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Direct Support Professional Certification Program *Guidebook*

National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals, Inc.

1971 Western Avenue, #261

Albany, New York 12203

P 844-44NADSP

www.nadsp.org

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Welcome to the NADSP Certification Program!

Thank you for your interest in national direct support professional certification through the National Alliance of Direct Support Professionals. You are embarking on a unique opportunity for people who support other people to reach their goals and dreams. Gone are the days of just “taking care” of people... Today’s direct support practitioner is a professional whose work is guided by a code of ethics, and a range of skills and knowledge that will help people reach positive outcomes and live quality lives in communities of their choice. The NADSP credential process is designed to support you in your journey to master the skills you need to advance your career and become an ethical and effective DSP.

The **NADSP certification program** offers powerful benefits to practitioners, their employers and to the people they support. Direct support professionals benefit by learning and applying best practices and evidence-based skill and knowledge in the workplace. The organizations employing credentialed DSPs can provide stronger assurances of quality to funders and consumers, and can proudly market their employment of nationally certified staff. People receiving supports from credentialed DSPs will have the advantage of partnering with highly trained professionals committed to supporting them using the ethical and effective interventions that they have mastered. Finally, anecdotal evidence suggests that employees who complete rigorous credential programs stay on the job longer and provide a higher quality of support.

Remember, it all depends on you. Written plans are only paper. Each direct support professional has the ability to immediately make life better for the people they support regardless of budget issues, the environment, and life circumstances. The NADSP certified prepare professionals to offer respect, choice, and dignity in everyday practice enabling you to make a positive difference every day.

Congratulations on taking the first step to advancing your career... now best wishes as you begin your journey to becoming a certified direct support professional!



Sincerely,
The Staff and Board of Directors,
National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals



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What is certification?

Certification is a process of receiving official recognition, including an authorized certificate, for mastering and demonstrating professional standards of practice. The National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals has identified and nationally validated the skills, knowledge sets, and ethical principles needed to be an effective DSP, and has organized these into a series of increasingly advanced levels of certification. The NADSP certificates are national and portable. This means that they are recognized for their value across the country and may be used to demonstrate competence in any national location where the certified DSP chooses to work.

Who is a Direct Support Professional?

In 1996, NADSP's ideological founder, John F. Kennedy Jr. wrote "Quality is defined at the point of interaction between the staff member and the individual with a disability". DSPs are the professionals working at that point of interaction. They do the day-to-day work needed to help people with disabilities live, learn, work and play in their communities.

Direct Support Professionals work under a variety of job titles, with a variety of job responsibilities, across the country. They might be called a Job Coach, a Community Living Associate, a Personal Care Attendant, or a Classroom Aide. Even people with titles like Program Coordinator, Residence Manager or Assistant Director might fall under the umbrella of Direct Support Professional if they spend more than half of their time at work interacting directly with the individuals their organizations serve. (If the majority of a potential applicant's time at work is spent on administrative and management tasks, NADSP's Frontline Supervisor Certification may be a better fit for their position.)



Why is certification important to Direct Support Professionals?

Direct Support Professionals have been overlooked and undervalued by policy makers, employers and community members for far too long. The support they provide is critical to assist people with disabilities to live self-directed and satisfying lives. While we know there are hundreds of thousands of highly qualified DSPs supporting people who use community human services, there are also DSPs who do not provide quality supports or practice according to ethical standards. Certifying DSPs is important because it will ensure that DSPs share a common knowledge base and skill set. Certification further ensures that DSPs make a commitment to practice according to the NADSP Code of Ethics.

The NADSP Direct Support Professional Certification Program embraces the knowledge, skills and values of this profession and binds them in ethical practices. NADSP believes that:

- Certified DSPs will feel more valued and take greater pride in their direct support work.
- People outside the field of community human services will see direct support work as an authentic profession with a career path.
- Certified DSPs will be recognized for the important work they do.
- Employers will find less DSP turnover problems if they hire and develop certified DSPs.
- Employers will see an increase in the consistency of high quality supports delivered by certified DSPs.
- DSPs will see wage enhancement programs for those who seek certified.
- Most importantly, people who use support services will lead higher quality lives because DSPs will have the knowledge, skills and values needed to support individuals' preferences and personal goals.

Purpose of the DSP Certification Program Guidebook

The NADSP Direct Support Professional Certification Program Guidebook was developed to:

- Help DSPs and employers understand the NADSP certified program.
- Explain what DSPs need to learn and do to obtain the different levels of NADSP certificates.
- Provide strategies that DSPs and employers can use to create mentoring relationships that will help DSPs to achieve the NADSP DSP- I and DSP- II certificates.

Overview of the NADSP Certification Program for Direct Support Professionals

The NADSP Certification Program for Direct Support Professionals is comprised of the following levels:

NADSP-Registered (DSP-R)

This is the first level of certified offered by NADSP. The DSP-R is intended to recognize people who have entered the profession and desire to have careers in the field of community human services. There is no portfolio requirement at this level, as DSP-R is not intended to be a certified for which NADSP prescribes or sanctions DSP competence.

NADSP-Certified Initial (DSP-I)

The second level of certification recognizes Direct Support Professionals who have demonstrated competence that is measured and approved by the NADSP. This level requires the submission of a professional portfolio showing the applicant's proficiency in four of the fifteen NADSP Competency Areas for Direct Support Professionals.

This certification sets this group of DSPs apart from other DSPs in that they have demonstrated skills that typical entry level DSPs would not have acquired. As the initial certified measuring competence in direct support practice, the DSP- I certified is the core of our certification program. Every DSP approved as a DSP- I has demonstrated skills and knowledge that enable them to practice high quality direct support.

NADSP-Certified Advanced (DSP-II)

In the third level of NADSP's certification program, DSPs submit a second portfolio that demonstrates their proficiency in four additional NADSP Competency Areas. A DSP certified at the advanced level has demonstrated their proficiency in eight of the fifteen NADSP Competency Areas for Direct Support Professionals. Every DSP approved as a DSP- II has demonstrated a wide range of skills that enable them to practice high quality direct support in a variety of settings.

NADSP-Certified Specialist (DSP-III)

The DSP-III is the fourth tier of certification for DSPs offered by the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals. This certificate recognizes people who have achieved DSP- I and DSP-II status and want to pursue specialization in any of the following specialty areas: Inclusion, Health Support, Employment Support, Positive Behavior Support, or Aging. Detailed information on this level of the certification program and how to apply for it can be found in the NADSP Certified Specialist Guidebook.



Applying for the NADSP-Registered Level (DSP-R)

To apply for NADSP-Registered status, simply submit a registration packet with the following required elements:

- **Completed NADSP application form** (see Appendix A).
- **Commitment to adhere to NADSP's Code of Ethics** (see Appendix B).
- **Statement of professional commitment** from the applicant which describes their values, commitment to, and purpose for entering the profession. (Professional Commitment Organizer can be found in Appendix C)
- **Letter from the employer** indicating that the applicant:
 - has completed all required training and orientation as prescribed by the jurisdiction in which they work and an employer in community human services or a person who self-directs her or his own services and supports;
 - has six months continuous and current employment with an employer in community human services or a person who self-directs his or her own services and supports;
 - has no substantiated cases of abuse, neglect or exploitation.
 - has a criminal background check with results that meet the standards of employer and the jurisdiction in which they work.
- **Payment** of the \$50 application fee

To maintain NADSP-Registered status, DSPs must submit the following to NADSP annually:

- NADSP-Registered application form with current contact information for the DSP.
- a signed re-commitment to the NADSP Code of Ethics.
- an employer letter documenting that they continue to remain in good standing.
- DSP are exempt from this renewal for the year in which they become NADSP-Registered

Overview of the Portfolio Process

While it is good to focus on the ultimate goal of submitting the portfolio and achieving certification, we hope that you will also find the process itself valuable. Organizing a quality portfolio takes time and commitment, but it can be a fun and informative experience. Direct Support Professionals who are going through the process of building a portfolio often find it is an opportunity to try new approaches and reflect on current practices in a way that benefits the people they support, their organizations and the DSPs themselves.

The portfolio may be developed while participating in an NADSP accredited educational or training program, or after a training program is complete. In some cases there may be guidance about portfolio construction built into the accredited training materials. The portfolio will showcase how the applicant is able to apply the general knowledge gained from their accredited training to specific situations that they encounter in their work.

Your employer might offer you the opportunity to work with a group of DSPs who are also preparing portfolios. Together, DSP applicants can brainstorm ideas and think through the different ways they might develop authentic work samples. Applicants may also find it helpful to ask for support from other DSPs, instructors or mentors as they develop their unique portfolio.

Electronic vs. Physical Portfolios

There are many advantages to creating a portfolio in an electronic format. Since there is no need to purchase physical materials, electronic portfolios are often less costly to produce. Electronic portfolios can be easily copied or shared with peers or mentors that are reviewing and proofreading the portfolio without the applicant losing control of the original. They are also typically easier to edit and update when changes are needed.

While NADSP prefers that portfolios be submitted electronically, paper portfolios are also accepted. NADSP must convert paper portfolios into an electronic format prior to review. For this reason a paper portfolio must be submitted on single-sided, letter-sized copy paper held together with a single binder clip. Portfolios containing materials such as staples, paper clips, sheet protectors, tape, card stock, glitter, glued items or scrapbooking materials cannot be processed by NADSP.

If submitting a paper portfolio, applicants should make copies of their portfolio to keep for themselves prior to submission. Submitted portfolios become the property of NADSP and will not be returned to the applicant.

Authentic Work Samples

An applicant for the DSP-I or DSP-II certificate must submit four work samples as part of their portfolio. A work sample is an example of the applicant's work that demonstrates competence in one of the fifteen NADSP competency areas for direct support. Each work sample must demonstrate a different competency area, so over the course of the DSP-I and DSP-II portfolio submissions, applicants will submit work samples in eight of the fifteen NADSP competency areas. (The complete list of NADSP Competencies can be found in Appendix D.)

Each NADSP competency contains a list of skill statements describing ways that DSPs can demonstrate their competency in this area. Each work sample in the applicant's portfolio must demonstrate at least two of the skill statements listed for the identified competency area. The work sample must also be consistent with any overall competency language for the identified competency area and the NADSP Code of Ethics.

The authentic work samples are the most important part of an applicant's portfolio. While all elements of the portfolio are reviewed, only the work samples will be scored by the review team. Work samples can be an example of work the applicant has done in the past or work the applicant undertakes specifically to include in their portfolio. The work included in the portfolio should be examples of the applicant's best work. In other words, the four work samples included in each portfolio should represent four examples of the applicant creating quality at the point of interaction.

Each of the work samples must include evidence of the work which the applicant completed. This evidence should show the applicant's skill in the selected competency area. Evidence can be provided in a variety of forms, including photographs, video or audio recordings, documentation, communication logs, or journal entries.

Each work sample must also include a reflective statement from the applicant of approximately 1,000 words. The reflective statement is a narrative that explains the included



evidence, and puts it into context. It should include a description of applicant's work, what they learned from completing this work; how they interacted with the people they supported, other DSPs, or community members; the outcomes of their work in this competency area; and how they integrated concepts from their training or education into their work. The applicant should also write about how they measured the effectiveness of their work, and reflect on how they might continue to grow in this competency area. Essentially, a reflective statement is the story behind the work sample, told from the applicant's perspective. (Questions to Prompt Reflection can be found in Appendix E.)

This document is called a reflective statement because the applicant's reflection on their own work is key to NADSP's evaluation of the work sample. This is a different style of writing than the approach that a direct support professional might use in documentation. While only the observed facts are typically included in documentation, in a reflective statement the writer's thoughts and feelings are an important part of the narrative. (DSP Certification Narrative with examples of reflection can be found in Appendix F.)

Confidentiality

When discussing another person in one of your work samples, you have two options:

- Remove all identifying information (change names, redact documents, obscure faces in photographs, etc.)
- Get the person's permission in writing.
 - If the person in question has a legal guardian, you must have written approval from the guardian as well.

The NADSP Code of Ethics requires that DSPs safeguard and respect the confidentiality and privacy of the people they support. Failure to do so in a work sample will result in an automatic Practice rating.

Related Instruction and Employment Requirements

DSPs applying for NADSP-Certified Initial (DSP-I) status must complete 100 hours of related instruction. An additional 100 hours of related instruction must be completed when applying for NADSP-Certified Advanced (DSP-II) status. Related instruction hours can be hours spent completing NADSP-accredited training, NADSP-provided training, or participating in discussions of those trainings with mentors or peers. Documentation of these training hours must be included in a DSP-I or DSP-II portfolio. A list of NADSP-accredited training programs can be found on the NADSP website (www.nadsp.org).

DSPs applying for NADSP-Certified Initial (DSP-I) status must have one year of continuous and current employment in community human services at the time of application. DSPs applying for NADSP-Certified Advanced (DSP-II) status must have an additional year of employment history (a minimum of two years) at the time of the DSP-II application. This employment history should be documented on the resume included with the DSP-I and DSP-II portfolios.



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The Role of Mentors and Cohorts

Many applicants find it very helpful to meet regularly with other professionals to discuss both the progress they are making and the challenges they are facing in completing their work samples. DSPs who are trying to build a portfolio on their own are likely to find the process to be more challenging than those who have the support of others. Skills mentors and cohorts play a vital role in helping applicants to successfully develop a portfolio.

A skills mentor is a fellow professional who agrees to assist an applicant through the certification process. An applicant might ask a supervisor, administrator, trainer, or previously certified DSP to act as their skills mentor. Mentors can act as critical reviewers of the applicant's writing, helping them to clearly describe and reflect on their accomplishments. Mentors can sometimes be especially helpful in navigating the organizational policies, procedures and personalities which might affect an applicant's work sample.

A cohort is a group of applicants supporting each other as they work toward their shared goal of achieving a credential. Regular cohort meetings give applicants an opportunity to discuss the accredited training material and how to apply ideas from the training on the job. Often such discussions can become the inspiration for a work sample.

Applying for the NADSP-Certified Initial Level (DSP-I)

An NADSP DSP-I portfolio must contain the following elements:

- 1 **Title Page:** A cover page that contains information to identify the applicant. The title page typically includes the applicant's name, address, phone number, and email address as well as the name, address, phone number and website of the organization employing the applicant.
- 2 **Table of Contents:** An organizational page that shows how sections are arranged and the pages where sections are located. For electronic portfolios, this element may be replaced with hyperlinks to other parts of the portfolio, or a well-organized directory structure.
- 3 **Completed NADSP Application Form** (see Appendix A).
- 4 **Statement of Professional Commitment:** Provides the reviewers with a statement of the applicant's professional goals and personal views on community human services. This statement can be updated (if necessary) from the statement written during the NADSP-Registered (DSP-R) application process.
- 5 **Resume:** An organized summary of the applicant's work history, including the places worked and positions held within specific organizations.



- 6 **Communication of Support:** At least one letter (or other communication) of support from a person the applicant supports, or in some situations, a family member or guardian.
- 7 **Commitment to the NADSP Code of Ethics:** A signed and dated re-commitment agreeing to continue to adhere to NADSP's Code of Ethics (see Appendix B).
- 8 **Authentic Work Samples with Reflective Statements:** A set of samples of the applicant's hands-on work that demonstrates competence in 4 of the 15 NADSP competency areas. Each work sample includes evidence of work sample completion and reflective statements describing the process of completing the work, including the applicant's thoughts and feelings about the work they are submitting. The applicant's reflection on their own work is key to NADSP's evaluation of the work sample.
- 9 **Releases of Information:** Permission forms from people identified in the portfolio (or a guardian if one has been appointed) indicating what information may be shared with NADSP. If no permission is granted, all identifying information must be removed. This may involve referring to individuals by a different name, redacting documentation, and blurring or obscuring faces in photographs.
- 10 **Training/Education Records:** Documentation of the applicant's training/education from an NADSP accredited program and related activities demonstrating that she or he has met the requirement of 100 hours of related instruction.

The application fee of \$150 should be paid upon portfolio submission. NADSP will not begin the portfolio review process until payment is received. The payment for portfolio review is not refundable.

Applying for the NADSP-Certified Advanced Level (DSP-II)

An NADSP DSP-II portfolio will be very similar in format to the DSP-I portfolio, and will also contain the following elements:

- 1 **Title Page:** A cover page that contains information to identify the applicant. The title page typically includes the applicant's name, address, phone number, and email address as well as the name, address, phone number and website of the organization employing the applicant.
- 2 **Table of Contents:** An organizational page that shows how sections are arranged and the pages where sections are located. For electronic portfolios, this element may be replaced with hyperlinks to other parts of the portfolio, or a well-organized directory structure.
- 3 **Completed NADSP Application Form** (see Appendix A).
- 4 **Statement of Professional Commitment:** Provides the reviewers with a statement of the applicant's professional goals and personal views on community human services. This statement can be updated (if necessary) from the statement used for the DSP-I portfolio.



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- 5 **Resume:** An organized summary of the applicant's work history, including the places worked and positions held within specific organizations.
- 6 **Communication of Support:** At least one letter (or other communication) of support from a person the applicant supports, or in some situations, a family member or guardian.
- 7 **Commitment to the NADSP Code of Ethics:** A signed and dated re-commitment agreeing to continue to adhere to NADSP's Code of Ethics (see Appendix B).
- 8 **Authentic Work Samples with Reflective Statements:** A set of samples of the applicant's hands-on work that demonstrates competence in 4 of the 15 NADSP competency areas. (The work samples in the DSP-II portfolio must not be directed at competencies already addressed in the applicant's DSP-I portfolio.) Each work sample includes evidence of work sample completion and reflective statements describing the process of completing the work, including the applicant's thoughts and feelings about the work they are submitting. The applicant's reflection on their own work is key to NADSP's evaluation of the work sample.
- 9 **Releases of Information:** Permission forms from individuals identified in the portfolio (or a guardian if one has been appointed) indicating what information may be shared with NADSP. If no permission is granted, all identifying information must be removed. This may involve referring to the individuals by a different name, redacting documentation, and blurring or obscuring faces in photographs.
- 10 **Training/Education Records:** Documentation of the applicant's training/education from an NADSP accredited program and related activities demonstrating that she or he has met the requirement of an additional 100 hours of related instruction.

The application fee of \$100 should be paid upon portfolio submission. NADSP will not begin the portfolio review process until payment is received. The payment for portfolio review is not refundable.



Portfolio Submission

Applicants are encouraged to review their completed portfolio carefully prior to submission. Applicants should also consider having someone else, such as a mentor or peer, review their portfolio before sending it in. Please make sure that all components of your application are present, including the payment for the portfolio review.

Links to electronic portfolios should be sent to:

tmoyer@nadsp.org

Physical portfolios should be sent to:

Certification

National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals

1971 Western Avenue, #261

Albany, New York 12203

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your
Portfolio

Paper portfolios must be submitted on single-sided, letter-sized copy paper held together with a single binder clip. Portfolios containing materials such as staples, paper clips, sheet protectors, tape, card stock, glitter, glued items or scrapbooking materials cannot be processed by NADSP.

Portfolio Evaluation, Scoring and Feedback

NADSP will complete an initial check for completeness of your portfolio within 6 weeks after the application packet was received at NADSP. Only complete portfolios containing all the required components will be forwarded to a review team. If you are missing portfolio items, you will be asked to submit the missing materials.

NADSP trained portfolio reviewers will carefully review your application, giving close attention to your portfolio's work samples. NADSP's trained portfolio reviewers are based all across the United States.

The NADSP review team will assign one of the following three ratings to each of your four work samples:

- Practice-this rating indicates the work sample shows a basic level of knowledge and skill in the competency area necessary to be somewhat effective in the direct support role.
- Proficient-this rating indicates the work sample shows mastery of a sufficient level of the knowledge and the skill standards in this competency area necessary to be moderately effective in the direct support role.
- Advanced-this rating indicates the work sample shows full mastery of the knowledge and skill standards in this competency area necessary to be highly effective in the direct support role.



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Your portfolio must contain no more than one work sample scored at the Practice level in order for the certificate to be awarded. Typically a Practice rating is given for one of the following reasons:

- The work sample does not demonstrate at least two of the skill statements associated with the identified competency area (or is clearly inconsistent with the overall competency language).
- The work sample describes actions by the applicant that are not in line with the NADSP Code of Ethics (including the tenet on confidentiality).
- The work sample contains insufficient evidence of the applicant's skill level. (For example, the evidence would be considered insufficient if the applicant included only a single log entry, a single picture, or a single incident report describing a minor incident. The evidence would also be insufficient if it is submitted in the form of illegible documents or electronic files that cannot be opened by the reviewer.)
- The reflective statement does not contain any reflection on the applicant's work.

Within ninety days of NADSP's receipt of your portfolio, you will be notified of the reviewers' decision. This information will be sent to you electronically and will include the reviewers' summary, which explains the scoring of each work sample, and describes both strengths and areas for development based on the review.

If you did not achieve the certification, the reviewers will include specific feedback about how you can improve your portfolio, and may suggest changes you might consider in your approach. Making these improvements will enable you to achieve the certification you applied for when you re-submit your portfolio. Applicants may re-submit their portfolios for consideration up to two times in a calendar year. An additional \$50 fee is required for each revision review. If the applicant does not achieve certification after the second revision attempt, they must wait a period of twelve months, and re-submit a new portfolio at the full cost for the application fee.

If you have successfully achieved the certification, congratulations! After the email notification, you will receive, via U.S. Mail, a personalized certificate and lapel pin recognizing your achievement.



Re-certification

For re-certification at the DSP-I or DSP-II level, the following is a list of requirements for NADSP Certification renewal that must be met every two years after NADSP Certification has been awarded:

- Completed NADSP Application form (see Appendix A)
- The completion of 20 hours of continuing education in the area of community human services
 - Documentation of the completion of all continuing education is required (The date(s) and topic or title of the training, number of training hours, and the name and title of the presenter/trainer), but Continuing Education Units (CEU's) are NOT required.
 - The training must have been completed during the two year period since the most recent certification.
 - Up to 8 hours can include employer-required re-certifications. Examples might include:
 - CPR
 - First Aid
 - Abuse and neglect or mandated reporter trainings
 - Medication administration
 - Required training/education on behavior support and intervention
 - Required safety trainings such as blood-borne pathogens or fire safety
 - The remaining 12 (or more) hours may include advanced professional development courses of the applicant's choosing, for example:
 - Participation in local, state, and national I/DD conferences, including the NADSP Annual Conference.
 - Online course completion on topics pertaining to human services
 - College coursework completion on a relevant topic in human services.
 - Completion of workshops or webinars offered by professional human service organizations on relevant topics, including those offered by NADSP.
- Signed and dated re-commitment to adhere to the NADSP Code of Ethics.
- Fee: \$50.00



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NADSP Application Form

Direct Support Professional Information

Date of Application:

Check Level of Certification:

- ☐ **DSP-R** (☐ New or ☐ Renewal)
☐ **DSP-I** (☐ New or ☐ Renewal)
☐ **DSP-II** (☐ New or ☐ Renewal)
☐ **DSP-III (Specialist)** (☐ New or ☐ Renewal)
☐ **FLS** (☐ New or ☐ Renewal)

First Name: _____ Middle Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Address 1: _____

Address 2: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Phone: _____ Cell: _____

Email (as available): _____

DSP Employment History: _____
(enter the number of years and months you have worked as a Direct Support Professional)

Current Employer Information *(to be completed by an Employer Representative)*

Name of Current Employer (Agency provider or person/family who self-directs supports): _____

Employer Address 1: _____ Length of Applicant's Employment: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____ Date of Hire: _____

Employer Address 2: _____ Continuous employment: ☐ Yes ☐ No:

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____ If No, explain gaps: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Website Address: _____

Name of Employer Representative: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

*NADSP communications are sent via email, so please include your email

Where should award package be mailed: ☐ Employer ☐ DSP



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NADSP Code of Ethics Form

Person-Centered Supports:

As a DSP, my first allegiance is to the person I support; all other activities and functions I perform flow from this allegiance.

Promoting Physical & Emotional Well-Being:

As a DSP, I will commit to promote the emotional, physical, and personal well-being of the people I support. I will encourage growth and recognize the autonomy of those receiving support while being attentive and energetic in reducing the risk of harm.

Integrity and Responsibility:

As a DSP, I will support the mission and vitality of my profession to assist people in leading self-directed lives and to foster a spirit of partnership with the people I support, other professionals, and the community.

Confidentiality:

As a DSP, I will safeguard and respect the confidentiality and privacy of the people I support.

Justice, Fairness and Equity:

As a DSP, I will affirm the human rights as well as the civil rights and responsibilities of the people I support. I will promote and practice justice, fairness, and equity for the people I support and the community as a whole.

Respect:

As a DSP, I will respect the human dignity and uniqueness of the people I support. I will recognize each person I support as valuable and promote their value within communities.

Relationships:

As a DSP, I will assist the people I support to develop and maintain relationships.

Self-Determination:

As a DSP, I will assist the people I support to direct the course of their own lives.

Advocacy:

As a DSP, I will advocate with the people I support for justice, inclusion, and full community participation.

www.nadsp.org

Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____



Professional Commitment Organizer

The following questions are designed to help you reflect on the information you will include in your Statement of Professional Commitment. (Do not submit this worksheet to NADSP. Your final Professional Commitment Statement must be a document that flows in paragraph form.)

I work in human services because: _____

My career goals are : _____

I will reach my goals by doing: _____

My strengths and qualities are: _____

My experiences, personal and professional, which relate to human services are: _____

Other things I would like the reviewer to know about me include: _____

My commitment to the field of direct support: _____

The 15 NADSP Competency Areas

Area 1: Participant Empowerment

The Direct Support Professional enhances the ability of the participant to lead a self-determining life by providing the support and information necessary to build self-esteem, and assertiveness; and to make decisions.

Skill Statements

- 1A. The competent DSP assists and supports the participant to develop strategies, make informed choices, follow through on responsibilities, and take risks.
- 1B. The competent DSP promotes participant partnership in the design of support services, consulting the person and involving him or her in the support process.
- 1C. The competent DSP provides opportunities for the participant to be a self-advocate by increasing awareness of self-advocacy methods and techniques, encouraging and assisting the participant to speak on his or her own behalf, and providing information on peer support and self-advocacy groups.
- 1D. The competent DSP provides information about human, legal, civil rights and other resources, facilitates access to such information and assists the participant to use information for self-advocacy and decision making about living, work, and social relationships.

Area 2: Communication

The Direct Support Professional should be knowledgeable about the range of effective communication strategies and skills necessary to establish a collaborative relationship with the participant.

Skill Statements

- 2A. The competent DSP uses effective, sensitive communication skills to build rapport and channels of communication by recognizing and adapting to the range of participant communication styles.
- 2B. The competent DSP has knowledge of and uses modes of communication that are appropriate to the communication needs of participants.
- 2C. The skilled DSP learns and uses terminology appropriately, explaining as necessary to ensure participant understanding.

Area 3: Assessment

The Direct Support Professional should be knowledgeable about formal and informal assessment practices in order to respond to the needs, desires and interests of the participants.

Skill Statements

- 3A. The competent DSP initiates or assists in the initiation of an assessment process by gathering information (e.g., participant's self-assessment and history, prior records, test results, additional evaluation) and informing the participant about what to expect throughout the assessment process.
- 3B. The competent DSP conducts or arranges for assessments to determine the needs, preferences, and capabilities of the participants using appropriate assessment tools and strategies, reviewing the process for inconsistencies, and making corrections as necessary.
- 3C. The competent DSP discusses findings and recommendations with the participant in a clear and understandable manner, following up on results and reevaluating the findings as necessary.

Area 4: Community and Service Networking

The Direct Support Professional should be knowledgeable about the formal and informal supports available in his or her community and skilled in assisting the participant to identify and gain access to such supports.

Skill Statements

- 4A. The competent DSP helps to identify the needs of the participant for community supports, working with the participant's informal support system, and assisting with, or initiating identified community connections.
- 4B. The competent DSP researches, develops, and maintains information on community and other resources relevant to the needs of participants.
- 4C. The competent DSP ensures participant access to needed and available community resources coordinating supports across agencies.
- 4D. The competent DSP participates in outreach to potential participants.

Area 5: Facilitation of Services

The Direct Support Professional is knowledgeable about a range of participatory planning techniques and is skilled in implementing plans in a collaborative and expeditious manner.

Skill Statements

- 5A. The competent DSP maintains collaborative professional relationships with the participant and all support team members (including family/friends), follows ethical standards of practice (e.g., confidentiality, informed consent, etc.), and recognizes his or her own personal limitations.



- 5B. The competent DSP assists and/or facilitates the development of an individualized plan based on participant preferences, needs, and interests.
- 5C. The competent DSP assists and/or facilitates the implementation of an individualized plan to achieve specific outcomes derived from participants' preferences, needs and interests.
- 5D. The competent DSP assists and/or facilitates the review of the achievement of individual participant outcomes.

Area 6: Community Living Skills & Supports

The Direct Support Professional has the ability to match specific supports and interventions to the unique needs of individual participants and recognizes the importance of friends, family and community relationships.

Skill Statements

- 6A. The competent DSP assists the participant to meet his or her physical (e.g., health, grooming, toileting, eating) and personal management needs (e.g., human development, human sexuality), by teaching skills, providing supports, and building on individual strengths and capabilities.
- 6B. The competent DSP assists the participant with household management (e.g., meal prep, laundry, cleaning, decorating) and with transportation needs to maximize his or her skills, abilities and independence.
- 6C. The competent DSP assists with identifying, securing and using needed equipment (e.g., adaptive equipment) and therapies (e.g., physical, occupational and communication).
- 6D. The competent DSP supports the participant in the development of friendships and other relationships.
- 6E. The competent community based support worker assists the participant to recruit and train service providers as needed.

Area 7: Education, Training & Self-Development

The Direct Support Professional should be able to identify areas for self improvement, pursue necessary educational/training resources, and share knowledge with others.

Skill Statements

- 7A. The competent DSP completes required training education/certification, continues professional development, and keeps abreast of relevant resources and information.
- 7B. The competent DSP educates participants, co-workers and community members about issues by providing information and support and facilitating training.

Area 8: Advocacy

The Direct Support Professional should be knowledgeable about the diverse challenges facing participants (e.g., human rights, legal, administrative and financial) and should be able to identify and use effective advocacy strategies to overcome such challenges.

Skill Statements

- 8A. The competent DSP and the participant identify advocacy issues by gathering information, reviewing and analyzing all aspects of the issue.
- 8B. The competent DSP has current knowledge of laws, services, and community resources to assist and educate participants to secure needed supports.
- 8C. The competent DSP facilitates, assists, and/or represents the participant when there are barriers to his or her service needs and lobbies decision-makers when appropriate to overcome barriers to services.
- 8D. The competent DSP interacts with and educates community members and organizations (e.g., employer, landlord, civic organization) when relevant to participant's needs or services.

Area 9: Vocational, Educational & Career Support

The Direct Support Professional should be knowledgeable about the career and education related concerns of the participant and should be able to mobilize the resources and support necessary to assist the participant to reach his or her goals.

Skill Statements

- 9A. The competent DSP explores with the participant his/her vocational interests and aptitudes, assists in preparing for job or school entry, and reviews opportunities for continued career growth.
- 9B. The competent DSP assists the participant in identifying job/training opportunities and marketing his/her capabilities and services.
- 9C. The competent DSP collaborates with employers and school personnel to support the participant, adapting the environment, and providing job retention supports.

Area 10: Crisis Prevention and Intervention

The Direct Support Professional should be knowledgeable about crisis prevention, intervention and resolution techniques and should match such techniques to particular circumstances and individuals.

Skill Statements

- 10A. The competent DSP identifies the crisis, defuses the situation, evaluates and determines an intervention strategy and contacts necessary supports.
- 10B. The competent DSP continues to monitor crisis situations, discussing the incident with authorized staff and participant(s), adjusting supports and the environment, and complying with regulations for reporting.



Area 11: Organizational Participation

The Direct Support Professional is familiar with the mission and practices of the support organization and participates in the life of the organization.

Skill Statements

- 11A. The competent DSP contributes to program evaluations, and helps to set organizational priorities to ensure quality.
- 11B. The competent DSP incorporates sensitivity to cultural, religious, racial, disability, and gender issues into daily practices and interactions.
- 11C. The competent DSP provides and accepts co-worker support, participating in supportive supervision, performance evaluation, and contributing to the screening of potential employees.
- 11D. The competent DSP provides input into budget priorities, identifying ways to provide services in a more cost-effective manner.

Area 12: Documentation

The Direct Support Professional is aware of the requirements for documentation in his or her organization and is able to manage these requirements efficiently.

Skill Statements

- 12A. The competent DSP maintains accurate records, collecting, compiling and evaluating data, and submitting records to appropriate sources in a timely fashion.
- 12B. The competent DSP maintains standards of confidentiality and ethical practice.
- 12C. The competent DSP learns and remains current with appropriate documentation systems, setting priorities and developing a system to manage documentation.

Area 13: Building and Maintaining Friendships and Relationships

Support the participant in the development of friendships and other relationships.

Skill Statements

- 13A. The competent DSP assists the individual as needed in planning for community activities and events (e.g., making reservation, staff needs, money, materials, accessibility).
- 13B. The competent DSP assists the individual as needed in arranging transportation for community events.
- 13C. The competent DSP documents community activities and events.
- 13D. The competent DSP encourages and assists the individual as needed in facilitating friendships and peer interactions.



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- 13E.** The competent DSP encourages and assists the individual as needed in communication with parents/family (e.g., phone calls, visits, letters).
- 13F.** The competent DSP implements individual supports regarding community activities.
- 13G.** The competent DSP provides incentive or motivation for consumer involvement in community outings.
- 13H.** The competent DSP assists the individual as needed in getting to know and interacting with his/her neighbors.
- 13I.** The competent DSP encourages and assists the individual as needed in dating.
- 13J.** The competent DSP encourages and assists the individual as needed in communicating with social workers and financial workers.

Area 14: Provide Person Centered Supports

Skill Statements

- 14A.** The competent DSP provides support to people using a person centered approach.
- 14B.** The competent DSP modifies support programs and interventions to ensure they are person centered.
- 14C.** The competent DSP challenges co-workers and supervisors to use person centered practices.
- 14D.** The competent DSP is knowledgeable about person centered planning techniques.
- 14E.** The competent DSP assists individuals in developing person centered plans.

Area 15: Supporting Health and Wellness

Promotes the health and wellness of all consumers.

Skill Statements

- 15A.** Administers medications accurately and in accordance with agency policy and procedures.
- 15B.** Observes and implements appropriate actions to promote healthy living and to prevent illness and accidents.
- 15C.** Uses appropriate first aid/safety procedures when responding to emergencies.
- 15D.** Assists individuals in scheduling, keeping, and following through on all health appointments.
- 15E.** Assists individuals in completing personal care (e.g., hygiene and grooming) activities.
- 15F.** Assists with identifying, securing and using needed adaptive equipment (i.e. adaptive equipment) and therapies (e.g., physical, occupational, speech, respiratory, psychological).
- 15G.** Assists individuals in implementing health and medical treatments.
- 15H.** Assists individuals to take an active role in their health care decisions.



Questions to Prompt Reflection

The following questions can be used to help applicants reflect on each of their work samples. Do not include this worksheet in the portfolio. The applicant's answers to these questions should be incorporated into the narrative of the reflective statement included with each work sample.

What did I learn from doing this work? _____

How is this work tied to the NADSP Competencies and the skill statements I am targeting? _____

How does this work relate to the NADSP Code of Ethics? _____

How does this work connect to the related instruction and other training I have received?

How do I know that my work is effective? _____

How can I continue to develop my skills in this area? _____

What is the impact of this work on myself, my co-workers, my organization, and the people I support?



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DSP Certification Narrative

This is a fictional account of how a direct support professional might go about applying for an NADSP Certified Initial (DSP-I) certificate. This is only intended as an example. Applicants may target different competency areas than described in this example, or different skill statements within the same competency areas. The portfolio process was designed to be flexible enough to allow each direct support professional to showcase their own particular strengths. No two portfolios, and no two work samples, will be alike.

Donna wants to pursue the DSP-I certificate from NADSP, but first she will need to become NADSP-Registered (DSP-R). The HR Director at her organization agreed to write a letter on behalf of the organization verifying that Donna has been employed for over 6 months, has cleared a criminal background check, has completed all required training, and is eligible to work as a DSP.

Donna wrote a statement of professional commitment as part of the DSP-R application process. This was basically a letter where she introduced herself. She wrote about how she got started as a DSP, and explained why she chose to work in the field of human services. She wrote about her plans for the future as well. Donna also signed an agreement to abide by the NADSP Code of Ethics. Donna sent a packet containing all this material, as well as the application fee, to NADSP.

While waiting to find out about her NADSP-Registered application, Donna began to plan her DSP-I portfolio. She asked her supervisor, Sally, to act as her skills mentor. Sally had recently completed the process to become certified as a frontline supervisor by NADSP, so she was very familiar with the process of creating and submitting a professional portfolio. Sally and Donna met regularly to discuss the the NADSP accredited trainings she was completing online and to brainstorm ideas for work samples that would allow Donna to apply the information she was learning in these trainings to her work.

For her first work sample, Donna decided to focus on the NADSP Competency Area of Communication. In one of their meetings Sally had reminded her of something that had happened a few years ago that would be a good fit for this competency area. Donna had realized that a man she supports named Phillip was attempting to communicate with her using American Sign Language. Donna knew a few basic signs already, but needed to increase her skills in this area to communicate effectively with Phillip. She was able to learn additional signs online, and she learned new signs from Phillip as well.

Phillip had a reputation for challenging behavior, and Donna began to understand that those behaviors often occurred when staff did not respond to his communication to them. She began to teach signs to her co-workers, and worked with Phillip to create a quick reference sheet explaining the signs that he thought were most important for the DSPs supporting him to understand.



Donna felt this work sample met the first two skill statements for the Communication competency area:

- 2A.** The competent DSP uses effective, sensitive communication skills to build rapport and channels of communication by recognizing and adapting to the range of participant communication styles.
- 2B.** The competent DSP has knowledge of and uses modes of communication that are appropriate to the communication needs of participants.

Her evidence for this work sample included a copy of the quick reference sheet and a video of a conversation between Phillip and herself. In her reflective statement she described her work with Phillip and reflected on the frustration he was experiencing when his communication was ignored.

For her second work sample, Donna chose to focus on the NADSP Competency Area of Participant Empowerment. This work sample focused on a woman named Cathy, who wanted to attend a self-advocacy conference in another city. The DSPs who normally supported Cathy were not able to travel to the conference, so Donna volunteered to do so. She had many questions for Cathy about what she wanted to do at the conference and how she could best support her during the conference. During the conference, Cathy chose to run for an elected position within the advocacy organization. This meant some of the plans they had made had to be altered. They used the hotel's business center to quickly print some flyers, and Donna helped Cathy to craft a short campaign speech. Cathy was elected to a position on the organization's Board of Directors, and Donna sometimes still supports her when she needs to travel to a meeting as part of her new position.

Donna felt the following skill statements were met in this work sample:

- 1A.** The competent DSP assists and supports the participant to develop strategies, make informed choices, follow through on responsibilities, and take risks.
- 1B.** The competent DSP promotes participant partnership in the design of support services, consulting the person and involving him or her in the support process.
- 1C.** The competent DSP provides opportunities for the participant to be a self-advocate by increasing awareness of self-advocacy methods and techniques, encouraging and assisting the participant to speak on his or her own behalf, and providing information on peer support and self-advocacy groups.

Her evidence included photos of her and Donna at the conference, including a photo of the campaign flyers they had quickly created. She reflected on the positive impact the conference and the new position was having on Cathy's life. Cathy also agreed to write a Letter of Support that Donna could include in her portfolio.



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For her third work sample, Donna focused on the NADSP Competency Area of Documentation. Donna's organization requires that she have access to several pieces of documentation, such as emergency contact information and person-centered plans, at all times when she is providing supports in the community. Donna was concerned with the fact that she and her co-workers were carrying these documents in a simple manila file folder. It did not seem to her that it was a secure way to carry these confidential documents. She shared this concern with Sally during a mentoring meeting, and Sally was surprised to hear about how these documents were being handled.

Donna and Sally began to work on finding a better solution. After doing some research online, they found a clipboard that included a locking compartment for storing documents. They purchased a few of these to try out with Donna's team. The new cases were very popular with the DSPs who used them. One unforeseen benefit was that DSPs began to also carry blank copies of some commonly used forms in the cases as well. This meant that they could complete some types of documentation immediately rather than at the end of their shift. Sally noticed an improvement in the quality of the documentation she was seeing from Donna and her co-workers, after a few weeks of using the new cases. Donna and Sally did a presentation about the new cases for their organization's leadership, and the decision was made to purchase the cases for use across the entire organization.

Donna felt this work sample met all three skill statements for this competency area.

- 12A.** The competent DSP maintains accurate records, collecting, compiling and evaluating data, and submitting records to appropriate sources in a timely fashion.
- 12B.** The competent DSP maintains standards of confidentiality and ethical practice.
- 12C.** The competent DSP learns and remains current with appropriate documentation systems, setting priorities and developing a system to manage documentation.

For her evidence she submitted a photos of the cases being used by her and her co-workers, and a copy of the PowerPoint she and Sally had used at the leadership meeting. She also included some examples of documentation she had completed immediately after an incident and an earlier example of documentation where she waited until the end of her shift to complete the forms. She reflected on the importance of confidentiality in direct support work, and the improvement she saw in the quality of her documentation.

For her final work sample, Donna chose to demonstrate her skills in the NADSP Competency Area of Education, Training and Self-Development. She had received an email advertising a human services conference that would be held nearby, and asked Sally if it was possible to attend. Sally agreed to her attending as long as she did a presentation for her co-workers sharing the information she had learned at the conference. Sally also pointed out that this would be something she could use for her final work sample.

Donna had a great time attending the conference. She had many great options for breakout sessions, but the one she attended on the history of disability services had the biggest impact on her. She knew that some of the people she supported had grown up in institutions, but she hadn't realized how traumatic that experience could have been. It helped her to see some of the behaviors they used in a new light. A behavior that she considered inappropriate in the community, might have been common, or even necessary, in an institutional setting. She decided that she wanted to focus on this topic when she presented to her co-workers.

After the conference, she did some additional research on the history of disability services in her state, and put together her presentation with some assistance from Sally. She presented her information during a departmental meeting, and it seemed to have the same impact on some of her co-workers that it had on her.

Donna felt this work sample met both skill statements for this competency area.

- 7A.** The competent DSP completes required training education/certification, continues professional development, and keeps abreast of relevant resources and information.
- 7B.** The competent DSP educates participants, co-workers and community members about issues by providing information and support and facilitating training.

Her evidence included photos of her attending the conference and a video of her presentation to her co-workers. She reflected on the changes in how people have viewed disability, how the insights she gained affected her approach to providing support, and her nervousness when presenting to her co-workers.

Now that all the work samples were finished, Donna focused on the other required portfolio components. She updated her resume, signed a commitment to the Code of Ethics, and made a few updates to her statement of professional commitment. She was able to get a transcript from Human Resources showing how she had completed her 100 hours of related instruction in an NADSP accredited training curriculum. She included the letter of support that Cathy had written for her as well.

Donna was able to create a free account on an online cloud storage site, and uploaded all the pieces of her portfolio. She organized these files into folders entitled "First Work Sample", "Second Work Sample", "Third Work Sample", "Fourth Work Sample" and "Other Portfolio Material". She then placed all these folders into another folder called "Donna's DSP-I Portfolio". She shared her portfolio with NADSP by emailing a link to this folder to the email address listed on NADSP's website. She explained in her email that a check for the application fee would be sent by her employer via regular mail.



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NADSP Code of Ethics



Vision. Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) who support people in their communities are called upon to make independent judgments on a frequent basis that involve both practical and ethical reasoning. The people who assume this complex role must examine their own values and beliefs while honoring those of the people they support.

Purpose. A primary purpose of the DSP is to assist people who need support to lead self-directed lives and to participate fully in our nation's communities. This emphasis on empowerment and participation is critical. There are numerous pressures coming from organizations, government, social policy, and societal prejudice that can shift focus and allegiance away from the people who are being supported. DSPs face ethical decisions on a daily basis and consistently feel the tension between the ideals of the profession and its practice.

In order to maintain the promise of partnership and respect that must exist in a supportive relationship, a strong ethical foundation is critical to help DSPs navigate the maze of influences that bombard them. The prejudices of society form powerful barriers, yet too often, the very social policies and service systems designed to help can create additional barriers that prevent many people with intellectual, developmental or physical disabilities from enjoying a rich and fulfilling life.

Mission. Therefore, it must be the mission of the DSP to honor the individual path suggested by the unique gifts, preferences, and needs of each person they support. DSPs will walk in partnership with the person, and those who are significant to them, toward a life of opportunity, well-being, freedom, and contribution. While other professional groups (such as doctors, nurses, service coordinators, and social workers) are directed by clearly defined criteria, the DSP is directed by the person they support. Therefore, the DSP must exemplify ethical practice, high standards, and creative vision as they partner with those they support in order to engage community and make everyday choices about their personal finances, physical well-being, social and intimate relationships, and employment. The entire landscape of a person's life can change through ethical and intentional direct support services.

Values, Skills and Knowledge. The knowledge and skills of community support practice must be joined with the ethical principles to create the environment needed to fully support people in making life choices. To do so effectively, we must all recognize DSPs as professionals who have values, skills, and knowledge that constitute a unique and important profession, and who can infuse these beliefs into practice. Furthermore, there must be a commitment to hiring, developing, and supporting DSPs to create a healthy sense of their own worth and potential. Direct Support Professionals must embrace their role to foster a spirit of cooperation and mutual responsibility with other DSPs regarding ethical practice.



Why The NADSP Code of Ethics

In 2000, these issues led the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) to bring together a national panel that included direct support professionals, self-advocates, family members, human service professionals and researchers to identify the kinds of ethical situations that direct support professionals face and to develop a set of ethical guidelines to address them. In 2016, the NADSP reconvened a new and diverse stakeholder group to review the language of our original document. The revised Code of Ethics has not changed in content, it remains to serve as a straightforward and relevant ethical guide, shedding light on the shared path to a self-directed life. It is intended to guide direct support professionals in resolving ethical dilemmas they face every day and to encourage them to achieve the highest ideals of the profession.

The NADSP Code of Ethics Challenge

Direct support professionals, agency leaders, policymakers, and people receiving support are urged to read the Code of Ethics and to consider ways that these ethical statements can be incorporated into daily practice. The beliefs and attitudes expressed in the Code of Ethics are a cornerstone of the profession. This Code of Ethics is not the handbook of the profession, but rather a roadmap to assist us in staying the course of securing freedom, justice, and equality for all.

The Nine Tenets of the Code of Ethics

Person-Centered Supports:

As a DSP, my first allegiance is to the person I support; all other activities and functions I perform flow from this allegiance.

Furthermore, as a DSP, I will:

- Commit to person-centered supports as best practice.
- Focus first on the person and understand that my role in direct supports will require flexibility, creativity and commitment.
- Recognize that each person is capable of directing their own life.
- Honor those who cannot speak by seeking other ways of understanding them.
- Recognize that the unique culture, social network, circumstances, personality, preferences, needs and gifts of each person I support must be the primary guides for the selection, structure, and use of supports for that person.
- Advocate with the person I support and others when the demands of the system override the needs of those I support, or when individual preferences, needs or gifts are neglected for any reason.

Promoting Physical and Emotional Well-Being:

As a DSP, I will commit to promote the emotional, physical, and personal well-being of the people I support. I will encourage growth and recognize the autonomy of those receiving support while being attentive and energetic in reducing the risk of harm.

Furthermore, as a DSP, I will:

- Develop a respectful relationship with the people I support that is based on mutual trust and maintains professional boundaries.

- Understand and respect the values of the people I support and facilitate their expression of choices related to those values.
- Assist the people I support to prevent illness, avoid unnecessary risk, and understand their options and possible consequences that relate to their physical health, safety, and emotional well-being.
- Partner with each person and their support network to identify areas of risk and create safeguards specific to these concerns.
- Challenge other support team members, such as doctors, nurses, therapists, coworkers, and family members, to recognize and support the rights of people to make informed decisions even when these decisions involve personal risk.
- Be vigilant in identifying and reporting any situation in which the people I support are at risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation or harm.
- Address challenging behaviors proactively and respectfully. If aversive or deprivation intervention techniques are included in an approved support plan, I will work diligently to find alternatives and pursue the elimination of these techniques from the person's plan.

Integrity and Responsibility:

As a DSP, I will support the mission and vitality of my profession to assist people in leading self-directed lives and to foster a spirit of partnership with the people I support, other professionals, and the community.

Furthermore, as a DSP, I will:

- Be aware of my own values and how they influence my professional decisions.
- Maintain competency in my profession through learning and ongoing collaboration with others.
- Assume responsibility and accountability for my decisions and actions.
- Advance my knowledge and skills through ongoing professional development and lifelong learning.
- Seek advice and guidance on ethical issues from others as needed to inform decision-making.
- Recognize the importance of modeling valued behaviors to co-workers, people I support, and the community at-large.
- Practice responsible work habits.

Confidentiality:

As a DSP, I will safeguard and respect the confidentiality and privacy of the people I support.

Furthermore, as a DSP, I will:

- Seek information directly from those I support regarding their wishes in how, when and with whom privileged information should be shared.
- Recognize that confidentiality agreements are subject to federal and state laws and regulations, as well as agency policies.



- Recognize that it may be necessary to disclose confidential information in order to prevent serious or imminent harm to the person I support or others.
- Seek out qualified guidance to help clarify situations where the correct course of action is unclear to me.

Justice, Fairness and Equity:

As a DSP, I will affirm the human rights as well as the civil rights and responsibilities of the people I support. I will promote and practice justice, fairness, and equity for the people I support and the community as a whole.

Furthermore, as a DSP, I will:

- Assist the people I support to access opportunities and resources in the community that are available to everyone.
- Facilitate the expression and understanding of rights and responsibilities with the people I support.
- Understand the guardianship or other legal representation of the people I support, and work in partnership with legal representatives to assure that the person's preferences and interests are honored.

Respect:

As a DSP, I will respect the human dignity and uniqueness of the people I support. I will recognize each person I support as valuable and promote their value within communities.

Furthermore, as a DSP, I will:

- Seek to understand the people I support today in the context of their personal history, their social and family networks, and their hopes and dreams for the future.
- Recognize and respect the cultural context (such as gender, disability, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, socio-economic class) of the person supported and his/her social network.
- Honor the choices, preferences, abilities and opinions of the people I support.
- Protect the privacy of the people I support.
- Interact with the people I support in a manner that is respectful to them.
- Provide opportunities for the people I support to be viewed and treated with respect and embraced as integral, contributing members of their communities.
- Promote the use of language that is respectful, sensitive and contemporary.
- Practice positive intention and transparency in my interactions.

Relationships:

As a DSP, I will assist the people I support to develop and maintain relationships.

Furthermore, as a DSP, I will:

- Advocate with the people I support when they do not have opportunities to build and maintain relationships.
- Recognize the importance of maintaining reciprocal relationships and proactively facilitate relationships between the people I support, their family and friends.

- Assure that people have the opportunity to make informed choices in safely expressing their sexuality.
- Separate my personal beliefs and expectations regarding relationships (including sexual relationships) from those of the people I support. If I am unable to separate my own beliefs and preferences in a given situation, I will remove myself from the situation and seek the assistance of a qualified coworker.
- Refrain from expressing negative views, harsh judgments, and stereotyping of people.

Self-Determination:

As a DSP, I will assist the people I support to direct the course of their own lives.

Furthermore, as a DSP, I will:

- Support the rights of individuals to lead self-directed lives, working in partnership with other members of the person's support network.
- Promote self-determination in physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual pursuits.
- Honor a person's right to assume risk in an informed manner.
- Recognize that each individual has potential for lifelong learning and growth.
- Celebrate, accept and learn from life's rich experiences with people through triumphs and failures.

Advocacy:

As a DSP, I will advocate with the people I support for justice, inclusion, and full community participation.

Furthermore, as a DSP, I will:

- Support people to speak for themselves in all matters, and offer my assistance when needed.
- Represent the best interests of people who cannot speak for themselves by partnering with the individual and their support team to gather information and find alternative means of expression.
- Advocate for laws, regulations, policies, and procedures that promote justice and inclusion for all people with disabilities.
- Promote human, legal, and civil rights for all people and help those I encounter to understand these rights.
- Seek additional advocacy services when those that I provide are not sufficient.
- Seek out qualified guidance when I am unsure of the appropriate course of action in my advocacy efforts.
- Recognize that those who victimize people with disabilities must be held accountable.

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