

# **Niagara County**

## **Temporary Assistance (TA) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment Plan**

January 01, 2024 - December 31, 2025

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# 1. Administration

## 1.1 Administrative Structure

- a. This agency's organizational chart is attached. It identifies the units and staff within the agency that are involved in the operation of the district's employment program.  
*(Attachments must be uploaded to the system through the "Documents" screen prior to submitting the plan. Use the textbox below to provide any additional information.)*

See attached.

- b. Below is a description of the office(s) in and/or outside of the Department of Social Services that are involved in the operation of the district's employment program and include the responsibilities of each office.

- 1) Human Resources Building. 301 Tenth Street Niagara Falls, 14301
- 2) Lockport DSS, 20 East Avenue, Lockport. 14094

Employment Units are located at each of the above sites. The Employment Unit obtains referrals from both the Intake and Undercare Units within the Department. Employment Case Managers conduct assessments and develop Employment Plans in consultation with the participant. These plans outline the steps needed for the participant to attain self-sufficiency. Employment Case Managers assign any non-exempt participants to appropriate work activities. Exempt individuals are required to attend activities designed to assist in restoration to self-sufficiency. Activity assignments are made in consultation with the participant. Employment Case Managers handle all the exempt individuals that have Substance Abuse issues. Participation in activities is monitored to determine successful completion. The failure to participate in assigned activities results in the implementation of conciliation/non-compliance process.

NCDSS current staff size is 423

## 1.2 TA and SNAP Employment & Training (SNAP E&T) Provider Agencies

- a. Table 1 lists the local contracts or agreements with agencies to provide employment services to TA and SNAP clients. These activities and services may include, but are not limited to: employability determinations; development of assessment and employment plans; conciliation and grievance activities; provision of work activities such as job readiness training; education and job skills training; monitoring and support for compliance with treatment plans for exempt individuals with the potential for restoration to self-sufficiency; job development; job placement and retention services; and other employment related activities.

Each contract listed in Table 1 contains an assurance that the activities are not otherwise available from that provider on a non-reimbursable basis, and, if not a performance-based contract, a statement regarding use of a cost allocation methodology that satisfies Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, as well as the requirements of U.S. Office of Management and Budget Circulars A-122 for nonprofit organizations, A-21 for educational institutions, or

A-87 for State and local governments. Districts must maintain proper monitoring and oversight to ensure that contractors perform in accordance with the terms, conditions, and specifications of their contracts.

Funding sources include, FFFS, SNAP E&T, Local or “other”. Categories of clients served include Family Assistance (FA), Safety Net Assistance for households with dependent children (SNA Fam), Safety Net Assistance for households without dependent children (SNA Ind), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) 200%.

**Contracts or Agreements with Agencies Who Provide TA and SNAP Employment Services**

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Total Contract Cost per Year</b>	<b>Funding Source(s)</b>	<b>Categories of Clients Served</b>	<b>Programs, Services or Activities Provided</b>
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

- b. Table 2 includes agencies/providers that offer services to participants and to which the district expects to refer participants, but which have no direct financial agreement with the district.

Categories of clients served include Family Assistance (FA), Safety Net Assistance for households with dependent children (SNA Fam), Safety Net Assistance for households without dependent children (SNA Ind), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and TANF 200%.

**Agencies and Providers to whom the District Refers for Employment Services**

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Funding Source(s)</b>	<b>Categories of Clients Served</b>	<b>Programs, Services or Activities Provided</b>
Access VR	Others: unknown	FA SNA Family SNA Individual	Training and Educational Services for disabled adults.
Niagara County Mental Health	Others: Unknown	FA SNA Family SNA Individual	Mental Health diagnosis and treatment
Orleans Niagara BOCES	Others: Unknown	FA SNA Family SNA Individual SNAP	GED/HSE/ESL, Job Readiness Training, Job Placement Services, Financial Literacy
Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center	Others: Unknown	FA SNA Family SNA Individual	Medical evaluations and functional capacity test to determine medical limitations. Mental Health diagnosis and treatment.
Niagara County Employment and Training	Others: Unknown	FA SNA Family SNA Individual SNAP	Job search, tuition for training, wage subsidy, and youth employment services.

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Funding Source(s)</b>	<b>Categories of Clients Served</b>	<b>Programs, Services or Activities Provided</b>
ATTAIN Lab	Others: OTDA	FA SNA Family SNA Individual SNAP	Vocational education and distance learning.
Northpointe Council	Others: Unknown	FA SNA Family SNA Individual	Substance Abuse Assessments for applicants and recipients.
Niagara County Community College	Others: Unknown	FA SNA Family SNA Individual SNAP	Training and Educational Services
Perinatal & Infant Community Health Collaborative	Others: Unknown	FA SNA Family SNA Individual SNAP	Improved birth outcomes and better pregnancy health for prenatal through age 5
Healthy Families Niagara	Others: Unknown	FA SNA Family SNA Individual SNAP	Improved birth outcomes and better pregnancy health for prenatal through 3 months old
Nurse Family Partnership	Others: Unknown	FA SNA Family SNA Individual SNAP	Improved birth outcomes and better pregnancy health for first time parent under 28 weeks pregnant.
Early Head Start	Others: unknown	FA SNA Family SNA Individual SNAP	Improved birth outcomes and health for children in NF City School District ages 6 weeks to 4 years

c. Monitoring and Oversight of TANF and SNAP E&T Funded Contracts/Agreements

Described below is the process used to monitor district held contracts/agreements with providers that use TANF and SNAP E&T funds for employment services:

The Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) Contract Management and Quality Assurance (CMQA) Bureau conducts reviews of the Venture providers as outlined in the NYS SNAP ME Plan. CMQA staff conduct on-site reviews and/or virtual reviews of contract programs once every three years or more frequently if determined necessary. Contracted provider operations are reviewed to determine if participant eligibility was correctly determined and that services offered are allowable under SNAP E&T guidelines and under the established SNAP Venture V program guidelines. CMQA staff provide notice to the provider that they will be conducting an on-site or virtual review. For on-site reviews, 10-15 case records are selected at random. For virtual reviews, CMQA staff pre-select 10-15 cases choosing those with multiple milestones claimed when possible. All requested case records are submitted via encrypted email or faxed for review on the agreed upon date. Performance information and any correspondence including previous on-site visit

summaries are reviewed prior to the review to assist in determining if the contractor is in compliance with contract guidelines and contract terms. As part of the review, CMQA staff communicate with the program coordinator to discuss how the program is operating using the Review Guide and provide any technical or programmatic assistance needed. Review of case records commence using the Review Guide and the findings documented. CMQA staff provide an exit conference with the contract staff to discuss findings. The review of contracted providers also includes a confirmation of SNAP eligibility monthly before vouchers are approved. In addition, DSS will meet quarterly with the Niagara County Employment & Training to review the programs being administered and address any concerns, issues, new information, success stories, and to brainstorm new ideas and develop new processes if needed.

### 1.3 OTDA Jobs Staff Agreement

- a. OTDA Jobs Program Services - Target Groups (reply yes or no to the options as they apply):

#### Services Provided by Jobs Staff

Yes or No:	Services Provided:
N/A	Assessment/Employment Plan
N/A	Supervised job search
N/A	Job readiness training
N/A	Job club
N/A	Job placement services
N/A	Grant diversion
N/A	Job development (employer outreach)
N/A	WOTC pre-certification

#### Jobs Staff Target Groups

Yes or No:	Target Groups:
N/A	Applicants
N/A	FA & SNA with children
N/A	SNA without children
N/A	SNAP
N/A	TANF 200%

- b. Described below are the additional services/duties Jobs Staff will be requested to perform (e.g., Welfare to Work Case Management System (WTWCMS) data entry, case conferencing, job fairs).

We no longer have OTDA job program services staff.

## 1.4 Access to Services at New York State Career Centers

- a. Described below is how the district provides access to its programs and services with Career Center partners (reply yes or no to the options as they apply):

### Programs and Services Provided at Career Centers

Yes or No:	Programs and Services Provided:
No	The district has employee(s) physically present at a Career Center
No	The district has contract staff physically present at a Career Center
Yes	The district makes available direct access to its program staff via phone or technology at a Career Center
Yes	The district makes available copies of the LDSS-2921 (Common Application) at a Career Center
No	Other (described here):

- b. Described below is how the district coordinates with Career Center partners to provide services to the district's clients, including referral and information sharing mechanisms, or other collaboration such as participation on the local WIOA Business Services Team, etc.

Information regarding the Career Center is provided to clients during the initial eligibility interview by the eligibility worker. At the individual orientation, the Employment Case Manager shares information about the Career Center and will make a referral if appropriate. The Career Center sends the Employment Unit, via E-mail, a monthly calendar of activities and information regarding any career fairs or recruitments for specific employers.

## 2. Orientation, Assessment and Employment Plan

### 2.1 Orientation (Reference 18 NYCRR 385.5)

- a. How does the district provide orientation (reply yes or no to the options as they apply)?

#### District Orientation Procedures

Yes or No:	District Orientation:
No	The district provides orientation in accordance with 18 NYCRR 385.5 and no additional information is provided at orientation.
Yes	In addition to the requirements outlined in 18 NYCRR 385.5 of the regulations, the district's orientation provides the following: Information and referrals for home visiting.



- b. Described below is how the district completes the required orientation for all applicants and recipients of TA at application and recertification. Orientation can be held in-person, either in a group setting, individually, or a combination of both. It can also be held virtually, over the phone, or by sending orientation material to the client by mail. Please include the orientation procedure for exempt individuals and non-exempt individuals, if different:

Both exempt and nonexempt applicants are provided with the orientation brochure (see attachments) at the initial eligibility interview by eligibility worker. Both exempt and nonexempt recipients are provided with an individual orientation either in person or by phone with the Employment Case Manager at the initial assessment that will be completed within 90 days of the case opening. The orientation brochure will also be provided at the recertification interview by the eligibility worker. The brochure informs applicants and recipients of activities and supportive services as per 18 NYCRR 385.5 at initial application, recertification, and during the employment assessment.

## 2.2 Temporary Assistance (TA) Employment Assessment

- a. How does the district conduct assessments as required by 18 NYCRR 385.6(a) and 385.7(a) (reply yes or no to the options as they apply)?

### District Assessment Procedures

Yes or No:	How the district conducts assessments
No	The district enters assessments directly into WTCMS.
Yes	The district uses the LDSS 4980 (New York State Assessment) and later enters information into WTCMS.
No	The district conducts assessments using a local equivalent tool, and later enters information into WTCMS. If applicable, the local equivalent contains additional elements beyond what is required:

- b. Described below is the district procedure for the completion of an employment assessment, including when initial assessments are conducted and whether an assessment is conducted in-person, virtually by phone, or a combination of both:

All recipients (regardless of employment status) are scheduled for a face-to-face assessment with an Employment Case Manager within 90 days of their case opening for both households with and without dependent children. At this assessment, the Employment Case Manager will complete the employment assessment (LDSS 4980) with the recipient. They will then develop an Employment Plan with the client. This plan will address the assignment to appropriate work activities and any necessary supportive services. Client preferences will be considered when the work activity assignments are made. Exempt individuals with medical issues will, when appropriate be required to participate in activities (counseling, physical therapy, etc.) designed to restore them to self-sufficiency. Both the assessment information and the Employment Plan are entered into WTCMS.

- c. Which district administrative unit or contractor is responsible for conducting assessments?

NCDSS Employment Case Manager - Employment Assessment

- d. Described below are the minimum qualifications of the employees conducting the assessment (refer to requirements listed in 18 NYCRR 385.6(c) and 385.7(c)):

Promotional: One (1) year of permanent competitive status as a Senior Social Services Worker or three (3) years as a Social Services Worker immediately preceding the date of written examination and possession of an Associate's Degree or higher from a regionally accredited college or university or one accredited by the New York State Board of Regents to grant degrees. OPEN-COMPETITIVE: Graduation from high school or possession of an equivalency diploma AND: 1. Graduation from a regionally accredited college or university or one accredited by the New York State Board of Regents to grant degrees with a Bachelor's Degree in social work, human services, humanities and social science, behavioral sciences, education, business administration, financial administration, or a closely related field and one (1) year of full-time paid experience in social casework\*; or the determination of eligibility for programs providing financial assistance or the provision of employment activities; OR: 2. Graduation from a regionally accredited college or university or one accredited by the New York State Board of Regents to grant degrees with an Associate's Degree in social work, human services, humanities and social science, behavioral sciences, education, business administration, financial administration, or a closely related field and three (3) years of full-time paid experience in social casework\*; or the determination of eligibility for programs providing financial assistance or the provision of employment activities. OR: 3. Five (5) years of full-time paid experience in social casework\*; or the determination of eligibility for programs providing financial assistance or the provision of employment activities. NOTE: Graduate level education in one (1) of the fields listed above may be substituted for the required experience on a year for year basis. \*SOCIAL CASEWORK: Social Casework involving the one-to-one interaction with a client in order to actively facilitate the identification of client needs and goals through the interview process, as well as the identification and use of services available in the agency or the community to meet those needs and goals. The goal of the social casework intervention is to improve the overall general welfare of the individual and, hence, the society as a whole.

- e. Are applicants in households with dependent children required to participate in completion of an employment assessment?

Yes

- f. Are applicants in households without dependent children required to participate in completion of an employment assessment?

Yes

- g. Are exempt adults in households without dependent children required to participate in completion of an employment assessment?

Yes

- h. How often and under what circumstances is the employment assessment updated?

The employment assessment is updated annually and when there is a change in circumstances.

## 2.3 TA Employment Planning (Reference 18 NYCRR 385.6 and 385.7)

- a. How does the district develop individual employment plans as required by 18 NYCRR 385.6(a) and 385.7(a) (reply yes or no to the options as they apply)?

### District Employment Plan Procedures

Yes or No:	How the district develops employment plans
No	The district enters employment plans directly into WTCMS.
No	The district uses the LDSS-4987 (New York State Employment Plan) and later enters information into WTCMS.
Yes	The district develops individual employment plans using a local equivalent tool. If applicable, the local equivalent contains the following additional elements beyond what is required: See attached NCDSS Employability Plan. The local equivalent contains no other additional elements beyond what is required.

- b. Who develops the employment plan (reply yes or no to the options as the apply)?

### District Employment Plan Development

Yes or No:	Who develops the districts employment plans
Yes	The same administrative unit or contractor that conducts employment assessments also develops employment plans.
No	A different administrative unit or contractor develops employment plans and the contractor's qualifications include:

- c. Described below is the district procedure for the completion of an individual's employment plan:

After the Employment Case Manager completes the assessment with the individual, they will then address the assignment of appropriate activities and any necessary supportive services. When the employment plan is created or updated the clients will be provided a copy of the plan.

- d. How often and under what circumstances is the employment plan updated?

The employment plan is updated annually and when there is a change in circumstances. When the employment plan is created or updated the clients will be provided a copy of the plan.

### **3. Engagement**

#### **3.1 Federal “Engaged in Work” Requirement (Reference 18 NYCRR 385.2 (f))**

- a. Federal requirements state that parents or caretakers must be engaged in work as soon as the district determines they are ready, but no later than within 24 months of receiving federally funded assistance. The district’s definition of “Engaged in Work” is:

Compliance with assessment, employment planning, all activities included in the individual’s Employment/Self-Sufficiency plan, including any need to attend treatment/rehabilitation programs, or any of the work activities listed in Section 4.1. Also included is pursuit of other forms of income such as SSI and SSDI.

- b. Described below is additional information regarding the district’s “Engaged in Work” requirements:

None

#### **3.2 Strategies/Procedures for Accommodating Individuals with Limited English Proficiency**

- a. Described below is how the district accommodates non-English speaking participants' access to employment activities and services:

When an applicant is identified as non-English speaking Niagara County uses the Language Line when interviewing the individual. For assessment purposes they are referred to Orleans/Niagara BOCES for testing (Best Test). Based on the results of the Best Test the applicant is enrolled in ESL classes. The client's progress is monitored to determine when they will be ready to engage in other activities.

#### **3.3 Strategies/Procedures for Increasing Program Attendance**

- a. Described below are the district policies and/or procedures used to reduce the number of times participants fail to participate in work activities. This includes absences with good cause:

Applicants and recipients that are deemed work eligible are scheduled to attend an Employment Assessment with their Employment Case Manager. During the assessment there is a discussion as to why it is important to comply with work requirements as it relates not only to their on-going eligibility but also their ability to achieve self-sufficiency. It is stressed that with any activity they need to have reliable transportation and day care plus back up for both. We discuss supportive services the district can provide in those areas. A referral is provided to those who need assistance finding a day care provider. The assessment also covers work supports available (EITC, etc.) and budget comparisons to show the value of working. These discussions are reinforced at every contact with employment unit personnel. Exempt individuals are encouraged to participate in workshops when offered by our community partners that deal with finding, keeping and succeeding in a job.

### 3.4 Strategies/Procedures for Engaging Sanctioned TA Participants

- a. The following are strategies used to engage sanctioned participants. If a district uses one of the options, a description will be provided (reply yes or no to the options as they apply and provide a description for “yes” responses):

#### Strategies and Procedures for Engaging Sanctioned TA Participants

Yes or No:	Strategies and Procedures for Engaging Sanctioned TA Participants
No	Described here are the strategies the district uses to attempt to engage sanctioned participants as soon as they are sanctioned:
Yes	Described below are the strategies the district uses to attempt to engage sanctioned participants when the durational period of the sanction is completed: Sanctioned clients are scheduled to report to a maximum of one meeting per month, Project Source, with their Employment Case Manager where they must report how they are supporting themselves while on a sanction. During this meeting clients are given a list of Hot Jobs openings in the area and an income comparison worksheet. Failure to attend a Project Source meeting constitutes a failure to comply with an eligibility requirement and results in the TA case being discontinued. Per 08-INF-12 local districts have the authority to meet with recipients as often as necessary to monitor ongoing eligibility for TA (18 NYCRR 351.1, 351.2, 351.21, 351.22).
No	Described below are the strategies the district uses to attempt to engage sanctioned participants during different times in the sanction period:

### 3.5 Strategies for Reducing the Need for TA

- a. Described below are the district’s strategies for reducing the need for TA:

Niagara County provides supportive services to divert applicants from needing Temporary Assistance. These supportive services are provided on a case-by-case basis and are only approved for individuals who are either already employed or have a promise of employment. Verification of employment (current pay stub) or a statement on the company's letterhead indicating a promise of employment (with an expected start date) is required for the individual to be considered for these services.

## 4. Work Activities

### 4.1 Allowable Work Activities

- a. Below is a list of activities available to individuals receiving Family Assistance (FA), Safety Net Assistance for households with dependent children (SNA Fam), Safety Net Assistance for households without dependent children (SNA Ind), and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. In the chart below, the case type is listed next to each activity available to it in the district.

## Allowable Work Activities by Case Type

Activity and Definition	Case Type
<p><b>Unsubsidized Employment</b> – Full time or part time employment in the public or private sector that is not subsidized by TANF or any other public program (excluding employer tax credits). Unsubsidized employment includes self-employment and/or paid internships.</p>	<p>FA SNAFAM SNA SNAP</p>
<p><b>Work Experience</b> – Unpaid work performed at a public or not-for-profit organization to enable a participant who has not obtained unsubsidized employment to improve his or her employability. Work experience provides participants with an opportunity to acquire training, knowledge, work habits, and work references necessary to obtain and retain employment. Participation in work experience includes training required for the participant to complete the work experience assignment. For example, an individual who is expected to provide clerical support in a government agency may be provided training to develop or refine filing and data entry skills as needed to perform the tasks required as part of the work activity assignment.</p>	<p>FA SNAFAM SNA SNAP</p>
<p><b>Job Search</b> – The act of seeking or obtaining employment or preparing to seek or obtain employment and will include: looking for suitable job openings in a group or individual setting; making contact with potential employers; learning appropriate workplace expectations and behaviors in preparation for submitting job applications and interviewing; preparing and applying for, and/or interviewing for jobs and related activities.</p>	<p>FA SNAFAM SNA SNAP</p>
<p><b>Vocational Education</b> – Vocational education is defined as an organized educational program that directly relates to the preparation of individuals for current or emerging occupations that require training up to a four-year degree. Vocational education does not generally include basic or remedial education or English as a Second Language (ESL) but may include work focused general education and language instruction that is a regular or integral part of a vocational education program. Social services districts are responsible for ensuring that any such remedial education or ESL is a regular part of the program for participants with similar skill sets as the TANF/SNA MOE client, is determined necessary by the program provider, and is limited in hours to less than one half of program participation. Vocational education programs include the completion of activities that provide individuals the knowledge and skills to perform a specific trade, occupation or vocation. Vocational education must be provided by an education or training organization.</p>	<p>FA SNAFAM SNA SNAP</p>
<p><b>Secondary School</b> – Regular attendance in accordance with the requirements of the secondary school or a course of study at a secondary school or other State accredited institution leading to a high school equivalence (HSE) diploma, in the case of a recipient who has not completed secondary school or received a certificate of general equivalence. Secondary school participation may include general adult basic education or ESL if it is linked to attending secondary school or leading to a HSE diploma as determined necessary by the educational institution. Secondary School or HSE programs that routinely include ESL, career training, alternative school, tutoring, dropout prevention, teen pregnancy or parenting programs as a requirement of program participation as determined by the educational institution will also be permitted.</p>	<p>FA SNAFAM SNA SNAP</p>

Activity and Definition	Case Type
<p><b>Job Skills Training</b> – Training or education in job skills to improve a participant’s employability, to ensure clients have the basic skills competencies required by employers to support job entry and/or to advance or adapt to the changing demands of the workplace. Where identified as needed, such training may include the development of basic workplace skills including professional workplace behaviors and decision-making skills. Job skills training may include customized or technical training designed to provide participants with additional workplace skills, post-secondary education courses leading to a bachelor’s or other advanced degree, or other training included under the definition of vocational education training. Job skills training may include literacy instruction, English language instruction, or other basic education for an individual who has already obtained a high school diploma or equivalency when determined from a client’s assessment that such instruction is needed to improve the participant’s employability.</p>	<p>FA SNAFAM SNA SNAP</p>
<p><b>Education Training</b> – Education directly related to employment for a recipient who has not received a high school diploma or equivalency must be related to a specific occupation, job or job offer or otherwise determined based on a client assessment as necessary to improve the participant’s employability to support job entry, retention or advancement. Education directly related to employment may include courses designed to provide the knowledge and skills for general or specific occupations or work settings to ensure clients have the basic skills competencies required by employers and may also include Adult Basic Education (ABE), ESL instruction and education leading to a high school equivalency diploma as determined as necessary to improve the participant’s job opportunities in potential occupations. Where identified as needed such training may include the development of basic workplace skills including professional workplace behaviors and decision-making skills.</p>	<p>FA SNAFAM SNA SNAP</p>
<p><b>Job Readiness Training (JRT) Activities</b> – Participation in programs that include seeking and preparing for work. JRT includes two types of activities: (1) traditional activities of resume preparation, training in interviewing skills, and instruction in workplace expectations, training in effective job seeking, including life skills training; and (2) activities that improve an individual’s employability, such as substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, or rehabilitation activities in which a qualified medical or mental health professional has certified that such treatment is necessary.</p>	<p>FA SNAFAM SNA SNAP</p>
<p><b>Subsidized Private Sector Employment</b> – Employment in the private sector for which the employer receives a subsidy from TANF or other public funds (excluding tax credits) to offset some or all of the wages and costs of employing and training a recipient in accordance with New York State Social Services Law 336-f. Subsidized private sector employment will include positions subsidized through grant diversion/Transitional Employment Advancement Program (TEAP), supported employment programs, and paid college work study programs at private institutions. Individuals participating in subsidized private sector employment are paid wages and receive the same benefits as unsubsidized employees who perform similar work. An employment situation will be subsidized for up to the full amount of wages/benefits provided to the program participant and will be subsidized for the length of time as determined appropriate by the State or social services district.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Activity and Definition	Case Type
<p><b>Subsidized Public Sector Employment</b> – Employment in the public sector for which the employer receives a subsidy from TANF or other public funds (excluding tax credits) to offset some or all of the wages and costs of employing and training a recipient in accordance with New York State Social Services Law 336-e. Subsidized public sector employment will include positions subsidized through grant diversion/TEAP, supported employment programs, and paid college work study programs at public institutions. Individuals participating in subsidized public sector employment, and work study unless otherwise permitted under a federal work study program, are paid wages and receive the same benefits as unsubsidized employees who perform similar work. An employment situation will be subsidized for up to the full amount of wages/benefits provided to the program participant and will be subsidized for the length of time as determined appropriate by the State or social services district.</p>	N/A
<p><b>Community Service</b> – A structured program in which participants perform work for the direct benefit of the community under the auspices of public or nonprofit organizations. Community service placements must be projects that serve a useful community purpose in fields such as health, social services, environmental protection, education, urban and rural redevelopment, welfare, public recreation, public facilities, public safety, and childcare. Community service programs are designed to improve the employability of participants not otherwise able to obtain unsubsidized employment. Participation in community service may include training that is directly required for the participant to complete the community service assignment. For example, an individual who is expected to provide clerical support to a food pantry may be provided training to develop or refine filing and data entry skills.</p>	N/A
<p><b>Provision of Childcare for Individual Participating in Community Service</b> – Providing unpaid childcare to enable another TA (TANF/SNA MOE funded) recipient to participate in a community service program.</p>	N/A
<p><b>SNAP E&amp;T Supervised Job Search</b> – The act of seeking or obtaining employment through a job search that is directly supervised and may include: case management services, career exploration, interview preparation, job application assistance, learning appropriate workplace expectations and behaviors in preparation for submitting job applications and interviewing, job leads, and direct job referrals.</p>	N/A
<p><b>On-the-Job-Training (OJT)</b> – Training in a public or private sector employment setting during which the participant receives work-essential paid training while he or she is engaged in productive work that provides the knowledge and skills essential to attain full and adequate performance of the job.</p>	FA SNAFAM SNA SNAP
<p><b>Other</b> – Any work activity that does not meet the criteria of any of the above countable activities constitutes participation that is not countable toward federal and State participation rates.</p>	N/A



## 4.2 Job Development

- a. Does the district conduct or access job development services to expand job opportunities for TA and SNAP participants?

Yes

How does the district participate in job development activities (reply yes or no to the options as they apply)?

### How the District Participates in Job Development Activities

Yes or No:	How the district participates in job development activities
Yes	District staff contacts employers to solicit jobs for TA and/or SNAP participants. Describe how this is done, including number of staff, frequency of contact, etc.: Senior Employment Case Manager is a member of the Niagara County Workforce Development Group which meets on a monthly basis. The Senior Employment Case Manager participates in the planning of area Job Fairs that are held twice per year in Niagara Falls and once a year in Lockport and North Tonawanda. Job leads are shared among the Workforce Group participants. The Employment case manager will engage with clients to go over the clients Job Searches and to offer new leads.
Yes	District contacts or has an agreement with another agency to contact employers and solicit jobs for TA and/or SNAP participants. Described here is how this is done, including number of staff, frequency of contacts, etc.: Niagara County does not have any contracts or agreements with other agencies however we work closely with Niagara County Employment and Training.

## 4.3 Training Approval and Activity Enrollment Policies (Reference 18 NYCRR 385.9)

- a. Described below is how the district identifies appropriate education program providers for services of Adult Basic Education (ABE), High School Equivalency (HSE) diploma preparation, and English Language Instruction that are available to clients whose assessment indicates such services would be an appropriate work activity assignment. Please ensure to include providers the district partners with for the provision of ABE, HSE, and English language instruction in Table 1 or Table 2 under section 1.2 of this Plan.

Niagara County identifies appropriate Adult Basic Education, High School Equivalency (HSE) and English Language providers through Orleans Niagara BOCES.

- b. Described below is how the district identifies appropriate program providers of Vocational Education and Job Skills Training programs that are available to clients whose assessment indicates such services would be an appropriate work activity assignment. Please ensure to include the current providers the district partners with for the provision of Vocational Education and Job Skills Training in Table 1 or Table 2 under section 1.2 of this Plan.

Niagara County DSS has a partnership with Niagara County Employment and Training. NC E&T as part of its mandate provides funding for tuition for Vocational Education. As part of that process NC E&T works with employers and training providers to make sure that programs being offered match the skills the employers are looking for. They will not provide

funding for training programs that fail to meet that standard. The NCDSS Senior Employment Case Manager participates in meetings with other agencies to determine what the needs of local employers are in order to determine training needs of recipients.

- c. Described below are the district's process and guidelines workers follow to ensure that individuals who have not attained a basic literacy level and/or have not attained a high school diploma are offered the opportunity to participate in an educational activity. This includes individuals who are 18 and older and individuals aged 16 or 17 who are not attending secondary school or its equivalent.

During the employment assessment, Recipients who haven't reached a basic literacy level (scoring at or beneath a 9th grade level) are assigned to remediation and a Job Readiness Class. Individuals who have not attained a high school diploma or equivalent, are offered the opportunity to participate in educational activities, including adult basic education and activities intended to prepare them to attain a high school diploma or its equivalent.

- d. Described below are the district's process and policy, including the guidelines workers follow, when determining whether participation in educational activities is approved for individuals who have not attained a high school diploma who are interested in participating in an educational activity. Include in this section instances when the district would deny participation in educational activities.

During the employment assessment, when an individual discloses that they have not attained a high school diploma or a high school equivalency (HSE), they will be referred to TABE testing to determine their literacy needs. Based on the test scores and the provider recommendations, the individual may be assigned to GED or the National External Diploma Program.

Participation in an educational activity may be denied as follows:

- Based on the provider determination.
- If their TABE scores are well below the entrance level of the courses they are requesting.
- If they are considering a degree program that requires a license without first clearing up a criminal background.
- If their case history has shown that they have not completed previous courses that they have enrolled in.

All individuals are reviewed on a case by case basis.

- e. Described below is the district's process and policy for determining whether a participant is approved/assigned to participate in job skills or vocational education activities.

They must not have exceeded their vocational education limit, and the desired training must be for something that could result in job placement, for example: does an area employer seek the skills that will result from the education/training. We will also look at their history to see if they have followed through on previous plans which were made with the department.

- f. Described below are the standards by which education and training providers are evaluated.

New York State Education Standards

- g. Described below is the district's procedure for advising participants of approved training.

Niagara County Employment and Training establishes the eligible training provider lists. The list is made available at assessment and when requested by an interested client. The list is also posted near our client reception area.

- h. Described below is the district's procedure for notifying participants they are approved for training or enrollment in a work activity.

Participants are notified in writing.

- i. Described below is how the district will monitor the high school attendance for 16-18 year-olds in order for them to retain their TA exempt status.

The Social Services Worker in the TA unit obtains verification of school attendance/enrollment at application and recertification. If it is determined that a 16- to 18-year-old is not in school, the individual will then be required to attend an Employment Assessment with an Employment Case Manager.

- j. Described below is the district's procedure for ensuring that an individual's health related limitations are accommodated when assigning the individual to a work activity.

When a health-related limitation is identified, the district will make all accommodations to comply with requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, including assigning said individual to a worksite which will accommodate the work limitations. Providers and worksites are notified in writing of an individual's work limitations. The district may make unscheduled visits to worksites to monitor compliance with our notification of the client's work limitations to ensure the worksite and client are complying. The client is consulted regarding being assigned to a provider or worksite which is within their limitations.

#### **4.4 Post-Secondary Education Approval and Enrollment Policies**

- a. Described below is the highest level of post-secondary level education that the district will approve as a work activity, up to a four-year college program (please ensure to include the current providers the districts partners with for the provision of post-secondary education programs in Table 1 or Table 2 under Section 1.2 of this plan):

NCDSS will allow up to a four-year college program as an activity provided that the program leads directly to employment. The assessment of the program is based on criteria NCDSS gets from Niagara County Employment and Training as stated in section 4.3 (g)

- b. In accordance with 18 NYCRR 385.9(b), regardless of whether the college program is approved for the participant as an employment work activity, the district will approve as a work activity a work-study, internship, externship or other work placement that is part of a non-graduate student's curriculum unless one or more of the following conditions applies as described below (reply yes or no to options as they apply):

**Conditions For Disapproval of Work Activities For Individuals Enrolled in College**

Yes or No:	Conditions for disapproval of work activity
No	It has been determined that the student voluntarily quit their job or reduced earnings to qualify for initial or increased TA.
Yes	A job or on-the-job training position that is comparable to the work-study, internship, externship or other work placement cannot reasonably be expected to exist in the private, public or not-for-profit sector.
Yes	The student is not maintaining a cumulative C average (or the equivalent). The district may disregard this provision if the student documents an undue hardship.
Yes	The institution or student fails to monitor and report information regarding the student's attendance and performance as required.
Yes	The student fails to progress toward the completion of a course of study without good cause, as determined by the district.
Yes	The student has previously enrolled in work-study, internship, or other work placement and failed to complete the work placement without good cause as determined by the district.
No	Additional reasons as stated here:

**5. Work Requirements**

**5.1 Meeting TA Work Requirements**

- a. Described below is how the district plans to meet federal and State TA participation rate requirements. Included in this description is the weekly hours standard participation requirements for individuals in the different case and household types, along with the typical time period it takes for nonexempt individuals to be engaged in activities for both newly opened cases and individuals whose status changed from exempt to nonexempt. (Information regarding engaging exempt individuals is entered in Section 9).

The typical time period it takes to engage non-exempt individuals in activities, for both newly opened cases and individuals whose status changed from exempt to non-exempt, is between two and four weeks. The development of an Employability Plan and the assignment to a work activity such as Supervised Job Search can be accomplished more quickly than the assignment to another activity (i.e. work experience) where the assignment may involve additional factors (a suitable worksite, more extensive supportive services). The importance of the monitoring of participation rate performance along with the tracking of individuals engaged in activities cannot be overstated. The local district's Sr. Employment Case Manager makes extensive use of State provided management reports available through Cognos. Niagara County's weekly standard participation requirement varies. First

and foremost, individuals are assigned to at least the minimum number of hours needed for their respective case to count in the participation rate. Individuals assigned to the Work Experience Program will be assigned to the maximum number of hours that the TA grant and SNAP benefits will allow not to exceed 40 hours in any instance. Individuals with a child under six will be expected to participate for a minimum of 20 hours per week. Those engaged in literacy as part of their job readiness continue to attend in addition to their WEP assignment. BOCES administers the literacy classes around their WEP assignments. Participants are required to share their work schedule with the literacy instructor. This determination is made on a case-by-case basis and is incorporated into the individual's Employability Plan. The goal for these individuals is financial self-sufficiency.

- b. Estimate the number of individuals expected to receive employment services for:

**Number of Individuals Who Receive Employment Services**

<b>Household Type</b>	<b>Number Served</b>
Households with Dependent Children Average Monthly	113
Households without Dependent Children Average Monthly	122

- c. Described below is how the district uses work participation management reports available through COGNOS or other reports and activities to monitor district progress toward meeting work participation requirements and ensuring full engagement by adults in work or work preparation activities:

Niagara County relies heavily upon Cognos reports to meet work participation rate requirements. Both current and monthly reports are reviewed with staff on a regular (usually monthly) basis. Current reports used most often are, Not Countable Participating Cases, Non-participating Cases, and Cases in Sanction status. Monthly reports most commonly used include, TANF Engagement Reports, SN MOE Engagement Reports, TANF and SN Moe Detail Reports. The "TANF and SN MOE Worker Participation/Engagement Summary Reports" is used (and shared with NCDSS Employment Case Managers) to monitor possible trouble spots and to focus attention/resources on these areas.

- d. Does the district assign TA applicants to Job Search? If yes, describe the district procedure for Job Search, including the required number of job search contacts and hours per week assigned. Use the "Additional Information" column in the chart below to describe how often individuals are generally required to report job search outcomes and if activities other than job search are routinely expected:

Yes

**Applicant Job Search**

<b>Applicant Job Search</b>	<b>Min. Contacts</b>	<b>Min. Hours</b>	<b>Additional Information</b>
TANF and SNA MOE	10	20	Weekly, not to exceed 12 weeks.

<b>Applicant Job Search</b>	<b>Min. Contacts</b>	<b>Min. Hours</b>	<b>Additional Information</b>
SNA Individuals	10	20	Weekly, not to exceed 12 weeks.

- e. Does the district assign TA recipients to Job Search? If yes, describe the district procedure for Job Search, including the required number of job search contacts and hours per week assigned. Include a description of how often individuals are generally required to report job search outcomes and if activities other than job search are routinely expected using the “Additional Information” column.

Yes

**TA Recipient Job Search**

<b>Recipient Job Search</b>	<b>Min. Contacts</b>	<b>Min. Hours</b>	<b>Additional Information</b>
TANF and SNA MOE	10	20	Weekly, not to exceed 12 weeks.
SNA Individuals	10	20	Weekly, not to exceed 12 weeks.

- f. Described below is the district’s process and policy used for determining whether participation in self-employment is approved as part of an individual's required work activities, including the guidelines workers follow. If the district always approves self-employment as part of an individual's required work activities, please note this policy below:

At Assessment the Employment Case Manager will review the reported income to determine if the client is earning minimum wage. If the client is not earning minimum wage, they will be advised they have 90 days from the date of assessment to be earning minimum wage or higher in addition to working the minimum number of hours per week to meet participation requirements. If they are not meeting these requirements at the end of 90 days, they will be assigned to work activities.

**5.2 Informing SNAP Applicants and Recipients of Work Requirements**

The district informs SNAP households where at least one member is subject to a work requirement of the applicable work rules at certification, recertification, and when a previously exempt household member or new household member becomes subject to work requirements. Notification is provided verbally and in writing.

- a. Described below is how SNAP applicants and recipients are informed in writing of SNAP work requirements (reply yes or no to options as they apply).

**Written Information Provided to SNAP Applicants and Recipients**

<b>Yes or No:</b>	<b>How written information is provided to SNAP applicants and recipients</b>
Yes	Eligibility staff use the LDSS-5193 <i>Important Information about SNAP Work Rules (General, Mandatory E&amp;T, and ABAWD)</i> and the LDSS-5193A <i>Important Information about SNAP Work Rules (General and Mandatory E&amp;T)</i> as appropriate.
No	Eligibility staff use a local equivalent consolidated work requirements notice to inform SNAP applicant and recipient households of their work requirements. Please attach a copy of the district's OTDA approved local equivalent.

- b. Described below is the process eligibility staff follow to provide a comprehensive oral explanation to SNAP households of work requirements, including General SNAP Work Rules, Mandatory SNAP E&T, and ABAWD Rules which pertain to non-exempt individuals in the household.

Eligibility staff read the 4826C Employment requirements for SNAP applicants and recipients-script for eligibility workers.

- c. Described below is how the district documents in the case record how the written information about SNAP work requirements was provided to the household (reply yes or no to options as they apply).

**How the District Documents the Written Requirement in the Case Record**

<b>Yes or No:</b>	<b>How written information is provided to SNAP applicants and recipients</b>
Yes	The district retains copies of all LDSS-5193/LDSS-5193A in the case record.
No	The district retains copies of local equivalent notices provided to the household in the case record.

- d. Described below is the district's process for documenting in the case record how the oral explanation of SNAP work requirements was provided to the household (reply yes or no to options as they apply).

**How the District Documents the Oral Requirement in the Case Record**

<b>Yes or No:</b>	<b>How oral information is provided to SNAP applicants and recipients</b>
Yes	Eligibility staff complete the LDSS-4826C and retain a copy in the case record.
No	Eligibility staff use a locally developed oral explanation tool and retain a copy in the case record.
No	Eligibility staff document the case record through case notes/comments.

### 5.3 Meeting SNAP Work Requirements

- a. Described below is the extent to which the district requires NTA SNAP recipients to participate in SNAP E&T work activities. (Please note: Case management services must be provided to all participants enrolled in SNAP E&T activity):

Niagara County does not require NTA SNAP recipients to participate in SNAP E&T work activities.

- b. If the district is offering Supervised Job Search as an E&T activity component, describe below how the job search activity will be supervised and tracked, including the frequency of monitoring the participant’s job search efforts.

Niagara County does not require NTA SNAP recipients to participate in SNAP E&T work activities.

- c. If the district is not mandating SNAP E&T work activity assignments, please describe below how NTA SNAP work registrants are informed of the services available, upon request, for assistance with job search activities. (Please note: At a minimum, districts are required to offer job search assistance to NTA SNAP applicants and recipients):

Clients are notified during their eligibility initial interview, recertification interview and at any change to employability status that the district offers job search assistance.

### 5.4 Advising Households of Employment and Training Services

At the time of recertification, non-exempt SNAP recipients who are members of certain TA/SNAP and NTA/SNAP households must be advised of the availability of employment and training services within the district and/or region. This requirement applies non-exempt recipients in households containing at least one adult, with no elderly or disabled individuals, and with no earned income at their last certification or required report.

- a. Described below is who the district provides information about employment and training services to (reply yes or no to the options as they apply):

**Who the District Provides Employment and Training Services Information to**

Yes or No:	Who the district provides employment and training services information to:
Yes	Required population only
No	Other groups described here:



- b. Described below is the method the district uses to advise SNAP recipients of available employment and training services at recertification (reply yes or no to the options as they apply):

**How the District Provides Employment and Training Services Information**

Yes or No:	How the district provides employment and training services information
Yes	Materials and information provided in print form
No	Materials and information provided on a website. Described here is how individuals are made aware the information is available on the website:
No	Material and information provided via email.

**5.5 Provider Determinations**

- a. Not every activity assignment/referral to training might be the right fit for every participant. As such, districts are required per federal regulations at 7 CFR 273.7(c)(18) to have procedures in place for when a provider/contractor determines an individual is not a good fit for a particular activity or program they are referred or assigned to. This is called the provider determination process. Described below is the district’s process for provider determination, including the process for screening individuals prior to referral to a provider, how to communicate information related to provider determinations with the district, how workers communicate information related to provider determinations with the client, and documenting provider determinations.

The agency's process for screening prior to referring to a provider is to conduct an assessment. If the provider determines an individual is not a good fit for the activity assignment/training program, they will communicate via telephone or electronic or printed communication with the Employment case managers immediately, but no later than 10 calendar days as required in 22-INF-11. The case manager will contact the participant either by phone or in writing within 10 calendar days of receiving the notification to notify the participant of the provider determination. The case managers will document in WTW and review the employment plan to determine a more appropriate activity or training program for the participant.

- b. Described below is the district process for informing providers of their authority and responsibility to determine if an individual is not a good fit for a particular activity or program.

The district will notify the provider of the requirements, responsibility and authority of notifying the case managers when an individual is not a good fit for an assigned activity or training program. They will be notified of their requirements to inform the district within 10 calendar days via verbal or written communication and this notification must include the reason for the determination. The district will notify the provider by providing them with 22-INF-11 via email. The district will review 22-INF-11 with the provider via email, phone, or in person meetings as needed.

- c. Described below is the district process for provider oversight to ensure that provider determinations are not unfair or used to discriminate against protected classes.

The district will thoroughly review provider determinations to ensure that SNAP E&T providers are adhering to Civil Rights laws and not discriminating against protected classes. If an issue was identified, the district would not take negative action against the client and would seek legal counsel.

## **6. Quality Assurance/Work Verification**

### **6.1 Quality Assurance Process - Random Case Sampling**

Consistent with New York State's approved Work Verification Plan (WVP), and in accordance with the requirements established by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, districts must develop a quality assurance plan to ensure that the data reported, from which their work participation rates are derived, are accurate. The plan must include the district's procedure for monitoring reported scheduled and actual attendance in paid employment and unpaid work activities and the controls in place to ensure that reported exemption statuses resulting in federal exclusions from the work participation rate calculation are accurately made, work eligible individuals are correctly identified, hours of attendance reported are accurate and documented, data entry is accurate and that the district and its providers adhere to the approved work activity definitions and the determination of countable excused absences and holiday reporting within federal limits. Each district must maintain the documentation to verify what is being reported to NYS OTDA.

Each district must describe how it will conduct periodic self audits to determine that system entries are consistent with documentation in case files. The district must also explain how it will choose the sample size, select sample cases and establish the review period (no less frequently than semi-annually). The plan must indicate the district will maintain documentation on all pertinent findings produced through its self audit process and that case records for all reviewed cases will be available for State and other auditors in their review of the local work verification system for the standard 6 year period associated with such reviews.

The district will sample cases from each month within the (6 month) semi-annual period. The October to March review will be due by May 20th. The April to September review will be due by November 20th. The results of these audits will enable the district to identify policies, processes or cases that may need corrective action.

After each self audit is completed, the district must submit a summary of findings to OTDA A&QI at [AQI.WV.SelfAudits@otda.ny.gov](mailto:AQI.WV.SelfAudits@otda.ny.gov) for State review including specific information on each of the errors identified. In addition, when monitoring reveals substantial problems, the district must describe the corrective action it will take.

The Quality Assurance (QA) plan must include the following elements:

- Ensure that documentation of wages and actual hours of employment is verified and accurately projected/reported and present in the case file, is actual and is projected correctly;
- Ensure that the documentation for actual hours, supervision/attendance, excused absences, and holidays in other activities is present in the case file;

- Assess whether participation in the work activities reported for work eligible individuals meets the approved federal definition for the activity;
  - Assess that the data entered into either WTWCMS, the Self-Sufficiency, Employment, Assessment and Management System (SEAMS) or other automated systems used for reporting work activities is accurate, including actual hours, excused absences and holidays; and is based on documentation in the case record; and
  - Ensure that documentation necessary to determine an individual to be exempt due to being the parent caretaker of a disabled household member (TA Employability Code 38 or 48), and/or parent or caretaker relative of a child in the household under 12 months of age, (TA Employability Code 31), is present in the case file and that individuals meet the exempt status based on the required documentation.
- a. Below is the number of random sample cases of participation in paid work activities the district will review semi-annually. Refer to the Instruction Guide for the minimum number of cases per district and guidance regarding review requirements.

12

- b. Below is the number of random sample cases of participation in unpaid work activities the district will review semi-annually. Refer to the Instruction Guide for the minimum number of cases per district and guidance regarding review requirements.

12

- c. Below is the number of random sample cases in which a case member is reported as an TA Employability Code 38 – “Parent needed in the home full time to care for an incapacitated/disabled household member” or TA Employability Code 48 – “Needed in the home to care for an incapacitated child full time – time limit exemption”. Refer to the Instruction Guide for the minimum number of cases per district and guidance regarding review requirements.

6

- d. Below is the number of random sample cases in which a case member is reported as an TA Employability Code 31 – “Parent or caretaker relative of a child under 12 months of age”. Refer to the Instruction Guide for the minimum number of cases per district and guidance regarding review requirements.

6

The district will review district worker or approved provider/vendor collected documentation and data entry of the above listed elements. The district will assess and verify that participation in the reported work activities listed above meet the State approved definition for the activity.

## 6.2 Use of Outside Providers/Vendors

- a. Does the district utilize outside providers/vendors to collect documentation and enter data directly into WTCMS?

No

- b. If Yes, does the district's provider/vendor documentation collection, data entry and management of WTCMS follow the same process that would be used by the district worker?

N/A

- c. If No, describe below the process used:

N/A

## 7. Supportive Services

### 7.1 TA and Non-TA SNAP Applicants and Recipients in Work Activities Approved by the District

- a. The district must provide childcare in accordance with the childcare section of the district's Child and Family County Services Plan. The district will also provide the following expenses, which the district deems necessary for the individual to participate in orientation, assessment, employment planning, approved work activities and activities to restore self-sufficiency:

Bus passes will be provided to individuals to participate in employment planning, approved work activities and activities to restore self-sufficiency. The district also provides clothing allowance, uniforms, work boots, work tools, vehicle repairs and insurance.

- b. Indicated below are the services the district will use to assist those participants who need transportation to and from an approved work activity site, including any applicable mileage reimbursement rate, and the method used by the district to arrive at that reimbursement rate. OTDA policy establishes a mileage reimbursement rate of no less than the IRS established rate for medical/moving purposes. In all instances, should the actual cost of transportation needed to participate in an assigned work activity exceed the reimbursement rate determined by the district, the district will reimburse for the actual costs based on reasonable documentation submitted by the work activity participant (reply yes or no to the options as they apply).

#### Transportation Services Provided to Clients

Yes or No:	Transportation Assistance Provided
Yes	Bus pass/token
No	Gas card/voucher

<b>Yes or No:</b>	<b>Transportation Assistance Provided</b>
No	Mileage reimbursement at the IRS Business rate (effective 1/1/2023 is 65 cents per mile)
Yes	Mile reimbursement at the IRS Medical/Moving rate (effective 1/1/2023 is 22 cents per mile)
No	Other mileage rate (the methodology used to establish reimbursement rate is described here):

- c. OTDA policy establishes a distance not to exceed two miles as the maximum distance that the district can require a participant to walk to a work activity assignment or to access public transportation. Describe below the distance an individual may be required to walk, each way, to a work activity or to access public transportation:

The maximum distance the district may require a participant to walk to a work activity assignment or to access public transportation is not to exceed 2 miles. Extreme weather conditions, physical limitations and young children will be taken into consideration.

- d. Described below are the services the district will provide to assist individuals at risk of needing TA to improve their opportunities for employment or to maintain their employment:

Niagara County provides supportive services to divert applicants from needing Temporary Assistance. The services provided will vary depending on if the household is an individual or a family. Each situation is evaluated on a case-by-case basis and are only approved for individuals who are either already employed or have a promise of employment. Verification of employment (current pay stub) or a statement on Company letterhead indicating a promise of a job, including start date is required for the individual to be considered for services. The anticipated wages would need to be high enough to project the household as being ineligible for Temporary Assistance. All diversion services need a manager's approval. Any cost exceeding \$1000.00 also needs the approval of the Director of Eligibility.

Additional criteria are as follows -

I. Transportation-all motor vehicle expenses.

- a) requires participant to have a valid driver's license
- b) vehicle must be titled and registered to a member of the applicant household

Repair:

- c) requires two estimates of cost from licensed auto repair shops including a statement of the necessity of the repairs to keep the vehicle working and road. legal
- d) requires that the cost of the repairs be in line with the value of the vehicle

Insurance:

- e) NCDSS will pay up to three months auto insurance per year

II. Work-related expenses (including uniforms, tools, license and test fees)

- a) uniforms-up to \$100.00
- b) tools-up to \$500.00
- c) license and fees-considered on a case-by-case basis

## 7.2 Post-Employment/Transitional Supportive Services

- a. Described below are the supports and strategies the district will provide to support job retention:

Case management is provided to support job retention. Transitional childcare will be provided for cases that close due to employment. In addition, the district will provide transportation assistance for up to three months for TANF eligible households and one month for non-TANF households after case closing for transportation costs. This can be in the form of a bus pass or mileage expenses at the IRS Medical/Moving rate. The district also provides clothing allowance, uniforms, work boots, work tools, vehicle repairs and insurance.

- b. Described below are the support services (for up to 90 days after case closing) the district will provide to individuals whose TA cases have closed due to employment:

Case management is provided to support job retention. Transitional childcare will be provided for cases that close due to employment. In addition, the district will provide transportation assistance for up to three months for TANF eligible households and one month for non-TANF households after case closing for transportation costs. This can be in the form of a bus pass or mileage expenses at the IRS Medical/Moving rate. The district also provides clothing allowance, uniforms, work boots, work tools, vehicle repairs and insurance.

## 7.3 Extended Support Services

- a. Described below are the support services the district will provide for individuals who are eligible under the TANF Services 200% of poverty eligibility guidelines. These services can be provided as long as funding is available (FFFS, etc.):

None

## 8. Conciliation, Sanction and Dispute Resolution Procedures

### 8.1 Conciliation

- a. The district's conciliation process for TA applicants and recipients must be conducted in accordance with 18 NYCRR 385.11(a). Indicate below how conciliations are conducted (reply yes or no to the options as they apply).

#### How the District Conducts Conciliation for TA Applicants and Recipients

Yes or No:	How conciliation is conducted
Yes	In person
Yes	By phone
Yes	By mail

The districts process for conduction TA conciliations is described below:

When a failure to comply occurs, the Employment Unit worker will issue a Conciliation Notice. The recipient must respond within 10 days. The conciliation process will last no longer than thirty (30) days for TANF participants and no longer than fourteen (14) days for Safety Net participants unless both the Department and the participant agree that the timeframe should be extended. The conciliation process provides the individual with the opportunity to inform the local district of the reason(s) for their failure to comply. During the conciliation period the Case Manager will determine if the TA recipient's failure to comply was willful and without good cause.

- b. Who makes the TA good cause/willfulness determination (reply yes or no to the options as they apply)?

**How the District Makes the Good Cause/Willfulness Determination for TA Applicants and Recipients**

<b>Yes or No:</b>	<b>Who makes the TA good cause/willfulness determination?</b>
Yes	The client's employment worker
No	A supervisor in the district
No	A separate entity (described here):

- c. The district's conciliation process for SNAP applicants and recipients must be conducted in accordance with 18 NYCRR 385.11(d). Indicate below how conciliations are conducted (reply yes or not to the options as they apply).

**How the District Conducts Conciliation for SNAP Applicants and Recipients**

<b>Yes or No:</b>	<b>How conciliation is conducted</b>
Yes	In person
Yes	By phone
Yes	By mail

The district's process for conducting SNAP conciliations is described below:

When a failure to comply occurs, the Employment Case Manager will issue a Conciliation Notice. The recipient must respond within 10 days. The conciliation process will last no longer than thirty (30) days unless both the Department and the participant agree that the timeframe should be extended. The conciliation process provides the individual with the opportunity to inform the local district of the reason(s) for the failure to comply. During this time frame the individual would also be given the opportunity to provide documentation supporting a claim of exemption from SNAP work activities. NTA SNAP recipients will not be subject to a conciliation process as SNAP E&T is on a voluntary basis.

- d. Who makes the SNAP E&T good cause/willfulness determination (reply yes or no to the options as they apply)?

**How the District Makes the Good Cause/Willfulness Determination for SNAP Applicants and Recipients**

<b>Yes or No:</b>	<b>Who makes the TA good cause/willfulness determination?</b>
Yes	The client's employment worker
No	A supervisor in the district
No	A separate entity (described here):

- e. Described below is the district's procedure for engaging SNAP recipients in a work activity to demonstrate compliance to avoid a SNAP E&T related sanction:

If a SNAP recipient contacts the agency to engage in a work activity to demonstrate compliance, we attempt to schedule them to the activity they were originally assigned to. If that's not possible then the agency will determine what activities are available and assign the SNAP recipient to one of them. Attendance in the activity is then tracked to ensure compliance. To demonstrate compliance the recipient must either participate on the Work Experience Program for 10 hours or provide verification of 5 Job Search contacts. NTA SNAP recipients will not be subject to a conciliation process as SNAP E&T is on a voluntary basis.

**8.2 Sanction**

- a. Described below is the district's procedure for determining compliance for those TA recipients who wish to end their employment sanction (18 NYCRR 385.12, 385.13), including the time period established for demonstrating compliance to the satisfaction of the district:

When an individual contacts the district to indicate they want to come into compliance, the case manager notes this in the case record. The case manager will review if the sanctioned individual is engaged in paid or unpaid work activities that would satisfy compliance and participation requirements and if not, the sanctioned individual will then be assigned to an activity. Once the individual has participated for ten calendar days they will be considered "in compliance". At that point, a referral is sent to the client's eligibility worker to end the sanction at the end of the durational sanction period if any. Temporary Assistance benefits will be restored retroactive to the date the individual indicated a willingness to comply, (but no earlier than the minimum duration period) in accordance with 09-ADM-20.

- b. Describe below the district's procedure for determining compliance for those SNAP recipients who wish to end their employment sanction (18 NYCRR 385.12, 18 NYCRR 385.13), including the time period established for demonstrating compliance to the satisfaction of the district:

When an individual contacts the district to indicate they want to come into compliance, the case manager notes this in the case record. The case manager will review if the sanctioned individual is engaged in paid or unpaid work activities that would satisfy compliance and participation requirements and if not, the sanctioned individual will then be assigned to an



activity. Once the individual has participated for ten calendar days they will be considered "in compliance". SNAP benefits will be restored retroactive to the date the individual indicated a willingness to comply, (but no earlier than the minimum duration period) in accordance with 09-ADM-20. Individuals may reestablish SNAP eligibility during the durational sanction period if the individual is determined by the district to be exempt from SNAP work requirements.

### 8.3 Dispute Resolution

- a. The district’s procedure for individuals who wish to dispute their work activity assignments, including individuals who dispute the district’s response to their request for health-related accommodations must be conducted in accordance with 18 NYCRR 385.11(c). Indicate below who mediates the grievance (reply yes or no to the options as they apply).

#### Grievance Mediation

Yes or No:	Who makes the TA good cause/willfulness determination?
No	An independent entity which has an agreement with the district.
No	Supervisory staff who are trained in mediation and who have no direct responsibility for the individual’s case.
Yes	Designated supervisory staff who have no direct responsibility for the individual's case and who are not trained in mediation.

## 9. Disability Determinations, Documentation and Requirements of Exempt Individuals

### 9.1 Disability Determination Process and Tools

- a. The district’s process for determining an individual’s disabilities and/or work limitations must be in accordance with 18 NYCRR 385.2(d). Indicate below what the district’s process is for determining an individual’s disabilities and/or work limitations (reply yes or no to the options as they apply).

#### Process for Determining Disabilities and/or Work Limitations

Yes or No:	How the district determines an individual’s disabilities and/or work limitation
No	District participates in the OTDA managed contract for independent medical evaluations.
No	District contracts directly with a physician to provide independent medical evaluations.
No	District accepts physician’s statement provided by participant.
Yes	District accepts physician’s statement provided by participant but refers for an independent evaluation when deemed necessary.

Yes or No:	How the district determines an individual's disabilities and/or work limitation
Yes	Other process: Niagara County will adhere to the disability program requirements set forth in 18 NYCRR 385.2(d). The disability procedure will be followed whenever the applicant/recipient claims an inability to work, a work limitation or whenever the district worker suspects that an inability to work or a work limitation might exist. If the applicant/recipient has his/her own health care provider, he/she will be provided ten (10) calendar days to submit evidence in support of the claim to be unable to work or work-limited. In instances where it is not possible for the documentation to be provided within ten (10) calendar days, an extension may be granted at the discretion of the local district. It is understood that an individual's health care provider may not be a physician or certified psychologist. However, the District reserves the right to require additional documentation from the individual when the documentation on file is insufficient for the district to make a determination on exempt/non-exempt status. NCDSS staff will review any documentation submitted by the individual to support his/her claim for exemption from work program requirements. The individual's past medical history, work limitations, prior work history and the availability of "light duty" worksites will be factors in determining the individual's exempt/nonexempt status. Niagara County will utilize the LDSS 4005 or 4005(a) to notify individuals of the District's determination regarding whether the individual is exempt, work-limited, or non-exempt. The individual retains the right to request a fair hearing should the issue not be resolved to his/her satisfaction.

- b. Described below is the district's procedure for notifying an individual of their exempt or non-exempt determination whenever an individual alleges to be unable to participate, or the individual otherwise participates in the employability disability review, including when an individual is notified that their status changes from exempt to non-exempt:

The agency will provide the individual with a documentation requirement form requesting the verification needed to support the alleged reason to be unable to participate. The district sends the LDSS-4005/LDSS-4005(a) and retains a copy in the case record. The notice can be sent by either the eligibility or employment worker.

- c. Described below is how the district notifies an individual of their exempt or non-exempt determination (reply yes or not to the options as they apply):

**Process for Notifying an Individual of Their Exempt or Non-Exempt Status**

Yes or No:	District's process for reviewing medical documentation
Yes	The district sends the LDSS-4005 or LDSS-4005a and retains a copy in the case record.
No	The district sends a local equivalent and retains a copy in the case record.

- d. Indicated below is the process for reviewing the medical documentation to determine if the individual is exempt, nonexempt, or work limited and describe the process by which the determination is made (reply yes or no to the options as they apply).

**Process for Reviewing Medical Documentation**

<b>Yes or No:</b>	<b>District’s process for reviewing medical documentation</b>
No	District directs the contracted physician or individual’s physician to determine status.
No	District review team reviews and determines status (described here):
No	Specialized disability/medical staff or unit reviews and determines status (described here):
Yes	Other process: Medical documentation is submitted by applicants to the TA worker. The TA worker makes the initial determination regarding exempt/non-exempt or work-limited status of the individual (often in consultation with the Employment Case Manager). The medical information is attached to the Employment Unit referral. The Employment Case Manager reviews the documentation, and any subsequent status redetermination is made by the Employment Case Manager. All exempt/nonexempt or work-limited determination of recipients is solely made by the NCDSS Employment Case Manager assigned to the case.

**9.2 Mental Health Screening and Assessment**

- a. In addition to screening for a disability as part of the application or disability determination process, does the district administer a screening tool for TA participants to help determine whether a referral for a mental health evaluation is warranted?

No

- b. Describe the district’s policy for determining when a program participant is offered a mental health screen:

N/A

- c. What screening tools does the district use (reply yes or no to the options as they apply)?

N/A

**Screening Tools the District Uses**

<b>Yes or No:</b>	<b>Screening Tools</b>
N/A	LDSS 5009 - Mental Health Screening Tool
N/A	The computer assisted version of the Modified Mini Screening tool (MMS)
N/A	Other Screening tool (described here):

- d. If using the MMS, indicate below the district's cutoff score (7, 8 or 9) for referral to a mental health evaluation.

N/A

- e. Describe below the procedure the district uses if the screening tool warrants a mental health evaluation referral:

N/A

### **9.3 Requirements for Exempt TA Participants (Reference 18 NYCRR 385.2 (e))**

- a. An exempt individual who has the potential to be restored to self-sufficiency through rehabilitation may be required to accept medical care to assist them in recovering from a mental or physical impairment, accept referral to and enrollment in a program of vocational rehabilitation, training, and/or other essential rehabilitation, and provide requested evidence that the individual is participating in the assigned program.

Described below is the district's procedure for determining if an individual, who is unable to work due to mental or physical impairment, has the potential through treatment or other rehabilitative activities to improve the ability to work. This determination is different from the determination of the individual's disability exemption as covered in Section 9.1 of this Plan. Indicate who makes or assists in this determination that an individual can restore or improve employability through treatment or other rehabilitative activities (e.g., medical practitioner, employment worker, TA worker, local review team, etc.). Also indicate the source and type of information used to make the determination (e.g., information from individual's medical practitioner, district contracted provider, specialist evaluation obtained as result of district referral, etc.).

When an individual has indicated that they are unable to engage in activities due to a physical or mental health issue the agency will request that the individual's Health Care Practitioner complete an LDSS-4526. On this form the Health Care Practitioner will indicate the individual's condition, current treatment programs the individual is engaged in, limitations to work activities and how long they are expected to last and if the Health Care Practitioner feels a referral to a rehabilitation program is appropriate. This information is used by the Employment Case Manager to determine if rehab should be part of an Employment Plan.

- b. Described below is the district's procedure for developing a treatment plan and for referring the participant to appropriate treatment, etc.

All exempt individuals are called in to do Employment Plans. An individual who can improve their ability to engage in work activities through rehab will develop an Employment Plan along with their Employment Case Manager that spells out the steps the individual is to take. This would include actions such as contacting their primary care physician for appropriate referrals and time frames in which the action needs to be accomplished.

- c. Described below is the district's procedure for tracking the participant's compliance with their treatment plan, including who in the district is responsible for monitoring compliance. Include elements such as monthly confirmation of attendance at rehabilitation or other factors to judge participation and progress, along with how often the treatment plan is updated.

District staff will monitor attendance at rehabilitation programs monthly. We will require the individual to bring in proof of attendance at the end of every month. Employment Plans which spell out the treatment plan requirements are updated yearly or when a change in treatment is indicated whichever is earlier. District staff will monitor attendance at rehabilitation programs monthly. We will require the individual to bring in proof of attendance at the end of every month. Employment Plans which spell out the treatment plan requirements are updated yearly or when a change in treatment is indicated whichever is earlier.

## **10. District Certification**

### **10.1 Certification**

As a condition of the receipt of federal and State funds the Local District Commissioner of Niagara County Department of Social Services submits this Temporary Assistance (TA) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment Plan (Plan) to the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. The Plan outlines the administration of employment services for TA and SNAP applicants and recipients for the period January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2025. Submission of this Plan certifies that the district has read and accepts the terms of this certification and hereby affirms that employment services programs will be administered in accordance with all applicable federal and State policies, laws, regulations, and provisions of this Plan.

2/13/2024  
Meghan Lutz  
Commissioner