



## OFFICE OF GOVERNOR **ROY COOPER**

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### **Governor Cooper Announces New Career Coaching Program to Support State Employees with Autism Spectrum Disorder**

*Pilot program launching in July will provide career coaching to support career success and advancement*

**RALEIGH:** In recognition of [World Autism Month in North Carolina](#) and to help people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) succeed in the workplace, Governor Roy Cooper has announced a pilot program to provide career coaching to state employees with ASD who need support in applying for promotions or job changes within state government.

Projected to launch in July, the Career Advancement Resources for Employees on the Spectrum (CARES) initiative will provide eligible employees with up to five hours of career coaching. The year-long pilot program will be funded by the NC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and provided by [UNC TEACCH Autism Center](#) and the [Autism Society of North Carolina](#). CARES supports Governor Cooper's [Executive Order 92: Employment First for North Carolinians with Disabilities](#), which recently marked its third-year anniversary.

"North Carolina's workforce is made stronger by its diversity, and our talented employees on the autism spectrum offer valuable skills and perspectives," Governor Cooper said. "This innovative program will help us support and retain these employees and better serve our state."

"Individuals with ASD bring a unique perspective to the job and often offer exceptional problem-solving skills, focus and productivity," said Barbara Gibson, North Carolina State Human Resources Director. "It is not unusual to hear from employers that individuals with ASD are dependable, loyal and have lower absenteeism rates than neurotypical workers."

"People with ASD deserve an equal chance to experience the dignity of work in an environment that supports them," said Kathie Trotter, Director of the DHHS Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Services. “Employers noted little to no additional costs incurred when employing an adult with ASD above that associated with a new employee. Individuals with ASD diversify the workplace, offering organizations a competitive edge.”

CARES career counselors will work in individualized sessions supporting efforts to hone management and interpersonal skills to be more effective with supervisors and colleagues, establish new and obtainable career goals, discover solutions to current employment obstacles, develop an employment action plan, provide support to make any changes needed, create a more equitable culture, advocate for the resources needed to succeed, empower the individual to work with current management and future teams and facilitate change and understanding.

CARES grew from [Linking North Carolina with Innovative Talent](#) (LiNC-IT), a collaborative program of the [NC Business Committee for Education](#) (NCBCE). LiNC-IT provides internships for early career individuals with ASD and helps employers develop neurodiversity programs.

About 1 in 44 children have been identified with autism spectrum disorder [according to](#) estimates from CDC’s Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network. Compared to other areas in the U.S. that were monitored for ASD prevalence, [North Carolina](#) had the highest proportion of children with ASD who had received a comprehensive evaluation performed by age 3. However, [only 23%](#) of autistic adults with average or above-average intellectual abilities have a paid job in the community.

“A small investment or commitment by employers to create and maintain effective employer programs offers a solution to the under employment of autistic adults and meets the needs of businesses every day,” said Laura Klinger, Director of UNC TEACCH. “In partnership with the Autism Society of North Carolina, we are committed to working collaboratively with the State of North Carolina to address the employment needs of autistic adults in our state.”

More information on the CARES pilot program, including resources for state employees interested in participating in the program, will be available from the Office of State Human Resources closer to the July launch.

Employers are encouraged to explore similar supports for current and prospective employees with ASD including job coaching resources and internship programs. Employers interested in providing internship opportunities for people with ASD are encouraged to contact NCBCE at [ncbceadmin@nc.gov](mailto:ncbceadmin@nc.gov). Individuals interested participating in an internship may apply through the [LiNC-IT website](#).

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