

# The Illinois Direct Support Professional Crisis: *The Inability to Recruit and Retain Staff to Work with People with Developmental Disabilities*

Value the Work -  
*Value Their Lives*

## What's at stake?

The health, safety and well-being of people with developmental disabilities is at high risk due to Direct Support Professional workforce crisis brought on by years of insufficient rates which have rendered it nearly impossible to hire and retain qualified staff.



Raise the Wage  
for Direct Support  
Professionals!

**Say YES to House Bill  
5931 and Senate Bill 2952**

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It has been 8 years since the Illinois' state government increased Medicaid rates for Developmental Disability services, even though inflation grew at 14% during that period.



*“The DSPs that care for my son are his lifeline. Every time one of them leaves for a higher paying job, I feel that we have to start all over again teaching staff about how to best ensure his health and safety, and that of his housemates too.”* **George Hardwidge, Parent**

## Executive Summary

- **House Bill 5931** and **Senate Bill 2952** have been introduced to increase starting wages of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) to \$15.00 per hour.
- In Illinois, over 27,000 people with developmental disabilities live in apartments, group homes and other residential programs. They learn in community-based centers and specialized programs. They volunteer and work in satisfying and productive jobs that benefit their communities.



- On January 7, 2016 a federal monitor found the State of Illinois non-compliant with the Ligas Consent Decree, a court order which ensures access to community care for individuals with developmental disabilities. The monitor found that community agencies' inability to hire DSPs had **decreased service quality and slowed the development of new services and supports.**

- The Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) in community agencies provide the foundation for community living. They ensure the health, safety and

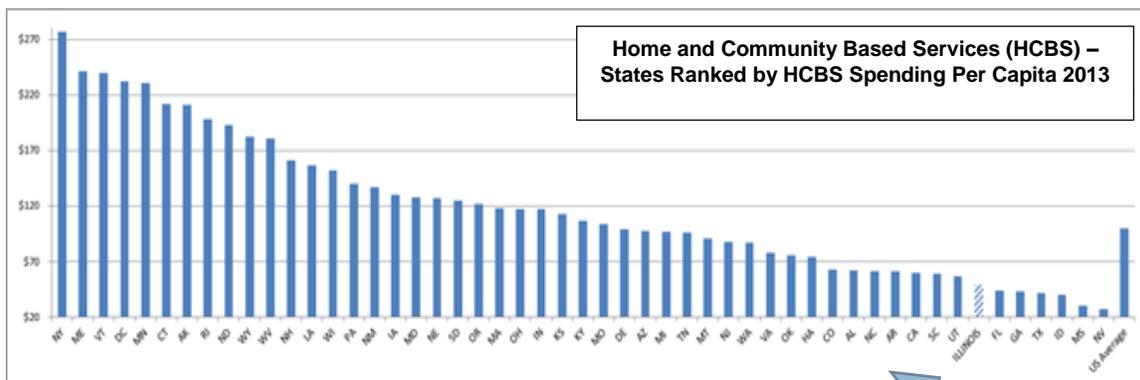
well-being of people with developmental disabilities by providing daily personal care, teaching life skills, and supporting people to be actively engaged and working in their community.

- Successful DSP applicants must meet rigorous employment requirements including interpersonal skills, background checks, physical exams, literacy requirements and possess a GED or high school diploma. Applicants must be 18 years of age or older.
- The work of DSPs is often physically demanding, emotionally draining and includes working with individuals with challenging and sometimes destructive behaviors.
- Funding for community programs that support people with developmental disabilities, including the wages of DSPs, comes from the Illinois Medicaid program. **Illinois spends very little on these services compared to other states,** consistently ranking near the bottom in national comparisons.
- **It has been 8 years since the Illinois' state government increased Medicaid rates for these services, even though inflation grew at 14% during that period.** Years of insufficient state funding without any rate increases has resulted in unacceptable wages for DSPs.

*"In my 40+ years working in the disabilities field in Illinois, I have never encountered such a staff recruitment problem. I would characterize it as a desperate situation." – Community provider quoted in the Ligas Court Monitor Report.*

- The average wage for DSPs working in a community agency is \$9.35/hour, or \$19,448/year, which is **less than the federal poverty level for a family of three**.
- The salaries of DSPs are matched by the federal Medicaid program. This means that the total cost to the state to increase wages is reduced by 50%.
- Chicago increased its minimum wage to \$10.00/hr. on July 1, 2015; this will increase to \$13.00/hr. over the next three years. Community providers offering services in Chicago have not had their rates increased to pay for this regulatory change.
- The “Fight for 15 Campaign” is driving up wages in the retail and fast food industries. Walmart has recently hiked its entry wage level to \$10.00/hr.
- Competition for personnel now means agencies are experiencing a staffing crisis, with **vacancy rates currently as high as 30%**.
- Because of the learning and adaptive impairments of many of the persons served, staff stability and continuity is vital. It is unfortunate that many providers are now resorting to temporary staffing services in an effort to continue to provide services.
- Increasing DSP wages to \$15/hr. will ensure the qualified, experienced and stable workforce required to safeguard the health, safety and well-being of people with disabilities.

**Without a substantial increase in state funding to allow for increased wages for DSPs, the staff vacancy crisis in community agencies poses a constantly growing threat to the health and safety of people with disabilities and will inevitably result in tragedies that could have been prevented.**



## Who are Direct Support Professionals?

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) assist people with developmental disabilities in leading productive lives and participating fully in their communities. Over 34,000 DSPs are employed by community organizations to provide support services to many of Illinois' most vulnerable citizens – including those with autism, cerebral palsy, seizure disorders and intellectual impairments. DSPs work in group residential settings, apartments and community-based homes. They also teach in adult learning centers and support people who have satisfying jobs in a variety of settings. They are caring and committed staff members who often work with those who have medical needs and challenging, sometimes destructive, behaviors. Many DSPs work with people with disabilities that require round-the-clock care. They find their work fulfilling and rewarding. Many DSPs have made their work a career, not just a job.

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*“For me, the people who work with me are my lifeline. I was trapped by autism when I lost my speaking voice, until I started typing to communicate. Now I am able to express myself and make my choices known and voice heard. But what if nobody was to listen? When staff leave it can seem like my voice is being sent away again. DSPs deserve to be paid a fair and good wage so that they can stay and live happy lives, like the lives they gave all of us.”*

**-Christopher Jorwic, Self-Advocate, Elmhurst**

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Unfortunately, because of the low wages and years without a pay increase, many talented and dedicated DSPs have left the field because they cannot make a living or raise a family on the current wage. Today, many other talented and capable DSP applicants are declining job offers because of the poverty wage.

## The Work of Direct Support Professionals Requires Skills and Compassion

DSPs support over 27,000 individuals with developmental disabilities to live as independently and safely as possible while participating as productive members of their communities. What DSPs do day-to-day depends on the needs of the individuals they support, but they have many responsibilities including:

- Assisting individuals with daily personal care routines such as toileting, bathing, grooming, dressing and eating. Many people served require total care, but some are able to learn and care for themselves through prompting.
- Administering medication to individuals and ensuring that others who can self-administer medications are doing so correctly. DSPs must also recognize signs and symptoms that require the attention or consultation of a registered nurse.
- Preparing and administering specialized meals and diets, including tube feeding, to prevent choking and ensure adherence to physician orders.
- Teaching life skills from money management, meal preparation, self-transportation, and basic reading to more complex skills such as anger management and proper social interactions.
- Helping individuals to become as independent as possible, giving feedback, providing emotional support, and being a willing listener.
- Taking people to activities in their community, providing transportation to medical appointments, jobs, church or to visit with their family members. Because active community citizenship is such a valuable experience, most providers require DSPs to have a valid driver's license and a history of safe driving.
- Facilitating effective communication for individuals who have difficulty speaking or who cannot speak.
- Completing mandated documentation including daily logs, progress notes, check lists, medical observations, and billing notes.
- Implementing detailed directives from clinical professionals including physical, behavioral and speech therapists, doctors, nurses, and hospice professionals.



*“You have to have compassion and patience to do this job.”* **Audrey Lake, DSP, taking a blood pressure check.**

### NOTE!

As is perhaps obvious, the outlined responsibilities clearly distinguish the Direct Support Professional position from those in retail or fast food businesses.

## Direct Support Professional are Highly Trained

Because the work is so complex, DSPs receive 120 hours of training, both on-the-job practical training and classroom instruction (a minimum of 40 hours). Trainees must pass a test after each module with a minimum score of 80%. As most DSPs administer medication, they must also pass a written test administered by a registered nurse and receive hands-on training.

**These jobs require technical and values-based skills that make life-changing differences in the lives of the individuals they support. DSPs must, therefore, receive very intensive training in a wide variety of critical areas.**

The Developmental Disabilities Division of the State of Illinois requires newly hired DSPs to complete training in seven learning modules – within 120 days of employment. The modules are:

- Introduction to Developmental Disabilities
- Human Rights
- Abuse and Neglect Prevention
- Human Interaction and Communication
- Service Plan Development and Implementation
- First Aid and CPR
- Basic Health and Safety

In addition, applicants for DSP positions have to meet numerous requirements under other Illinois rules or statutes. While these requirements contribute to quality care and performance, they also shrink the pool of possible DSP candidates. Other requirements:

- High School diploma or GED
- Successful Test of Adult Basic Education – As most positions require DSPs to pass medications, even high school graduates must pass the TABE test to demonstrate 8th grade literacy in English.
- Clear at least four background checks: Health Care Worker Registry (abuse/neglect), IL State Police (criminal), DCFS (child abuse/neglect), and the Illinois Sex Offender Registry.
- Minimum Age: 18 years old, or 21 if working with DCFS wards, or 23 if their agency requires that they drive public transit vehicles for transportation.
- Have a safe driving record if required to provide transportation.
- Pass a drug test.

### NOTE!

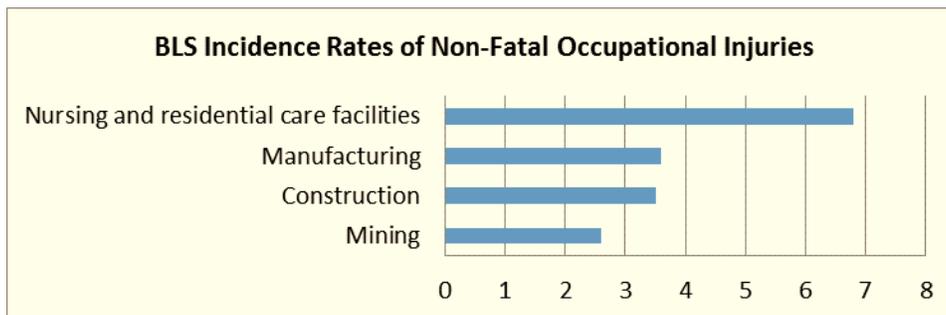
While other industries such as retail and fast food may have requirements such as age or the completion of a high school degree, few businesses have such extensive applicant requirements or mandates.

## Direct Support Professionals Manage Challenging Situations

Some Illinois policy makers dismiss low DSP wages by saying these individuals perform entry-level work and must first gain skills before they can be better compensated. On the contrary, supporting individuals with developmental disabilities demands a values-based commitment combined with patience, compassion and resilience.

Supporting individuals with physical challenges is very strenuous work. It requires lifting and holding individuals, using approved techniques, during many daily activities such as toileting, bathing, and dressing. DSPs also assist people in transferring to and from wheelchairs and provide the physical support often needed to ensure safety while walking. Lastly, pushing a wheelchair can also be a high-risk activity for some DSPs. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, nursing and residential facilities have among the highest incidence rates for occupational injuries – twice that of the mining, construction or manufacturing industries.

- High vacancy rates result in DSPs working excessive overtime, thus becoming sleep deprived while managing challenging situations. Sleep deprivation leads to accidents and poor-decision making.



- Experienced DSPs have been trained to know how to respond to difficult interpersonal situations including screaming, threats, name calling and instances of self-destructive behavior or verbal or physical aggression. DSPs work hard to ensure a safe and positive environment for all individuals whether at home or work. While at times the state provides a modest rate enhancement to address the need for additional direct service hours, providers cannot respond due to the lack of available and qualified staff.
- Information from the Illinois Crisis Prevention Network identifies verbal aggression, physical aggression and aggression toward property as the most common problematic behaviors experienced in community-based homes occupied by people with developmental disabilities.

## It is Difficult to Recruit and Retain Direct Support Professionals

Providing support services for 27,000 Illinois residents with developmental disabilities is an enormous challenge for the 350 plus community-based agencies responsible for their care. The families of individuals with developmental disabilities and the State of Illinois rely on these community agencies, and their DSPs, to provide that care. The lack of adequate wages for DSPs has resulted in high turnover rates, which in turn, negatively impacts the quality of services provided and threatens the health, safety and well-being of people with developmental disabilities.

A recent survey done by the Institute on Public Policy for People with Disabilities found that 81% of Illinois agencies surveyed indicated that securing a stable and competent workforce was a serious concern and the highest priority need identified by providers.

**Challenging work, restrictions on who can perform the work, and wage competition has resulted in a catastrophic DSP staffing crisis in community agencies. For example, the Chicago Tribune reported that Wal-Mart raised its minimum hourly wage to \$10 and increased the average hourly wage for full-time workers to \$13.38. Billboards have also recently appeared announcing that Macy's is now paying \$12.70/hr for an entry level employee. The struggle to recruit and retain DSPs is driving vacancy rates as high as 30%!**

### Recruitment

- Developmental Disability service providers are experiencing significant crisis in recruiting DSPs primarily because of the entry wage.
- There has been a rapid growth in other jobs, especially health related positions for those without a college degree.
- Many DSP candidates are able to find daytime or first shift positions in other work settings and do not want to work an evening or overnight shift.

### Retention

- The lack of a rate increase has prevented salary increases and caused excellent employees to leave and seek higher paying jobs.
- Current employees are leaving DSP positions because of the burdensome overtime hours.
- Employees experiencing low morale because staff resources are scarce are also severing their employment with community providers.
- Turnover of front line supervisory staff has significantly gone up, primarily because of the increased demands on their time to fill vacant shifts to ensure adequate staff coverage.

## NOTE!

Hiring will become even more challenging as the baby-boom population ages and more people require care. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics projects the need for DSPs and similar titles such as home health aide will explode. BLS projects demand for DSPs will grow 26 percent from 2014 to 2024 - much faster than the average for all occupations. This will require attracting 458,100 additional employees to the DSP workforce. Home health aide demand is projected to grow 38 percent, adding 348,400 jobs which will have to be filled.

***\$4,200-\$5,200 is the estimated total cost of turnover per direct support employee. -2016 MediSked, LLC***

## Solving the Workforce Crisis



## Raise the Wage

- The wages of direct support professionals must be increased to an entry wage level of \$15.00/hour.
- **House Bill 5931**, whose chief sponsor is Representative Robyn Gabel, and **Senate Bill 2952**, whose chief sponsor is Senator Heather Steans.
- Any state budget must include an increase in Medicaid funding to increase the wages of Direct Support Professionals and other disability support workers.

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*“Providers are reporting double-digit vacancy and turnover rates, staffing programs at bare levels and focusing staff resources on the safety of individuals.” **Fourth Annual Report of the Ligas Court Monitor, January 2, 2016.***

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## Letter to Governor Rauner Regarding the Workforce Crisis

December 18, 2015

### RE: Meeting Request on Direct Service Professional Workforce Crisis in Community-Based System of Care for Persons with Developmental Disabilities

Dear Governor Rauner:

We are writing to call your attention to the unfolding crisis in the delivery of services and supports to children and adults with developmental disabilities in the community. Simply put, there are not enough staff available to support people in their homes safely. We are asking you to convene your administrative and Department of Human Services' staff to meet with us next week to identify a solution to the crisis.

Across Illinois, children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities are facing a crisis unlike any we have experienced before. **The critical shortage of direct service professionals is threatening the ability of non-profit community providers to meet the basic health and safety requirements outlined in federal and state laws and regulations for tens of thousands Illinois residents.**

Organizations that contract with the state to provide community services simply cannot compete with other employers to attract qualified candidates, given the low rates the state pays for services - rates which have not increased in nearly a decade.

The direct support position demands extensive training, maturity, patience and judgement - the very qualities any of us would want in a person that we or a loved one depended upon to keep us healthy and safe. Due to nearly a decade of stagnant rates and lack of investment in the system, the average starting wage rate for direct service personnel paid by the state is barely above the minimum wage, despite the responsibilities and requirements of the position vastly exceeding those of other minimum wage opportunities.

#### **Please consider some of the worsening consequences of this wage crisis:**

- Providers are experiencing double-digit vacancy and turnover rates within already limited staffing plans;
- Providers are forced to compete with – and are losing to - the fast food and other industries that are now paying higher starting wages for less intensive work and training;
- Providers are closing and/or consolidating group homes and increasing the number of individuals residing to the maximum allowed under law (8 beds) – which is the opposite of what they believe is best for supporting people;
- Providers are increasingly not meeting basic individual/staffing ratios – raising their anxiety about the safety of individuals and staff;
- Providers by and large are not able to serve more people because they can't recruit and retain direct service personnel; and
- The system is ill-prepared to comply with recently finalized home and community-based services federal regulations.

Community agencies are desperately aware of the impact the direct support workforce shortage is having on the lives of people supported by the community service system, if not the very future of the system itself. Without the community system to rely upon, the people being supported through it today would require costly institutional care provided directly by the state.

Governor Rauner, we are urging your leadership and partnership in resolving the workforce crisis we face. We cannot wait another day to bring this matter to the attention of you and other leaders. Again, we hope to meet with you next to discuss our concerns and solutions aimed at preventing the collapse of community-based care for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities.

Respectfully,

Tony Paulauski  
The Arc of IL

Janet Stover  
Illinois Association  
of Rehabilitation

Mike Bibo  
Center for DD  
Advocacy and  
Community  
Supports

Vickie Kean  
Don Moss &  
Associates

Kathy Carmody  
Institute of Public Policy  
for Persons with DD

## Court Monitor Finds Illinois Must Raise Wages to Provide Adequate Community Services

On January 7, 2016 a federal monitor found the State of Illinois non-compliant with the Ligas Consent Decree, a court order which ensures access to community care for individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. The monitor found that community agencies' inability to hire DSPs had decreased service quality and slowed the development of new residential placements.

From the Court Monitor's Report:

- Lack of a budget for the State of Illinois has resulted in uncertainties for beneficiaries of the Consent Decree and their families, agencies, staff, advocates, providers of all services and supports;
- Low wages creating a staffing crisis for providers of all types of services in their efforts to recruit and maintain adequate staffing and appropriate training for staff with existing inadequate funding for wages and high staff turnover levels;
- Initiation of waiver services is still pending for more than one year, and for as much as three or more years, for 153 class members who have been selected between March, 2012 and March, 2014 via the PUNS process as well as for 101 Ligas ICFDD class members seeking DD Waiver services;
- There is limited availability of small CILAs in certain geographic areas and for individuals with more intense medical, behavioral or physical needs;
- There is an inadequate availability of flexible, person-centered, integrated day activities or employment for individuals seeking such opportunities; and called attention to the potential for the inadequate availability of resources for implementation of the Consent Decree during the second half of Fiscal Year 2016.



*"My daughter's DSP makes an amazing contribution in her life. Her DSP is not just a caregiver. She guides my daughter in navigating the complex world of interactions with other people." - Laura Kramer, Parent*

There is no doubt that the finding of noncompliance is due to the inadequate rates and low wages which have created a workforce crisis. This is a crisis so severe that providers are reporting vacancy and turnover rates as high as 30%. As a result, providers now are unable to accept new referrals for new services. The shrinking DSP workforce will cause the State to fail to meet the conditions of the Ligas Consent Decree.

## The State of Illinois Must Provide Adequate Funding for Direct Support Professionals

Direct Support Professionals assume numerous daily responsibilities which they must perform according to the highest professional standards.

They work under strict scrutiny by multiple oversight agencies. Their work is critical to the well-being and safety of the thousands of people with developmental disabilities they serve.

However, Illinois reimbursement rates to community agencies do not allow for a decent and livable wage. **The average wage for DSPs is \$9.35/hour, or \$19,488/year, less than the federal poverty level for a family of three.**

Low wages are driving recruitment and retention issues which pose an enormous threat to the people with developmental disabilities who rely on DSPs.

Funding for community services, including DSP salaries, comes from the Illinois Medicaid program. Illinois Spends very little on these developmental disability services compared to other states, consistently ranking near the bottom in respected national comparisons. **The University of Colorado ranking of per capita developmental disability spending shows Illinois ranking 45 of 51 states and D.C., spending less than half the national average. The University of Minnesota ranking of per-individual Medicaid Waiver spending places Illinois 44 out of 51 states and D.C.**

**In the past eight years the Illinois' state government has not increased Medicaid rates for these services, even though inflation grew at 14% during that period. Years of insufficient state funding and no rate increases have left community programs unable to afford to raise DSP wages.**

According to [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' Toolkit](#), Coverage of Direct Service Workforce Continuing Training within Medicaid Policy and Rate Setting, "Linking wage increases to workers' advancement in training



### FACT

While there may be a cost to increasing wages, there is also a direct cost of doing nothing. A recent study by the University of California at Berkeley found the majority of those enrolled in our nation's major public benefits programs are working families. Looking at just two of those programs - healthcare and cash assistance – the authors estimated the cost to the State of Illinois of providing this assistance to working families at \$1.1 billion annually. Costs would be higher if other programs, such as child care subsidies, were included. The study found that among the occupations most likely to rely on public assistance – because of low wages – are DSPs.

programs (i.e., career pathways, apprenticeships, credentialing, or certification programs) represent an important coordinated strategy that may be implemented on the state level. (Harris-Kojetin et al., 2004).”

As Illinois wages continue to increase and unemployment decreases, it will be more important than ever to increase DSP wages to attract quality DSPs. And to do that, the State of Illinois must commit to quality care by increasing reimbursement rates to community agencies.

Organizations that provide services to vulnerable populations have little to no control over their ability to increase DSP wages. Most are heavily dependent upon funding from government, especially Illinois’ Medicaid program. In fact, 90% of funding for programs serving people with developmental disabilities is Medicaid. Increases in wages can only be achieved when government decides to fund such increases.

Unlike retail and fast food industries, not-for-profit agencies that support persons with developmental disabilities cannot increase the wages of DSPs without a corresponding rate increase from the State.

**Midwestern State Comparison on Spending Commitment for People with Disabilities:**

| State           | DD Community Fiscal Effort* | DD Spending per Capita** | 2013 GDP Ranking      | National Ranking***    |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Illinois</b> | <b>\$2.70</b>               | <b>\$49</b>              | <b>5<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>47<sup>th</sup></b> |
| Indiana         | \$5.28                      | \$117                    | 16 <sup>th</sup>      | 23 <sup>rd</sup>       |
| Michigan        | \$3.86                      | \$97                     | 13 <sup>th</sup>      | 29 <sup>th</sup>       |
| Minnesota       | \$6.73                      | \$231                    | 17 <sup>th</sup>      | 7 <sup>th</sup>        |
| Ohio            | \$7.05                      | \$117                    | 7 <sup>th</sup>       | 10 <sup>th</sup>       |
| Wisconsin       | \$5.75                      | \$152                    | 20 <sup>th</sup>      | 33 <sup>rd</sup>       |

\*Fiscal Effort = Dollars per \$1,000 of personal income – residential settings of 15 or fewer and non-residential settings.  
 \*\*Per Capita Spending = per citizen. State of the States in Developmental Disabilities Report 2013.  
 \*\*\*Case for Inclusion 2015 Report.

The Home and Community Based Service Waiver program is the main Medicaid program for residential and non-residential services for persons with developmental disabilities.

Illinois ranks 45<sup>th</sup> out of 51 states and DC. Illinois spending per capital is less than half of the national average (State of the State in DD-University of CO). University of Minnesota also ranks Illinois 44<sup>th</sup> out of 51 states and DC on spending per waiver participant in 2010.

## More Problems Ahead for Illinois

Having an insufficient number of Direct Support Professionals is also jeopardizing the State of Illinois compliance with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services newly promulgated rule regarding Home and Community Based Services. As federal rules trend to community-based systems, it is the responsibility of the state to build capacity in the community.

**Community providers are presently facing DSP vacancy rates of 30% and rising!**

Present staffing levels will not allow providers to meet such federal requirements as:

- Being integrated in and supporting full access to the greater community, including opportunities to seek employment and work in competitive integrated settings, engage in community life, control personal resources, and receive services in the community, with the same degree of access as individuals not receiving Home and Community Based Services.
- Carrying out person-centered and person-directed rule requirements including the presence of full life choices in daily activities.

## IN JEOPARDY!

Failure to comply with the Centers of Medicaid and Medicare Services puts the 50% federal match to \$1.3 billion for Illinois' Developmental Disabilities system in jeopardy.

## Responsibility of the Illinois State Government



Organizations that provide services to individuals with developmental disabilities are heavily dependent upon funding from government because they are carrying out the obligations of the state in supporting the most vulnerable. In fact, 90% of funding for programs serving this population is reimbursed from the state's Medicaid program. Fortunately, this means the federal government reimburses the state for half the cost of these services.

*“My daughter, Sarah, needs consistent and qualified staff that understands autism, visual supports, and the fact that communication is very closely linked to her behavior. Change causes much distress to Sarah, dramatically worsening her behavior and limiting her ability to learn important life skills. Illinois needs to invest in quality...ignoring will only make matters worse for my daughter, others with disabilities, and the tax payers in Illinois.”* **Laurie Jerue, Parent**

While provider organizations work hard to raise private contributions to improve the lives of those they support, the State of Illinois determines Medicaid rates. Significant increases in wages can only be achieved when our state government funds such increases. Unlike retail and fast food industries, not-for-profit agencies cannot raise prices to improve their bottom line. It is the responsibility of the

state to strengthen capacity to meet the growing needs of the community service system and respond to those citizens with disabilities in need of services.

**Illinois has an obligation to provide sufficient funding so that DSPs can earn a fair wage. Without a fair wage, the health, safety and well-being of people with disabilities who rely on community providers is in serious jeopardy and at a threshold for disaster.**

Our state invested in livable wages for disability “home care workers” in order to stabilize that system of care. Illinois must now address the crisis in community care for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

**VALUE THE WORK – VALUE THEIR LIVES  
RAISE THE WAGE**

## Take Action NOW!

There is a direct support workforce crisis within the Developmental Disabilities service system. The lack of sufficient numbers of staff is threatening the health, safety, and well-being of thousands of persons with developmental disabilities.

### What Must Be Done

- **The starting wage for Direct Support Professionals must be raised to \$15.00/hr.**
- **House Bill 5931 and Senate Bill 2952, which seeks to raise such wages, must be passed.**
- **The 2016-2017 State Budget should include Medicaid funding to increase the wages of DSPs and other developmental disability support workers.**

### CALL TO ACTION!

House Bill 5931  
and Senate Bill 2952, which seeks to raise DSP wages to \$15.00/hr., must be passed!

**This booklet was prepared by the following members of the Coalition to Raise the Wages of DSPs:**

Art Dykstra, Trinity Services

Tony Paulauski, The Arc of Illinois

Anne Irving, AFSCME Council 31

Kim Zoeller, Ray Graham Association

**Contact representatives from the following organizations for additional information:**



INSTITUTE ON PUBLIC POLICY



FOR PEOPLE WITH  
DISABILITIES



**DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL  
CODE OF ETHICS**

National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals

The Code of Ethics developed through the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) guides DSPs through the ethical dilemmas they face

daily and encourages the highest professional ideals. Direct support staff, agency leaders, policymakers, and people receiving services are urged to read the code and to consider ways that these ethical statements can be incorporated into daily practice. This code is not the handbook of the profession, but rather a roadmap to assist in staying the course of securing freedom, justice, and equality for all.

**Person-Centered Supports.** As a DSP, my first allegiance is to the person I support; all other activities and functions I perform flow from this allegiance.

**Promoting Physical and Emotional Well-Being.** As a DSP, I am responsible for supporting the emotional, physical, and personal well-being of the individuals receiving support. I will encourage growth and recognize the autonomy of the individuals receiving support while being attentive and energetic in reducing their risk of harm.

**Integrity and Responsibility.** As a DSP, I will support the mission and vitality of my profession to assist people in leading self-directed lives and to foster a spirit of partnership with the people I support, other professionals, and the community.

**Confidentiality.** As a DSP, I will safeguard and respect the confidentiality and privacy of the people I support.

**Justice, Fairness and Equity.** As a DSP, I will promote and practice justice, fairness, and equity for the people I support and the community as a whole. I will affirm the human rights, civil rights and responsibilities of the people I support.

**Respect.** As a DSP, I will respect the human dignity and uniqueness of the people I support. I will recognize each person I support as valuable and help others understand their value.

**Relationships.** As a DSP, I will assist the people I support to develop and maintain relationships.

**Self-Determination.** As a DSP, I will assist the people I support to direct the course of their own lives.

**Advocacy.** As a DSP, I will advocate with the people I support for justice, inclusion, and full community participation.

