

A Newsletter of the National  
Alliance for Direct Support Professionals

# Frontline Initiative

Volume 6 • Number 3 • 2006

## The Voice of a DSP

### Introduction

*Pat Gerke teaches Survey of Developmental Disabilities and Health Issues across the Lifespan at Ocean County College and Camden County College in New Jersey. Gerke has 22 years of experience in the field of developmental disabilities and has worked as a DSP in residential and employment services in positions in health care spiritual support (HIV/AIDS and developmental disabilities), and as a community builder for individuals living in a variety of settings.*

*She has taught Survey of Developmental Disabilities and Health Issues across the Lifespan for four years as part of her consultant role for the Elizabeth M. Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. Gerke also has a six-year-old son with developmental disabilities.*

*As a part of Gerke's class, Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) have the opportunity to write about their experiences and opinions of their jobs. Through a class assignment, Gerke's students wrote reflective memos about issues important to them and their direct support work. In the article that follows, one of Gerke's students shares her ideas about reducing stress on the job.*

### Reducing Job Stress

*by Diana Ritter*

**S**tanding in long lines to make purchases, baking dozens and dozens of cookies, wrapping presents, snow-covered roads, ice, sleet, final exams, traffic jams, research papers, projects, writ-

Continued on page 19

Erica Stevenson and The League for People with Disabilities make dreams a reality. Read Erica's story on page 8.



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# Frontline Notes

## Editorial Information

Editor · **Nancy McCulloh**  
Assistant Editor · **Michelle Trotter**  
Managing Editor · **Amy Hewitt**  
Graphic Design · **Connie Burkhart**  
Web · **www.nadsp.org**

## NADSP Board of Directors

### Mark Olson, President

Arc Greater Twin Cities  
Diamond Hill Center  
4301 Highway 7, Suite 140  
Minneapolis, MN 55416-5810  
952.920.0855, Fax: 952.920.1480  
markolson@arcgreatertwincities.org

### Cliff Poetz, Vice President

People First of Minnesota  
2433 5th Ave. S., #212  
Minneapolis, MN 55404  
612.871.0675

### Tony Thomas, Secretary

Ohio Affiliate (see page 4)

### John Rose, Treasurer

Irwin Siegel Agency  
25 Lake Louise Marie Road  
Rock Hill, NY 12775  
800.622.8272  
2johnrose@excite.com

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If you are interested in contributing to *Frontline Initiative*, reprinting an article, or becoming an editorial board member, please contact —

*Frontline Initiative* Editor  
P.O. Box 13315  
Minneapolis, MN 55414  
Tel. 612.624.0060  
Fax: 612.625.6619  
email: mccul037@umn.edu

Well, here it is! Another issue of *Frontline Initiative* hot off the press. It is so jam-packed with useful information, you won't be able to put it down, from stories written by Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) who are working on the front lines supporting individuals with disabilities to stories about quiet heroes and resources for those seeking more knowledge and skills.

In our lead story, *Voices of DSPs*, Diana takes a look at how Easter Seals Lacey helps employees manage stress. Make sure you read her story.

We have included several articles for DSPs in search of more knowledge and skills in this issue. Consider Susan O'Neil's article about using the College of Direct Support (CDS) to create a Direct Support Profession. CDS is an on-line training curriculum specifically designed to teach DSPs the skill and knowledge they need to be the best they can be. Also check out Tim Lister's story in our *In Action* column, about how CDS is making a difference in the supports he provides. Or perhaps you are interested in the Certificate in Disability Policy

and Services offered by Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota. Continuing with our education opportunities, read about InfoUse a training program on CD-ROM for personal assistance services in person centered planning and consumer choice options. And finally, for those of you who read the first part of the article *Supporting Cultural Shifting* in our last issue, you may want to finish learning how to build bridges and support more community inclusive opportunities for the individuals you support.

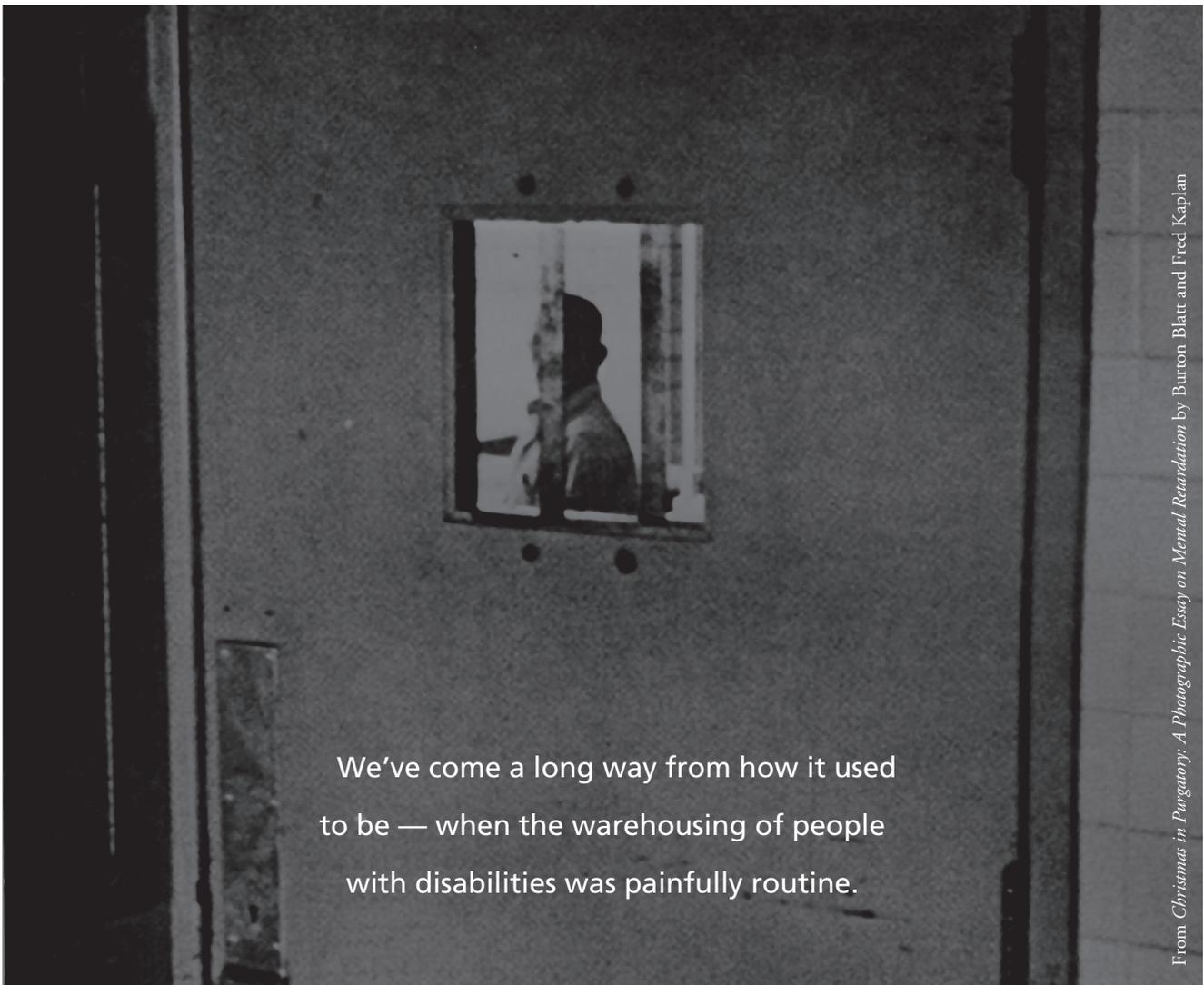
On a more personal note, meet quiet hero, Erica Stevenson from Baltimore, MD. She sought special help to secure a job after graduation from college and was successful because of the support she received from The League for People with Disabilities. Don't miss her story!

We hope you enjoy the stories and information you find in this issue of *Frontline Initiative*. As always, we encourage our readers to share their own stories. Submit ideas and article to [mccul037@umn.edu](mailto:mccul037@umn.edu).

The Editors

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*Frontline Initiative* is available in alternate formats upon request.



From *Christmas in Purgatory: A Photographic Essay on Mental Retardation* by Burron Blatt and Fred Kaplan

We've come a long way from how it used to be — when the warehousing of people with disabilities was painfully routine.



Today, Direct Support Professionals enable our most vulnerable citizens to live self-directed lives with dignity and pride. You are the everyday heroes who help people with disabilities realize their dreams and enjoy the daily liberties and human rights that the rest of us take for granted.

Together, we can make a world of difference.

**Join the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals.**

[www.nadsp.org](http://www.nadsp.org)

# NADSP Member Organizations and State Contacts

## NADSP Supporting Organizations

We would like to acknowledge the NADSP Supporting Organization members for their generosity and ongoing dedication to the goals and mission of NADSP.

- ANCOR
- Anne Grady Corporation
- Association of Group Homes for Nodaway County, Missouri
- Direct Support Professionals of Missouri
- Direct Support Professional Association of Tennessee (DSPAT)
- Irwin Siegel Agency
- Special People in Northwest, Inc.
- Welcome House

## Start a NADSP state affiliate in your area now!

For more information, contact Don Carrick, NADSP state affiliate coordinator at 660.582.7113 or [dcarrick@asde.net](mailto:dcarrick@asde.net). Or visit the NADSP Web site at

[www.nadsp.org](http://www.nadsp.org).

## NADSP State Affiliates

### Arizona

Michelle Noe  
Practical Training Solutions LLC  
8100 E. Indian School Rd., Suite #7W  
Scottsdale, AZ 85251 480.945.2930  
[michelle@practicaltrainingsolutions.net](mailto:michelle@practicaltrainingsolutions.net)

### Arkansas

Vanessa Smith  
Partners for Inclusive Communities  
2001 Pershing Circle, Suite 300  
North Little Rock, AR 72114  
501.526.5962, Toll free: 1.800.342.2923  
[smithVanessaL@uams.edu](mailto:smithVanessaL@uams.edu)

### California

Melanie Bazile  
Strategies to Empower People, Inc.  
5945 Palm Dr., Carmichael, CA 95608  
916.79.1555 ext. 108, [melanieb@stepsite.com](mailto:melanieb@stepsite.com)

### Connecticut

Kristine E. Foss  
Ability Beyond Disability  
135 Old State Road, Brookfield, CT 06804  
203.775.4700, ext. 0234  
[kfoss@abilitybeyonddisability.org](mailto:kfoss@abilitybeyonddisability.org)

### Florida

Marta Morin  
Miami Cerebral Palsy Residential Services, Inc.  
2200 NW 107 Ave., Miami, FL 33172  
305.599.0899, [marta.morin@ucpsouthflorida.org](mailto:marta.morin@ucpsouthflorida.org)

### Kansas

Clarence Walker  
Creative Community Living of Winfield Kansas  
622 N. Haverhill Road, El Dorado, KS 67042  
316.320.7531, [semrick@cclcl.org](mailto:semrick@cclcl.org)

### Louisiana

Fabra Cain  
474 N. Foster, Baton Rouge, LA 70808  
225.924.7998, [blaney375@aol.com](mailto:blaney375@aol.com)

Nancy Robertson  
LSUHSC/HDC  
1100 Florida Ave. #119, New Orleans, LA 70119  
504.942.8289, [nrober@lsuhsc.edu](mailto:nrober@lsuhsc.edu)

Roni Jo Frazier  
Evergreen Presbyterian Ministries, Inc.  
920 Main Str., Pineville, LA 71360  
318.483.9922, [rfrazier@epmi.org](mailto:rfrazier@epmi.org)

### Maine

Ray Gedat  
Maine PASA  
P.O. Box 710, Norway, ME 04268  
207.890.0773, [rggedat@exploremaine.com](mailto:rggedat@exploremaine.com)

### Massachusetts

Marianne Taylor  
HSRI/Bristol Community College  
777 Eisbree St., Fall River, MA 02720  
508.678.2811, [mtaylor@bristol.mass.edu](mailto:mtaylor@bristol.mass.edu)

### Michigan

Karen Wolf-Branigin  
Developmental Disabilities Institute  
Wayne State University  
Leonard Simons Bldg., 4809 Woodward Ave.  
Detroit, MI 48202, 313.577.798,  
[karen\\_wolf-branigin@wayne.edu](mailto:karen_wolf-branigin@wayne.edu)

### Minnesota

Muhannah S. Kakish  
DSP Association of Minnesota (D-SPAM)  
1491 3rd Str. E, St. Paul, MN 55106  
651.755.1513, [mskeyesltd@yahoo.com](mailto:mskeyesltd@yahoo.com)

Kellie Miller Nagel  
South Central Technical College-Mankato Campus  
1920 Lee Blvd., North Mankato, MN 56003  
507.389.7407, [kellie.millernagel@southcentral.edu](mailto:kellie.millernagel@southcentral.edu)

### Mississippi

Lisa Burck, MPA  
Arc of Mississippi, 4101 Gautier Vancleave Road,  
Suite 103, Gautier, MS 39552  
[lisaburck@cabelone.net](mailto:lisaburck@cabelone.net)

### Missouri

Don Carrick  
DSPs of Missouri  
P.O. Box 454, Maryville, MO 64468  
660.582.7113, [dcarrick@asde.net](mailto:dcarrick@asde.net)

Marci Whiteman  
PMB 264 2977 Hwy K  
O'Fallon, MO 63366  
[mcwhiteman@charter.net](mailto:mcwhiteman@charter.net)

### New Hampshire

Laura Lassins  
Lifeshare, Inc.  
225 Eddy Road, Manchester, NH 03102  
603.625.8825, [john@lifeshareinc.org](mailto:john@lifeshareinc.org)

### New Mexico

Judith Stevens  
Community Support Alliance  
Center for Development and Disabilities  
Health Sciences Center  
University of New Mexico  
2300 Menaul NE, Albuquerque, NM 87107  
505.272.1853, [jese@unm.edu](mailto:jese@unm.edu)

Barbara Ibañez  
Community Support Alliance  
Center for Development and Disabilities  
University of New Mexico  
Health Sciences Center  
2300 Menaul NE, Albuquerque, NM 87107  
505.272.1853 ext. 2, [bibanez@unm.edu](mailto:bibanez@unm.edu)

### New York

William Ebenstein  
Consortium for the Study of Disabilities, CUNY  
535 E. 80th St., New York, NY 10021  
212.794.5486, [wiebb@cunyvm.cuny.edu](mailto:wiebb@cunyvm.cuny.edu)

Daniele Lymon  
Heritage Christian Services  
585.340.2009

Regis Obijiski  
Mid-Hudson Coalition, Inc.  
at New Horizons Resources, Inc.  
21 Van Wagner Road, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603  
845.473.3000 ext. 304, [robijiski@nhmy.org](mailto:robijiski@nhmy.org)

Shawn Pike  
Adirondack Arc, 105 Park St., Maline, NY 12953  
518.891.6565, [shawnpikenadsp@yahoo.com](mailto:shawnpikenadsp@yahoo.com)

### Ohio

Tony Thomas  
Welcome House  
20575 Center Ridge Road, Suite 200  
Rocky River, OH 44116  
440.356.2330, [tthomas@welcomehouseinc.org](mailto:tthomas@welcomehouseinc.org)

### Tennessee

Earl Foss, Jr.  
DSP Association of Tennessee (DSPAT)  
1161 Murfreesboro Road, Suite 420  
Nashville, TN 37217  
615.596.5321, [efoxccoinc@bellsouth.net](mailto:efoxccoinc@bellsouth.net)

Rick Rader, MD  
Orange Grove Center  
615 Derby Street, Chattanooga, TN 37404  
423.493.2936, [habctrmd@aol.com](mailto:habctrmd@aol.com)

# National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals

## About the NADSP

The National Alliance of Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) is for individuals and organizations that are committed to helping people with disabilities achieve their life dreams. 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. The NADSP, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, has developed a national agenda to address these workforce issues and has organized members to develop strategies that address the following goals —

- Enhance the status of DSPs.
- Provide better access to high-quality educational experiences for DSPs.
- Strengthen the working relationships and partnerships among consumers, family members, and DSPs.
- Promote system reform including incentives for education, increased compensation, and access to career pathways.
- Support a national voluntary credentialing process.

## Become a Member Today!

- Be a part of a growing national movement to elevate the status of DSPs.
- Learn about national and international successful practices, such as certificate programs, apprenticeships, credit-bearing coursework, and ways to improve agency cultures.
- Help educate policymakers and legislators about the importance of high quality human services.
- Learn about and gain access to public forums and conferences focusing on DSP issues.
- Learn how to develop and enhance DSP regional affiliations.
- Develop leadership skills in the field of direct support.

## NADSP Membership Form

- DSP Membership\* \$25.00** Please mark one:  
 DSP  DSP (member of a state affiliate of NADSP)  
 Frontline Supervisor
- Associate Membership\* \$25.00** Please mark one:  
 Self-Advocate  Family Member
- Other Professional Membership\* \$40.00**  
For professionals working in the field of disability services, such as social workers, administrators, and healthcare professionals. Please tell us what your profession is:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\* DSP Memberships, Associate Memberships, and Other Professional Memberships include **one subscription to *Frontline Initiative***, a Code of Ethics pocket card, and a NADSP membership card.

- Agency/Provider Affiliate Membership \$200.00**  
For providers who wish to demonstrate a commitment to supporting the efforts of DSPs. Membership includes certificate of membership and two subscriptions to *Frontline Initiative*.
- Supporting Organization Membership \$500.00**  
For agencies and organizations that are dedicated to advancing the interests of DSPs and the people they support at a national level. Membership includes a certificate of membership and four subscriptions to *Frontline Initiative*. Your organization will also be listed in *Frontline Initiative* as a supporting organization.

### Please make checks payable to NADSP.

We are unable to accept credit cards or purchase orders.

### Mail membership form to:

Research and Training Center on Community Living  
University of Minnesota  
204 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Dr. SE  
Minneapolis, MN 55455 Phone: 612-624-6328

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Organization

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City State Zip

( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

Total enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

# The Real Scoop

**W**elcome to *The Real Scoop*. Clifford is a self-advocate who has been politically active for years. He's here to give you his spin on how to deal with issues you face as you forge ahead in your role as a Direct Support Professional (DSP). Seth has been a DSP for many years, and he loves to give advice. He may ruffle your feathers, but hey, it's for your own good! Clifford and Seth tackle this one with a few suggestions.

## On Becoming Professional

Dear Cliff and Seth,

I am a DSP. I hear a lot about the importance of credentials and career development, but why is this important when my employer doesn't recognize these efforts with better pay?

— Show Me the Money

Dear Show Me the Money,

*Credentials can mean that you will get more pay with more education. Sooner or later, your employer will realize your value to the company. Eventually, being credentialed will be an expectation for DSPs. At the national level, NADSP is beginning to work on that issue. It may take a while to develop guidelines for credentialing, but employers will eventually hear about this and each state can say if you have to be credentialed. That means higher expectations.*

— Cliff

Dear Show Me the Money,

*The credentialing process is more important to you. It gives you credibility as a professional and possibly an opportunity "to go where the money is" to the agencies that credentials when determining wage incentives and leadership positions. It is critical to change the image of DSPs from "just another job" to a role that is recognized and valued by everyone.*

— Seth

Dear Seth and Cliff,

I am a DSP and would like to work with other DSPs to further my professional development. Any suggestions on what steps can I take?

— Longing to Belong

Dear Longing to Belong,

*First, find out if there is a chapter of the National Alliance of Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) in your state and start going to those meetings or talk to other DSPs at your work site. You can learn from your co-workers, and together you can build some good friendships as you work to build your own state chapter.*

— Cliff

Dear Longing to Belong,

*I would first go online and find DSP groups that meet in your area such as AAMR, ARC, and NADSP. Starting there should keep you busy finding conferences and other meetings that interest you. As you get to know other DSPs you may find that a natural coalition begins to build.*

— Seth

## Ask Clifford and Seth

Do you have a burning question about direct support, but don't know who to ask? Submit it to —

Frontline Initiative  
The Real Scoop  
P.O. Box 13315  
Minneapolis, MN 55414

Tel: 612.624.0060  
Fax: 612.625.6619  
Email: mccul037@umn.edu

Please include your name, day phone for verification, and alias, if desired.

# The College of Direct Support Another Step Toward Professionalism

**M**any things come together to create a profession. A top priority is the need for training and education that apply specifically to the field. These options need to teach the actual day-to-day skills used on the job. They must also provide guidance to help the professional make good judgments even in unpredictable situations. The training must present these skills through the lens of professional boundaries and ethical practice.

Professional education and training need to be reliable. This means that they need to be recognized as producing workers who can perform skills on the job. It also means that skills taught in one place are the same skills, knowledge, and professional values that are taught in another place. This assurance of quality creates a situation where people who have the training are recognized for having completed it. It prevents people from having to redo their training in order to practice with a different employer.

Training and education for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) does not currently meet these standards. Instead it is often focused on meeting government mandates. In most cases, individual employers create the training to meet these mandates. While this flexibility to meet individual needs is desirable, it results in a situation where DSP training is not regarded as valuable outside the organization for which it was designed.

Imagine a system for doctors that was similar. In this situation, individual hospitals would create and deliver training. When a doctor

sought a position with a different hospital, they would have to start their medical training over at the beginning. In addition, imagine that the training focused only on the minimum activities a doctor could do to keep you alive. This situation

**Training and education for Direct Support Professionals does not currently meet [any professional] standards....Around the country, training consortia, technical colleges, and employers have worked together to develop and support voluntary credentialing programs based on [the] guiding principles [of the CSSS and NADSP Code of Ethics].**

would certainly create an unreasonable barrier to the medical profession. It would also diminish patient care.

To prevent this situation, programs that trained doctors became accredited. This helps ensure that doctor training and education meets

the critical needs of the field. A doctor trained in Iowa is expected to receive the same education as one trained in Wyoming, Massachusetts, or California. When a doctor completes an accredited program and passes their state board examination, patients can be confident that the training is consistent and the doctor is prepared to do the job.

Much effort has been going on across the country to create voluntary credentialing opportunities for DSPs. These credentials must mean something that has value. Over the years, many strides have been taken to identify the critical core skills of DSPs and frontline supervisors (FLS) in community human services settings.

In 1996, the Community Support Skill Standards (CSSS) were developed. These were a core set of skills needed for DSPs in a variety of community human services settings. The CSSS were developed through a national validation process to ensure that the skills were those needed not only in one region or one setting, but in all settings. What came of this process was a core set of skills necessary to achieve the vision of independence and full community participation and involvement for people with support needs.

In Minnesota, two other sets of skills were identified: one for DSPs supporting people with intellectual disabilities at home, and a second for supervisors of DSPs. In a similar way, the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) has articulated a set of ethical statements to help DSPs. This code of ethics helps DSPs understand

Continued on page 16

# A Quiet Hero

## The League for People with Disabilities

Celebrating its 78<sup>th</sup> year, The League for People with Disabilities is a pivotal and pioneering agency which annually offers more than 1,300 individuals with multiple, physical, cognitive, and neurological disabilities the opportunity to gain independence through a comprehensive continuum of vocational, rehabilitative, educational, medical, wellness, and social services.

When Erica Stevenson arrived at The League last November, she had high hopes — and low self-esteem. Individually tailored classes and job coaching workshops through The League’s Vocational Services program gave Erica the skills — and the boost — she needed to land a job as a one-on-one tutor at Norwood Elementary School in Baltimore County, where she works with first- and second-graders in reading and math skills.

A graduate of Coppin State University in Baltimore, Maryland, with a degree in applied psychology, Erica knew that she wanted to teach and work with children, but she felt ill-equipped to make the leap from dreams to reality. “I couldn’t have done it without The League,” says Erica. “When I came here, I had just left a job working in a kitchen. With my degree, I knew I could do more, and The League helped me find the way.”

Vanessa Foster, of Vocational Services, customized Erica’s job training to her educational interests and career goals and also served as her job coach. “Erica is such a success story,” Vanessa says. “When she first started at The League her

confidence level was so low and it has grown dramatically. Even her family has noticed the difference. Erica is so confident now that she has applied to Coppin’s Master’s degree program in rehabilitative counseling.” Erica’s future plans include working with people with disabilities. “I want to find other people with disabilities jobs the way

**With my degree,  
I knew I could do  
more, and The League  
helped me find  
the way.**

The League helped me,” she says.

The Vocational Services program, in cooperation with Maryland Department of Rehabilitative Services, also helped Erica get an electric scooter so she can more easily keep up with her students. “The kids love my scooter and so do I,” says Erica. “When I first got there, the kids were totally fascinated with the scooter and had so many questions. They were interested in my disability, too, and some of them said, ‘You talk funny,’ and I explained that my disability affects my speech and they were like, ‘Oh, OK, that’s cool.’”

Last summer, Erica volunteered at Vocational Services, assisting with the job-training classes. However, Erica may have been one of the few people who actually looked forward to September. “I love getting up in

the morning and going to work,” she says. “I love my students — they are so inquisitive and open.”

### About The League

Through the efforts of Mrs. Isabell K. Frank, William S. Baer, and the Council of Jewish Women, The League for People with Disabilities was founded in 1927 to provide services to children with disabilities.

Since that time, The League has continued its innovative programming, such as Camp Greentop, serving over 400 campers annually; League Industries, which provides vocational training to people with disabilities; and Vocational Rehabilitation Services, which helps hundreds of individuals find employment in the community.

Erica Stevenson is a tutor at Norwood Elementary School in Baltimore County. She can be contacted through the development office of The League at 410-323-0500 x 304. For more information about The League, visit [www.leagueforpeople.org](http://www.leagueforpeople.org).

# Direct Support Education Programs

## Increasing Skills, Knowledge, and Leadership

Is it important for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) to continue their education? Yes! It is important for all DSPs to continue to improve their skills and continue their education.

How can you increase your skills as a DSP and be recognized for your knowledge and experience? Here are a few educational opportunities for DSPs to explore.

### Opportunities at the University of Minnesota

#### Certificate in Disability Policy and Services

The certificate is designed to allow graduate and undergraduate students, as well as DSPs, to study policies and services that affect the lives of children, youth, and adults with disabilities. The certificate is a 12-credit program that studies education, health, and social services available to individuals with disabilities and their families. Also, the certificate examines the public and private networks of disability services from an interdisciplinary perspective. While the program addresses the needs of people with all types of disabilities, it emphasizes developmental disabilities across the lifespan.

The Certificate in Disability Policy and Services is a collaborative effort of the Department of Educational Policy and Administration and Institute on Community Integration in the College of Education and Human Development.

#### Online Courses for Credit

There are two courses offered online that have been developed specifically for DSPs and Frontline Supervisors —

- EDHD 3301: Supporting Persons with Developmental and Related Disabilities in Community Human Services.
- EDHD 4301: Personnel Supervision and Management in Community Human Services teaches students effective recruitment, retention and training interventions.

To learn more, visit <http://ici.umn.edu/welcome/certificate.html> or contact Marijo McBride at 612-624-6830 or [mcbri001@umn.edu](mailto:mcbri001@umn.edu).

#### Ohio PATHS Program

The Ohio PATHS Program (Professional Advancement through Training and education in Human Services) offers a voluntary credentialing program for DSPs. The program challenges DSPs to attend 60 hours of PATHS-designed classes, examine the NADSP Code of Ethics and apply it to their work, and complete a portfolio of the skills they have learned in specific competency areas. Additionally, DSPs study and complete credential requirements while working with a skill mentor.

To learn more, contact Amy Gerowitz, c/o OPRA, 30 Spruce Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215, 513-871-0835; Fax: 513-871-2135; [agerowitz@outlooks.us](mailto:agerowitz@outlooks.us).

#### Ad Astra Direct Support Apprenticeship and Credentialing Program

The Ad Astra Direct Support Apprenticeship Program is a voluntary employee-trainee development program with the mission of improving quality of life for people with support needs and DSPs. It creates a career path for DSPs linked to mastery of knowledge, skill, and ethical practice. The program, developed by a coalition of Kansas stakeholders, is built on the national Community Support Skill Standards. The first three levels of Ad Astra require 216 hours of related instruction and 3000 hours of on-the-job work experience under the guidance of a skills mentor. The U.S. Department of Labor has approved this voluntary credentialing program. Apprenticeship links wage increases to completion of each level of training. Currently, Ad Astra is being piloted by two Kansas organizations.

To learn more, contact Kathleen Olson, Ph.D., Associate Scientist, Kansas University Center on Developmental Disabilities, 2601 Gabriel, Parsons, KS 67357 by phone at 620-421-6550 extension 1771 or by e-mail at [kolson@ku.edu](mailto:kolson@ku.edu).

Thank you to Marijo Waldera McBride, L.S.W., Q.M.R.P., M.Ed., Training Coordinator at the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration (UCEDD) who provided information about the University of Minnesota's Certificate in Disability Policy and Services program.

# Consumer Choice Training DSPs and Self Advocates

**F**or people with disabilities, the trend is out of institutions and into life at home or in the community. Laws reinforcing this independent living trend include the 1999 Olmstead Supreme Court decision which ruled that and the New Freedom Initiative (requesting implementation of Olmstead and more community living options). One result of this independent living trend is an increasing demand for trained direct service providers.

Here at InfoUse in Berkeley, CA, we research demand for and providers of these personal assistant services. We have identified a large and growing need for direct service providers who understand consumer-directed care, in order to meet another emerging demand: for more self-determination by people who receive these personal services. This showed a need for updated training resources, particularly for agencies who train and place direct service providers.

## **What is Consumer-Directed Care?**

People with different physical and mental abilities, people receiving elder care services, and people in rehabilitation require customized personal care services to support their daily life and work activities. Through focus group research, analysis of existing personal assistant training programs, and a review of service delivery demonstration programs, InfoUse found preferences among those Personal Assistance Services (PAS) consumer groups for —

- Participating in the hiring, training, and supervision of their service providers;
- Actively directing customized and individualized services they need; and
- Developing more of an employer-employee working relationship, even when administrative functions — such as payroll, recruitment, taxes, and insurance — are managed by a home care or public agency.

**...There is a large and growing need for direct service providers who understand consumer-directed care...**

These preferences for more self-determining, consumer-directed support services points to updated training that focuses on disability awareness, improved communication/conflict resolution skills, and a service attitude that supports modifying routines, procedures, and services to meet individual needs ... by collaborating with the consumer-as-boss. Such updated training, focused on a consumer-directed service model, would build upon basic, required personal assistant services, such as training on body systems, equipment, assistive technology, home management, and emergency response.

## **“Musts” for the New DSP Training Package**

InfoUse’s focus group research points to must-have training topics that support consumer direction, or self-determination, including —

- Consumer self-assessment of needs and preferences
- Clear rights and responsibilities of the DSP and the consumer
- Disability awareness
- The hiring process (for independents and home care agency providers)
- Job hunting for DSPs
- Communication skills
- Management responsibilities (payroll, money, taxes, insurance)
- Individualizing standard care tasks
- Safety (lifting, universal precautions, preventing injuries)
- Backup and emergency systems

InfoUse also determined a clear need for cooperation across institutional players, since some currently train consumers, while others train direct service providers. New PAS training should meet the needs of younger as well as older PAS consumers, as research concluded that younger consumers of PAS preferred more involvement and management of their service relationship. Last on the “must have” list, updated training must support consumers who receive services through home health care or intermediary service agencies, as well as those who hire independent providers (Kraus et al. 1999).

Continued on page 11

## Developing New Consumer-Directed Training Resources

The InfoUse team has created a CD-ROM for DSPs and a Web site for PAS consumers. We applied mixed learning techniques, including —

- Text goals and factual information
- Behavioral modeling through depicted scenarios and interviews
- Paced practice sets, self-tests, and review
- Diverse ethnic, racial and cultural inclusion
- Easy comprehension by the use of sixth grade-level language and abundant visual reinforcements

InfoUse's development team emphasized consumer choice and increasing DSP awareness of their role in supporting it. A key objective in developing the CD-ROM was to provide DSPs with practical tools to solve on-the-job needs, such as how to communicate with consumers or family members, how to rectify miscommunication, how to make choices, how to deal with personal stress, and how to increase their effectiveness on the job.

## The Training Package

"Consumer Direction in Personal Assistance: How to Work Together" is available in interactive CD-ROM format or in four self-paced videos with Learning Guides. Here are the main topics covered in the package —

1. Consumer Direction: Defining consumer-directed personal services; identifying tasks.
2. Health & Safety: Emergency response; protecting the consumer and the service provider from disease, infection, and injury; techniques to relieve stress.

3. Communication: Problem prevention tips; clarifying what the consumer prefers; problem solving and resolution; increasing disability awareness and using person-first language; meeting expectations and communicating with people who have different management styles and abilities.
4. Rights & Responsibilities: How to write up work agreements; reliability and schedules; respecting personal boundaries; recognizing and reporting abuse to proper authorities.

Professionals who tested, implemented, or reviewed this training said —

- "Excellent job conveying an Independent Living perspective. You folks produce a professional tutorial." — Alfred H. DeGraff, author, *Caregivers and Personal Assistants*.
- "Integral part of training on issues involving personal assistant care." — Joseph Havranek, *Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling*

For more information, to see a video preview, or to order this consumer-directed service training, visit at <http://www.disabilitytrainin.com/pacs.html> or call 1-800-543-2119.

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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found that Medicaid recipients with disabilities who direct their own services were more satisfied and appeared to get better care than those receiving services through agencies.

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The Center for Personal Assistance Services, based at the University of California, San Francisco, also includes InfoUse (developers of Consumer Direction in Personal Assistant Services), the Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute, the Institute for the Future of Aging Services, and faculty members at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County; University of Michigan; and West Virginia University's Job Accommodation Network (JAN). <http://www.pascenter.org/home/index.php>.

Author Lewis Kraus is a Vice President at InfoUse in Berkeley, California, and helped develop the Consumer Direction in Personal Assistance Services training program. He can be reached at 510.549.6520 or [Lkraus@infouse.com](mailto:Lkraus@infouse.com). Marie E. Marra of Program Development Associates, distributors of this and other multimedia disability training resources, also contributed to this article.

# In Action: Community Support Skills Standards

## Searching for Skills: Learning and Growing

**A**s a Direct Support Professional (DSP), my educational opportunities have been found in unusual places. Six months ago, an insightful class on how people progress through the stages of Alzheimer's disease resulted from a call I made to the Alzheimer's association whose number is in the yellow pages. Recently, I met a hospice counselor at Dairy Queen and acquired training for myself and my team.

Unquestionably, the most useful and productive training I have had was the College of Direct Support (CDS). There are twelve modules (each has 4–8 lessons) with subjects appropriate for any DSP. This training is supported by the NADSP because “it recognizes the need for DSPs to have easy access to high-quality training opportunities built on established competencies and ethical guidelines, and that provide usable information necessary to do the job more effectively, while working towards advanced skills (NADSP, 2004).” Here is how I use what I learned from the CDS —

### Supporting Healthy Lives Course

I use the OAR (Observe, Assess, React) system taught in the Supporting Healthy Lives module on a daily basis. Being able to accurately describe what I observe and assess speeds the reaction of medical professionals during times of concern.

### Introduction to Developmental Disabilities Course

I had chills run up my spine as I learned the painful history of people with developmental disabilities. I

still wonder how human beings can treat other humans so badly. I found my resolve to see justice for all in my lifetime strengthened.

### Teaching People with Developmental Disabilities Course

While completing the Teaching People with Developmental Disabilities module, I gained new insight into teaching strategies. For some, aging creates the need to learn new skills like using a walker or putting on an incontinence undergarment. Having more methods of teaching has helped me find better ways for each individual to learn.

### Positive Behavior Supports Course

The Positive Behavior Support module was challenging but helpful. As the team I work with sorted through a daily challenging behavior, I was able to ask questions to determine that a medication was the cause of the behavioral challenge for one person we support. The CDS is the only reason I knew what to ask.

Unfortunately, funding for the CDS in Kansas ended in July, 2005. Accessing more education has been an effort in vigilance, searching for skills so I can better support people. My search will not end. I will continue to read. One of my searches led me to my favorite book, *Beauty is the Beast: Appearance-impaired Children in America*, by Ann Hill Beuf. My understanding of how people that look different are treated by our society was changed. Now I understand that appearing and acting different have potential

lifelong consequences. A couple of my favorite Web sites are —

- The Arc: [www.thearc.org](http://www.thearc.org). Their family resource guide has state specific information on benefits, supports, and services.
- Saint Luke's health system eLibrary: <http://hvelink.saint-lukes.org/library/healthguide/en-us/drugguide/default.htm>. On this site, I am able to quickly research medication, which is important to delivering competent support.

I learn anywhere I can — from the DSPs in my faith community, from the life experiences of families I support, and possibly from you. If you know of any good books or Web sites, send a list of them to me or any other DSP you know who is searching for skills. The people we support will be grateful and will receive better supports.

Tim Lister works at TARC Senior Services in Topeka, Kansas and can be contacted at [tlister@tarcinc.org](mailto:tlister@tarcinc.org).

## Community Supports Skills Standards

### Competency Area 7: Education, Training and Self-Development

The community-based support practitioner should be able to identify areas for self improvement, pursue necessary educational/training resources, and share knowledge with others.

# The Process of Cultural Shifting

## Part 2: Find the Person, Place, or Thing

The first part of this article which appeared in *Frontline Initiative* Vol. 6 No. 2, focused on part one of a two-part theory to help Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) understand cultural shifting. This part of the theory states that some ideas and customs in our culture stop individuals with disabilities from taking part in community life. The second part of the theory states that if we understand those cultural habits, we can use them to help those same individuals join their communities.

While many individuals with disabilities have moved into the community, they have not connected with other community members because of ideas or cultural beliefs that create barriers. DSPs can support people to make connections by using a four-step process that leads a culture to accept a person.

### Step One

Step one, as discussed in the last issue of *Frontline Initiative*, is to find the passion or point of connection. This means the DSP must recognize the talents and passions of the individuals they support and use these to create connections with others. Building on these positive capacities will help people in the community think and act more positively towards individuals with disabilities.

### Step Two

After the change agent has identified the positive capacities for inclusion or incorporation, the next step in cultural shifting is to find a place within the community where we can anchor our bridge. Finding a setting where the person or idea might be

accepted sets the stage for inclusion and cultural shifting. In other words, we need to find the person, place, or thing, in the community with which our person can connect.

It is easier to find new friends or ways to participate in community life if you connect with others who share your passion in a hobby, interest, or capacity. For example, my son, Santino asked me if he could try football. Given this interest, I began to look for a venue where Santino might test his interest in the sport and connect with others. I found that venue with a local Youth Football League. Santino and I built a bridge out of his passion and capacity for football and anchored it at the Youth Football League. He used the bridge to connect with the football community, where he has made friends and formed relationships with others who share his passion and capacity for football.

In a more formal way, this step helps agencies connect people to their community. One example is the story of David. David had been admitted to our local county home for the aged as a young man and there he stayed until we met. Through my agency, we helped David move into his own apartment, meet people, and make friends. We used Step One to learn that David enjoyed oldies music, and using Step Two we found an oldies club not far from where he lives. It offered David a good starting point because he had same the interest and knowledge as the other members of the club. David's DSP helped him use his strengths to build a bridge and anchor it at the oldies club, where he and the other members focus on

their passion for oldies music — not on David's differences.

We know that people gather for all kinds of reasons, but they are at their strongest when they gather to celebrate that which they share. The second step of matching the interest to the community is critical to cultural shifting. To find the right match, we have to ask the right people or look in the right place. In David's situation, we called the local oldies radio station to inquire. With Santino, I saw a story in our local newspaper about the Youth Football League.

Now let's talk about an obstacle that may crop up when you and the person you support put the second step of cultural shifting into motion. People with disabilities have historically been forced to congregate separately from typical populations. Even human services professionals tend to continue this separation and call it inclusion. The existing members of your community or chosen venue may try to follow this pattern. They may want to anchor your bridge off to the side. For example, when we discover a capacity during Step One, such as our friend David's love of oldies, it might be natural to look for other people with disabilities who like oldies and then put them together. We see this all the time in our stadiums or theaters, where the folks with disabilities are herded together to watch the game or show from the "handicap sections." That is not natural inclusion; it is congregation.

Even when we find a natural community venue, the person who

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## Support Cultural Shifting,

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controls the venue might resist the idea of inclusion and suggest congregation instead. For example, my friend Jim used Step One and discovered that he had an interest in swimming. In Step Two we found a YMCA in Jim's community and went to there to get his membership. The director pulled me aside and whispered that my agency could have private use of the pool every other Tuesday so all the handicapped people could swim together. The director didn't understand what kind of bridge we wanted to build. He thought we wanted to create a community of "disabled swimmers." We had to help him see Jim as a person who wanted to join the existing community of people who enjoy swimming. When we did that, we started the cultural shift that would let Jim build his bridge where he wanted it to be, not where custom said it should be.

The Internet is another tool for building bridges. If you spend any time online, you know about chat rooms. These are settings where people gather online to explore common interests. Every topic imaginable has a chat room. For every capacity or passion, there is a place where people gather to celebrate that passion. Once we get over our own habits of segregation, we can help others see that the only requirement for joining the celebration should be common interest.

### Step 3

In my book, I identify the important elements of community and I will review them here. They are —

**Rituals** – These are customs and traditions that members of the community follow. These behaviors can be formal actions or symbolic activities that members just pick

up. Religions have formal rituals and symbols, but so do activities in which we participate for entertainment or other reasons. Anyone who has ever gone to a Bingo game knows that the players whistle or ring a bell when certain numbers come up. Usually, formal rituals are closely followed and passed down from one generation to the next. Informal rituals are often developed by the current group and are specific to that age group, like teenagers giving each other a "high five."

**Patterns** — Cultural patterns refer to the movements and social space occupied by the community members and usually revolve around the territory they occupy. For example, in New York's Little Italy, the Italian culture's patterns of food, music, language and rituals thrive more strongly than they do elsewhere in New York. As territorial animals, we also defend our "investment" in the culture and may resent those we see as intruders. For example, students from rival high schools may use athletic events to act out their defense of their schools' territories and cultures.

**Jargon** — This relates to the words that members of the culture use to talk about their common interest. These words might be technical or very specific to the cultural theme. People who are unfamiliar with legal terminology refer to the language of lawyers as "legalese." Jargon also refers to sayings or expressions that are not technical but are unique to the culture. If you don't follow baseball, you may not know what a ground-rule double is. Jargons can also include gestures. There are cultures where to nod your head up and down means "No," and a side-to-side shake means "Yes." Imagine the trouble you would have if you were unfamiliar with the jargon of that culture!

**Memory** — This refers to the culture's collective history. We record a culture's actions with yearbooks, annual reports, and other official documents. We may also honor its history with celebrations or holidays. Cultures also preserve memories by weaving them into stories or anecdotes. This living history forms a bond that encourages members to continue the culture. Since we learn from our history, memory also leads to community wisdom.

The value of knowing the four elements of any culture we wish to enter becomes clear as we go on to Step Three. In Step One, individuals identify the activities that they find interesting or exciting. In Step Two, we look for the connection point, a venue or culture where the supported individual can celebrate his or her passion, talent, or interest. In the third step of this process, we try to learn about the culture's rituals, patterns, jargon, and memories. This gives the newcomer a clearer picture of the culture before attempting to join.

Observing the community in action is the best way to acquire this knowledge. These observations will help the individuals you support to learn the actions they need to take and the information they need to learn to secure their place within the community. The more familiar they are with the community's rituals, patterns, jargon, and memory, the more easily they will fit in. Before my son joined the Youth Football League, we learned about its culture by talking to other children and their families who played last year.

There is another reason why this observation period is so important in process of cultural shifting. The members of a community usually react to new ideas that may affect their culture. Very often, that reaction is negative. We need to think about

how a new person or idea might change the culture's rituals, patterns, jargon, or memory. For example, if we introduce a new computer methodology to a group, it will change how the group does its business. A change agent who understands how a new idea will affect a group will be able to plan for helping the group to adjust to the idea.

When observing cultural elements, the change agent needs to keep an open mind. He or she should make mental notes, and perhaps written notes, if the culture is complex. Agents can also ask people who have had experiences with the culture, but should be cautious. An informant may give slanted or incomplete information if he or she has a personal grudge, a plan that conflicts with yours, or is just suspicious of your questions. A third method for learning the elements of culture is to read local newspapers or promotional material. Successful change agents will try to use all three methods. They ask, observe and read as much as they can about the culture.

#### **Step 4**

The final step in cultural shifting centers on the gatekeeper. Gatekeepers are members of the community who have influence with the culture. People and ideas enter a community when a gatekeeper introduces and endorses them. Community members may choose gatekeepers formally, as when they elect a mayor or president of a civic group. They can also give a member this power informally, based on his or her willingness and ability to support the culture. Gatekeeper's power can be either positive or negative as they apply their influence to endorse or reject a person or idea. We can think of this influence as social capital and the gatekeeper's approval

is an investment in the new idea. A gatekeeper's investment of social capital for or against an idea can convince neutral members make the same investment. To get an idea of a gatekeeper's power, consider the fact that in most communities over 50% of the members are usually neutral.

To shift a culture, the change agent must identify and enlist a gatekeeper to facilitate the alteration. This idea is simple, yet complex in how it plays out. On the one side we know that gatekeepers are a part of any culture or community, and that 20% of them are positive people willing to taking risks to promote things they feel good about. We know that when the gatekeeper endorses someone, it encourages other members to do the same. We also know that the more enthusiastic the gatekeeper is, the more apt others are to follow that lead.

On the other hand, enlisting gatekeepers is sensitive business. The change agent needs to remember that most people do not want others to manipulate them or tell them what they should do, especially if the change agent is not a recognized member of the community. Still, if you want to shift a culture's perspective, a gatekeeper's support or endorsement is essential. The change agent who can find a gatekeeper and ask for assistance without being perceived as a meddler or trespasser has a valuable talent.

If the new idea is controversial, gatekeepers will tend to be cautious for fear of rejection. Even assertive gatekeepers will think twice about investing social capital in unusual ideas or major changes because of the increased risk of losing on their investment. When dealing with the inclusion of new people, there are ways to lessen that risk. It's helpful if the potential gatekeeper has a history of supporting goals that

are similar to yours. For example, a gatekeeper who has experience with disability or is sensitive to disability issues may be more likely to help us. Their awareness of the issues gives them a good platform from which to endorse the new person and counter resistance from other members of the community.

Another point of connection might be if the gatekeeper had a difficult time getting into a group. He or she may be apt to help a newcomer avoid the same problems. Folks who are successful in the culture, even with their difference, tend to be willing to help others who face similar discrimination. Similarly, people who perceive themselves as liberal or tolerant may be more likely to accept differences and sponsor someone attempting to join the culture. Finding and enlisting gatekeepers can be tricky business, but it is an essential ingredient for cultural shifting. Change agents must learn as much as they can about gatekeepers to enhance their effectiveness.

This article is based on the monograph "Building Bridges to Community: The Process of Cultural Shifting" by Dr. Al Condeluci, Executive Director, UCP Pittsburgh. With his permission, it has been edited for the Direct Support Professional by Melissa Rennie, Associate Director of Residential Programs, SullivanArc. Dr. Condeluci can be reached at 412.683.7100 x 329 or [acondeluci@aol.com](mailto:acondeluci@aol.com).

## College of Direct Support,

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ethical boundaries in their work and provides guidelines to help them resolve situations in which ethics play a role.

With these core competencies and ethical guidelines in mind, many places have gone about aligning their training around these skills, knowledge, and attitudes. They

have done this to help create more portable and comprehensive training for DSPs. Around the country, training consortia, technical colleges, and employers have worked together to develop and support voluntary credentialing programs based on these guiding principles. This national movement recently got a boost when the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) incorporated the best of these credentialing programs into an apprentice position for DSPs.

The College of Direct Support (CDS) ([www.collegeofdirectsupport.com](http://www.collegeofdirectsupport.com)) is built on the foundation of portable, credible, and reliable training. It is an online curriculum. This method of delivery allows people to pace their own training and to complete it at times and in places that are convenient to them. The content in the CDS is consistently delivered and offers many ideas for helping the learner and their trainer or instructor make the leap from online learning to practice in the actual setting. In addition, it is built upon identified skill sets and ethical competencies and matches the educational needs of the DOL apprenticeship requirements.

There are currently 13 complete courses in the CDS ranging from health and safety content to documentation to cultural competence. The content of the CDS is interactive and uses multimedia. It intersperses video, voices, graphics, and interactions with text and narration. The content offered is accessible to people with varied educational, comprehension, and employment backgrounds. Concepts are presented in a clear and straightforward way that maintains the expectation of high-quality practice on the part of the DSP.

In addition to the curriculum, the CDS has a learner management system. This system allows admin-

istrators to customize and adapt the CDS content to the unique state requirements and employer needs, and the people being supported.

The core curriculum can be organized and assigned in various ways. It can be annotated and linked to additional online content and tests developed by the purchaser. It also provides a permanent and transferable record of the learner's training.

People who complete courses in the CDS can apply for Continuing Education Units (CEUs) through the University of Minnesota's College of Education and Human Development. In addition, there are now options for people to apply for online credit-bearing courses through the University of Minnesota that use the CDS as the foundation of the courses. As professionalism continues to be an emerging issue in direct support, the CDS provides a well-designed and flexible curriculum that realistically meets the needs of today's community human services workforce. It can serve as a cornerstone to any effort designed to help DSPs improve their training and education options. Its high quality and consistency provides opportunities today as well as for tomorrow for DSPs.

Susan O'Neill is a project coordinator for the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota. She can be contacted at [oneill001@umn.edu](mailto:oneill001@umn.edu).

To find out more about the CDS, contact Bill Tapp at 1.877.353.2767 or [bill@collegeofdirectsupport.com](mailto:bill@collegeofdirectsupport.com). To find out more about CDS courses for credit from the University of Minnesota, contact Amy Hewitt at 612.625.1098 or [hewit005@umn.edu](mailto:hewit005@umn.edu).

# COLLEGE OF DIRECT SUPPORT

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Careers



[www.collegeofdirectsupport.com](http://www.collegeofdirectsupport.com)

Internet-based Learning for Direct Support Professionals



RESEARCH AND TRAINING  
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# Alliance Update

**H**ey! My name is Don Carrick and I'm a member of Direct Support Professionals of Missouri (DSPM). DSPM joined NADSP in 1999 as state affiliate for the "Show-Me State." What is a state affiliate? and what do they do? Well, funny you should ask...

State Affiliates are direct support advocacy groups or individuals interested in direct support issues. They provide NADSP with information on what's important to DSPs in their states. Without this network of state affiliates, the organization becomes too insular and our momentum stops. Fresh ideas, insights, and grassroots knowledge are important to a growing, progressive organization like NADSP.

The relationship among NADSP and its affiliates is symbiotic. While NADSP relies on the information and guidance from affiliates; affiliates also take away new ideas and strategies they can use in their home states to continue advocating for direct support issues. I know that I have always walked away from NADSP meetings and conference calls energized and filled with new ideas we can use in our state.

Having been involved in NADSP for the past six years, I can see the great importance of state affiliates to the future of NADSP. While I may be able to speak for what's going on here in Missouri, I don't know what's important to DSPs in New Jersey, Oregon, or Texas. It's important for NADSP to have affiliates from all states. Please, look at the contacts on page 4. If there's already an affiliate in your state, contact them to see how you can

get involved. If your state doesn't have an affiliate yet, contact me at [dcarrick@asde.net](mailto:dcarrick@asde.net) for information on how you can become that affiliate. If you are interested in direct support issues, I guarantee you will not be disappointed.

Hope to hear from you soon.

## AADMD Policy Paper

Given DSPs' importance in the lives of people with disabilities, we think it's important to share the following policy statement from the American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry (AADMD). The paper can also be found at [www.aadmd.org](http://www.aadmd.org).

### **Caring for the Patient with a Neurodevelopmental Disorder: The Value of the Direct Support Professional**

The AADMD recognizes and promotes the collaborative nature of comprehensive health care for citizens with neurodevelopmental disorders and intellectual disabilities. The AADMD recognizes and promotes the role and contribution of Direct Support Professionals in the delivery of continuous, culturally competent, and coordinated health care for citizens with neurodevelopmental disorders and intellectual disabilities. The AADMD recognizes the role and contribution of the Direct Support Professional in the following domains: Assistance in providing relevant and accurate medical histories, allergies, treat-

ment outcomes, and other pertinent bio-psychosocial health care experiences to physicians and dentists.

- Compliance and adherence assistance to prescribed and recommended treatment regimens and lifestyles
- Health promotion and disease prevention
- Recognition and reporting of changes in demeanor and displeasure
- Sharing of emerging stressors (staffing, jobs, living, relationships)
- Knowledge of the individual over time in a variety of settings and situations
- Providing the individual with healthy lifestyle choices and opportunities
- Supporting the individual in an environment and fashion that promotes the richness and fullness of life

AADMD Pledges —

- To assist the DSP with the best practices to communicate health-related issues to physicians, dentists, and allied health professionals.
- To value, regard, and consider health related insights, observations, and experiences from DSPs regarding their clients.
- To support and promote Direct Support Professionals in enhancing their societal recognition, professional development, and appropriate economic security
- To recognize the profession of Direct Support with all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities rightfully and appropriately deserved.

# Frontline Resources

## Quality Mall

[www.qualitymall.org](http://www.qualitymall.org)

Quality Mall is an online resource on many topics that impact people with disabilities, their families, and caregivers. It is also a valuable source of information for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), offering hundreds of products of potential interest to DSPs, including —

- **Career Pathmaker: A Toolkit for Entering Careers in Human Services and Health Care**  
[www.hsri.org](http://www.hsri.org)  
Career Pathmaker is designed to help people interested in careers in human services or health care. It provides information about job requirements and work styles to help people determine if they match expectations of people working in helping professions.
- **Staff Recruitment, Retention, and Training Strategies for Community Human Services Organizations**  
[rtc.umn.edu](http://rtc.umn.edu)  
This is a book for managers and others who supervise direct care staff for people with disabilities. It describes many research-based strategies that organizations can use to increase staff retention.
- **1001 Ways to Reward Employees**  
[www.workman.com](http://www.workman.com)  
This book gives 1001 ideas for supervisors and managers to use in their recognition program to address staff recruitment and retention challenges.
- **First, Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers do Differently**  
[www.simonsays.com](http://www.simonsays.com)  
Book on effective management practices, based on 25 years of research by the Gallup company.
- **Dating Games: An Introduction to Human Sexuality**  
[ici.umn.edu/products](http://ici.umn.edu/products)  
A training module for staff orientation in community programs serving persons with developmental disabilities.
- **National Alliance of Direct Support Professionals Code of Ethics**  
[www.nadsp.org](http://www.nadsp.org)  
A series of materials on the Code of Ethics developed for DSPs.
- **Remembering the Soul of Our Work**  
[www.optionsmadison.com](http://www.optionsmadison.com)  
A book of stories written by DSPs who work with an innovative agency.
- **College of Direct Support**  
[www.collegeofdirectsupport.com](http://www.collegeofdirectsupport.com)  
This online college provides training for DSPs and their supervisors.
- **A Credo for Support**  
[www.pdassoc.com/acfs.html](http://www.pdassoc.com/acfs.html)  
This powerful four-minute video offers a series of suggestions for people who care about and support people with disabilities. It prompts viewers to question the common views of disability, professionalism, and support.

## The Arc of the U.S.

1010 Wayne Avenue, Suite 650  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
[www.thearc.org](http://www.thearc.org)  
301-565-3842

The Arc is a national organization that focuses on people with mental retardation and related developmental disabilities and their families. It is the oldest family organization for people with disabilities, and it has been the most influential in terms of advocacy related to public policy. It has about 140,000 members who are affiliated through about 1,000 state and local chapters. The Arc sponsors a public policy forum each spring which provides thorough coverage of disability policy information. Arc's governmental affairs newsletter contains the most recent information concerning public policy advocacy.

## Attract and Recruit Quality DSPs

with the *Direct Support Professional Recruitment Toolkit*

<http://rtc.umn.edu/wddsp/tools.html>



**Voices of DSPs: Reducing Job Stress,**  
Continued from page 1

ing out holiday cards, bills, family issues, holiday parties, long hours at work, deadlines, meetings, added job responsibilities, lack of sleep, registering for classes, and the list goes on and on and on. Did your blood pressure rise at the mere mention of snow- and ice-covered roads and traffic jams?

Stress management is big business in the U.S. Products are marketed to hopeful consumers. Hope and desperation send us in search of easy fixes, creating a multibillion-dollar industry. Companies advertise the following products and services as the answer to our stressful lives: scented candles, spas, massages, calming nature sounds, calming drinks and teas, new age music, vitamins, pills, decaffeinated coffee, and vacations. These products and services only offer a temporary reprieve from the whirlwind around us.

As employees in the human service field, we often find ourselves in stressful situations. This continual exposure to stress can lead to burn-

out. Employees overcome by stress and burnout jeopardize the safety and wellbeing of the people they support. People receiving supports are subjected to distracted employees who make errors and mistakes that can be life-threatening: medication errors, car accidents, and situations of abuse and neglect. We have all heard the stories of people receiving supports not receiving their medication, and being victims of abuse, neglect or exploitation at the hands of DSPs. Reducing stress is hard work. There is no easy fix. It takes time, planning, and persistence. Employers should provide support to all employees so they can meet the needs of people receiving supports. Employees and DSPs should take responsibility to recognize their own increased stress and work hard to reduce it.

In speaking with several employees of the Easter Seals Lacey Community Support Services, we identified areas of concern that employees have related to stress. In discussing these concerns, we have been able to formulate responses to most of these

issues.

The following questions were asked —

- On a scale of one to ten (ten being the highest), how would you rate your stress level?
- What is the most stressful aspect of your life? Pick one from the list or add your own. Home, work, school, family, financial, or \_\_\_\_.
- What are your top three stressors at work?
- What do you like best about your job?
- How long have you been in this position?
- What specific changes would you recommend to ease your level of stress?

Several respondents gave similar answers. Their responses and our conversations with DSPs led us to understand that those DSPs were discouraged. While many of the issues we uncovered seemed obvious and have been know for years to people in our field, I felt it was time to say, “Now we have to do some-

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thing about it.” Identified stressors and suggested organizational responses to these stressors are identified in the remainder of this article.

**Stressor 1: Too much paperwork and not enough time to do it.**

**Relief:** We have made arrangements for an employee who does not have the same documentation obligations as the other staff to cover the morning transportation pick-up. We have posted a sign-up sheet; any employee who would like to have their morning transportation covered puts their name under that day of the week. The employees who utilize the coverage have an extra hour to work on paperwork. Our administrative assistant is also helping out by typing addenda to daily training records and assisting with filing.

**Stressor 2: Employees do not have opportunities to pursue activities in the community. Also, they are apprehensive**

**about making those contacts.**

**Relief:** A Community Development Coordinator was hired to work throughout Ocean County. This individual has been hired to make those connections and identify activities based on the needs of persons receiving services.

**Stressor 3: Employees do a great deal of driving daily. Many employees pass the homes of people receiving services as they are traveling to and from work, but they must come to the site get a vehicle and drive back to get the person served.**

**Relief:** We were able to make arrangements so that employees who wanted to take a vehicle home could do so (for work purposes only). This allowed employees to save a half hour to an hour of commuting time each way. This relief also helps employees who are finding it difficult to finish their paperwork. The time that they save in driving allows more time to complete the necessary documentation.

**Stress 4: Employees stated that the rate of pay and finances are areas of stress.**

**Relief:** The employees who chose to bring a work vehicle home have found a variety of financial benefits including a reduction in their personal car insurance and savings on gas. They have also saved money by reducing the number of oil changes and tune ups for their personal car. We are also in the process of creating and implementing an incentive program for employee attendance, quality activities, and timely submission of documentation.

Most people have a certain degree of stress in their lives. We are responsible for making the necessary changes to ensure that we can continue to support people with developmental disabilities. We have been able to make some progress in reducing stress at the Easter Seals Lacey site. We know there are some things we cannot change, but we are optimistic and empowered by the things we can change.

Diana Ritter can be contacted at [diron@netscape.com](mailto:diron@netscape.com).

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