

KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

ANN MARIE T. SULLIVAN, M.D.
Commissioner

MOIRA TASHJIAN, MPA
Executive Deputy Commissioner

February 28, 2023

Nadine Morrell
Audit Director
Office of the State Comptroller
Division of State Government Accountability
110 State Street – 11th Floor
Albany, NY 12236-0001

Dear Ms. Morrell:

In accordance with Executive Law § 170, the following are the responses from the Office of Mental Health (OMH) to the Office of the State Comptroller's (OSC's) final audit report entitled, "*Maximizing Incentives for Individuals with Disabilities*" (2021-S-26).

OSC Recommendation 1: Take steps to increase utilization of NYESS such as:

- Better informing State agencies about NYESS' capabilities and benefits so agency officials may educate their employment service providers about NYESS; and
- Collaborating with State agencies and employment service providers to assess their needs.

OMH 180-Day Response: Administration of the New York Employment Services System (NYESS) will continue to inform state agency partners about the benefits and capabilities of the system and will highlight recent application and infrastructure enhancements. Informational materials will be updated for provider and state agency education about the benefits of utilizing the NYESS.

Since the issuance of OSC's final audit report, the NYESS administration has engaged state agency partners about the current system and potential areas of further collaboration. We also delivered a presentation to the Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council (MISCC) on December 1, 2022, regarding the statewide collaborative model, highlighting the potential for enhanced state partnerships and the essential role employment must play in our services system.

Lastly, we continue strategizing with partner agencies on how to enhance stakeholder engagement to assess needs and take steps to increase participation. The NYESS administration plans to initiate targeted stakeholder engagement to explore full onboarding and buy-in of the system which also may include enhanced data agreements and Application Programming Interface (API) mechanisms to share essential data.

OSC Recommendation 2: Ensure TTW provider affiliates have the knowledge and resources available to use NYESS to monitor the TTW program, including periodic refresher trainings on generating reports.

OMH 180-Day Response: The NYESS administration will continue to ensure that the necessary training and technical assistance is available for all existing and prospective provider partners. Full NYESS trainings are offered on an average of twice per month, with additional trainings being delivered on demand. The additional trainings include topics such as: Employment 101 for essential partners; working while receiving public benefits; and other related topics that are essential for the Ticket to Work (TTW) Program.

As described in OMH's response to the draft audit report, a quarterly newsletter was initiated on May 5, 2022, which is being used to send reminders and alerts regarding available training and technical assistance, as well as important FAQs. The NYESS Learning Center has also been deployed on the NYESS website and will continue to be built upon.

OSC Recommendation 3: Develop written policies and procedures related to NYESS and the monitoring and administration of the TTW program.

OMH 180-Day Response: A new NYESS Policy and Procedures Manual was developed and distributed on July 22, 2022, and was sent directly to all NYESS Provider Affiliates. This manual is also provided during onboarding, after each training, and on demand.

OSC Recommendation 4: Monitor and verify the data entered in NYESS to ensure its completeness, accuracy, and validity.

OMH 180-Day Response: As indicated in OMH's response to the draft audit report, the NYESS administration implemented ongoing provider reviews in February 2022, which focus on adherence to the Ticket Program Agreement, data fidelity, best practices, and maximizing TTW revenue and engagement opportunities. These reviews have resulted in substantive training and technical assistance opportunities and have informed our ongoing statewide efforts.

Please let us know if you have any questions or require additional information concerning the above.

Sincerely,



Ann Marie T. Sullivan, M.D.
Commissioner

cc. Honorable Kathy Hochul, Governor of the State of New York
Honorable Thomas P. DiNapoli, State Comptroller
Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Senate Majority Leader and President Pro Tempore
Honorable Robert G. Ort, Senate Minority Leader
Honorable Carl E. Heastie, Assembly Speaker
Honorable Crystal D. Peoples-Stokes, Assembly Majority Leader

Honorable William A. Barclay, Assembly Minority Leader
Honorable Liz Krueger, Chairperson, Senate Finance Committee
Honorable Thomas F. O'Mara, Ranking Minority Member, Senate Finance Committee
Honorable Helene E. Weinstein, Chairman, Assembly Ways and Means Committee
Honorable Edward P. Ra, Ranking Minority Member, Assembly Ways and Means Committee
Sandra Beattie, Division of the Budget