

## The Crisis in Hiring, Training, and Retaining Direct Support Professionals (DSPs)

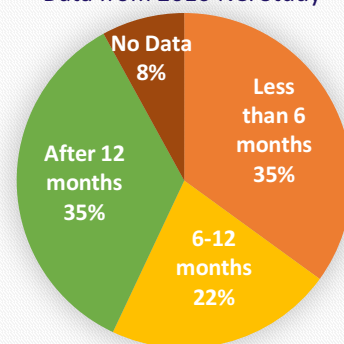
On February 14, 2018, the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities (PCPID) released its 2017 report, *America's Direct Support Workforce Crisis: Effects on People with Intellectual Disabilities, Families, Communities and the U.S. Economy*. The report stated that in HCBS settings, the average Direct Support Professionals (DSP) wage is \$10.72, most DSPs work two or three jobs, and the average annual DSP turnover rate is 45%. Job vacancies are estimated in excess of 9% nationally.<sup>1,2</sup> In turn, the workforce shortage slows the movement of waiting lists, increases potential for incidents of abuse and neglect, and increases overtime payments to workers forced to cover extra shifts, while causing providers to divert resources to recruiting and training staff.

### Factors contributing to this crisis:

- The average turnover rate for DSPs in 2016 ranged by state from 24.1% to 69.1%. The national average was 45.5%.<sup>3</sup>
- Across all service types and settings, DSPs received a median hourly wage of \$11.41/hour.<sup>4</sup>
- DSPs often receive insufficient training and supervision.
- Responsibilities for DSPs exceed those of entry-level jobs in other fields paying same rate. Hours and shifts vary.
- No career path or financial incentives for increased education and training.
- Salaries are set by Medicaid and state governments, not the open market. Providers don't set salaries, and compete with other providers to attract and retain competent staff.

### **DSP Turnover by Tenure Length**

Data from 2016 NCI Study



*The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates an additional 1.1 million workers of this kind will be needed by 2024 - a 26 percent increase over 2014. Yet, the population of potential workers who tend to fill these jobs, overwhelmingly women ages 25 to 64, will increase at a much slower rate.<sup>5</sup>*

### Proposals to alleviate the crisis:

- Allocate federal and state funding at levels sufficient to provide living wages and the benefits necessary to attract and retain qualified DSPs.
- Set standards for minimum training required to serve as a DSP. Set industry standards for different levels of credentialing and certification.<sup>6</sup>
- Create career opportunities through education, credentialing, and competency-based training. Encourage promotion for specialization and length of service with a particular company or provider.
- Provide better mentoring and supervision for DSPs by ensuring that frontline supervisors are experienced and trained in direct support.
- Foster better care environments by supporting staff and ensuring their safety, as well as the safety and care of the residents. Ensure that clients are given the right supports, placed in the most appropriate settings. Match staff competencies to meet the client's level of need and ability.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.acl.gov/sites/default/files/programs/2018-02/2017%20PCPID%20Full%20Report\\_0.PDF](https://www.acl.gov/sites/default/files/programs/2018-02/2017%20PCPID%20Full%20Report_0.PDF) (Executive Summary, p. 8)

<sup>2</sup> An article in the Columbus Dispatch reported statewide vacancy rates in Ohio at 10-20%: <http://www.dispatch.com/news/20180429/crisis-in-care--number-of-support-workers-for-disabled-plummets-as-demand-rises>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.nationalcoreindicators.org/upload/core-indicators/2016\\_Staff\\_Stability\\_Survey\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](https://www.nationalcoreindicators.org/upload/core-indicators/2016_Staff_Stability_Survey_Report_Final.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.* (The \$11.41 listed here was measured in all settings, not just HCBS as referenced in the PCPID report.)

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.bls.gov/emp/ep\\_table\\_102.htm](https://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_table_102.htm)

<sup>6</sup> The National Alliance of Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) currently offers 3 levels of credentialing. <https://nadsp.org/about-dsp-credentialing/>