



Advocating for My Arms and Legs

Article by

Ed Bartz

March 2023

Each year before the New York state budget is compiled and proposed, there are several interest groups that come to Albany to ensure their programs and organizations are funded for another year. For people with a developmental disability, this annual pilgrimage is frustrating and dare I say humiliating? The job of people with disabilities is to advocate for our Direct Support Professionals which is typically the last group that gets a tiny bit of these budgets. The people who have this title are extremely important to the people they support and work for.

DSP's help people with various physical and intellectual disabilities be a part of and compete in today's society. Now, this does sound like an important job, correct? You are right, it is especially important, but society does not value the work of a Direct Support Professional. The paycheck of most DSP's is embarrassing because it hardly covers the cost of living. Because of this situation, people leave for higher paying jobs. This forces agencies to constantly hire and train new employees which seems pointless if after the first paycheck the new employees end up quitting. The employees that do stick around and continue to work for different agencies more often than not are forced to get a second job to counterbalance the cost of living and the lack of pay. They may even have several jobs within one agency to help out other areas that are struggling with lack of staff. The reason people take on several positions within an agency is because the role of a DSP or any human service position is way undervalued and overworked.

Above, I mentioned the word humiliating. People with developmental and intellectual disabilities are not asking for anything silly nor outrageous. We need the people that have chosen to assist us in getting to where we want to be in life to feel valued by the job market and society as a whole. By not paying DSP's a livable wage, government and society are telling people with disabilities that they do not matter. This is why I used the word humiliating. We add diversity to our local and national communities. People with disabilities really should not have to fight "City Hall" to be able to get up in the morning and go work for City Hall. Let me urge everyone who reads my work to advocate and advocate again for DSP's to be recognized as the professionals that they are.



Come learn about advocacy and disability rights!

"March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month (DDAM), a month where we celebrate the coming together of people with and without disabilities to form strong and diverse communities."

- NY DDPC

**Thursday, March
16 from 6-7 PM**

**[Click Here to
Register](#)**



All are welcome to attend!