

Why should we care about the Direct Support Professional (DSP) Worker Shortage?

Pamela Stafford, Organizing Director

New Mexico Caregivers in Action

For The Interim Legislative Health and Human Services Committee

(10/6/2022)

Introduction



What is NMCA?

- Statewide Not-for-Profit Membership Organization
- Membership is open to anyone who supports our values related to the care agenda
- Members are unpaid family members, paid family members, career caregivers, Direct Support professionals, care recipients, organizational members including home health care agencies and DD Providers

What does NMCA provide?

- Group Discounted Insurance
- Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) in partnership with Prosperity Works
- Caregiver Advocacy and Action Training
- Caregiver mobilization including Build Back Better and the National Domestic Workers Bill of Rights

Introduction to Pamela Stafford, Organizing Director

- Sibling of a person with I/DD (now deceased)
- 26-year career supporting persons with I/DD
- NMCA in May 2021

“I knew in 2021 that the COVID-19 pandemic had accelerated the workforce crisis among Direct Support Professionals. The best way for me to support individuals with disabilities was to make the move to advocate for DSPs and similar positions.” Pam Stafford

Focus of Presentation

The main question: “Why Should We Care about the Direct Support Professional Workforce Shortage?”

Topic Discussion Areas:

- What is a Direct Support Professional?
- What type of work does a person in this position do?
- Why is there a shortage?
- Why should we care?

Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS)

- In 1981, as part of the Budget Reconciliation Act, an amendment to the Social Security Act created the 1915(c) waivers.
- Prior to the creation of HCBS waivers, long-term care was available through Medicaid only in institutional settings.
- Care in Home and Community-Based settings is different from care in institutional settings.
- The Federal DD Act ensures that people with developmental disabilities in the United States and their families have access to services and supports that promote self-determination, independence and inclusion in their communities.

Sample Brief Job Description –

Direct Support Professionals assist people in achieving their full potential by offering **both care and support**. They can work in a range of settings, such as at home, or in adult habilitation or community settings, both alone and as part of a group. A support worker's duty varies, but they all assist persons who need **care and support** for a variety of reasons, including developmental disabilities, mental health issues, learning difficulties, and physical impairment. They may be required to labor in patients' homes, assisting them with duties such as movement, feeding, and drinking, as well as personal care. Because the persons they support have different requirements, the tasks of a DSP are distinct and varied. **They could assist with food prep, domestic tasks, medication administration, financial management, community access, doctor visits, job search, and moral support.**

Two Components of Care

- Care of person and environment – bathing, feeding, toileting, household tasks
- Health Management – Assisting with medication, assessing symptoms for urgent or emergency care, going to doctor appointments, serving as intermediary between doctors when medical issues are complex, implementing health care plan, crisis plans, therapy plans (and often, for multiple individuals)

Two Examples of Support

Education / Learning

- Joe would like to manage his own finances without a Representative Payee (Rep Payee).
- First, he will work with his personal spending money to make a budget, track expenditures. Then he can decide how much to save each month.

Community Navigation

- Lisa wants to make friends with her neighbors. She joins a neighborhood group that cleans a neighborhood park once a month.
- Supported Living Plan because Lisa communicates differently from many.
- Behavioral Services Plan helps Lisa maintain appropriate boundaries

Care or person/place	Health Care	Education/ Learning support	Community navigation support
1. Van safety check	2. Transported and attended a doctor's appointment with Sally	3.a Taught Jane how to sort laundry, operate washer and dryer, fold clothes and put them away	3.b Helped Dawn connect to Zoom for chat with her mother
5. Cooked dinner for all three, prepared Dawn's meal for aspiration risk and sat with her separately to monitor her eating	4.a Helped Dawn with range of motion exercises as trained by physical therapist	7.Supported Sally in outcome on packing her own lunch each night in preparation for next day	4.b Practiced "lines" with Sally who is in a community theater group
8. Helped Dawn to bathe, prompted Sally and Jane to get ready for bed	6. Assisted Jane to take nightly meds	10. Help set Dawn's Audible book for pre-bed reading	11. Encouraged Sally not to quit her job because she likes her paycheck
12. Wash dinner dishes, sweep and mop kitchen floor	9. Responded to Jane's seizure		

Care or person/place	Health Care	Education/ Learning support	Community navigation support
1. Assisted Don to dress for the day in his best interview clothes	4. Reminded Ed as he is walking home to put on his sunscreen so he doesn't get sunburned	5. Picked Frank at home and to take him to library	2. Took Don to job interview. Helped employer to understand Don's communication system. Took Don home
8. Met George at apartment complex to help him with laundry	6. Responded to Frank's anxiety and escalation by practicing techniques taught by his behavior therapist	10. Attended a sexuality and relationship class with Irene	3. Met Ed at his A.A. meeting to provide support and encouragement
12. Assisted Irene in using restroom	13. Helped Irene helps to re-bandage a wound before leaving home	11. Took Irene to shoe store to purchase shoes	7. Took Frank on lunch date with his girlfriend
	14. On way home, called the agency nurse to alert her with concern over blood in Irene's stool and to update on wound		9. Assisted George in completing renewal for Section 8 housing approval

UNM- CDD Training Requirements for Direct Support Staff

Course Name	Days for Compliance	Access Location
ANE Awareness	30, then annually	Online Courses or Training Calendar
HIPPA	30	Online Courses
Standard Precautions	30	Online Courses
Keys to Health	30	Online Courses or Training Calendar
Introduction to Person Centered Planning	30	Online Courses
Introduction to Waivers	30	Online Courses
Individual Service Plan (ISP) DSP/DSS	60	Training Calendar
Assisting with Medication Delivery (if required in MAAT)	90	Part 1 Online, Parts 2 and 3 Training Calendar
Advocacy in Action	90	Online Courses and Training Calendar
Communication Supports Training	90	Online Courses and Training Calendar
Positive Supports Training	90	Online Courses and Training Calendar

Pandemic Shut-Down in 2020

- For individuals in group home, shut-down meant they were not allowed to leave their home for any reason other than medical need or emergency
- No family members, corporate guardians, therapists, nurses, supervisors or case managers were allowed in the home
- For almost six months, the only person allowed in the home was the Direct Support Professional – the most essential service in the DD Waiver system
- In the DD Waiver system, DSPs were the COVID-19 pandemic frontline

Why is there a workforce shortage?

- Labor shortage across all industries
- Wages not competitive with other jobs
- Wages do not align with high level of responsibility
- Lack of benefits
- Often have to work multiple jobs for financial reasons
- Emotional and physical fatigue of job
- Additional unpaid care needs within family

Why should we care about the lack of Direct Support Staff?

- Impact on individuals in service
- Impact on staff remaining in positions
- Impact on families
- Impact on system
- Impact on economic recovery
- Domino effect

Why should we care about the lack of Direct Support Staff?

“Families are still the primary caregivers for adults with developmental disabilities and are themselves aging. About 76% of individuals with developmental disabilities reside at home. In 25% of these homes, the family caregiver is over 60 years of age. The average age of the care recipient with a developmental disability is age 38.

Source: Family Caregiver Alliance

Impact of Staffing Crisis on Individuals (recipients of care)

- People are impacted by disability in different ways; they have different life circumstances
- Person First Video – Isolation, unable to attend work, unable to conduct typical community activities
- The Arc NM Guardianship letter

Impact of Staffing Crisis on Staff

- Overworked
- Too many hours of overtime – “burn-out”
- Increased likelihood of injury to self
- Increased likelihood of impacting individuals inadvertently
- Job dissatisfaction
- Domino effect of staff shortage will lead to additional staff shortage

Impact of Staffing on Family & Systems of Support

Family

- May not be able to return to work
- Many additional hours of caregiving added to existing hours
- Fatigue and burnout
- Worry and fear

System

- High costs of overtime
- High Workers' Compensation costs
- Higher training costs
- Higher incident management costs
- Waitlist for services
- Prioritizing residential over community services

Why I support the DSP Workforce Stabilization Bill

- Values Direct Support Staff
- It adds new recurring state money to the system with a Federal match
- It doesn't harm providers – in any year there is not an increase in rates, there is no expectation of wage increases
- It helps providers by requiring rate studies are conducted every two years so that we have real-time data on the cost of doing business
- Workforce data collection means legislators will know if the investment actually results in recruitment and retention
- The timing is right – provider capacity assessment and rate study about to begin

Additional Considerations