

# DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

THE FOUNDATION OF SERVICES FOR NEW YORKERS WITH DISABILITIES



## HIGHLY SKILLED

### DSPs Are Skilled Professionals

DSPs are trained professionals, responsible for the care and support of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. They attend to the comprehensive social, emotional, physical and psychological needs of people they support.



The varied roles of DSPs involve many types of routine and emergency supports, including:

- first aid & CPR,
- medication administration
- meal preparation & feeding
- personal hygiene
- transportation
- communication
- behavioral de-escalation
- money management
- work & life skill development

These dedicated staff are the foundation of our system of supports and services. **Their essential work facilitates independence and inclusion for New Yorkers with I/DD.**

Yet, a disturbing trend has made it nearly impossible to recruit and retain the skilled staff necessary to provide quality care and support for people with I/DD.

**These highly skilled positions have become minimum wage jobs.**

## RAPIDLY DEVALUED

### These are NOT minimum wage jobs

The role of a DSP requires an intense level of skill and responsibility, but their work is no longer valued accordingly.

**15 years ago, the average DSP wage was nearly **TWICE** minimum wage.**

The current average starting wage for a DSP at a nonprofit provider in New York state is \$16.48 — **only 10% above minimum wage.**

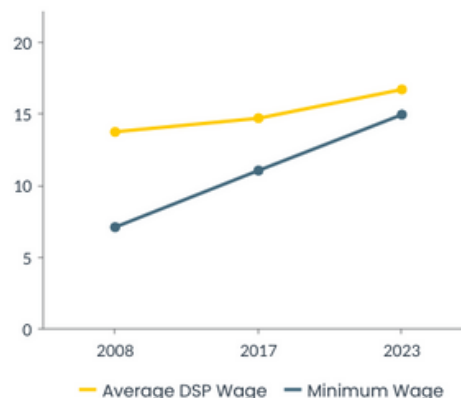
#### DSP Wage % Above Minimum Wage

The downward trend over 15 years (2008–2023)



#### DSP Wage Increase vs Minimum Wage Increase

Change over last 15 years (2008–2023)



# THE CRISIS

## WITHOUT STAFF, WE CANNOT PROVIDE SUPPORT

### Years of Underfunding

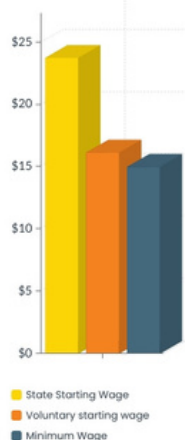
New York state failed to make adequate investments in services and supports for New Yorkers with I/DD for more than a decade. Over the last 10 years, investment in the I/DD field rarely even covered the year's inflation. This systemic underfunding eroded our workforce and created a critical staffing crisis.

### The Issue of Inequity

New York state provides supports and services to 140,000 people with I/DD. Nonprofit providers deliver 85% of these services. The other 15% of people are supported in state-operated programs.

Nonprofit and state-operated providers are all funded through Medicaid and overseen by OPWDD. The two sectors work in partnership to support New Yorkers with I/DD.

Hourly DSP starting wage



While wages for direct support staff at nonprofit providers stagnated, the state provided significant increases for staff doing the same work at state operated providers.

**Today, DSPs at nonprofit providers make 30% LESS than DSPs working for the state**

We can no longer compete with state programs to recruit and retain staff. Without quality staff, nonprofit providers cannot fulfill our role in the state's system of supports.

### THE IMPACT

**20,000**

**critical direct care positions are currently unfilled**

**ONE IN THREE**

**DSPs leave their jobs every year**

**The annual cost of staff turnover costs has risen to**

**\$100,000,000**

**38% of nonprofit providers closed or reduced programs in a single year**



## NEW YORK MUST DO BETTER

### INVEST IN THE SYSTEM

- Include a 3.2% COLA in the NYS BUDGET

### INVEST IN THE WORKFORCE

- Establish a Direct Support Wage Enhancement

INVEST IN *me!*