Direct Support Certificate

Program Overview

Direct Support Practitioners work directly with individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities. Having a strong desire to help people as well as sensitivity, patience and flexibility are keys to success. Students learn to build a rapport with clients, adapt to different communications styles, and strengthen writing and problem-solving skills.

The Certificate in Direct Support at NECC will teach you the theory and help you develop the skills needed to provide direct client services in residential or vocational programs, with the goal of improving the quality of life of the clients and helping them achieve maximum possible self-sufficiency. You will develop competencies in accordance with the National Community Support Skills standards.

The Direct Support Certificate was originally created to support and enhance the careers of direct support staff in programs funded by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), formerly called the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR). The DDS continues to fund a contract Direct Support Certificate program that is available to employees of DDS or employees of DDS funded agencies.

Career Opportunities

Social and Human Service Assistants are listed among the fastest growing occupations.* You may choose to apply all the credits earned in this certificate toward NECC’s Associate Degree in Human Services or you may directly enter the workforce. Graduates work in a range of settings including the following:

Community residences
Independent living programs
Vocational programs
Home support services

Courses
Required Courses

Year 1, Fall Semester
ENG101 English Composition I
HUS101 Introduction to Human Services

Year 1, Spring Semester
HUS105 Introduction to Disabilities
HUS190 Human Services Practicum I
HUS202 Behavior Management Principles & Techniques

Year 1, Summer Semester
HUS150 Issues in Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities
PSY101 Introduction to Psychology

Additional Opportunities
As a student in this program, you will participate in practicums (supervised clinical experiences) where you will provide direct support services to individuals using interpersonal communication, interviewing, observation, problem solving, case management, and documentation skills in accordance with the human service philosophy. Practicum experiences allow you to experience the human services profession first-hand, and give you the opportunity to grow as a person and a professional.

Getting Started
Ready to get started? It’s easy! Northern Essex has an open admissions policy, which means that if you have a high school diploma or GED you are eligible to enroll at NECC. Just fill out an application, attend an orientation/assessment session, and then register for classes.

Program Requirements

Admission Requirements: The Direct Support Certificate has additional admission requirements, which include attending a human services information session, completing a Human Services Additional Data Form, and interviewing with a member of the human services faculty. See the Admissions Criteria Packet under Courses and Requirements at www.necc.mass.edu/programs for complete information.

CORI/SORI/CHRI: Students interested in participating in this program may be required to undergo a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check, a Criminal Records Central Repository (CHRI) check, and a Sex Offender Record Information (SORI) check. For more information, visit www.necc.mass.edu/cori-sori.

Northern Essex Community College is committed to the success of every student. Students with legal issues in their background will meet with a committee as part of the CORI/SORI/CHRI process and will receive guidance and counseling throughout the review of their records. NECC personnel make every effort to help students prepare for careers in their chosen field. Students are encouraged to seek assistance and support.

For more information
Contact Brian MacKenna-Rice at 978-556-3331 or bmackennarice@necc.mass.edu, visit our website at www.necc.mass.edu, or contact Enrollment Services at 978-556-3700.

For more information on program costs and graduation rates, visit www.necc.mass.edu/DSCU.