

The National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals

WHO WE ARE

NADSP was founded in 1996 by a small and dedicated group of visionary professionals, committed to the provision of quality services for people with disabilities. The group's best-known visionary was John F. Kennedy, Jr., who was the President of Reaching Up and working closely with the New York State Consortium for the Study of Disabilities at the City University of New York. The founders shared the vision that improving personal outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) will be realized when government invests in the professional development, professional competency and the professional identity of the direct support workforce and understands the increasing demands and higher levels of expectation that is continually being placed upon it.

NADSP values the full participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of community life through the provision of person-centered supports. We believe that high quality support requires all professionals to follow the individual path suggested by the unique gifts, preferences, and needs of each person they support, and to walk in partnership with the person, and those who love him or her, toward a life of opportunity, well-being, freedom, and contribution.

OUR MISSION



To elevate the status of direct support professionals by improving practice standards, promoting system reform, and advancing their knowledge, skills and values.

OUR VISION



A world with a highly qualified and professional direct support workforce that partners with, supports and empowers people with disabilities to lead a life of their choosing.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- All direct support professionals benefit from access to well-constructed educational experiences (e.g., in-service training, continuing and higher education) and lifelong learning;
- Certifying highly qualified workers incentivizes continuing education, increased compensation, and access to career pathways for direct support professionals thereby improving retention;
- Values and ethical decision making can be learned and infused into daily practice; and
- Strengthening relationships and partnerships between direct support professionals, self-advocates, and other consumer groups and families improves the quality of support.

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Gain insight into the DSP workforce ...

Direct Support Professionals

WHO ARE DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS?

Direct support professionals (DSPs) assist people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities in realizing their full potential and becoming valued and participating members of their communities. Their work is complex and goes well beyond caregiving, requiring skills including independent problem solving, decision making, behavioral assessment and prevention, medication administration, health and allied health treatment, teaching new skills, crisis prevention and intervention and more.



Nationwide, there are roughly **1.4 million DSPs** in the I/DD sector of a 4.5 million caregiving workforce.



The median hourly wage for DSPs is **\$13.36**.



The turnover rate for DSPs averaged **43.6%**.



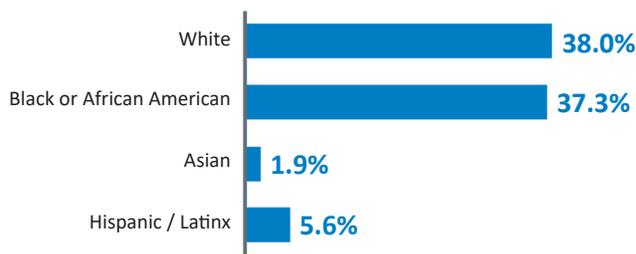
16.4% of part-time DSP positions were vacant.
12.3% of full-time DSP positions were vacant.

The job duties of a DSP may resemble those of teachers, nurses, social workers, counselors, physical or occupational therapists, dieticians, chauffeurs, personal trainers, and others. Their work requires strong communication skills and the ability to build relationships with the people they support and their families. DSPs may work in family or individual homes, intermediate care facilities, residential group homes, community job sites, vocational and day programs, and other locations. Their work is determined by the unique needs and preferences of the individuals they support and they are held to high ethical and professional standards.

DSP DEMOGRAPHICS



71.3% of DSPs identify as female.



demographic and rates/wages: NCI, 2021



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Direct Support Professionals need a ... pathway for career development and advancement

Landmark federal policies, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Developmental Disabilities Assistance & Bill of Rights Act, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Settings Rule, and the US Department of Labor Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), have set forth standards aimed at making competitive integrated employment, full community inclusion, independent living and optimal self-sufficiency of people with intellectual, developmental, and other significant disabilities a reality. The availability of a qualified, competent, and stable Direct Support Professional (DSP) workforce plays an important role in supporting people to accomplish these goals. It is critical that DSPs have the competence, confidence, ethical decision-making skills, and guidance necessary to provide quality support, receive compensation that is commensurate with job responsibilities and have access to a career path aligned with ongoing professional development.

POLICY CHALLENGE: NO FEDERAL STANDARDS OR CENTRALIZED INVESTMENTS IN DEVELOPING A FIRST-IN-CLASS DSP WORKFORCE

Building and promoting an adequate, well-qualified, and competent direct service workforce has proven to be a particularly challenging task given the lack of a strong federal commitment towards building a first-in-class national Direct Care workforce. We need federal legislation coupled with a strong influx of federal funding to build DSP workforce, including establishing a career pathway and solid investments to assure that DSPs possess the capacity, competency, health & well-being to meet growing demand and provide the highest-quality of Medicaid-funded home and community-based services for people with I/DD and other significant disabilities.

At the same time, increased federal investments in people with disabilities, their families, and the direct support workforce is critically important. It is imperative that Congress support an increase of \$150 billion for Medicaid HCBS, which provide the supports people with disabilities need to be a part of their community, and better pay for the workers that support them.

For years, the service system that people with intellectual and development disabilities (IDD) and their families rely on, Medicaid, has needed an investment. People are stuck on waiting lists for HCBS, the direct care workforce is underpaid, and too often, unpaid family caregivers are filling in the gaps.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Please cosponsor the **Supporting Our Direct Care Workforce and Family Caregivers Act (S.2344)** or the **Direct Creation, Advancement, and Retention of Employment (CARE) Opportunity Act of 2021 (H.R. 2999)**. These bills would assure stronger federal guidance and investments in creating a highly-qualified direct care workforce to meet the needs of America's Care Sector. Also, please commit to assuring access to high-quality HCBS and investments in the DSP workforce by supporting an increase of \$150 Billion for the expansion and enhancement of Medicaid Home & Community Based Services.



Direct Support Professionals need a ...

Standard Occupational Classification

The National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) is leading a nationwide effort to establish a Direct Support Professional (DSP) Standard Occupational Classification (SOC).

WHAT IS A DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL?

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POLICY CHALLENGE: LACK OF SOC RECOGNITION FOR THE DSP PROFESSION

Currently, DSPs are inaccurately classified in labor reports under other positions, such as a nursing assistant (CNA), home health aide (HHA) or personal care assistant (PCA). The chart below compares the required competencies of a DSP to other direct care jobs, as well as licensed practical nurse (LPN), demonstrating the differences of the depth and breadth for a DSP's work. We are in the midst of an acute shortage of DSPs. The standard process for considering new SOCs is every 8-10 years, with the next proposed revision scheduled for 2028. We do not have time to wait and are therefore seeking legislation to address the issue.

NADSP Competencies	DSP	CNA	HHA	PCA	LPN
Participant Empowerment	X				
Community and Service Networking	X				
Advocacy	X				
Vocational, Educational and Career Support	X				
Organizational Participation	X				
Building and Maintaining Friendships/Relationships	X				
Provide Person-Centered Support	X				
Facilitation of Services	X			X	
Crisis Prevention and Intervention	X			X	
Education, Training and Self-Development	X	X			X
Community Living Skills and Supports	X	X	X		
Assessment	X	X		X	X
Communication	X	X	X	X	X
Documentation	X	X	X	X	X
Supporting Health and Wellness	X	X	X	X	X

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Please cosponsor and support **S.1437 - Recognizing the Role of Direct Support Professionals Act in the Senate** and **HR. 4779 Recognizing the Role of Direct Support Professionals Act in the House**.

