



**NADSP**

**The Nation/State Affiliation  
Toolkit**

February 2, 2009



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## **Welcome to NADSP!**

Thank you for considering becoming an affiliate of the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP). The documents provided should offer you a better understanding of what NADSP stands for, our goals, what we can do for your organization and what your role will be in NADSP.

You will also find information for building a state chapter, our credentialing program, tips for gaining support for participation in a state chapter and tips executives, administrators, managers and supervisors can use to support direct support professional development.

Sincerely,

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jay Mackey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Jay Mackey  
Affiliation Chairperson  
NADSP



## Who We Are

The NADSP is a coalition of organizations and individuals committed to strengthening the quality of community human service support by strengthening the direct support workforce. The group has representatives from the fields of mental health, developmental disabilities, child welfare, education, and many others in the human services community. The Alliance has developed a national agenda to address conditions chronicled for 25 years that are harmful to people who rely on human services. These conditions include high staff turnover, low social status, insufficient training, limited educational and career opportunities, and poor wages. These undermine the commitment of the Direct Support Professionals, and have made it very difficult to recruit and train qualified and committed individuals in direct support roles in every area of human services.

The NADSP believes that service participants and direct support professionals are partners in the move towards a self-determined life, and in complimenting and facilitating growth of natural supports. We recognize that people needing support are more likely to fulfill their life dreams if they have well-trained, experienced, and motivated people at their side in long-term, stable, compatible support relationships. We also recognize that well-planned workforce development strategies are needed to strengthen our workforce.

The NADSP mission is to promote the development of a highly competent human services workforce which supports individuals in achieving their life goals. We have organized our membership into committees to develop strategies to address each of the following goals:

- Enhance the status of direct support professionals;
- Provide better access for all direct support professionals to high quality educational experiences (e.g. in-service training, continuing & higher education) and lifelong learning which enhances competency.
- Strengthening the working relationships and partnerships between direct support professionals, self-advocates, other consumer groups and families.
- Promote systems reform which provides incentives for educational experiences, increased compensation, and access to career pathways for direct support professionals through the promotion of policy initiatives (e.g., legislation, funding, practices).
- Support the development and implementation of a national volunteer credentialing process for direct support professional.



# Code of Ethics

- **Person-Centered Supports**- As a DSP my first allegiance is to the person I support; all other activities and functions I perform flow from this allegiance.
- **Promoting Physical and Emotional Well-Being**- As a DSP I am responsible for supporting the emotional, physical, and personal well-being of the individuals receiving support. I will encourage growth and recognize the autonomy of the individuals receiving support while being attentive and energetic in reducing their risk of harm.
- **Integrity and Responsibility**- As a DSP I will support the mission and vitality of my profession to assist people in leading self-directed lives and to foster a spirit of partnership with the people I support, other professionals, and the community.
- **Confidentiality**- As a DSP I will safeguard and respect the confidentiality and privacy of the people I support.
- **Justice, Fairness and Equity**- As a DSP I will promote and practice justice, fairness, and equity for the people I support and the community as a whole. I will affirm the human rights, civil rights and responsibilities of the people I support.
- **Respect**- As a DSP I will respect the human dignity and uniqueness of the people I support. I will recognize each person I support as valuable and help others understand their value.
- **Relationships** - As a DSP I will assist the people I support to develop and maintain relationships.
- **Self-Determination**- As a DSP I will assist the people I support to direct the course of their own lives.
- **Advocacy** - As a DSP I will advocate with the people I support for justice, inclusion, and full community participation.



## **The NADSP Direct Support Professional Credentialing Program**

The NADSP credentialing program affords Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) the opportunity to commit to the profession of direct support through its three-tiered credential program. This voluntary credentialing program provides a career path for DSPs. The career path begins with the Registration Level (DSP-R). Once direct support professionals become DSP-Rs they are eligible to pursue the Certified Level (DSP-C) which requires a demonstration of competence and ethical practice. After achieving the DSP-C, direct support professionals can earn a Specialist credential (DSP-S) by demonstrating competence and ethical practice in providing specialized support to individuals who use community human services.

### **What is credentialing?**

Credentialing is a review process designed to establish professional standards of practice. Credentialing programs identify criteria for the skills, knowledge, and values needed in a particular profession (e.g. direct support in community human services). A credentialing body often determines different levels of credentials to acknowledge varying levels of mastery within a particular profession. Obtaining a credential typically means that the professional commits to ethical practice and a professional code of ethics. Professional credentials are designed to be portable, meaning that a credentialed professional will be recognized for their skills and knowledge wherever they choose to work.

### **Why is credentialing important for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs)?**

Direct Support Professionals have been overlooked and undervalued for far too long. The support they provide to individuals is critical to their ability to live self-directed and satisfying lives. While we know there are thousands of highly qualified DSPs supporting people who use community human services, there are also DSPs who do not provide quality supports or practice according to ethical principles. Credentialing DSPs is important because it will ensure that people who pursue careers in direct support share a common knowledge base and skill set. Credentialing further ensures that DSPs make a commitment to practice according to the NADSP Code of Ethics. In other words, the job will no longer be left to chance. DSPs will be required to show mastery in the nationally validated competency areas through skill demonstration on the job and through a portfolio of work samples.

The NADSP Direct Support Professional Credentialing Program has created an opportunity to build a nationally recognized profession for direct support workers across the country. This program embraces the knowledge, skills and values of this



profession and binds them in ethical practices which will result in the following:

- Credentialed DSPs feel valued and take pride in their direct support work.
- People outside the field of community human services will see direct support work as an authentic profession and career track.
- Credentialed DSPs will be recognized for the important work they do.
- Employers will find DSP turnover to be less of a problem if credentialed DSPs have a career path to pursue.
- Employers will see an increase in the consistency of high quality supports delivered by credentialed DSPs.
- DSPs will see wage enhancement programs for those who seek credentials.

Most importantly, people who use support services will lead better lives because DSPs will have the knowledge, skills and values needed to support individuals' goals and dreams.

To learn more about NADSP's Credentialing Program, go to: [www.nadsp.org](http://www.nadsp.org) and click on Credentialing.



# Your Role in NADSP

As a membership organization, NADSP requires the involvement of its members to share information on Direct Support Professional issues, achievements and directions. Chapters and Contacts do this important work in concert with NADSP. We encourage the involvement and participation of DSPs' in leadership roles at both the local and national levels.

## **State Contact**

This is an individual member of NADSP who is interested in developing a state chapter for DSPs. This person holds a stated purpose that is in alignment with NADSP.

- Must adhere to and advance the stated goals of NADSP in your area or state
- Assist in the development of a statewide chapter
- Assist in the recruitment of new NADSP members
- Participate in NADSP conference calls and committee meetings

## **State Chapter**

This is a formally organized direct support membership group, led by direct support professionals, whose strategic goals are in alignment with and approved by NADSP, with duties as follows:

- Must adhere to and advance the stated goals of NADSP in your area or state
- Assist in the recruitment of new NADSP members
- Participate in NADSP conference calls, committees and submit an annual state report to NADSP
- Sponsor one member of the Chapter to become a NADSP Board Liaison
- Holds at least an annual meeting of members and regular meetings
- Communicates with members through meetings, newsletters, emails, a web page and other correspondence
- Collects annual dues from members and contributes \$10 of those dues (per member) to NADSP
- Provide NADSP with an annual data report regarding members



# NADSP Job Descriptions

## **Affiliate Chairperson**

- Maintain up-dated records on state chapters.
- Respond to affiliate needs when requested.
- Arrange communication between prospective or new state chapters and the NADSP representative in their region.
- Update NADSP board on activities with affiliates.

## **Region Representative**

- Conduct quarterly conference calls within the region. Conference calls are designed to share information about DSP workforce activities happening across the region, identifying ways for state chapters to collaborate and/or support one another within a region, and communicate information between state and national.
- Take minutes on all region conference calls.
- Assist chairperson with forming new contacts and chapters in their region.

## **NADSP Administrator**

- Send out Contact/Chapter survey once a year.
- Collect and disseminate contracts for new contacts and chapters and disseminate to appropriate parties.



# NADSP Committees

NADSP Committees are a vital part of NADSP's growth and expansion. Without the work done in these committees, our organization becomes stagnant. Your voice, and the voices of the people in your state are necessary for NADSP to focus on important issues for direct support across the nation.

Please look at the descriptions below and find areas you are interested in. If possible, pick several different committees for members of your state group to be involved in. Add the committees you are interested in and the contact info for the person interested to the second page of your NADSP contract (located at the end of the toolkit).

- **Communication:** Functions include, Frontline Initiative, website consultation, marketing, and Moving Mountains
- **Membership:** Functions include development of individual and agency membership
- **Affiliates:** Functions include building grass roots DSP organizations in key states
- **Education, Training and Development:** Functions include credentialing and code of ethics
- **Advocacy:** Functions include political, policy and legislative advocacy.
- **Grants and Resource Development:** Functions include collaborating in submission of grants that support NADSP objectives
- **Research and Evaluation:** Functions include proving that credentialing is beneficial, creating a resource library of workforce development articles.



## Strategies for Building a State NADSP Chapter

**Strategies to engage Direct Support Professionals, advocates, individuals who use community human services, family members, agencies and others in activities that promote the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals' (NADSP) mission and goals.**

- Make contacts at agencies that support people with disabilities. Enlist that person's effort to make their direct support workforce aware of the Alliance's goal, mission and newsletter. Suggestions for activities and actions Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) within your area could engage in to promote the mission of NADSP and advocate for themselves as DSP's include:
- Develop a group that meets monthly to discuss direct support issues and different solutions. The group could elect a representative to share the ideas with the agencies management.
- Provide training on grassroots lobbying related specifically to the direct support workforce and how they can impact their local and state representatives, i.e. letter writing, phone calls, individual and group meetings to build relationships.
- Set up visits for DSPs to agencies or service providers in order to exchange ideas and learn about other efforts directly from other DSPs.
- Enlist the support and actions of family members, people with disabilities and advocates in the field to understand the importance of and the need for promoting the direct support workforce. These groups could present personal experiences on why the direct support workforce is valuable and greatly needed, formally and informally, to the management of service providers, lobbying groups, other families, workers and advocates, local and state representatives and at conferences.
- Work through professional associations/organizations to promote the goals and mission of NADSP through their newsletters, boards, etc.
- Identify key people in your community that support your efforts through their involvement or in-kind support.
- Meet with regional employment boards and private industry councils to inform them about the direct support workforce and to seek support for training and education programs.
- Seek funds from foundations, state human service agencies or local foundations to support coalition building efforts around human service workforce development.
- Organize a DSP recognition day that includes public recognition from the Governor or other high level officials for DSP work and is coordinated with recognition activities at the local agency level.
- Support the organization of a local, regional or statewide conference that



- brings DSP's together with self-advocates and policy makers to for learning, reflection and the creation of an agenda to strengthen the DSP workforce.
- Bring educators, employers and DSPs together to develop relevant, competency-based training and educational activities that lead to certificates and degrees.
  - Meet with foundations, DD Councils, researchers and policy makers to stimulate demonstration projects and research that will benefit the direct support workforce.
  - Encourage human service employers to pool resources and expand educational opportunities through the development of regional educational and training consortia.
  - Involve DSPs and self-advocates in leadership roles and in teaching others about community support work.
  - Develop a 'story' summarizing regional or statewide activities involving DSPs that can be submitted to NADSP's Frontline Initiative.
  - Make presentations about workforce issues and NADSP activities at board meetings, advocacy groups and local and regional conferences of national organizations (e.g., AAMR, TASH, IAPSRs, NOHSE – all of these member organizations of NADSP have regional conferences and activities).

**Legislative advocacy strategies aimed to bring awareness and enlist the support of local and state legislators in the effort to improve the direct support workforce:**

- Build relationships with legislators. Establish contact through letters identifying workforce issues while highlighting NADSPs' efforts to improve those issues. Set up a face-to-face meeting.
- Establish credibility and become a resource for the legislator.
- Send letters and make phone calls frequently when bills are being discussed around direct support workforce issues or regarding people with disabilities and the supports they need.
- Remain up-to-date on what bills are being discussed and get involved in these discussions. Call the legislator's office and give your opinions on related matters.
- Follow up your conversation in written format.
- Learn and remain aware of what other issues are important to that legislator and let them know that you support them on other issues as well.
- Resource: Minnesota Governors Councils on Developmental Disabilities. "Making Your Case". This is a useful tool for training people on how to successfully work with their local and state representatives.



## **Foster Positive Employer/DSP Relationships in Your State: What DSP's Can Do**

- Be knowledgeable about and committed to the NADSP Code of Ethics and apply these principles in your work. Reflect upon the mission, vision and values of your organization, NADSP, and your state chapter and how they relate to each other.
- As stated in the NADSP code of ethics, a DSP's first allegiance is to the person he or she supports. All other activities and functions that a DSP performs flow from this allegiance.
- Recognize that every organization is unique. Work within your organization to develop ways to gain support for your involvement in the state chapter (as a chapter member and, if applicable, as a board member) as well as other professional development initiatives. Some factors to consider include: Share with your supervisor, as soon as you are able, your interest in being an active member of the State Chapter and other professional development activities and why it is important to you personally and professionally.
- Clearly explain what your involvement in the state chapter and other professional development opportunities would include and the support that you would need. Work with your supervisor and other organization representatives to identify the factors that would need to be discussed such as: time commitments, when paid or personal time would be used, whether or not and how expenses would be reimbursed (For example, mileage, meals, lodging), what other resources might be available, what scheduling changes would need to be arranged or what work responsibilities would need to be covered, and deciding if office equipment/supplies, training materials, or meeting space could be used.
- Build upon this initial dialogue and reach agreement about what methods would be most effective for maintaining communication and ensuring that everyone remains informed. Engage in problem-solving sessions with your supervisor or other organization members to develop solutions to issues and concerns that may arise related to your involvement in the state chapter, NADSP activities, and other professional development initiatives.
- When working with different groups of people (For example, legislators, co-workers, managers or executive directors, conference participants) be aware of your audience and think about the most effective way and manner for you to communicate your message to that group [For example, type of presentation (informal or formal), language used, timing, intended outcome].



- Highlight the value and benefits of participation in the state chapter, NADSP, and other professional development opportunities for your organization such as: Sharing resources and strategies to enhance the quality of supports for individuals with disabilities; Development of knowledge and skills in specific topic areas that can be shared with co-workers and individuals or families supported by the organization; Designing and developing training sessions based on knowledge and skills developed through the state chapter and other professional development opportunities; Collaboration with supervisors, managers, and administrators in activities related to systems change that could enhance a better understanding of workforce challenges and interventions that foster the professional development of DSPs; Develop and deliver presentations at professional conferences and meetings that highlight the work of the state chapter and NADSP; Show how DSP participation in the state chapter, NADSP, and other professional development activities can strengthen DSP commitment to and increase tenure within their organizations.
- Because there are DSPs from both union and non-union organizations, reinforce the principle of union neutrality within the state chapter and NADSP, and place a strong focus on professional development.
- Remember to acknowledge and recognize the organizations that support your participation in the state chapter and NADSP, and other professional development opportunities.



## Being an NADSP Ambassador

**You help establish the “persona” of the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals.**

- Communicate succinctly NADSP’s key messages
- Act with passion and express appreciation
- Be interesting...and interested

### **What is a key message?**

- A concise description of key points (no more than three)
- Brief and memorable
- Natural sounding – not memorized – a conversational tone

**How do I put it all together? There are so many key messages...**

### NADSP messages and taglines

*We develop a workforce that is competent, demonstrates integrity and creates leaders.*

As members of NADSP, you should have a solid understanding of who NADSP serves, generally what we do, and how to talk about it.

When you know NADSP’s tagline and can talk about it comfortably, you are essentially sharing NADSP’s priorities.

**NADSP’s goal is to practice talking about who we are, in less than 2 minutes.**

### Who are you talking to and what do you want to accomplish?

- New faces?
- Combination of new and returning?
- People from an organization that has been supportive before?

### “Outreach Directors”

- Members and supporters are important to NADSP – we NEED them and we need to make sure they know they are appreciated and valued
- Board members and state leadership are excellent outreach directors.
- If you don’t have all the information you need, ask NADSP colleagues.
- READ Frontline Initiative and visit the web site often. New prospects don’t



expect you to know everything, but you should stay connected. That way you aren't caught by surprise should someone comment about a specific activity.

- Know how to refer someone to the NADSP web site or Board members and other leaders for more specific information – if you don't know the web address, know where to find it. Keep a supply of the NADSP brochure handy to give to others.

#### What could/should you do if you get a tough question you don't know how to answer?

- Acknowledge that you don't know the answer, but you'll find out for them (that's perfectly legitimate!)
- Follow up with them if you offer to find out.
- Suggest they talk to a board member or regional contact.

#### Structuring your presentation

This will be useful when you do displays AND when you are talking casually to others.

Hi, my name is\_\_\_\_\_ and I want to welcome you to NADSP

You know how...

Well, what we do is...

So that....

We're kind of like....

Examples

#### **Your turn to practice, working in pairs**

- How did that feel?
- Any volunteers to share the speeches they developed?

#### **Resources/Handouts**

- Frequently asked questions
- NADSP key messages
- Guiding Principles document
- Frontline Initiative



# Tools

## **Effective Power point Presentations**

PowerPoint presentations are for the audience to SEE, not for the presenter to read from. Attention spans range, so keep your presentation free of extraneous information as much as possible. Simplicity leads to great things.

### **Text**

- Type should be 24 point or larger
- Correct spelling and grammar are critical
- No ALL CAPS
- Limit the number of words per slide for easier comprehension, avoid paragraphs
  - No complete sentences
  - No periods, question marks or exclamation points
- Use no more than 6 bullet points per slide
  - Every bullet is followed by a capital letter
  - Each bullet has 8 words or less
  - Each bullet is consistent – all start with verbs, for example, or all with nouns
- Stick with simple fonts and use the same fonts throughout – standard fonts travel cross-platform
- Avoid slang and acronyms

### **Background**

- White or light colored backgrounds with black/dark text easiest to read
- Avoid pictures/logos in the background – steals attention from content
- Simple solid color backgrounds preferred
- Keep pictures at a minimum – this is a presentation, not a family photo album
- Limit graphics/pictures to 1-3 per page maximum
- Make sure graphics face the center of the slide
- Use color to highlight key phrases

### **Transitions**

- Use builds to avoid giving too much info at once
- Choose one transition for all slides
- Make sure special effects have a purpose
- Go slower rather than faster

### **Practice**

- Get comfortable with the PowerPoint before using
- Reading slides is utterly boring – expand and embellish on the slide points
- Make connections to material already presented and material to come



# Tools

## **NADSP Story: The Brief and Concise Version**

**Hi! My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm a board member, state chapter representative of NADSP or whatever title is appropriate.**

**You know how...(problem)**

**Well, what we do is...(feature)**

**So that...(benefit)**

**We're kind of like the .... (metaphor)**



# Public Speaking

Did you know...many people fear public speaking even more than death? Natural to be nervous...even good, because then you are sharp

Calm the jitters by...

- Thinking about the audience. Who are they, what will they want to know?
- Storyteller – be as personal as you can be... tell a story about how DSPs make a difference – put a face on NADSP for the person you are talking with.
- Give overview of NADSP and why it is important join, support and share with others
- Always include an invitation to get involved...!

Tips for being comfortable

- Keep it conversational – don't think of it as a speech, you talking to someone who is interested in hearing what you have to say
- Make it personal – share something about yourself and why you are part of NADSP
- Use humor – tell a funny story or remark, to help people feel more relaxed.
- Don't use a script – using an outline or note cards will help you be more natural
- Speak to the heart, not just the head
- Watch out for jargon
- Ask for help – ask a colleague or friend to help you identify distracting gestures or mannerisms that take away from your message.
- If you jingle your keys, take them out of your pocket
- If you know you say "um" and "you know" a lot, have a code (I know my voice gets quiet when I'm nervous, so I'll have someone ready to signal me if I can't be heard)
- Look people in the eye and practice looking at everybody in the group, rather than just one person
- Breathe. Take a deep breath before starting. Talk slowly. Smile.
- Close with the door open – always give your audience a chance to ask questions or make it clear you are available for them to talk with you one on one. Invite them to join, support and share with others.
- Practice!
- Review – after your speech take time to think about what went well. Revise your presentation as needed.



## **Foster Positive Employer/DSP Relationships in Your State: What Employers Can Do**

- As stated in the National Alliance of Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) code of ethics, a DSP's first allegiance is to the person he or she supports; all other activities and functions that a DSP performs flow from this allegiance.
- Every organization is unique. Communicate clearly and directly about the parameters of support and expectations for DSP involvement in a state chapter of NADSP as a chapter member and, if applicable, as a board member. Begin a conversation about DSP participation and the expected level of agency/administrative support immediately upon initiation of any interest and/or participation in a state chapter and other professional development activities by a DSP.
- Work with your DSPs to develop a variety of approaches around DSP involvement in the state chapter as well as networking with other DSPs and other professional development activities. If you believe it necessary or helpful, develop some general written guidelines about what your organization will support (For example, kinds of involvement; types of financial support-- conferences, mileage, meals, transportation--, time commitments (how much and when); scheduling, covering work responsibilities and deciding if office equipment/supplies, training materials, or meeting space could be used. Leave the door open for ongoing discussion and further considerations.
- Build upon this initial dialogue by discussing and reaching agreement about effective methods for maintaining communication to ensure everyone remains informed. Engage in problem-solving sessions with your DSPs to develop solutions to issues and concerns that may arise related to DSP involvement in the state chapter and in NADSP, and other professional development opportunities.
- Your organization's support of DSPs with their involvement in a state chapter, NADSP activities, and DSP involvement in other professional initiatives is critical to and will benefit your organization, the state chapter, and persons receiving supports.
- The state chapter is founded upon DSP leadership. Recognize that taking on a leadership role may be a new experience for many DSPs. Discuss with



DSPs, their supervisors, and managers the role that organizational support and guidance (e.g. training, mentoring, coaching) can play in fostering successful DSP leadership development

- Share with supervisors and managers the importance of DSP involvement in IDSP, NADSP, or other local, regional, state, or national organizations as opportunities for growing professionally, learning skills of leadership, making presentations, team development, and representing their organization to the outside world. Offer opportunities for DSP leadership skill development within your own organization (e.g. participation in a workgroup, committee or task force).
- The state chapter's focus is on Professional Development. Because there are DSPs from both union and non-union organizations, IDSP emphasizes union neutrality and recognizes that principle as an important factor for DSP participation in the IDSP association



## NADSP State Contact Agreement

I, \_\_\_\_\_(insert name) agree to serve as the NADSP State Contact for \_\_\_\_\_(insert state name). I have reviewed the role of the State Contact and understand that my activities as an NADSP contact must support the values and mission of the NADSP. I have read the responsibilities required of this voluntary position and agree to meet these responsibilities. As a State Contact I will be facilitating and supporting activities around at least one of the goals of the NADSP. I have committed to the following initiatives in my state:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The NADSP will provide mentoring to me as needed to assist in building support within my state, working towards the establishment of a NADSP State Chapter.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

State Contact Signature. \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to: NADSP, c/o Elizabeth Sauer



**(NADSP State Contract Continued)**

Committee Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Info for person wanting to be involved (Name, email address, phone number, address, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

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Committee Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Info for person wanting to be involved (Name, email address, phone number, address, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

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Committee Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Info for person wanting to be involved (Name, email address, phone number, address, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

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Contact Info for person wanting to be involved (Name, email address, phone number, address, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

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