

DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) assist people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities in realizing their full potential and becoming valued and participating members of their communities.

2,097*



Direct Support Professionals work in family or individual homes, intermediate care facilities, residential group homes, community job sites, vocational and day programs, and other locations throughout the state of Delaware. Plagued by staff turnover, high vacancy rates and low wages; the COVID-19 pandemic amplified the extraordinary pressures and ESSENTIAL role of DSPs.

*National Core Indicators Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. (2022). National Core Indicators Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities 2021 State of the Workforce Survey Report.

The work of DSPs requires strong skills, core competencies and professional & career development. DDDS is committed to elevating the image and status of DSPs and recognize that this **deliberate strategy is a key piece of the puzzle to increase the capacity and sustainability of a qualified workforce.**

The DSP Academy is a customized vocational training program that is designed to enable individuals with disabilities to become DSPs in the IDD service system. Upon completion, participants will have all training and certifications needed to be a DSP in the State of Delaware. The award winning curriculum has been adapted to suit all learning styles and offers participants job development and placement services.



Leadership, Empowerment, Advancement & Development (LEAD)

Partnering with the National Leadership Consortium (an affiliate of Council on Quality Leadership), DDDS is sponsoring a 12 week training for DSPs. Designed for the growth and professional development of Delaware's direct support workforce, LEAD is aimed at creating a network of DSP leaders, opportunities for broader participation and to strengthen the work and future of the disability service system. LEAD goals are to:

- Identify and cultivate leadership capacity within the DSP community
- Foster confidence among DSPs and build upon existing strengths
- Demonstrate the state's commitment to the essential role of the direct support workforce



"I have the pleasure to serve for over 13 years working in the field with the intellectual disabilities population. The work is tense and demands hands-on and high quality skills to perform daily interactions with our consumers." – Voice of DE DSP

Source: DSP Experience Survey – DDDS – December 2021

#DEDSPMatters is a targeted web based marketing initiative designed to engage Delaware DSPs. Utilizing digital content, this project features resources for professional development & career coaching, provides space to share stories and opportunities that build community, spotlight, recognize and celebrate the critical role of the direct support workforce and the individuals they support.



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