



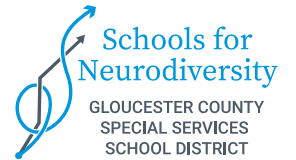
# Rowan College

## SOUTH JERSEY

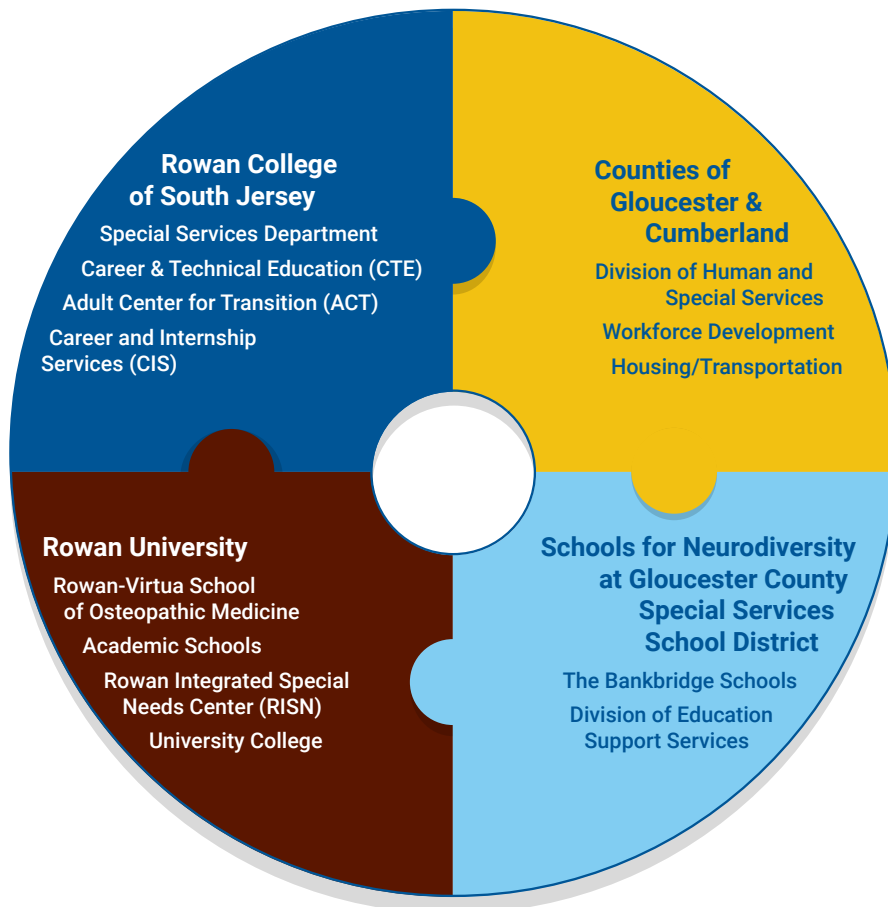
### Academy for Neurodiversity

AT THE STEPHEN M. SWEENEY  
CENTER FOR SPECIAL SERVICES

— In Partnership with —



# Rowan College of South Jersey Academy for Neurodiversity



## Executive Board

- RCSJ Dean of Academic Advancement & Special Services, Executive Board Chair
- RCSJ Presidential Liaison to the Academy for Neurodiversity
- Superintendent, Schools for Neurodiversity at GCSSSD
- Director, Gloucester County Department of Human and Special Services
- Director, Cumberland County Department of Human and Special Services
- ACT Program Executive Director & Social Worker
- GCSSSD/RCSJ Clinical Consultant
- RCSJ President

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- Gloucester County Chamber of Commerce
- Housing Authority of Gloucester County
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- Children's Inter-Agency Coordinating Council & Human Services Advisory Council Coordinator/Youth Services Administrator, Cumberland County Department of Human Services
- Transition Coordinator, Vineland High School RISE Program
- School Psychologist & Anti-Bullying Specialist, Cumberland County Technical Education Center
- Executive Director, Family Support Organization of Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem
- Representative - NJ Division of Vocational Rehabilitative Services (DVRS)
- Special Olympics New Jersey
- RCSJ Consultant to Academy for Special Services
- RCSJ Department of Special Services
- RCSJ Career & Technical Education (CTE)
- Director, Rowan University Academic Success Center & Disability Resources
- Rowan University Chief of Staff
- Co-Director, Rowan University Center for Neurodiversity
- Representative - NJ Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)
- GCSSSD, Director, DESS
- GCSSSD, Principal, Bankbridge Regional Parent(s), ACT Program
- Student(s), ACT Program

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## Executive Summary

Under the auspices of the County of Gloucester, a request has been made to establish the RCSJ Academy for Neurodiversity (Academy) in collaboration with the leadership of Rowan College of South Jersey (RCSJ). The mission of the Academy is to serve populations encompassing all aspects of special needs beginning from the transition out of high school through adult life by means of direct service and/or multi-agency referral relationships.

RCSJ recognizes the need for a paradigm shift and has been tasked with leading an initiative to develop the RCSJ Academy for Neurodiversity. RCSJ understands the importance of creating an equitable environment for individuals with special needs. This multi-pronged perspective is postured to establish a center of excellence and inclusion that will provide individuals with special needs holistic care and resources in an unbiased inclusive environment necessary for them to flourish in society.

The establishment of a multi-faceted approach will be through eight main components determined as essential for individuals with special needs. These eight main components encompass an array of services available to post-high school adults with special needs in the Counties of Gloucester and Cumberland.

### Eight Main Components

1. Education and Workforce Training
2. Employment Services
3. Medical Services
4. Mental Health and Behavioral Services
5. Transportation
6. Housing and Sustenance
7. Athletics and Recreation
8. Legal Advocacy Services

## Goals of the Academy

1. Provide the resources needed to allow individuals with special needs the ability to live full, productive, and meaningful lives
  - *Establish a pipeline of resources and referrals across a network of partners outlined in the eight main components*
2. Raise awareness in the community and workplace
  - *Educate the public and highlight to employers the benefits of hiring individuals with special needs*
3. Expand educational opportunities by emphasizing a multi-disciplinary approach to education
  - *Support untapped student talent through focused training programs, academic accommodations, assistive technologies, and flexible scheduling arrangements*

# An Overview of the RCSJ Academy for Neurodiversity

Students with special needs, ages 3-21 identified as eligible for special services, qualify for various entitlements while attending public school. These entitlements may include the right to a free and appropriate public education, an Individualized Education Program (IEP), transportation, and/or other support services such as occupational therapy, speech therapy, behavioral interventions, or sign language interpreting services. Additionally, as early as age 14, the New Jersey Administrative Code 6A:14 requires the development of an exit transition strategy for individuals with special needs as they enter high school. Vocational experience and/or post-secondary introductory experiences must be planned and documented in the high school exit IEP.

Once a student formally exits high school, legal entitlements cease and arrangements for programs, services, and other activities become the sole responsibility of the individual, family members, or legal guardians. Seeking the appropriate services for individuals with special needs can be a daunting and complex process. The RCSJ Academy for Neurodiversity (Academy) has been established as a centralized service provider to guide, advocate, and locate resources for the residents of Gloucester and Cumberland counties with special needs, post-high school through adulthood. The Academy is strategically designed to create a venue for service delivery encompassing:

- education and workforce training
- employment services
- medical services
- mental health and behavioral services
- transportation
- housing and sustenance
- athletics and recreation
- legal advocacy services

RCSJ's mission is grounded in student success, accessibility, and as an affordable learning institution dedicated to enhancing its community's economic development and quality of life by striving for academic excellence in offering innovative programs and services to a diverse community of learners in a safe and caring environment. With this mission, and under the leadership of RCSJ, the Academy will assist, facilitate, and maximize the abilities of students with special needs through strength-based strategies highlighting their capabilities instead of differences.



A vital component located within the Academy is the Adult Center for Transition (ACT) which will continue to serve the constituents of Gloucester and Cumberland counties providing life-enhancing approaches tailored to the learning and behavior requirements of individuals with special needs. Within the ACT Program, students will have the opportunity to participate in a focused program to gain the education and skills needed for a career pathway with options for appropriate work-based learning experiences, job shadowing, internships, pre-apprenticeships, and apprenticeship programs. Additionally, in association with RCSJ and the College's flagship partner, Rowan University, other opportunities to transfer into college credit classes can be explored.

Beyond education, employment and workforce training is another essential aspect of the Academy. Unemployment for adults with special needs remains a genuine reality despite their capability, skillfulness, and eagerness to work. Many face interpersonal challenges making it difficult to secure interviews leading to employment. For individuals with special needs, these types of personal autonomy barriers can lead to isolation, financial insecurity, and social and economic dependency on family, government, and community-based organizations. Fortunately, due to continued special needs advocacy, employers are beginning to recognize the unique skill set diverse individuals bring in terms of enhanced productivity and innovation. Training programs in support of social skills, self-awareness, mindfulness, and other services are being offered to augment existing skills and facilitate securing employment to benefit individuals with special needs, and employers, as well. The Academy is uniquely positioned to serve individuals with special needs aiding and identifying employment and workforce training resources specifically suited to the needs of the individual.

The RCSJ Academy for Neurodiversity is intentionally designed to provide Gloucester and Cumberland counties with a strategic system of support services for individuals with special needs. At the heart of the Academy is the belief that through awareness, access to appropriate resources, as well as educational and/or vocational opportunities, individuals with special needs will come to enjoy the same range of experiences as any member of society.

## Eight Main Components



### Education and Workforce Training

#### ACT Bridge Program for High Schools

Gloucester County high school districts identified the need for a college-based program to support transition services for eligible students ages 16-21, who have met the required course credits to graduate. As a result, the following programs (and others soon to be added, including partners in Cumberland County) will be offered as transitional bridge programs on the campus of RCSJ.

**Gloucester County High School Bridge Program** students will have the opportunity to engage in age-appropriate experiences on the College campus while enhancing their academics, employment preparedness, independent living skills, and social skills. Students who meet the requirements of the ACT Bridge Program will be involved in inclusive campus experiences, person-centered planning, academic enrichment, and peer support that builds self-confidence and self-determination skills. Opportunities will be available on either the RCSJ main campus or through the RCSJ ACT Program.

**Schools for Neurodiversity at Gloucester County Special Services School District (GCSSSD) & Vineland High School Bridge Program** is a yearlong, partial-day program whereby students graduating from GCSSSD and Vineland High career training programs will be provided space within the ACT Program in order to engage in age-appropriate experiences on the College campus and strengthen the connection between their high school and post-secondary education and training experiences. RCSJ ACT will collaborate with GCSSSD and Vineland High on the design and implementation of the programs. Vineland High students will engage in experiences unique to our RCSJ Cumberland campus ACT program and prepare for their post-secondary education.

### **ACT Workforce Readiness – Career Pathway Industry Certificate Programs**

The ACT Workforce Readiness Program supports the unique challenges of individuals with special needs with the appropriate support systems and training program models based on best practices. This will enable participants to pursue a pathway toward additional post-secondary education or to earn an industry-recognized credential in preparation for employment opportunities.



Career pathway industry certificate programs offered in collaboration with RCSJ Career and Technical Education Division (CTE) will prepare students with industry-recognized certificates in the following sectors: advanced manufacturing, healthcare, transportation, logistics and distribution, and hospitality, retail, and tourism. The training programs will be made available on a flexible schedule matrix and participants will be eligible for dual enrollment in both the ACT Program and the ACT Workforce Readiness program.

The ACT Workforce Readiness program will:

- Integrate relevant work-based learning experiences using best instructional practices
- Identify and provide training programs in alignment with the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) approved training courses, as appropriate
- Align with industry-recognized certifications and regional workforce needs

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### **ACT Fundamentals of College – RCSJ & CTE College Credit Degree/Certificate Program**

The ACT Fundamentals of College program shares similarities to the ACT Workforce Readiness program; however, this program collaborates with RCSJ and CTE to administer a programmatic model designed for individuals with special needs to advance on a pathway to earn college credits toward a degree or certificate credential. Additionally, Rowan University will have the capability to support this pathway as a four-year institution.

The ACT Fundamentals of College program will:

- Use the latest research for best instructional practices to align and prepare individuals with special needs to successfully navigate college credit credential courses
- Develop a pipeline to two- and four-year education institutions to provide individuals with special needs the opportunity to complete their degree program of study
- Ensure career counseling and academic advising services are available

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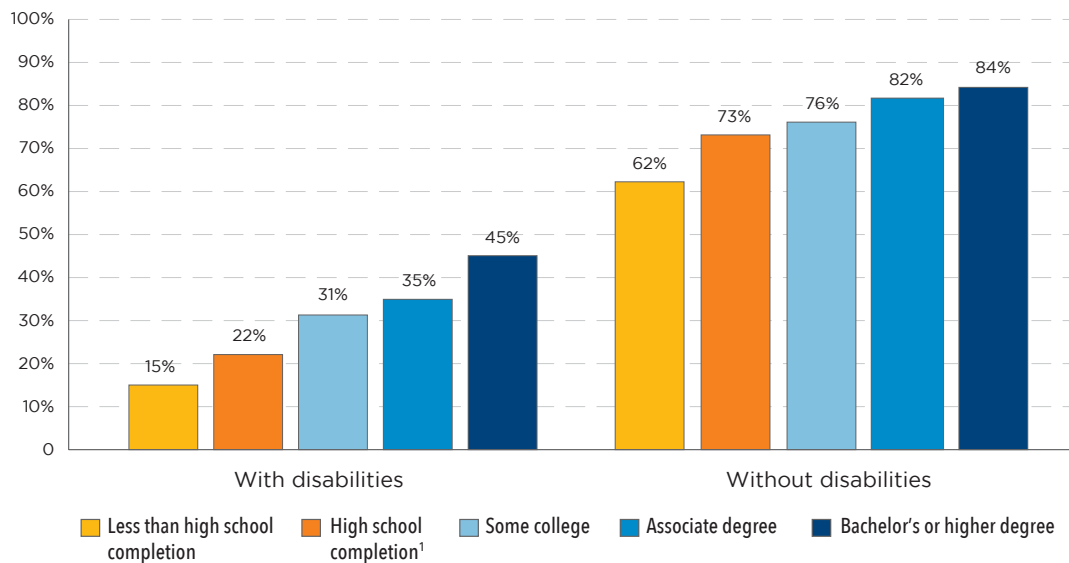
### **RCSJ Department of Special Services**

The College's Department of Special Services advocates and facilitates learning experiences that value people with diverse abilities and is committed to the inclusion of all students. The Department of Special Services is the designated area where eligibility for reasonable academic accommodations is determined. The mission of the Department of Special Services is to ensure equitable academic opportunities to eligible RCSJ students, and to support an accessible learning and user-friendly campus to promote academic success.

The Department of Special Services staff are dedicated to assisting students who experience a variety of challenges. The Department of Special Services ensures RCSJ students with a documented disability receive reasonable and appropriate academic accommodations in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability.



### Employment percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds with and without disabilities, by educational attainment: 2015



<sup>1</sup>Includes completion of high school through equivalency programs, such as a GED program.

NOTE: Respondents were classified as employed if they worked during any part of the survey week as paid employees. Those who were employed but not at work during the survey week were also included. Data are based on sample surveys of the noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities); data include military personnel who live in households with civilians, but exclude those who live in military barracks.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2015. See Digest of Education Statistics 2016, table 501.35.

### Rowan University Center for Neurodiversity

The Center for Neurodiversity is a cultural center within Rowan University's Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). The Center for Neurodiversity situates neurodiversity in DEI initiatives recognizing that all aspects of human diversity are natural and valuable (dis/ability, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality, etc). The Center for Neurodiversity provides programming, research and community engagement that value and prioritize neurodiversity culture.

### Abilities Solutions

Abilities Solutions provides the following opportunities for individuals with disabilities or behavioral complications that limit their ability to participate in competitive employment:

- Training that aligns with industry standard certifications to meet regional workforce needs
- Integrated relevant work-based learning experiences
- Referrals to transitional employment when work in a community-based business is not an option due to the disability or behavioral concern
- Provides transitional employment, when needed

### Additional Education and Workforce Agencies

The Academy will also utilize a broad range of educational and workforce options offered through other local agencies such as The Arc Gloucester, The ARC Cumberland, Avenues to Independent Living, Center for Independent Living, Resources for Independent Living, HollyDELL, St. John of God Community of Services and RCSJ Career and Internship Services.



## Employment Services

The Academy is engaged in partnerships with many organizations that provide employment services to individuals with disabilities. This section highlights some of the agencies in Gloucester and Cumberland counties who have been working most closely with the Academy. The Academy will continue to seek additional productive employment relationships.

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### RCSJ Career and Internship Services

The Career and Internship Services (CIS) Department of RCSJ provides career awareness and exploration for individuals with special needs to help them reach their full potential. By utilizing person-centered planning, pre-placement activities, internships, and employment opportunities, individuals will be able to identify an employment goal, launch a career pathway, and reach their desired occupation. Career and Internship Services works with students and individuals who choose CIS as their State of New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) and State of New Jersey Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) approved vendor. This can include ACT students and RCSJ students with special needs.

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### ACT Vocational Assessment/Career Exploration

The vocational assessment evaluates an individual's medical factors, psychological makeup, educational background, social behaviors, attitudes, and values. The student's unique needs, work skills, abilities, and interests are identified during the career exploration. A person-centered career pathway is developed to prepare the student for successful employment.

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### ACT On-campus Internship Experiences

This practical work experience introduces students to professional and industry requirements to assist them to develop and join the workforce. The students will work closely with ACT staff and others on campus as they are exposed to a variety of work experiences around the College.

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### Additional ACT Partnerships

ACT has assembled a broad spectrum of partners from across private businesses, as well as state and local agencies such as Abilities Solutions, The Arc Gloucester, Avenues for Independent Living, St. John of God Community Services, Resources for Independent Living, Center for Independent Living, Gloucester County Workforce Development Board, Cumberland County Workforce Development Board, Gloucester County and Cumberland County Chambers of Commerce, and many others. Our partners continue to provide the special needs population with vocational assessment, training, work experience, and employment opportunities.

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### New Jersey Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)

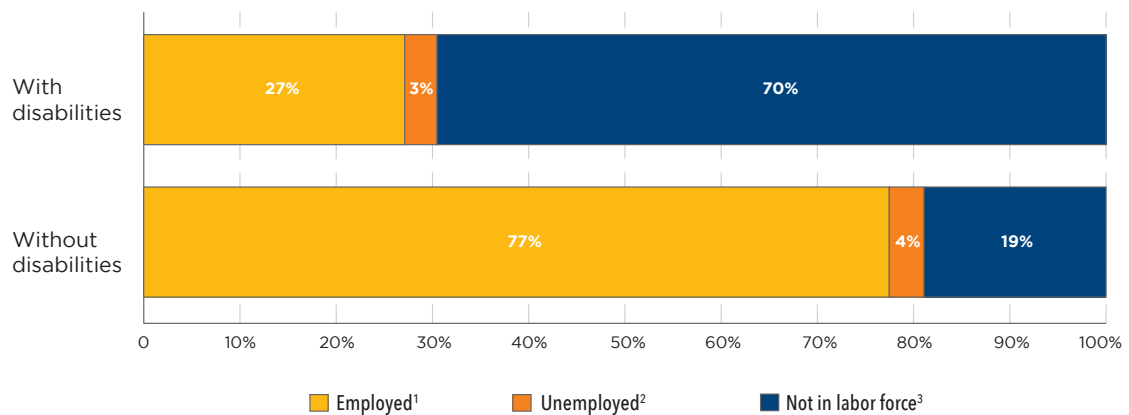
The mission of DDD assures the opportunity for individuals with developmental disabilities to receive quality services and supports, participate meaningfully in their communities, and exercise their right to make choices. DDD promotes a person-centered planning process for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities to explore their interests, skills, dreams, and goals, including those related to employment. Employment services are offered by the Department of Labor's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services must be accessed before using DDD-funded employment services. ACT is an approved provider agency for DDD-funded employment services.

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### New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)/ACT Partnership

The mission of DVRS is to enable eligible individuals with disabilities to achieve an employment outcome consistent with their strengths, priorities, needs, abilities, and capabilities. Any individual with a physical, mental, cognitive, or other form of disability who has a substantial impediment

## Percentage distribution of 25- to 64-year-olds with and without disabilities, by labor force status: 2015



<sup>1</sup> Respondents were classified as employed if they worked during any part of the survey week as paid employees. Those who were employed but not at work during the survey week were also included.

<sup>2</sup> The unemployed population consists of individuals without jobs who are actively looking for work. The unemployment percentages shown in this figure are not comparable to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' unemployment rates, which excludes from the denominator individuals who are not in the labor force.

<sup>3</sup> The population not in the labor force consists of persons who are neither employed nor seeking employment.

NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities); data include military personnel who live in households with civilians, but exclude those who live in military barracks.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2015. See Digest of Education Statistics 2016, table 501.35.

to employment may qualify for services through DVRS. Students enrolled in the ACT program are encouraged to apply to DVRS (when appropriate) and ACT staff assists with and supports the application process. ACT then works in partnership with students' selected approved DVRS community vendors.

### Abilities Solutions Job Placement and Retention Services

Pre-placement, placement, and retention services, including long term coaching, are provided to ensure success in competitive integrated employment environments. Services are designed to maximize retention rates and are available 24/7.

### Abilities Solutions Transitional Employment Program

Transitional employment refers to non-permanent work employment for adults who are not able or otherwise ready, or do not choose competitive integrated employment. Workforce skills are developed through classes, job fairs, and various on-the-job experiences. In cases where individuals are considered competitively unemployable, transitional employment is a method of continuing to develop vocationally while earning some wages commensurate with skills.

### Abilities Solutions Youth Transition

Abilities Solutions provides a variety of full and part-time options for individuals with special needs ages 16 and over. Individuals may be out of school or still in high school. Options include paid internships, vocational assessments, job readiness classes, and job placement and coaching which may include completing high school, advancing to an apprenticeship or technical training, enlisting in the military, attending college, or acquiring a job.

### Avenues to Independent Living Supported Employment (Avenues)

Avenues assists and supports people with varied abilities, helping them find and keep meaningful employment. Supported employment involves individualized job search and systematic methods for assuring job retention. Avenues will assist with Self-Directed Services, job search assistance, resume building, job skills, job coaching and supported employment. Avenues also provides Long Term Follow Along.

### Centers for Independent Living

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services supports the state's Centers for Independent Living. Among other services, these centers offer information, guidance, and support to people with disabilities who are gearing up for employment-related activities. DVRS is actively involved with the New Jersey Statewide Independent Living Council.

### Resources for Independent Living

Resources for Independent Living provides presentations, individual help with resumes and job searches, mock interviews, and help with planning for higher education. Many other services for disabled persons are also available.

### St. John of God Community Services Social Security's Ticket to Work Program

St. John of God Community Services is an Employment Network (EN) and works in agreement with Social Security to provide employment services, vocational rehabilitation services, and other types of support beneficiaries with disabilities under the Ticket program.

### St. John of God Community Services Benefits Analysis/Work Incentive Counseling

Benefits Analysis/Work Incentive Counseling provides information necessary for making decisions about employment. It helps an individual seeking employment understand how earnings may affect disability payments, healthcare, and other publicly funded benefits. St. John of God Community Services has a certified counselor to assist individuals navigate benefits and work incentives.



## Medical Services

### Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine (Rowan-Virtua SOM)

Rowan-Virtua SOM provides quality education and healthcare for the community and is located in close proximity to the Academy. Rowan-Virtua SOM will offer clinic outpatient services that encompass chronic complex conditions, intellectual or developmental disabilities, and behavioral health challenges. Additionally, 3rd and 4th year students at Rowan-Virtua SOM will participate in experiential learning at the Schools for Neurodiversity at GCSSSD, preparing them for work with neurodiverse patients.

### Rowan Integrated Special Needs (RISN) Center of Rowan University



The RISN Center is a primary care practice dedicated to serving the needs of individuals with physical, intellectual, developmental disabilities, and/or with a variety of chronic complex health conditions. As part of the integrated medical home model, behavioral health and care-coordination services are embedded into all levels of practice. Expanded access to routine medical services, including preventative healthcare, reproductive health, and personal care are also offered for clients from birth through adulthood. In addition, RISN recognizes the vital role caregivers play in the success of their loved ones with disabilities and strives to maintain caregiver health by offering them primary care services as well as caregiver support.

### Inspira Health

Inspira Health is a leading regional health network delivering a full range of primary, acute, advanced, and urgent care services including medical health care and treatment options, behavioral health and wellness, rehabilitation, sleep medicine labs, cardiac testing facilities, digestive health and wound care centers, home care and hospice. Therapeutic services such as audiology, speech language, physical, and occupational therapies are available.

Inspira's medical staff and other health care providers work to help each patient achieve the best possible outcome. Inspira Health's overarching mission is to improve the lives of those they touch in the community. Their highly skilled team of professionals are well-trained and positioned to provide clinical and service excellence.

### Inspira Health Autism Diagnostic Center

Inspira will soon open the region's first Autism Diagnostic Center in Woodbury, addressing South Jersey's critical need for autism spectrum diagnostic services. The center will use a multi-disciplinary approach and serve as a resource to patients and families. It will provide diagnostic services for children ages 4 and over, as well as adolescents and adults.

### ShopRite of Washington Township Pharmacy – Bottino's Family Markets

For a modest fee, the ShopRite Pharmacy will deliver medications and other pharmacy-related purchases to the future site of the Housing Authority of Gloucester County's special needs residential building on the RCSJ campus. The pharmacy service is provided in conjunction with an online order placed through the Shop From Home department.



## Mental Health and Behavioral Services

### ACT Social Workers

Credentialed social workers help to manage day-to-day activities and provide support for students in the ACT program. Social workers will also act as conduits for aligning and referring individuals to appropriate information and resources.

### Behavioral Health Services

The RCSJ Executive Director of Behavioral Services will serve as a liaison to the ACT Program in unison with the social worker to provide additional behavioral health services, as needed. The Executive Director will also work with the Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine and other outside health agencies to ensure individuals have appropriate access to behavioral health services within the community.

### Acenda Integrated Health

Services through Acenda aim to look at the psychological and social needs of the individual, and to enhance access to services for all while perfecting the quality of care received. Acenda staff provide essential mental health, substance abuse treatment, wraparound recovery services, telepsychiatry, crisis services, parenting support, and family-focused therapy to improve the overall well-being of the children, families, and individuals living in our communities. Modeled to provide care from birth throughout all stages of adulthood.



## Rowan University Schools of Psychology and Social Work

Rowan University students enrolled in these programs will participate in experiential learning at the Schools for Neurodiversity at GCSSSD, preparing them for work with neurodiverse patients.

### Inspira Clinic

Inspira offers a range of behavioral health and wellness services to adults, adolescents, children, and families for a range of concerns and all levels of care. Treatment centers provide quality care in a variety of environments, including various inpatient, partial hospitalization, and outpatient therapy programs. Therapeutic services, referrals, and on-site psychiatric services (excluding legal forensic assessments) are offered at the Inspira Behavioral Wellness Center. Inspira's experienced multidisciplinary treatment teams are focused on helping each patient regain control of their life in a safe, nurturing setting.

### Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)

DDD will be a resource for quality social services and other support services.



## Transportation

### NJ Transit

Publicly funded and/or subsidized transit programs (such as Access Link) are offered to people with disabilities, senior citizens, and people living in rural areas without transportation access.

### Cumberland Area Transit System (CATS)

The Cumberland County CATS Program provides peace of mind by offering a lifeline to resources with safe and reliable bus transportation to county residents who are aged 60 or older; Veterans; persons with disabilities; and the general public.

### Gloucester County Division of Transportation (DTS)

Under the Department of Human Services, non-emergency curb to curb services are provided to senior citizens (60 years and older), people with disabilities, veterans, and low-income county residents.

### South Jersey Transportation Authority (SJTA)

Transportation routes are available that increase access opportunities in areas underserved by transit.

### Pureland East-West Community Shuttle

For a modest fee this deviated route serves the general public connecting Avandale Park and Ride, Williamstown, Glassboro, Mullica Hill, Swedesboro, and Pureland Industrial complex.

### Uber and Lyft

Both businesses offer alternative options to taxis or private transportation services. These businesses frequently partner with DDD and Access Link to provide service to consumers. They provide a convenient way to request and pay for transportation through a smartphone.



## Housing and Sustenance

### Housing Authority of Gloucester County (HAGC)

HAGC provides quality affordable housing opportunities to those not served adequately by private/unsubsidized organizations in Gloucester County. The County of Gloucester has



recognized the need and demand for accessible, affordable housing for adults with special needs and has proposed a housing project to appropriately support this underserved population. The HAGC has committed to assist in the development, operation, and management of special needs housing with dedicated space within the proposed facility for supportive services. The HAGC also administers Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers which can be used to provide assistance towards rent and utilities to low income special needs households, making their rent affordable.

### **The Arc Gloucester**

Housing opportunities in residential programs include group homes, medical group homes, and supervised apartments. Individuals who reside in The Arc Gloucester's residential programs receive the necessary support while still having the opportunity to live independently in their home.

### **ShopRite of Washington Township – Bottino's Family Markets**

Bottino's ShopRite will offer new residents at the future site of Gloucester County Housing Authority's special needs residential building on the RCSJ Gloucester campus two weeks free delivery when an online order is placed through the Shop From Home department. Thereafter, Bottino's ShopRite will deliver groceries and other sundry purchases for a modest fee.



## **Athletics and Recreation**

While the Academy has been working closely with some of the organizations listed in the Gloucester County area for some time, the Academy is expanding its relationships within Cumberland County since the opening of the ACT program on the RCSJ Cumberland campus.

### **Special Olympics New Jersey (SONJ)**

SONJ maintains an office in the Stephen M. Sweeney Center for Special Services and provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Additionally, SONJ offers other initiatives that enhance the mission of Special Olympics by offering athletes and community members experiences outside the realm of traditional Special Olympics sports. These programs further athletes' capacity to learn life skills, gain confidence, and grow as individuals, as well as encourage all involved to celebrate differences and break down barriers. These programs include Young Athletes™, Healthy Athletes, Camp Shriver, and summer RCSJ week-long sports camp run by students. All program initiatives are free of charge to participants.

### **Special Olympics New Jersey Unified Sports**

Unified Sports promotes social inclusion through sports where teams are designated with a combination of members with and without intellectual disabilities to build camaraderie and dispense with preconceived ideas about disabilities. Both RCSJ and Rowan University actively participate in the program as Unified Sports Partners on their respective campuses and collaborate on opportunities for joint events.

### **Gloucester County Parks & Recreation**

County residents are provided with access to open space recreation offering recreational programs and activities, such as water sports, fishing, concerts, and nature strolls.

### **Gloucester County DREAM Park**

Located in Logan Township, the DREAM Park Therapeutic Riding Center offers horseback riding and driving lessons to children and adults with a variety of special needs.

### **PAWS for People**

PAWS for People is a pet therapy organization that provides animal-assisted therapeutic visits to any person in the community who would benefit from interaction with a well-trained, loving pet.

### **St. John of God Community Services**

St. John of God Community Services offers recreation, leisure, and socialization opportunities for adults with special needs. Each month from September through June events such as themed dances, holiday parties, and an annual formal dance, and trips to local venues such as Johnson's Family Farm, Brunswick Zone, and Cinemark Theatre are offered in the evening and on weekends. A number of coworkers, volunteers, and a nurse staff the events, providing supervision and assistance to those in attendance. Although many events are exclusive to the adult population, some family-friendly events are held throughout the year as well.

### **The Arc Gloucester**

The Arc Gloucester's Life-Long Learning programs provide avenues to explore and develop interests in areas such as fine art, health and wellness, cooking, and performing arts. Additionally, Camp Sun 'N Fun offers children and adults with developmental disabilities an opportunity to enjoy summer recreational activities such as swimming, a nature trail, and open areas for sports and recreation with an on-site medical facility.

### **YMCA of Gloucester County**

The YMCA of Gloucester County offers a variety of recreational activities such as aquatics and healthy living classes that focus on exercising and feeding the spirit, mind, and body.



## **Legal Advocacy Services**

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### **Archer, Attorneys at Law – Haddonfield location**

Archer's Disability Law Practice focuses on the needs of those who may be physically or cognitively disabled due to a variety of causes. Archer attorneys regularly handle guardianship and conservatorship proceedings when incapacity strikes suddenly. They also assist individuals with disabilities in obtaining benefits through available state and federal programs such as Traumatic Brain Injury Fund, Social Security Disability Insurance, Medicare, and Medicare Part D. In addition, advice may be offered in long range habilitation planning, appropriate residential, educational and workplace accommodations, and asset protection for the lifetime care and support of the person with disabilities through appropriate special needs trust planning.

### **RCSJ Paralegal Advisory Services**

Advisory services will be provided by second year student interns with specialized legal training, enabling them to gather and analyze facts, perform legal research, and direct students with special needs and/or parents/caregivers to appropriate legal resources.

### **County of Gloucester**

Understanding disability law and other federal civil rights regulations can be confusing, often requiring those seeking legal protections against discrimination or simply hoping for reasonable accommodations or dispute resolution, in need of help to navigate its myriad of components. As part of both the legal and the disability community, members of the County legal community can offer assistance, direction, and guidance in the area of New Jersey disability law and individual rights under the ADA as well as facilitating access to related legal services to individuals with special needs.



# The Partners

Rowan College of South Jersey has a fifty-year history of successful collaboration with local and state institutions and agencies on a variety of projects resulting in strong alliances. Building off these robust relationships, a holistic approach will be established for success of the Academy. Partnerships providing primary and behavioral healthcare, and access to housing, transportation, and sustenance will become vital components to this multi-faceted program.

Partnerships are the core of the Academy. Partners will work together, allowing processes and goals to align and lead the Academy to a higher success rate, thus fully serving the special needs community. Through strong communication, trust and respect, embracing responsibility, accountability and the coordination of resources and services, the partnerships will be instrumental in the delivery of optimum support and services for individuals with special needs. The listing below demonstrates the Academy's current relationships with new partnerships continually under development to be added, as appropriate, in the future.

## Abilities Solutions

- A non-profit 501(c)(3) community-based organization providing a full menu of workforce development services to youth and adults with disabilities and other barriers to employment

## Archer, Attorneys at Law - Haddonfield

- Offers legal guidance and advocacy

## Avenues to Independent Living

- Provides support to as many individuals with varying abilities as possible, in order to reach their fullest potential
- Committed to community, work, and social inclusion; promoting care, experiences, relationships, job support and opportunities, which lead to further independence and self-direction for all

## Center for Independent Living of South Jersey (CIL-SJ)

- Offers services that include: information and referral, peer support, independent living skills training, advocacy and transition to people with disabilities of all ages

## Cumberland County Department of Health

- The Cumberland County Department of Health is dedicated to the promotion, protection, and improvement of the public's health in partnership with the communities that we serve

## Cumberland County Campus Educational Foundation

- Provides scholarships for Cumberland campus ACT students and supports the Cumberland campus ACT program

## Cumberland County Human Services Department

- The County Department of Human Services is committed to implementing, coordinating and improving the system of human services through the use of federal, state and county funds. At the county level, the office serves as the grants management office through which many statewide initiatives are operationalized.

## Cumberland, Gloucester & Salem Family Support Organization (CGS FSO)

- CGS FSO is a non-profit organization servicing families involved in the Children's System of Care in New Jersey
- Work as a team with the Care Management Organization (CMO) to help support, educate and advocate for families who have children with mental, emotional, behavioral, developmental disabilities and substance abuse challenges
- A resource center for information and referrals

## Gloucester County & Cumberland County Chambers of Commerce

- Work as a resource for business development, training, education, and workforce development

## Gloucester County & Cumberland County Departments of Economic Development

- Work to promote public/private partnerships to create and retain sustainable local businesses and will offer support and collaboration on the development of an educated/trained workforce based on business requirements

**Gloucester County Division of Human & Special Services**

- Provide services support, advice, and collaboration under the Department of Health and Human Services

**Schools for Neurodiversity at Gloucester County Special Services School District (GCSSSD)**

- Provides recruitment insight and updates on special needs awareness initiatives in the county
- Offers consultation on the ACT Bridge Program and initiates referral to RCSJ ACT and RCSJ CTE

**Workforce Development Boards (WDB)**

- Partners with local business leaders and county and state government agencies in Gloucester and Cumberland counties and will offer support and advisory collaboration on workforce needs

**HollyDELL - (former Cerebral Palsy Center of Gloucester and Salem Counties)**

- Provides education, medical transportation, recreation, and social work services to individuals ages 3-adulthood with cognitive, neurological, mobility, and significant medical complications. Two adult programs, Growing Opportunities and Twenty-One Plus, are available to HollyDELL consumers

**Housing Authority of Gloucester County (HAGC)**

- Aids in the operation and management of special needs housing. Administers rental assistance programs to low income households

**Inspira Health**

- Provides a full range of innovative primary, acute, and advanced care services

**New Jersey Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)**

- Provides resources, guidance, information on current state and local needs, and support services

**New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)**

- Provides guidance regarding the vocational rehabilitation process, employment-related resources, and services that may be provided to DVRS consumers

**NJ Transit**

- Provides transportation and offers current information on resources and support services for individuals with disabilities

**Resources for Independent Living**

- Provide our children and adults with opportunities for them to feel valued and appreciated as unique individuals and it is their personal goals and desires that keep us focused on our mission. Individuals receive a safe environment, a person-centered approach, a high level of support, and an interdisciplinary team

**Rowan College of South Jersey Adult Center for Transition (ACT)**

- Provides academic, interpersonal and workforce training as well as guidance and recommendations to transition students regarding career pathways
- Makes referrals to partners as appropriate to benefit students

**Rowan College of South Jersey Career & Technical Education Division (CTE)**

- Provides guidance on workforce and career services that including job training, industry certifications, credentials, and academics required for in-demand jobs

**Rowan College Foundation**

- Provides scholarships for RCSJ Gloucester campus ACT students and supports the Gloucester campus ACT program

**Rowan College of South Jersey Office of Special Services**

- Offers 504 ADA accommodations to eligible students and provides guidance and recommendations to transition students
- Makes referrals to partners, or to ACT program, as appropriate for benefit of students
- Coordinates with ACT for referral and enrollment into credit-bearing courses for students for whom that path is appropriate.

**Rowan University Academic Success Center & Disabilities Resources**

- Provides supplemental guidance and functions as a resource for the ACT Fundamentals of College transition program
- Identifies potential internship opportunities

**Rowan University Center for Neurodiversity**

- Provides programming, research and community engagement that value and prioritize the neurodiverse culture

**Rowan University/Rowan-Virtua SOM/RISN Center**

- Advises on current research and innovation to improve health, and solve current and future medical challenges
- RISN Center provides updates regarding resources, guidance, support services, and collaboration for individuals with special needs

**ShopRite of Washington Township – Bottino’s Farm Markets**

- Offers employment experiences and job opportunities to individuals with special needs
- Offers pharmacy services, groceries, and other sundry purchases at a reasonable cost

**Special Olympics New Jersey**

- Promotes social inclusion through shared sports training and competition experiences

**St. John of God Community Services**

- Serves individuals with special needs birth through adulthood. Existing programs, resources, and specialized training programs help this population find and maintain lasting employment

**The Arc Gloucester**

- Programs and services benefiting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in all areas of life are provided. Housing, day habilitation, pre-vocational training, supported employment, respite, and social/recreational opportunities are offered

**Vineland Public Schools**

- Vineland Public Schools have entered into a bridge program partnership with the RCSJ ACT Program to allow Vineland students the opportunity to experience the ACT Program while still in high school.

## Conclusion

The innovative and robust partnerships created between Rowan College of South Jersey, Counties of Gloucester and Cumberland, and key partner associates are unparalleled and distinctive. It surpasses any prior initiative, creating an environment for learning, training, medical care, and the opportunity for an all-inclusive and unique experience enabling people with special needs characteristics to live life to the fullest extent possible.

The importance of partnering and collaborating to serve individuals with special needs cannot be overstated. The RCSJ Academy for Neurodiversity will maintain and continue to develop strong and meaningful relationships with a variety of organizations and businesses invested in the mission of facilitating independence and workforce success, while heightening public awareness of the special needs initiative situated on the RCSJ campus.

The Academy will work with our partners to utilize the many resource opportunities to engage, enhance, and enrich the lives of individuals with special needs. While many of the Academy’s partners have been collaborating for years, these extraordinary and pioneering partnerships will also provide occasions to share insights, new ideas, and research that can shape additional strategies to benefit the life outcomes of the special needs community as we seek new transformative relationships.

The potential for the Academy to create significant social transformation is substantive. This concept brings with it a sense of hope that all members of the community, regardless of their socioeconomic demographic, how they read, think, experience, socialize, or attend, will be recognized for their gifts, and accorded to them will be the same rights and privileges as those deemed as typical individuals.



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