who will serve as the single point of contact between Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute and the selected district, who will also participate in monthly project community management teleconferences, and semi-annual project community meetings in Albany, NY. Travel and lodging costs for the latter will be reimbursed by Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute. The NYS PROMISE recognizes that existing personnel already perform some of these functions within local education agencies, although often not to the extent needed for this demonstration. For example, Chairs of Committees of Special Education typically provide case management services, and integrate service coordination into the Individual Education Plan. The district can assign these roles and responsibilities however they feel is most natural. In exchange for participation, based on the number of SSI youth targeted for each selected local education agency, they will receive \$50,000-\$75,000 per year of

the potential five year contract to cover personnel and other associated costs for participation. To demonstrate our ability to recruit local education agencies to serve as potential research demonstration sites, a small sampling in each of the three regions were solicited for their willingness to engage in the research demonstration if selected for award. These letters of proposed commitment are provided in Appendix A, pp. A-41 - A-57.

***a. The extent to which the identified key personnel have the requisite authority to commit their agency and its resources to the implementation of the project.***

As evidenced by the letter of support from the Governor of the State of New York provided in Appendix A, Governor's Letter of Intent and Commitment, new York State Governor's Office (pp. A-1 - A-2), the Office of Mental Health, and their partners, have been granted the requisite executive authority to commit to implementation of the NYS PROMISE. In addition, letters of support committing subcontractors, agency partners and their resources are provided in Appendix A, Letters of Commitment and Willingness to Collaborate (pp. A-3 - 57).

**D. Significance**

***1. Extent to which the proposed project will result in systems change and improvement***

Importance of interagency collaboration in providing a coordinated set of services to transition-age youth and young adults with disabilities has been known for more than two decades. Recent comparative analysis of NYS Model Transition Program and the national data from NLTS2 indicated that receiving services from partner providers mediated substantial proportion of program effects on post-secondary outcomes for youth with disabilities. Further, the IDEA has embraced the importance of interagency collaboration in achieving successful postsecondary outcomes for youth with disabilities and requires schools to partner with agencies to seek services for youth during their transition. However, much work needs to be done in

bringing various youth serving agencies to have a unified approach to seamless delivery of needs services for youth. Further, in case of SSI youth who may have greater service needs based on their impairments and family income situations, interagency collaboration plays an important role in helping these young people and their families during transition to adulthood.

The NYS PROMISE proposes to *establish horizontal collaborative groups at multiple levels* – i.e., state and local, to improve interagency collaboration leading to timely delivery of needed services and improve postsecondary outcomes of employment and education for SSI youth. Specifically, the NYESS SCC, established at the state-level will convene monthly meetings to discuss the progress of young adults in their transition to adulthood process and examine existing policy/program barriers in providing services for SSI youth and their families. Quarterly aggregated outputs from the TID system will inform discussions on policy and program barriers within NYESS SCC. Further, implementing SAFAR protocol annually in assessing improvement in collaboration will assist the NYESS SCC in establishing short-term goals in their efforts to improving collaboration across agencies and develop bench-marks that can be visited at regular intervals to examine progress made and highlight needs for establishing newer strategies to improve unification of services. Training and technical assistance provided by the Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute partners will further help in advancing strategies for interagency collaboration.

In addition to data-centric focus on strengthening interagency collaboration, the **outcomes-based payment system** (outlined in Appendix A, Outcomes Based Payment Schema pp. A-58 - A-66-) will help in achieving a level of integration centered on employment outcomes for youth with disabilities. Current fee-for-service payment systems cause excessive burden to funding agencies over the long-term, and by implementing this outcomes-based payment system

NYS PROMISE aims to improve the efficiency as well as the effectiveness of service systems in attaining employment goals for SSI youth. Further, to institutionalize the process of outcomes-based payments and establish seamless process for payment on reaching specific milestones, all providers in the NYS PROMISE initiative will be required to enroll into the NYESS data system. This online secure database will not only help in tracking referrals and progress of SSI youth across agencies, but also expedite the reimbursement process enhancing operational efficiency of this approach. As demonstrated in other research, this approach has high potential for improving collaboration across various youth serving agencies (Hart, Zimbrich & Ghiloni, 2001; Karhan et al., 2010).

The data collection process in NYS PROMISE aims to collect information within the framework of **continuous quality improvement** and reporting data to stakeholders and program implementers are central elements of this approach. Continuous feedback loops informing project partners, NYESS SCC, regional provider networks and RDS will help not only to identify needs in improving program quality and performance, but also instill a culture for seeking data-based evidence for program implementation and planning. Multiple sources of data inform development of a comprehensive grid of information that can be analyzed to assess quality of program interventions, recognize barriers and develop an action plan responding to these barriers. The comprehensive reporting to NYESS SCC and RDS will include aggregated information on SSI youth participation and engagement in transition planning and activities, information on referrals for services from partner providers, and outcomes of receiving services. This information will be supplemented by program contexts including information on fidelity of program structure and processes to best-practices in transition to adulthood for youth with disabilities. Information on SSI youth and parent satisfaction, as well as extent of collaboration

will be provided to conduct a comprehensive analysis of existing system. This discussion will be moderated by highly trained research faculty members from Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute and action plans will be developed at state and local-levels in improvement of transition programming. Further institutional capacities for reviewing program evidence will be developed at regional-level by training regional network contacts from PTCs as well as Regional Transition Coordinators, and at state-level by training NYESS SCC personnel to establish sustainable resources for evidence-based planning and quality improvement.

Besides, the NYS PROMISE approach is unique in the way that it will explicitly *assess program fidelity to best-practices and interagency collaboration on a continual basis* for guiding improvement in programming through the phases of implementation. These processes built within the framework of research, evaluation, training and TA will help in moving the current segregated systems to adopt a more unified approach in providing services to SSI youth and their families. Though not measured, these activities are likely to influence organizational practices that will promote interagency collaboration and instill a learning culture in system change efforts.

## ***2. The potential contribution of the proposed project to the development and advancement of knowledge and practices in the field***

The NYS PROMISE aims at *supporting and improving existing structures, processes, and practices* in transition to adulthood programs in their local context and collect rich array of data elements to inform for its replication and generalizability. Random assignment of SSI youth into treatment and control groups helps in ensuring minimizing contributions of unobservable factors influencing postsecondary outcomes. Collecting data at multiple-levels of the program will help in understanding the vertical impact of contexts, program structure and processes,

including interagency collaboration on individual SSI youth and their families. Appendix A, pp. A-186 - A-189 has a matrix of data collection activities with the purpose of tracking program implementation at multiple-levels. This rich array of data elements will inform on optimal conditions for achieving positive postsecondary employment and education outcomes for SSI youth. The majority of transition to adulthood program evaluations are limited in their abilities to collect data on key elements at individual, program and systems-level and NYS PROMISE approach addresses this limitation through the data collection activities.

Few transition to adulthood programs have been evaluated for their effectiveness using randomized control design. The NYS PROMISE will *generate state-of-the-art evidence for effective strategies in transition to adulthood*. Besides informing strategies specific to SSI youth, several general elements of transition programs and its impact on young adult outcomes, as well as parent and family impact will be studied within the project. The NYS PROMISE approach of synthesizing evidence from multiple sources will advance methodologies in evaluation of transition to adulthood programs. Though it is likely that randomization at student-level has a potential for contamination or spill-over effect to the control group, this effect will be minimized through continual training and technical assistance to provide intervention to those assigned to the treatment group and services as usual to the control group participants. Further, in examining fidelity of program interventions to best-practices, information will be collected on the extent to which the treatment as usual –i.e., control group condition is in alignment with leading practices. This information will be valuable during the process of summative evaluation studying the impact of interventions in RDS as this approach allows calculating differential receipt of treatment enabling further model-based adjustments (Hulleman & Cordray, 2009). Working in collaboration with national evaluator will assist in collecting data on standard

elements that will further aid in any comparative analysis of NYS PROMISE approach with other models nationally. Data collected within this project has a potential to inform important program implementation research. Following are a list of an example of research questions that can be addressed within the framework of the NYS PROMISE:

- Which specific interventions/services are most effective in improving postsecondary employment and education for SSI youth in treatment group in comparison with the control group?
- How does the program fidelity to best-practices impact program outcomes for SSI youth? Is there a dose response relationship between the level of fidelity and treatment outcomes after adjusting for achieved relative strength<sup>10</sup>?
- How does the level of interagency collaboration at local level influence program outcomes? Do program outcomes monotonically vary with levels of interagency collaboration?
- To what extent the interagency collaboration at the state-level influence the strength of collaboration at local levels?
- Does the process of continuous feedback loop in the program evaluation systems help in improvement of program quality? Is there an added effect of TA on program quality improvement?
- Does improvement in program quality increase satisfaction with services among SSI youth and parents? What components of support systems are more valued by parents and SSI youth? Does high level of program satisfaction correlate with high fidelity to best-practices?

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<sup>10</sup> Achieve Relative Strength (ARS) is the difference in the fidelity of intervention to best practices between the intervention and counterfactual conditions.

- What critical program elements mediate the observed effect of treatment? To what extent the relationship between treatment and outcomes are mediated by fidelity to best-practices in transition to adulthood programs for SSI youth?

Besides the data collected for research and evaluation, the program outputs include ***development of nationally-relevant evidence-based training and technical assistance tools***. This array of tools will include online Just-In-Time (JIT) targeted for students, their families, service providers, schools, and other transition stakeholders, such as employers. These tools will include, but not be limited to: gaining knowledge and changing attitudes and assumptions regarding benefits, work incentives and asset accumulation; financial literacy; successfully maneuvering and effectively engaging in transition planning; building local partnerships to promote employment, educational, and financial literacy outcomes of youth; employer engagement in work-based learning; provision of high quality transition planning services and support; and others. These tools will be disseminated and shared across the national PROMISE community, as well as through the national TA network, and other training and technical assistance brokers for broader dissemination.

In addition, the NYS PROMISE will ***build long-term, sustainable local community leadership and service delivery capacities*** through a series of outputs. In collaboration with the statewide Partners in Policy Making initiative, parents, family and student leaders will be equipped within local communities to continue to elevate the voices of SSI youth and their familial experiences, long beyond the cycle of this demonstration. In addition, citizen-centered leadership agents equipped through the CCLD online learning program, will continue lifelong attachment to the international learning community, as well as continue to develop and hone person-centered practices within their own local communities, organizations, and experiences.

Across the three regional areas, 50 new certified work incentive practitioners, equipped through scholarships made available through EDIonline, will continue to be available for delivery of these critical employment services and supports beyond the life of the grant. These practitioners will be attached either individually or organizationally to the NYESS Employment Network, to provide a sustainable source of long-term referral and funding for services.

Finally, the NYS PROMISE approach and its impact, through dissemination, *will infuse future research and policy agendas nationally*. Through the national technical assistance network proposed under the NYS PROMISE, ongoing dialogue, collaboration, and sharing of experiences and impact will be achieved. It is expected that lessons learned under the NYS PROMISE will guide the future research agendas of these respected institutions, and through dissemination of research experiences and findings at national events and through scholarly publication will impact an even broader net of researchers and policy makers both nationally, and globally. The NYS PROMISE partners have extensive publication record, disseminating experiences and findings of prior research conducted. It is expected that a minimum of 10 scholarly publications will be produced across the five years of this demonstration, and that presentations of findings will be made at no fewer than 10 statewide and national events. As a long-standing RRTC, sponsored by the USDOE's NIDRR, Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute has contributed new knowledge across several areas of research, providing both written and oral testimony before Congress as well as the NYS legislature. In addition, staff of the NYS PROMISE partners have also held critical advisory positions to state and federal government, and are well-versed in the development and promotion of new policy agendas. These bodies have included, but are not limited to the: NYS Rehabilitation Council; NYS Independent Living Council; Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Advisory Panel; SSA's

Alternative Ticket Payment Workgroup; NYS MISCC; MISCC Employment Subcommittee; NYS Commissioner's Advisory Panel; and others.

**3. *The extent to which the project is designed to raise the expectations held by, and about, participating child SSI recipients regarding their education and employment outcomes***

Transition-age youth receiving SSI benefits have higher than usual needs for supports and services. Further, parents of these SSI youth are more likely to be unemployed and have low educational attainment (Loprest & Wittenburg, 2007). The SSI youth are more likely to drop out of secondary school and have engagement with department of justice system. These young people have lower access to services that help them prepare for the world of work. Further, about a third of those receiving SSI before age 18 no longer remain to be eligible for these benefits and have a high likelihood of living in poverty, disconnected with labor market.

The NYS PROMISE approach aims to enhance access to services to SSI youth and their parents that helps improving their participation in human capital development activities and prepares them for work. By implementing systems and processes to track referrals and services the NYS PROMISE aims improving not only the array of available services, but also enables customization of service package at the individual level. Partnering with the PTCs helps connect the parents of SSI youth to needed services that help them to access opportunities for work as well as advancing their education. Improving access to young people with community-based work opportunities and services from local providers will further enhance their capacities in securing and retaining work. Most importantly, these referral activities, individual-level customization of services and training in improving self-determination skills will afford skills to young people in finding supports in their local communities for engaging in work or continuing their education after secondary school. The activities aimed at enhancing the human capital of

SSI youth has substantial evidence in literature furthering employment for people with disabilities, especially among those with significant disabilities who may be on SSI. By demonstrating the possibility of living an independent and engaged life, the NYS PROMISE is likely to improve the expectations of SSI youth about their potential to engage in work and community living.

Zhang et al. (2011) demonstrated the reciprocal effect of parental expectations on student's expectations which in turn were related to student academic achievement. While examining directionality of effects, they found that parental expectation shaped students' expectations. As most parents of SSI youth hold lower expectations towards their career, it is likely that increasing parental expectations has a high potential to influence positive outcomes for youth, partly by influencing young person's expectation towards postsecondary success. Davis-Kean (2005) also demonstrated that parent education and family influence their expectations of child's academic success, which further impacting parent's behavior of engagement in their child's education. Therefore, one of the ways the NYS PROMISE aims to improve parent's expectation and economic status is by connecting them to services available from the regional PTCs. Parental engagement in work and human capital development also enhances the available household income supporting needs of the SSI youth. Parental expectation also mediates relationship between household assets and its impact on child's academic achievement. Providing benefits counseling, work incentives and asset planning and assistance, and financial literacy training in the NYS PROMISE coupled with increase in parental expectations will help increasing its impact on SSI youth outcomes.

The data collection systems designed in NYS PROMISE will inform program stakeholders periodically on progress made on increasing participation of SSI youth and their

family in the process of transition planning and activities. These markers of success will help in raising expectations about SSI youth within the project. Especially, these markers have a potential to impact teachers' expectation with respect to SSI youth's abilities and motivation for engaging in work and/or education after secondary school. The emerging evidence of program success and barriers will further help in recalibrating program efforts continually to ensure the needs of SSI youth and parents are met and their engagement in transition is sustained throughout the project. Specifically aggregated data on student progress will be shared with the regional PTCs who will help in developing understandable materials for dissemination with parents of SSI youth in the intervention group to sustain their interest and also address any issue impacting student attrition.

***4. The importance or magnitude of the results or outcomes likely to be attained by the proposed project***

Postsecondary outcomes of engagement in employment and education have enduring impact on long-term well-being and community engagement for people with disabilities. Despite observed improvements in postsecondary engagement in work over the past decade, youth with disabilities continue to lag behind their peers without disabilities. Young people who receive SSI have an added disadvantage often due to severity of their functional limitations as well as potential risk of reduction in cash benefits resulting from paid work. This scenario becomes further complicated as the SSA requires that program eligibility for young people be re-determined after the age of 18 years. Nearly one quarter to one third of young people with SSI benefits do not go through the re-determination process due to lack of knowledge or because they are no longer found to be disabled under the adult definition of work disability. This phenomenon creates a situation where these young people, who are typically not adequately

prepared for postsecondary work and education, slip into poverty and often leading to multi-systemic involvement.

Often these young people belong to low-income families where parents typically have low expectations towards their postsecondary engagement in work and education. These young people frequently have lower self-determination skills that further snare their advancement toward postsecondary work and education. In studying factors associated with successful re-determination of eligibility to SSI, Loprest and Wittenburg (2007), observe that majority of SSI youth with limitations in Activities of Daily Living (e.g. feeding, bathing, and grooming) and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (e.g., preparing food, managing money, doing housework, and managing medications) increased likelihood of re-determination by 29 percent. However, they note that those individuals who are off SSI are more likely to live independently, but almost one third earn income below the poverty levels. They also noted that those who were off SSI were more likely to have dropped out from secondary school and/or have involvement with department of justice systems, pointing to service needs in preventing drop out and department of justice involvement. Extending this research, Hemmeter, Kauff and Wittenburg (2009), note among the 61 percent of those youth who are off SSI were employment, only 25 percent earned wages enough to replace their childhood SSI payments. Further, those who were not receiving SSI and not engaged in work or earning less than their SSI payments were less likely to invest in human capital development. In addition to factors at individual-level, program and macro-level factors have known to influence employment outcomes. Berry and Caplan (2010), in their study of examining factors related to successful employment for SSI youth served in the vocational rehabilitation system, reported that specific VR services such as supported employment had positive impact on employment status two years after exiting the VR

system. They found mixed effect of participation in post-secondary education, where on one hand participation in this service reduced the likelihood of observing positive employment outcome and on the other participation in postsecondary education was strongly correlated with long-term growth in wages. SSI youth who were employed and had attained postsecondary educational credential demonstrated greatest likelihood of moving away from SSI cash benefits compared with others without postsecondary education degree. State-level factors such as high poverty rate had some impact on the employment outcomes for SSI youth, though this effect was lesser compared with factors at individual and program-levels. However, highlighting policy-level barriers to employment, Berry and Coffey (2008) demonstrated that most SSI youth served within the VR system stopped work five years after program exit reflecting barriers for continued engagement in labor market and need for services after job-placements.

The program design of NYS PROMISE is not only to address multi-level factors, but also capture data that informs the impact of these factors in a randomized controlled design setting. As a result of the efforts undertaken by the NYS PROMISE, it is expected that NYS will achieve substantial results across three primary domains of employment, education and economic outcomes for SSI youth and families. From a *national impact perspective*, findings and new knowledge generated through the NYS PROMISE will inform the development of future research agendas and initiatives. As described earlier, through ongoing communication with nationally-related research and technical assistance entities, it is expected that our efforts will inform current, as well as future research of these centers. In addition, as a result of efforts modeled at the local and state level, it is expected that policy recommendations for removing barriers, as well as new and innovative practices for ensuring the successful post-school outcomes of SSI youth and their families will inform a much broader national policy discussion.

This will include, but not be limited to policies in the areas of social insurance, workforce development, vocational rehabilitation, and special education.

From a *state systems impact perspective*, both state and efforts to streamline and better coordinate services and supports for SSI youth and their families , will have an influential impact on how the NYS disability, workforce development, and assistance agencies work together to achieve common purpose. While the NYSED, NYSDOL, NYSOMH, NYSOPWDD, NYS CBVH, and NYSOTADA, have worked together in the past to develop a comprehensive employment system in NYS under the MISCC Employment Subcommittee, the NYS PROMISE will bring attention to an un- and underserved population in NYS, that of SSI youth and their families—and increase their understanding of the unique needs represented by this target group. Through the NYESS SCC, and efforts across the five years of the project, it is expected that enhanced MOUs, articulation agreements, and further development of the NYESS will result in cross-agency systems improvements that remove barriers to success for this population, and create opportunities. Further, through the capacity building efforts with the NYS Transition Services PDSC, it is expected that NYSED-sponsored Transition Specialists will be better equipped to provide long-term, sustainable training and technical assistance supports beyond the life of this demonstration to the over 700 Schools across NYS on those practices most effective for increasing post-school success of SSI youth. Finally, the three regional PTCs, because of their integration in both the national and state-sponsored PTC networks, will disseminate and replicate training curricula and parent supports developed under this project that were most effective in producing positive project outcomes statewide, as well as nationally.

From a *locally-based impact perspective*, the NYS PROMISE will not only improve local and regional transition practices, but more importantly the lives of individual students and

their families. From an educational perspective, it is anticipated that 95% of youth in the intervention group will stay in school, and of those dropping out, that at least 75% will be enrolled in high school equivalency programs within 6 months. It is also expected that 100% of parents will be exposed to opportunities for advancing their academic preparation, and of those expressing an interest 100% will be referred for literacy/education advancement, with 50% of those enrolling in formal literacy/advancement programs. From an employment perspective, it is anticipated that the majority of youth in the intervention group staying in school will obtain a paid work experience in integrated settings at or above minimum wage-levels, further, that the majority of these students will obtain full time work in integrated settings upon graduation, and retain employment for at least an additional year upon graduation. Of parents in the treatment group expressing an interest in employment, the majority will obtain employment, and/or be promoted or find better paying work elsewhere as a result of information and referral services provided under the NYS PROMISE. Finally, from an economic perspective, youth and parents participating in financial literacy and financial planning will demonstrate increased abilities in money management and financial planning, and those who receive benefits and work incentives planning and assistance will reduce the level of SSI benefits they receive—reducing their overall reliance on public benefits. Youth and parents who received career development services will increase the percentage of their income from work, showing increased total household income.

As a result of the NYS PROMISE efforts across these three domains, it is expected that for youth and their families in the intervention group the magnitude of impact will be formidable. Currently the composite outlook of a child who receives SSI is someone who rarely leaves the SSA rolls, has low educational and employment attainment, rarely participates in vocational rehabilitation, experience higher incarceration rates, and often does not have access to transition

services. It is fully expected that the same SSI child described above, as a result of receiving intervention services under the NYS PROMISE, is no longer is destined for a lifetime of poverty on benefits, has higher levels of education, has received transition planning, vocational rehabilitation and other employment services, actively engages in meaningful employment, and has a more positive future life outlook.

**(E) Capacity for continuous feedback and improvement**

NYS has incorporated continuous quality improvement and feedback into the design of the NYS PROMISE MDP, including: implementation, evaluation, collaboration, and partnership. Over the course of this initiative, the NYS PROMISE project community will implement a rigorous continuous quality feedback and improvement process that will guide the formative success of the demonstration—designing and incorporating specific feedback practices and protocols, and elevating the experiences and voices of SSI youth beneficiaries and their families. In the sections that follow we outline our plans and procedures for ensuring continuous feedback and improvement, as well as the strategies that will guide our efforts. Efforts in the continuous quality improvement will follow the rubric of – plan, do, study and act (PDSA).

***1) The adequacy of plans and procedures for ensuring continuous feedback and improvement in the implementation of the proposed project.***

In response to supporting continuous feedback and improvement, the NYS PROMISE has incorporated several critical strategies and approaches. The following plans and procedures will be implemented over the course of the NYS PROMISE implementation. The NYESS SCC, RDS, parent and SSI youth representative inputs will be collected on various elements of data collection to ensure its relevance and utility. Upon establishment of data collection systems data will be periodically collected as outlined in section C. 3. Data collection will begin with the establishment of RDS articulation agreements. As data is collected periodic reports will be

generated for the purposes of engaging stakeholder in the continuous quality improvement process.

Formative Data Reports. Mainly two types of project reports will be generated from research and evaluation activities elaborated in section C. 3. – (a) Quarterly NYS PROMISE project update report; and (b) Annual NYS PROMISE project report. These reports will be generated the RDS, regional and state-levels. In addition to these standard reports, the systems will have capacity for developing real-time reports that will helpful for monthly meetings.

*Quarterly NYS PROMISE project update report.* This report will provide updated on progress on SSI youth recruitment, outreach, treatment allocation, participation in interventions at RDS, referrals for services from local network providers, and participation in services from the providers. This report will also contain information on the training and TA activities. While compiling report at RDS-levels comparison will be provided between the given RDS and state-wide to provide a comparative assessment of progress for each RDSs. Similarly, while compiling regional-level reports comparison will be provided to regional-level aggregation and state-wide data. While providing reports at state-level, RDS and region-wise breakdowns will be presented to support broad policy-level discussions and provide opportunities for troubleshooting at regional and local-levels.

*Annual NYS PROMISE project update report.* This report will have similar contents as the Quarterly report. This report will consist of information on assessment of fidelity of program to best-practices in transition to adulthood, an analysis of levels of collaboration, summary of SSI youth and parental satisfaction, unmet service needs, expectations, and levels of self-determination. The report will follow a similar multi-level structure as the quarterly reports. The annual report will be shared with national evaluators at the sponsors annual meeting in

Washington, DC. In preparing these reports continuous feedback will be sought from the management partners, RDS representatives, PTC representatives, parents and SSI youth to ensure its quality and relevance to all the program stakeholders.

Monthly Meetings of the NYESS Coordinating Council. The statewide council will convene regular in-person meetings to review project-related progress and data. During these meetings ongoing and intermittent progress of the NYS PROMISE will be reviewed, discussed and strategized. Implementation, policy and practice barriers identified will be deliberated and remediated with feedback from the statewide council feeding directly back into the core management team for consideration, and translation into modified project implementation.

Quarterly RDS program meetings. Quarterly meetings will be held at each of the RDSs led by Cornell Technical Assistance and Fidelity Monitoring personnel through in-person visits. These meetings will also be attended by local network partner providers including parent and youth representatives and PTC representatives. The Cornell personnel will facilitate discussions based on quarterly data reports and engage the group in formative analysis of program implementation. Various issues posing barriers to RDS programs will be discussed, plans will be developed with objective markers to improve the content of programming as well as strategies for implementation.

Quarterly Regional Cases Management Support Meetings. Drawing from the NYESS administrative data sets, quarterly reports on outreach, recruitment, attrition, referrals tracking and services received by SSI youth will be shared at quarterly regional case management support meetings. Quarterly formative data reports will also be shared with this group. Discussions regarding specific emerging issues with respect to case management will be discussed and plans will be generated to remediate problems. Any training or TA needed to build capacities in case

management skills will be provided in collaboration with the Regional Transition Coordinator and PTC personnel.

Annual Fidelity Assessment and Site Visits. Cornell's Technical Assistance and Fidelity Assessment personnel will conduct in-person site visits to RDSs for administer the program fidelity assessment tool and capturing information on program processes. Responses to structural component of fidelity will be reviewed during the visits and any needed adjustments will be made. In addition to meeting with program implementation teams, the process of service delivery will be observed in the RDS and partner-provider environments. Rich descriptions of program implementation processes will be developed and digitally archived. Further, the analysis of program fidelity to best-practices will be reviewed during the following quarterly site visits after in-depth analysis of fidelity to best practices. Strategies, action plans and objective markers will be established to improve the quality of program as well as fidelity to best-practices.

Documentation of treatment-as-usual or the intervention for control group will be prepared to help in differentiating intervention across the two conditions and provide data for evaluating treatment effect adjusting for the extent of spill-over effect.

Meeting with the National Evaluator. Cornell University Research Director accompanied by Research Assistant and other management partners from NYESS SCC, will plan to periodically meet with the national evaluator to discuss their information needs and develop plans for creating the process of data transfer and establishing data structure as per the specification of the national evaluator. Data dictionary and data quality reports will be generated on periodic basis for supporting the work of national evaluator.

**2) *The capacity for incorporating participating child SSI recipient and family feedback***

- i. The extent to which the proposed project seeks, encourages, and includes parental involvement and feedback*
- ii. The extent to which the proposed project seeks, encourages, and includes feedback from participating child SSI recipients and encourages their self-determination*

Ensuring a consistent plan for continuous feedback and improvement requires that all key project partners, including agencies, organizations, transition, and community stakeholders, at the state, regional and local level, have been equipped and directed to elevate and infuse the voices of SSI youth beneficiaries and their families in their organizational practices and procedures. Toward achieving this end, several essential features will be implemented including:

Quarterly Distance Learning Events. Over the course of the NYS PROMISE, quarterly distance-learning events will be conducted for the entire project community to highlight strategies and effective practices for elevating beneficiary and family voices and experiences. This will include, but not be limited to: specific strategies for consideration; case profiles of the lived experience of beneficiaries and their families; and evidence-based and promising practices.

SSI Youth and Family Inclusion in Advisory Bodies. Participation of both SSI youth and their family members will be required for all local, regional and state advisory bodies related to the NYS PROMISE. This will include the NYESS SCC, Regional Transition Councils and other groups. Through capacity-building we will work with the project community to incorporate beneficiaries and their families in local and agency boards to ensure the translation of their experiences at the local level. A budget line item has been included to ensure travel reimbursement for student and parent involvement.

Leadership Capacity Building. Recognizing that token representation on broader boards may not result in the voices and lived experiences of the target population being elevated to the

degree that they impact policy and practice at the state, regional and local level, the NYS PROMISE will formally develop the capacities of six student/family leaders each year through the state's existing Partners in Policy Making program. The Partners in Policy-making initiative, implemented and evaluated by Cornell's EDI, in collaboration with the Parent Advocacy Center in Rochester NY under the sponsorship of the NYS DDPC, will provide full scholarships for six student/family leaders each year to complete the certification program—equipping them as effective policy, practice, and change agents at the local, regional and state level, and connecting them with a statewide groups of advocates from the state driving systems, policy and practice change in NYS. Lessons learned from these scholars will be translated in the semi-annual project learning communities. In addition, up to 20 student and parent leaders each year will be provided scholarships to participate in and complete the Citizen-Centered Leadership Development program—connecting them to a statewide, national and international community of practice focused on the expansion of citizen-centered leadership and person-centered planning practices.

Meaningful Engagement and Partnership of Regional Parent Training Centers. Three Regional Parent Training Centers (PTCs) will be critical management partners on the NYS PROMISE, and lead parent engagement, training and technical assistance activities in each region. These centers have over 50+ years of experience building the capacities of individuals with disabilities and their family members—including their most recent contributions to the two SSA-funded YTD in Western NY and New York City. Each PTC maintains a parent advisory council that will review project data and progress, and provide ongoing feedback to ensure project success. PTCs will assist in identifying parent and student leaders in each area for inclusion in the semi-annual project learning communities, representation on the NYESS SCC, and recommendations for Partners Scholars.

Student and Family Accessible Materials and Products. PTCs are well-versed in providing jargon-free informational materials and products written in easy-to-comprehend language. PTCs also bring recognition of the linguistic diversity within their targeted catchment areas, and the resources and access to expertise to translate materials into native languages and accessible formats.

Accessibility is an important consideration in the design of all project-related materials, including website materials. As a primary management partner, Cornell's EDI has a history of providing the latest innovations in accessible materials and website design. Project-related websites designed and administered by Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute are Section 508 compliant, passing at least a Priority Level 2 of the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), and have validated XHTML 1.0 Transitional markup. Drawing from our own research as well as recommendations from experts in the field, we have systematically incorporated universal design strategies that improve the accessibility and usability of our websites into our software development lifecycle. The iterative nature of website development provides consistent improvement in readability, understandability, design sophistication, accessibility and usability of all our websites. For example, *DisabilityStatistics.org* (a RRTC website maintained by Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute) offers all information in graphical, narrative, and tabular form, to accommodate people with different learning styles and informational needs. Dissemination and technical assistance activities of the NYS PROMISE will be primarily managed by Cornell's EDI. Administrative staff has extensive experience in providing alternate print formats, are trained in using Duxbury Systems for Braille to prepare documents, and have been trained in providing accessible website materials for screen readers. Staff is experienced in

converting sophisticated reports involving equations, tables, charts, and graphs to accessible hard-copy and HTML versions. To further ensure accessibility, all NYS PROMISE partners are located in fully accessible facilities. The NYS PROMISE collaborators are committed to ensuring that accessibility includes accessible elements for persons with all types of disabilities.

Student and Family Voices in Program Impact Assessment. The research and evaluation approaches employed by the NYS PROMISE include parent and student voices in assessing impact of the NYS PROMISE MDP interventions. Specific NYS PROMISE approaches that encourage parental and student participation and feedback include collecting information on: (a) participation and role in IEP meetings, program activities within schools and service-provider settings; (b) expectations for graduating secondary school, obtaining paid work and/or going to college; (c) satisfaction with services received and unmet service needs; (d) self-determination skills; (e) attitudes towards work and public benefits and (f) documenting experiences of participation in NYS PROMISE MDP through longitudinal qualitative interviews. This will be accompanied by targeted capacity building and knowledge in transition to adulthood programs working in collaboration with PTCs and schools as well as periodic sharing of aggregated progress data on student progress with parents working in collaboration with PTCs. Furthermore, these data elements will be aggregated and represented within the quarterly and annual reports for project stakeholders to ensure parent voices are reflected within the overall evaluation and continuous quality improvement processes.

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