



Florida
Developmental
Disabilities
Council, Inc.



LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM 2022

PAY FAIR FOR MY CARE

The Council supports the Medicaid Home- and Community-Based Services iBudget waiver for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities(I/DD) that includes services that support inclusion in the community, provides for a meaningful life, and helps the individual avoid costly and/or restrictive institutional care. Direct Support Professionals (DSP), the bedrock of these supports, are leaving the profession in large numbers due to a lack of pay increases and sustainable wages. Increased compensation can encourage DSPs to stay in their profession, especially if they earn a living wage.

Disability services are chronically underfunded, and the problem has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Nationwide, the health care industry is seeing a shortage of Direct Support Professionals (DSP). Service providers are now doing what they can to recruit and retain employees amidst a workforce crisis. In Florida, DSP wages have not been substantially increased for years.

Individuals with I/DD and their families are asking lawmakers to Pay Fair for My Care!



ISSUE

DSPs fulfill many critical roles. They build relationships and oftentimes provide around-the-clock care for people with I/DD. However, the annual turnover rate has reached a crisis level of over 50% and the workforce has diminished. Before the pandemic, the national average annual turnover rate of DSPs was already too high at 45%. According to the Predictors of Annual Turnover Among DSPs study out of the University of Minnesota, the magnitude of the DSP turnover rate is hardly ever seen in any other industry, thus making running an efficient and effective direct support program or business nearly impossible.

Job retention for DSPs is about valuing people in the position. It's about increasing pay, commensurate with responsibilities, skills, and experience, as well as making sure that DSP concerns are heard and that they are responded to in a respectful way. It's important that DSPs feel like they are part of a person's team.

DSPs are some of the most underpaid, undervalued professionals in our state. On average, DSPs make a little more than \$11 an hour nationwide—wages bound by state and federal funding. Florida ranks forty-seventh in mean entry level pay per hour for all professions by state. The Council is concerned that many of our DSPs have education and experience requirements but are funded below current entry-level averages for Florida. The Governor was forced to veto many items in the state budget in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and, unfortunately, DSP provider rate increases for the developmental disability community's Medicaid Home-and Community- Based Services iBudget waiver were vetoed.

DSPs are a lifeline for people living with I/DD. They not only give them a seat at the table but help them to survive and thrive. Without the availability of these services, individuals with I/DD cannot be included in their communities and may have to seek more costly institutional care to survive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ➔ The Council supports increasing DSP rates for iBudget services. Wages for the DSP workforce should be increased to levels commensurate with a livable wage. The National Association of Direct Support Professionals at the beginning of the pandemic found that 74% are the primary wage earner in their households.
- ➔ Florida should continue investing in smaller community settings to provide services and supports. Investing dollars to support non institutional care in smaller settings minimizes turnover as compared to larger settings.
- ➔ Florida should continue investing in the sustainability of Medicaid-funded home-and community-based services. This investment should include efforts to include workforce shortages and retention challenges.



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