

My name is Cindy Fisher and am a Direct Support Professionals (DSP). DSP's provide crucial support to adults and children experiencing intellectual and developmental disabilities. Our work includes managing medical needs, challenging behavioral health supports, intimate personal care/ personal hygiene and support to maintain employment and make real connections in the community.

Diverse workforce that is 87% women; 59% people of color; and 27% immigrant

Persistently low wages - current average wage is \$13.94

Not minimum wage work, yet low wages force agencies to compete with minimum wage jobs

While DSPs are NOT state employees – their work is almost entirely funded by state and federally matched funds (average of 98.2%).

We strive to expand the horizons and enhance the quality of life of those we support and try to teach them everyday skills to become independent as much as possible.

With such low wages that we make it is very difficult to keep staff as they tend to move on to better paying jobs even if this is something they enjoy doing. Many of us that have stuck it out work several overtime hours which takes from our own family lives. If we were able to have better wages more staff would stay. I hear the complaints from fellow staff all the time how they struggle with what is being made.

We need a strong IDD budget with a focus on DSP wages

Fully fund I/DD Direct Support Professionals - value the work and raise the wage.

DSPs are essential workers who have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 crisis since the beginning with very little compensation.

We deserve a significant investment in our wages.