

# 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*

Raise the Wage for  
Direct Support  
Professionals!



**Resource Kit for Legislator Education**

**House Bill 5931 and Senate Bill 2952**

## Contents

Contents ..... 1

About this toolkit..... 2

Why should you care? ..... 3

DSP Crisis...Summary of Critical Issues ..... 4

Your Elected State Legislators ..... 5

Senate Bill 2952 Flyer.....6

House Bill 5931 Flyer.....7

Sample letter to the editor from a CEO..... 8

Some Key Facts for Advocacy ..... 9

Provider Comments to Court Monitor on DSP Crisis ... 10

Problematic Trends Identified by Court Monitor ..... 11

Sample Telephone Scripts ..... 13

Sample Engagement Letters..... 15

Sample family letter to Legislator ..... 16

Sample DSP letter to Legislator ..... 17

Letter Template for Agency  
Staff (non-DSP) ..... 18

Letter Template for Self-  
Advocates ..... 19

Witness Slips.....20

Contact Information.....21

Infograph.....22



## About this toolkit

The most critical issue for community based organizations that serve people with intellectual and developmental disabilities is the inability to recruit and retain qualified direct support staff due to low rates paid to providers. We need to raise the wages for those staff that work in direct support roles statewide! Our coalition wants to give you as many resources that you may need to convince the Governor, legislators, the media and the general public that Direct Service Professionals deserve a livable wage.

Our theme is: “Value the Work – Value Their Lives” “Raise the Wage”

Two bills have been introduced in the Capitol. Both bills call for a starting wage of \$15.00/hour for DSP’s:

- [House Bill 5931](#)
- [Senate Bill 2952](#)

Within this toolkit you will find fact sheets on the legislation, excerpts from the Court Monitor’s Report finding the State in non-compliance, sample engagement letters to enlist your board, staff and families, telephone scripts, sample letter to the editor and more.

If you need other information, please feel free to contact us with your needs.

We are here to assist and resolve the crisis of recruiting and retaining DSP’s in Illinois.

**We need your advocacy on the local level now.**



## Why should you care?

- DSPs have the most significant impact on quality, safety and community participation!
- Failure to address this crisis will result in the closure of homes and people living in larger settings.
- Without DSP's, the system cannot respond to people in critical situations and others waiting.
- Our entire statewide system is in total failure and the future is uncertain.

Community providers report that up to 30% of their direct support positions are vacant at any one point in time.

Providers are relying on current staff members to cover the minimum shifts needed for daily services and safety, thus increasing worker fatigue.



The number of applicants interested in employment has dramatically decreased. Simply stated, providers cannot attract qualified applicants for the starting wage. The statewide average wage is only \$9.35/hour or \$19,488 annually. This is less than the federal poverty level for a family of three.

It is clear that the increase in the Chicago minimum wage is directly impacting the ability to recruit and retain qualified direct support professional in and around the Chicago-metro area.

On January 7, 2016 a federal monitor found the State of Illinois noncompliant with the Ligas Consent Decree, a court order that ensures access to community care for individuals with I/DD. The monitor found that community agencies' inability to hire direct support staff had decreased services quality and slowed the development of new placements.

**The answer:** The Governor and legislators must immediately stop ignoring our staffing crisis!

## DSP Crisis...Summary of Critical Issues

- 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.
- The 34,000 Direct Service 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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%.

## Your Elected State Legislators

### **Finding Your Legislators**

You want to make sure you are communicating with the person in government that represents you. In order to do so, it is helpful if you have your home address and the full zip code for your residence.

For this campaign we are targeting your State Representative and your State Senator.

The contact information for your State Representative and your State Senator can be found online.

Go to this link to [find your legislator](#).

Another option is to type this address into your browser:

<http://cqrcengage.com/thearc/action>

Or call The Arc of Illinois: (815) 464-1832

### **Meeting With Your Legislators**

Your first step is to call your legislator's local office for an appointment. State that you would like to discuss the DSP recruitment and retention crisis with your legislator. Further, you would like them to consider becoming a co-sponsor for HB 5931 or SB 2952.

We recommend that your team that meets with your representative include the CEO or Executive Director, a Direct Support Professional, a Self-Advocate and Family Member.

Each individual should speak to the DSP recruitment and retention crisis from their personal perspective. The CEO should be last with a quick summary and asking the legislator to become a co-sponsor.

Be respectful of the representative, as your goal is for them to look at you as a resource on disability issues and that they become a co-sponsor of House Bill 5931 or Senate Bill 2952.

Take pictures and post on Facebook or Twitter.

Send a thank you letter.

Let your state association know of the outcome of your meeting.

## **Support House Bill 5931**

### **Become a Co-Sponsor of HB 5931**



### **Value the Work – Value Their Lives**

Representative Robyn Gabel has introduced HB 5931. HB 5931 provides that Direct Service Persons (DSPs) will earn a base wage of not less than \$15 per hour and so that other front line personnel earn a commensurate wage.

- The bill includes a comprehensive definition of DSPs that include nurses, QIDP's, ISP's and most community employees under the level of top agency management.
- The bill includes personnel in residential and day programs, intermediate care facilities for persons with developmental disabilities, community integrated living arrangements, developmental training programs, employment, and other residential and day programs for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities supported by State funds.

## **Support Senate Bill 2952**

### **Become a Co-Sponsor of Senate Bill 2952**



### **Value the Work – Value Their Lives**

Senator Heather Steans has introduced SB 2952. SB 2952 provides that Direct Service Persons (DSPs) will earn a base wage of not less than \$15 per hour and that other front line personnel earn a commensurate wage.

- The bill includes a comprehensive definition of DSP's that include nurses, QIDP's, ISP's and most community employees under the level of top agency management.
- The bill includes personnel in residential and day programs, intermediate care facilities for persons with developmental disabilities, community integrated living arrangements, developmental training programs, employment, and other residential and day programs for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities supported by State funds.

## Sample letter to the editor from a CEO

The stability of the Illinois community service system for tens of thousands of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities is teetering on the brink of collapse due to an unprecedented direct service workforce crisis. Direct service workers are overwhelmingly employed by non-profit organizations whom the state contracts with to provide community based residential, training and support services. Between 2001 and 2013, the direct service wage paid by the state has risen only \$0.79/hour - an 8% increase across a twelve year period. As a result, community agencies cannot compete with other employers, putting the well-being of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, who depend on the direct service workforce for continuous support, supervision and protection, at risk.

Direct service work 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. Despite the critical role the direct service workforce plays in the lives of people with disabilities, the wages these workers earn are barely above minimum wage positions that are far less demanding and impactful to our society.

House Bill 5931 and Senate Bill 2952 have been introduced in the General Assembly to address the long-overdue attention that must be paid to assuring our most vulnerable citizens can continue to live and thrive in the community with the support of a stable and committed work force.

For more information on this critical legislation contact:

## Some Key Facts for Advocacy

### Ligas Court Monitor Noncompliance Findings

From “Fourth Annual Report of the Ligas Court Monitor”

“The remainder of the Monitor’s first six months have been focused upon several major and interrelated issues which directly impact the Consent Decree’s implementation, including:

- Lack of a budget for the State of Illinois resulting in uncertainties for beneficiaries of the Consent Decree and their families, agencies, staff, providers of all types of services, and advocates;
- **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 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;
- Limited availability of small CILAs in certain geographic areas and for individuals with more intense medical, behavioral or physical needs;
- Inadequate availability of flexible, person-centered, integrated day activities or employment for individuals seeking such opportunities; and
- Reported potential for inadequate availability of resources for implementation of the Consent Decree during the second half of Fiscal Year 2016.”

**The current Monitor’s experience in Fiscal Year 2016 thus far is that the status of such resources has significantly worsened. In the current report, there is a finding of noncompliance in this area.**

## Provider Comments to Court Monitor on DSP Crisis

### From “Fourth Annual Report of the Ligas Court Monitor”

Without disclosing any names of individuals or agencies, the following are a sampling of comments from service providers addressing their top concerns:

“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.”

“The most obvious risk is when you truly need two people present and on duty, but you may have only one staff member.”

“Providers are reporting double-digit vacancy and turnover rates; staffing programs at bare-minimum levels and focusing staff resources solely on the safety of individuals.”

“Without doubt, the number one issue affecting quality of life and the basic issues of safety and freedom from harm is the inability to recruit direct support staff because of the noncompetitive entry wage level.”

“All providers have stalled opening new CILAs and are also reducing existing CILA capacity to stay financially stable. Inability to attract and retain staff and uncertainty of future funding levels are the main factors that limit providers’ ability to open new CILAs. Across the board, providers would be able to increase their capacity and open new homes, but they have no way of staffing them.”

“A four-person CILA which would serve three Ligas Class Members has been ready to open for four months but remains vacant because the agency cannot adequately staff existing operations.”

“20% of an agency’s population are Ligas Class Members. The agency has a 20% vacancy rate in direct support positions and is taking steps to move people into larger residential settings due to the inability to staff smaller settings. The agency has closed residential intake despite a long waiting list.”

“An agency is closing a CILA and moving residents to vacancies in other homes it operates due to staffing shortages.”

## Problematic Trends Identified by Court Monitor

### From “Fourth Annual Report of the Ligas Court Monitor”

In addition, some problematic trends were identified which also point to inadequate funding:

- Three agencies reported having from 39 to 65 DSP positions vacant and are therefore, not considering any referrals for residential expansion, including for Ligas Class Members living in an ICFDD who wish to move out.
- An agency with a turnover rate of over 30% among DSP positions faces significant challenges in staffing programs that serve people with significant medical and behavioral support needs because there is no differential within the CILA and DT rates to account for the necessary intensity of support.
- Chicago-based agencies are struggling to remain competitive with other employers in the area due to the city-wide minimum wage increase to \$10.00 per hour effective July 1, 2015, with no commensurate increase in reimbursement rates.
- The average (not starting) DSP's wage is \$9.35 per hour which is insufficient to maintain staff. Even the providers who are able to pay \$1.00 to \$2.00 more per hour are experiencing significant vacancy and turnover levels.
- The State pays direct support workers in other programs significantly higher than the reimbursement wage for DSP personnel in community agencies, resulting in staff leaving community agencies to work for other State programs.
- One agency reported a \$500,000.00 annual loss in developmental training services due to the staffing ratio required for people including Ligas Class Members with intense behavioral and medical support needs.
- One agency is losing \$20,000.00 annually for each person living in an ICFDD setting due to significant medical needs, the need to pay a higher wage to attract staff and insufficient reimbursement rates. The provider cannot consider developing smaller CILAs for these individuals because the losses would increase.
- ISC agencies reported there is a growing list of families who have been selected for CILA services but cannot find a provider agency who will serve their family member due to their inability to expand services, the more intensive support needs of the person or the agency will only fill vacancies in existing settings which do not meet the families' expectations.
- Reliance on the 53R/D programs to address the needs of people with more significant medical and behavioral support needs is ineffective. This program assigns additional DSP hours to a specific person in response to a provider request based on the more challenging needs of the person. Often, the skill level that individuals require is beyond that of a DSP position and providers cannot fill existing DSP positions, so having additional hours is not a solution.

- The FY 2016 reduction back to pre-September 1, 2014 levels in the Personal Needs Allowance overall and the significantly lower payment for people living in ICFs/DD severely limits individuals' ability to pay for needed items and to access community resources.
- ICFs/DD have had to cut existing services, including nursing and a variety of therapy services, to those currently being served due to inadequate rates.
- The Illinois Association of ICF/DD Providers, Inc. (IAIP) issued a report in April, 2015, reflecting a cost study of FY2013 which showed that 40% of the 204 ICF/DD facilities in Illinois at that time had a Negative Net Income in that year. Subsequently, it was reported that since that time, losses have only increased as costs have risen and no reimbursement increases have been provided.
- In a special report regarding ICF/DD resources in August, 2014, Tony Records stated that, while not identifying Defendants' failure to increase rates as a violation of the Decree, "the overall level of rates for ICFs/DD and community based options have become increasingly problematic and pose an intermediate as well as long term insidious threat to continued compliance with the Decree. This issue must stay high on the agenda for the parties' attention, and will not go away on its own."

## Sample Telephone Scripts

When calling your State Representative and Senator's office, you should expect that a staff person would answer the telephone. Please plan to leave a short message with the staff. It is their role to take the calls that come in and keep track of the issues people are calling about. As few as three telephone calls to one local office can trigger a heightened awareness!

You can leave a simple or detailed message...totally up to you. You can also ask for the elected official to return your call if you like.

Please note that elected officials have local and Springfield offices. Typically it is best to call their local office, unless they are in session in Springfield. At times we may direct you to a specific office as part of a targeted campaign.

The following are some sample telephone scripts to use with your State Representative and your State Senator.

### Self-Advocate Telephone Script:

I am a person with a disability that relies upon staff for my daily care. My very life depends upon compassionate and caring staff. I am asking Representative/Senator to support people with disabilities by taking action to raise the wages of those direct support staff. Please support House Bill 5931 and Senate Bill 2952.

### Family Telephone Script:

"I am calling today to ask that the Representative/Senator support people with developmental disabilities by taking action to raise the wages of those that work in direct support positions. As a parent/sibling/etc... of someone with a developmental disability served by (state organization), this issue is very important to me. I am asking for support of House Bill 5931 and Senate Bill 2952."

### DSP Telephone Script:

"I work at (state organization) as a Direct Support staff. The work I do keeps people with developmental disabilities safe and healthy. Direct support staff directly impact

quality. There is a serious shortage of Direct Support staff because the wages are so low. I am asking for support of House Bill 5931 and Senate Bill 2952.”

#### **Non DSP Staff Telephone Script:**

“I work at (state organization) as a XXXX. The work our Direct Support staff does keeps people with developmental disabilities safe and healthy. Direct support staff directly impact quality. There is a serious shortage of Direct Support staff because the wages are so low. I am asking for support of House Bill 5931 and Senate Bill 2952.”

#### **Telephone Script for Advocates:**

“I am advocating for individuals with developmental disabilities and the direct support staff that care for them. There is a serious shortage of direct support staff because the wages are so low. I am asking for support of House Bill 5931 and Senate Bill 2952.”

## Sample Engagement Letters

### Sample letter from CEO to families, and other stakeholders:

Dear,

Our most critical matter at hand today is our ability to hire and retain qualified staff that provides direct services across our organization. We are not unique. This is a statewide crisis!

I need you to raise your voice and demand that the Governor and General Assembly pass House Bill 5931 and Senate Bill 2952 that would raise wages for direct support staff to a competitive level. It may sound absurd to attempt this at a time when there is no state budget, but I can assure you that many special interest groups are doing the same. We need to be first in line at decision-making time!

I am asking that you select three simple ways to support our mutual critical need!

- Write a letter to your State Representative and Senator.
- Make a telephone call to your State Representative and Senator.
- Send a personal note and picture of your family member to your State Representative and Senator.
- Set up a time to meet with your State Representative and/or Senator (consider bringing your family member with a disability).
- Attend a legislative town hall or public meeting and present your concerns (it is an election year...there is a lot of opportunity).
- Post a message on your State Representative and/or Senator's social media pages, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.
- Support your family member to write a letter or note to State Representative and/or Senator.
- Start a social media campaign of your own and get your friends and family involved.

I know that many of you are gravely concerned about our ability to recruit and retain qualified team members, because you see it firsthand. For those of you that do not experience this labor crisis today, I can assure you that it is only a matter of time. Taking action now is the only way to secure the future of community based services for individuals with developmental disabilities. We cannot wait for the budget impasse to be resolved. We must act now!

Sincerely,

CEO

## Sample family letter to Legislator

Legislator Name

Legislator Address

Dear

My SON/DAUGHTER/BROTHER/SISTER/ETC receives services from (organization name).

For years and years now, the state has ignored our pleas to appropriate funds that would allow (organization name) to give pay increases to current employees and have the ability to have higher starting salaries for new ones. As a result, we now have a crisis and we need immediate action!

I see firsthand how caring the direct support staff are with my loved one. I honestly do not know what I would do without them!

PERSONALIZE THIS SECTION and ADD AS MUCH DETAIL AS YOU LIKE:

YOUR FAMILY MEMBER'S NAME is my SON/DAUGHTER/BROTHER/SISTER/ETC'S name. HE/SHE lives FILL IN THE BLANK and spends their day FILL IN THE BLANK. The direct support staff help HIM/HER to FILL IN THE BLANK.

I cannot understand why our elected state officials do not value the lives of people with developmental disabilities. I also do not understand why there is no recognition that the direct support staff that keep people with developmental disabilities alive, healthy and safe are valued individuals. It is truly a sad day when the average wage for a direct support staff is only \$9.35 in Illinois.

The political situation in Illinois is devastating a system that is supposed to protect people that have developmental disabilities. Be the better person and do the right thing! Support House Bill 5931 and Senate Bill 2952

Sincerely,

Your name

Address/Phone #

## Sample DSP letter to Legislator

Legislator Name

Legislator Address

Dear

I am proud to be in a position that changes people's lives! I am a Direct Support Professional (DSP) at (organization name). I keep people with disabilities alive, healthy, and safe! But that is not all. DSPs help people with disabilities to learn daily living skills, find jobs, administer medications, get to necessary doctor appointments, respond calmly to diffuse potentially dangerous behavioral situations and keep people out of the police departments and emergency rooms...and our day is just getting started!

It is so sad that I do not feel valued because I chose to be in a role that truly helps people. The average wage in our state for DSPs is only \$9.35/hour! For years and years, the general assembly has decided to ignore us, so today we have a crisis that must be dealt with immediately. I have seen my co-workers leave the job they love because they cannot make ends meet with current pay. We cannot even compete with McDonalds! My co-workers and I are tired of having to work so much overtime just to survive, and barely covering the basics that people need.

I want to be in a position that makes a difference in the lives of our most vulnerable citizens in Illinois because they need help the most. Please don't push me out the door. The political situation in Illinois is devastating a system that is supposed to support and protect people. Be the better person and do the right thing! Support House Bill 5931 and Senate Bill 2952

Sincerely,

Your name

Address/Phone #

## Letter Template for Agency Staff (non-DSP)

Today's Date

Legislator Name

Legislator Address

Dear

I am writing to tell you about how important Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) are to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I am so fortunate to work at (organization's name), an organization that provides services to people with I/DD. At (organization's name), our DSPs keep people with disabilities alive, healthy, and safe! But, that is not all. DSPs at our organization help people with disabilities to learn daily living skills, find jobs, administer medications, get to necessary doctor appointments, respond calmly to diffuse potentially dangerous behavioral situations and keep people out of the police departments and emergency rooms...and their day is just getting started!

It is so sad that our state does not value those that make a decision to be in a role that really helps people. The average wage in our state for DSPs is only \$9.35/hour! For years and years, the general assembly has decided to ignore them, so today we have a crisis that must be dealt with immediately. Simply, we cannot recruit and retain qualified staff any longer. We cannot even compete with McDonalds! Our DSPs have to work so much overtime just to survive and make ends meet and to cover the basic needs of the people that state asks us to protect and serve.

I think we should value those that make a difference in the lives of our most vulnerable citizens in Illinois. The political situation in our state is devastating a system that is supposed to support and protect people. Be the better person and do the right thing! Support House Bill 5931 and Senate Bill 2952.

Sincerely,

Your name

Address/Phone #

## Letter Template for Self-Advocates

Date:

My name is (add name) and get services from (add organization's name). I am very concerned about having staff available to keep me safe, healthy, and actively involved in my community.

I need direct support staff to help me with (add personal information).

I need people I trust to help me. I want them to stay a long time and not leave because (organization name) can't pay them enough money. I feel like the State of Illinois does not care about me and those that want to help me. Please support House Bill 5931 and/or Senate Bill 2952.

Sincerely,

Signature

Home Address

## Witness Slips

Another easy to make your voice heard on the workforce crisis bills is by submitting a Witness Slip online. This is a way for citizens to participate in the legislative process.

“During committee hearings is the only time public opinion is openly incorporated into the decision-making process. At that time, public testimony on a particular piece of legislation is allowed. During the hearing on legislation, the committee chairman commonly reads the list of witnesses that have filed slips for or against the proposal. Citizens over age 13 to file witness slips online and provides a way for virtual participation in the House proceedings. The forms are considered official state documentation and information included should be verifiable.”

*Source: [illinoisreview.com](http://illinoisreview.com)*

## HOW TO FILE WITNESS SLIP ELECTRONICALLY:

1. Go to [www.ilga.gov](http://www.ilga.gov) and click on **GA DASHBOARD** to see the Session and Committee Hearings schedules.
2. Choose either Senate or House on the left column.
3. Click on Committees and scroll down to Human Services Committee. It may indicate “No Hearings Scheduled”. If that is the case, please check the site daily to see if it is “Scheduled”, or send Sherry Ladislas an email at [sladislas@trinity-services.org](mailto:sladislas@trinity-services.org) and she will notify you of the hearing date by email.

**If your bill is scheduled to be heard the day you are filing the witness slip:** Click on the paper icon to the right. Then, find your bill and click on the pencil/paper icon to file slip.

**If your bill is scheduled for a future date:** Choose either Senate or House on the left then scroll down to the committees tab. You can choose to have the committee hearings show by day, week or month.

Find the committee your bill is in and click on the people icon to the right. Click on the “notice of hearing” tab on top. Click on “view legislation” icon to the right. If there are multiple bills being heard in the committee you will need to find your bill and click on the pencil/paper icon to file a witness slip.

## Contact Information

**For more information, resources, or assistance please feel free to contact the following organizations:**



INSTITUTE ON PUBLIC POLICY



FOR PEOPLE WITH  
DISABILITIES



**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  
Association

Kim Zoeller, Ray Graham

**HB 5931: Gabel**  
**SB 2952: Steans**  
 Living Wage for DSPs

# DSP

Direct Support Professional

# FACTS



Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) assist 27,000 people with disabilities to lead productive lives and to participate fully in their communities. DSPs are employed by provider organizations to provide support services to many of Illinois' most vulnerable citizens.

DSPs are the **lowest paid** care givers in the aging & disabilities service system yet, provide the **same level and depth** of service as those paid much more.

DSP positions top the list of the projected fastest-growing occupations in the country, making the current reality a **crisis**.

### Inflation Outpaces Wage Adjustments

CPI was 14% from 2008 to present  
 0% systemwide increases by the state since 2008

### Turnover Estimates/Average

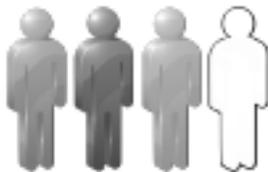
88% of providers in U.S. cite low DSP wages and benefits as **#1** reason for turnover



### DSPs hourly wage in Community vs Other Settings & Industries



- Personal Assistants Starting Wage: **\$15.00/hr**
- Chicago Minimum Wage: **\$10.00/hr**
- Walmart Minimum Wage: **\$10.00/hr**
- Walmart Average Full Time Wage: **\$15.30/hr**
- DSPs Average Wage: **\$9.35/hr**



Low wages mean agencies can't hire – one out of every four DSP jobs goes unfilled



## Our request is:

Increase the starting wage for DSPs to **\$15.00/hr**



### SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

AFSCME Council 31  
 Don Moss & Associates

IARF  
 The Arc of Illinois

The Center for Developmental Disabilities Advocacy & Community Support

The Institute on Public Policy for People with Developmental Disabilities

#WeAreDSPs

[WWW.WEAREDSPS.COM](http://WWW.WEAREDSPS.COM)

#valuethework

#valuetheirlives