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Quick Facts: Provider Workforce Crisis

*“The DSPs that care for my son are his lifeline. Every time one of them leaves for a higher paying job, we have to start all over again teaching staff about how to best ensure his health and safety,*

*and that of his housemates too.” ~ George, a Parent*

**What is a Direct Support Professional?**

The Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) in community agencies provide the foundation for community living. They ensure the health, safety and well-being of people with disabilities by providing daily personal care, teaching life skills, and supporting people to be actively engaged and working in their community.

More than 8,000 Tennesseans with intellectual, developmental and age-related disabilities depend on home- and community-based service providers. The network of services that providers offer is carefully constructed to meet each client’s unique needs.

**Why is There A Workforce Crisis?**

Personal care and home health are among the fastest growing, lowest-paid occupations. ***Today, Tennessee’s home- and community-based service providers are experiencing a 53% turnover in DSPs.***

* The state of Tennessee reimburses its contracted community providers for DSP salaries based on a set methodology of $9.15/hour. This has risen just $0.90 in the last 10 years.
* During the same time period, state employees have received a 17.24% wage increase. Today, Community DSPs earn, on average, $9.00/hour vs. the $10-15/hour they would earn at comparable state-operated facilities.

With the critical shortage of DSPs, it is extremely difficult, approaching impossible, for community providers to serve additional people with disabilities. There is difficulty in attracting and retaining qualified, caring staff because community providers cannot pay fair, competitive wages.

This directly impacts the quality of care provided to individuals with disabilities receiving services in the community.

**Wage Increase for DSPs to $10 an hour (Walmart just announced a starting wage of $11)**

More competitive wages are needed to serve our most vulnerable population. We are asking that the fiscal year 2019 budget include an increase in DIDD’s rate methodology for all residential, personal assistance, day and family-based services funded by the state. This would provide funds needed to increase DSP wages.

*“The lifting power of many wings can achieve twice the distance of flying alone.”*

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