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STRATEGIES FOR POLICY CHANGE

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This chapter discusses the importance of addressing direct support workforce challenges through policy and legislative initiatives to enhance wages, improve training, create opportunities, and enhance the status and image of direct support professionals (DSPs). Suggestions are made as to how to influence local, state, and federal policy decisions and the importance of including DSPs in this process. Specific successful examples of policy and legislative efforts to address direct support workforce development are provided.

TARGETED FRONT-LINE SUPERVISOR COMPETENCIES

Primary Skills

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Front-line supervisors (FLSs) identify necessary changes in the program planning and monitoring systems within the organization and at the local, state, and federal levels and advocate for these changes with their managers and government officials.

FLSs attend and actively participate in organization management, planning, and cross-functional work group meetings.

RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR SOLUTIONS

This book has focused on what administrators, managers, and supervisors can do to address recruitment, retention, and training challenges within their organizations. We hope that it is clear by now that organizations can do many things to make a difference. It is also true, however, that effective systemic improvements in workforce challenges will not happen without policy changes (through governmental policy shifts, legislation, and/or litigation). This chapter describes many policy interventions that have been used to make improvements in workforce outcomes in supports for people with disabilities.

Recruitment, retention, and training challenges threaten the sustainability, growth, and quality of community human services. The ability to create new services and to maintain those that already exist is made enormously more difficult by the direct support staffing crisis. Even as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issues requests for proposals for systems change grants that will provide greater access to community services (Thompson, 2001), community human services organizations, individuals receiving supports and their families, and advocates express concern about the sustainability of existing services and great reluctance on the part of federal, state,

and local government agencies to expand to meet new demand (Hewitt, Larson, & Lakin, 2000). Pressure to reduce waiting lists; to increase the availability of community supports for individuals who want them; and to provide high-quality, individualized supports that deliver desired outcomes make this workforce crisis more severe and underscore the importance of finding solutions to these challenges.

Many states still have large numbers of people living in institutions and large congregate care settings. In fact, an estimated 42,835 people with developmental disabilities in the U.S. still live in state-operated institutions compared with 443,217 who now receive community Medicaid-funded long-term care supports (Prouty, Smith, & Lakin, 2004). With the pending lawsuits that have resulted from the *Olmstead v. L.C.* decision (Smith, 2003), there could not be a more pressing urgency for federal and state agencies to find solutions to the direct support workforce crisis. The New Freedom Initiative (<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/newfreedom>) and the related Executive Order 13217 were presented to the public in 2001 by the Bush administration. This initiative set forth a series of grants, programs, and new policies designed to increase access to community services for all people with disabilities and to ensure that adequate infrastructure supports exist in the community, including an adequate, well-trained DSP workforce. There is no foreseeable way that efforts to provide equal access to community services can succeed without finding resolutions to the problems of DSP recruitment, retention, and training. Systems change efforts to enhance community opportunities for people with developmental disabilities must include specific, planned, proactive, and comprehensive efforts to increase the public awareness of the direct support profession; efforts to increase the numbers of people who enter this line of work; and serious efforts to enhance DSP wages, benefits, and incentives to get DSPs to remain in their positions.

Local governments, community human services organizations, individuals receiving supports and their families, and advocates report that these issues are among the *most important* challenges to overcome today (Hewitt, Larson, & Lakin, 2000). Recruitment and retention concerns have been noted by individuals receiving supports (Jaskulski & Whiteman, 1996) and their families (Hewitt, Larson, & Lakin, 2000; Jaskulski & Whiteman, 1996; Larson & Lakin, 1992), provider organizations (ANCOR, 2001b; Rosen, 1996), and policy makers (Chao, 2002; National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services, 2000a).

Congressional Direct Support Professional Recognition resolutions were passed in the U.S. House of Representatives (H. Con. Res. 94) and U.S. Senate (S. Con. Res. 21) in 2003,

Expressing the sense of the Congress that community inclusion and enhanced lives for individuals with mental retardation and developmental disabilities is at serious risk because of the crisis in recruiting and retaining direct support professionals, which impedes the availability of a stable, quality, direct support workforce

Furthermore, the concurrent resolutions found that “this workforce shortage is the most significant barrier to implementing the *Olmstead* decision and undermines the expansion of community integration as called for by President Bush’s New Freedom Initiative, placing the community support infrastructure at risk.” The resolution ended by noting that

It is the sense of the Congress that the Federal Government and States should make it a priority to ensure a stable, quality direct support workforce for individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities that advances our Nation's commitment to community integration for such individuals and to personal security for them and their families.

The resolutions were further reinforced by report language in the FY 2004 appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and related agencies (part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2004, PL 108-199) that recognized "the growing crisis in recruiting and retaining quality direct support professionals to serve people with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities living in the community" (Lakin, Gardner, Larson, & Wheeler, n.d.).

Perhaps the most detrimental workforce challenge is the high turnover of DSPs, which hinders 1) the development and maintenance of relationships, 2) the development of mutual respect between DSPs and individuals who receive support and their family members, and 3) the development of trust between supported individuals and every new DSP that enters their lives. High vacancy rates, an increased use of overtime, and DSP turnover rates averaging 50% or more have negative effects on the quality of supports provided (Larson, Hewitt, & Lakin, 2004). Without continuity, quality, commitment, and competence in direct supports, the opportunity for people with disabilities to become full citizens and active community members is greatly diminished. The nature of the current workforce crises makes it difficult for organizations to provide even basic support such as help with self-care and medical support.

In the Spotlight: Camphill Association of North America

by Camphill Association of North America

Camphill communities promote social renewal through community living with children, youth, and adults with developmental and other disabilities. The communities vary in scope and size, with more than 90 worldwide. The seven communities in the United States, most of which are in rural settings (a residential school, two training centers for youth, and four villages for adults), are member sites of the Camphill Association of North America. In each of these communities, people with and without disabilities live alongside each other.

The Camphill way of life developed out of the belief that every person, with or without a disability, is unique and is entitled to lead a full and purposeful life in freedom and dignity as a contributing citizen. Camphill communities work hard to remove the social barriers that limit opportunities for people with disabilities and are environments where all people can discover, develop, and realize their abilities, becoming partners and contributors rather than recipients of services. In Camphill communities, staff are referred to as co-workers. Farmers, gardeners, crafters, therapists, administrators, and other supporters come from around the globe as full-time volunteers. Some people come for a short-term experience (generally, 1 year); others make it a way of life. The volunteers do not receive a salary in the usual sense. Each person works for the well-being and benefit of the others in the community, and, in turn, his or her living needs are supported (e.g., room and board, health insurance, vacation time).

Because the Camphill movement was founded in Europe, it has historically attracted international volunteers, mainly from Europe. As it becomes increasingly difficult for these

volunteers to obtain visas to enter the United States, a key strategic objective of the Camphill Association of North America is to increase the number of American volunteers in its communities. To do so, the association decided to participate in the AmeriCorps program.

The National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 (PL 103-82) created the Corporation for National and Community Service and various AmeriCorps programs (see <http://www.americorps.org> for more information about AmeriCorps). The AmeriCorps Education Awards program provides grants to national, state, and local community service programs that can support most or all of the costs associated with managing the work of AmeriCorps volunteers. The Camphill Association of North America chose to participate in the Education Awards program because it identified difficulty repaying education loans as a significant barrier to recruiting volunteers.

In April 2001, the Camphill Association of North America became an AmeriCorps member program with spots available for 20 full-time volunteers. Participation in the AmeriCorps program meant that the association had to institute a number of changes. To identify which changes each of its communities needed to make, the association conducted a needs assessment through multiple training workshops for supervising personnel. Participants discussed the requirements and responsibilities of site supervisors and program sites and identified priorities for skill development, administrative duties, and program infrastructure.

During this assessment, it became apparent that the technical assistance required for each site varied depending upon multiple factors relating to existing infrastructure. The Camphill Association of North America regional office began providing technical assistance to all sites to exceed AmeriCorps participation criteria, to streamline efforts across multiple sites, and to meet the particular needs of each site.

The U.S. Camphill communities thus moved toward greater accountability for admitting, supporting, and training AmeriCorps members to achieve goals to directly benefit community members with developmental or other disabilities. The volunteer application process was made clearer, with in-depth reference requirements and stringent background checks. The Camphill Association of North America also instituted formal mentoring arrangements and feedback tools such as reviews, exit interviews, and surveys. In addition, the regional office worked with a number of sites to improve pre-arrival orientation, interviewing, orientation, and mentoring.

The Camphill Association of North America encountered a variety of challenges while making these changes. The changes needed to be adapted to Camphill culture. For example, the feedback tools had to be appropriate to Camphill culture and also collect data in a measurable form. In addition, the Camphill Association of North America began to provide a great deal of education for site supervisors and communities about concrete obligations regarding being a member program of AmeriCorps.

Another challenge for the Camphill Association of North America was for its communities to coalesce as a cohesive AmeriCorps member program across great distances. To address this issue, the communities created common orientations, evaluations, and social events for volunteers from multiple sites. The communities encouraged peer support during orientation by inviting volunteers to provide contact information to be shared among interested volunteers.

During the Camphill Association of North America's first year as an AmeriCorps member program, nine AmeriCorps volunteers enrolled, all of whom had committed to volunteering at Camphill before learning about the AmeriCorps program. The low enrollment of AmeriCorps volunteers was attributed to an initial lack of know-how within Camphill

about effective recruiting strategies. With increased knowledge and skills during the second program year, recruitment efforts strengthened and enrollments of AmeriCorps volunteers at Camphill communities increased. By October 2002, the Camphill communities had enrolled 20 AmeriCorps members and had received approval for 6 additional AmeriCorps slots, with the expectation of a further increase in enrollments in the year ahead.

STRATEGIES FOR RESPONDING TO THE PROBLEM

Improve Recruitment Strategies

Given severe difficulties in finding qualified workers, the likelihood is small that organizations providing direct support will be able to overcome the challenges without policy initiatives.

Federal and State Jobs Programs

Several policy initiatives have tried to address recruitment challenges. As noted in the In the Spotlight segment on the Camphill Association of North America, AmeriCorps and Job Corps programs target underutilized pools of potential workers to improve recruitment success. Other efforts increase the number of recruits by maximizing linkages with recent immigrants, students in secondary schools (through school-to-work programs and community service requirements), and students in postsecondary educational institutions. For example, the Minnesota WorkForce Center in Rochester works with community human services organizations to give web-based multimedia English lessons to personal care attendants who have emigrated from East Africa and who speak little or no English. This initiative increased the skills of the immigrants while they were working. Other states have begun to connect organizations that hire DSPs with state workforce initiatives. For example, in one economically depressed area of New Jersey, people who are in welfare-to-work programs are being recruited and trained specifically to work in DSP roles in state-run residential service settings.

Recruitment and Marketing Campaigns

Policy initiatives to improve recruitment success also include efforts to broaden the visibility of careers in community services. Several states, including Colorado, Connecticut, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island, have developed sophisticated recruitment programs using a variety of professional marketing mechanisms, including public service announcements; web sites such as <http://www.rewardingwork.org/>, <http://hspeople.com/>, and <http://www.omr.state.ny.us/rr/index.jsp>; news conferences; and a statewide DSP recognition day. In some states (e.g., Colorado, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York), these initiatives are funded and sponsored in conjunction with the state developmental disabilities entity, whereas in other states, the state Developmental Disabilities Councils (DD Councils) or coalitions of provider organizations have organized these recruitment initiatives (e.g., Arizona, Arkansas, Illinois, Kansas, Ohio, Rhode Island; ANCOR, 2001b).

A federal initiative has also improved the profile of community DSPs by establishing a DSP apprenticeship program within the U.S. Department of Labor. The

program guidelines describe work experience competencies and related instruction guidelines for human services organizations that wish to certify their employees as apprentices through this program. Apprenticeship programs include training and mentoring components (some of which use the College of Direct Support for content; see Chapter 7) that require documentation of competence on areas defined by the Community Supports Skills Standards (CSSS; Taylor, Bradley, & Warren, 1996) as well as a required number of hours of employment as an apprentice to become credentialed. Successful participants are awarded some form of salary increase. States such as Kansas, Massachusetts, Ohio, and Wyoming have been working to implement this apprenticeship program and have improved the linkages between state departments of labor staff and providers of community services. This has not only helped to implement the apprenticeship program but has also improved networking between the industry and the U.S. Department of Labor. This initiative also enhances career development opportunities for DSPs.

Other Federal, State, and Local Initiatives

The Kansas Mobilizing for Change project (Hewitt & Larson, 2002) initially addressed recruitment challenges through efforts to change policy. One component of this multifaceted project was the creation of a statewide recruitment taskforce to identify and develop plans to implement recruitment interventions. The task force developed a realistic industry preview video (similar to a realistic job preview; see Chapter 3 for more on RJPs). The video shows the good and not so good features about DSP careers in Kansas. The video is being adapted so that individual organizations in Kansas can use it. It also can be edited to be useful in other states and specific organizations (for more information, see <http://rtc.umn.edu/wddsp/rjp.html>). In June 2004, the state of Kansas committed to funding copies of the RJP video and a marketing toolkit as well as to provide training based on the *Removing the Revolving Door* curriculum (O'Neil, Hewitt, Sauer, & Larson, 2001) for FLSs in all provider organizations in Kansas.

In 2003 and 2004 the federal government funded 10 initiatives aimed at helping recruit, train, and retain DSPs. Part of the President's New Freedom Initiative, the Demonstration to Improve the Direct Service Community Workforce, granted \$1.4 million each to six entities to increase access to health insurance for DSPs during 3-year demonstration periods:

- Bridges, Inc., a nonprofit service organization in Indiana
- The Maine Governor's Office of Health Policy
- The New Mexico Department of Health
- Finance and Pathways for the Future, a service provider in North Carolina
- The Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services
- The Home Care Quality Authority, a Washington State organization

Four entities received grants of more than \$600,000 each to develop educational materials, training for DSPs, mentorship programs, and other recruitment and retention activities:

- Arkansas Department of Human Services
- The University of Delaware
- Seven Counties Services, Inc., a service provider in Kentucky
- Volunteers of America in Louisiana

(More information about this program and the New Freedom Initiative is available at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/newfreedom>)

Some organizations have had success in connecting with local workforce initiative boards, which guide policy initiatives within local communities and often determine how federal and state resources will be spent on various industries. In New York and Maryland, consortia of programs and organizations have had success in using support dollars to improve access to training, increase wages, and make other enhancements to the status and image of DSPs (see, e.g., the In the Spotlight segment on the Mid-Hudson Coalition in Chapter 5). The establishment of personal connections is critical to pressure workforce initiative boards to acknowledge the professionalism of the direct support workforce by supporting DSP apprenticeship programs in their states. The community human services industry must let communities know how big the profession is and the contribution it makes to the communities.

Federal, state, and local governments can assist in recruiting DSPs by funding training and technical assistance to organizations on recruitment and selection. Although Chapter 4 identified many relevant strategies, organizations and supervisors are often unaware of these recruitment and selection techniques. Projects such as the U.S. Department of Labor's Partnerships for Success Project, which funded training for supervisors and organizations and technical assistance in implementing recruitment and other workforce interventions, are needed throughout the United States to bridge the gap between such research-based strategies and actual practice. The Partnerships for Success Project reduced turnover by one third in 13 participating organizations over a 3-year period (Hewitt, Larson, Sauer, Anderson, & O'Neil, 2001).

Consumer-Directed Community Support Services Programs

Consumer-directed community support services (CDSS), funded by Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services Waiver dollars, can also be used to address recruitment challenges. CDSS were primarily designed to support self-determination, control, and choice for people with disabilities. They use a very different approach to recruiting DSPs. In CDSS programs, individuals with disabilities and their family members are given control over how they will spend the public dollars available to them through the waiver. They can use those dollars to recruit and hire family members, friends, and other people they know to provide supports rather than rely on provider organizations to find DSPs. This expands the pool of potential DSPs by tapping the natural support networks of the individuals who receive supports.

Address Wage and Compensation Issues

Research has consistently shown that higher turnover is associated with low wages (e.g., Braddock & Mitchell, 1992; Lakin & Bruininks, 1981; Larson et al., 2004; Larson & Lakin, 1999; Larson, Lakin, & Bruininks, 1998; State of Minnesota Department of Employee Relations, 1989). Improving pay, paid leave time policies, benefits, and opportunities for advancement must become priorities among policy makers if community support services are to continue. Interventions must include restructuring local, state, or federal government funding to community human services organizations for the supports they provide to build in cost-of-living salary adjustments. Since the late 1990s, several state legislatures have financed cost-of-living adjustments for

DSPs in community residential settings (Polister, Lakin, & Prouty, 2003), but in most cases this was not a recurring increase but rather one that had to be fought for anew in each legislative session. Providing cost-of-living adjustments may be the only way to forestall the regression of already low wages and benefits behind other industries. Additional efforts are needed to develop initiatives to raise wages to a livable level, using competency-based wage incentives.

Efforts to provide competency-based wage incentives have been proposed in New York and Minnesota. Minnesota legislation that was proposed in 2001–2002 (Minnesota H.F. 1483 and S.F. 1426, 82nd Legislative Session), which had not passed as of 2004, creates a direct support incentive program. To participate in the incentive program, organizations that hire DSPs must develop and implement a workforce development plan; submit data on turnover, tenure, wages, vacancies, and number of staff annually; agree to develop an organizational workforce development plan to address workforce issues identified by the organization as priorities; use their portion of the incentive to address priorities listed on the organization's workforce development plan; and document eligibility of DSPs for the program. This strategic plan could be in the form of the Intervention Plan Questionnaire that is discussed at the end of Chapter 14.

To be eligible to get a bonus the first time, a DSP must document 12 months of continuous satisfactory employment at the same organization, complete 10 semester credits of job-related coursework from an accredited postsecondary educational institution, demonstrate basic competence in the CSSS (Taylor et al., 1996), agree to abide by the NADSP Code of Ethics (see Chapter 5 and Figure 5.4), provide a letter of support from an individual receiving supports and/or his or her family, provide a letter from an employer documenting satisfactory job performance, and demonstrate competence in a required number of skill standard areas.

The proposal has a three-tiered incentive available to DSPs. In Tier 1, full-time DSPs who demonstrate competence in four areas in the CSSS (Taylor et al., 1996) and who meet the other requirements earn a \$1,000 annual bonus, and their provider organization earns \$500 to support training and other project costs. In Tier 2, eligible full-time employees who demonstrate competence in eight areas can earn an annual bonus of \$1,750, and the provider organization earns \$600. In Tier 3, eligible full-time employees who demonstrate competence in all 12 areas of the CSSS earn an annual bonus of \$2,500, and the provider organization earns \$700. Eligible part-time employees who work 20–39 hours per week and demonstrate competence in the specified areas can earn half of the corresponding tiered bonus amount annually. Employers also receive a prorated amount for eligible employees.

To be eligible for subsequent bonuses, a DSP must document continuous employment in the same organization for an additional 12 months, earn 20 hours or 2 semester credits (10 hours or 1 semester credit for a part-time DSP) advanced training on approved community support topics for which a certificate is earned, and document continued satisfactory job performance and competence in the same areas as the initial award. To earn a higher tier bonus, the person has to document competence in the additional number of skill areas required.

The proposed program also includes a statewide stakeholder group to conduct program oversight, establish policies and procedures, and identify administrative

functions for eligibility determination. A management entity would be awarded a contract to administer the financial components of the proposal. The proposed program would also provide technical assistance to organizations on assessing competence, developing and implementing workforce development plans, providing training, and completing forms. The proposed program would provide technical assistance to DSPs on the contents of the CSSS (Taylor et al., 1996) and on how to gain access to training and document competence. The benefits of this proposal are that it provides increased wages and delivers a more stable and highly skilled workforce.

In addition to policy initiatives that increase wages, initiatives that fund alternative employment compensation and benefit packages, such as tuition credits at public colleges, universities, and technical schools, may be a valuable recruitment tool among younger workers. These initiatives require either policy or legislative changes in most states. Alternatively, organizations could lobby for tax credits to be developed to allow retirees on Social Security to benefit from employment in the human services industry. Organizations could also lobby for funding to provide other types of compensation, such as room and board; access to state health care plans; child care (especially nighttime care and care for sick children); discounts for DSPs at local retailers; free entrance to state and national parks; transportation that is paid for, subsidized by, or provided by the employer; and tuition or loan forgiveness.

Enhance Professional Identity and Recognition

Unfortunately, society tends to disregard the direct support profession. A significant disincentive, this lack of role recognition impedes workforce recruitment and retention. Several policy initiatives address this problem and help organizations develop viable career paths for DSPs. For example, sponsoring and holding statewide conferences specifically for DSPs or supporting state and national associations increases the visibility of DSP careers. Coalitions in states such as Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, and Tennessee have formed local chapters of the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) to enhance professional identity and recognition for DSPs (see Chapter 5 for more about professionalization and the NADSP). Membership in state or national task forces and working groups offers individuals the opportunity to contribute to discussions about workforce issues and other components of human services work and increases recognition of DSPs as professionals. Creating state and national awards to recognize excellence in DSPs can move the direct support profession to a level now enjoyed by other workforce segments. State agencies could show support for state and national DSP associations by providing meeting space, hosting project web sites, and identifying potential participants (through registries of DSPs).

Provide Education and Training

Ensuring adequate training for DSPs and FLSs is a substantial workforce development challenge, especially because organizations must often deal with inadequate resources for training while maintaining operations. Although some training and development occurs at the organization level, success will also require concerted policy initiatives to make pre- and in-service training opportunities available. Policy initia-

tives that support developing, disseminating, and updating effective training materials to keep learning opportunities fresh and focused on best practices is essential. Using skill standards, such as the CSSS (Taylor et al., 1996) and *The Minnesota Frontline Supervisor Competencies and Performance Indicators* (Hewitt, Larson, O'Neil, Sauer, & Sedlezky, 1998) offers opportunities to link demonstrated skills to credit-bearing and competency-based training. When workers are provided with incentives to complete training, such as tuition vouchers or loan forgiveness programs, these initiatives spark renewed interest in training experiences. Likewise, programs which result in a portable credential that can be carried from one organization to another maximize learning and minimize duplicated training among organizations.

In New York, the Kennedy Fellows Mentoring Program provides scholarships and career mentoring to DSPs enrolled for at least 6 credits at one of two colleges (Hewitt, Larson, & Ebenstein, 1996). Developed by John F. Kennedy, Jr., this program encourages DSPs to complete a 2-year degree and enhances eligibility for promotion to positions with greater responsibility. Across the United States more career paths and focused pre-service training opportunities are being developed each year. Many of these programs were sparked by Training Initiative Project (TIP) funds through the Administration on Developmental Disabilities, which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Although TIP funding no longer exists, University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (formerly called University Affiliated Programs) have maintained vital roles in providing training and continuing education for educators and DSPs. These projects reflect the growing national interest in and concern for developing, respecting, and supporting DSPs. They are designed to increase the visibility of direct support careers and can thus assist in recruiting new workers to the industry. The College of Direct Support (see Chapter 7) and the College of Frontline Supervision (see the Resources section of Chapter 11) are potential vehicles for the provision of credit-bearing and competency-based training based on skill standards.

The South Central Technical College in Minnesota has a training program for DSPs called Community Supports for People with Disabilities, which recruits high school students and then places program graduates in DSP positions in local companies (see the following In the Spotlight segment on this program).

In the Spotlight: Community Supports for People with Disabilities

The Community Supports for People with Disabilities (CSP) program was developed and implemented at South Central Technical College in Minnesota in the fall of 1997. It is intended for students who want to pursue careers as DSPs in health, human services, and education working with individuals who have disabilities. The CSP program evolved from a community-based model rather than a more traditional medical model of providing services to people with disabilities. Rather than teach future DSPs how to take care of people, program instructors teach participants to support individuals to care for themselves and learn to manage their own lives.

Many students who enroll in the CSP work in residential, vocational, education or special education, recreation, social service, or health settings. Other students have no

experience in those settings but desire to learn to work with people who have abilities and challenges in their everyday life experiences. Some students are family members or friends of people with disabilities or are advocates with a wide range of backgrounds.

CSP is a credit-based program and is accredited by North Central Accreditation. Seven CSP students graduated with a certificate, a diploma, or an associate of applied science (AAS) degree in 1997–1998. Since then, the program has grown, with on-line distance education added in 2002 to complement its already respected face-to-face component. CSP now serves approximately 45–75 students throughout Minnesota at any given time. The course content is based on the CSSS (Taylor et al., 1996), is competency driven, and emphasizes skill application.

To earn a CSP certificate, students must complete 16 credits of coursework, including the following courses: Direct Service Professional, Physical Developmental Supports I, Facilitating Positive Behavior I, Person Centered Planning, Introduction to Computers, and Employment Search Skills. The 44-credit CSP diploma requires completion of the 16-credit CSP certificate, a 4-credit internship, and 24 additional credits selected from the following courses: Physical Developmental Supports II, Facilitating Positive Behavior II, Challenging Behaviors, Supportive Interventions, Person Centered Planning, Medical Terminology, Trained Medication Aide, Basic Nursing 101 (Certified Nursing Assistant), CPR, or First Aid. To earn an AAS degree, students must complete the 44-credit diploma and earn 20 transferable general education credits. Additional courses in sign language and leadership in service provision are also available for more experienced DSPs and supervisors who want to be role leaders in the health, human services, and education occupations.

As the use of intermediate care facilities for persons with mental retardation (ICFs/MR) declined with deinstitutionalization and Home and Community-Based Services funded by Medicaid Waiver and other sources grew, Minnesota required organizations supporting people with intellectual or developmental disabilities to employ Designated Coordinators, staff who had specialized training in providing supports to people with disabilities and who had educational and experiential backgrounds similar to those of Qualified Mental Retardation Professionals (QMRPs). (QMRP is a federal designation for certain employees in ICFs/MR. To obtain the QMRP designation, a person usually has to have at least a 4-year degree and must meet other requirements.) However, in Minnesota, people who complete the CSP diploma or AAS degree and who have 2 years' direct support experience can be Designated Coordinators and do not need to have a 4-year degree. The Designated Coordinator status allows students to apply for supervisory management positions in most service settings.

The benefits of the CSP program are many. Students who have earned a CSP certificate have professional credentials to show that they have obtained education in providing services to people with disabilities. Students who have earned a CSP diploma or an AAS degree can apply these college credits toward a social service, humanity, psychology, or social science degree at most 4-year colleges. CSP graduates have learned to apply a professional, knowledgeable, and skillful philosophy and attitude to direct support work. These people have shown commitment in the time they have put into their education and can be expected to maintain the same commitment to the industry, thus workforce retention is increased.

The CSP program is cost-effective. It costs employers \$2,500 or more per employee to hire and train new DSPs. For about the same amount, CSP students meet these and more requirements at a mastery level before graduating from the program and entering the workforce. A background check is conducted for each student before the end of his

or her first semester to prevent any students who are ineligible for direct support work, the educational institution, and industry from wasting time and money on training.

By paying for employees to attend or by providing time for them to participate in the CSP program, an organization provides recognition, praise, and value for its DSPs and provides an incentive for high-performing DSPs to remain with the organization and move up the career ladder.

Individuals receiving supports and their family members, their friends, and other advocates benefit because CSP students understand rules and regulations that apply to direct support and are skilled in advocating, reinforcing, and promoting a healthy, safe, secure, and independent lifestyle. Students learn Minnesota's regulations on preventing abuse and neglect and promote a self-advocating, empowering life experience. CSP students learn to teach people who have abilities and make contributions to their communities to be as independent as possible.

To learn more about the CSP program, go to <http://www.southcentral.edu/dept/csp/> or contact W.C. Sanders, CSP developer, coordinator, and lead faculty member (South Central Technical College, 1920 Lee Boulevard, North Mankato, MN 56003; 507-389-7299; e-mail: wcs@southcentral.edu).

It is increasingly important that training initiatives not be limited just to organizations that provide traditional community human services (e.g., group homes). With the growth of CDSS, it is important that local-, state-, or federally funded legislative or policy-driven training initiatives develop, identify, and distribute competency-based training materials and technical assistance to assist supported individuals and their families to find, train, and keep DSPs.

Local, state, and federal programs could also assist education and training efforts by supporting training and providing technical assistance on effective orientation strategies; supporting organizations who catalog resources available to organizations to develop high-quality orientations that welcome new employees (e.g., the American Society for Training and Development, <http://www.astd.org>); funding contracts to develop, disseminate, and update effective training materials; establishing tuition voucher or loan forgiveness programs for DSPs; increasing reimbursement for training costs incurred by organizations and individuals who employ DSPs; and supporting voluntary credentialing programs. For example, in a 2001 program funded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, a pilot project offered a 1-year certification program with free tuition and books for 67 DSPs (ANCOR, 2001b).

States that are interested in developing voluntary credentialing for DSPs should build in the following components, which were identified by the NADSP (Hewitt, O'Neil, Lei, & Jendro, 2000):

- Participation should be *voluntary*.
- The credential should be based on a set of standardized competencies that are measured.
- The credential should allow local or regional autonomy yet be transportable for DSPs who move from one organization to another or from one geographic location to another.
- The credential should consider the satisfaction of the supported individual and/or his or her family with the supports provided by applying DSPs.

- DSPs should be required to have worked for a single provider for a specified length of time to earn the initial credential.
- The credential should be accessible to DSPs (e.g., in terms of cost, location, and support).
- The credential should articulate to other educational awards.
- The credential should lead to higher value (e.g., wage increase, college credit, other opportunities).

In addition to supporting voluntary credentialing programs, local, state, and federal governmental agencies can improve training opportunities and outcomes by doing the following:

- Providing DSPs and FLSs with encouragement and financial incentives to complete training and skill development
- Funding or developing statewide training and trainers to support organizations
- Offering test-out options for all competencies mandated in regulation
- Maximizing the use of technology-supported learning
- Requiring organizations to measure whether participants actually apply learning to their jobs (competency-based training)
- Supporting the development of peer mentoring programs for DSPs and FLSs

In the Spotlight: The Ohio PATHS Project

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The Ohio PATHS Project, funded by the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council and directed by the Ohio Providers Resource Association in collaboration with the Ohio Alliance for Direct Support Professionals and the Human Services Research Institute (HSRI), was developed to strengthen the state's direct support workforce. PATHS stands for *professional advancement through training and education in human services*. Ohio PATHS is an employer-based, multilevel skills training program aligned with U.S. Department of Labor guidelines for apprenticeship as a DSP. Candidates who pursue the PATHS credentialing program can earn several certificates.

The planning consortium for Ohio PATHS used lessons from successful efforts in technical preparation along with a deep understanding of the direct support role and the human services industry in Ohio to design a relevant, practical, and robust credentialing framework plan. Among the recommended practices incorporated in the plan are

- Customization to human services industry characteristics
- Involvement of key stakeholders in planning and subsequent administration of credential operations
- Criterion-referenced competency-based approaches
- Use of valid and legally defensible employment skill, knowledge, and ethical practice sets customized to direct support
- Emphasis on assessment practices that are embedded in job performance or that closely approximate job performance
- Multiple credential levels/award tiers to create a defined career path
- Alignment with recently approved federal apprenticeship guidelines for direct support
- Planning for needs and marketing analysis
- Provisions for credential renewal

The planning consortium's mission is to "create clear and desirable career paths within the direct support role and from direct support to other roles within human services." Implicit in this mission is that the program should help candidates adopt a career focus as a DSP and that the credential program should offer a means of attracting people to pursue careers in direct support. Moreover, the content of the credential must be meaningful and relevant to effective direct support work. Benchmarks for mastery must be within the scope of incumbent workers who do not desire postsecondary degrees but should also bring candidates through a manageable sequence of learning that connects explicitly with more advanced programs for those who seek this path.

Planners extended this vision by suggesting the possible and desirable outcomes of the credential program if the identified mission is fulfilled. These aspirations create a portrait of a much healthier human services workforce than currently exists in Ohio and elsewhere. By taking steps to move toward this vision, Ohio has moved into the leading edge of progressive leaders in workforce development.

As of 2004, the PATHS project is in its second phase, which is aimed at implementing the PATHS credentialing program on a pilot basis. Growing from a core group of about 15 people, the PATHS project now has Regional Councils who have piloted the Certificate of Initial Proficiency in Direct Support with 60 DSPs from 15 organizations in three separate regions: Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Toledo. The first cohort of DSPs completed the initial certificate in January 2004. An evaluation is currently underway and coalition members are preparing the training infrastructure to pilot the Certificate of Advanced Proficiency in Direct Support. Several consortium partners have recently been approved to offer national apprenticeship status through the PATHS program. The U.S. and Ohio Departments of Labor have committed \$100,000 in grant resources to assist Ohio's human services employers in offering apprenticeship opportunities.

The next phase will expand pilot capability to prepare candidates who have received their initial certificate to obtain the advanced certificate. The requirements for the advanced certificate are equivalent to the challenging requirements of the federally recognized senior specialist status in direct support.

Support Front-Line Supervisors

Training and supporting FLSs to do their jobs well is critical. Policy initiatives that can help these efforts include supporting the development of systematic training for FLSs based on established competencies (e.g., *The Minnesota Frontline Supervisor Competencies and Performance Indicators*; Hewitt et al., 1998), building in routine cost-of-living adjustments for FLSs, developing and distributing competency-based FLS training materials to organizations, and providing competency-based wage incentives for FLSs. These are similar to the policy recommendations for DSPs. The importance of supporting a highly qualified cadre of FLSs should not be minimized as workforce initiatives are crafted. As with DSPs, there is a need for governmental support for technical assistance for organizations to build competent FLSs. Developing a credential for FLSs based on established competencies would also be helpful. Finally, policy initiatives should support ongoing research to identify recommended practices in recruiting, training, and retaining FLSs.

Supervisor training initiatives funded by state DD Councils have begun in Illinois and Kansas. Community human services organizations in New Jersey, New York,

Tennessee, West Virginia, and Wyoming are participating in a 3-year project (2003–2006) called the National Training Institute for Frontline Supervisors and Technical Assistance Project. This project is training trainers in each participating state to provide training using the *Removing the Revolving Door* curriculum (O’Neill, Hewitt, et al., 2001) and the College of Frontline Supervision (see Chapter 11) to improve the skills of FLSs in supporting DSPs to reduce turnover and vacancy rates and improve training practices. Funding for this project has been provided by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (in the U.S. Department of Education). For more information, see <http://rtc.umn.edu/ntiffs/main/index.asp>.

Encourage Systems Building

Two system-related policy initiatives hold promise for improving workforce outcomes. First, there should be improved collaboration among state and federal agencies that have some responsibility or expertise in workforce issues to target cross-industry needs and boost potential worker pools (e.g., workforce development systems; school-to-work initiatives; welfare-to-work initiatives; postsecondary educational institutions; and federal, state, and local disability agencies). The challenge is to gather and communicate information about the many different effective practices to the people who need it.

Second, there is a need to improve accountability of community human services organizations and state and local systems to document the impact of recruitment, retention, and worker competence on the satisfaction of the individuals receiving supports. Although the human services industry is highly regulated and there are many attempts to measure the quality of services people receive, few elements of the quality assurance system comprehensively assess quality indicators related to the direct support workforce, such as turnover and vacancy rates. One exception is a recruitment and retention initiative created by the Pennsylvania General Assembly in which counties received workforce initiatives allocations in exchange for providing data on workforce challenges and for implementing an intervention plan (ANCOR, 2001b). Unless federal, state, or local governmental agencies routinely collect and disseminate information about how organizations are doing in these areas, assessment of both organizational and systemwide progress will be very difficult.

Gather Workforce Data

Policy interventions should be based on accurate, current data on the number of DSPs, salaries, turnover rates, recruitment challenges, and training needs. Polister et al. (2002) summarized documentation from 37 state agencies and 32 state residential direct support organizations regarding starting or average wages for DSPs in 42 states. Although this represents a remarkable increase in available information, compared with earlier summaries (e.g., Larson, Lakin, & Bruininks 1998), adequate information about turnover, vacancy rates, unfilled hours of service for individuals who receive in-home supports, DSP and FLS competence, DSP and FLS training needs, and the characteristics of DSPs and FLSs are still very difficult to gather. This information should be routinely collected for both DSPs and FLSs, at least at a state level, if states are going to make a serious effort to address existing workforce challenges. It is not known how

many people are in the roles of DSPs and FLSs in community settings, much less the number of people working with various individuals (e.g., individuals with developmental disabilities, older adults, individuals with mental health disorders) or in various types of community programs (e.g., residential, vocational, in-home). Furthermore, ongoing information about starting, average, and highest wages for various positions and various service types is also needed, as is information about access to paid time off and other benefits. States should also be routinely assessing the extent to which workforce challenges contribute to organizations' use of waiting lists of people who are underserved or unserved. Finally, research should be funded to assess the costs and outcomes of recruitment, retention, and training challenges. The Direct Support Professional Workforce Status and Outcomes worksheet at the end of Chapter 13 may be useful as part of an annual evaluation submitted to state or local governmental agencies.

Form Coalitions

This chapter has listed many different types of policy initiatives that might be helpful in addressing recruitment, retention, and training challenges. The implementation of those initiatives should be done in a way that mirrors the process recommended in the chapters in Section IV on organizational change and assessment and selection of strategies. Specifically, these efforts should be made by coalitions of relevant stakeholders. Relevant stakeholder groups in policy initiatives include representatives of key groups who are involved at the organization level, as well as some players who would not always be involved in organizational interventions. One group of stakeholders that should be involved is representatives in the many different state or federal agencies that implement relevant programs. That means that in addition to individuals representing state or federal disability agencies, representatives from other agencies should also be at the table, including representatives from the U.S. Department of Labor or state departments of labor; state workforce systems that assist job seekers and employers; school-to-work programs; welfare-to-work programs; postsecondary educational institutions (especially institutions that train DSPs or FLSs); and state, county, or local governmental agencies. In some cases, significant efforts will be necessary to make sure those agencies that ordinarily do not collaborate with one another work together on this topic. Nongovernmental stakeholders who should be at the table include the people who receive supports and their families, political activists, community human services organizations (e.g., public or private, for-profit or nonprofit), coalitions of community human services organizations, union officials, and advocates. Finally, and most important, DSPs and FLSs should be represented in large enough numbers so that they are not intimidated and so that they can actively participate in the coalition (e.g., at least 2–3 DSPs in a group of 15 stakeholders). These stakeholders should work together to articulate and implement broad, comprehensive solutions and strategies. It is increasingly important that these efforts not be confined to just one disability group (e.g., individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities, people with Alzheimer's disease, individuals with mental illness, people with physical disabilities) but rather that they involve cross-disability group work. The challenges and the solutions are similar across these groups.

Seek Change Through Litigation

Systems change in community supports for people with disabilities is sometimes achieved through policy initiatives such as those described in this chapter. At other times, however, family members and advocates have found those changes occur far too slowly or not at all and that the desired outcomes can only be achieved through other channels. Several lawsuits have been filed since the late 1990s arguing that wages or rate-setting practices in various states are illegal violations of various federal or state statutes or policies (Smith, 2003). Lawsuits that seek relief in the form of rate increases include *Ball et al. v. Biedess et al.*, filed January 2000 in Arizona; *Sanchez et al. v. Johnson et al.*, filed May 2000 and dismissed in January 2004 in California; *Interhab, Inc. et al. v. Schalansky et al.*, filed October 2002 in Kansas; *Sandy L. et al. v. Martz et al.*, filed September 2002 in Montana; and *Network for Quality M.R. Services in Pennsylvania v. Department of Public Welfare*, filed March 2002 and dismissed in July 2003 in Pennsylvania. Among the allegations in these suits are that the huge differential in wages between institutional and community settings violates the law and that the rates paid to community providers are too low for organizations to recruit or retain DSPs, resulting in the provision of inadequate supports. Regular status updates on these and other lawsuits are available at the Quality Mall web site (<http://www.qualitymall.org/products/prod1.asp?prodid=260>).

OVERCOMING IMPLEMENTATION BARRIERS

Making systems change is a difficult and lengthy process because of the size and complexity of the federal, state, and local governmental agencies involved. Common barriers in systems change initiatives include 1) exclusion of people who have the power to make the needed change from the planning process; 2) difficulties getting stakeholders to reach a consensus about the nature of the problem and about the specific changes that are needed; 3) hidden agendas and widely divergent interests of the various players; 4) lack of understanding about the political realities of the situation; 5) impatience with the process or unwillingness to pursue options that have been tried unsuccessfully in the past but that may now be successful in the current political climate; and 6) inability to mobilize grass roots initiatives—in this case, among DSPs and supported individuals and their families—to advocate for the change. It is beyond the scope of this book to address all of these issues. Some basic principles, however, can be applied to systems change efforts to increase their chances of success:

- Make sure that the people with the power to make the needed changes are involved in the discussions.
- Make efforts to understand the boundaries around what specific governmental entities can and cannot do.
- Use active listening skills in meetings.
- Involve an experienced, skilled facilitator in the discussions.
- Ensure that the case for the needed change is clearly and adequately documented.
- Focus on solutions that have research support regarding their effectiveness.
- Provide opportunities for DSPs to network and meet other DSPs.

- Support connections and partnerships between DSPs and supported individuals and their family members in an organized way to encourage grass roots mobilization.

Organizations or individuals that advocate systems change through legislation should ensure that the lawmakers hear from the people with disabilities and their families about the nature of the problem and potential solutions. Policy makers listen to paid lobbyists all day long; thus, it becomes easy to tune those special interest groups out. People with disabilities and their family members are much more effective spokespeople in this context. Also, when the issue being discussed specifically affects DSPs, it is critical that DSPs are well represented among those offering public testimony. In Minnesota, one of the most effective cost-of-living adjustment campaigns for DSPs was successful in part because new stories about the need for the increase from the perspective of DSPs were distributed to legislators every day while the proposed bill was being considered.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Which of the workforce challenges that your organization faces can only be adequately addressed through policy change or new legislation?
2. Before attempting systems change, did your organization implement the strategies described in the other chapters of this book so that you can demonstrate you have done everything you can and still require systems change to effectively accomplish the desired outcomes?
3. How have you included representatives of all the important stakeholders in establishing coalitions to pursue systems change?
4. Who are your organizations' natural partners in pursuing systems change in your state?
5. How has your organization worked with those partners to reach consensus about the desired solution so that legislators are hearing the same message from all parties?
6. To what extent has your organization established good working relationships with representatives of relevant local, state, and federal governmental agencies whose policies directly affect your organization?
7. Does your state or region have a plan that describes how it will address workforce challenges? If not, what will you do to bring stakeholders together to create one?

CONCLUSION

This chapter describes a variety of policy initiatives that can be undertaken to change how services are organized and paid for so that direct support workforce needs can be better met. The initiatives listed here are only some of the many options that are available. We encourage readers to balance their work in the policy arena with organizational work to improve internal workforce practices. The reality is that policy-level

changes are difficult and can take a long time to achieve. They will not occur without planned, concerted efforts on the parts of all interested stakeholders. Empowering DSPs and FLSs to participate in and/or lead these efforts can increase the professionalization of those positions and the effectiveness of the policy initiatives.

We hope that this book has provided many ideas about interventions that address workforce challenges. Clearly, workforce challenges are difficult to address and are growing. You can do something to improve your organization's success in addressing those challenges. Our challenge to you is to select one intervention today that you will work on with DSPs, individuals receiving supports and their families, FLSs, administrators, and others to develop, implement, and evaluate within your organization. Also, if one or more of the policy intervention strategies identified in this chapter would work for your situation, we encourage your organization to work with other stakeholders in your city or state to plan and implement those policy changes as well. We would love to hear about your successes. Contact us and the other authors who contributed to this book at the addresses shown in the biographical sketches at the front of the book. To get updated information about the work of the Research and Training Center on Community Living at the University of Minnesota, check the direct support section of the center's web site (<http://rtc.umn.edu/wddsp>) and the Quality Mall (<http://www.qualitymall.org>) regularly.

RESOURCES

Bureau of Labor Statistics (<http://www.bls.gov>)

The Bureau of Labor Statistics provides statistics on employment and unemployment rates nationally and for various states. It also provides wage information for broad classifications of employees and other workforce descriptors. The Summer 2000 issue of its *Occupational Outlook Quarterly* (<http://www.bls.gov/opub/ooq/2000/summer/art04.htm>) provides a comprehensive review of workforce trends.

Kansans Mobilizing for Workforce Change, Credentialing and Apprenticeship Training (<http://rtc.umn.edu/kansas/groups/credentialing.asp>)

This credentialing web site includes many different resources that can be used to support systems change initiatives. One such resource is a presentation titled *Building a Career Structure for Direct Support Professionals*. More information about the credentialing framework can be obtained from Marianne Taylor, Senior Project Director, Human Services Research Institute, 2336 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02140; 617-876-0426 x 2330; e-mail: taylor@hsri.org.

National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP; <http://www.nadsp.org>)

The NADSP web site contains information from local chapters across the United States with tips and resources for how to start a professional association for DSPs. The NADSP and its member organizations are active at the local, state, and national levels in articulating the need for policy changes that improve the status, image, and professionalization of DSPs.

National Clearinghouse on the Direct Care Workforce (<http://www.directcareclearinghouse.org>)

The National Clearinghouse on the Direct Care Workforce provides a vast listing of on-line resources on recruitment and retention challenges, with a focus on services for older adults in the United States in nursing homes and community-based settings.

Quality Mall (<http://qualitymall.org/directory/store1.asp?storeid=11>)

The Staffing Store of Quality Mall contains information about the people who provide direct support and other services to people with developmental disabilities. Departments cover staff recruitment and retention, staff supervision and management, and staff training.

Research and Training Center on Community Living (<http://rtc.umn.edu/wddsp>)

This site includes many different resources and tools on recruitment, retention, and training of DSPs. In the Research section, the Policy Research Brief on DSP wages is posted. The site also includes information about currently funded research projects on DSP and FLS issues.

Smith, G.A. (2003, June 29). *Status report: Litigation concerning home and community services for people with disabilities*. Tualatin, OR: Human Services Research Institute. (Also available from the publisher, 503-885-1436 x17, <http://www.qualitymall.org/download/Litigation062903.pdf>)

This publication, which is updated regularly, provides a summary of lawsuits regarding access to Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services, community placement for people living in institutions, and limitations on Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services benefits (lawsuits on wages and other staffing issues are discussed in this section).