



# Rhode Island Statewide Workforce Initiative

SupportWise Workforce Data Summary for Reporting Period July 1, 2023–December 31, 2023

## Easy Read Report

This report is about the staff paid to support people with disabilities in Rhode Island. It shares information about Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and Frontline Supervisors (FLSs). It is meant to show if the statewide work in Rhode Island is making a difference. It shares information for employers, families, and self-advocates.

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### About the Employers

The information in this report is from 34 employers in Rhode Island. All of them serve people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs). Most provide support where people live. Sometimes, these were group homes (68%). Other times DSPs provided support in people's homes (65%). Nearly all organizations (95%) provided support in places other than where people lived, like where they worked.

## About the DSPs

On December 31st, 2023, 3,058 DSPs were working for these employers. Most were female (66%) and most were either White (43%), Black/African American (38%), or Latino/Hispanic (10%). These DSPs were usually between the ages of twenty-one and forty (46%) or forty-one and sixty (37%).

Most DSPs who worked for these employers had been there for less than three years. Slightly less than half had been a DSP for more than three years.

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### How Long DSPs Stay



## How Much Were DSPs Being Paid?

On December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023, the average wage for all DSPs was \$20.82/hour. New DSPs were paid \$20.25/hour on average. New DSPs earned almost as much as DSPs who had worked awhile. In 76% of organizations, DSPs could earn bonuses when they did great work. Bonuses are extra pay.

Almost all employers (91%) offered DSPs paid time off. This could be vacation or sick time. About the same number of agencies provided DSPs with health insurance. For both of these benefits, the agencies varied in deciding who could get them, and who could not. Sometimes, full-time staff received better benefits than those who worked part-time.



## Frontline Supervisors

On December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023,, the 34 organizations employed 310 frontline supervisors (FLSs). FLSs guide and direct DSPs and also provide direct support. Half (50%) of organizations paid FLSs hourly, 38% paid them a set amount each year, and 19% paid some hourly and some annual. Some FLSs got extra pay when they worked direct support (56%), and others did not (44%).

Fewer FLSs were male, not White, and/or spoke a primary language other than English compared to DSPs. Men and people of color had less opportunity to be promoted to the FLS. Organizations should hire and maintain a diverse group of FLSs.

## The Problem of Turnover

In Rhode Island over a third of new DSPs left before they had worked six months. Another twenty percent left before they had worked a full year. About two-thirds of DSPs left because they either needed to or wanted to. Too many DSPs who left were fired (32%). A common reason that DSPs leave their jobs early is that they don't understand the job before they start. Other problems include not receiving enough training and supervision when they were new on the job, or not feeling welcomed by others. DSPs are terminated because they didn't

follow the rules or were not a good fit. One of the biggest problems in Rhode Island seems to be that employers are not choosing the right people.

On December 31, 2023, 14% of full-time DSP jobs in Rhode Island had no one to fill them. That meant other DSPs had to work more to keep everyone safe and healthy. It also meant that many people were not able to do things they wanted. Sometimes part-time people could have helped, but 20% of those jobs had no one to fill them. Working more hours can be hard for DSPs and takes them away from their families. Paying overtime is expensive for employers.

The report had both good news and challenging news.

### **GOOD NEWS**

- Starting and average wages have increased a lot since December 2022. Starting wages have gone from \$18.87 in 2022 to \$20.25. Average hourly wages have grown from \$18.94 in 2022 to \$20.82.
- In the 6 months studied, the number of DSPs in Rhode Island grew from 3,013 to 3,058. This is an additional 45 DSPs.
- On the last day of 2023, 34% of DSPs in RI were male - that is high compared to other states and the national data (25%).



- The number of DSPs leaving their jobs has decreased. Turnover was 21% in 2022 and 17% at the end of 2023.
- The number of DSP jobs unfilled has decreased. Vacancies were 17% in 2022 and 14% at the end of 2023.

### CHALLENGING NEWS

- Almost 1/3 of the agencies had fewer DSPs on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023 than on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023.
- During this same time, 35% of agencies had to stop accepting new referrals because they did not have enough DSPs.
- Too many DSPs are being hired who end up getting fired soon after.



### What do we need to do about this?

- Keep getting data from employers so we can see if the changes are good or bad.
- Figure out how to get data from individuals and families who self-direct and employ DSPs.
- Share this report with other people so they can see our progress.
- Work with employers to reduce the number of staff that leave within 6 months.