Recognizing Excellence in Direct Support

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) have taken on increasingly expanded and complex roles since Home and Community Based Services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities were first provided several decades ago. The responsibilities of today’s DSPs extend far beyond assisting with personal care, hygiene, and health-related needs. They are called upon to facilitate participation in and ensure access to the community, playing the critical role of “community connectors” and “capacity builders” by helping those they support to establish valued social roles and networks, while enhancing awareness and acceptance among the general public. DSPs advocate for and with those supported, promote self-determination, and provide guidance and advice in making informed decisions. Above all, they support people in achieving the hopes and dreams they have for themselves.

ANCOR’s Recognizing Excellence magazine highlights this year’s Direct Support Professional Recognition Award Recipients. The stories included demonstrate the many unique and creative ways these dedicated DSPs have helped people to achieve full and meaningful lives in their communities. Access the magazine electronically using the following link to read about what your colleagues in direct support are doing across the country: http://www.nationaladvocacycampaign.org/newsroom/news/2018-recognizing-excellence-magazine

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DSPs Making a Difference
Debra Wittrock - The Arc of Union County

September 2018 will mark 33 years since Debra Wittrock began working for The Arc of Union County as a Day Program Support Professional. Her coworkers and supervisors, who refer to her as “Deb,” describe her as a “ray of sunshine,” “a cheerleader,” and “very encouraging, patient and understanding.”

Deb’s supervisor, Inesha Housey, Direct Supervisor at The Arc Union Day Program, says that Deb makes her job easier because she is so “creative and resourceful.” Deb’s creativity is on full display when she’s at work helping those she supports to build independent living skills like money management, food preparation and cooking, by tying the activity to popular game shows. For example, Deb created a Jeopardy board using repurposed cardboard and printed materials. She adds her own spin on it by having everyone participate together and seek help from each other to land upon the correct answer. Inesha says that everyone in the program “loves this game,” and they request to play it often. Family members of those in the program have attributed the progress their loved ones have made in reaching their goals with the engaging and creative games Deb comes up with. This is just one example of how Deb is able to use her creativity with limited resources and funding to do so much more with the individuals she supports.

What really stands out about Deb, according to her supervisor, is her teamwork approach to everything at the program. She helps those she supports to feel connected, valued, and respected by assisting them in building interdependent relationships. You can often hear many of the people she supports using her famous quote, even when she is not around... “We can do it.”

Over the years, Deb has seen the individuals she works with learn and grow in so many ways, and says that the people she supports keep her going. Deb believes in their abilities, finds her job rewarding, and approaches every single day with a positive attitude and a smile even after 33 years!
Professional Development Opportunities for DSPs

Behavioral Support and the NADD DSP Credential

It is common for individuals with developmental or intellectual disabilities to have psychiatric disorders and other mental health challenges. People with IDD who experience mental illness (IDD/MI) often have complex needs. Describing and managing the symptoms of their disorder may be difficult for them. People with this dual diagnosis also experience higher rates of challenging behavior. As a result, they may struggle to have meaningful relationships, miss opportunities for community inclusion and participation, and require additional support to be successful.

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) spend more time with the person with IDD/MI than any other professional, and the competence of the DSP can make a big difference in their quality of life. Training that promotes best practice in dual diagnosis, including understanding how mental illness affects behaviors, is essential to develop and sustain workforce competence. This advanced level of knowledge can be demonstrated through certification, which is meant to assure that DSPs are appropriately trained and qualified to meet the complex needs of individuals with IDD/MI.

NADD, an association for persons with developmental disabilities and mental health needs, has developed the Direct Support Professional Certification Program to certify the competency of those supporting people with a dual diagnosis. This program is designed to evaluate knowledge, values, and skills providing supports in the areas of: Assessment and Observation, Behavior Support, Crisis Prevention and Intervention, Health and Wellness, and Community Collaboration and Teamwork. The program leads to NADD-DSP Certification, which was recently included among the required qualifications for professionals involved in monitoring the implementation of behavior support plans of individuals receiving Behavioral Supports under the NJ Supports Program and the Community Care Program. For more details on the Certification Program, visit the NADD website: [http://acp.thenadd.org/dsp.htm](http://acp.thenadd.org/dsp.htm)

To highlight ongoing ways to enhance staff and agency-wide capacity to support people with mental health and behavior needs, The Boggs Center will offer two upcoming webinars:

| The NADD DSP Credential: Building a Competent Workforce to Support Individuals with Behavior and Mental Health Needs |
| July 24, 2018 - 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM |
| Registration Link: [https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/5651076741772151298](https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/5651076741772151298) |

| The NADD DSP Credential Part 2: Developing Staff Competency and Preparing for Certification |
| July 31, 2018 - 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM |
| Registration Link: [https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/7194593155076793346](https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/7194593155076793346) |
College of Direct Support Course Highlight

College of Frontline Supervision and Management: Fueling High Performance

Professional development enables staff to strengthen their practice and improve skills throughout their careers. In addition to enhancing job performance, professional development helps to reduce staff turnover by improving competence and confidence. This course, meant for Frontline Supervisors, focuses on reducing turnover among high-potential staff by providing DSPs with professional development opportunities and clear, consistent job performance requirements. It reviews a number of important interventions that give structure and definition to expectations for providing quality supports. Learners in this course can expect to gain valuable insights on competency-based training, employee development, teamwork, coaching and positive discipline, and employee participation, motivation, and recognition.

More information on courses available in the College of Direct Support is available on the Direct Course Online website: [http://directcourseonline.com/courses/](http://directcourseonline.com,courses/)

College of Direct Support Administrator Tip

Are you having trouble adding new staff to the College of Direct Support Learner Management System? If you receive an error message when trying to add new agency staff, that staff person already exists in the system under another agency. You can still access their transcript and assign online training through Manager Zone, also known as Secondary Access. Whether staff work for one or four different agencies, each agency will be able to view the staff’s transcript and assign them online training. Simply email the staff’s full name and the last four digits of their social security number to CDSTA@rutgers.edu for access. Manager Zone requests are processed once a week, and can be submitted up until Friday afternoons at 4pm. Access to staff will be granted to all CDS Agency Administrators for your agency by the following Wednesday.

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