



Alliance for the Betterment of Citizens with Disabilities
An Alliance of Community Providers in NJ

Devoted, Sincere, Passionate Are you a DSP?

Direct Support Professional



Learn about the role of a Direct Support Professional (DSP) within the disabled community

- What and why DSPs do what they do
- The need for developmental services in NJ
- The various environments in which DSPs work
- NJ data on the DSP workforce
- Job Requirements and Competency Areas

Introduction

“What should I do after I graduate?”

“How do I re-enter the job market?”

“What should I do if I don't want to go to college?”

“Is it possible to work part-time/full-time while helping others who need me and will truly appreciate my skills?”

For some of us, the above questions are reflective of where we currently stand as we consider life's next steps. On the other hand, others may feel frustrated with their present jobs, ready to research careers that will not only fit their skillset but give them purpose. The feat of entering, re-entering, or changing one's profession is a largely confusing, anxiety-riddled process; more specifically, it is a highly unique, individualized experience that many are quick to generalize. In the end, it is up to you to decide what you want to spend the majority of your life doing.

So, with that being said, choosing an occupation where your skills, compassion, empathy, and work ethic are capitalized on may be a career worth considering. In the state of New Jersey, we have over 12,800 adults with disabilities attending day programs, more than 8,000 adults residing in licensed community settings, and thousands more are in a variety of other settings where direct support professionals are responsible for supporting and advocating on behalf of those most vulnerable.

So, do you have what it takes to be a direct support professional, a front-line worker in one of the most rewarding and self-fulfilling jobs ever? For more information about the profession, please read through the contents of this booklet.

Sincerely,

The Alliance for the Betterment of Citizens with Disabilities
An Alliance of Community Providers in NJ

Role of a Direct Support Professional

"I look forward to going to work"

Who is a Direct Support Professional?

A Direct Support Professional (DSP) is a highly personable and caring individual who offers specialized support for men and women with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD).



"I like caring for people, it is the best thing ever"

What does a Direct Support Professional do?

DSPs are not the same as caregivers; evident of their title, caregivers take care of individuals who are unable to do so for themselves.

DSPs, on the other hand, support and enable individuals with disabilities to make independent decisions as capable contributors of their community.

DSPs equip their participants with essential life skills so that they may reach their full potential.

An illustration of a hand holding a heart. The hand is rendered in shades of brown and tan, with the fingers gently cupping a large, light orange heart. The background is a soft, light beige color. The text is overlaid on this illustration.

Be the Difference

**"OUR JOB
FULFILLS US
IN WAYS
THAT ARE
NOT FOUND
IN OTHER
CAREERS"**

A quote from one of CCP's
Direct Support Professionals

"This line of work is very rewarding"

People First . . .

There are 61 million adults in the U.S. living with IDD



What Does "People First" Mean?

Adults with disabilities are, first and foremost, people first. They are people with abilities, interests, and needs. They are ordinary individuals— someone's brother, sister, neighbor, friend, son, and daughter.

They are not to be pitied, feared, ignored, or disrespected. Most importantly, they are not helpless. Their potential supersedes imagination, but only if we stop and treat them like the people they are.

DSPs Are Role Models

As a DSP, you are a frontline representative of the "People First" Initiative. Your work directly affects the way in which adults with IDD perceive their abilities and potential.

Direct Support Professionals all over the country are held to this standard of care and professionalism by the **National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals**. The NADSP believes that "high quality support requires all professionals to follow the individual path suggested by the unique gifts, preferences, and needs of each person they support, and to walk in partnership with the person, and those who love him or her, toward a life of opportunity, well-being, freedom, and contribution."

See more information
at nadsp.org/about-us/our-work/.



"Not only have I been able to care for the clients, but I get to know them as individuals"

An illustration of two hands, one larger and one smaller, holding a heart. The hands are rendered in shades of brown and tan, with soft shadows. The heart is a vibrant orange-red color. The background is a light beige with a subtle gradient.

Empower The Community

**"EVERY DAY, I
GET THE CHANCE
TO BE A ROLE
MODEL FOR SOME
OF THE MOST
VULNERABLE
PEOPLE IN OUR
SOCIETY"**

A quote from one of Allies Inc.'s
Direct Support Professionals

Why be a Direct Support Professional?

ABCD's Mission Statement

Is to influence the development and implementation of public policy and to support our members in improving the lives of people with complex physical and neurological developmental disabilities so they can achieve their highest level of purpose and dignity.

DSPs are an integral part to this nationwide mission!

How do Direct Support Professionals enhance the lifestyles of their participants?

1

Support Independent Decision-Making

2

Encourage the Participant to Reach His/Her Established Goals

3

Advocate for the Participant's Abilities with Friends, Family, and the Community



"The variety of our workday is both unpredictable and invigorating"

An illustration of a hand holding a heart. The hand is rendered in shades of orange and brown, with the fingers gently cupping a heart. The heart is a darker shade of brown. The background is a light, warm tone. The overall style is soft and illustrative.

*When Passion
Becomes A Career*

**"IT'S THE
FIRST JOB I'VE
EVER HAD
WHERE I'M
EXCITED TO
GET UP IN THE
MORNING AND
GO TO WORK"**

A quote from one of LADACIN Network's
Direct Support Professionals

Who Do We Serve?

There are a range of conditions experienced by adults with developmental disabilities (DD) and intellectual disabilities (ID) served through NJ's Department of Human Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities.

- ***Those with DD being served**

- Intellectual Disability
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Cerebral Palsy
- Epilepsy
- Down Syndrome
- Encephalopathy
- Other Disabilities

- ***Those with ID being served**

- Mild Intellectual Disability
- Moderate Intellectual Disability
- Severe Intellectual Disability
- Profound Intellectual Disability
- Unspecified Intellectual Disability

DSPs are able to serve the unique needs of their participants and work in variety of environments, such as:



Congregate Settings



Healthcare Environment



Habilitation Programs



Psychiatric Facilities

I love going to work!

**Data and information were taken from Rutgers University's Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities (2018)*



Love What You Do

**"THIS JOB HAS
BEEN QUITE A
BLESSING IN MY
EYES BECAUSE
NO MATTER HOW
I FEEL IN MY LIFE
– GOOD, BAD, OR
INDIFFERENT, THE
CLIENTS ALWAYS
LOVE YOU FOR
WHO YOU ARE."**

A quote from one of LADACIN Network's
Direct Support Professionals

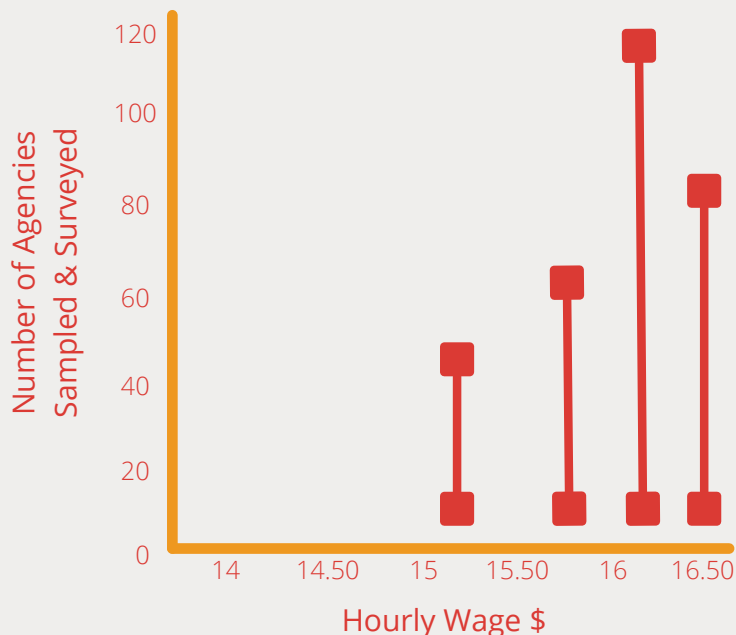
"I love my work because I love helping the people I serve be as independent as possible"

DSPs in New Jersey

We ♥ our DSPs.

*Out of 107 agencies sampled and surveyed . . .

- Average percentage of agency DSPs that are full-time is **64.2%**
- Average percentage of DSPs that are part-time is **35.8%**



*Out of the 120 agencies . . .

- The average hourly wage for DSPs is **\$16.06**

*Out of 52 agencies . . .

- The average hourly wage for DSPs providing Residential Support is **\$15.22**

*Out of 66 agencies . . .

- The average hourly wage for DSPs providing In-Home Supports is **\$15.92**

*Out of 82 agencies . . .

- The average hourly wage for DSPs providing Non-Residential Supports is **\$16.54**

*Out of over 100 agencies sampled and surveyed . . .

- **87.9%** of agencies provide paid time off (PTO) to DSPs
- **94.4%** of agencies offer paid sick time to some or all DSPs
- **81.9%** of agencies offer paid vacation time to some or all DSPs
- **73.6%** of agencies offer health insurance to some or all DSPs

*Data was taken from the NASDDDS's National Core Indicators Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities | Staff Stability Survey Report (2020)

*Are you up for the
challenge?*

**"THE OUTCOMES
WE CONTRIBUTE
TO, IN ADDITION TO
THE BONDS AND
RELATIONSHIPS WE
FOSTER, MOTIVATE
US TO CONTINUE
WORK THAT IS
DIFFICULT AT
TIMES."**

A quote from one of CCP's Direct
Support Professionals

DSP Qualifications

Basic Job Requirements to be a DSP in the State of New Jersey

- Must be 18 years or older
- Possess a High School Diploma, GED, or suitable equivalent
- Successfully complete your agency's onboarding and training programs

"Not only have I been able to care for the clients, but I get to know them as individuals"



Qualifying Skills | Competency Areas

"Competency" – A cluster of related knowledge, skills, and abilities that affects a major part of one's job, that correlates with performance on the job, which is measurable against well-accepted standards and are improvable via training and development.

***There are 15 competency areas considered for people pursuing a career as a Direct Support Professional**

1. Participation Empowerment
2. Communication
3. Assessment
4. Community and Service Networking
5. Facilitation of Services
6. Community Living Skills and Supports
7. Education, Training, and Self-Development
8. Advocacy
9. Vocational, Educational, and Career Support
10. Crisis Prevention and Intervention
11. Organizational Participation
12. Documentation
13. Building and Maintaining Friendships and Relationships
14. Provide Person Centered Supports
15. Supporting Health and Wellness

"Being a DSP is like being part of the participant's family"

*Data was taken from the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals' "Direct Support Professional Competency Areas" (2016)

Collaborating Agencies



Adult Day Habilitation Program
Children's Center Programs, LLC

CCP's Adult Day Habilitation Program is a leisure and activity-based program for individuals 21 years and older with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The program offers campus and community-based choices during daytime hours in year-long setting.

Neptune City, NJ | www.ccprograms.com



LADACIN Network provides options for continuum of care, including educational, therapeutic, social, residential and support services to adults with complex physical and developmental disabilities or delays.



Asbury Park, NJ | www.ladacin.org



Allies, Inc. is a nonprofit agency dedicated to providing housing, healthcare, meaningful employment, and recreational opportunities to people with special needs in the communities of their choice.

Hamilton, NJ | www.alliesnj.org





Alliance for the Betterment of Citizens with Disabilities

Every Day
Give a Shout Out to Our
Devoted, Sincere, Passionate
Direct Support Professionals

ABCD would like to express its heartfelt thanks to the authors of this booklet for their creativity, research, time, and recognition of the dedication and hard work Direct Support Professionals put in every day.

ABCD would also like to thank:

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- Ladacin Network for contributing DSP testimonials and agency photographs.
- Allies Inc. for also contributing DSP testimonials and agency photographs.

Thank you authors of *Devoted, Sincere, and Passionate: Are You A DSP?*

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