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Frontline Initiative

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Employment supports
Frontline Initiative

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DSPs key to successful employment

Providing effective employment supports

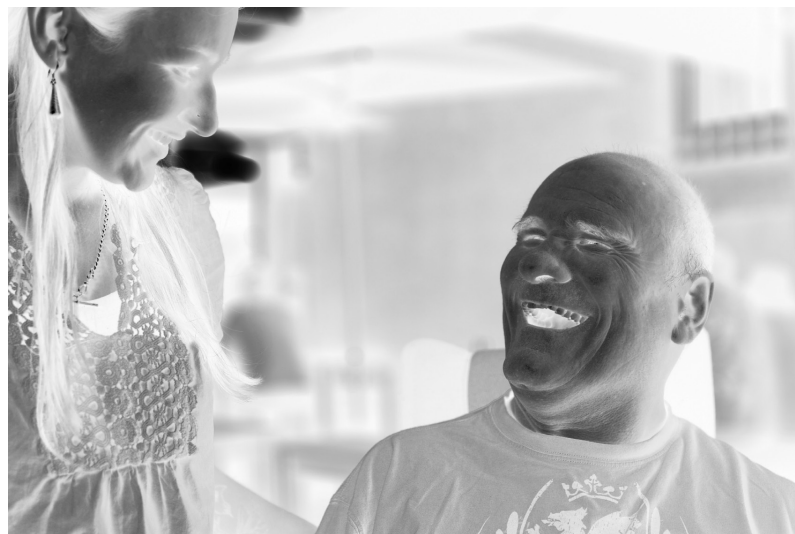
By Rachael Sarto and Derek Nord

Employment supports have changed dramatically over the years. Today's best practices aim to match the skills and interests of individual job seekers to real jobs in the community, as well as provide supports to find, obtain, and retain work. These community-based employment supports are built and delivered on a person-by-person basis, rather than through the group approach that segregated workshops or enclaves provide. These supports allow for each person to be hired, employed and paid by a business, not by a vocational pro-

vider. The role of the employment direct support professional (DSP) is to provide supports to people through the many stages of finding and keeping work. This includes skill exploration, the job search and hiring process, and ongoing supports on- and off-the-job.

Providing effective direct supports that assist people in finding and keeping real jobs requires specific skills and knowledge. To advance community employment goals, it is necessary to define the specific skills and knowledge employment DSPs working in employment need to be successful. Among the groups working to establish a set of skills

and knowledge for employment DSPs are APSE: The Network on Employment, which has offered a comprehensive position statement, and the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP), which is working to develop



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Frontline notes

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Welcome to the employment supports issue of *Frontline Initiative*.

“What do you do?” This is often the first question we ask when we meet a new person. Our jobs are an important part of who we are. But people with disabilities still experience high levels of unemployment and underemployment. This means less income, more poverty, and less experience of making a valued contribution to one’s community. This issue of *Frontline Initiative* highlights the roles direct support professionals (DSPs) play in supporting people with disabilities to find and keep satisfying employment.

We are proud to offer this *Frontline Initiative* in collaboration with the Alliance for Full Participation (AFP), highlighting the upcoming November 2011 Employment Summit and the “Real Jobs — It’s Everybody’s Business” Campaign. The National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) is a founding member of the Alliance for Full Participation, and shares AFP’s mission of doubling the employment rate for people with disabilities by 2015. We believe that DSPs can and will play an essential role in helping people with disabilities achieve this goal, and helping communities develop more inclusive attitudes and practices.

In this *Frontline Initiative*, DSP Lindsay Short of DSPAM, NADSP’s Minnesota chapter, offers some

insights on providing effective employment supports. Derek Nord and Rachael Sarto highlight the specific skills and knowledge needed to successfully support a person in achieving and maintaining community employment. Melissa Clark tells her story of successful self-employment through her business, Lissie’s Luv Yums, and describes the supports she has received from Sr. Johnelle Howanach. Frontline Resources offer additional web sites, organizations, and articles to learn more about employment supports and employment for people with disabilities.

Policy advocacy to promote professionalization of DSPs remains core to NADSP’s mission, and will influence available employment supports across the nation. In this issue we have included an update on Direct Support Professional Recognition Week 2010, the Direct Care Workforce Empowerment Act of 2010, the Administration on Developmental Disabilities Envisioning the Future Summits of Fall 2010, and the AFP Employment Summit in November 2011. NADSP is also pleased to announce the development of a DSP–Specialist credential in Employment Supports, and the new DSP Apprenticeship Program through the Department of Labor.

We hope you will find this issue a valuable resource on the topic of employment supports.

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Frontline Initiative is available in alternate formats upon request.

NADSP update

DSPs and employment supports

By Lisa Burck

NADSP is committed to improving opportunities for people who receive supports. Our mission is based in the understanding that people are more likely to succeed in all areas of life, including employment, when they have dedicated, skilled, and knowledgeable direct support professionals (DSPs) at their sides. Employment for people with disabilities is essential, and it will not happen without an educated, professional, and stable direct support workforce. NADSP's contributions to improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities include our participation in the Alliance for

Full Participation and our DSP-Specialist credential in Employment Supports. In each of these areas, we continue to be a strong voice for self-determination and full inclusion for those receiving supports, consistent with the NADSP Code of Ethics.

Our DSP Credentialing Program has grown from a good idea to an active program with over 800 DSP-R credentialed DSPs, and more and more DSPs choosing to pursue the competency-based DSP-Certified credential. Over 1500 individual members and more than 35 organizations support our work. In Spring 2011, we will hire our first Executive Director

to continue to strengthen NADSP in the years ahead. This September, the United States Senate declared the third annual Direct Support Professional Recognition Week. Promising and challenging years lie ahead for DSPs, for those who receive direct supports, and for NADSP. As we collaborate with other leaders through the Alliance for Full Participation, we hope that all NADSP members will hear the charge and take a stand for increasing real employment for people with disabilities.

*Lisa Burck, MPA, MEd
President, NADSP Board of Directors, Project Director, The Arc of Mississippi, lburck@nadsp.org*

NEW Direct Support Professional Registered Apprenticeship Program!

Career path options continue to be developed!

NADSP has been offering a national, voluntary credentialing program since 2007. NADSP's leadership in recognizing high quality, competent direct support professionals positioned us to take a leadership role in designing the national guidelines for the U.S. Department of Labor's new Registered Apprenticeship Program for DSPs. This historic new Apprenticeship Program, announced in October 2010, offers formal

government recognition of the direct support career.

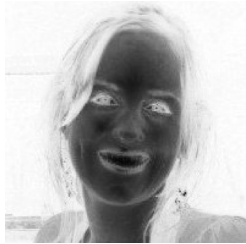
NADSP, in collaboration with the American Network on Community Options and Resources (ANCOR), designed the Apprenticeship guidelines based on the NADSP Credentialing Program. It requires training hours and on the job training in eight of the 15 NADSP Competency Areas. To reach the highest level of the Apprenticeship, the DSP completes training and meets the same requirements as the NADSP DSP-Certified credential.

Provider organizations and educational/training programs can become approved as DOL Apprenticeship sites and/or NADSP Accredited. If you are interested in pursuing a DSP credential or apprenticeship, go to <http://nadsp.org/credentialing/index.asp> or http://www.doleta.gov/ETA_News_Releases/20101488.cfm to learn more. Share this information with your employer and support the development of an increasingly skilled and competent workforce.

Stay tuned for more details!

What works in community employment supports: One DSP's experience

By Lindsay Short



My journey started three years ago, and it isn't finished. Fresh out of college,

I was hired by Kaposia, Inc., in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Kaposia is a nonprofit organization that progressively focuses on supported employment with real wages and providing opportunities to adults with disabilities through employment and volunteer positions. During the last three years working as an employment direct support professional (DSP) my stereotypes about people with disabilities have been shattered again and again. During these past three years, I have learned some important lessons.

I have learned that DSPs providing employment supports need to know the preferences, skills, likes, and dislikes of each individual being supported. Our role as a DSP is to support a person in

activities that he or she wants to do. It's not our job to choose for them. Like all of us, people with disabilities have a right to make their own decisions. DSPs are guides, and can help a person see the options available and support them toward success. However, ultimately, the decision of what a person wants to do with their life comes down to the person receiving supports.

Everyone learns through experiences in life. As a DSP, I believe it is important to encourage the people I support to have new experiences. They may sometimes make a mistake, or try something and fail, but I am there to help the person learn from this experience. This also means that I help an employee understand the responsibilities, rules, and expectations of his or her workplace. Part of employment is to receive feedback from

the employer. This may be positive or negative feedback. I support a person to grow from this feedback process, and encourage the person I support to strive to live up to employers' expectations, within reason. This can be very empowering for the individual, and can influence how the broader community sees people with disabilities working in integrated settings. We all become confident and effective employees and adults through our experiences, both enjoyable and difficult. As a DSP, I don't know what a person can accomplish until he or she has an opportunity to try.

To successfully provide employment supports, DSPs must truly

understand that a person's disability does not make the person. What a person can accomplish, and the journey that takes the person there, matters most. This quote sticks with me: "Disability doesn't mean inability; it means you have a circumstance." Like the people I support, I continue to learn more every day. I believe that if we aren't learning, then we aren't being the best that we can be. That goes for DSPs as much as for people who receive direct supports. Each of us always has the chance to grow and be the best we can.

I don't know what a person can accomplish until he or she has an opportunity to try.

Coming soon!

**DSP-Specialist credential in
Employment Supports**

Learn more at nadsp.org/credentialing

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Successful self employment with support

Lissie's Luv Yums: Fighting Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

By Melissa Clark, with Sr. Johnelle Howanach

My name is Melissa Clark (Lissie), or my Assiniboine given name, Eya Be Washday Weya (Good Words Woman). I am a Gros Ventre Assiniboine Native American from Ft. Belknap Reservation, and now live in Great Falls, Montana, where I am the proud owner of Lissie's Luv Yums, a gourmet dog biscuit business. I am also an associate member of the Sisters of Humility of Davenport, Iowa.

I was born in Havre, Montana in 1976, and am one of the first diagnosed children with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome in the state of Montana. My life mission is to educate people about Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, give hope to them, and show other people with disabilities that they too can develop their own business. Together with my support person who is also my foster mom, Sister Johnelle Howanach, a Sister of Humility, I share methods and techniques that help me live in my environment and succeed as a person and business owner.

In 1998, when I was finishing Secondary Life Skills, a post-high school class that helps students develop skills to become as independent as possible, my foster mom began looking around the community to see what businesses might work for me. I knew I could not work in the fast food industry, and that I liked animals, and that I wanted to promote awareness of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Only two possibilities seemed worth exploring: a daycare center for children with developmental dis-

abilities, or anything to do with pets, especially dogs. One day she phoned our dear friend Marilyn who advocates for people with alcohol related birth defects. Providentially, Marilyn was thinking of starting a dog walking business at the very same time! So we decided to establish a business partnership. After three months of intense planning we began Wacheesta's Walk a Dog Service. At Christmas we decided to give our canine customers homemade doggie treats specially wrapped and decorated. We made them in our kitchen, and the recipe was made from only the best ingredients. We wanted the treats to look special and taste good to the dogs. We made extra and easily sold them to our dog-loving friends. We received so many orders for more we talked seriously about getting into the gourmet dog biscuit business selling Lissie's Luv Yums to people who loved their pets. Thus the seed was planted. Now, where were the resources needed to help our seed dream root and grow?

Through the Montana Rural Institute on Disabilities I was told about monies available from the Montana Jobs Training Partnership Act. We wrote a grant proposal and presented it to New Directions, the vendor for the program. We succeeded in getting the grant and I become the sole proprietor of our newest venture. I now had money to invest in Lissie's Luv Yums, my gourmet dog treats made from Montana's golden wheat.

In October of that year we hired KFBB-TV to make the best com-

mercial ever. Each year we air the commercial between Thanksgiving and Christmas. It includes our dog Tiger flipping a Luv Yum off her nose and catching it in her mouth. Now if that wouldn't sell a dog treat, what would?

Our business is at a very exciting place in development. When it started we only sold our product in Great Falls through local flea markets and friends; it has now expanded to a company with customers in 15 states, and we receive orders through our Web site. We even have an Informal Franchise with a woman in Baker, Montana, who makes and sells the biscuits in her area.

Our business is unique in that the money earned supports our efforts to educate people about Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Fetal Alcohol Effect. I am a nationally recognized speaker on FAS and on self-employment for people with disabilities, and my foster mom and I have spoken all over the country. One of my favorite presentations was on my reservation where I gave a talk on alcohol and what the after effects of it have been for me. And the reward was not only that the crowd sat and listened, but I got a big honorary naming ceremony afterwards. I couldn't believe it!

On January 25, 2007 I received a Montana Advocacy Award in Helena for my work in helping others with disabilities gain self-employment. And on November 21, 2007, I was officially accepted as an Executive Member in the

Continued on page 11

Real jobs

It's everybody's business

By James Gardner

The Alliance for Full Participation (AFP) has launched its new campaign — “Real Jobs—It’s Everybody’s Business.” The Alliance for Full Participation is a formal partnership of leading developmental disabilities organizations with a common vision – to create a better and more fulfilling quality of life for people with developmental disabilities. The AFP’s goal is to double the employment rate for people with disabilities by 2015. We’re serious about this goal, energized by our spirit of collaboration, and dedicated to making real employment a reality for all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, “real jobs” means an end to the sheltered workshops and the new reality of fully integrated employment for all people. “Real jobs” means real paychecks, which enable individuals to afford housing, food, clothing and the supports and services necessary for them to live - and work - in the communities of their choice. In a very concrete way, “real jobs” will support people to live out their dreams and aspirations, a goal we can all identify with. Unfor-

tunately, the employment rate for people with developmental disabilities is only 22%, compared to 79% for typical Americans. This has forced people who could live independently to depend heavily on others to define and support their choices.

The denial of employment opportunity is not just a problem for people with developmental disabilities and their families. Lack of employment opportunity and economic resources for any citizen hinders community development. Greater financial independence will decrease the burden on families, on government

and community social services programs, and on Medicaid. Discovering new employment opportunities and assets also means that our communities can more easily enjoy the benefits of the energy, imagination, hard work and eco-

nommic growth from people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Just as the problem affects us all, and its resolution benefits us all, we all have a role to play in making real jobs a reality. Our campaign begins at the state level, where we’re forming teams of people with developmental disabilities, employers, coworkers, business organizations, service providers, government officials, family members, advocacy organizations, and members of the general community. Read more in this issue of *Frontline Initiative* on how to get involved in your state team.

Everyone can contribute to AFP’s effort. There are opportunities and roles that will match your energy, commitment, and talents. If you’d like to be a part of this historic effort, you can begin by registering on this website and/or on our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/AllianceforFullParticipation. We look forward to working with you over the months ahead, and to making our goal of doubling employment for people with developmental disabilities a reality.

*James F. Gardner, PhD, President,
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Real jobs means real paychecks, which enable individuals to afford housing, food, clothing, and the supports and services necessary for them to live — and work — in the communities of their choice.

Sign up for E-Flash

Stay in the loop with NADSP’s monthly email!

Contact rsarto@nadsp.org

Alliance for Full Participation

State teams need you

By Karen Flippo

AFP Summit 2011: Real Jobs—It's Everybody's Business

On November 17-18, 2011 at the Gaylord National Harbor Hotel just outside of Washington, DC, the Alliance for Full Participation (AFP) will convene a ground-breaking employment summit. Over 1500 attendees will work together to plan, organize and share best practices that will lead to a substantial increase in the number of people with developmental disabilities in integrated employment. Countless more will participate at local viewing stations set up throughout the county. The AFP Summit will mark the mid-point in AFP's "Real Jobs—It's Everyone's Business" five-year campaign. In addition to the Summit, AFP will be providing education and networking opportunities through an interactive online community, newsletters, and webinars.

State Teams: Leading the Way in Local Communities

Far more than a two-day Summit will be required to hammer out achievable strategies for helping persons with developmental disabilities achieve meaningful, fully integrated, competitive employment. A long-range social reform agenda must be rooted in the realities of local political, social and economic environments. That's why the State Teams are so important. AFP will provide state teams with resources to help assess their

current employment practices, determine areas that they would like to focus on for improvement, and create an action plan for achieving these goals.

State Teams should include the voices of individuals with intellectual and developmental dis-

"This has been a great opportunity to collaborate with people with disabilities and other stakeholders on a shared mission."

**– Bridget Siljander,
DSPAM Member**

abilities, employers, families, policy makers, providers, DSPs, researchers, and community builders. After the AFP Employment Summit, state teams will bring the action agenda back to their communities so that the vision and outcomes agreed upon in Washington can become a reality nationwide.

Call to Action: You Can Get Involved

State Teams are continuing to form across the United States. So far, AFP has 38 teams in some stage of formation. Several of the state teams are using Employment First initiatives to promote AFP, others are incorporating the AFP mission and employment challenge as part of a Medicaid Grant project, still others are working

within their APSE chapters or State DD Councils, or with other coalitions that have worked to promote employment within their states. State teams are using AFP to call attention to improving competitive and inclusive employment for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

NADSP State Chapters and individual members of NADSP can contribute valuable knowledge and insight to the AFP State Teams, and the voices of DSPs are needed. "This has been a great opportunity to collaborate with people with disabilities and other stakeholders on a shared mission," says Bridget Siljander, Direct Support Professionals Association of Minnesota (DSPAM) member. DSPAM, the Minnesota chapter of NADSP, is playing an active role in the Minnesota AFP State Team. "Since DSPs are a primary support resource for people with developmental disabilities, we offer tremendous value through our participation in the Alliance."

For more information on the AFP State Teams, or to find out how you can participate in a team in your area, visit www.allianceforfullparticipation.org/state-teams. If there is no contact listed there in your area, please email Karen Flippo at AFP to learn more about getting a State Team started, or with further questions.

Karen Flippo, Alliance for Full Participation, kflippo@allianceforfullparticipation.org

Legislation and policy advocacy update

NADSP continues to advocate for new policies and systems that enhance the status of DSPs and promote high quality direct support. In addition to participation in the Alliance for Full Participation Real Jobs Campaign and State Teams, NADSP members have been working on the following policies and programs:

Recognition and Professionalization

Direct Support Professional Recognition Week 2010

Across the United States, agencies, people who receive supports, families, and DSPs celebrated the week of September 12 – 19, 2010. The United States Senate's declaration marked the third year in a row this week has been designated as Direct Support Professional Recognition Week, and each year is marked by increased awareness and activity. More than thirty state governors also issued statements highlighting the contributions of DSPs.

DSP Department of Labor Apprenticeships

NADSP has worked with ANCOR (American Network on Community Options and Resources) and the U.S. Department of Labor to shape guidelines for the new Registered Apprenticeship Program for DSPs. The training and on the job learning is based on the Code of Ethics and NADSP Competencies. Apprenticeship is one more way to be formally recognized for the quality work you do.

Policy Advocacy

The Direct Care Workforce Empowerment Acts

In Summer 2010, Congresswoman Linda T. Sanchez from California announced HR 5902, the Direct Care Workforce Empowerment Act, a bill that which aims to create a more stable, valued direct support/direct care workforce and to improve the quality of care and quality of life for millions of Americans. This bill is intended to assist all workers who provide direct support to people with all types of disabilities, as well as people who are aging and in need of supports. On October 13, 2010, with 35 co-sponsors, the bill was referred to the Subcommittee on Workforce Protections. Senator Bob Casey from Pennsylvania has announced a parallel bill he will introduce in the Senate. Both bills are expected to receive consideration in early 2011. Along with our allies at the Direct Care Alliance, NADSP and its members will need to make our voices heard in support of this act.

The Administration on Developmental Disabilities Envisioning the Future Summits

The newly appointed commissioner of the Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD), Sharon Lewis, has held five regional listening sessions this fall that focus on the goals we have set as a nation for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. These goals are 1) social justice, 2) community inclusion, 3) self-determination, 4) empowerment,

5) family support, 6) employment in real jobs for real wages, and 7) freedom from restraint and seclusion. A large part of the work to meet these goals will be done by DSPs. NADSP has provided testimony in writing and in person in Florida, Michigan, and Pennsylvania. Visit nadsp.org to see legislation testimony provided.

DSPs-to-DC 2010

NADSP members played key roles in this every-two-year event hosted by the American Network of Community Options and Resources. The event brought close to 200 DSPs from across the country to the nation's capitol to learn together and advocate for policies that benefit people receiving supports as well as DSPs. NADSP Board President Lisa Burck; Board Member Regis Obijiski; Policy Committee Chair Joe Macbeth; Education, Training, and Workforce Development member John Raffaele; and founding member Amy Hewitt all spoke to the assembled DSPs on topics such as DSP professionalism, the Code of Ethics, and developing a state chapter. Tina Fagan, DSP-Certified, gave testimony to a large assembly of industry leaders, DSPs, and legislators. Her full testimony is available at nadsp.org/legislation.

Stay tuned for action alerts and more through our email newsletter, "NADSP E-Flash." Sign up by emailing Rachael Sarto at rsarto@nadsp.org.

NADSP supporting & affiliate organizations, state chapters and contacts

Supporting organizations \$500 level

- Anderson Center for Autism
- Block Institute
- Cardinal McClosky Services
- Cardinal Services, Inc.
- Cerebral Palsy Association of NY State
- Crystal Run Village, Inc.
- DSP Association of TN (DSPAT)
- Eggleston Services
- Family Residences and Essential Enterprises
- Greystone Programs, Inc.
- Hawaii Waiver Providers Association
- Hillside Children's Center
- ICES, Inc.
- Jefferson Rehabilitation Center
- Koinonia Homes, Inc.
- Larry McKinstry Services, LLC
- Mercy Home
- Missoula Developmental Service Corporation
- New Horizons Resources, Inc.
- NYSARC, Inc.
- NYSARC, Inc. Columbia County Chapter
- Opportunity Enterprises, Inc.
- Pathfinder Services
- Putnam Arc (PARC)
- Stone Belt Arc, Inc.
- The Adirondack Arc
- The Arc of California
- The Arc of Rensselaer County
- The Arc of Schuyler
- The Resource Center
- Welcome House, Inc.
- Westchester Arc
- Whole Life, Inc.

Affiliate organizations \$200 level

- ADD Inc.
- Beyond Abilities, LLC
- Community Support Services, Inc.
- Epilepsy Foundation of Long Island
- John Raffaele Educational Support for DSPs
- Life's WORC
- People Inc.
- SCO Family of Services
- Spaulding Support Services
- SPEAK
- Sycamore Services, Inc
- The Arc of Steuben
- WestSide Support Services LLC

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Sign up for E-Flash

Stay in the loop with NADSP's monthly email!

Contact rsarto@nadsp.org

Frontline resources

Alliance for Full Participation (AFP)

allianceforfullparticipation.org

AFP is a formal partnership of leading intellectual and developmental disabilities organizations with a common vision—to create a better quality of life for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. AFP also supports a network of state teams. Learn more about AFP and its mission to double employment rates for people with disabilities by 2015 at allianceforfullparticipation.org.

APSE: Advancing Employment. Connecting People.

www.apse.org

APSE, a nonprofit founded in 1988 as the Association for Persons in Supported Employment, has chapters in 35 states and the District of Columbia. APSE's goals are 1) Promote employment opportunities for all people. 2) Help establish and expand equitable employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. 3) Advocate with federal, state, and local legislators for legislation promoting integrated employment. 4) Work with policy makers to increase funding for integrated employment. 5) Raise awareness within the business community as to the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities. 6) Advocate for social change to help those with severe disabilities achieve a lifestyle that approximates that of individuals without disabilities. Membership is open to anyone who wants to be a part of a grassroots network committed

to ensuring that integrated employment continues to grow and improve. APSE has adopted a set of Supported Employment Competencies, which can be found at www.apse.org/publications/positions.cfm.

College of Direct Support (CDS)

collegeofdirectsupport.com

CDS is a curriculum accredited by NADSP, which offers a course on Employment Supports. CDS is a multimedia, interactive, web-based curriculum. CDS offers training in content areas that have been identified as critical to successfully supporting people with disabilities to live self-directed lives in the community.

Employment First

www.employmentfirst.net

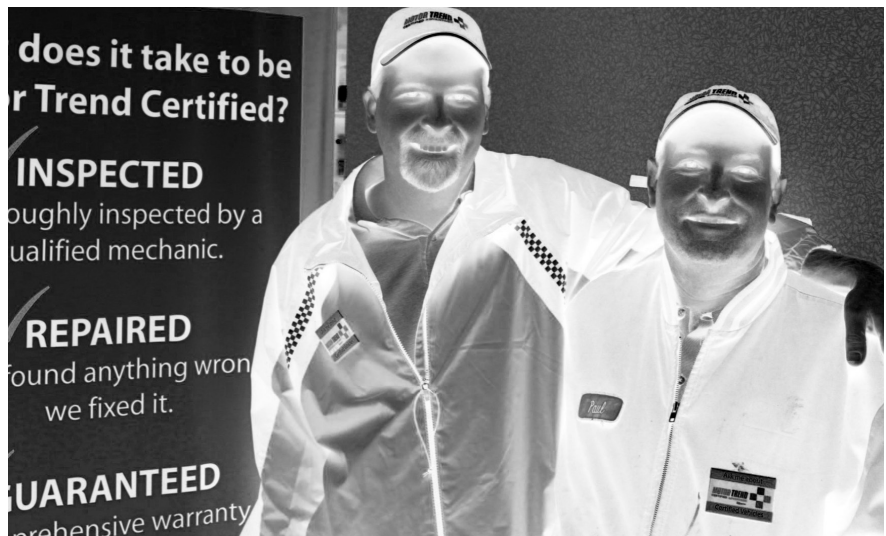
This website aims to collect and disseminate information being produced across the country (and internationally) in the effort to establish Employment First as the

preeminent vocational disability practice. Employment First is a declaration of both philosophy and policy stating that employment is the first priority and preferred outcome of people with disabilities. Read the latest news, articles, policies, and training events, and share information.

Real People, Real Jobs: Stories from the Frontline

www.realworkstories.org

This website highlights the employment successes of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) who are working in paid jobs in their communities. Using innovative, front-line employment support practices, these individuals are earning money, forming networks, and contributing to their communities. The purpose of these stories is to share where people work and how they got there. They are meant to be read by individuals with ID/DD, their families, as well as frontline staff.



Successful self employment with support:
Lissie's Luv Yums: Fighting Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
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2007/2008 *Cambridge Who's Who Executive and Professional Registry.*

My advice to other women with disabilities about running their own businesses is this: Don't let other people discourage you from running your business in the way you want to run it. And I would say as an individual that has a business, let your support person guide you in this. It takes two people to run a business. And it makes it stronger if both of you work together on it.

Parent, W., Foley, S., Balcazar, F., Ely, C., Bremer, C. & Gaylord, V. (Eds.). (Summer/Fall 2008). *Impact: Feature Issue on Employment and Women With Disabilities, 21(1)*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration.

Melissa Clark and Sr. Johnelle Howanach live in Great Falls, Montana. For more information about Lissie's Luv Yums visit www.lissiesluyums.com or call 406.453.2531.

Building skills and knowledge: Providing effective employment supports
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a Direct Support Professional Specialist credential in Employment Supports.

The following areas were identified as starting points for community based employment supports.

Understanding Community-Based Employment Supports

It is important for an employment DSP to understand and communicate best practices, history, and current laws related to employment supports. Also essential is a commitment to use the principles of integration, inclusion, and self-determination to guide all elements of direct support practice.

Assessing Interests, Strengths, and Support Needs

By using a variety of strategies to learn about each job seeker, the DSP can become more informed about the job seeker's vocational direction, interests, abilities, strengths, and possible supports needed to achieve their employment goal. Ways to gain insight about each person may include working with job seekers and employers to develop situational assessments and job tryout opportunities. The DSP will also want to be able to access a job seeker's person-

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NADSP membership form

Individual memberships* \$20

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

Includes one subscription to *Frontline Initiative*, Code of Ethics card, and NADSP membership card.

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. Includes certificate of membership, two subscriptions to *Frontline Initiative*.

Supporting organization membership \$500

For agencies and organizations dedicated to advancing the interests of DSPs and the people they support at a national level. Includes certificate of membership, four subscriptions to *Frontline Initiative*, and a listing as a NADSP Supporting Organization in NADSP communications.

Make checks payable to NADSP. To pay by credit card, visit www.nadsp.org/membership

Mail membership form and payment to:

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

Name

Organization

Address

City State Zip

(_____) _____ - _____
Phone

Email

Total enclosed \$ _____

Building skills and knowledge: Providing effective employment supports

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al network (friends, family members, and others) to identify areas of vocational interest and skill.

The Job Search and Acquisition Process

People find employment in many ways in today's job market. For many, the tried and true way is the traditional approach, where a job seeker finds a job posting, applies and submits a resume, interviews, and is then hired by the employer. This approach does work for some people. DSPs must understand the details of the application and interview process, and use them in supporting the job seeker when suitable. However, this traditional approach is not a good fit for everybody. In order to promote opportunities for customized employment, DSPs must become better connected to the business community and to the job seeker's personal and professional network to identify and obtain jobs. By using multiple strategies to find and acquire jobs for those they support, DSPs increase their ability to make more and better job placements.

Ongoing Supports

The ongoing role of the employment DSP differs depending upon the needs of each individual and employer. In general, the DSP's role involves promoting an ongoing positive work experience for both the employee and the employer, while promoting

Today's best practices aim to match the skills and interests of individual job seekers to real jobs in the community, as well as provide supports to find, obtain, and retain work.

respect, self-determination, and natural supports for the employee. A competent DSP may help with on-the-job training, work with the employer to develop accommodations, assist in reducing any problematic workplace behaviors, and arrange transportation, among many other activities. The DSP may provide coaching and

assistance to the employee or to the employer, communicating regularly through worksite visits, meetings, or telephone calls.

DSP Continuing Education and Credentialing

The National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals encourages DSPs to stay up to date with ongoing training and education about providing high quality community-based employment supports. NADSP's DSP Credentialing Program recognizes excellence in direct support practice through the DSP-Certified and DSP-Specialist in Employment Supports credentials. By developing skills and knowledge in employment supports, and achieving nationally recognized credentials, committed and hardworking employment DSPs can advance professionally, while at the same time enhancing the successes of those they support.

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