



The Disability Workforce Crisis: ANCOR Policy Asks

Direct support professionals (DSP) provide critical long-term supports and services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) such as autism, cerebral palsy and Down Syndrome. These professionals are integral to supporting individuals with disabilities to live successfully in the community, avoid more costly institutional care, and enable states to comply with the integration mandate of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

However, across the nation, there is a DSP workforce crisis. According to the National Core Indicator's 2016 survey of 17 states, the average annual turnover rate for direct support professionals is 45 percent. The Bureau of Labor Statistics cites this sector as the most needed workforce with the need rising into the next decade. The lack of a stable workforce not only harms individuals with disabilities and their families, but also can lead to increased institutionalization and costs. This crisis stems from low provider rates, lack of recognition and career growth, and failing to utilize innovative technology solutions. Potential solutions to the DSP workforce crisis include:

Designation of DSP Standard Occupational Classification

DSPs lack their own discrete classification under the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This limits the ability for states and the federal government to collect data on this specific field. It also affects policy decisions, such as rate setting, which effects recruitment and retention. The Bureau of Labor Statistics needs to designate DSP as an individual class of workers.

Technology as a Solution

Emerging and innovative technology not only can be one of the solutions to the DSP workforce crisis, but can also help to support individuals in their home and allow reinvestment of cost savings into priorities like waiting lists for services. However, providers serving people with IDD have not received clear authority from CMS that they can be reimbursed for technology driven services, such as software applications (e.g. phone apps), tablet technology (e.g. iPads), smart home technology, or maintenance of technology solutions. Additionally, providers are unable to keep the savings generated by services that are delivered through technology. CMS should authorize payment for technology services under IDD service funding authorities and allow providers to reinvest savings generated by using technology.

Reporting IDD Service Reimbursement Rates

In many states, IDD provider rates have not changed or have decreased in over a decade. It is becoming increasingly difficult for providers to maintain, recruit, and retain their DSP workforce due to low reimbursement rates. This is compounded by state increases in minimum wage. We believe that IDD rates and rate methodologies should be transparent and reported on an annual

basis. Annual reporting of rates for IDD services will highlight the need more rate adjustments, and improve data surrounding the DSP workforce.

Transition to Independence

The DSP workforce reduces the amount of hospitalizations and institutionalizations for individuals with IDD. This leads to increased savings, improves the quality of life for individuals with IDD, and allows individuals with IDD to participate in the community, such as living independently and pursuing employment opportunities. In 2015, Senator Grassley introduced the [Transition to Independence Act](#), which would create a demonstration program for states to receive a bonus payment for meeting specific, measurable benchmarks in expanding individual integrated employment for individuals with disabilities. We believe this legislation should be revisited, with a focus on how the DSP workforce leads to enhanced community engagement and independent living.

Support Pipeline Programs

ANCOR and our members have been working at the state and local level to develop DSP workforce pipeline programs. Specifically, we are looking at opportunities at Workforce Investment Bureaus, universities, high schools, local businesses and other sectors to create recruitment programs. However, to initiate many of these programs takes initial invests and working capital. Grant funding to support these initiatives will improve the likelihood of their beginning, success, and continuation. In [2010 the Department of Labor established standards for Direct Support Professionals](#) under the national registered apprenticeship system – this effort needs resources to be effective.

Our Asks: Support efforts to increase the Direct Support Professionals workforce

- Sign on to standard occupational classification (SOC) letter to encourage the Bureau of Labor Statistics to designate DSP as a discrete class of workers
- Encourage CMS to confirm Medicaid payments are authorized for the use of innovative technology solutions to deliver HCBS waiver services
- Allow providers to reinvest savings generated by using technology to deliver services
- Annual state reporting of IDD service reimbursement rates
- Revisit the Transition to Independence Act, with a focus on how the DSP workforce enhances community engagement and independent living
- Support federal, state, and local pipeline programs to increase the number of people entering the DSP field