

**Tips from NADSP for ADD Envisioning the Future Testimony**  
October 2010

**This bulleted list is intended to give you ideas about what to include in your written testimony, but please make sure that you customize it and make it your own.** Build in your own stories, reflections and priorities. It is important to make these points, but to change them so you are not giving the same message verbatim in every listening session. Also, please note that **oral testimony will be timed for three minutes.** You need to be concise and, in the interest of time, rather than reading the written testimony, briefly state your points or tell a story about how a DSP helped someone achieve an important milestone.

1) Introduce yourself and your position/organization. Let them know you are here speaking behalf of the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP). Make sure to remind them about this organization and its importance and commitment to supporting DSPs to best support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families.

2) Thank the Commissioner and other ADD staff for organizing the listening sessions and offering you an opportunity to speak.

3) Focus on the goals we have set as a nation for people with IDD - social justice, community inclusion, self-determination, empowerment, family support, employment in real jobs for real wages, freedom for restraint and seclusion. [add a personal story here of a DSP you know that made a huge difference]

**From this, build the argument about the need for ADD to focus on the direct support workforce. Here are some thoughts:**

1) As a nation we cannot realize the promises made to people with IDD and their families without investing in and supporting the professional development of the staff who provide them with support. When people with IDD get jobs, a DSP has helped them to get and keep this job, when people with IDD find their own home and live in it, DSPs have helped to make this happen; when people with IDD go vote, DSPs have helped them to go vote, etc..... [add another personal story here about how you or a DSP you know has helped a person with IDD reaching of these major life goals].

2) Point out that while enormous positive steps have been taken in this country to improve the quality of life for people with IDD through efforts such as deinstitutionalization, self-directed services, employment first approaches, these same efforts have not been taken for their direct support

staff. In fact things have gotten worse for these workers over the past several decades. Wages have declined when adjusted for inflation, access to benefits of any kind have been reduced or become non-existent, training has dwindled, opportunities for professional growth and development have become fewer (for example at one time ADD sponsored training initiative projects throughout their UCEDD network - these were disbanded many years ago), and workers have become more and more invisible in state and federal policy.

3) DSPs make it happen for individuals with disabilities and for families. We need to provide growth and professional development opportunities for DSPs. We need ADD to advocate that this group of workers - Direct Support Professionals - are named and benefit from DOL and HRSA training activities. We need ADD to ensure that all UCEDDs engage in activities of professional development, growth and celebration of this workforce. We need ADD to fund a project of national significance that will result in answers to basic questions such as: How many direct support professionals are working in the United States that provide service and supports to people with IDD? What is their rate of pay? What benefits are available to them and do they use these benefits? Most importantly we need ADD to ensure that Title III of the DD Act remains in the reauthorization and that this title be funded.

4) ADD needs to recognize that much work has gone into framing and understanding these critical issues. Tools and resources to ameliorate the problems exist through the NADSP and many UCEDD programs but moving these programs, tools and resource to wide scale use and availability is virtually non-existent. ADD needs to focus its energy on bringing to scale the many investments it has made to create tools and resources to support the direct support workforce. All states and every DSP in this country needs to benefit from these efforts.