



NEW JERSEY STATE AS A MODEL EMPLOYER BIANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1, 2023 – DECEMBER 30, 2023



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the enactment of P.L. 2021, Chapter 466, in 2022, which authorized the development of the New Jersey State as a Model Employer (SAME) of People with Disabilities program, many State agencies have taken significant steps to expand and improve employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Enhanced recruitment activities have been established to include outreach to community organizations and educational institutions. Specific activities and training programs have also been developed. These initiatives have been aimed to attract a more diverse applicant pool and ensure that job openings are widely accessible to disabled individuals. However, other agencies have yet to establish mechanisms or goals to ensure the viability of the SAME program. Set forth below is a summary of the initiatives which were developed or have continued during the biannual SAME reporting period of July to December 2023, as well as information on issues that need to be addressed.

Partnerships with Disability Organizations: Departments, such as the Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Transportation, are forming partnerships with organizations specializing in disability employment. These collaborations aim to advertise job vacancies more effectively and create work-based learning opportunities. By working closely with these organizations, the departments hope to increase visibility and access to job openings for individuals with disabilities.

Improving Accessibility and Accommodations: The Department of Human Services is hiring a Coordinator to oversee ergonomic assessments and accommodations, which will help identify and remove barriers for employees with disabilities. This reflects a proactive approach to making workplaces more accessible. Additionally, the Department of Education plans to use an Applicant Tracking System to post job openings on multiple job boards, including those focusing on specific populations such as veterans and individuals with disabilities. These efforts leverage technology to reach a broader audience. Additionally, the Civil Service Commission introduced a dedicated line through its Information Center. The public can speak with a member of staff regarding the SAME program at (609) 292-4144 or via email at CSC-Same@csc.nj.gov.

Training and Awareness Programs: Agencies like the Department of Environmental Protection are developing training programs aimed at educating interview panels on disability issues and creating a more inclusive hiring process. This highlights the importance of ongoing education and awareness to combat stigma and improve employment practices. By fostering a more informed and inclusive environment, these agencies support the long-term retention and success of employees with disabilities.

Consistency in Goals: Most agencies have a consistent goal of 7% for hiring individuals with disabilities, which suggest a standard benchmark being used across these organizations. However, there are many agencies with no established goals, indicating areas for improvement in policy implementation for disability inclusion. The College of New Jersey's 20% goal

demonstrates a strong commitment to inclusivity, setting a potential model for other institutions to follow.

Events and Efforts: There is considerable variation in the efforts and goals set by different agencies regarding the recruitment and retention of persons with disabilities. While some agencies have specific percentage goals and actively participate in various outreach and recruitment activities, others have yet to establish goals or engage in substantial initiatives. Common strategies include collaboration with advocacy organizations and participation in job fairs, but there is room for more consistent and integrated efforts across all agencies to ensure a more inclusive workforce.

Mentoring and Internship Programs: The data on existing or planned mentoring, internship, or similar work-based learning programs for persons with disabilities across various State agencies reveal significant disparities. Agencies like the Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the Department of Health lead with comprehensive programs, while others, such as the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission and the Department of Corrections, report no specific programs. Increasing awareness and training on disability inclusion, enhancing internal communication, and conducting regular needs assessments are recommended to improve these programs.

Retention Rates: The data on retention rates reveal a significant disparity, with a few State agencies achieving 100% retention while the majority have 0% retention, highlighting potential organizational and operational challenges. This disparity underscores the need for further investigation into the factors influencing hiring and retention of individuals with disabilities.

Analysis of Ongoing Barriers to Employment: Various agencies face significant barriers to employing individuals with disabilities, including lack of required qualifications of candidates, accessibility issues, social stigma, insufficient accommodations, and lack of awareness. To address these barriers, agencies are planning a range of initiatives such as enhanced recruitment efforts, partnerships with disability organizations, improved accessibility and accommodations, leveraging technology for recruitment, and implementation of training and awareness programs. However, some agencies report minimal barriers or provide limited plans for improvement, suggesting a need for comprehensive strategies and consistent efforts across all agencies.

Conclusion: State agencies are making strides toward improving employment opportunities and conditions for individuals with disabilities. While there are notable successes and innovative programs in place, there remains room for improvement. Greater consistencies in goal setting, integrated efforts in recruitment and retention, and comprehensive strategies to address ongoing barriers are essential for achieving a truly inclusive workforce. Collaboration and sharing of best practices across agencies can further enhance these initiatives and ensure equal employment opportunities for all.

INTRODUCTION

The SAME program represents a pioneering effort to establish New Jersey as a leader in employment practices, setting a high standard for inclusivity, diversity, and employee well-being across public sector workplaces. By prioritizing these core values, the SAME program aims to foster an equitable and supportive environment for all State employees, ensuring that New Jersey not only attracts top talent, but also retains a dedicated workforce committed to public service.

Reporting for the period of July to December 2023, 35 entities have actively participated, providing valuable data and insights into their employment practices and policies. The active participation of the 35 entities underscores the widespread commitment to the SAME program's objectives. These organizations, encompassing a broad range of State departments, agencies, commissions, and institutions of higher education, have shared detailed information that will form the backbone of this period's report. The report will illuminate the state of employment within New Jersey's public sector, highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement. It will serve as a critical tool for benchmarking progress and identifying best practices that can be adopted across the board.

The report will also detail the findings from these 35 entities, offering an analysis of their employment practices. It will cover key areas such as recruitment, retention, professional development, and workplace accommodations, providing a nuanced understanding of how these elements contribute to a model employment environment. This in-depth examination will not only highlight successes but also pinpoint challenges that need to be addressed to further advance the SAME program's goals.

Furthermore, the report will offer actionable recommendations based on the data collected. These recommendations will guide policymakers and organizational leaders in implementing strategies that promote a supportive workplace. By following these guidelines, New Jersey aims to showcase the positive impact of adopting inclusive employment practices.

In conclusion, the involvement of the listed 35 entities marks a significant step towards achieving excellence in public sector employment. The report provides a detailed and insightful overview of the employment landscape, paving the way for continued improvements and innovation.

LIST OF RESPONDING AGENCIES - BIENNIAL REPORT (JULY TO DECEMBER 2023)			
1	Election Law Enforcement Commission	19	Department of Environmental Protection
2	Casino Control Commission	20	Public Employment Relations Commission
3	Department of Labor and Workforce Development	21	Department of Health
4	Motor Vehicle Commission	22	Department of Law and Public Safety
5	Department of Transportation	23	New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency
6	Department of Human Services	24	Governor's Office
7	Department of Agriculture	25	Civil Service Commission
8	Office of Information Technology	26	Department of Education
9	State Commission of Investigation	27	New Jersey Educational Facilities Authority
10	Office of the Public Defender	28	Office of the Secretary of Higher Education
11	Department of Children and Families	29	New Jersey City University
12	Department of State	30	The College of New Jersey
13	Department of Corrections	31	Kean University
14	State Parole Board	32	New Jersey Higher Education Student Assistance Authority
15	Department of the Treasury	33	State of New Jersey Schools Development Authority
16	Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness	34	William Paterson University
17	Board of Public Utility	35	Stockton University
18	Department of Community Affairs		

1. PERCENTAGE GOALS ESTABLISHED

The SAME program reveals significant variability in the recruitment and retention goals for persons with disabilities across various State agencies. Several agencies, including the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Transportation, and the Motor Vehicle Commission, have established a goal of 7% for recruiting and retaining individuals with disabilities. This percentage aligns with the goals of the Election Law Enforcement Commission and the Casino Control Commission. Additionally, the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, the Department of Community Affairs, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the New Jersey Higher Education Student Assistance Authority also set the same 7%, indicating a concerted effort across these agencies to foster an inclusive workforce.

Conversely, numerous agencies, such as the Office of Information Technology, the State Commission of Investigation, the Office of the Public Defender, and the Department of Corrections, have not established specific goals. This absence is also noted in departments like the Department of the Treasury, the Department of Health, and the Board of Public Utilities. Notably, higher education institutions display varying goals. While The College of New Jersey sets its goal at 20%, the New Jersey City University aims for 2%, and several universities like Kean University, William Paterson University, and Stockton University have no established number. This disparity underscores the need for a more uniform approach and consistent commitment across all State agencies and institutions to achieve the SAME program's objectives.

Recommendations:

1. Agencies with no goals must consider establishing measurable standards to promote inclusivity.
2. Agencies with lower goals might review their policies and consider aligning with the more common 7%.
3. Sharing best practices from agencies like The College of New Jersey could help others improve their inclusivity strategies.

In summary, while many State agencies have embraced the SAME program's goals by setting specific recruitment and retention rates for persons with disabilities, there remains a significant portion of agencies and educational institutions that have yet to establish such goals. This mixed approach highlights both progress and areas for improvement.

2. EVENTS AND EFFORTS

The SAME program is designed to promote the recruitment and retention of persons with disabilities across various State agencies. The data indicates that several agencies have undertaken significant initiatives to support this objective. For instance, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development collaborates with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and participates in multiple career fairs to promote unclassified and noncompetitive position vacancies. Similarly, the Motor Vehicle Commission has partnered with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to conduct virtual job fairs, emphasizing the importance of hiring individuals with disabilities. These efforts reflect a strong commitment to inclusivity and diversity in the State's workforce.

Furthermore, the Department of Transportation has engaged with several divisions, such as the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the Division of Developmental Disabilities, to enhance its recruitment strategies. The Department of Transportation is also updating its recruitment website to be more accessible to persons with disabilities and promoting job opportunities through external outreach activities. Moreover, the Department of Human Services lists SAME information on its job postings and ensures these postings are available on the Civil Service Commission's SAME job webpage, demonstrating an integrated approach to promoting the program.

Despite these proactive measures, the level of engagement with the SAME program varies across different State agencies. While some agencies, such as the Office of Information Technology and the Department of Children and Families, have embedded SAME guidelines into their hiring practices and actively seek to participate in job fairs, others have not demonstrated a similar level of commitment. For example, the State Parole Board does not have specific efforts listed to attract persons with disabilities. This inconsistency highlights a need for a more uniform approach across all agencies to fully support the SAME program's objectives.

Agencies like the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Community Affairs also show active participation in the SAME program. The Department of Agriculture has posted job opportunities on various platforms and attended multiple job fairs to recruit persons with disabilities. Additionally, the Civil Service Commission has participated in numerous job outreach events, collectively reaching many potential candidates, including individuals with disabilities as can be seen on the following page.

In conclusion, while many State agencies have made commendable efforts to support the SAME program through various initiatives, there remains a significant gap in engagement across all agencies. To fully realize the objectives of the SAME program, a more consistent and unified approach is necessary.

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION OUTREACH EVENTS			
	Events attended or hosted by Civil Service Commission staff promoting the SAME program (July 2023 to December 2023)	Date	Number of Attendees
1	Department of Environmental Protection Career Event, Trenton	8/17/2023	50
2	Congressman Payne, Jr.'s Annual Veterans Job Fair, Newark	8/24/2023	110
3	Passaic County Job Fair, Paterson	8/24/2023	65
4	Senator Troy Singleton Job Fair, Burlington	9/13/2023	50
5	One Stop Information Session Central Region <i>(Virtual)</i>	9/19/2023	403
6	One Stop Information Session Southern Region <i>(Virtual)</i>	9/21/2023	363
7	Seton Hall University Career Center, South Orange	9/21/2023	100
8	One Stop Information Session Northern Region <i>(Virtual)</i>	9/27/2023	361
9	Burlington County Job Fair, Burlington	9/28/2023	450
10	Kean University, Union	9/28/2023	35
11	Caldwell University Guest Speaker (Criminal Justice) <i>(Virtual)</i>	10/4/2023	30
12	One Stop Information Session Southern Region <i>(Virtual)</i>	10/4/2023	356
13	Stockton University Fair, Galloway	10/5/2023	220
14	Hudson County Job Fair, Jersey City	10/12/2023	100
15	Rutgers Facing the Future 2023, New Brunswick	10/13/2023	250
16	One Stop Information Session Central Region <i>(Virtual)</i>	10/19/2023	182
17	Bergen County Community College, Paramus	10/20/2023	20
18	Burlington County NDAM Resource and Employment Fair, Burlington	10/23/2023	125
19	Mercer County Job Fair, West Windsor	10/25/2023	250
20	One Stop Information Session Northern Region <i>(Virtual)</i>	10/25/2023	320
21	Civil Service Commission Job Fair, Essex County College, Newark	10/26/2023	1100
22	Seton Hall University Law Careers in Public Service, South Orange	11/6/2023	100
23	Middlesex County Job Fair, Edison	11/16/2023	185
24	New Jersey Reentry Corporation & Veteran Outreach Initiative, Carteret	11/17/2023	35
	TOTAL OUTREACH EFFORTS TO THE PUBLIC REGARDING THE SAME PROGRAM:		5260

3. MENTORING, INTERNSHIP, AND REFERRAL PROGRAMS

The data table provides an overview of various agencies' efforts to implement and promote work-based learning, mentoring, and internship programs specifically designed for persons with disabilities. These initiatives are part of the SAME program, which aims to increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities across different State departments and institutions. Several agencies have adopted diverse strategies to create an inclusive work environment and provide career development opportunities for disabled individuals.

One prominent initiative highlighted in the data is the Department of Labor and Workforce Development's comprehensive approach. The department has established mentorship programs, summer internships, and lunch and learn sessions focusing on diversity and inclusion. Additionally, it offers 100% tuition reimbursement for approved studies, promoting continuous learning and professional growth among employees inclusive of those with disabilities. The Motor Vehicle Commission also supports this effort with its summer internship program for current full-time college students regardless of their disability status. It also partners with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to identify suitable candidates for internships and training programs, emphasizing reasonable accommodation through its MVC Leave and ADA Unit, once employed.

Moreover, several departments have shown proactive measures in recruiting and supporting employees with disabilities. The Department of Transportation has collaborated with the Katzenbach School for the Deaf to establish internship opportunities and provide one-on-one training for career development. Similarly, the Department of Human Services includes SAME information on its website and ensures job postings are accessible. The Office of Information Technology promotes career advancement for persons with disabilities by providing necessary resources and support.

Educational institutions have also integrated the SAME program into their recruitment and professional development practices. Kean University offers LinkedIn learning courses for professional development and hosts biannual job fairs on campus. The College of New Jersey and New Jersey City University have professional mentoring programs and partnerships with organizations to support students with disabilities. These institutions ensure that all employees, regardless of disabilities, have access to training and career growth opportunities.

Collaboration with educational institutions is a key aspect of many agencies' efforts to support persons with disabilities. The Department of Health works with universities such as Rutgers University and Temple University to recruit interns, while the Department of the Treasury is developing a mentoring pilot program involving mentors and mentees from local colleges. The Department of Community Affairs also plans to expand its internship program to include more universities, aiming to attract a diverse candidate pool. These collaborations are crucial for identifying and supporting students and recent graduates with disabilities.

Moreover, the use of online platforms and resources is becoming increasingly common among State agencies. Job opportunity platforms like Handshake and Indeed are used by agencies such as the Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the Motor Vehicle Commission to connect with students and recent graduates. The New Jersey Higher Education Student Assistance Authority utilizes Handshake to provide work-based learning opportunities tailored to individual needs. These online resources help agencies broaden their reach and ensure that job opportunities are accessible to a diverse range of candidates, including those with disabilities.

In summary, the efforts across various State agencies and educational institutions reflect a strong commitment to creating an inclusive work environment for persons with disabilities. By implementing mentorship programs, internships, and continuous learning opportunities, these entities are promoting diversity and providing equal employment opportunities. The comprehensive approach to integrating the SAME program highlights the State's dedication to supporting the career development and well-being of persons with disabilities.

4. EFFORTS TO INCREASE EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

State agencies have embarked on various initiatives aimed at increasing the employment of persons with disabilities under the SAME program. These efforts reflect a broader commitment to diversity and inclusion within the State's workforce. This section of the report provides an analysis of the progress made by different agencies from July to December 2023, highlighting key achievements, challenges, and areas for improvement.

Progress and Efforts: Several agencies have demonstrated proactive approaches in their efforts to increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. The Department of Labor and Workforce Development has made significant strides in its outreach by participating in more career fairs which focus on opportunities for persons with disabilities and by enhancing human resource initiatives focused on SAME program awareness and compliance. Similarly, the Motor Vehicle Commission has actively interviewed multiple candidates with disabilities, although the hiring rate remains modest, with one new hire in the past year. These initiatives indicate a growing recognition of the importance of inclusive hiring practices.

Challenges Encountered: Despite these efforts, many agencies have faced significant challenges in their attempts to increase the employment of persons with disabilities. The Department of Transportation has highlighted issues related to the retention of SAME program employees, particularly due to the lack of self-identification of disabilities by employees. This complicates the provision of necessary accommodations and support. Furthermore, incomplete Schedule B forms have hindered accurate reporting and tracking of progress. These challenges underscore the need for better mechanisms to encourage self-identification and streamline administrative processes.

Successful Strategies: Some agencies have implemented effective strategies that have yielded positive results. The Department of Environmental Protection has included specific language in

its job postings to encourage SAME candidates to apply, resulting in a noticeable increase in applications from this group. Additionally, the Civil Service Commission's regional job fair, which attracted approximately 1,100 participants including job seekers with disabilities, stands out as a successful outreach effort. Further, the Department of Health is taking a strategic step by hiring a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Coordinator, which is expected to bolster diversity initiatives across the agency.

Plans and Recommendations: Looking ahead, several agencies are planning to refine their hiring and retention processes to better support persons with disabilities. The Department of Community Affairs and the Department of Health are reviewing their current practices and seeking feedback from employees to identify areas for improvement. The Department of Education is exploring additional job boards that focus on specific populations, and the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education has revised its recruitment workflow to better identify and accommodate applicants with disabilities.

Conclusion: State agencies have made progress in increasing the employment of persons with disabilities, though challenges persist. By addressing these challenges through focused initiatives, improved administrative processes, and continuous training, agencies can further enhance their inclusive hiring practices. Continuous training on neurodiversity and SAME compliance for hiring managers and line supervisors is recommended to assist in sustaining these efforts. The ongoing commitment to the SAME program and related diversity initiatives is essential for achieving long-term success in building a more inclusive workforce. In the next section, efforts made during the reporting period through job postings will be explored.

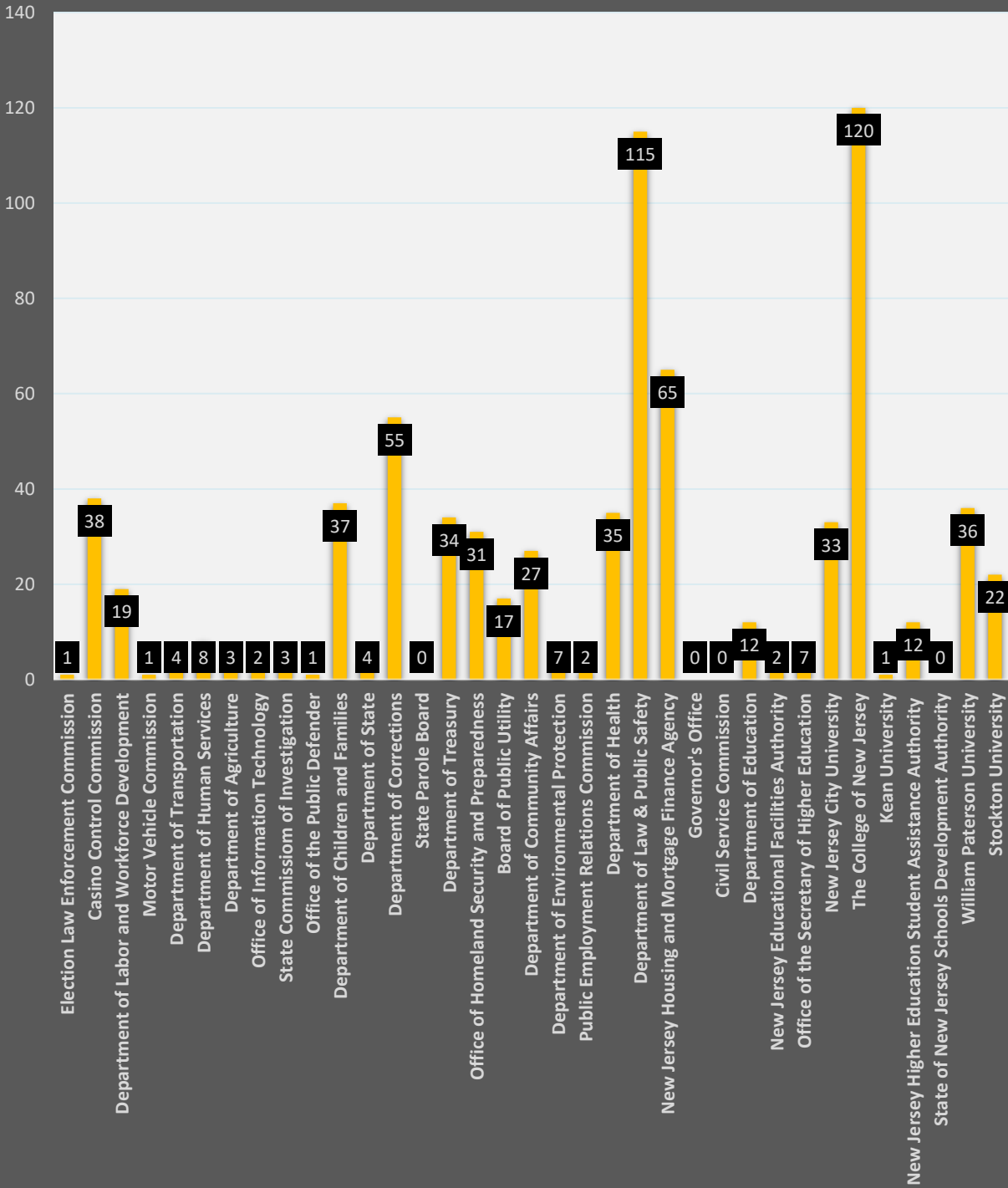
5. UNCLASSIFIED AND NONCOMPETITIVE JOB POSTINGS

The State of New Jersey is committed to fostering an inclusive and diverse workforce, welcoming all individuals, including people with disabilities, to apply for any job title within the State. This commitment ensures that opportunities are accessible to everyone, reflecting the State's dedication to equal employment. The State's policies and practices aim to create an environment where all employees can thrive and contribute their unique skills and perspectives.

As part of the SAME program, particular emphasis is placed on unclassified and noncompetitive job titles. Positions with these job titles provide accessible opportunities, tailored to individuals who may face barriers in obtaining a position in the competitive division of the career service which generally requires testing. The following graphs highlight agencies' postings of unclassified and noncompetitive job opportunities during the second half of 2023, showcasing the State's efforts to promote inclusive hiring practices and create a supportive work environment for all.

NUMBER OF UNCLASSIFIED JOB POSTINGS

754 Unclassified positions posted July to December 2023



5a. Data Analysis of Unclassified Job Postings

The data shows the number of job announcements for unclassified positions posted by 34 different New Jersey State agencies over the six-month period between July to December 2023, totaling 754 positions.

High Volume Agencies:

The College of New Jersey posted the highest number of unclassified positions at **120**. This indicates a significant recruitment effort, likely due to expansion, replacement of outgoing staff, or new initiatives requiring additional personnel.

Department of Law and Public Safety followed with **115** positions. This high number may reflect an ongoing need in the public safety and law enforcement sectors, possibly driven by increased demand for public safety services.

New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency posted **65** positions, suggesting an active phase in housing and mortgage finance, potentially related to affordable housing initiatives.

Department of Corrections posted **55** positions, indicative of staffing needs for maintaining operations within correctional facilities.

Moderate Volume Agencies:

Several agencies listed below posted between 10 and 40 positions. These numbers indicate moderate recruitment activities, possibly for specialized roles or to address specific operational needs.

- Casino Control Commission (38)**
- Department of Children and Families (37)**
- William Paterson University (36)**
- Department of the Treasury (34)**
- New Jersey City University (35)**
- Office of Homeland Security & Preparedness (31)**

Low Volume Agencies:

Listed below are agencies which posted fewer than 10 positions. These low numbers suggest limited hiring needs, potentially due to smaller organizational sizes or stable staffing levels.

- Election Law Enforcement Commission (1)**
- Motor Vehicle Commission (1)**
- Office of Public Defender (1)**
- Department of Agriculture (3)**
- Office of Information Technology (2)**
- State Commission of Investigation (3)**

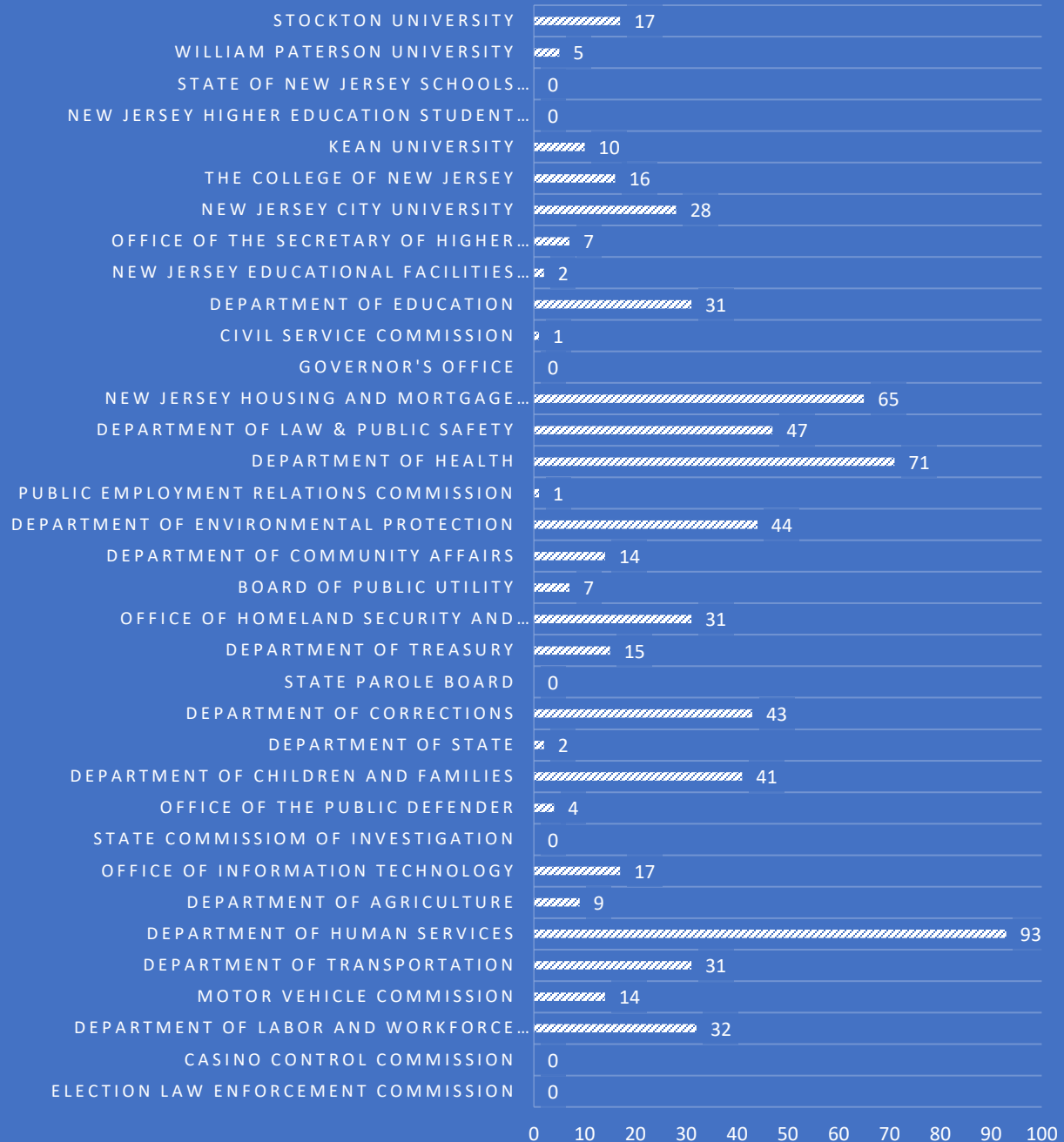
Zero Postings Agencies:

Some agencies did not post job vacancies for unclassified positions. This could indicate career service staffing need only, stable staffing levels, budget constraints, or alternative staffing strategies that do not involve posting unclassified positions. These agencies include the **State Parole Board, Governor's Office, Civil Service Commission, and the State of New Jersey Schools Development Authority.**

Conclusion: The distribution of unclassified job postings across State agencies reflects varying staffing needs, with higher numbers in educational institutions, as well as in public safety and housing. The College of New Jersey and the Department of Law and Public Safety were the most active in recruitment, suggesting significant initiatives or expansions in their program areas. Conversely, agencies with zero or very few postings may have stable staffing or different recruitment needs.

NUMBER OF NONCOMPETITIVE JOB POSTINGS

698 NON-COMPETITIVE JOB VACANCY POSITIONS JULY TO DECEMBER 2023



5b.Data Analysis of Noncompetitive Job Postings

The data shows the number of job announcements for noncompetitive positions posted by various State agencies over the six-month period between July to December 2023, totaling 698 positions.

High Volume Agencies:

Department of Human Services posted the highest number of noncompetitive positions at 93. This indicates a significant need for roles that may not require specific qualifications and are entry level and/or an urgency in filling positions to maintain or expand services.

Department of Health followed with **71** positions. This high number suggests ongoing requirements in the health sector, potentially driven by public health initiatives or expansions in healthcare services.

New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency posted **65** positions, reflecting active recruitment likely due to ongoing housing projects or financial services aimed at supporting the housing market.

Department of Law and Public Safety posted **47** positions, indicating robust hiring needs possibly associated with regulatory compliance roles or public safety programs.

Department of Environmental Protection and **Department of Corrections** posted **44** and **43** positions, respectively, highlighting significant recruitment in environmental management and correctional services.

Moderate Volume Agencies:

Several agencies listed below posted between 10 and 40 positions. These numbers suggest moderate recruitment activities within these agencies.

Department of Labor and Workforce Development (32)

Department of Transportation (31)

Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness (31)

Department of Education (31)

New Jersey City University (28)

Department of Children and Families (41)

Low Volume Agencies:

Listed below are agencies which posted fewer than 10 positions. These lower numbers indicate limited hiring needs, potentially due to smaller organizational sizes or stable staffing levels.

Department of Agriculture (9)

Office of Information Technology (17)

Office of the Public Defender (4)

Board of Public Utility (7)

Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (7)

Kean University (10)

Zero posting Agencies:

Some agencies did not post job announcements for noncompetitive positions. This could indicate stable staffing levels, budget constraints, or alternative staffing strategies that do not involve noncompetitive positions.

Election Law Enforcement Commission

Casino Control Commission

State Commission of Investigation

State Parole Board

Governor's Office

New Jersey Higher Education Student Assistance Authority

State of New Jersey Schools Development Authority

Conclusion: The distribution of noncompetitive job postings across State agencies reflects varying staffing needs, with higher numbers in human services, health, housing, and public safety. The Department of Human Services and the Department of Health were the most active in recruitment, suggesting significant ongoing initiatives or expansions in their respective areas. Conversely, agencies with zero or very few job postings likely have stable staffing or different recruitment needs.

6. ONGOING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

The data indicates that various agencies face barriers to employing people with disabilities, mainly due to lack of required qualifications of candidates, accessibility issues, social stigma, insufficient accommodations, and lack of awareness. To address these barriers, agencies are planning a range of initiatives including enhanced recruitment efforts, partnerships with disability organizations, improved accessibility and accommodations, leveraging technology for recruitment, and implementing training and awareness programs.

However, some agencies reported minimal barriers or provided limited plans for improvement, suggesting a need for more comprehensive strategies and consistent efforts across all agencies to ensure equal employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Lack of Required Qualifications: Many agencies, such as the Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the Motor Vehicle Commission, identified a lack of required education and experience as significant barriers. This indicates that individuals with disabilities might not have access to the necessary training or educational opportunities to qualify for certain positions.

Limited Accessibility and Awareness: The Department of Transportation highlighted issues related to limited accessibility, including transportation challenges and a lack of awareness about available resources. Additionally, the Department of Community Affairs pointed out that individuals might be reluctant to self-identify as disabled due to fear of stigma or career repercussions.

Social Barriers and Stigma: Social barriers and stigma were noted by several departments, such as the Department of Transportation and the Department of Environmental Protection. There is a clear need for improved sensitivity and awareness among employees and management to create a more inclusive environment.

Lack of Reasonable Accommodations: Several departments, including the Department of Children and Families and the Office of the Public Defender, mentioned challenges in providing reasonable accommodations or finding candidates who can perform essential job functions with or without accommodations. This suggests that current accommodation practices may be insufficient or not well-communicated.

Recruitment and Outreach Challenges: A recurring theme is the difficulty in reaching and recruiting individuals with disabilities. Departments like the Department of Corrections and the State Parole Board reported minimal applicants from the SAME program, indicating a need for more effective outreach and recruitment strategies. However, it is noted that candidates for many public safety positions are subject to psychological and medical examinations. Applicants must be psychologically and medically fit to effectively perform the duties of the position.

7. PLANS FOR EXPANDING AND IMPROVING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

In an effort to enhance and expand employment opportunities, various state agencies are implementing a range of strategic initiatives designed to increase inclusivity and accessibility in the workforce. These plans include strengthening recruitment efforts through partnerships with community organizations and educational institutions. Additionally, agencies are forging collaborations with disability organizations to promote job vacancies and work-based learning opportunities. A key focus is also on improving accessibility to identify and remove workplace barriers. Training and awareness programs are also being developed to educate hiring panels on disability issues and foster a more inclusive hiring process. These efforts underscore a collective commitment to creating more equitable employment opportunities for all.

Enhanced Recruitment Efforts: Many agencies plan to improve their recruitment efforts by expanding outreach to community organizations and educational institutions. For example, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development aims to promote career and developmental opportunities through focused outreach activities.

Partnerships with Disability Organizations: Departments such as the Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Transportation are planning to partner with organizations that specialize in disability employment to advertise job vacancies and create work-based learning opportunities.

Improving Accessibility and Accommodations: The Department of Human Services is hiring a Coordinator to oversee ergonomic assessments and accommodations, which could help identify and remove barriers for employees with disabilities. In October 2023, the Civil Service Commission introduced a dedicated line through its Information Center. The public can speak with a member of staff regarding the SAME program at (609) 292-4144 or via email at CSC-Same@csc.nj.gov. These efforts reflect a proactive approach to making workplaces and outreach to the public more accessible.

Utilizing Technology for Recruitment: The Department of Education plans to use an Applicant Tracking System to post job openings on multiple job boards, including those focusing on specific populations such as veterans and individuals with disabilities. This approach leverages technology to reach a broader audience.

Training and Awareness Programs: Agencies like the Department of Environmental Protection are developing training aimed at educating interview panels on disability issues and creating a more inclusive hiring process. This highlights the importance of ongoing education and awareness to combat stigma and improve employment practices.

8. RETENTION RATES OF APPOINTEES:

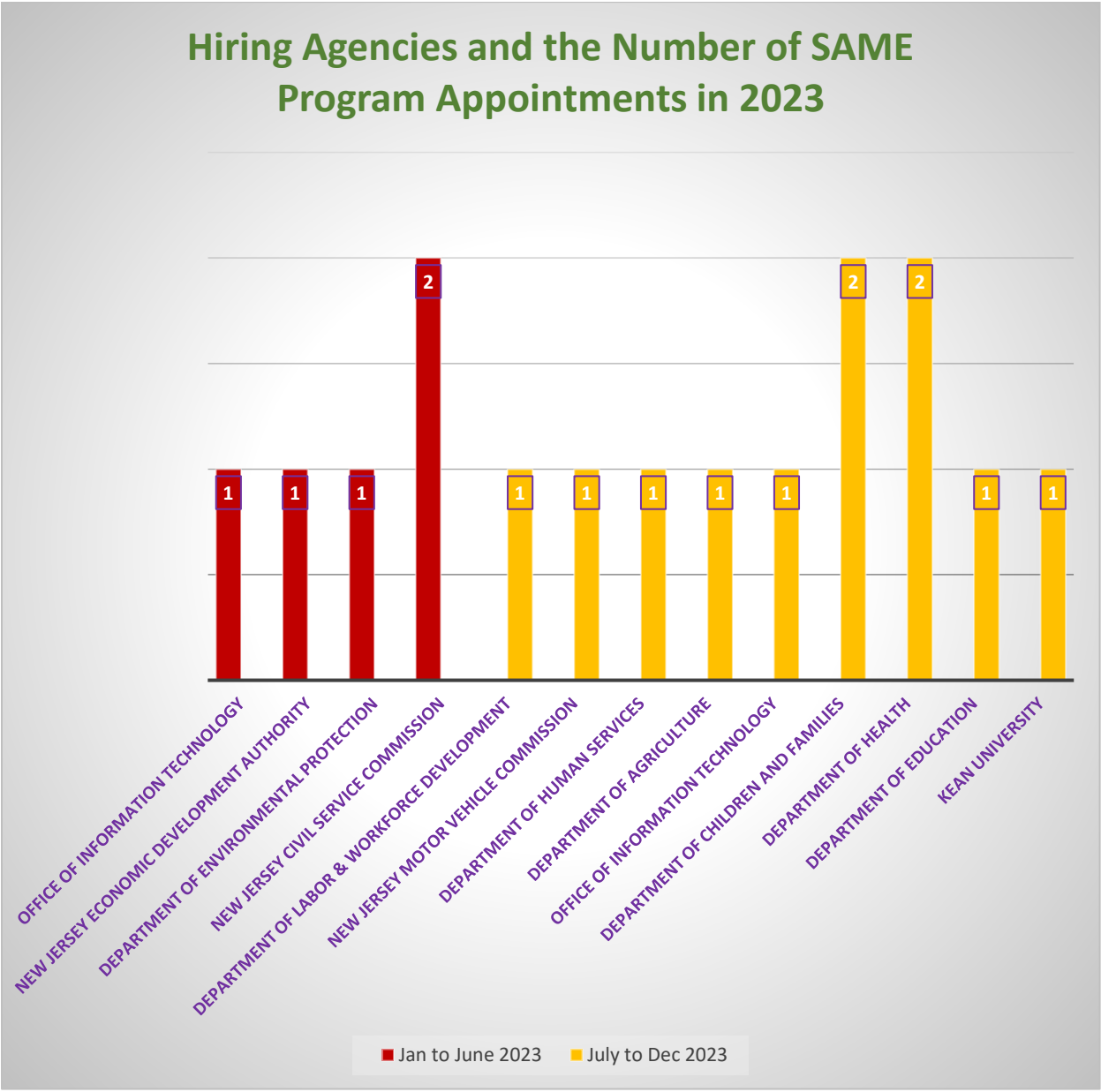
It is important to note that the State of New Jersey does not capture data on disability at employment. For the SAME program, agencies are attempting to include this information on a voluntary basis from current and new hires. The following information is based on SAME program employment from July to December 2023. For this reporting period, 11 applicants were appointed. The chart below lists the agencies and its hires for 2023. A total of 16 SAME program applicants were appointed for the year.

The information provided for SAME hires in 2023 offers an overview of the retention rates across various agencies in New Jersey. A stark contrast is evident, as a few agencies boast a perfect retention rate of 100%, while the majority report a 0% retention rate. Notably, the Departments of Labor and Workforce Development, Human Services, and Agriculture, as well as the Motor Vehicle Commission, Office of Information Technology, and Civil Service Commission, all achieved 100% retention, reflecting their ability to maintain stability, and possibly indicating strong internal management and job satisfaction among their employees.

In contrast, many other agencies, including the Election Law Enforcement Commission, Casino Control Commission, Department of Transportation, and Department of Health, have reported a 0% retention rate, as they have not hired any staff under the SAME program.

The disparate retention rates across State agencies suggest a need for a closer examination of the factors contributing to employment and retention under the SAME program. Agencies with retention rates might offer insights into best practices and strategies that could be implemented across other departments. Conversely, identifying and addressing the challenges faced by agencies to avoid no or low retention rates will be crucial in fostering a more stable and effective public sector workforce in New Jersey.

NUMBER OF SAME PROGRAM APPLICANTS APPOINTED IN 2023



9. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SAME PROGRAM CHANGES

Several state agencies have put forward a series of recommendations aimed at improving the SAME program and fostering a more inclusive and accessible work environment for individuals with disabilities. These proposals collectively aim to improve access, equity, and support for employees with disabilities within state agencies.

The **Department of Labor and Workforce Development** recommends a crucial change in the qualification process for job applicants. Instead of requiring applicants to request an interview, the policy should ensure that they are directly provided the opportunity to interview. This adjustment aims to remove barriers for applicants who may lack the necessary information or resources to request an interview, thereby aligning the policy more closely with the legislation's intent to facilitate equal employment opportunities.

The **Department of Transportation** emphasizes the importance of annual reevaluation of job specifications and vacancy announcements. This reevaluation is intended to ensure that no artificial barriers are preventing equal employment opportunities for persons with disabilities or any other eligible employees. By regularly updating job criteria, the department seeks to create a more inclusive hiring process that accommodates diverse applicants.

The **Department of Human Services** proposes the implementation of flexible schedules and the expansion of remote work possibilities for employees with disabilities. This recommendation aims to create a more accommodating work environment that recognizes the unique needs of employees with disabilities. By allowing for greater flexibility, the department hopes to enhance job satisfaction and productivity among these employees.

The **Department of Children and Families** points out that the number of persons with disabilities is likely underreported due to employees' reluctance to identify as disabled or the inaccessibility of the survey. To address this, the Department suggests making the survey accessible online and reformatting it to ask if employees meet certain criteria rather than directly asking if they are disabled. Additionally, they recommend sharing survey responses with appointing authorities to better track and support employees with disabilities.

The **Department of Treasury** suggests shifting to annual reporting instead of quarterly or biannual reports to streamline processes. Additionally, it proposes that the Civil Service Commission could provide more resources and coordinated recruitment activities, such as disability-focused career fairs, to attract more applicants with disabilities. These recommendations aim to enhance the recruitment and retention of employees with disabilities across state agencies.

Conclusion: The recommendations from various State agencies highlight a concerted effort to improve employment opportunities and workplace inclusivity for individuals with disabilities. By removing barriers in the interview process, regularly updating job specifications, offering flexible work arrangements, making disability surveys more accessible, and enhancing recruitment strategies, the State can foster a more inclusive work environment. These changes are essential for ensuring that all employees, regardless of their abilities, have equal opportunities to thrive in their careers.

It is important to note that all job fairs hosted by the Civil Service Commission are inclusive of the SAME program and opened to all residents of New Jersey, including people with disabilities. It is advisable that all agencies advance the SAME program through their various offices and all avenues, especially when promoting a job fair of which they are hosting or attending.