



For people with intellectual  
and developmental disabilities



# POSITION STATEMENT

## Direct Support Professionals

Policy makers and provider organizations must establish and support a stable, competent, adequately compensated workforce of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). Doing so ensures the quality and continuity of the community services that support people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities<sup>1</sup>.

### Issue

The lack of quality and continuity and the often inadequate amount of support they receive from DSPs is a key factor in the failure of some of our constituents to thrive in the community. Inadequate compensation hampers both recruitment and retention. Inadequate funding for training of DSPs and their supervisors as well as lack of sufficient supervision threatens health and safety. It also hinders access to quality services. Annual turnover rates among DSPs of 35% to 70% are not unusual.

### Position

Stable, caring, competent, creative, adequately compensated, and qualified DSPs are essential to providing safe and effective supports and services for our constituents. Such a workforce requires:

- **Adequate Compensation.** DSPs must receive wages and benefits sufficient to attract and retain the workforce to fully support people living in the community
- **Education.** Government should support and provider agencies must be able to deliver high quality training covering the essential knowledge, ethical principles and practices, and skills necessary for effective direct support. Employers must educate DSPs in the philosophy and values that all people are members of the community and should have control over their lives.
- **Workforce sufficiency.** National, state, and local private and public entities must engage in policy initiatives to increase the number of people employed in direct support work.

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- **Management.** Organizations must support DSPs in their professional and personal development.
- **Information Availability.** Organizations and individuals that employ DSPs must have access to high quality information, technical assistance, and training materials to enable them to recruit, train, manage, and retain a high-quality DSP workforce.
- **Quality Assurance.** Federal and state quality assurance programs must assess and monitor DSP vacancy rates, retention, and

competence as part of licensure, in order to recognize positive performance and to direct assistance to those with unacceptable performance. DSP's should not have a documented history of abuse, neglect or a criminal record.

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<sup>1</sup>"People with intellectual disabilities and/or developmental disabilities" refers to those defined by AAIDD classification and DSM IV. In everyday language they are frequently referred to as people with cognitive, intellectual and/or developmental disabilities although the professional and legal definitions of those terms both include others and exclude some defined by DSM IV.

Adopted:

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