

**A Publication of the National  
Alliance for Direct Support Professionals**

# Frontline Initiative

**Volume 7 • Number 1 • 2006**

**Together, We Can Make a Difference**

## Join the NADSP

In early 2005, the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) was incorporated as a 501(c)(6) non-profit organization. The completion of this process mobilizes everyone who believes in the mission and goals of NADSP and wants to be a part of the movement toward a professionally trained and fairly compensated direct support workforce. As part of this effort, we are asking you, our *FI* readers, to become charter members of NADSP.

### **How do I join?**

It's easy to join NADSP! Just fill out the membership form (see page 5) and submit it along with a check or money order payable to NADSP. Your membership fee is based on the type of work you do and your connection to DSPs.

### **Why are there different membership categories?**

NADSP is committed to having as leaders the people we support and those who assist them most closely in achieving their life goals. The membership categories let us know who is a self-advocate, a DSP, a family member, and/or other professional and how best to include them in

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By joining the NADSP, you become part of a network of individuals and groups committed to making self-directed lives a reality for people with disabilities.



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# Frontline Notes

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Dear Readers,  
Moving forward sometimes means looking back. In this issue of *Frontline Initiative* we will look both backwards and forwards.

First, we look back to the historical Alliance for Full Participation (AFP) Summit held in Washington, DC, September 22–23, 2005. AFP stands as a turning point in history and its impact will be felt long into the future. At AFP, Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), self-advocates, family members, support providers, exhibitors, and others came together to speak about important issues. You can read what people said about their experiences at AFP on pages 8, 13, and 16. These stories may inspire you to find out what is happening in your own state to further the Summit's theme — Many Voices, One Vision.

Another important event in 2005 was the finalization of the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) incorporation as a 501(c)(6) non-profit organization. This allows NADSP to become a tax-exempt membership organization. Our lead story encourages readers to become members and to

get involved regionally to support NADSP's mission.

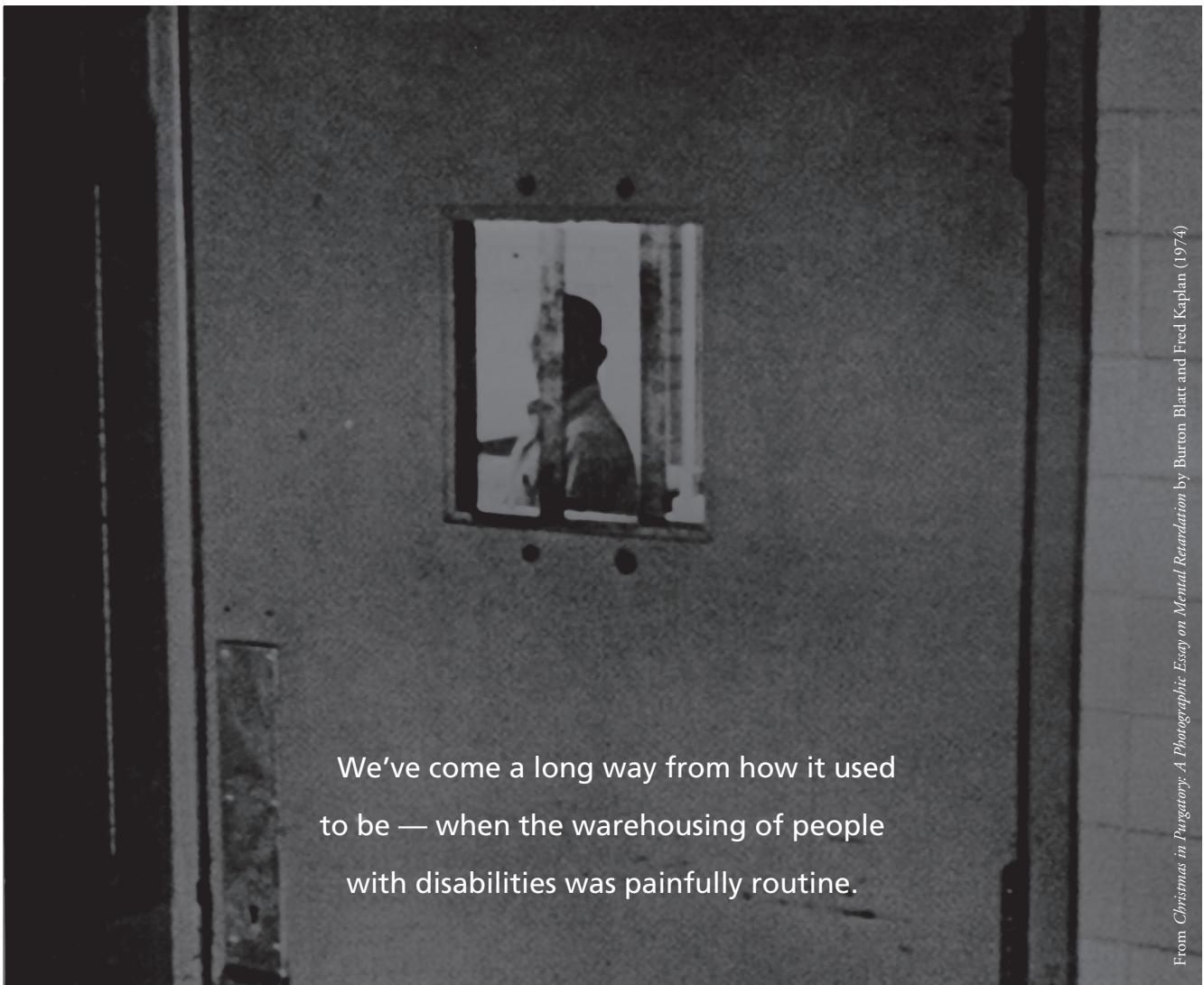
As we look forward, both AFP and NADSP recognize that one of the major roadblocks to full inclusion and participation for people with disabilities is the availability of caring and competent DSPs. Both AFP and NADSP support and encourage national efforts that help employers find, train, and keep high quality DSPs. These efforts are known as DSP Workforce Development. In this issue you will find articles about some of these efforts to help community human service agencies, individuals, and family employers find and keep good DSPs (See pages 9, 10, and 12).

We hope you find this issue of *FI* helpful and informative. We encourage you to share story ideas. If you have a story you would like to submit for publication consideration, you can email *Frontline Initiative* at mccul037@umn.edu.

Until next issue, take care,  
The Editors

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

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



From *Christmas in Purgatory: A Photographic Essay on Mental Retardation* by Burron Blatt and Fred Kaplan (1974)

We've come a long way from how it used to be — when the warehousing of people with disabilities was painfully routine.



Today, Direct Support Professionals enable our most vulnerable citizens to live self-directed lives with dignity and pride. You are the everyday heroes who help people with disabilities realize their dreams and enjoy the daily liberties and human rights that the rest of us take for granted.

Together, we can make a world of difference.

**Join the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals.**

[www.nadsp.org](http://www.nadsp.org)

# NADSP Member Organizations and State Contacts

## NADSP Supporting Organizations

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

- ANCOR
- Anne Grady Corporation
- Arc Northern Chesapeake Region
- Association of Group Homes for Nodaway County, Missouri
- Community Advantage
- Crystal Run Village, Inc.
- Direct Support Professionals of Missouri
- Direct Support Professional Association of Tennessee (DSPAT)
- Irwin Siegel Agency
- Laura Baker Services Association
- MCStrategies, Inc./College of Direct Support
- Melwood
- MidHudson Coalition
- Rise, Inc.
- Special People in Northeast, Inc.
- Welcome House

## Start a NADSP state affiliate in your area now!

For more information, contact Don Carrick, NADSP State Affiliate Coordinator, at 660.582.7113 or [dcarrick@asde.net](mailto:dcarrick@asde.net), or visit the NADSP Web site at

[www.nadsp.org](http://www.nadsp.org)

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# National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals

## About NADSP

The National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) is an organization for individuals and organizations that are committed to helping people with disabilities achieve their life dreams. We recognize that people needing support are more likely to fulfill their life dreams if they have well-trained, experienced, and motivated people at their side in long-term, stable, compatible support relationships. NADSP, a 501(c)(6) non-profit organization, has developed a national agenda to address these workforce issues and to develop strategies to —

- Enhance the status of DSPs.
- Provide better access to high-quality educational experiences for DSPs.
- Strengthen working relationships and partnerships among consumers, family members, and DSPs.
- Promote system reform, including incentives for education, increased compensation, and access to career pathways.
- Support a national voluntary credentialing process.

## Become a Member Today!

- Join a growing national movement to elevate the status of DSPs.
- Learn about national and international successful practices, such as certificate programs, apprenticeships, credit-bearing coursework, and ways to improve agency culture.
- Help educate policymakers and legislators about the importance of high quality human services.
- Learn about and gain access to public forums and conferences on DSP issues.
- Learn how to develop and enhance DSP regional affiliations.
- Develop leadership skills in the field of direct support.

## NADSP Membership Form

- DSP Membership\* \$25.00** Please mark one:  
 DSP  DSP (member of a state affiliate of NADSP)  
 Frontline Supervisor
- Associate Membership\* \$25.00** Please mark one:  
 Self-Advocate  Family Member
- Other Professional Membership\* \$40.00**  
For professionals working in the field of disability services, such as social workers, administrators, and healthcare professionals. Please tell us what your profession is:

\*DSP Memberships, Associate Memberships, and Other Professional Memberships include **one subscription to Frontline Initiative**, a Code of Ethics pocket card, and a NADSP membership card.

- Agency/Provider Affiliate Membership \$200.00**  
For providers who wish to demonstrate a commitment to supporting the efforts of DSPs. Membership includes a certificate of membership and two subscriptions to *Frontline Initiative*.
- Supporting Organization Membership \$500.00**  
For agencies and organizations dedicated to advancing the interests of DSPs and the people they support at a national level. Membership includes a certificate of membership and four subscriptions to *Frontline Initiative*. Your organization will also be listed in *Frontline Initiative* as a supporting organization.

### Please make checks payable to NADSP.

We are unable to accept credit cards or purchase orders.

### Mail membership form to:

Research and Training Center on Community Living  
University of Minnesota  
204 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Dr. SE  
Minneapolis, MN 55455 Phone: 612.624.6328

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Email \_\_\_\_\_

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

# The Real Scoop

**W**elcome to *The Real Scoop*. Clifford is a self-advocate who has been politically active for years. He's here to give you his spin on how to deal with issues you face as you forge ahead in your role as a Direct Support Professional (DSP). Seth has been a DSP for many years, and he loves to give advice. He may ruffle your feathers, but hey, it's for your own good! Clifford and Seth tackle this one with a few suggestions.

## Whatever Happened to AFP?

Dear Cliff and Seth,

Last fall I attended an amazing event called the Alliance for Full Participation Summit 2005. I am curious about what has been happening since. Can you help?

Sincerely,

Wondering What's Next

Dear Wondering,

*In December 2003, eleven leading national disability organizations officially joined together to form the Alliance for Full Participation, LLC (AFP). The objective of this alliance was full realization of the vision of people with disabilities living meaningful, productive, and personally satisfying lives in their communities of choice.*

*The AFP Web site contains additional information and follow up on AFP's 2005 Summit ([www.allianceforfullparticipation.org](http://www.allianceforfullparticipation.org)).*

— Seth

Dear Wondering,

*Partners from each state met before the AFP Summit and organized and identified key issues that they wanted to work on. At this point, most of the state teams are supposed to be working on the goals they identified for their individual state. For example, the state where I am from, Minnesota, is focusing on securing sustainable funding for self-advocacy and gaining on better support to address direct support workforce issues. To learn more about what your state is doing, visit AFP's state teams page, where you can find contact information for the team leader in your state ([www.allianceforfullparticipation.org](http://www.allianceforfullparticipation.org)).*

— Cliff

## Ask Clifford and Seth

Do you have a burning question about direct support, but don't know who to ask? Submit it to —

Frontline Initiative  
The Real Scoop  
P.O. Box 13315  
Minneapolis, MN 55414

Tel: 612.624.0060  
Fax: 612.625.6619  
Email: [mccul037@umn.edu](mailto:mccul037@umn.edu)

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

## Attract and Recruit Quality DSPs

with the Direct Support Professional Recruitment Toolkit

<http://rtc.umn.edu/wddsp/tools.html>



# The Voice of NADSP

## in Concert with the Alliance for Full Participation

**F**or nearly a decade, the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) has worked to elevate the status of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) in the workforce. We are leading our membership toward greater prominence and capacity by working together and working with other agencies that share our vision. Now NADSP has become part of an alliance that combines all our voices to take direct support to a new level.

The Alliance for Full Participation (AFP) is a partnership of disability organizations united by a common vision: better and more fulfilling lives for people with disabilities through successful community inclusion. NADSP was one of 11 founding members of AFP in 2003. In September 2005, AFP hosted an historic summit of member organizations and individuals committed to making full inclusion a reality. More than 2,500 attended the Summit including the entire NADSP board of directors and many NADSP members. Attendees said, “I don’t believe there’s ever been a time when so many organizations have all joined forces to work on common issues,” and “Coming together for one summit to talk about our agenda for the future is new, unique, and really exciting.”

Summit participants developed a comprehensive action agenda. One of its key points is a recommitment to the Community Imperative, which states that no one should live in an institution because of disability. The way to achieve this vision is to increase the community choices available to people with disabilities

and to provide well-trained support staff. Ultimately, this will lead to the closing of all institutions.

Energized and focused by the AFP Summit, NADSP leadership is assessing opportunities for further collaboration on the AFP agenda

**“I don’t believe there’s ever been a time when so many organizations have all joined forces to work on common issues.”**

and taking the lead on workforce issues. We have 30 affiliates in 21 states already working on our mission and goals, which align with those of AFP. We must continue efforts to require quality inclusive community services for everyone.

NADSP Vice President Cliff Poetz saw the AFP Summit as a time to focus on overcoming both real and perceived barriers — barriers that make employment, daily living, recreation, and ultimately full community inclusion difficult to attain. “We need to do a better job providing transportation in both rural and urban settings” he remarked. “Vocational opportunities that include individualized supports by well-trained staff must become a reality.” He also suggests outreach to communities to help them understand dignity of risk and that health and safety, though key components of anyone’s life, should not be the

sole factor in decision-making and determining quality. As part of this outreach, Cliff feels that we need to do more to dispel myths about hiring people of differing abilities, including the perceived difficulty and expense of providing accommodations. AFP participants also recognized that these barriers are often similar to those faced by the people providing direct support. This is why NADSP is a part of the AFP — to include people with disabilities, and by so doing, encourage those who support them to achieve life goals.

Individuals and organizations that would like to be part of NADSP’s efforts can learn about opportunities by contacting their local affiliate. A list of local affiliates is available at [www.nadsp.org](http://www.nadsp.org). The more people get involved, the more we can accomplish by combining our voices at the grass roots and the front lines.

Mark Olson, NADSP President, works at Arc Greater Twin Cities in Minnesota. He can be reached at [olsonmark@archennepin.org](mailto:olsonmark@archennepin.org). Cliff Poetz, NADSP Vice President, works at the University of Minnesota’s Institute on Community Integration. He can be reached at 612.871.0675.

# Stories from DSPs at the AFP Summit

While attending the Alliance for Full Participation (AFP) Summit the staff of *Frontline Initiative* had the opportunity to talk with Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) about their work and what they wanted to learn from their participation in the Summit. The following are interviews with two DSPs around their experience at the Summit.

## Teresa's Story

Teresa DeMar has worked as a DSP for over 20 years. Currently, she works at Heritage Christian Services in Rochester, New York. She enjoys her work as a DSP and particularly appreciates being able to share different parts of herself with the people she supports by coaching a Special Olympics volleyball team and doing craft projects with them.

Teresa traveled to AFP with 12 people from her agency, including DSPs and self-advocates. She had been asked to speak about being a DSP at the Summit. Initially, she thought the Summit would be small, but later learned what a huge and innovative Summit it actually was. This made Teresa a bit nervous about her presentation, but she reported that it went really well.

When asked about her experience at the AFP Summit, Teresa stated, "This conference has been wonderful. I've been able to get all sorts of different ideas." She indicated that one of the greatest joys of the conference was being able to share in the experience of the self-advocates she traveled with. She enjoyed talking with them about the sessions and observing how much they enjoyed their experience at the Summit.

"Attending the Summit sparks a vision of wanting to make sure you can go back and share all these experiences with everybody," Teresa said, "and I look forward to the next steps we can take. I can't wait to see what our state as a whole wants to set its goals." As she reflected on her experience at the AFP Summit, Teresa noted how truly important

Rarely do you hear the voice of self-advocates....We need to begin to listen because it is their life and they need to be running it.

DSPs are to the people they support and the setting in which they work. Additionally, Teresa had renewed her vision for encouraging greater self-advocacy by the people she supports as she returned to work.

Teresa DeMar works as a DSP at Heritage Christian Services in Rochester, NY. She can be reached at [tdemar@heritagechristianservices.org](mailto:tdemar@heritagechristianservices.org) or 585.872.4344.

## Rita's Story

Rita McAninch-Hastings has worked as a DSP at Dakota Communities Incorporated in Minnesota since 1981. She really enjoys her job and the constant challenges it brings. As a presenter and participant at the AFP Summit, Rita admits that at first she did not know what to expect.

Arriving at the Summit, she was particularly struck by the number of self-advocates in attendance. She reflected that in so many places the voices of self-advocates are missing. She was also struck by the information shared and the comments made by self-advocates. For Rita, these voices made important issues more three-dimensional. She typically hears the views of providers, DSPs, and the government, but with self-advocates included in the dialogue, the picture was completed. Rita stated, "Rarely do you hear the voices of self-advocates talking about how the things we do impact their lives and whether or not they really want us to do those things. We need to begin to listen because it is their life and they need to be running it."

As Rita returned to her work in Minnesota, she brought the desire to help spread the word about empowerment among the people she supports. She would like to create opportunities for the people she works with to be involved in self-advocacy groups. Her goal was to communicate that the people she supports have power and there is a place where their voices can be heard.

Rita McAninch-Hastings is a DSP at Dakota Communities Incorporated in Minnesota. She can be reached at 763.588.6312.



# State-of-the-Art Definition

## Direct Support Workforce Development

Imagine if you were dependent on someone else to help with personal and intimate care. Imagine that every few weeks or so you were faced with a new person. When they show up (if they show up) to provide support and personal care, you don't even know who they are, let alone if they can properly support you. For many people with disabilities and their families, this is their reality. The dream of full inclusion and full citizenship in communities for individuals with disabilities and their families is in jeopardy because it is becoming more and more difficult to find, hire, and retain competent, caring Direct Support Professionals (DSPs).

Low wages, lack of recognition for their important work, poor supervision, lack of clear direction or job descriptions, problems with coworkers, and lack of training all contribute to the current crisis in DSP workforce.

Direct Support Workforce Development is a set of strategies and interventions to help employers find, hire, and retain high quality DSPs and Frontline Supervisors (FLSs). Direct Support Workforce Development strategies and interventions include —

- **Use of inside recruitment sources**  
Involve current employees, consumers, family members, volunteers, and board members who are familiar with the agency and the work, and who have an investment in new employee success, to recruit potential DSPs.
- **Realistic job preview (RJP)**  
Provide a description of the positive and negative aspects of the job to potential employees.
- **Structured behavioral interview**  
Solicit more accurate information from a candidate and relates their previous experiences to their potential success in the job with this interview method.
- **Socialization**  
Help new employees connect positively with existing employees and consumers, and buy in to the agency mission and vision.
- **Mentoring**  
Assist employees in socialization, developing new skills, and connecting with other employees through peer mentoring programs.
- **Effective orientation**  
Help new employees feel welcome, a part of the agency/family, and confident in their jobs.
- **Improve training practices**  
Use adult learning principles, competency-based training, and other methods to assure that employees fully understand and can perform their job duties.
- **Job carving**  
Restructure jobs to help employees be successful by reducing the number of duties and the amount of training required to learn new skills.
- **Support immigrant workers**  
Understand the unique needs and challenges of being a new American in the workplace, and adapt the workplace to be welcoming to all employees.
- **Recognition**  
Promote networking and career advancement opportunities, use effective formal and informal recognition strategies, and acknowledges long-term DSPs.
- **Team building**  
Use effective conflict management techniques that build camaraderie.
- **Participatory management**  
Provide opportunities for DSP voices to be heard, involve DSPs in management decisions that reduces hierarchy.
- **Evaluate recruitment, retention and training outcomes**  
Develop accurate baselines and use data to diagnose needs and evaluate interventions.

Direct Support Workforce Development interventions help improve or refine how a community human service agency or family employers find, recruit, hire, train, and retain high-quality DSPs and FLSs. For more information, go to <http://rtc.umn.edu/dsp/> and click on Publications & Products.

# Training Frontline Supervisors Improves Recruitment and Retention of DSPs

It is well known that there is a national Direct Support Professional (DSP) workforce crisis. People with disabilities and the community human service employers that support them are struggling to find and keep committed, competent, and caring DSPs. Part of the solution to this crisis is finding better ways to recruit, train, and retain DSPs. To help address this problem, the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) funded a three-year grant project at the Research and Training Center on Community Living (RTC) at the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration. The project was designed to create a "train-the-trainer" and technical assistance model to help community human service employers address the DSP workforce crisis. RTC was selected to receive the grant because it has conducted several research projects on DSP workforce development interventions across the country, and it has a proven track record of sharing successful workforce development interventions and strategies.

Five community human service employers were selected to participate in the project, called the National Training Institute for Frontline Supervisors and Technical Assistance Project (NTIFFS) —

1. New Horizons Resources, Inc. of New York
2. Bancroft NeuroHealth and Devereux of New Jersey
3. Orange Grove Center of Tennessee
4. Potomac Center, Inc. of West Virginia
5. Southwest Wyoming Rehab Center, CES and RENEW of Wyoming

Three staff members from each participating agency were identified and agreed to participate in all project activities. These "change agents" were responsible for facilitating change within their agency and sharing what they learn with other community human service employers in their region.

**People with disabilities and the community human service employers that support them are struggling to find and keep DSPs who are committed, competent, and caring.**

## Task One

The first task for these individuals was to learn about workforce development intervention strategies. To do this, they used the training curriculum called *Removing the Revolving Door (RRD): Strategies to Address Recruitment and Retention Challenges*. Each team of change agents worked through the *RRD* modules and lessons with the technical assistance from RTC. Throughout this learning process, each agency assessed its current

workforce challenges and developed a unique workforce development intervention plan to address them. *RRD* lessons were followed up with the on-line version of *RRD*, called the College of Frontline Supervision and Management (CFSM), to reinforce learning and provide another method for training FLSs in workforce development.

Both *RRD* and CFSM include modules on the following topics and competencies —

- The role of FLSs in influencing DSP recruitment, retention, and training outcomes, including their ability to identify the impact of recruitment and retention issues on consumers, DSPs, and the organization; effectively participate in and communicate about organization-wide activities to address these issues; identify a range of participatory management techniques; and use strategies to collaborate with DSPs in management decisions.
- Using effective recruitment and selection strategies to find and hire DSPs who will stay, including tapping new recruitment sources; using structured interviews and other selection methods; and clearly differentiating recruitment and selection strategies.
- Effectively using socialization, orientation, mentoring, and training strategies — including formal and informal training, orientation, and mentoring practices — to respond to the needs, desires, and interests of new employees; using accurate competency-based DSP job descriptions to develop training and conduct performance

appraisals; and coordinating and participating in DSP orientation and in-service training.

- Effectively using team building, conflict management, and employee recognition strategies, including understanding the importance of recognition in promoting job satisfaction and organizational commitment; matching specific recognition techniques to the needs of individual DSPs; and enhancing staff relations by using effective communication skills, encouraging growth and self-development, facilitating teamwork, employing conflict resolution skills, and adequately supporting DSPs.
- Effectively using, selecting, implementing, and evaluating targeted recruitment and retention interventions, including working with stakeholders (e.g., consumers, families, DSPs, agency administrators) to establish baselines, select intervention strategies to address identified problems, and implement and evaluate the outcomes of selected interventions.

One of the key concepts stressed during this initial training was the important role FLSs play in the recruitment and retention of high quality DSPs. Better trained FLSs are better able to provide high quality training and support to DSPs, resulting in higher quality DSPs and better supports, services, and lives for people with disabilities.

## Task Two

The second major project activity was to invite the 15 change agents to participate in a four-day “train-the-trainer” session. The purpose of the session was to reinforce *RRD* lessons, share and network with others from across the country, and learn techniques to teach FLSs in

their own agencies about workforce development interventions.

Following the training, the change agents returned home to: 1) begin training and supporting FLSs in these highly effective workforce

**Better trained FLSs are better able to provide high quality training and support to DSPs resulting in higher quality DSPs and better supports, services and lives for people with disabilities.**

development practices, and 2) refine and implement their workforce development intervention plan.

Project staff provided comprehensive technical assistance to participants throughout all project activities, including reviewing their baseline data, selecting intervention techniques to target their agency’s specific problems, and developing and implementing the selected intervention techniques. The effectiveness of the intervention plans will be assessed by comparing baseline data on annual turnover rates, vacancy rates, and training outcomes with similar information gathered after the implementation of the interventions. Ongoing technical assistance was provided through email, phone calls, and face-to-face visits to support and guide future intervention work.

The projects technical assistants make use of and recommend various workforce development tools, including planning worksheets, da-

tabase templates, sample structured interview questions, realistic job preview selection guidelines, baseline worksheets, exit questionnaires, staff satisfaction surveys, organizational commitment surveys, and training needs assessments, just to name a few. (These tools are posted in PDF format <http://rtc.umn.edu/dsp/>)

An important project activity was for the agency participants to develop plans to sustain their workforce development efforts, not only within their agencies and coalitions, but also regionally with other community human service employers. To help in this process, another training was held in May 2005. Participants had an opportunity to share what they had done, discuss their successes, and learn about what it would take to sustain their workforce development efforts.

Continued on page 16

## Quality Mall

An invaluable resource for the project is RTC’s Quality Mall, [www.qualitymall.org](http://www.qualitymall.org). This Web site showcases the best ideas, programs, information, products, and supports in person-centered services for people with developmental disabilities. Here many commercially available tools and products to assist organizations with recruitment, retention, and training challenges are reviewed and listed. Quality Mall is not a retailer or vendor of products and services, but uses the theme of a shopping mall to help connect visitors to available products and services. Within the Mall is a Staffing Store with three departments: Staff Recruitment and Retention, Staff Supervision and Management, and Staff Training.

# CMS Announces the National Direct Service Workforce Resource Center

The U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is pleased to announce the launching of its National Direct Service Workforce Resource Center (DSW). CMS created DSW in response to the large and growing shortage of workers who provide direct care and personal assistance to individuals who need long-term supports and services in the U.S., particularly those living in the community.

DSW provides information and technical assistance to state and local governments, non-profit organiza-

tions, employers, and professionals who want to improve the recruitment and retention of DSPs.

DSW brings together the nation's premier resources on the topic of the direct support workforce. These resources, which include Web-based clearinghouses, technical experts, training tools, cover the full range of consumer populations.

In addition, state Medicaid agencies can apply to receive individualized in-depth technical assistance through the DSW. CMS is sponsoring this technical assistance for state

Medicaid agencies because of the key role they play in quality assurance, worker education, supervisor education for workers and consumers, wages and benefits, and provider reimbursement.

For more information, visit the DSW Resource Center Web site at [www.dswresourcecenter.org](http://www.dswresourcecenter.org), call toll free 1.877.822.2647, or email [info@dswresourcecenter.org](mailto:info@dswresourcecenter.org).

## My Friend Charlie

by Nate Hajdu

He is my friend: I am his friend  
 I help him out: He helps me to learn  
 I help him to learn: He helps me to grow  
 I help him to grow: He teaches me to accept

His struggle: Is my struggle  
 His vulnerability: Leads to my respect  
 My respect: Leads him to trust  
 His trust: Leads to my devotion

His availability: Feeds my desire to be needed  
 I keep his secrets: He keeps mine

We have an arrangement  
 His lack of self-consciousness: Leads to my tolerance  
 His constant need for stimulation: Leads to my patience  
 His discomfort: Sharpens my sensitivity  
 His unhappiness: Is my challenge  
 His presence: Eases my isolation  
 His loyalty: Leads to my loyalty  
 Which leads to mutual appreciation

His brokenness: Makes me accept my own brokenness  
 Which leads to healing

His humanity: Leads to personal connection  
 His steadfastness: Centers me

His smile: Is my reward  
 His joy: Lifts my spirits  
 His happiness: Gives me a sense of purpose  
 His struggles: Expose my anxieties  
 Which tests me  
 Then strengthens me  
 And in turn bolsters my faith

In guiding: I am guided  
 In helping: I am helped  
 In teaching: I am taught

In his laughter: There is joy  
 In that joy: There is energy  
 In that energy: There is spirit  
 In that spirit: There is grace

In his eyes: There is a glow  
 In that glow: Is his soul  
 In his soul: There is God  
 And in God: There is peace

Nate Hajdu read this poem at the Interfaith Disability PreSummit on September 22, 2005. Nate is a DSP at the Jubilee Association of Maryland and can be reached at [nhajdu@jubileemd.org](mailto:nhajdu@jubileemd.org). Reprinted with permission.

# DSPAT at the AFP Summit

## Validation and Respect for DSPs

I had the privilege of attending the Alliance for Full Participation (AFP) Summit along with Direct Support Professional Association of Tennessee (DSPAT) Director Earl Foxx, Jr. During these pivotal days we were able to hear the collective voices of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities speak on issues that most concern them. The town hall meeting, led by CNN's Frank Sesno, was most impressive because it put real faces, real challenges and real success stories in a position of relevance and meaning.

While there we were also able to meet with the leaders of the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP), who were more than thrilled to hear of DSPAT's progress. One of the main goals of our meeting with NADSP was to discuss ways we can incorporate their membership benefits into

DSPAT's membership benefit, so that when people join DSPAT they are also given the chance to join NADSP. We were able to come up with some great ideas and we are looking forward to hearing feedback as they are rolled out. Yes, it may mean that DSPAT's membership will increase by a few dollars, but as members of DSPAT you will have the opportunity to join a national association. Membership will be open to individuals, associates and organizations.

There are still many states that long for an association like DSPAT. One of the sessions at the Summit was entitled, "From the Inside: Stories, Reflections, and Predictions About the Status of the Direct Support Workforce: What Works and What Doesn't." According to Amy Hewitt, PhD, there would need to be 900,000 new DSPs entering the field by the year 2020 in order

to keep pace with the current 52% turnover rate and the increasing need for DSP services. I shared with the session what we are doing in Tennessee, and the great support we have from so many stakeholders like families, self-advocates, the state government, and agencies. It was very exciting to stand with a group of people who understand why we do what we do. It felt like our role as DSPs was validated and respected. DSPAT is a great example for other states to follow. Our best work lies ahead!

As a member of the State Team for NADSP, DSPAT is committed to seeing changes in the three key areas the AFP Summit addressed: Leadership, Community Membership, and Enhancing Services. If you have any questions or comments, please let us know. We hope you will join this national movement. For more information, please visit [www.dspat.org](http://www.dspat.org) or call 1-800-835-7077.



Danyetta Najoli was Chair of the Direct Support Professionals Association of Tennessee, Inc. (DSPAT). Since writing this article, Danyetta has moved with her family to Nebraska.

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# Frontline Resources

## **The College of Direct Support: Supervisory Courses**

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

The College of Direct Support (CDS) is a self-paced Web-based training program. It is filled with information and online tools to help supervisors and others learn more about the recruitment and retention issues discussed in the *Removing the Revolving Door* curriculum. CDS supervisory courses help learners understand how to identify problems with recruitment and retention practices and make real changes. The multimedia materials use interactive exercises to help learners understand and apply the content.

## **Recruitment and Retention Tool Kit: Strategies for Finding and Keeping Good Workers**

*Developed by the Oregon  
Rehabilitation Association*

This tool kit describes an array of recruitment and retention intervention strategies, and provides questions and assessment tools agencies, managers, and supervisors can use to select them. The manual includes brief descriptions of the following strategies: Recruitment, Hiring, Communication, Measurement, Orientation and Training, Supervisor Training, and Creating a Great Place to Work. The tool kit also includes a Recruitment and Retention action plan. To order call the Oregon Rehabilitation Association at 503-585-3337.

## **Direct Support Professional Workforce Development Web Site**

[rtc.umn.edu/dsp](http://rtc.umn.edu/dsp)

This Web site, created by the Research and Training Center on Community Living, contains downloadable publications, tools, and products on staff recruitment, retention, and training. In addition, you will find descriptions of research and training projects on DSP workforce development.

## **Staff Recruitment, Retention, and Training Strategies**

*by Sheryl A. Larson & Amy S. Hewitt*

This easy-to-read handbook offers supervisors, managers, and administrators a practical guide for facing recruitment and retention challenges, and finding ways to find, train and keep dedicated, motivated DSPs. Each chapter of this easy-to-read handbook focuses on a critical workforce issue such as recruiting and hiring employees, socializing and supporting staff, strengthening commitment and skills through mentoring programs, building effective teams, fostering diversity and cultural competence, and designing and surviving organizational change. For ordering information, visit <http://www.brookespublishing.com>

## **Direct Support: A Realistic Job Preview**

*Produced by the Research and  
Training Center on Community Living*

A realistic job preview (RJP) is a hiring strategy used to give potential employees detailed and balanced information about job expectations, the employer, and the worksite, so they can make an informed decision about accepting a job offer. RJP's provide both positive and negative information that potential staff are unlikely to know. This professionally produced 22-minute video, with customization options, illustrates the real, everyday work of DSPs. It provides first-person stories and advice for people considering direct support as a career choice. For more information, visit <http://rtc.umn.edu/publications>

*Frontline Initiative thanks the Quality Mall ([www.qualitymall.org](http://www.qualitymall.org)) for these resource descriptions.*

**Join the NADSP,**  
Continued from page 1

our work. Other professionals are asked to pay a little bit more for memberships because they generally have more resources. NADSP also gives these professionals the opportunity to mentor and support our leadership by sharing their experience and talents. This helps to give our leaders a strong knowledge and skill base.

**Should agencies and providers be allies?**

NADSP definitely wants provider organizations as allies! We offer opportunities for agencies, providers, and other organizations to support our mission. It does not stop with sending us a check to become an agency affiliate or a supporting organization — there is so much more agencies can do to support our effort. Most of all, we ask that in addition to writing a check, that these organizations encourage individual DSPs to get involved and become better trained professionals who use their collective voice to make change happen.

NADSP does not work in a vacuum; we know that we need to collaborate with our allies to reach our goals.

**How can I make a difference locally?**

NADSP is excited to have many state and local contacts and affiliates supporting its mission. Being grass-roots focused, NADSP asks affiliates to align with our mission and goals but gives the state entities the right to decide which goals to focus on. We have 30 contacts working in 21 states, all in various stages of organizing. Check out our Web site, *www.nadsp.org*, to see what your next local step could be. If there is not a contact listed for your state, call us to see if we have any updates or if we can support you in getting some of your direct support colleagues together to begin the process of affiliation. In every state, the leadership for NADSP chapters and affiliates arose from dedicated people. NADSP will be there to help you make it happen in your community as well.

**So what do I get for my NADSP membership?**

A lot! Besides the personal satisfaction of being a part of the organization and supporting the mission, all individual members receive a membership card, Code of Ethics card, and a one-year subscription to *Frontline Initiative*, the official publication of NADSP. *FI* is written for, by, and about DSPs. You also become part of a network of committed individuals and groups working to make self-directed lives a reality for the people we support and professionalism a reality for the direct support workforce.

Agency affiliates and supporting organizations get certificates of membership and two or four subscriptions respectively. They are also recognized in each issue of *FI* and on our Web site.

**Questions?**

Call one of our officers listed or your local affiliate (see page 4) and we will do our best to answer your questions and bring you into this exciting organization.

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**Remember, subscriptions are included with NADSP membership. Consider a membership today (see page 5).**

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Participants begin to develop their individual workforce development sustainability plans. As the project came to an end, participants have had begun to provide training and technical assistance to other organizations and FLSs regionally.

The final activity of the project was an assessment of its success. All of the participating agencies were asked to conduct post-intervention assessments to evaluate the impact of project participation on workforce development outcomes in their agencies. The final project report will summarize the interventions used and the outcomes experienced by participating agencies. When this report is complete at the end of 2006, it will be submitted to *Frontline Initiative* for publication consideration.

Nancy McCulloh is a Project Coordinator at the Research and Training Center for Community Living at the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration. She can be reached at [mccul037@umn.edu](mailto:mccul037@umn.edu).



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