

Linsey Latham
Opportunity Enterprise
LD 1932

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) provide essential, life-sustaining services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. They are responsible not only for daily care tasks such as personal hygiene, medication support, transportation, and meal preparation, but also for promoting independence, dignity, emotional well-being, community inclusion, and safety. The quality of life for vulnerable individuals depends directly on the skill, consistency, and dedication of DSPs.

DSPs routinely manage complex behavioral needs, medical protocols, crisis situations, documentation requirements, and strict regulatory compliance. They are entrusted with the health, safety, and rights of people who often cannot advocate for themselves. This level of responsibility requires strong judgment, emotional intelligence, patience, and specialized training — yet DSP wages often remain close to entry-level or minimum wage positions with far fewer responsibilities and risks.

Low wages contribute directly to high staff turnover, staffing shortages, burnout, and inconsistent care. When DSPs are underpaid, agencies struggle to retain experienced workers, leading to frequent retraining costs, disrupted routines for individuals served, reduced program stability, and increased safety risks. Investing in competitive wages improves retention, strengthens relationships between staff and clients, enhances service quality, and ultimately reduces long-term operational costs.

Fair compensation also acknowledges the physical and emotional demands of the role. DSPs routinely lift, assist with mobility, manage aggressive behaviors, respond to medical emergencies, and provide emotional support through trauma, grief, and daily challenges. These responsibilities mirror those in healthcare, education, and behavioral support fields — professions that are typically compensated at significantly higher rates.

Raising DSP wages is not only a workforce issue — it is a community responsibility. When DSPs are valued and financially stable, individuals with disabilities receive more consistent, respectful, and person-centered care. Families gain peace of mind, agencies operate more efficiently, and communities benefit from inclusive, well-supported citizens. Paying DSPs a living wage reflects the true value of their work and ensures sustainability of essential services.