



Direct Support Professionals Make A Difference. Shouldn't They Also Make A Living?

The Shared Goal – Life in the Community for People with Disabilities

The Supreme Court (Olmstead decision), President Bush's New Freedom Initiative, Congress, Governors, people with disabilities, families and providers all agree – the United States must adopt a long-term support system that gives all people the opportunity to live and work in their own community.

Direct Support Professionals are the Lynchpin to Community Living

Direct support professionals, often referred to as personal assistants or home care aides, build close, trusted relationships with the millions of people with disabilities they assist each day. They work in community settings assisting people with severe disabilities with medications, preparing and eating meals, dressing, mobility, and handling daily affairs.

The Workforce Crisis is Blocking the Realization of the Shared Goal

Inadequate wages have led to high turnover and ongoing vacancies in the direct support workforce. Hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities are already waiting for services and demand for supports will explode over the next decade. Here are the facts on wages:

**Support
H.R. 1279!**

- As many as **75%** of all direct support positions turnover every year;
- Hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities are already waiting for services;
- Direct support professional hourly wages increased only **\$1.20** from **1995 to 2004** versus \$2.79 and \$1.75 for public direct support positions and fast food workers respectively;
- Direct support professional wages rose slower than the minimum wage from 1995 to 2004, **16.88%** versus 21.18%; and
- Most direct support professionals are women with families of their own to support, working at an average of less than \$9 an hour.

Why aren't the wages rising faster? Ask your state regulators. Direct support services are funded through Medicaid reimbursements and state governments set the reimbursement rates.

The Workforce Crisis Threatens the Quality of Supports to People with Disabilities

The lack of a reliable labor pool has thrown the industry into turmoil and placed the lives of millions of Americans who rely on long-term services and supports at risk. This critical shortage of a stable workforce threatens the quality of supports to people with disabilities and undermines the ability of people to live in their own homes and communities.

The Direct Support Professionals Fairness and Security Act of 2007 (H.R. 1279)

Lead Sponsors: Representatives Lois Capps (D-CA) and Lee Terry (R-NE)

H.R. 1279 takes an important step forward by joining federal, state and private sectors together. The legislation encourages investing resources now so that people with disabilities can choose to live in their own homes and communities—a choice that ultimately saves money while reflecting the nation's shared goal.

H.R. 1279 would amend Title XIX of the Social Security Act to provide funds to states to enable them to increase the wages paid to targeted direct support professionals who are providing services to individuals with disabilities under Medicaid.

Key bill provisions:

- **State Option:** States would have the choice to participate. Participating states will realize pay parity between private and public direct support professionals.
- **Financial Incentive to States:** The bill provides a financial incentive (additional temporary federal funding) to states to reimburse private providers for increased wages and mandated wage-related costs for specific direct support professionals.
- **Enhanced Federal Assistance:** States would receive enhanced 100% federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) for five years to increase wages with no additional state dollars required to match the additional federal funds.
- **Submission of Five-Year Plan and Maintenance of Wage Increase:** In order to receive the enhanced FMAP, states would have to submit a five-year plan and must assure continuation of the increased wage rate after the five-year period.
- **Annual Indexing:** The state must provide assurance that at the end of the five-year implementation period, it will provide funding to increase the wages annually by a percentage equal to the Bureau of Labor Statistic's employment cost index (ECI).
- **Collaborative Process:** The state's plan must be developed with meaningful participation of private providers, individuals with disabilities and family members, direct support professionals, and organizations that represents these groups.
- **Funding for State Planning Grants:** It would provide \$3 million in federal funding for state planning grants to help states develop their wage enhancement state plans.
- **GAO and Inspector General Requirements:** Requires a General Accountability Office (GAO) study on recruitment and retention and an Inspector General Audit of progress in reducing/eliminating wage gap.

Direct Support Professionals Make A Difference. You can too.