How to Attract and Retain PWS Caregivers

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DSP Turnover

- DSP turnover rates average 51.3% nationwide (Parfaite-Claude, 2020).

- Average wage of DSP nationwide $13.92/hr. (2021).

- Why has this become the norm?
  - Low wages
  - High stress
  - Company culture
  - Lack of training
  - Not attractive as a career
How Turnover Effects Individuals & Support Agencies

“People who rely on supports provided by DSPs report experiencing lower quality of life when stable, reliable supports cannot be found.”

Study including 1,342 people with IDD participated in a CQL Personal Outcomes Measures interview that analyzed impact of DSP turnover in the previous two years on 21 indicators aligned with quality of life” (Friedman, 2018).
Current and on-going crisis levels of staff shortages among the DSP workforce results in chronically vacant direct care positions across all industry sectors of Home and Community Based Support Services, leaving even emergency staffing resources unavailable, increasing demands of administrative personnel, and need of extensive amounts of time and energy to provide essential direct care services.

A high rate of DSP turnover is also costly for human service organizations, and state budgets more broadly. In 2004, Larson and colleagues estimated turnover costs at $3,278 per DSP who leaves the organization, including separation costs, training costs, and hiring costs (Larson et al., 2016). In 2009, these costs were estimated at $4,872 per DSP (ANCOR, 2010).

“This equates to a significant loss in personnel time engaged in strategic planning, recruiting, and Hiring DSPs, quality training, and other activities that support quality development of DSP Core Competencies.”
Why such a high rate of turnover?

- Skills Don’t Match Needs
- Company Culture
- Manager & Supervisor Effectiveness
- Burnout
- Emotionally Demanding
- “Can’t give what you don’t have”
- Lack of Recognition
Where To Start

Recruiting and Hiring Manager
- Acts as on-site Recourse for Staff Support
- Coordinates staffing across 9 individual homes in one region.

Enabling Retention by increasing opportunities to find the “Right Fit” among multiple home-based teams

Mission of Position
“Support DSP Staff with the same person-centered practices that guide individualized support services for residents.”
How to Attract New Employees

Source of Applicants & New Hire DSPs in 2021

Majority of **ALL DSPs Hired this year** had at least 1 existing connection to 2 major “veins” within the Community or Social Network of just 2 Current DSP Employees.

**Capitalized on Current Employees’ Community Connections & Social Networks with support of Referral Bonus incentives to Source & Recruit New Applicants.**

**RESULT:**

- Significant Increase in number of DSPs who are trained to work at multiple home locations.
- Increased communication & productivity among Home-Based Teams
- Increased regular occurrence of community outings & planned activities that include multiple DSP and resident participants from different home-based locations
“Why Are You Interested In Working with AME?”

“...because of the **good news that i heard of the company** from one of my workmate.”

“**My friend told me how AME work with her schedule and how amazing the teams are**, that made me be interested in AME.”

“...I have a couple of friends who work with this company and **said they absolutely love it and it’s such a nice environment to work in and be around...**”

“...because **a current staff talk a lot of good things** about the company”

“I heard about this opportunity **from a few friends**, who said **it’s a great and fun environment** and I will learn how to provide better supports services for I/DD individuals.”

“...a good friend of mine has been working for AME. She told me that **AME supports learning and development** on the job and really rewards hard workers. These are values I also share. I feel would be an excellent fit with AME.”

“**To help people with disabilities in realizing their full potential and believe the AME community is providing such services.**”

Direct quotes from applicant’s submission of agency’s online Employment Inquiry form
How To Attract New Employees

- Employee Referral Bonus Program
- Source of 95% of all New Hire Employees in 2021
- Social media
- Recruiting platforms
- Local schools
- Job fairs
Making Investment Into the Future

Asking about Career Goals

Supporting Career Goals

- Paid training
- Tuition reimbursement
- Sustainable staffing = Supervisors can be supportive of training & career development activities without risk of burnout
- Balance on-going education of Best PWS supports and DSP skills
- Making DSP a Career Choice!
PWS Training
Agency Developed & Ongoing PWS Training

- Behavior
- Nutrition and Meal Prep
- PWS History and Medical Research
- Advocacy & Community Integration
- Meaningful Interactions
- Positive Supports
- Goal-Setting
- Health & Exercise
- Communication Strategies
DSP Competencies & Skills Training

- NADSP [https://nadsp.org](https://nadsp.org)
- College of Direct Support [https://directcourseonline.com/direct-support/](https://directcourseonline.com/direct-support/)
- Leadership trainings/certificates
- Virtual Seminars with certificates
Retention Strategies

1. Flexible Employee Benefits

Extend Vacation Time & Leaves of Absence For All Employees

HOW?

- Recruit & Hire New DSPs to Casual Positions
- Individualized Scheduling Rooted in Person-Centered Practices

WHY?

- Supports Long-Term Employment of High-Demand Position
- Low Wages Demand Flexible Scheduling to Support Multiple Jobs
- Serves Needs of DSP Immigrant Worker Population
- Flexible Scheduling Attractive Benefit Unmatched by competing industries
Retention Strategies

2. Creating Pathways to Leadership

Agency Development of Advancement Opportunity & Leadership Position for Direct Support Professionals

DSP Preceptor Role & Responsibilities

• Benefits DSPs
• Benefits Agency
• Benefits PWS Individuals
• Supports NADSP Goals for Professionalizing Workforce
Retention

Long-Term DSP Employment = Strong Long-Term Support Relationship for PWS Individuals

Important to Success of PWS individuals who THRIVE on consistency, familiar, & competent execution of well established routines

How?

Using the same Persons Centered Practices of self-determination & Goal Setting used when Planning Support Services with PWS Individuals

“How can we help support your Professional Development Goal?”

Better Quality of Life!

Friedman, (2018)

• Incorporate Discussion of DSP Career Goals into The Annual Performance Review

• Create opportunities for shared Teaching and Learning experiences between DSP & PWS individual

3. Facilitate DSP Learning & Development
Vision for The Future

Advocacy of DSP Profession
- Accredited Certification & DSP Credentialing
- Continuing education requirements

College & University Education
- DSP Curriculum & Certification Programs
- Continuing Education Courses

Agency Provided Supports
- Paying Livable Wages
- Build a Career Pathway Program
- Sustainable Community
References


