

A Publication of the National  
Alliance for Direct Support Professionals

# Frontline Initiative

Volume 8 • Number 1 • 2008

DSP Recognition  
Frontline Initiative

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## Miami Cerebral Palsy Celebrates and Promotes DSPs

**M**iami Cerebral Palsy Residential Services, Inc. (MCPRS) has always prided itself on being a leader in the field of services to people with disabilities. This has never been more apparent than in how we embraced and espoused the mission and ideals of the National Alliance of Direct Support Professionals (NADSP). Our leadership adopted the NADSP as the necessary vehicle for our Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) to develop professionally.

Here in Miami we have the good fortune of being part of a multi-cultural community. Our DSPs come from varied backgrounds. Many are new to this country and have found the field of disabilities to be a good match for their talents and caring attitudes. With this good fortune, however, come the obstacles that language and cultural barriers can pose to professional development strategies. MCPRS recognizes the need of every individual to develop

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Newly-Registered Direct Support Professionals (R-DSPs) from Miami Cerebral Palsy display their certificates from the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals. All DSPs at Miami Cerebral Palsy become Registered.

# Frontline Notes

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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  
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Dear Readers,  
Welcome to the **Recognition Issue** of *Frontline Initiative*. We would like to introduce Lori Sedlezky as the newest member of our editorial team. Lori was a Direct Support Professional and supported people with disabilities for many years. She embraces the principles of the NADSP and respects the hard work of DSPs across the country.

This issue highlights the recognition of direct support professionals in all its forms. How do agencies recognize their workforce? Read what organizations such as United Cerebral Palsy, NYSACRA, the Mid-Hudson Coalition, and New Horizons have done. Learn more about the NADSP credentialing program. Part of recognizing the DSP workforce is providing education and training to further careers and improve supports to people with disabilities. Learn how you can become a part of this growing movement.

Don't miss the State-of-the-Art Column to learn about how DSPs are integral to the design and development of recognition programs. Hopefully, this will inspire you to make changes or support recognition efforts within your own organization.

We will also explore some creative and fun ways that DSPs have brought recognition to the workforce. Learn about Sean Delaney's hip-hop video that highlights the value of people with disabilities in our community and of the DSPs who support them. He has already reached more than a quarter-million people through YouTube.

In summary, there are many ways to recognize DSPs and organizations for the valuable work they do. We encourage you to think about what recognition means to you: How do you want to be recognized? *Recognition is so important.* That is why we bring you this issue. Perhaps you will feel more recognized after reading this. But most of all, we hope you will use this information to recognize your colleagues, promote recognition strategies within your organization, advocate for legislative changes that promote the DSP workforce, or get creative and find your own way to recognize yourself and those around you. Joining NADSP is another great way to get connected and start recognizing the DSP workforce.

Congratulations to all DSPs – for the hard work you do and all that you bring to your community by supporting people with disabilities! Let us all recognize our own value.

The Editors

*Frontline Initiative* is supported through a cooperative agreement between the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, U.S. Department of Education (#H133B980047) and the Research and Training Center on Community Living (RTC) at the Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the RTC, Institute, University of Minnesota, or their funding sources.

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

# National Alliance for **Direct Support** Professionals

## About NADSP

The National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) is a professional association for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). It is committed to supporting professionals who choose careers in supporting 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. NADSP, a 501(c)(6) non-profit organization, has developed a national agenda to address these workforce issues and to develop strategies to –

- Enhance the status of DSPs.
- Provide better access to high-quality educational experiences for DSPs.
- Strengthen 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!

- Join 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 culture.
- Help educate policymakers and legislators about the importance of high quality human services.
- Learn about and gain access to public forums and conferences on DSP issues.
- Learn how to develop and enhance DSP regional affiliations.
- Develop leadership skills in the field of direct support.

## NADSP Membership Form

### Individual Memberships\* \$20

*\*If your state has an NADSP chapter, you will receive dual membership in the state chapter and NADSP.*

**DSP**

DSP  Frontline Supervisor

**Associate**

Self-Advocate  Family Member

**Other Professionals**

For professionals working in community human services, such as social workers, administrators, and healthcare professionals.

**What is your profession?** \_\_\_\_\_

### Other Memberships

**Affiliate Membership \$200**

For individuals, agencies, providers, associations, and NADSP state chapters who wish to demonstrate a commitment to support the efforts of DSPs.

**Supporting Organization Membership \$500**

For agencies and organizations dedicated to advancing the interests of DSPs and the people they support at a national level.

Make checks payable to NADSP. To pay by credit card, visit [www.nadsp.org/membership](http://www.nadsp.org/membership). (Discounts are not available with online payment.)

### Mail membership form and payment to:

NADSP, P.O. Box 13447, Minneapolis, MN 55414

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Organization

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail

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

# NADSP State Chapters and State Contacts

## NADSP Supporting Organizations

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

- Alexandria Community Services Board
- Bost, Inc.
- College of Direct Support
- Community Advantage
- Crystal Run Village, Inc.
- Innovative Learning, LLC
- Koinonia Homes, Inc.
- Laura Baker Services Association
- NHS Human Services
- OHI
- People Enhancing People
- SECOH
- Special People In Northeast, Inc.
- The PLUS Company, Inc.
- Woodfords Family Services

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@nadsp.org](mailto:dcarrick@nadsp.org) or visit the NADSP Web site at [www.nadsp.org](http://www.nadsp.org).

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# The Real Scoop

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**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 worked in the field of Direct Support. Clifford and Seth tackle this one with a few suggestions.

Dear Cliff and Seth,  
I How do I find ways to recognize DSPs? How would I find out about what kinds of recognition opportunities are available at the local, state or even national level?  
Signed,  
Derek, Job Coach/Direct Support Professional

Dear Need to See a Change,  
First, of course, be sure to read up on this issue of *Frontline Initiative*. Second, check with your employer's human resources representative, check with your local council person, and finally check with your local chapter of the Arc. Third, use Google (or other search engine) to check on recognition for DSPs. When I did a Google search, I found nearly 2 million opportunities regarding recognition for DSPs through both government and private entities.  
Thanks,  
Seth

Dear Need to See a Change,  
My first recommendation is to go to NADSP.org and check out NADSP's credentialing program – this is a great first step. You can also contact your state chapter of NADSP in order to get some more information and local help. I would also check out NADSP.org for Moving Mountains winners – if any past winners have been in your state, they would be a great resource on recognition. Finally, many state self-advocacy and other conferences give out awards for outstanding DSPs. Contact your local self-advocacy groups and the Arc to see if there are any awards in your state.

Sincerely,  
Cliff

## 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 13447  
Minneapolis, MN 55414

Tel: 612.624.7668  
E-mail: sedl0003@umn.edu

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

# Moving Mountains

## NADSP Recognizes Best Practices

In a field experiencing budget cuts and struggling to retain quality staff, there are a number of organizations that, despite the challenges, push the envelope of direct support. Against many odds, these agencies and initiatives improve the field by creating solutions to the issues in direct support.

NADSP honors these agencies and organizations that use best practices and innovative strategies to promote the direct support workforce. These leaders in the field are presented with the NADSP Moving Mountains award, which recognizes organizations that embrace NADSP's guiding principles and promote the NADSP Code of Ethics. The NADSP guiding principles are:

1. Enhancing the status of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs),
2. Providing educational and career opportunities for DSPs,
3. Strengthening partnerships between DSPs, self-advocates, and other consumer groups,
4. Promoting systems reform in Direct Support, and
5. Supporting a credentialing process.

Moving Mountains award recipients have taken the lead in improving the competence, status, compensation, and stability of the direct support workforce. They have shown that they value input from DSPs, self-advocates, and family members in developing their programs and initiatives. These organizations recognize their DSPs as valuable assets. NADSP, in turn, recognizes these organizations by awarding Moving Mountains.

The Moving Mountains award, which is presented every year at the Reinventing Quality Conference, is supported by a partnership between NADSP and the Research and Training Center on Community Living at the University of Minnesota.

Congratulations to the 2007 Moving Mountains award recipients: Support Providing Employees

**Moving Mountains  
award recipients  
have taken the lead  
in improving the  
competence, status,  
compensation and  
stability of the direct  
support workforce.**

Association of Kentucky (SPEAK) and the Alaska Alliance for Direct Support Careers (AADSC)!

SPEAK was recognized for its pre-service orientation of DSPs, mentoring of new hires, in-service training, and promoting direct support recognition and professionalism. Currently, 220 DSP applicants have completed the pre-service orientation and 43 DSPs have become mentors. Turnover in partnering organizations has dropped from 62% to 27% in three years. For more information about SPEAK, please visit [www.dspspk.org](http://www.dspspk.org).

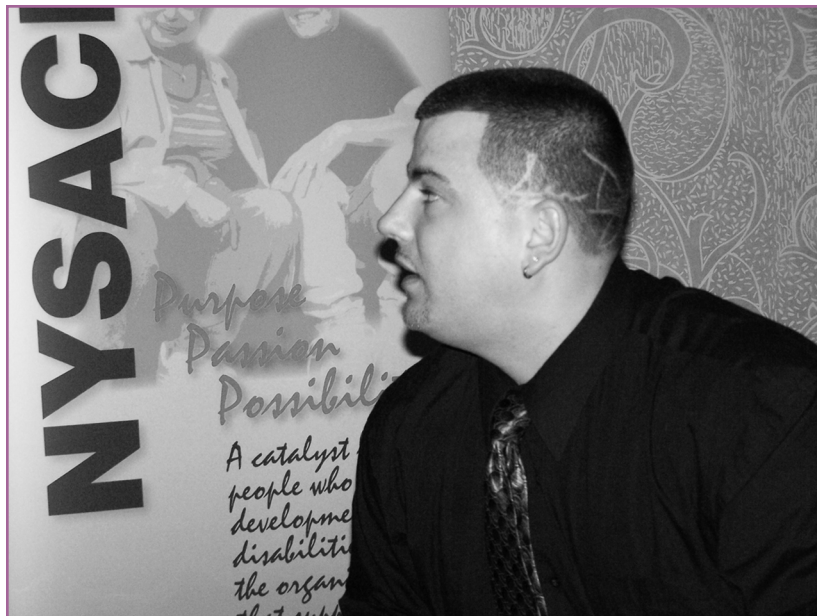
AADSC began in 2000 as an effort to create and retain a more competent direct support workforce. The state alliance has several goals. These include improving the status and public image of DSPs, expanding the DSP recruitment pool, developing effective retention strategies, and achieving a living wage and benefits for DSPs. AADSC has creatively pursued these goals by creating a statewide media campaign showing people who receive support and their DSPs in a positive light. Their Web site posts job openings, upcoming events, and other opportunities for DSPs. For more information about AADSC, visit [www.aadsc.alaska.gov](http://www.aadsc.alaska.gov).

The 2008 Reinventing Quality conference will be held in Baltimore, August 13-15. Who will receive the Moving Mountains awards this year?

To learn more about applying for the Moving Mountains award, visit the NADSP Web site at [nadsp.org/training](http://nadsp.org/training). Applications for the 2009 Moving Mountains award will be posted this summer.

Jeanne Desjardins is on the NADSP Board of Directors and is a member of the Communications Subcommittee. She can be reached at [jdesjardins@nadsp.org](mailto:jdesjardins@nadsp.org).

# “Open Your Eyes” Video Brings DSP Recognition to Music



Direct Support Professional (DSP) and hip-hop artist Sean Delaney released “Open Your Eyes,” a song and YouTube hit about his experiences as a DSP.

**W**ho knew that a spilled cup of coffee would seal Sean Delaney’s fate to record a powerful song about supporting people with disabilities?

Delaney, a 27-year-old direct support professional (DSP) from New York, says music has been a part of his life since he was a teenager. He has been part of various hip-hop groups and even has his own recording studio in his house. But it took his passion for music combined with his work as a DSP for Delaney to create a song that has exploded in the disability community and across the Internet.

This is where the cup of coffee comes in to play. Gary Malick, Delaney’s future mentor and director of his music video for “Open Your Eyes,” walked into a sandwich shop to grab a cup of coffee. He struck up a conversation with the

woman working in the shop and told her he was a filmmaker. This woman happened to be Delaney’s girlfriend. As Malick left the shop,

**Delaney’s song  
“Open Your Eyes” is  
a statement about  
working as a DSP and  
recognizing this line of  
work as important in  
people’s lives.**

he spilled his cup of coffee and went back inside for another. Delaney’s girlfriend spoke up and told Malick about Delaney and his music.

During their first meeting, Malick asked Delaney what he does for a living. Delaney told him about his work as a DSP. Malick gave Delaney some “homework:” write a song about his job. Delaney went home and sat down to write a song that aimed to tell the truth about people with disabilities and direct support. Within an hour, “Open Your Eyes” was born.

Delaney’s song, “Open Your Eyes,” recognizes people with disabilities as valuable human beings. The song speaks of people with disabilities as independent thinkers with their own needs and wants. It is also a statement about working as a DSP and recognizing this line of work as important to people’s lives. In the lyrics, Delaney declares, *This is an anthem of staff-members who care from the start and play a part in another individual’s life.*

What about the recognition that Delaney has received for his song and video? When he first played the song for his fellow DSP’s, they were “blown away.” Some had goosebumps. The “Open Your Eyes” video has been viewed over a quarter million times on YouTube, thanks in part to Delaney’s partnership with AutismSpeaks. Comments on YouTube include parents (many who say they do not listen to this type of music) thanking Delaney for his video, and others calling him a role model. Delaney had the opportunity to go down to Florida and perform during an Autism telethon.

Continued on back cover

# Watching the Movement Grow

## An NADSP Chapter President Catches the Spark

On May 8-9, 2008, partners and members of NADSP attended the National Symposium on Strengthening the HCBS Direct Service Workforce (DSW) in Baltimore. Among them was Bridget Siljander, president of DSPAM, the NADSP chapter in Minnesota. Here are some of her reflections on the DSW Symposium, taken from a piece she wrote on the NADSP blog at [www.NADSP.org/blog](http://www.NADSP.org/blog).

**A**t the DSW Symposium, I discovered there are DSPs in leadership and that we are being invited to the table as valued stakeholders, along with a great variety of other stakeholders, to address the workforce issues that affect our whole communities.

I was impressed by the growing respect for DSPs as a group that this signified. Now is the time for DSPs to step up, speak up, and join

the emerging DSP leadership. Our movement needs momentum and we must call on all DSPs to become part of it.

I also learned that there is tremendous energy gathering around the workforce issues – from DSPs to researchers to policymakers to providers to bureaucrats. We need to take full advantage of the opportunities available to us today by getting better organized, by form-

ing partnerships, and by working together to solve workforce issues. The time for DSPs is now!

Bridget Siljander is president of the Direct Support Professionals Association of Minnesota (DSPAM). She can be reached at [bridgetsiljander@yahoo.com](mailto:bridgetsiljander@yahoo.com) or 612.272.0281.

# Higher Ground

"...if we left, who would take care of the people we support? ...dedication is why we're still here."



"Higher Ground" is a 48-minute documentary on the dedication of direct support professionals during and after hurricanes Katrina and Rita. As hurricane Katrina approached the city of New Orleans, DSPs evacuated with their families and the people they supported. With little support for themselves, they took care of some of New Orleans most vulnerable citizens during an unprecedented crisis that extended for months. More than one year later, they are still working long hours at low wages, supporting people with disabilities as active participants in their communities.

To view the trailer or to purchase, visit [rtcmedia.umn.edu](http://rtcmedia.umn.edu).



# NYSACRA Awarded Grant

## Recognition and Advancement for New York DSPs

The New York State Association of Community and Residential Agencies (NYSACRA) was recently awarded \$300,000 by the New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities to enhance the recognition and advancement of New York's direct support workforce.

The funding award recognizes NYSACRA's commitment and comprehensive approach to assist their member agencies in recruiting and retaining a quality workforce. While the association is very proud of their recent success, there is much, much more to do to improve the skills and competence of our workforce and subsequently improve the quality of services to New Yorkers with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. This grant will allow NYSACRA and its 200 member agencies to take their initiatives even further.

"By showing us how to best support the people who truly touch the lives of those with developmental disabilities, these demonstration projects will benefit our entire system of care," said Commissioner Diana Jones Ritter. "We're about putting people first, and that means our workers as well those we support. We must nurture and reward the best practices of our valuable staff, so they can continue providing excellent care, and know that they are vitally important to our agency."

This grant allows NYSACRA to:

1. Establish a marketing campaign to recruit and encourage Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) in the development of a New York Chapter of the NADSP.
2. Develop and share two Realistic Job Previews: one from the point of view of a person with intellectual disabilities who manages his or her own supports, and another

from the point of view of a provider agency.

3. Develop a comprehensive advertising campaign about the role of the DSP and the crisis in this workforce. Public service announcements and printed materials will illustrate the realities of the crisis in recruiting and retaining quality employees. These messages will also promote DSP job opportunities.
4. Become the statewide administrator for the oversight, marketing, and dissemination of the College of Direct Support.

Joseph M. Macbeth is the Assistant Executive Director of New York State Association of Community and Residential Agencies (NYSACRA). He can be reached at 518.449.7551 or [joem@nysacra.org](mailto:joem@nysacra.org). Visit NYSACRA on the Web at [www.nysacra.org](http://www.nysacra.org).

## In Their Own Words: DSPs Speak Out

NYSACRA hears the voices of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) by providing open forums at DSP conferences and other events. These voices help guide a comprehensive strategy to promote direct support workforce issues such as access to quality training and higher education, recognition, and salary enhancement.

Here is what DSPs tell NYSACRA:

"Two things that would go a long way in assisting DSPs are recognition of the importance of the work we do and additional training. I was fortunate to have participated in the College of

Direct Support and look forward to continuing my education." – *Residential Services DSP*

"The most rewarding part of this job is assisting people achieve their goals – be it living independently or getting a job, et cetera – seeing their pride in what they've accomplished." – *Day Services DSP*

"I've seen people fresh out of college who love this work, and would want to do it for the rest of their lives, but can't afford to. The cost of everything is going up. They move on to better-paying fields." – *Day Services DSP*

"Having accompanied the people I support to the emergency room, I appreciate how important my advocacy is. I take on their voice when they can't give their histories or say how they are feeling – the medical staff at the hospital just don't know them. I'm there to ensure their care is what I'd expect for myself or my family. Direct Support Professionals need to be recognized for the advocacy we do on behalf of people with disabilities." – *Residential Services DSP*

# An Employee Recognition Program

## Designed by Direct Support Professionals

Four North Carolina organizations employing 500 direct support professionals (DSPs) recently completed a three-year project funded by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services project in western North Carolina to reduce DSP turnover and improve job satisfaction. The project was originally funded to test the impact of providing less expensive health care coverage to DSPs. But after discussions with DSPs, the organizations learned that DSPs were interested in the creation and benefits of a new recognition program. As the project turned in this direction, the DSPs were instrumental in designing the recognition program. DSPs requested two types of recognition: cash bonuses and service awards. Cash bonuses of \$125 were earned by DSPs who had attendance of 90% or better for one year. Service awards included items such as tote bags, fleece jackets, portfolios, mugs, and pins. All of these awards were printed with agency logos. The type of service award earned was based on the DSPs' years of service.

### What We Learned

DSPs who received a cash bonus or service award were very satisfied with their jobs. The recognition programs further increased their job satisfaction. It was also found that all DSPs, whether or not they had earned a bonus or service award, found the recognition program to be valuable. Recognizing DSPs for their work also improved recruitment. More than 92% of service award recipients and more than 98% of bonus recipients said they

would "probably" or "definitely" recommend direct support work to a friend or family member. DSP retention also improved. DSPs who received merit bonuses or service awards were more likely to say they planned to stay in the field for one, two, and five years. DSP turnover declined from 30% in 2003 to 14% in 2007. DSPs valued the recognition program and had a genuine sense of pride in wearing the agency's logo. DSPs also identified future forms of service awards, such as cash, gift cards or vacation time.

"...what I like is having the logos of the agency on it so people could recognize... I'm out there helping people and it's very important for me to help people. I'd like to represent the company."

### Starting a Recognition Program?

This recognition program had a positive impact on both DSPs and employers. In addition to increasing DSPs' job satisfaction, the items awarded increased DSPs' sense of professional identity and pride in working for a particular organization. When DSPs wore items with the organizations' logo on them, it also provided excellent visibility for their employer.

An employer who is considering starting a recognition program for DSPs should consider the following to increase their likelihood of success:

1. Involve DSPs in selecting the awards.
2. Hold organizational events where DSPs can gather and

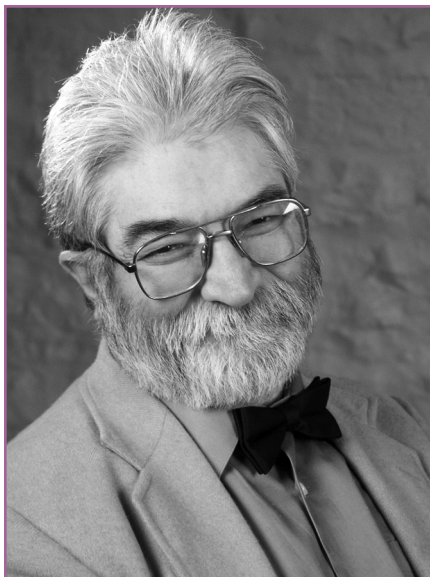
be recognized in front of their peers and family members.

3. Remember the costs of a recognition program will typically be much less than the high cost of unwanted turnover.
4. Establish and communicate upfront the criteria that will be used for recognition awards, such as attendance.
5. Think creatively about the possible awards. DSPs in our study valued clothing items (e.g., fleece jacket) and other items (portfolios, pins) that they could use at work. DSPs in our focus groups also requested that future programs award paid time-off, based on years of service.
6. Reward years of service with increasingly valuable awards to show the value you place on your DSPs' loyalty to the organization.
7. Enter a recognition program with the understanding that everything won't go perfectly; you may have to make adjustments as you proceed. That's OK—the DSPs will appreciate your efforts to recognize them!

John J. Sherlock is an Associate Professor and Director of the MS degree program at Western Carolina University and can be reached at [sherlock@email.wcu.edu](mailto:sherlock@email.wcu.edu) or 828.227.3380. Grant Morgan is a Research Associate at Praxis Research, Inc. and can be reached at 704.523.4667.

# Creating Policy Change

## Recognizing the Partnership



**S**ome of the most powerful policy changes happen when groups of people work together. For many years, I have envisioned direct support professionals (DSPs) and self-advocates combining their strengths to change public policy. In this article, I lay out my vision for creating these partnerships.

Most often, when DSPs attend advocacy days hosted by public policy organizations or attend meetings with officials at the local, state or national levels, their primary role is to support self-advocates in getting their voices heard. This is vital but I am asking DSPs to recognize that their role can be so much deeper—not only as a support person but also as a policy-changing partner. In addition to supporting self-advocates, I believe DSPs also need to get *their* voices heard: DSPs can tell what is happening right there on the frontlines. They can offer a unique perspective. Together, DSPs

and self-advocates can share personal stories that put faces to larger public policy issues.

Agencies and national organizations also need to further recognize this unique partnership. Agency leaders can discuss advocacy issues with DSPs and Frontline Supervisors. For example, training could be implemented on how to stay informed through public policy e-mails alerts. Taking it one step further, agencies could also provide information about responding to e-mail alerts and why it is important to respond.

As a member of People First, I know that many self-advocates have significant advocacy experience and training that DSPs may not have had. I hope People First can bring advocacy training to DSPs. DSPs

**I am asking that DSPs recognize that their role can be so much deeper—not only as a support person but also as a policy-changing partner.**

and self-advocates can teach each other about advocacy and they can mentor each other in getting their voices heard. But this is not the only way it can happen. Remember, when you attend an advocacy meeting or event with a self-advocate,

be prepared to share your story as well. Both stories can have twice the impact.

Agencies and national organizations can and do provide a number of other valuable resources. Organizations such as the Arc, ANCOR, NADSP and SABE have taken large steps to recognize and strengthen the policy partnership between DSPs and self-advocates. I challenge these organizations to push this partnership further by reaching out to DSPs and educating them in the policy issues. They can train DSPs on how to advocate not only for self-advocates but also for DSPs. Lastly, these organizations can work to bring DSPs and self-advocates together at the same policy change events and meetings.

By recognizing and acting on a partnership between DSPs and self-advocates, together we will be able to bring about significant change and better the lives of both DSPs and self-advocates. This is true recognition!

Cliff Poetz is the Vice President of NADSP. He is a self-advocate and is actively involved in policy change at both the state and local levels. Cliff can be contacted at 612.625.0151.

# NADSP Supports

## DSP Fairness and Security Act

In March 2007, legislation was introduced in the United States House of Representatives by Lois Capps (D-CA) and Lee Terry (R-NE) entitled the Direct Support Professionals Fairness and Security Act of 2007 (H.R. 1279). This bill allows states to secure additional federal Medicaid dollars in order to increase wages paid to direct support professionals (DSPs).

The National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP), which includes DSPs and their allies, believes the Direct Support Professionals Fairness and Security Act of 2007 (H.R. 1279) is long overdue. Unfortunately, DSPs are the very definition of “underpaid and overworked” and it is time for us to be recognized as the backbone of community human services programs across the nation. Nationally, the average wage of Direct Support Professionals is \$8.86 per hour, which is not nearly enough to support our families and ourselves. Many of us are our family’s sole income-earner and a good number of us are as disenfranchised as the people we support.

These dollars represent a critical step towards reducing workforce turnover rates. Many people needing service in the community wake up each day and wonder whom, if anyone, will be available to meet their most basic needs. With turnover rates as high as 86% in some services and the highest turnover rates happening within the first three months of employment, is it any wonder that people with disabilities are stressed? It is very difficult to meet any desired goal when you are in

a constant cycle of training new people to meet your needs. We ask Congress to consider someone in their life impacted by the work we do as primary “professional” caregivers. It may be a family member, the person bagging their groceries or processing their mortgage payment. It may be someone in their office, in their faith community or in their neighborhood. We ask each member

**...It is time for us  
to be recognized  
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human services  
programs across the  
nation.**

of Congress to imagine living in that person’s shoes: Would you not want a consistent, qualified DSP in your life in order to support you in achieving your dreams?

We voice our concern and join with other stakeholders in reminding Congress that poor wage reimbursements jeopardize the quality of life for people with disabilities, DSPs and their families. We ask our entire Congress to value the work we do by supporting the Direct Support Professionals Fairness and Security Act of 2007 (H.R. 1279) and make the lives of those we support as fulfilling as they can be.

Mark Olson, author of this article, is president of the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals. He can be reached at 612.624.1157 or molson@nadsp.org.

### Current Status of HR 1279

As of June 2008, HR 1279 had 121 co-sponsors. Over a year earlier, the bill was referred to the House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Health. Although it is still in subcommittee, the bill continues to gain co-sponsors. Please search for HR 1279 at thomas.gov and see if your legislator is a co-sponsor.

# You want to be the best!

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



# Mid-Hudson Coalition, Inc.

## Presents DSP Excellence Awards

The Mid-Hudson Coalition, Inc. (MHC) recognized six direct support professionals with DSP Excellence Awards at the 15th annual conference held at Dutchess Community College in Poughkeepsie, New York on June 14, 2007. The theme of this instructive and celebratory conference was “The Gift of Many Hands.” The conference was attended by nearly 400 DSPs.

The awardees were Lucinda and Robert Sucato of Abbott House, Vanessa Timperio of the Anderson Center For Autism, Cindy Pommerenke and Winsome Badroe of New Horizons Resources, and Betty Botsford of New Hope Community.

Since 1989, the MHC has had a working partnership comprised of 32 private organizations in an 11-county area, including educational institutions, individuals, government, and international affiliations. MHC members believe that quality supports for people is defined at the point of service. Therefore the purpose of MHC is to enhance the competence and career of DSPs through post-secondary educational opportunities. Because our members provide supports to individuals from infants to seniors, our coalition recognizes excellence across the lifespan.

Congratulations Direct Support Professionals!

**Lucinda and Robert Sucato** have been foster parents for almost eight years. Not only have they provided a loving home for children with an array of behavioral and emotional problems, they have also adopted five children. They are now

in the process of adopting two more children from the foster system. The youngsters who have left their home are still connected with “mom and dad” Sucato.

**Vanessa Timperio** works as a classroom aide with youth ages 12 to 21 who have autism. Vanessa always goes way beyond the requirements of her job. Her work is of the highest quality. She enlists students as much as possible with her humor, dependability, and sense of responsibility. She accomplishes all this while carrying a full load of college courses that will lead to an educational degree in human services.

**MHC members believe that quality supports for people is defined at the point of service. Therefore the purpose of MHC is to enhance the competence and career of DSPs through post-secondary educational opportunities.**

**Cindy Pommerenke** is successful with adult women and men with disabilities because of the complete respect she has for each person. Even on her busiest days, Cindy ensures that everyone is a part of meaning-

ful community living experiences. Highly principled, Cindy embodies the DSP Code of Ethics.

**Winsome Hope Badroe** continuously seeks innovative ways of providing person-centered services. Her peers acknowledge her for recognizing the distinct personal choices of people with disabilities. Hope is also a role model regarding her educational and self-development pursuits. Working full-time and taking care of her family, she earned her bachelor’s degree in human services and is now studying for her master’s degree.

**Betty Botsford** has already received her agency’s Staff of the Year award and other awards for embodying the universal mission of Direct Support. The two qualities that distinguish Betty in her supports of adults and seniors are her superb verbal and pre-verbal communication skills as well as her intense commitment to be person-centered in everything she does. This empathic professional is an inspiration to all her peers in human services.

Further information about the Mid-Hudson Coalition, Inc. can be found at [www.midhudsoncoalition.org](http://www.midhudsoncoalition.org).

# Direct Care Certificate

## NHR Salutes its Graduates



Four DSPs from New Horizons Resources, Inc., celebrate their new Direct Care Certificates in Poughkeepsie, New York, with NHR Executive Director Regis Obijiski, on May 29, 2007. From left to right are DSPs Stacey Alexander and Alfonso Johnson, Obijiski, and DSPs Sonia Grant and Brooke McNally.

**C**ongratulations to New Horizon's latest graduates: Stacey Alexander, Sonia Grant, Alfonso Johnson, Brooke McNally, Winsome Hope Badroe, and Barbara Delventura! Extra congratulations to Stacey as she is also the first person in New York State to achieve journeyworker status by completing the Direct Support Professional (DSP) apprenticeship program through New Horizons. New Horizons is a member of the Mid-Hudson Coalition, which is discussed in other articles in this issue of *Frontline Initiative*.

On May 29, 2007 New Horizons Resources (NHR) honored recent graduates Stacey, Sonia, Alfonso, and Brooke by celebrating at the River Station in Poughkeepsie, New York (see photo above). Hope and Barbara were honored at later dates. NHR is proud to increase wages for employees with these educational achievements to recognize their

hard work and newly-acquired training. Currently, the hourly differential for DSPs who obtain Direct Care Certificate I is \$0.33 and the Direct Care Certificate II is an additional \$0.34, leading to a total of \$0.67. Apprentices who attain journeyworker status earn an *additional* \$1.39 per hour.

Although finding a balance between school and work can be difficult, our graduates had nothing but good things to say about the certificate program as a whole. "It was hard work, but it gave me better insight into the individuals we work with... It shifts the focus to them and enables you to help them better," says graduate Sonia Grant. Graduates also expressed appreciation for NHR's support during the process. NHR offered many types of support from flexible scheduling to motivating employees to continually better themselves. In addition, NHR covers the cost of tuition. Graduate Alfonso Johnson cites individuals in the agency as part of his motivation. There are other employees whom he, "looks up to as inspiration – they encourage me to keep striving." The program offers employees the opportunity to advance in the field of human services and a sense of personal satisfaction. Mr. Johnson says that helping others makes him feel complete and gives him a

sense of accomplishment. He is also motivated by his children: "They see me doing good and they want to do good."

Barbara says that she has learned so much in her eight years with New Horizons and that is due, in part, to this certificate program. She recommends the experience to everyone and believes the advantages are worth the time commitment and effort. "It really expands your growth in the field because you learn so much that you might not otherwise be exposed to in your day-to-day job," she said. "The courses take you to another level."

Stacey Alexander, who earned the Direct Care Certificate I and II and journeyworker status simultaneously, says, "My college education only enhances my appreciation of the DSP."

Well, your achievements (and the achievements of ALL of our Direct Support Professionals!) only enhance New Horizons' appreciation of YOU. Dedicated employees, such as these graduates, serve as an inspiration for the rest of the agency. Please congratulate Stacey, Sonia, Alfonso, and Brooke on their accomplishments and for serving as role models of NHR's Unifying Principles (Learning)!

Jerilynne Smith is the Human Resources Coordinator at New Horizons Resources, Inc. She can be reached at 854.473.3000.

# DSP Excellence Award Winner

## Winsome Hope Badroe

In this article, Winsome Hope Badroe reflects on how her education has made her a better DSP and furthers her professional goals.

I study Humanistic Multicultural Education, a particular approach to human services. This area of study is both life-touching and life-changing, and it will equip me with the information and techniques I need to continue working in this field.

Humanistic Multicultural Education embraces diversity and uses cooperative structures learning to enhance students' education. Students learn group dynamics, such as interpersonal skills, group thinking, teamwork, diversity in the workplace, leadership, and cultural competence. This approach also builds learners' advocacy skills by teaching us to support the people we serve to advocate for themselves. Students learn effective listening skills, which help us to focus on the message that an individual is sending to us beyond spoken words. Students also gain conflict resolution skills to help us resolve conflict in the workplace and in our personal lives. The approach also teaches the barriers and opportunities of working in this field, such as self-determination for the individuals we serve, self-fulfillment for the staff, and the financial restraints that sometimes prevents an agency from going the extra mile as a care provider.

My motivation for choosing this area of study is to make a difference in the lives of the people that I support. I believe that if I can help one person each day when I go to work, then I have done my job and my living will not be in vain. I strongly believe that the individuals

that I serve have potential in one or more areas, and I will continue to assist them in developing their potential, so they can self-actualize their dreams and aspirations in life. As a Direct Support Professional, my general responsibilities are to teach and encourage individuals to achieve self-determination, and to advance my new skills. But my job goes above and beyond this – my work is to provide an environment where the people I support feel love

community integration as part of developing friendships and to generate a community circle of support and network.

My studies are in accordance with what I need to become a great human service worker.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Dutchess Community College, Empire State College, and SUNY New Paltz for meeting my educational goals. The depth and breath of these studies will help me become an excellent Direct Support Professional. I am humbled and honored to have received such a wonderful educational experience.

Winsome Hope Badroe is a Direct Support Professional at New Horizons Resources. She can be reached at 854.473.3000.

**To provide true quality of life for the people I support, I must see the capabilities of the individuals before their disabilities.**

and belonging. This environment should also be conducive to learning, where we can use our mistakes, or even the mistakes and challenges of the people we support, as “teachable moments.”

To provide true quality of life for the people I support, I must see the capabilities of the individuals beyond their disabilities. I have created and implemented activities that stimulate their minds, using different modalities such as arts and crafts, dancing, music appreciation, and gross motor activities. I incorporate community inclusion and



# Recognizing the DSP

## The Key to Excellence

In an industry that focuses on recognizing the needs and desires of the people being supported, we often forget to recognize the needs and desires of those providing the support. NADSP is committed to ensuring that those who share our mission know that the key to excellence is a well-recognized and celebrated Direct Support workforce.

As President of NADSP, this issue of *Frontline Initiative* excites me because it offers ways to incorporate recognition of our work into our daily lives and at all levels of the system. We have assembled a group of authors who share research, best practices, and policy actions that can be used by individuals and organizations to advance the status of Direct Support.

Over the past year, in an effort to help the nation better recognize the Direct Support Professional, Board members have focused on developing and marketing the NADSP credential. We are excited to offer this opportunity for individuals, organizations, and policymakers to recognize and support your work. Since we released the product last year, 121 individuals became credentialed at the DSP-Registered level. Numerous organizations have embraced and included the credential in their recognition and/or compensation systems.

The training community is also buzzing about the NADSP credential: Many organizations are aligning their training curricula with NADSP's community support skills standards so they can award the credential. The Board is developing

a pathway and designing protocols for programs to qualify. We want to expand the opportunity for DSPs to be recognized for excellent service. You can now become credentialed by using accredited curricula; visit [www.NADSP.org](http://www.NADSP.org) to explore the options. The criteria for the first step in the credentialing process – the DSP-Registered level of the credential – are simple and easily attained

**Please remember that you are key to the success of those you support and to the success of this industry. The only way we can get the recognition we so richly deserve is to get involved, get informed, and get included.**

through tenure and good service provision. Two subsequent levels of the credential, DSP-Certified and DSP-Specialist, are also available.

NADSP also took a position on the Direct Support Professionals Fairness and Security Act of 2007, authored by Lois Capps of California and Lee Terry of Nebraska. This bill recognizes the need for wage parity for DSPs in community-based settings. See the article on page 12 that outlines our position.

NADSP has joined many organizations in supporting this legislation and asks its membership to help make our collective voice heard. Let your policymakers know you support this legislation and ask them to do the same. NADSP also aims to soon have our own action alert network. In this way we can keep you posted on ways to affect policy. Until we build our network, we encourage our membership to connect with one of our allies to keep up with what is happening with H.R. 1279, to learn about other policy issues and of course, to make your voice heard. Two allies with great action alert networks are The Arc of the United States ([www.thearc.org](http://www.thearc.org)) and ANCOR ([www.ancor.org](http://www.ancor.org)), and they are fighting to get Direct Support Professionals recognized nationwide.

Please remember that you are key to the success of those you support and to the success of this industry. The only way we can get the recognition we so richly deserve is to get involved, get informed, and get included.

Mark Olson, President  
National Alliance of Direct  
Support Professionals

# Frontline Resources

## **Love 'Em or Lose 'Em: Getting Good People to Stay**

**By Beverly Kay and Sharon Jordan-Evans**

This handbook addresses many different techniques for managers to use in order to retain staff, from fostering a fun and healthy workplace environment to implementing strategies that retain employees. The authors use numerous examples from companies, firsthand stories from employees, and easy recommendations for managers to use. Meant to be an accessible read, this book offers managers many options for creating and keeping a high quality staff. To order, visit [www.bkconnection.com](http://www.bkconnection.com).

## **The Exemplar Employee: Rewarding and Recognizing Outstanding Direct Contact Employees**

**By Art Dykstra and Deborah Gustafson**

This book explains one recognition strategy used by Trinity Services, Inc. since 1991. Each year, employees are recognized at Trinity Services as Exemplar, and the status is very prestigious in the agency. This book explains the process of recognizing and rewarding excellent employees at Trinity Services, and is a good tool for agencies that would like to implement a similar recognition process. For more information and to order, visit [www.hightidepress.com](http://www.hightidepress.com).

## **1001 Ways to Reward Employees**

**By Bob Nelson**

This accessible book can be a quick reference for ideas to reward and recognize staff. Recognition strategies are divided up between informal rewards, awards and achievement, and formal rewards. The book gives countless examples from different companies around the country, many of which are low-cost. This is a must-have book for any manager who wants quick suggestions about rewarding staff. To order, visit [www.workman.com](http://www.workman.com).

## **1001 Rewards & Recognition Fieldbook: The Complete Guide**

**By Bob Nelson and Dean R. Spitzer**

This hands-on, practical fieldbook by Nelson and Spitzer can help organizations to recognize and reward their employees. Focusing on innovative empowerment of employees rather than traditional incentives, the authors provide creative and effective ways for an organization to implement a low-cost recognition program, recognize an individual or a group, and improve morale. The book provides organizations with worksheets, templates, and countless ideas for low-cost/no-cost recognition ideas.

## **How to Recognize and Reward Employees**

**By Donna Deeprise**

This handbook is a guide to managers for implementing recognition more thoroughly and effectively throughout their organizations. The book is divided into three parts, exploring why organizations should frequently recognize employees, how managers can implement recognition strategies in their organization, and finally, what they should do to recognize, including 100 specific things managers can do. For more information and to order, visit [www.amanet.org](http://www.amanet.org).

## **180 Ways to Walk the Recognition Talk: The How-to Handbook for Everyone**

**By Eric Harvey**

This handbook offers easy-to-implement strategies and techniques to promote recognition in your workplace. The recognition strategies will encourage an uplifting workplace culture and improve retention. For more information, visit [www.walkthetalk.com](http://www.walkthetalk.com).

**Miami Cerebral Palsy Celebrates and Promotes DSPs**

Continued from front cover

professionally and economically. It saw in the NADSP credentialing program a means of providing this to staff.

In May of 2004 MCPRS began working toward the NADSP's mission and goals of standardized national benchmarks. At that time, we adopted the NADSP Code of Ethics and began educating our DSPs on the Code. We held numerous training sessions on the Code and gave Code of Ethics cards to all employees. We also incorporated the process into our pre-service orientation sessions. Each DSP, including every newly-hired DSP, signs and commits to the Code of Ethics.

MCPRS saw the NADSP credentialing program as the next logical step of working toward our goal of supporting staff by professionalizing the position and reinforcing national recognition of their work. We recognized the need for further education for DSPs and the benefit this would have to the individuals

being supported. We chose to use the College of Direct Support as our training tool. We introduced the College of Front Line Supervision to staff in 2005 and added the College of Direct Support in 2006. We also brought in a consultant to provide seminars to DSPs about the registration process.

We are proud to have 86 registered DSPs. We believe we are the first agency in the nation to require its entire work force to become Registered Direct Support Professionals through the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals. Approximately 40 more are in the process of obtaining Registration; and in the coming months, 30 more will work toward Registration. We consider this the first step of a three-part series in the credentialing and certification standards of our employees.

"We are proud of our agency's commitment and the interest, efforts, and commitment made by our direct support staff," says Marta Morin, our Executive Director. "Miami Cerebral Palsy/United

Cerebral Palsy of South Florida is committed to investing in staff and in their career as DSPs. We want to ensure staff brings a full set of ethical skills standards to the job of DSP by providing formal training – utilizing the College of Direct Support



as one of its educational vehicles for educating and supporting staff."

We look forward to this process with energy and enthusiasm.

Elizabeth Das is the Staff Development Coordinator at Miami Cerebral Palsy Residential Services, Inc. She can be reached at 305.599.0899 or elizabeth.das@ucpsouthflorida.org.

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# Contribute to Frontline Initiative

**W**e encourage you to share story ideas. If you have a story you want us to consider for publication, please e-mail *Frontline Initiative* at [sedl0003@umn.edu](mailto:sedl0003@umn.edu).

### **“Open Your Eyes” Video Brings DSP Recognition to Music** Continued from page 7

In April 2008, Delaney, along with two other musicians, received the Excellence Award from the New York State Association of Community and Residential Agencies (NYSACRA). Delaney says that he is honored to receive this award, and he truly feels like NYSACRA supports his vision.

Delaney continues to make music that makes people think and see deeper into issues. His father has dubbed him the “Bob Dylan of Hip-Hop”: A man who tells stories through his music. Delaney just released his newest album, “The Shining,” and in his latest song he addresses the issues surrounding Iraq War veterans. Delaney is carving out his own unique genre of hip-hop and looks to make a difference with his music. He has also started his own clothing line, HudCity Gear.

Delaney is amazed by the response to “Open Your Eyes.” One of the things he appreciates most is the recognition it has brought to the individuals with disabilities in his video, and all other people with disabilities. The power of seeing the faces of people with disabilities in the video has truly “opened” people’s eyes, thanks to Delaney and his talent.

The video “Open Your Eyes” can be viewed online at [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com). For more information about Sean Delaney and his music, visit his MySpace page at [www.myspace.com/sdotlyric](http://www.myspace.com/sdotlyric) or visit [www.HudCityGear.com](http://www.HudCityGear.com).

Visit the NADSP Web site at <http://www.nadsp.org>