

Direct Support Professional Workforce Crisis for People with Disabilities & Families

Pennsylvania has had a Direct Support Professional (DSP) workforce crisis for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and those who love and care for them for over a decade. Add a pandemic to this existing DSP workforce crisis and you have a disaster. Direct Support Professionals are leaving the human service industry in record numbers because they are unable to earn a wage that allows them to pay their bills. These individuals are doing one of the most important jobs in our society: supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live a safe, healthy, and inclusive life. It is urgent this DSP workforce crisis be corrected. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities rely on DSP's to survive and thrive in their communities. Individuals and families are also suffering because of significant program and service cuts. Many of these cuts are due to historic levels of staff vacancies/shortages, which are directly related to the providers inability to adequately pay the DSP workforce for the essential and life sustaining services they provide.

We will all need to work together to help build an adequate and sustainable system for people with disabilities, their families, and the workforce who supports them. Senate Bill 1126 "Level Up for ID/A" legislation will help facilitate this important work and collaboration. Please support SB 1126.

We, at The Arc of Chester County, have been sounding the alarm for over a decade about this DSP workforce crisis. We are currently working with our other advocacy partners including, The Arc of Chester County Self-Determination Committee, The Arc of PA, The Arc of the United States, PAR (Pennsylvania Advocates and Resources for Autism and Intellectual Disabilities), MAX (Moving Agencies Toward Excellence), and other community partners to urge Governor Wolf and our lawmakers to act now to adequately fund the essential and life sustaining services people with intellectual and developmental disabilities need.

In addition, for the past several months, The Arc's Advocacy Team, including staff, self-advocates, families, and members of our Governmental Affairs & Advocacy Committee have met with local and state elected officials to express the urgency for increased funding. Although grateful for some recent rate increases using American Rescue Plan Act funds, these rate increases do not fill the gap between the cost to deliver the services and the state set rates. These increases are like putting a tiny bandage on a laceration that needs 100 stitches. The reason we find ourselves in this position is due to significant rate cuts, no investment in rates year after year and a lack of a regular inflationary increase. We are imploring Governor Wolf and all Pennsylvania lawmakers to fully fund services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and to establish payment rates that cover the cost to deliver the service and allow providers to offer and pay a competitive wage to these front-line hero's- the DSPs. We are asking that a yearly inflationary index to rates occur, and yearly rate increases be put in place with each budget. If we have any hope to restore the collapsing service system that is responsible for supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities these actions must be taken seriously and must be taken now.

We encourage you to reach out to your local legislators and go over the above information with them. You can also sign up for [Action Alerts](#) to be notified of the critical legislation or government action that impacts Pennsylvanians with disabilities. Thank you for getting involved, make your voice heard and for your advocacy to help fix this DSP workforce crisis. For more information about how you can get involved, please contact our Advocacy Director, Kim Booz at 610-696-8090 x220.