find choose & keep great DSPs

A toolkit for families

looking for quality, caring and committed direct support professionals

UIC Department of Disability and Human Development
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO
COLLEGE OF APPLIED HEALTH SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

RTC
Research & Training Center on Community Living

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contents

find

A Look for the right person
B Identify your wants and needs
C Use the best sources
D Market to the right person

choose

E Share the real story
F Develop your real story
G Ask the right questions
H Select the best person

keep

I Welcome new DSPs
J Teach DSPs to do the job
K Help DSPs avoid stress and burnout
L Celebrate a job well done

User's guide

Version for families and support team members

Purpose

This toolkit is designed to provide easy-to-use tips and strategies to help families of people with disabilities find, choose and keep high quality Direct Support Professionals. The tools were created so that families could pick and choose what strategies work best for them. It's not necessary to use the entire toolkit, and it's not necessary to use the tools in order.

Defining DSPs

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) play an important role in the lives of people with disabilities and their families. DSPs assist people with disabilities in activities of daily living, social activities, personal contacts, coordination of health care, community interactions and more. The support they provide depends upon the situation of each person and can encompass a wide range of possible activities, such as helping to maintain a home, meeting friends, finding work, providing transportation, making important decisions, taking medications, learning new skills, paying bills, getting a job and/or providing physical assistance. DSPs also facilitate connections to the people, resources and experiences necessary for families and individuals to live fully and safely in their neighborhoods and communities. The quality of support individuals with disabilities receive from DSPs has a profound effect on the quality of their daily lives.

Different terms and titles are used for people who do such work, including "personal care attendant" or "direct care worker." This toolkit uses the term Direct Support Professional or DSP.

"One of our greatest challenges is finding good staff. Once we find them, we work really hard to keep them!"

Who should use this version of the toolkit?

- ☐ **Family members of people with disabilities:** This toolkit is for family members of people with disabilities, to guide them on how to support their family member in finding, choosing and keeping great DSPs.
- ☐ **Anyone providing support for people with disabilities:** This toolkit can also be used by anyone providing support for people with disabilities.

Contents of the toolkit

The toolkit is set up as a resource guide organized into the three-step process of finding, choosing and keeping great DSPs. It includes four tools for each topic area —

Find

- Look for the right person
- Identify your wants and needs
- Use the best sources
- Market to the right person

Choose

- Share the real story
- Develop your real story
- Ask the right questions
- Select the best person

Keep

- Welcome new DSPs
- Teach DSPs to do the job
- Help DSPs avoid stress and burnout
- Celebrate a job well done

How to use the toolkit

There are two different versions of this toolkit — one for people with disabilities and one for their family members and support providers. These toolkits can be used together or separately. Both versions have the same sections and similar information. Both versions were developed and reviewed by people with disabilities and their family members to make sure they are appropriate, relevant and accessible for people with a wide range of disabilities.

Think about where you are in terms of finding, choosing and keeping DSPs —

- Are you just beginning the process of finding a new DSP to work for your family member and need some tips on how to get started? If so, look at the "Find" section.
- Are you in the process of hiring someone and want to learn how to identify who you should select for the job? If so, look at the "Choose" section.
- Do you currently have a DSP working for your family member that is great and you want to learn how to keep him or her? If so, look at the "Keep" section.

Some people have more than one DSP working with them and therefore may be at different phases with different DSPs. For example, Joe may have Bob come every morning to assist him in getting ready for work, but Joe may be looking to find someone else to help him in the afternoons with grocery shopping and bills. Therefore, Joe could use the strategies in the "Keep" section for Bob as well as the strategies in the "Find" section to hire someone else. Where you are in the process will help you determine where to look.

Additional tips

- All of the tools may not be relevant to you; some of them may fit your personal situation more than others.
- There is no particular order in which you should use this toolkit. It is not like a book that you need to read from front to back, but rather has a variety of different resources that you can pick and choose from depending on your situation. Use the toolkit in whatever way works best for your family.
- Also, the toolkit is not meant to be a curriculum or a way to learn everything, but rather a guide with tips and highlights on how to find, choose and keep great DSPs. It is meant to be a resource and could be used as a supplement to training.
- The toolkit does not serve as a legal reference for ensuring that you are following appropriate employment laws. It was not intended for this purpose. Please consult other resources for this information.

Worksheet and template CD

The toolkit has various activities/worksheets that can help you through the process of finding, choosing and keeping great DSPs. For your convenience, all activities, worksheets and realistic job preview PowerPoint templates are included in the CD found in the back cover of the toolkit. You may use the worksheets right in this toolkit, or photocopy or print out worksheets so you can use them a few times.

Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota

The Institute on Community Integration (ICI) was founded out of the belief that universities had a great deal to offer people with disabilities in our society. Bringing together expertise from different fields — from the health sciences to education, psychology, social work and many others — creates a center of academic strength to push the frontiers of knowledge, and to connect that knowledge and the development of ideas to the needs of people with disabilities, their families and their communities.

ICI, a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities based at the University of Minnesota, is home to six affiliated centers and over 100 projects. Its work is guided by the belief that all people with disabilities should experience the benefits of family and community living while receiving the services necessary to fully develop their potential in the areas of personal independence, self-care, educational and vocational achievement and social participation.

Research and Training Center on Community Living

The Research and Training Center on Community Living (RTC/CL) is one of ICI's six affiliated centers providing research, evaluation, training and technical assistance and dissemination to support the aspirations of people with disabilities to live full, productive and integrated lives in their communities. RTC/CL also works to find creative solutions to DSP workforce challenges of recruitment, retention and training. RTC/CL operates with primary funding from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR). It also receives funding from the Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD) and other federal agencies. For more information, contact —

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Institute on Disability and Human Development at the University of Illinois at Chicago

The Institute on Disability and Human Development (IDHD), a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research and Service (UCEDD), is dedicated to promoting the independence, productivity and inclusion of people with disabilities into all aspects of society. This mission is addressed by conducting research and disseminating information about disabilities to scholars, policymakers, businesses, government agencies, service providers and the general public. The Institute's mission includes providing an extensive array of clinical and community service activities and, through the Department of Disability and Human Development and other academic departments, offering interdisciplinary pre-service training. The values of cultural diversity, consumer choice and self-determination are emphasized across the life span in all of the Institutes training, public service and research activities. For more information, contact —

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Look for the right person

Defining the type of person you want to work for your family member will help you find the right people for the job. Think about what your family member needs and wants from a DSP. How can you find and choose people who best fit what your family is looking for? Here is some information about how to define who is the right person for your family member.

Think about the DSPs you have had in the past and make a list

- ☐ What did you like about the good DSPs?
  - What were they like?
  - What did they like to do?
  - What was going on in their life?
  - Where did they live?
  - Were they a man or a woman?
  - How old were they?
- ☐ Think about the DSPs that stayed the longest —
  - Why did they stay?
  - Why did they leave?

"I really want to find someone who loves children and enjoys being outdoors."

Circle the qualities that you and your family member want DSPs to have — and add some of your own!

Assertive	Creative	Honest	Resourceful
Balanced	Decisive	Insightful	Respectful
Calm	Dependable	Takes initiative	Self-directed
Caring	Determined	Mature	Sincere
Committed	Diplomatic	Modest	Smart
Common sense	Empathetic	Objective	Understanding
Communicative	Encouraging	Organized	Visionary
Compassionate	Enthusiastic	Patient	_____
Conscientious	Flexible	Positive	_____
Consistent	Good sense of humor	Professional	_____
Cooperative		Punctual	_____

Make a list of the things you and your family member want DSPs to do

☐ Consider the following when making your list:

- Prepare meals
- Help family member eat
- Help family member dress and undress
- Take family member places
- Help family member with bathing and grooming
- Clean family member's house
- Help family member go to the bathroom
- Run errands
- Help family member be healthy

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____

Are personal phone calls okay at work?

What does your family member like to do?

Will they complete tasks the way you need and want them done?

Identify your wants and needs

B

Think about what you and your family member might expect from a potential DSP. Figure out what supports you need and want from DSPs for your family member. Explore what work behaviors and standards your family wants the DSP to meet. Here is some information about how you can set expectations for DSPs.

What do you and your family member expect from DSPs?

☐ Think of things your family might expect from a DSP who supports your family member. Here is a list that may help —

- Be to work on time.
- Communicate with you and your family member well.
- Work as a team with the other DSPs who support your family member.
- Be willing to work extra hours when another DSP is sick or on vacation.
- Respect you and your family member's values even when the DSP does not share them.
- Complete tasks and duties the way you and your family member need and want them done.

What requirements do you and your family member have for DSPs?

- ☐ Another area for your family to think about before choosing a DSP is what requirements you want potential DSPs to meet before you hire them. Here is a list of things to consider —
  - Is it okay to share information about your family member with co-workers and others?
  - Is it okay to make personal calls while working?
  - Is it okay to use your refrigerator and stove for personal refreshments and meals?
  - Is it okay to open your family member's mail in their presence or at any time?
  - Is it important to share thoughts and feelings honestly and respectfully with your family member and co-workers?

What are you and your family member's wants and needs?

- ☐ Think about the following things that can help your family to decide what supports your family member needs and wants that a potential DSP can provide —
  - What things does your family member do every day —
    - What does a good day and a bad day look like?
  - How are morning, afternoon, evening and nighttime routines different and/or the same?
  - What are some leisure activities your family member enjoys?
  - What does your family member do on the weekend? How is this different from weekdays?
  - When does your family member need things to be done?
  - What things do people need to know to keep your family member safe and healthy?
  - What things are important to you and your family member? What things matter less to you and your family member?
  - What are the places a DSP can help your family member get to? How and when does that happen?
  - What time of day does your family member need the most help and for how long?
  - What things bother you and your family member the most? What makes you and your family member upset?
  - What things are most important for people to know about your family and your family member?

What might a bad day look like?

Narrow down what is most important when choosing a DSP

1. Think carefully about the three lists you have just created: expectations of DSPs, requirements for DSPs and supports you and your family member want and need from DSPs.
2. Pick the top 10 things that are most important to you and your family member. Write them below.
3. When you are done with your top 10 list, review it again. This time choose the top five most important things and mark them with an X in the box.

Top areas to focus on when choosing a DSP

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

Use the best sources

C

It is not always easy to find the right person to work with your family member, but you can improve the chances of finding someone good by asking current DSPs, other family members and your friends to help you. These people know what skills are needed to work with your family member and can share stories about what is expected.

Strategies

There are two good strategies for finding new DSPs: inside recruitment sources and outside recruitment sources.

> "One of the best DSPs I ever hired was someone who was a friend of a DSP who worked for me."

Inside sources

- ☐ Inside sources like current DSPs, former DSPs, other family members, your friends and other people who know what it is like to help support your family member can help you find new DSPs.
- ☐ Inside sources can tell potential DSPs specific information about the job and what it is like working for you and your family member.
- ☐ Using inside sources is more likely to maximize the amount of time new

DSPs stay because they know what to expect from the job before they apply.

- ☐ Inside sources are usually less expensive and can help you find the people you are looking for.

Outside sources

- ☐ Outside sources like newspaper help wanted ads, internet ads, flyers and job postings on bulletin boards only give general information about the work and cannot provide additional information about what is expected or what it is like to support your family member.
- ☐ Outside sources are more expensive and can lead to people applying who are not a good match for you and your family member.

What sources should you use?

- ☐ Use inside sources first because they cost less and work best!
  - You can encourage inside sources to lend a hand in finding new DSPs by using recruitment and hiring bonuses.
  - Provide inside sources with cards to hand out to people they know who might want to work for you and your family member. Put the name of who people should talk to about the job on the card.
  - Offer people trial work experience opportunities as another way to create your own insiders.

How to best use inside sources

Here are some ideas of how you can encourage people you know — inside sources — to help you find new DSPs.

Recruitment bonus

Giving people money or other gifts can help you find good DSPs for your family member. When inside recruitment sources recommend someone who is hired and stays employed for a set amount of time, you reward them with money or other gifts. Set up the bonus so that part of the bonus is paid when the new worker completes orientation, another part when they complete 6 months of work and the final amount after they have worked for 12 months.

Hiring bonuses

Hiring bonuses should encourage DSPs to work with your family member, and also to stay longer. You can use cash incentives, quick raises and gifts given at set times

during the first year or two of work. Consider giving part after they complete orientation, part at 6 months and the final amount at 12 months.

Use the worksheet on page C-10 to help you develop your bonus program.

Trial work experience

Create your own insiders by offering people an opportunity to try out the job. You can create trial work experiences through paid and unpaid internships or volunteer or community service opportunities, and by working with high school work study programs or post-secondary school programs. You should develop relationships with the people in charge of these programs such as high school counselors, professors and church staff. It is important to remember to provide supervision to people who are part of any trial work opportunity to ensure the safety of your family member.

Plan ahead

Trying to anticipate openings before they occur is not easy. Ask current DSPs to talk to you at least 3–6 months in advance if they think they might be leaving. You can then begin finding new DSPs before you actually need them. You can also hire DSPs as casual or fill-in DSPs so they are ready when you have an opening with more regular hours.

Contact cards

Give contact cards to inside people who are helping you find new DSPs. Make sure the cards have the name and number of the person to talk to about working with your family member. You can use a computer and blank business cards to create your own contact cards or have some business cards printed professionally. You can also use neatly written note cards with contact information on them.

Develop your bonus program worksheet

Read the questions in the first column and think about your answers. Then write your answers under the recruitment and hiring bonus columns to help you develop a bonus program that will work for you.

Questions to answer	**Recruitment bonus** Given to existing DSPs for finding new DSPs who stay for a specific amount of time	**Hiring bonus** Given to new people who come to work for you
How much or what is the bonus?		
What specifically will people need to do to earn the bonus?		
When will the bonus be given? (Consider a staggered schedule like: at 30 days, 6 months and 12 months)		

Market to the right person

Finding DSPs to work with your family member takes a lot of work and planning. Once you identify the type of person you are looking for, you should begin to think about where you can find these types of people in your community. This is called *targeted marketing.*

Think about where in the community you found the best DSPs

- ☐ For example, if you are looking for a youthful male who likes to ride bikes, be outdoors and who has a lot of energy, where in your community will you find this type of person?
  - A local bike shop?
  - A local college in the physical education department??
  - Your local gym?

> "I get good people by going to the local college and talking to occupational therapy students that I know I can keep around until they get done with school. Students seem to like the flexibility and experience and they think the wage is pretty good."

D

Create a plan

Use these steps to guide the development of your plan. Answer each question and use the answers to help you figure out what kind of person you and your family member want to hire. Then, use the Targeted Marketing Information Sheet to find places in the community where you are most likely to find the people you want.

- ☐ **Step 1:** Describe your family member's current and past DSPs (you may want to refer to the tool, "Look for the Right Person," on page A-1) —
  - What do DSPs like about working with your family member?
  - What do DSPs dislike about working with your family member?
  - What is important to the DSPs who work with your family member?
- ☐ **Step 2:** Describe your family member (you may want to refer to the tool, "Develop Your Real Story," on page E-15) —
  - What is important to your family member?
  - What does your family member like to do?
  - Why would a DSP enjoy working with your family member?
  - What is difficult about working with your family member?
- ☐ **Step 3:** Identify reasons DSPs have left —
  - Is there anything you can change so this will not happen again?
- ☐ **Step 4:** Where can you find the people you and your family member are looking for? (See "Targeted Marketing Information Sheet" on page D-13.)
- ☐ **Step 5:** Here are some ways to let people know about the job —
  - Spread the word by talking to others.
  - Tell your friends, family members, relatives and co-workers.
  - If you meet someone who seems right for the job, ask them to consider interviewing with you for it.
  - Make and give out business/marketing cards to people while you are shopping, waiting for a movie to begin or at a sporting event.
  - Post flyers that describe who you are, the type of support needs you have and the kind of person you want to work with you.
  - Write and place articles in local newspapers or bulletins about who you are and what type of support you want for your family member.

Targeted marketing information sheet

There are places in your community where you are most likely to find specific types of people. Some examples are listed below.

- ☐ **Faith-based organizations**
  Synagogues, churches, mosques, temples, spiritual centers and holiday events.

  Speak to the leader of the particular community you are targeting and ask them what they think is the best way to help you spread the word about your need for new DSPs for your family member. They may allow you to place something in their religious bulletin or mailing, speak at a service or gathering or post brochures or flyers in their building(s).

- ☐ **Gen Y'ers**
  Web sites (e.g., Monster.com), high schools, colleges, coffee shops, hangouts and shopping malls.

  This group may appreciate a creative approach to recruitment. Reach them where they live: on the computer, with their friends or hanging out!

- ☐ **Retirees**
  Senior centers, senior publications, senior Web sites, community centers, volunteer organizations, churches and senior apartment/condo communities.

  Many seniors or retired people have time, energy and tremendous gifts and skills to share. Contact the director of a community center and ask them how they reach their senior population, or contact your local chapter of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). Such organizations are well-equipped to help you reach this population in your immediate area.

- ☐ **Stay-at-home moms and dads**
  Family publications, community centers, neighborhood newspapers, child-friendly community events and places, grocery stores, schools, libraries and churches.

  Do you know parents whosw children participate in a play group? What a perfect place to start spreading the word. Also, consider any place where parents gather or where they

perform basic functions in their lives. You may contact your local elementary school principal and ask to speak at a meeting of the parent teacher organization, post flyers at the grocery store bulletin board or leave some flyers at the local laundromat. Target parent publications. Be creative!

- ☐ **Students**
  Classroom instructors, community and technical colleges and universities, high school career days, campus job fairs, campus human resources and financial aid offices, school newspapers and student Web sites.

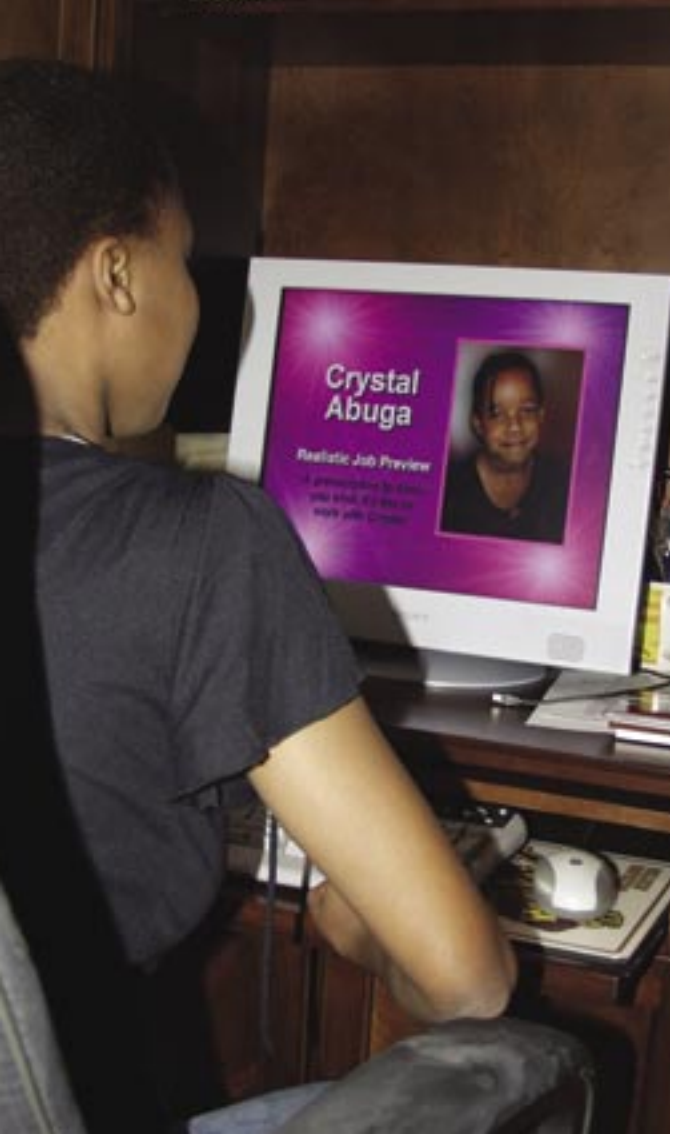
  Reach out to students who are specifically interested in a career in human services. Try to make contact with an instructor who teaches human service courses, or talk to current employees that are in school and ask them to introduce you to those instructors. Suggest that you make a presentation in their course about working with people with disabilities. This isn't just a recruitment opportunity, but an opportunity to educate these young adults. You can also disseminate information about the work opportunities that you have and professional training you can offer and leave recruitment or contact cards in case students are looking for employment providing supports to people with disabilities.

- ☐ **Cross-cultural communities**
  Cultural centers, community centers, newspapers, Web sites, radio stations, ethnic stores and services.

  A diverse workforce creates richness in your community, as well as in the lives of people receiving supports. You must, however, be prepared to appreciate, respect and train DSPs from various cultures as well. Recruiting within a specific cultural community can be very effective. Make sure that you communicate early on whether or not the applicant must be able to speak English to meet your support needs.

Additional Resource

Direct Support Professional Recruitment Toolkit
Research and Training Center on Community Living
204 Pattee Hall
150 Pillsbury Dr SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
612.625.6328
rtc.umn.edu/dsp



Share the real story

If you want good DSPs to stay longer, then you have to tell them the real story about working with your family member. Include both the satisfying and hard parts of the job. Sharing the real story is called a *realistic job preview.* Realistic job previews help potential DSPs understand what the job is all about before they accept a job offer.

Plan and create realistic job previews that work

- ☐ Gather information
  - Gather real stories about what the job is really like from DSPs who work with your family member.
  - Use the tool, "Develop Your Real Story," on page F-17 to help you plan what to include in your realistic job preview.
- ☐ Ask current DSPs —
  - What do you like best about your job?
  - What is your least favorite thing to do?
  - What do you wish you had known when you started that you know now?

> "Job seekers want to know what they're getting into right from the start before they decide to come and work for you."

E

- ☐ Summarize information
  - Select the stories that matter most and tell about the easy and fun parts of the job as well as the hard and challenging parts.
  - Pick a few stories to share with potential DSPs.
  - Use stories that tell about the fun and easy parts as well as the hard and challenging parts of the job. These have to tell the real story.
- ☐ Select a strategy
  - Select the best way to tell your stories based on what you want to share and how you want to tell the real story.
  - What is the best way to tell your story? Use what works best for you and your family member. Look at the samples provided on the CD included in this toolkit or create a realistic job preview using your own ideas.
- ☐ Implement and evaluate
  - Tell prospective DSPs your real story before you interview them or offer them a job.
  - Check to make sure you are telling the real story by asking new DSPs if the realistic job preview gave them an accurate picture of the job.
- ☐ Revise and update the realistic job preview when —
  - Supports and needs of your family member change.
  - Goals, expectations and desires of your family member change.
  - New DSPs tell you about something to add or remove from the realistic job preview story because it is not working.

You can tell your real story with

- ☐ Scrapbooks or photo essays.
- ☐ Slide shows or PowerPoint presentations.
- ☐ Audio tapes of DSPs describing the job.
- ☐ Pictures with descriptions.
- ☐ Videos.
- ☐ Brochures or flyers.
- ☐ A Web site.
- ☐ Invitations to talk to DSPs who work well with your family member.
- ☐ Trial work shifts observing current DSPs working with your family member.
- ☐ Planned observation checklists that help the potential DSPs learn about supporting your family member and your household routines.

Develop your real story

This tool can help you develop your real story that you can share with DSPs who might work for you. You can also use a computer to do this worksheet. You will find it on the CD that comes with this toolkit, along with other worksheets.

How to use this tool

- ☐ This tool can help you think about what you want to tell potential DSPs.
- ☐ While using this tool, it is important to think about both the good and difficult parts of the job so potential DSPs know the real story.
- ☐ When you are done with the tool, you can use the information to create a realistic job preview for your family member.
- ☐ You can use this tool all by itself or you can use the ideas to create a realistic job preview that tells your real story in a way that works for your family.
- ☐ There are samples at the end of this tool that can give you ideas of how to create your own realistic job preview.

F

"I have found that by sharing the real story I get DSPs who will hang in there with us and our family member."

A realistic job preview

This is the real story about working with _____ to help you decide if this is the right job for you! We want to share both the fun and hard parts of the job, including what the job is like, what we expect, why DSPs like working with _____ and what you need to know before you decide if working with us is a good idea for you.

We want to start by introducing you to:

Make a list of 5–7 things that a DSP should know about your family member .

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

insert photo here

insert photo here

Who we are as a family

Introduce each member of the family and tell something about them or why they are important to your family member. Include things that a new worker should know, like how they help support the family member.

- ☐ _____
  _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
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  _____
- ☐ _____
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  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____
  _____

insert photo here

insert photo here

insert photo here

insert photo here

Other DSPs who work for our family member

List the names of other DSPs and tell a little bit about each one.

- ☐ _____
  _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____
  _____

insert photo here

insert photo here

insert photo here

insert photo here

Here are some people and places that are important to us

List the names and descriptions so a new DSP can get to know other people and places that are important to your family member.

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

What a typical day looks like

List things that need to be completed with your family member during a typical day. Include some photos to help new DSPs see what they might be doing.

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

insert photo here

insert photo here

What we need and want from DSPs

List the things you and your family member expect from DSPs who work for you. Include things like being on time, duties, common courtesies, dress code, a list of do's and don'ts, etc.

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

insert photo here

insert photo here

Here are some important duties that might be difficult for you when you work with _____.

List tasks and duties that DSPs might find challenging or hard to do. It is important to be honest so potential DSPs will be able to decide if they can do the job and whether they want to do the job. Include some photos to help potential DSPs picture what they will be expected to do.

insert photo here

insert photo here

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

What DSPs like about working with _____.

Have your current DSPs tell you or write down things they like about working with your family member.

- ☐ _____
  _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____
  _____

Helpful things that DSPs want to tell you about working with _____.

Have your family member's current DSPs tell you or write down things that make working with your family member go more smoothly.

- ☐ _____
  _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____

Current DSPs tell us they like working here because...

List quotes from current DSPs about why they like working with your family member.

- ☐ _____
  _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____

Here are some skills we expect you to have when working with _____.

List skills and characteristics of DSPs who are successful working with your family member. Add pictures to help tell the story.

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

insert photo here

insert photo here

Here are some favorite moments...

Add pictures here to help potential DSPs get to know your family member better.

insert photo here

insert photo here

insert photo here

insert photo here

Make your decision

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about our family. You need to decide if working with us is a good fit for you. We want DSPs who will take a personal interest in our family member and who will remain committed to supporting them. We also want DSPs who will learn about the supports our family member needs and provide those supports. It is very disruptive and hurtful to our family member when DSPs come and go. Think about what you have learned about our family and working with our family member, sleep on it and then make your decision. We look forward to hearing from you!

photo

Ask the right questions

Instincts are great and a gut feeling can be very helpful when you interview potential DSPs, but there is a better way to find a good match. You need to ask the right questions to get the information you need to make a good decision.

- ☐ Think about the most important skills and qualities you and your family member are looking for in a DSP. You may want to refer to the tool, "Identify Your Wants and Needs," on page B-3.
- ☐ Develop questions based on those skills and qualities a DSP will need in order to meet your family member's needs and wants.
- ☐ You do not need to interview everyone who applies for the job. You only want to talk to people who are a likely match with what you and your family member are looking for.

"All I want is someone who likes to work with me and do what I want to do."

G

How to prepare to interview a DSP

Pre-interview screening

- ☐ Review applications and resumes to assess potential DSPs —
  - Work history
  - Job experience
  - Educational background
  - References
- ☐ Ask yourself —
  - Does this person have what your family is looking for? If not, it is better to keep looking than to hire someone who does not have the skills you want and need.
  - Did you do background checks for valid driver's licenses or criminal clearances? Has the person passed these checks?
  - When you checked references, what did people say about the work habits of this person? Were they happy with their work? Why or why not? If the references were not favorable, why would you take the time to interview this person?
  - How will you confirm that the person has the educational background or credentials reported on the resume or application? Did they include proof with the application or can they bring it to the interview?

Getting the information you want

The best way to find out something is to ask the right type of question. Different styles of questions will give you different information.

- ☐ Behavioral questions —
  - Ask for information about job behaviors and skills needed to be successful on the job.
  - Ask about actual situations people have experienced and how they have handled them.
    - What was the situation?
    - What did you do?
    - What happened as a result?
    - What did you learn?
- ☐ Situational questions —
  - Are usually future-based and hypothetical.
  - Ask the candidate to choose between two equally desirable or undesirable actions.
  - Are evaluated based on best answers and poor answers you have determined ahead of time.
- ☐ Fact finding questions —
  - Ask about work history.
  - Ask about education and training.
  - Ask about experience.

- Ask about credentials, awards and achievements.
- Ask about technical knowledge.
- Ask about personal opinions, values and ideas.

☐ To avoid asking illegal or discriminatory questions —

- Stick to job-related questions — what the person needs to be able to do on the job to support your family member.

Sample interview questions

These are just sample questions. Feel free to make up your own questions.

☐ Why do you think you would like this job?

☐ What experiences have you had that prepared you for this job?

☐ Tell me about where you have worked in the past and how long you were there. What was your reason for leaving? (If you notice gaps in work history, ask the person to explain these.)

☐ Describe a typical day in your most recent job working for people with disabilities. What was your favorite thing to do? What was your least favorite?

☐ What goals do you have for your future career and how do you plan to accomplish them?

☐ Describe a disagreement or conflict you had at your most recent job. What happened? What did you do to resolve it? What was the result? What did you learn from the situation?

☐ Tell me about the most difficult situation you have ever encountered and how you dealt with it.

☐ Describe your skills and experience providing assistance and support with personal care and household chores.

☐ Describe a time when you helped someone you supported advocate for something they really wanted. What was the situation? What did you do and say? What happened? What did you learn?

☐ My friend wants to learn to cook but her mother is afraid she won't be safe in the kitchen. If you worked with my friend, how would you help her learn to cook? What would you tell her mother about her safety concerns?

☐ Tell me what you like to do for fun.

☐ What is your favorite hobby or sport?

Select the best person

It is important that you don't settle for just any DSP but rather take the time to select the best person for the job.

- ☐ When making your final decision about who to choose, think about the following —
  - Don't settle for people who just meet minimum qualifications; choose people who go beyond those requirements.
  - Which people have the skills you are looking for? Yoy may want to refer to the tool, "Identify Your Wants and Needs" on page B-3.
  - If more than one person has applied for the job, you will need to determine which one is the best person to work with your family member. Rank the applicants based on the things that are most important for you and your family member. For example, if interacting with your family member is important, which of the applicants spent the most time interacting with him or her? On the other hand, if using sign language with your family member is important, which of the people demonstrated

"I finally realized that the key to losing DSPs all of the time was selection. Actually, selecting the best person, sometimes waiting for them, has been key to our retention."

H

proficiency in sign language?

- What did the interview process tell you about the potential worker's personality, values, interests, behaviors and attitudes? Ask if each person is a good match with your family member and with the values of your family.
- Which people demonstrated skills, knowledge and attitudes during the interview that most closely matched the needs and desires of your family member?
- Remember that skills can be taught but attitudes are slow to change.
- Listen to your instincts.

Select the best person worksheet (sample)

Pick the best person for the job. Put them in order from best to worst, using the form on the next page. Here is an example of how you can use this form to help you select the best person for you.

List the most important things your family member needs and wants.	List the names of the people you talked to. Put an X in the box if the person can do it.		
	Zander	*Ramone*	*Kateya*
Arriving on time	X		
Able to work weekends	X		
Likes going to the movies	X	X	
Good listener			
Able to help with bathroom needs	X		X
Will they ask how your family member is feeling?		X	
Total Xs	*4*	*2*	*1*
What was your gut feeling?	*I liked him*	*She was quiet*	*I didn't like her*
Things they like to do and are good at	*Camping and going to movies*	*Watching TV*	*Didn't say*

Select the best person worksheet

List the most important things your family member needs and wants.	List the names of the people you talked to. Put an X in the box if the person can do it.		
Total Xs			
What was your gut feeling?			
Things they like to do and are good at			

Welcome new DSPs

It is important to welcome new DSPs so they feel confident and comfortable supporting your family member. Take time to welcome the new person; it will pay off in the long run.

The process and purpose

Welcoming new DSPs who support your family member is a process with a purpose. That process and its purpose includes —

- ☐ Orienting new DSPs so they feel confident and comfortable about accepting the job.
- ☐ Beginning to develop a positive connection to your family member and to their job responsibilities.
- ☐ Building trust with your family member, you and your family and with co-workers.
- ☐ Learning about your family member's values and cultural background.
- ☐ Understanding the support needs of your family member and your family.

The following page has ideas for welcoming new DSPs who are working with your family member.

> "I always try to do something special or personal for new DSPs who come to work for our family member."

I

Introduce the new DSP to the whole family.

Show the new DSP around your home.

Point out where important things are.

Ideas for welcoming new DSPs who work with your family member

Below is a list of ideas for welcoming new DSPs. Use any ideas that you like and think would help your family make a new person feel welcome.

- ☐ Welcome the new DSP when he or she arrives the first day.
- ☐ Invite the new DSP to meet your family member and talk about their new role.
- ☐ Share your family member's schedule and routine.
- ☐ Go over the new DSP's schedule and what your family wants him or her to do.
- ☐ Show the new DSP around your home. Point out where important things are like the phone and the bathroom.
- ☐ Introduce the new person to the whole family and other important people in your family member's life.
- ☐ Share information about your family member such as likes and dislikes.
- ☐ Talk about rules of the house such as when or if it is okay for them to use your phone, and when and where they can eat.
- ☐ During the first few days, focus on basic health and safety information (e.g., the nearest hospital, the fire evacuation plan, etc.).
- ☐ Give them a tour of your community.
- ☐ Offer positive comments about how the new person is doing on the job.

- ☐ Provide job shadowing with a experienced DSP who works with your family member for the first few weeks.
- ☐ Use yourself, other members of the family and coworkers to train the new DSP.
- ☐ Provide job aids such as pictures, videos and written instructions for important information that is hard to remember.
- ☐ Check with the new person to see how thing are going and if they have questions.
- ☐ Educate them about how you want them to do the job and how they should behave on the job.
- ☐ Keep the tone upbeat.
- ☐ Have fun and let the new person know they are important. If the new DSP feels welcome, they'll be happy they are working with you.

Teach DSPs to do the job

Choose the things your family wants the DSP to know and do and the attitudes he or she needs to have. What skills and values does a DSP need to help your family member achieve his or her dreams? Here are some hints, tips and ideas to help you teach DSPs what they need to know to help your family member.

- ☐ What does your family member need and want the DSP to do? You may want to refer to the tools "Look for the Right Person" on page A-1 and "Identify Your Wants and Needs" on page B-3.
- ☐ Of the things your family member needs and wants, what can the DSP already do?
- ☐ What knowledge, skills and attitudes does the DSP need in order to do the job you want him or her to do?
- ☐ What does your family need to teach the DSP so your family member is optimally supported?

"I usually try to quickly learn what my DSP already knows how to do and then I help them learn what they don't know how to do."

J

What can the DSP already do?

Ask the DSP to show you or tell you how he or she would support your family member in important areas of his or her life. For example, you could ask the DSP the following —

- ☐ "How would you assist our family member in managing money and budgeting to save up for a trip?"
- ☐ "How would you assist our family member in getting a tattoo even though you do not agree with his or her decision to do so?"
- ☐ "What would you do if our family member wanted your support to go on a date?"

Knowledge, skills and attitudes

Build on the knowledge, skills and attitudes that your DSP already has —

- ☐ Knowledge – A DSP may know what a catheter is, but might need to learn more about what community inclusion means.
- ☐ Skills – A DSP may know how to make meals and follow directions, but might need to learn how to clean your family member's room the way your family member wants it done.
- ☐ Attitudes – A DSP respects your family member's beliefs and choices and supports your family member to do things that are important to them, even if he or she does not agree with the importance of an activity.

How best to teach your DSP

Every person who directs their own supports has their own teaching style. However, it is also important for you to think about the DSPs you are trying to teach and how they learn best so they can better support your family member.

Adult learning styles

There are three common ways for adults to learn —

- ☐ Seeing (visual learner)
- ☐ Hearing (auditory learner)
- ☐ Doing (hands-on learning)

Talk with the DSP to find out his or her best way of learning new things.

Teaching methods

The following are some examples of basic teaching methods that fit with the three common ways of learning —

- ☐ Visual learners — people who learn best by seeing directions —
  - Show pictures, write or type things out, make diagrams and charts, or use forms and worksheets.

- ☐ Auditory learners — people who learn best by hearing directions —
  - Explain things in words, discuss an activity, or read a book or manual.
- ☐ Hands-on learners — people who learn best by doing the task —
  - Show the person how to do something and then let them try it themselves.

Give feedback

Giving feedback is a positive way to teach and support DSPs —

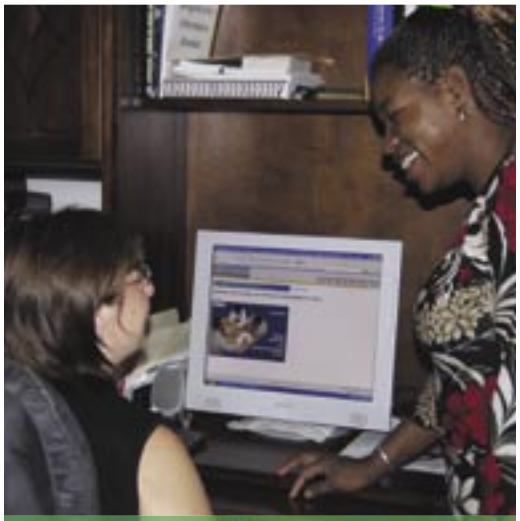
- ☐ Review the DSP's performance often, about every month or two. Then, do a more formal evaluation once a year.
- ☐ Tell the DSP what he or she is doing well.
- ☐ Explain what the DSP could do better.
- ☐ Listen to the DSP's concerns about the work situation.
- ☐ Ask questions about how they can support your family member better.
- ☐ Set clear expectations about the job and how to do it.
- ☐ Provide the right tools so the person can do the job better.
- ☐ Celebrate their accomplishments!

If you need to tell DSPs how to do something better, ask yourself the following questions —

- ☐ How would you like to hear the feedback you are giving?
- ☐ How will you communicate the message clearly and concisely to your DSP?
- ☐ What does the DSP need to do to improve their job performance?

Subscribe to professional periodicals like *Frontline Initiative.*

Support DSPs in becoming credentialed.



Provide opportunities for DSPs to receive additional training.

Support professional development

- ☐ Support your DSP to join a national or state professional organization.
- ☐ Purchase a subscription to professional publications for your DSP.
- ☐ Support your DSP to become credentialed as a DSP-Registered, DSP-Certified, or DSP-Specialist.
- ☐ Support DSPs to pursue additional training.
- ☐ Encourage your DSP to participate in rallies at the legislature.
- ☐ Support your DSP to participate in local and state conferences and workshops.

Professional development resources

Here are some important resources to help your DSPs do their jobs —

- ☐ National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (www.nadsp.org) is a professional organization for DSPs.
- ☐ *Frontline Initiative* is a newsletter by and for DSPs. Each issue focuses on topics relevant to DSPs and the people they support. Articles include personal stories, policy information, the latest research and intervention activities. Subsribe at www.nadsp.org.
- ☐ The College of Direct Support is an online competency-based training curriculum created from a national set of skill standards. It uses the latest

technology to deliver a vibrant learning experience for today's DSPs. You can view a sample lesson at www.collegeofdirectsupport.com

- ☐ Centers of Independent Living (CILs) have many classes to teach people who support your family member about advocacy and independent living. To find a CIL near you, visit www.virtualcil.net/cils/
- ☐ Quality Mall is a large database for over a thousand of the BEST person-centered and community-based products and services that help direct support workers provide more effective supports to persons with disabilities. Check it out at www.qualitymall.org

Make a plan

Sometimes, a plan can help you support your family member's DSP and give them more formal feedback about their job. You can use the worksheet on the next page for ideas about how to make a plan with a DSP so he or she can learn what his or her strengths and weaknesses are and how he or she can grow and develop.

DSP work review and improvement plan

Name of DSP_____ Date_____

- ☐ List the top three expectations you have for the DSP who supports your family member:

- ☐ How well is the DSP supporting your family member's needs and wants?

- ☐ List the tasks or duties that the DSP knows and can do best:

- ☐ List the tasks or duties that the DSP might be able to improve on:

- ☐ List some ways that the DSP has continued to grow professionally (e.g., takes classes at a local college, became a member of the State chapter of NADSP, goes to the state Arc conference):

- ☐ List some duties or responsibilities the DSP would like to or needs to know more about:

Help DSPs avoid stress and burnout

The job of your DSP is to support your family member effectively. For DSPs to achieve that goal, you need to support them. By supporting DSPs, you help them avoid stress and burnout so they continue to work with you.

Managing stress and burnout

The work of DSPs can sometimes be stressful and your family can help them avoid burnout. Learn what causes stress for DSPs who support your family member and how these DSPs can better manage the stress they have —

- ☐ Recognize signs of stress in DSPs by noticing if they seem overwhelmed, angry, sad or irritable.
- ☐ Ask DSPs what makes work with your family member stressful.
- ☐ Ask DSPs how they avoid stress.
  - Maybe they avoid stress by getting enough sleep and learning new tasks one step at a time.
- ☐ Ask how they manage stress.

> "Sometimes working with Crystal can be very stressful. I have to accept that and help her DSPs cope and deal with their stress so they don't burn out."

K

- Maybe they manage stress by exercising or talking to a friend about difficult situations.

☐ Learn what works for each person in managing stress.

- Maybe it will help one person to talk with you about a difficult task, while another person may need time alone to think through a difficult situation on their own.

Starting a new job

Starting a new job can be stressful and overwhelming. DSPs say the hardest parts about starting a new job are —

☐ Getting to know you.

☐ Learning routines and completing tasks.

☐ Getting to know other DSPs and adjusting to their schedule.

☐ Learning and remembering everything.

☐ Getting used to a person with a disability being the employer or boss.

Teaching DSPs

It is your responsibility to make sure that DSPs know how to support your family member. Take time to explain and demonstrate the skills they need. You can teach the DSP how to do a better job and avoid stress by using the following method —

☐ Show — Show a DSP what you want him or her to do.

☐ Tell — Explain to the DSP what he or she needs to be doing.

☐ Do — Have the DSP do the task while you watch to make sure it is done the way you want it done.

☐ Check — Make sure the DSP does the task correctly and give him or her immediate feedback about their work.

You may want to refer to the tool, "Teach DSPs to Do the Job," on page J-39.

Give feedback

Giving feedback is a positive way to teach and support DSPs. Make sure to tell the DSP what they are doing well and what they could do better. Be sure to listen to the DSP's concerns about the work situation. Before providing feedback, think about how is best to provide the information.

Professional development

Encourage DSPs to grow professionally. Suggest that they join a national and/or local professional organization, attend conferences, or become active in rallies at the legislature.

Resources

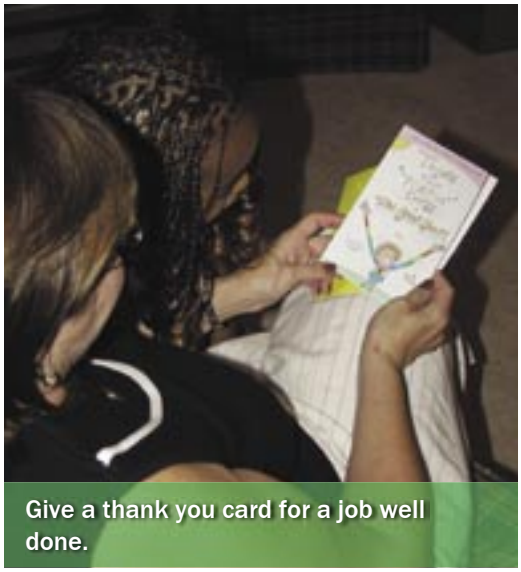
Basics of Time and Stress Management, by Carter McNamara
www.managementhelp.org

Celebrate a job well done

DSPs want to be recognized for their accomplishments and good work performance. Frequent recognition often leads to energized, motivated, creative and competent DSPs. Recognizing DSPs usually results in more satisfied DSPs who stay longer.

- ☐ DSPs need to feel that they are important and valued. They want to feel that they are contributing to the success of your family member, and they want their good performance acknowledged.
- ☐ When DSPs are given the recognition they deserve, it often energizes and motivates them to be creative and proactive with the people they support. An employee who approaches their work day with enthusiasm and vigor is more likely to meet the needs of your family and the demands of the job.
- ☐ When DSPs know that the work they do is valued and meaningful, they are better employees. Frequent, fair and consistent rewards for DSPs will make the cycle of positive performance an ongoing process.

> "It's always easy to see what support staff are doing wrong and to blame them for our problems. I have found that if I focus on the good things, then the not-so-good things don't happen as often."


Give a thank you card for a job well done.

Give a gift card or small amount of cash.

Allow flexibility in scheduling.

- DSPs will stay in their positions longer and will do their jobs more effectively. Frequent recognition will help maintain high-quality performance, motivate them to accept new and exciting challenges and help them continue growing.

Recognition and motivation: They go together like salt and pepper

- Recognition is a strategy for acknowledging DSPs who do a job well, achieve special accomplishments, put in years of service, share creative ideas and perform other notable activities.
- DSPs need and want concrete and honest feedback, a show of appreciation for what they do and rewards that are fair and consistent.
- When DSPs are recognized for the good work they do, they will likely become motivated to continue succeeding at their jobs.
- Motivation, on the other hand, is the excitement and energy that drives DSPs to do well in their job, accomplish great things and go beyond what is expected. DSPs can be motivated by extrinsic motivators such as pay, rewards, or recognition. More often, however, they are motivated by intrinsic motivators — self-imposed internal motivating forces that compel them to do good work.
- The same things do not motivate all people. Take the time to learn what

each DSP likes and figure out the best way to recognize him or her.

- ☐ Traditionally, employers have focused on wage increases as the best motivator for DSPs. However, research has shown that DSPs often see other things as being more motivating and important. For example, DPSs need feedback and appreciation for what they do. They want their work to be noticed and acknowledged.

Ways to recognize DSPs

- ☐ Give a thank you card for a job well done.
- ☐ Allow flexibility in their schedule.
- ☐ Tell the DSP what they are doing well.
- ☐ Show appreciation for the job the DSP is doing.
- ☐ Give a small bonus of extra money for a very good job.
- ☐ Make your reward personal and something that you know this particular DSP will appreciate.
- ☐ Give the DSP a day off with pay by having a friend or trusted volunteer work in his or her place.
- ☐ Acknowledge personal events and milestones of the DSP (e.g., birthday, anniversary, graduation, their child's birthday).
- ☐ Take interest in what is important to the DSP.

Activities, worksheets and presentations CD

The toolkit has various activities/worksheets that can help you through the process of finding, choosing and keeping great DSPs. For your convenience, all activities, worksheets and realistic job preview PowerPoint templates are included in this CD. You may use the worksheets right in this toolkit, or photocopy or print out worksheets so you are able to use them a few times.