



Dezira Gurule – Nominee, 2022 Colorado DSP of the Year

As an Employment Specialist on the DDRC Employment Services team, Dezira Gurule has contributed to the evolution of our service delivery culture, built strong relationships with her team, and has a meaningful impact on the career journeys of the people she supports.

Service Delivery Culture: Dezira is a leader among her peers. She shares her knowledge and expertise with her fellow Employment Specialists to advance their supported employment skills for the benefit of the people we support. She asks bold questions and is not afraid to advocate for change that will help bring positive outcomes for the people we support.

For example, Dezira provided supports for an employee who was pursuing his next steps toward greater independence at work. DDRC had been providing line of sight (LOS) supervision duties for this employee during his shifts. He demonstrated through his work performance and positive choices that it was time to discuss if his LOS supports could be reduced or eliminated altogether, as he desired. While it wasn't typical that the Employment Specialist would be involved in advocating for a transition away from line-of-sight supervision, Dezira recognized his readiness to transition and helped him advocate for himself, including being present as a support during meetings that were not typically billable in Dezira's role. However, this advocacy and her support promoted positive employment outcomes for this person. Our subject matter expert at HCPF applauded our advocacy and indicated that our inquiry regarding the matter of billable activities would serve as a best practice case study as HCPF evolves their fee schedule over the coming months. Dezira's initiative shows she puts service culture first and seeks to make that the norm.

Employer Relationships: Dezira has a natural talent for connecting with local employers and building relationships with leaders in our local workforce to help open more doors for people we serve. She builds a network of employer contacts which leverages in her own job development efforts and shares her connections with her teammates so that the career seekers we support find the right job match for their employment goals.

Employers look to Dezira as a resource for recruiting qualified candidates that are the right job match for their business needs and as a source of education around diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace. For example, Dezira has developed a close relationship with the Golden Hotel and Restaurant management team. Because of her time spent getting to understand this employer's needs, they have been an incredible partner in promoting inclusive employment within their own hiring practices. They have approached Dezira about educating their staff on how to support co-workers with disabilities in an inclusive and equitable way. When hiring opportunities become available, they reach out to Dezira because they know that she will connect them with qualified candidates and be a meaningful resource and support for new employees. Similarly, Dezira has also built strong working relationships with Burlington and the managers there have reached out to Dezira to help with their hiring efforts in other parts of the state.

Career Seeker Impact: Dezira's biggest impact is on the career seekers she supports. She finds personal fulfillment in assisting others in pursuing and achieving their employment goals, all while promoting competitive, inclusive employment and upholding DDRC's commitment to Employment First.

Dezira chooses work approaches that are unique to each person she supports. She embraces diverse job development techniques that encourage the right job match for a career seeker and then explores creative strategies to offer effective job coaching that supports independence, and finally, fading to the minimum supports necessary. An example of this person-centered, unique approach is when Dezira began working with a career seeker who loves superheroes. The career seeker experiences anxiety, especially when trying to connect with new managers or co-workers. While some members of her support network felt her love of superheroes may be a hindrance to her success at work, Dezira embraced what was important to this career seeker and explored how it could actually assist her in forming relationships at work and reduce anxiety. Dezira helps this person build strong relationships with her team by being present with her for new introductions and encouraging conversation about superheroes. This employee now connects

with new team members and mitigates her anxiety by talking about superheroes as an ice breaker. Instead of hiding her personal interests from her co-workers, it has become her superpower!

Deziraе's contributions as an Employment Specialist at DDRC truly impacts every aspect of our work. From growing our team, to educating employers, to serving career seekers, Deziraе exemplifies Employment First and advancing our vision for people with disabilities to pursue their employment goals and participate fully in the workforce. *And today, more than ever, positive outcomes for employees and employers, and workforce participation, are of importance for so many!*