

WANTED: A FAIR DAY'S PAY FOR A FAIR DAY'S WORK

“One might summarize the job description of the direct support worker as requiring the wisdom of Solomon, the patience of Job and the caring of Florence Nightingale.”

Clarence Sundrum, Governor
Cuomo's Special Advisor on
Vulnerable Persons

Direct Support Professionals currently earn on average between \$10 and \$13 per hour, yet the demands of the job far exceed their compensation.

Direct Support Professionals are the men and women who carry out a myriad of responsibilities to ensure that people with developmental disabilities live safe, fulfilling lives.

There are over 110,000 Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), with 97,000 working for not for profit agencies. Direct Support Professionals are the lynchpin of the system of supports for more than 130,000 people with developmental disabilities in New York. They enable individuals with disabilities to live self-directed, meaningful and productive lives and are key to making it possible for an

individual with disabilities to live in the community. In order to become a DSP, an individual must complete a series of pre-employment requirements regulated by the state that include fingerprinting and criminal and various background checks.

WHO THEY ARE

- Direct Support Professionals and other staff who work in programs that support adults and children with developmental disabilities are a diverse group. 73% are women, many of whom are single mothers. 50.8% are either black or Latino.
- DSPs are the people who provide services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- DSPs are professionals who are highly trained in a wide variety of critical areas that include medication administration, first aid, CPR, safe behavioral de-escalation and intervention, safety, including OSHA regulations, fire drills/emergency evacuation procedures, on-the-job Core Competencies, and Code of Ethics developed by NADSP. DSPs must be knowledgeable of the laws, regulations and procedures designed to protect individuals.
- Being a DSP is physically strenuous work. It often involves the lifting and moving of individuals to meet their mobility needs and the performance of daily activities.

WHAT THEY DO

- DSPs are proficient in understanding and communicating complex information to others via daily logs, progress reports and electronic means. They must deal with an enormous burden of paperwork essential to regulatory compliance and service delivery documentation used for billing Medicaid.
- DSPs provide services and supports for activities of daily living including meal preparation, grooming and toileting.
- DSPs are responsible for medication administration. They receive extensive training leading to certification and are retested annually.
- DSPs are also responsible for tube feeding, diabetic & wound care, oxygen administration and must be knowledgeable of the operation of durable medical equipment including that are used for lifting, bathing and transporting individuals with developmental disabilities.
- DSPs transport individuals with disabilities to all activities throughout the community.
- DSPs teach personal care skills, money management and social skills.
- DSPs support the delivery of physical and behavioral health services in both routine and crisis situations.
- DSPs form close, trusted relationships with individuals with disabilities and their families, making community living in New York State a reality.
- DSPs respect the human dignity and uniqueness of the people they support and serve as advocates through the promotion of human and civil rights.

WE CALL ON NEW YORK STATE TO GIVE DSPS AND OTHER WORKERS WHO SUPPORT CHILDREN AND ADULTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES A “FAIR DAY'S PAY FOR A FAIR DAY'S WORK.”

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DIRECT CARE STAFF SHORTAGES GROWING VACANCY & TURNOVER SURVEY

Not-for-profit OPWDD provider agencies that support people with developmental disabilities were surveyed to provide calendar year 2015 data on the growing turnover and vacancy rates for professional direct care staff (DSPs) and other support staff. Last year we collected 2014 data on the same questions to allow the measurement of workforce changes over time.

142 agencies in all regions of New York State responded to the survey. More than half had also responded to the 2015 survey, which had 136 respondents. Respondents had a total of 66,567 full and part-time DSPs and other support staff.



2015 VACANCY RATE:

Respondents had a **9.3% vacancy rate** for professional direct care staff (DSPs) and other support staff, which was **20% higher** than the 2014 rate of 7.76%.

2015 TURNOVER RATE:

Respondents had a **23.07% one-year turnover rate** for professional direct care staff (DSPs) and other support staff, which was **21% higher** than the 2014 rate of 19.05%.

2015 OVERTIME HOURS:

Respondents paid for **6,442,594 hours of overtime** for professional direct care staff (DSPs) and other support staff, which was **13.5% higher** than 2014's 5,673,787 overtime hours.

2015 WORKFORCE DEMOGRAPHICS:

Respondents workforce of professional direct care staff (DSPs) and other support staff is:

- 73% women
- 42.3% black/African American
- 8.5% Hispanic/ Latino

REGIONAL VARIATION:

- All regions were relatively consistent in the percentage of women employed in these positions.
- Region 1 (NYC and LI) had the highest proportion of minority workers (50% black/African American and 11.6% Hispanic).



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DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL (DSP) STABILIZATION FUNDING

Not-for-profit OPWDD funded provider agencies provide about 85% of the needed day-to-day services to the 130,000 people with developmental disabilities in NYS. Stabilization funding is necessary to help these organizations provide a living wage for their tens of thousands of professional direct care staff (DSPs) and other support staff. More than 90 percent of the funding comes from government to pay salaries for staff who care for New Yorkers with autism, serious brain injury, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities who have the most important jobs at our organizations. The current low wages have led to a crisis for attracting and retaining staff, destabilizing the workforce and threatening the ability to sustain the supports people with disabilities and their families require.



Caring for people with complex needs is a rewarding yet difficult job which requires a high level of responsibility and skill. Years of government funding freezes and sparse increases mean our employees no longer earn a living wage. We were once an employer of choice and now we can't compete with fast food restaurants and big box stores.

CONTINUE MINIMUM WAGE FUNDING

New York State has begun to provide funding to transition employees who work with people with developmental disabilities up to the new minimum wage and this phase-in funding must be continued and included in subsequent state budgets. But these are not minimum wage jobs!

PROPOSED 2017-2018 STATE BUDGET STABILIZATION FUNDING

To address the current 9.3% vacancy rate and 23.07% one-year turnover rate for professional direct care and other support staff, government not-for-profit provider stabilization funding will transition these staff to an hourly **living wage** that exceeds the minimum wage over the next six years. When the stabilization funding is fully implemented, starting salaries will be \$17.72 in the NYC/ Long Island region and \$15.54 in other parts of NYS.

COST OF PROPOSAL

An investment of \$45 million in additional state funding per year, reaching \$270 million in the sixth year, is needed to achieve a living wage.
(Funds to be matched by an equal amount of federal Medicaid funds)

The total investment to achieve the living wage will equate to a 2.3% annual increase each year for the next 6 years for OPWDD services provided by not-for-profit agencies.

LIVING WAGE CALCULATION

The living wage model is a market-based approach that draws upon geographically specific expenditure data related to a family's basic needs, such as food, child care, health insurance, housing, and transportation. **The model shows the minimum full time salary for meeting the basic necessities, without needing public assistance or suffering housing or food insecurity.**