



Rhode Island Statewide Workforce Initiative (RISWI)

SupportWise Workforce Data Summary and Implications
for Reporting Period July 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024

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Coordinating Council and Community Collaborators.



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The University of Minnesota stands on *Miní Sóta Makhóche*, the rightful homelands of the *Dakhóta Oyáte*. We recognize the U.S. did not uphold its end of these land treaties. It is the current and continued displacement of the *Dakhóta Oyáte* that allows the University to remain today.

Ongoing oppression and discrimination in the United States has led to significant trauma for many people of color, immigrants, people with disabilities, and other oppressed persons. At ICI, we affirm our commitment to address systemic racism, ableism and all other inequalities and forms of oppression to ensure inclusive communities.

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Introduction

A stable, competent, and reliable direct support workforce is needed in Rhode Island and every state and territory in the United States. This workforce also needs support from stable and competent front-line supervisors (FLSs). Direct support professionals (DSPs) provide support to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) so they can live, work, socialize with family and friends, and thrive in their communities. FLSs' principal role is providing direction and guidance to the work of DSPs; however, they too provide support to people with disabilities as a part of their job. Yet, due to workforce shortages, they increasingly are required to provide notable direct support to persons with IDD, which takes them away from their primary role of guiding and directing the work of DSPs.

High turnover and vacancy rates for the direct support profession have been documented for over 30 years in the United States (National Core Indicators Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, NCI-IDD, 2024). Vacancies and turnover, along with high stress job duties, for the direct support workforce have been persistent (Hall et al., 2022; Hall et al., 2024; PHI, 2021; Houseworth et al., 2020; Bogenschutz et al., 2014). The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these challenges (Sheppard-Jones et al., 2022). Taking steps to understand these workforce challenges specific to Rhode Island and implementing strategies at the employer and state-wide levels is imperative

to improving the well-being and stability of direct support professionals.

Background

Rhode Island's history mirrors trends of the broader services and supports systems for individuals who have intellectual or developmental disability (IDD). These trends include increasing awareness of the capabilities and strengths of these people with IDD, enforcing their rights and ability to make choices, and supporting inclusion and participation in their communities. In 2013, after several years of underfunding and decreased service availability to meet demands, the Department of Justice conducted an investigation which eventually resulted in the 2014 Consent Decree which mandated the expectation that all persons with IDD in Rhode Island be employed, empowered to participate in community integrated settings, and make choices that allow them to live their best lives. An addendum to the Consent Decree was implemented in 2023.

The consent decree specifically calls for investment in the stabilization of the direct support workforce. Over the last few years, one of the measures used to demonstrate progress regarding the development and promotion of effective models for providing service and supports is the collection and reporting of key workforce data that address workforce stability in the state of Rhode Island.

2 Rhode Island Statewide Workforce Initiative (RISWI)

This report summarizes key workforce data findings for the reporting period July 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024. It identifies trends across time points where available, specific data points of concern and actions that can be taken to address the data-identified problems. This report also provides the Rhode Island Statewide Workforce Initiative (RISWI) Coordinating Council and other key stakeholders connected to the workforce with benchmark and trend data to monitor progress and recommendations that when implemented will help to further stabilize the direct support workforce.

Methodology & Data Analysis

Instrumentation, Data Collection & Analysis

The initial instrument used for data collection was developed by the court monitor and the state of Rhode Island, in conjunction with the Human Services Research Institute (HSRI). The initial survey was a modified Rhode Island version of the National Core Indicator (NCI-IDD)© State of the Workforce (SoTW) Survey which provided the data needed by the court monitor every six months to satisfy requirements of the Consent Decree. After several data collection cycles, a decision was made to use SupportWise Data, developed by the University of Minnesota's Direct Support Workforce Solutions team, as a method for employers to collect, enter, track, and report data around key workforce indicators (e.g., staffing, recruitment and retention, wages, benefits, and more). SupportWise Data gathers all required data identified in the consent decree plus additional data that is used to inform state and employer efforts to address workforce stability. It also allows employers to compare their results to key National Core Indicator (NCI-IDD)© State of the Workforce (SoTW) benchmarks.

During January 2025, DD providers across the state of Rhode Island collected and reported their workforce data using SupportWise Data. The University of Minnesota aggregated the data and submitted results to the Court Monitor. This report provides further analyses and offers discussion of the issues, progress made, and recommendations moving forward. The Rhode Island Statewide Workforce Initia-

tive (RISWI) Coordinating Council and workgroups are charged with addressing the recommendations provided in this report.

Respondents

Respondents included 33 of the 34 DD provider organizations (97%) participating across Rhode Island. Organizations represented are listed below:

- AccessPoint RI
- Action Based Enterprises Inc.
- Agape Homes of Rhode Island LLC
- Avatar Residential Inc.
- Community Living of Rhode Island Inc.
- Community Residences Inc.
- Corliss Institute Inc.
- Easterseals Rhode Island Inc.
- Frank Olean Center
- Gateways to Change Inc.
- Goodwill Industries of Rhode Island
- J. Arthur Trudeau Memorial Center
- James L. Maher Center
- Justice Resource Institute
- Kaleidoscope Family Solutions Rhode Island Inc.
- Living in Fulfilling Life Environments Inc. (LIFE)
- Looking Upwards Inc.
- Opportunities Unlimited for People with Differing Abilities
- Perspectives Corporation
- ReFocus Inc.
- Rhode Island Community Living and Supports (RICLAS)
- Seven Hills Rhode Island
- Spurwink | RI
- The Arc of Blackstone Valley
- The Arc of Bristol County Inc./proAbility
- The COVE Center Inc./The Groden Network
- The Fogarty Center
- Town of Coventry Project FRIENDS
- United Cerebral Palsy of Rhode Island (UCPRI)
- West Bay RI
- Whitmarsh House
- Work Inc.
- Work Opportunities Unlimited Contracts Inc.



Results

Results are provided in aggregate form. Each of the participating organizations has access to their unique data within SupportWise Data which allows them to monitor progress in real time and over time.

Agency Profile(s)

Provision of Residential Supports

Organizations were asked if they provided residential supports to adults with IDD, and if so, to how many adults with IDD on 12/31/24. Seventy percent of organizations reported providing residential supports. Thirty percent of organizations reported having no adults with IDD receiving residential supports, 6% 1-10 adults with IDD, 9% 11-20 adults with IDD, 18% 21-50 adults with IDD, 21% 51-99 adults with IDD, and 15% 100-499 adults with IDD.

Table 1. Organizations that provide residential services by number and percentage

Do you provide residential supports to adults with IDD?	N	Percentage
Yes	23	70%
No	10	30%

How many adults with IDD were receiving residential supports from your agency on 12/31/24?	N	Percentage
0	10	30%
1-10	2	6%
11-20	3	9%
21-50	6	18%
51-99	7	21%
100-499	5	15%

Note: 33 organizations provided data

Provision of In-Home Supports

Organizations were asked if they provided in-home supports to adults with IDD, and if so, to how many adults with IDD on 12/31/24. Sixty-four percent of organizations reported providing in-home supports. Thirty-six percent of organizations reported having no adults with IDD receiving in-home supports, 21% 1-10 adults with IDD, 15% 11-20 adults with IDD, 18% 21-50 adults with IDD, 3% 51-99 adults with IDD, and 6% 100-499 adults with IDD.

Table 2. Organizations that provide in-home support by number and percentage

Do you provide in-home supports to adults with IDD?	N	Percentage
Yes	21	64%
No	12	36%

How many adults with IDD were receiving in-home supports from your agency on 12/31/24?	N	Percentage
0	12	36%
1-10	7	21%
11-20	5	15%
21-50	6	18%
51-99	1	3%
100-499	2	6%

Note: 33 organizations provided data

Provision of Non-Residential Supports

Organizations were asked if they provided non-residential supports to adults with IDD, and if so, to how many adults with IDD on 12/31/24. Non-residential supports were defined as those provided in a day program, community program or work setting (e.g., adult day services, employment or vocational services, community supports). Ninety-seven percent of organizations reported providing non-residential supports. Nine percent of organizations reported having no adults with IDD receiving non-residential supports on 12/31/24, 12% 1-10 adults with IDD, 12% 11-20 adults with IDD, 36% 21-50 adults with IDD, 24% 51-99 adults with IDD, and 6% 100-499 adults with IDD.

Table 3. Organizations that provide non-residential services by number and percentage

Do you provide non-residential supports to adults with IDD?	N	Percentage
Yes	32	97%
No	1	3%

How many adults with IDD were receiving non-residential supports from your agency on 12/31/24?	N	Percentage
0	3	9%
1-10	4	12%
11-20	4	12%
21-50	12	36%
51-99	8	24%
100-499	2	6%

Note: 33 organizations provided data

Adults with IDD Enrolled in Residential, In-Home, and Non-Residential Services

Organizations were asked how many adults with IDD were enrolled in residential, in-home, and/or non-residential services on 7/1/24 and 12/31/24. The total number of adults with IDD enrolled in residential, in-home, and/or non-residential services on 7/1/24 was 2,667 (average = 81 adults with IDD, range 1-302 adults with IDD). The total number of adults with IDD enrolled in residential, in-home, and/or non-residential services on 12/31/24 was 2,703 (average = 82 adults with IDD, range 1-314 adults with IDD). The difference between the number of adults with IDD enrolled in residential, in-home, and/or non-residential services between 7/1/24 and 12/31/24 was +36 (average = +1 adults with IDD) meaning there were 36 more adults with IDD (1 on average) enrolled in residential, in-home, and/or non-residential services on 12/31/24.

Table 4. Total number of adults with IDD enrolled in services by type

	Total	Average	Range
How many adults with IDD were enrolled in residential, in-home, and/or non-residential services at your agency on 7/1/24?	2,667	81	1-302
How many adults with IDD were enrolled in residential, in-home, and/or non-residential services at your agency on 12/31/24?	2,703	82	1-314

	Total	Average	Range
Difference between 7/1/24 and 12/31/24 in adults enrolled in residential, in-home, and/or non-residential services.	+36	+1	

Note: 33 organizations provided data

Turning Away or Stop Accepting New Service Referrals

Organizations were asked if they had to turn away or stop accepting new service referrals due to DSP staffing issues during 7/1/24-12/31/24. Thirty percent of organizations reported they had turned away or stopped accepting new service referrals and 70% had not.

Table 5. Organizations turning away or not accepting referrals by number and percentage

During 7/1/24-12/31/24 did your agency have to turn away or stop accepting new service referrals due to DSP staffing issues?	N	Percentage
Yes	10	30%
No	23	70%
No Response	0	0%

Note: 33 organizations provided data



Payroll Data

Direct Support Professionals on Payroll

Organizations were asked how many DSPs were on their payroll on 7/1/24 and 12/31/24. The total number of DSPs on payroll on 7/1/24 was 3,240 (range 3-340 DSPs). The total number of DSPs on payroll on 12/31/24 was 3,275 (range 4-333 DSPs). The difference between the number of DSPs on payroll between 7/1/24 and 12/31/24 was +35. The number of organizations reporting fewer DSPs on 12/31/24 than 7/1/24 was 12.

Table 6. Number of DSPs on payroll

	Total	Range
How many DSPs did you have on your payroll on 7/1/24?	3,240	3-340
How many DSPs did you have on your payroll on 12/31/24?	3,275	4-333
Difference between 7/1/24 and 12/31/24 on number of DSPs on the payroll.	+35	
What was the number of agencies reporting LESS DSPs on 12/31/24 than 7/1/24?	12	

Note: 33 organizations provided data

Direct Support Professional Employment Tenure

Organizations were asked the number of DSPs on payroll on 12/31/24 who were continuously employed for less than 12 months, between 12 and 26 months, and more than 36 months. Organizations reported 25% (range 0%-50%) of their DSPs on the payroll on 12/31/24 had been continuously employed for less than 12 months, 25% (range 0%-89%) between 12 and 36 months, and 50% (range 0%-85%) more than 36 months.

Table 7. Overall percentage and range regarding the number of DSPs on payroll

How many DSPs on your payroll on 12/31/24 were continuously employed at your organization for:	N	Percentage	Range
Less than 12 months	804	25%	0%-50%
Between 12 and 36 months	819	25%	0%-89%
More than 36 months	1,652	50%	0%-85%

Note: 33 organizations provided data

Direct Support Professional Race/Ethnicity

Organizations were asked the number of DSPs on payroll on 12/31/24 who identified as American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black/African American, Pacific Islander, White, Hispanic/Latino, more than one race/ethnicity, another race/ethnicity, and unknown. Organizations reported 1% (range 0%-2%) identified as American Indian/Alaska Native, 1% (range 0%-8%) Asian, 37% (range 0%-100%) Black/African American, <1% (range 0%-2%) Pacific Islander, 43% (range 0%-100%) White, 10% (range 0%-41%) Hispanic/Latino, 3% (range 0%-17%) more than one race/ethnicity, <1% (range 0%-25%) another race/ethnicity, and 5% (range 0%-100%) unknown.

Table 8. Percentage of DSPs by racial and ethnic groups

On 12/31/24, how many DSPs identified as being in each of the following racial or ethnic groups?	N	Percentage	Range	RI 2020 census
American Indian/Alaska Native	21	1%	0%-2%	<1%
Asian	32	1%	0%-8%	4%
Black/African American	1,199	37%	0%-100%	6%
Pacific Islander	8	<1%	0%-2%	<1%
White	1,386	43%	0%-100%	71%
Hispanic/Latino	333	10%	0%-41%	17%
More than one race/ethnicity	82	3%	0%-17%	9%
Another race/ethnicity	2	<1%	0%-25%	9%
Do not know	157	5%	0%-100%	n/a

Note: 32 organizations provided data

When compared to RI state demographics (US Census 2020; <https://dlt.ri.gov/labor-market-information/data-center/census-data>) there are fewer Asian, White, and Hispanic/Latino DSPs and DSPs who identify as more than one race/ethnicity or another race/ethnicity than would be expected, when compared to the total population in RI. There are more DSPs who

are Black/African-American when compared to RI statewide demographic data.

Direct Support Professional Gender

Organizations were asked the number of DSPs on payroll on 12/31/24 who identified as male, female, and non-conforming. Organizations reported 34% (range 0%-62%) of the DSPs on the payroll on 12/31/24 identified as male, 63% (range 0%-91%) female, 0% non-conforming, and 3% (range 0%-100%) unknown.

Table 9. Percentage of DSPs by gender identity

On 12/31/24, how many DSPs identified as being in each of the following gender groups?	N	Percentage	Range
Male	1,089	34%	0%-62%
Female	2,045	63%	0%-91%
Non-conforming	0	0%	n/a
Unknown	86	3%	0%-100%

Note: 32 organizations provided data

Direct Support Professional Age

Organizations were asked the number of DSPs on payroll on 12/31/24 who identified in various age groups. Organizations reported 2% (range 0% to 7%) of the DSPs on the payroll on 12/31/24 were 15-20 years old, 24% (range 0% to 80%) were 21-30 years old, 24% (range 0% to 100%) were 31-40 years old, 18% (range 0% to 31%) were 41-50 years old, 17% (range 0% to 30%) were 51-60 years old, 11% (range 0% to 21%) were 61-70 years old, 2% (range 0% to 5%) were 71+ years old, and 3% (range 0% to 100%) unknown. Four organizations were unable to provide age group data.

Table 10. Percentage of DSPs by age group

On 12/31/24, how many DSPs were in each of the following age groups?	N	Percentage	Range
15-20 years	59	2%	0%-7%
21-30 years	739	24%	0%-80%
31-40 years	756	24%	0%-100%
41-50 years	555	18%	0%-31%
51-60 years	546	17%	0%-30%
61-70 years	332	11%	0%-21%
71+ years	59	2%	0%-5%
Unknown	79	3%	0%-100%

Note: 4 organizations were unable to provide data



Separations

Direct Support Professional Permanent Separation

Organizations were asked how many DSPs permanently left/separated from their organization during 7/1/24-12/31/24. The total number of DSPs who permanently left/separated from their organization during 7/1/24-12/31/24 was 554 (average = 17 DSPs, range 0-82 DSPs). The DSP turnover ratio was 16.9% (range 0%-31%).

Table 11. DSP separations and turnover ratio

	Total	Average	Range	Percentage
How many DSPs permanently left/separated from your organization between 7/1/24-12/31/24?	554	17	0-82	
DSP Turnover Ratio			0%-31%	16.9%

Note: 33 organizations provided data

Direct Support Professional Tenure Prior to Separating

Organizations were asked the number of DSPs who left/separated permanently during 7/1/24-12/31/24 who worked less than 6 months, between 6 and 12 months, between 13 and 36 months, and more than 36 months.

Organizations reported 35% (range 0% to 100%) of the DSPs who left/separated permanently worked less than 6 months, 16% (range 0% to 35%) between 6 and 12 months, 30% (range 0% to 100%) between 13 and 36 months, and 19% (range 0% to 100%) more than 36 months.

Table 12. DSP tenure prior to separation by percentage and range

How many DSPs on your payroll on 12/31/24 left/separated permanently before working the following amount of time:	N	Percentage	Range
Less than 6 months	194	35%	0%-100%
Between 6 and 12 months	87	16%	0%-35%
Between 13 and 36 months	165	30%	0%-100%
More than 36 months	108	19%	0%-100%

Note: 29 organizations provided data; 4 organizations had 0% turnover

Direct Support Professionals Voluntary/Involuntary Separation

Organizations were asked the number of DSPs who left/separated permanently during 7/1/24-12/31/24 who left voluntarily/retired/quit and those whose employment was terminated. Organizations reported 72% (range 0% to 100%) of the DSPs who left/separated permanently left voluntarily/retired/quit, 26% (range 0% to 100%) were terminated, 0% were laid off (position was eliminated), and 2% (range 0% to 42%) unknown.

Table 13. DSP separation by type

How many DSPs on your payroll on 12/31/24 left/separated permanently under each of the following circumstances:	N	Percentage	Range
Voluntarily left/retired or quit	391	72%	0%-100%
Employee was terminated	145	26%	0%-100%
Laid off (position was eliminated)	0	0%	n/a
Do not know	11	2%	0%-42%

Note: 29 organizations provided data; 4 organizations had 0% turnover

Direct Support Professional Full-time Status

Organizations were asked the minimum number of hours DSPs needed to work to be considered a full-time employee. Six percent of organizations reported DSPs needed to work a minimum of 20-29 hours to be considered full-time, 33% 30 hours, 55% 31-39 hours, and 6% 40 hours.

Table 14. Requirements for DSP full time status

What is the minimum number of hours a DSP needs to work per week to be considered full-time?	Percentage
20-29 hours	6%
30 hours	33%
31-39 hours	55%
40 hours	6%

Note: 33 organizations provided data

Direct Support Professional Positions & Vacancies

Organizations were asked how many full-time, part-time and on-call DSPs were on their payroll on 12/31/24. They were also asked the number of full-time and part-time vacant positions they had on 12/31/24. The total number of full-time DSPs who worked at organizations on 12/31/24 was 2,437. The number of full-time DSP position vacancies on 12/31/24 was 231. Across all organizations, the total number of full-time positions on 12/31/24 was 2,668. The total number of part-time DSPs who worked at organizations on 12/31/24 was 838. The number of part-time DSP position vacancies on 12/31/24 was 163. Across all organizations, the total number of part-time positions on 12/31/24 was 1,001. The total number of on-call and/or PRN DSPs who worked at organizations on 12/31/24 was 325. The total number of DSP positions (full-time + part-time) on 12/31/24 was 3,669. The total number of DSP (full-time + part-time) position vacancies on 12/31/24 was 394. The DSP vacancy rate was 10.7%.

Table 15. Number of full-time and part-time DSPs by position and vacancies

	Percentage	Total
How many full-time DSPs worked at your organization (were on the payroll) on 12/31/24?		2,437
How many full-time DSP position vacancies did your organization have on 12/31/24?		231
Total number of full-time DSP positions on 12/31/24.		2,668
How many part-time DSPs worked at your organization (were on the payroll) on 12/31/24?		838
How many part-time DSP position vacancies did your organization have on 12/31/24?		163
Total number of part-time DSP positions on 12/31/24.		1,001
How many on-call and/or PRN DSPs were employed by your agency to support adult with IDD on 12/31/24?		325
Total number of DSP positions (full-time + part-time) on 12/31/24.		3,669
Total number of DSP vacant positions (full-time + part-time) on 12/31/24.		394
DSP vacancy rate	10.7%	

Note: 33 organizations provided data



Compensation

Direct Support Professional Wages

Organizations were asked the average DSP starting and hourly wages during 7/1/24-12/31/24 across all services and settings (residential supports, in-home supports, and non-residential supports) as well as to split wages separately by residential supports, in-home supports, and non-residential supports. The average DSP starting hourly wages across all services and settings was \$20.70. It was \$20.02 for residential supports, \$19.74 for in-home supports, and \$20.63 for non-residential supports. The average DSP hourly wages across all services and settings was \$21.48. It was \$20.77 for residential supports, \$21.35 for in-home supports, and \$21.01 for non-residential supports.

Table 16. DSP average starting and average wage by setting type

What was the average DSP starting hourly wage between 7/1/24-12/31/24 for:	Average	Range
All services and settings (residential supports, in-home supports, and non-residential supports)	\$20.70	\$20.00-\$22.92
Residential supports	\$20.02	\$20.00-\$23.76
In-home supports	\$19.74	\$20.00-\$22.25
Non-residential supports	\$20.63	\$20.00-\$22.25

What was the average DSP hourly wage between 7/1/24-12/31/24 for:	Average	Range
All services and settings (residential supports, in-home supports, and nonresidential supports)	\$21.48	\$20.00-\$25.00
Residential supports	\$20.77	\$20.00-\$25.00
In-home supports	\$21.35	\$20.00-\$25.00
Non-residential supports	\$21.01	\$20.00-\$25.00

Note: DSP starting hourly wages across all services and settings was reported by 32 organizations, residential by 26 organizations, at-home by 26 organizations, and non-residential by 31 organizations; DSP hourly wages across all services and settings was reported by 33 organizations, residential by 26 organizations, at-home by 26 organizations, and non-residential by 32 organizations

Direct Support Professional Pay Scales & Differential Pay

Organizations were asked if they used a different pay scale for full-time and part-time DSPs, and for DSPs who communicate in a language other than English. Two organizations reported they used a different pay scale for full-time and part-time DSPs while 31 did not. Two organizations used a pay differential for DSPs who communicate in languages other than English while 31 did not.

Table 17. Organization use of DSP pay scales and differentials

Does your agency use a different pay scale for full-time and part-time DSPs?	N
Yes	2
No	31

Does your agency provide a pay differential for those DSPs who can communicate in languages other than English?	N
Yes	2
No	31

Note: 33 organizations provided data



Bonuses & Overtime

Direct Support Professional Wage Bonuses

Organizations were asked if they gave wage bonuses to DSPs and if they did, the average amount of the bonus. Wage bonus was defined as a wage compensation supplemental to salary or wages. Bonuses are typically given at intervals less frequent than payroll. Sixty-four percent of organizations reported they gave wage bonuses to DSPs. Of the 21 organizations who reported that they offered bonuses to DSPs, 20 provided the details of wage bonuses given to DSPs. Of the DSPs on their payroll on 12/31/24, the total number who received at least one wage bonus was 1,834 (average = 66 DSPs, range = 2-309 DSPs) DSPs. Of wage bonuses given to DSPs at organizations, 0 gave less than \$50, 0 gave \$50-\$100, 3 gave \$101-\$200, 4 gave \$201-\$300, 0 gave \$301-\$400, 1 gave \$401-\$500, and 12 gave more than \$500.

Table 18. Use of DSP bonuses

	Yes N	No N
During 7/1/24-12/31/24, did your agency give any wage bonuses to DSPs?	21	12
If yes, did your organization offer an employee referral bonus to current DSPs for bringing in new recruits?	11	14
If yes, did your organization offer newly hired DSPs a monetary hiring bonus?	4	21
If yes, did your organization offer DSPs a monetary bonus or award for performance recognition?	6	19
If yes, did your organization offer DSPs a monetary bonus or award for years of service?	4	21

	Yes N	No N
If yes, did your organization offer DSPs a monetary bonus or award for reasons other than employee referrals, hiring, performance recognition, or years of service?	7	18

Of the DSPs on your payroll on 12/31/24, what is the total unduplicated count of DSPs who received at least one wage bonus?	N
Agencies reporting	20
Total	1,834
Average	66
Range	2-309

If your agency gave wage bonuses to DSPs between 7/1/24-12/31/24, what was the average amount for the bonus?	N
Less than \$50	0
\$50-\$100	0
\$101-\$200	3
\$201-\$300	4
\$301-\$400	0
\$401-\$500	1
More than \$500	12

Note: 33, 25, and 20 organizations provided data, respectively

Organizations that Gave Wage Bonuses to DSPs versus Those that Did Not

Additional analyses were performed to see if there were differences in vacancy and turnover rates between those organizations that gave wage bonuses to DSPs (N=21) and those that didn't (N=12). The results are shown below.

Table 19. Differences in turnover and vacancy rates by bonus status

Wage Bonus	N	Turnover Rate	Range	Vacancy Rate	Range
Yes	21	14%	0%-31%	9%	0%-20%
No	12	14%	0%-27%	15%	0%-44%

Note: 33 organizations provided data

The turnover rate was the same for organizations that did and did not provide wage bonuses (14%). However, those organizations providing wage bonuses had a significantly lower vacancy rate compared to those that didn't provide them (9% vs. 15%).

Direct Support Professional Overtime Costs

Organizations were asked their total payroll costs and total overtime costs for DSPs supporting adults with IDD during 7/1/24-12/31/24. Across 33 organizations, \$96,961,788 was the total payroll cost for DSPs supporting adults with IDD. Thirty-three organizations reported \$11,451,027 in total overtime costs for DSPs supporting adults with IDD. This is 12% of the total payroll. The total unduplicated number of DSPs who received at least one hour of overtime pay was 2,079. This is 63% of all DSPs.

Table 20. Organizational DSP payroll and overtime costs

What were your total payroll costs for DSPs supporting adults with IDD during 7/1/24-12/31/24?	
Agencies reporting	33
Total	\$96,961,788

What were your total overtime costs for DSPs supporting adults with IDD during 7/1/24-12/31/24?	
Agencies reporting	33
Total	\$11,451,027
Percent of total payroll	12%

Of the DSPs on your payroll on 12/31/24, what is the total unduplicated count of DSPs who received at least one hour of overtime pay?	
Total	2,079
Percent of all DSPs	63%

Note: 33 organizations provided data



Benefits

Paid Time Off

Organizations were asked if they provided any paid time off. If they offered paid time off, more detailed questions were asked about various types of paid time off including pooled paid time off [defined as paid time off that is not distinguished by category (vacation, sick or other time off)], paid vacation, paid sick time, and paid personal time. Ninety-four percent of organizations provided some form of paid time off to DSPs.

Twenty-seven percent of organizations offered pooled paid time off to some or all DSPs during 7/1/24-12/31/24. Nine organizations provided more detailed information regarding eligibility requirements for pooled paid time off. One organization required DSPs to be working full-time, 3 required DSPs to work a minimum amount of time in a defined period of time, 4 required DSPs to be employed at their agency for a certain length of time, and 4 reported all DSPs were eligible.

Table 21. DSP paid time off

Does your organization provide any paid time off?	N	Percentage
Yes	31	94%
No	2	6%

Did your organization offer pooled paid time off to some or all DSPs during 7/1/24-12/31/24?	N	Percentage
Yes	9	27%
No	24	73%

What were the requirements for a DSP to be eligible for pooled paid time off? (Check all that apply)	N
Must be working full-time	1
Must work a minimum amount of time in a defined period of time (for example, 25 hours/week, 18 days/month, etc.)	3
Must have been employed at the agency for a certain length of time	4
All DSPs are eligible	4

Note: 33 organizations provided data; Organizations were able to select more than one option for requirements to be eligible for paid pooled time off; therefore, responses can total more than the nine organizations reporting.

Paid Vacation Time

Seventy percent of organizations offered paid vacation time to some or all DSPs during 7/1/24-12/31/24. Twenty-three organizations provided more detailed information regarding eligibility requirements for paid vacation time. Ten organizations required DSPs to be working full-time, 17 required DSPs to work a minimum amount of time in a defined period of time, 18 required DSPs to be employed at their agency for a certain length of time, and 8 reported all DSPs were eligible.

Table 22. DSP paid vacation time

Did your organization offer paid vacation time to some or all DSPs during 7/1/24-12/31/24?	N	Percentage
Yes	23	70%
No	10	30%

What were the requirements for a DSP to be eligible for paid vacation time? (Check all that apply)	N
Must be working full-time	10
Must work a minimum amount of time in a defined period of time (for example, 25 hours/week, 18 days/month, etc.)	17
Must have been employed at the agency for a certain length of time	18
All DSPs are eligible	8

Note: 33 organizations provided data; Organizations were able to select more than one option for requirements to be eligible for paid vacation time off; therefore, responses can total more than the 23 organizations reporting.

Organizations that Offered Paid Vacation Time to DSPs versus Those that did not

Additional analyses were performed to see if there were differences in vacancy rates and turnover between those organizations that offered paid vacation time to DSPs (N=23) and those that didn't (N=10). The results are shown below.

Table 23. Difference in vacancy and turnover rates based on DSP paid vacation time

Offered paid vacation time	N	Turnover Rate	Range	Vacancy Rate	Range
Yes	23	13%	0%-31%	12%	0%-44%
No	10	16%	7%-25%	11%	0%-26%

Note: 33 organizations provided data

For organizations that offered paid vacation time to their DSPs, their turnover rate was slightly lower than those that didn't offer paid vacation time (13% vs. 16%). The vacancy rate was similar for organizations offering paid vacation time and those that didn't (12% vs. 11%).

Paid Sick Time

Eighty-two percent of organizations offered paid sick time to some or all DSPs during 7/1/24-12/31/24. Twenty-seven organizations provided more detailed information regarding eligibility requirements for paid sick time. Nine organizations required DSPs to be working full-time, 15 required DSPs to work a minimum amount of time in a defined period of time, 14 required DSPs to be employed at their agency for a certain length of time, and 19 reported all DSPs were eligible.

Table 24. DSP paid sick time

Did your organization offer paid sick time to some or all DSPs during 7/1/24-12/31/24?	N	Percentage
Yes	27	82%
No	6	18%

What were the requirements for a DSP to be eligible for paid sick time? (Check all that apply)	N
Must be working full-time	9
Must work a minimum amount of time in a defined period of time (for example, 25 hours/week, 18 days/month, etc.)	15
Must have been employed at the agency for a certain length of time	14
All DSPs are eligible	19

Note: 33 organizations provided data; Organizations were able to select more than one option for requirements to be eligible for paid sick time off; therefore, responses can total more than the 27 organizations reporting.

Organizations that Offered Paid Sick Time to DSPs versus Those that Did Not

Additional analyses were performed to see if there were differences in vacancy rates and turnover between those organizations that offered paid sick time to DSPs (N=27) and those that didn't (N=6). The results are shown below.

Table 25. Difference in vacancy and turnover rates based on DSP paid sick time

Offered Paid Sick Time	N	Turnover Rate	Range	Vacancy Rate	Range
Yes	27	13%	0%-31%	11%	0%-44%
No	6	18%	0%-25%	12%	0%-26%

Note: 33 organizations provided data

For organizations that offered paid sick time to their DSPs, their turnover rate was lower than those that didn't offer paid sick time (13% vs. 18%). The vacancy rate was similar for organizations offering paid sick time and those that didn't (11% vs. 12%).

Paid Personal Time

Sixty-three percent of organizations offered paid personal time to some or all DSPs between 7/1/24-12/31/24. Twenty organizations provided more detailed information regarding eligibility requirements for paid personal time. Nine organizations required DSPs to be working full-time, 15 required DSPs to work a minimum amount of time in a defined period of time, 15 required DSPs to be employed at their agency for a certain length of time, and 7 reported all DSPs were eligible.

Table 26. DSP paid personal time

Did your organization offer paid personal time to some or all DSPs during 7/1/24-12/31/24?	N	Percentage
Yes	20	63%
No	12	37%

What were the requirements for a DSP to be eligible for paid personal time? (Check all that apply)	N
Must be working full-time	9
Must work a minimum amount of time in a defined period of time (for example, 25 hours/week, 18 days/month, etc.)	15
Must have been employed at the agency for a certain length of time	15
All DSPs are eligible	7

Note: 33 organizations provided data; Organizations were able to select more than one option for requirements to be eligible for paid personal time off; therefore, responses can total more than the 20 organizations reporting.

Organizations that Offered Paid Personal Time to DSPs versus Those that Did Not

Additional analyses were performed to see if there were differences in vacancy rates and turnover between those organizations that offered paid personal time to DSPs (N=20) and those that didn't (N=12). The results are shown below.

Table 27. Difference in vacancy and turnover rates based on DSP paid personal time

Offered Paid Personal Time	N	Turnover Rate	Range	Vacancy Rate	Range
Yes	20	13%	0%-31%	12%	0%-44%
No	12	16%	0%-25%	11%	0%-26%

Note: 32 organizations provided data

For organizations that offered paid personal time to their DSPs, their turnover rate was slightly lower than those that didn't offer paid personal time (13% vs. 16%). The vacancy rate was similar for organizations offering paid personal time and those that didn't (12% vs. 11%).

Health (Medical) Insurance

Ninety-one percent of organizations offered health (medical) insurance coverage to some or all DSPs during 7/1/24-12/31/24. Thirty organizations provided more detailed information regarding eligibility requirements for health (medical) insurance coverage. Eighteen organizations required DSPs to be working full-time, 26 required DSPs to work a minimum amount of time in a defined period of time, 23 required DSPs to be employed at their agency for a certain length of time, and 7 reported all DSPs were eligible. Across 30 organizations, there were 2,583 DSPs eligible for health (medical) insurance coverage with 1,349 (41% of all DSPs) enrolled in health (medical) insurance coverage through their organization.

Table 28. DSP health (medical) insurance access

Did your organization offer health (medical) insurance coverage to some or all DSPs during 7/1/24-12/31/24?	N	Percentage
Yes	30	91%
No	3	9%

What were the requirements for a DSP to be eligible for health (medical) insurance coverage? (Check all that apply)	N
Must be working full-time	18
Must work a minimum amount of time in a defined period of time (for example, 25 hours/week, 18 days/month, etc.)	26
Must have been employed at the agency for a certain length of time	23
All DSPs are eligible	7

During 7/1/24-12/31/24, how many DSPs were eligible for health insurance through your organization?	
Total agencies reporting	30
Total number of DSPs eligible	2,583
Percent of all DSPs eligible	79% (2,583/3,275)

During 7/1/24-12/31/24, how many DSPs were enrolled in health insurance through your organization?	Percentage
Total	1,349
Percent of eligible DSPs enrolled	52% (1,349/2,583)
Percent of all DSPs enrolled	41% (1,349/3,275)

Note: 33 organizations provided data; Organizations were able to select more than one option for requirements to be eligible for health (medical) insurance; therefore, responses can total more than the 30 organizations reporting.

Vision & Dental Coverage

Seventy percent of organizations offered vision coverage to some or all DSPs during 7/1/24-12/31/24. Ninety-one percent of organizations offered dental coverage to some or all DSPs during 7/1/24-12/31/24.

Table 29. Organizations that offer DSPs vision and dental coverage

Did your organization offer vision coverage to some or all DSPs during 7/1/24-12/31/24?	N	Percentage
Yes	23	70%
No/No answer	10	30%

Did your organization offer dental coverage to some or all DSPs during 7/1/24-12/31/24?	N	Percentage
Yes	30	91%
No	3	9%

Note: 33 organizations provided data

Retirement Benefits

Eighty-two percent of organizations offered an employer-sponsored retirement plan (401K, 403b, or other plan) to some or all DSPs during 7/1/24-12/31/24. Twenty-seven organizations provided more detailed information regarding eligibility requirements for retirement benefits. Six organizations required DSPs to be working full-time, 14 required DSPs to work a minimum amount of time in a defined period of time, 17 required DSPs to be employed at their agency for a certain length of time, and 12 reported all DSPs were eligible.

Table 30. DSP retirement benefits

Did your organization offer an employer-sponsored retirement plan (401K, 403b, or other plan) to some or all DSPs during 7/1/24-12/31/24?	N	Percentage
Yes	27	82%
No	6	18%

What were the requirements for a DSP to be eligible for an employer-sponsored retirement plan? (Check all that apply)	N
Must be working full-time	6
Must work a minimum amount of time in a defined period of time (for example, 25 hours/week, 18 days/month, etc.)	14
Must have been employed at the agency for a certain length of time	17
All DSPs are eligible	12

Note: 33 organizations provided data; Organizations were able to select more than one option for requirements to be eligible for an employer-sponsored retirement plan (401K, 403b, or other plan); therefore, responses can total more than the 27 organizations reporting.

Other Benefits

Ninety-four percent of organizations offered other benefits not previously listed to some or all DSPs during 7/1/24-12/31/24.

Table 31. Other DSP benefits offered

Did your organization offer any other benefits to some or all DSPs during 7/1/24-12/31/24?	N	Percentage
Yes	31	94%
No	2	6%

Note: 33 organizations provided data



Recruitment & Retention

Pay Incentive for Referral Bonus

Organizations were asked if they provided a pay incentive or referral bonus for current DSPs to bring in new recruits. Seventy-nine percent of organizations reported they offered a pay incentive or referral bonus to current DSP staff to bring in new recruits. Four organizations reported the incentive amount of \$151-\$200, 12 \$201-\$500, 8 \$501-\$1,000, and 2 more than \$1,000.

Table 32. Organization use of referral bonuses

Does your agency offer a pay incentive or referral bonus for current DSP staff to bring in new recruits?	N	Percentage
Yes	26	79%
No	7	21%

What is the incentive or referral bonus amount that current DSPs get to bring in new recruits?	N
\$1-\$50	0
\$51-\$100	0
\$101-\$150	0
\$151-\$200	4
\$201-\$500	12
\$501-\$1,000	8
More than \$1,000	2
Do not know	0

Note: 33 and 26 organizations provided data, respectively

Recruitment & Retention Strategies

Organizations were asked what recruitment and retention strategies they used to bring in and keep DSP staff. Eighty-five percent of organizations used a realistic job preview for DSP positions, 100% DSP training on a code of ethics, 48% DSP ladder to retain highly skilled workers in DSP roles, 64% supporting staff to get credentialed through a state or nationally recognized professional organization, 45% bonuses, stipends or raises for DSPs for completion of or steps of a credentialing process, 73% employee engagement surveys or other efforts aimed at assessing DSP satisfaction and experience working for the agency, 82% employee recognition programs such as initiatives to reward DSPs for achievement, anniversaries, and other milestones, 33% including DSPs in agency governance, and 79% require any training for DSPs above and beyond those trainings required by state regulation.

Table 33. Retention and recruitment strategies used by organizations

Which of the following strategies does your agency use to retain and/or recruit staff in DSP positions? (Check all that apply)	Percentage
Realistic job preview for DSP positions	85%
DSP training on a code of ethics	100%
DSP ladder to retain highly skilled workers in DSP roles	48%
Supporting staff to get credentialed through a state or nationally recognized professional organization	64%
Bonuses, stipends or raises for DSPs for completion of credentialing process (or steps of a credentialing process)	45%
Employee engagement surveys or other efforts aimed at assessing DSP satisfaction and experience working for the agency	73%
Employee recognition programs such as initiatives to reward DSPs for achievement, anniversaries, and other milestones	82%
Including DSPs in agency governance	33%
Require any training for DSPs above and beyond those trainings required by state regulation	79%

Note: 33 organizations provided data



Frontline Supervisors

Organizations were asked the number of frontline supervisors (FLSs) on their payroll on 12/31/24. The total number of FLSs employed across organizations was 319. Nearly half (53%) of organizations reported their FLSs are paid hourly, 31% salaried, and 16% a mix of hourly pay and salaries.

Table 34. Number of frontline supervisors and how they are paid

How many frontline supervisors were on your staff on 12/31/24?	
Total	319

Are the frontline supervisors employed by your agency paid hourly wages (and therefore eligible for overtime pay) or are they salaried?	Percentage
All frontline supervisors are paid hourly	53%
All frontline supervisors are salaried	31%
Some frontline supervisors are paid hourly and some are salaried	16%

Note: 32 organizations provided data

Frontline Supervisor Turnover and Vacancy

The average frontline supervisor turnover rate during the period of 7/1/24-12/31/24 was 6% across 24 reporting organizations (range 0%-40%). The average frontline supervisor vacancy rate was 10% across 19 reporting organizations (range 0%-50%).

Frontline Supervisor Overtime

Organizations were asked if FLSs received additional pay/wages for overtime hours during 7/1/24-12/31/24. Fifty percent of organizations reported FLSs received additional pay/wages for overtime hours. Organizations were asked the number of hours of overtime paid to FLSs during 7/1/24-12/31/24. The total number of overtime hours paid to FLSs during 7/1/24-12/31/24 was 16,569 (average = 975 hours, range 32-3,304 hours). The number of FLS who received overtime pay from their organization during 7/1/24-12/31/24 was 175, which was 55% of FLSs.

Table 35. FLS additional pay for overtime hours

Did FLSs receive additional pay/wages for overtime hours during 7/1/24-12/31/24?	N	Percentage
Yes	16	50%
No	16	50%

What was the total number of overtime hours your agency paid to Frontline Supervisors during 7/1/24-12/31/24?	N
Total	16,569
Average	975
Range	32-3,304

How many frontline supervisors received overtime pay from your agency during 7/1/24-12/31/24?	
Total	175
% of all FLSs	55%

Note: 32, 15, and 32 organizations provided data, respectively

Organizations that Paid Overtime to FLSs versus Those that Did Not

For those organizations that provided FLS turnover and vacancy data, additional analyses were performed to see if there were differences in FLS turnover rates between those organizations that paid overtime to FLSs (N=16) and those that didn't (N=16). The results are shown below.

Table 36. Difference in turnover and vacancy rates for organizations that pay overtime to FLSs

Paid Overtime	N	FLS Turnover Rate (N=19)	Range	FLS Vacancy Rate (N=24)	Range
Yes	16	7%	0%-25%	16%	0%-50%
No	16	5%	0%-40%	5%	0%-50%

Note: 19 organizations provided vacancy data; 24 organizations provided turnover data

For organizations that paid overtime to their FLSs, their turnover rate was higher than those that didn't pay overtime to FLSs (7% vs. 5%). Additionally, those organizations paying overtime to FLSs also had a significantly higher vacancy rate compared to those that didn't pay overtime to FLSs (16% vs. 5%).

Frontline Supervisor Race/Ethnicity

Organizations were asked the number of FLSs on payroll on 12/31/24 who identified as American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black/African American, Pacific Islander, White, Hispanic/Latino, more than one race/ethnicity, another race/ethnicity, and unknown. Organizations reported 3% of the FLSs on the payroll on 12/31/24 identified as American Indian/Alaska Native, <1% Asian, 27% Black/African American, 0% Pacific Islander, 58% White, 9% Hispanic/Latino, 3% more than one race/ethnicity, 0% another race/ethnicity, and 0% were Unknown.

Table 37. Frontline supervisor race and ethnicity

On 12/31/24, how many FLSs identified as being in each of the following racial or ethnic groups?	FLS N	FLS Percent-age	DSP N	DSP Percent-age	RI 2020 census
American Indian/Alaska Native	9	3%	21	1%	<1%
Asian	2	<1%	32	1%	4%
Black/African American	84	27%	1,199	37%	6%
Pacific Islander	0	0%	8	<1%	<1%
White	184	58%	1,386	43%	71%
Hispanic/Latino	28	9%	333	10%	17%
More than one race/ethnicity	9	3%	82	3%	9%
Another race/ethnicity	0	0%	2	<1%	9%
Unknown	0	0%	157	5%	n/a

Note: 32 organizations provided data

When compared to DSPs, the race and ethnicity of DSP and FLSs are similar, except for there being a much higher percentage of DSPs who are Black or African American and a higher percentage of FLSs who are White. Additionally, a higher percentage of DSPs have race and ethnicity that is unknown to their employers. Compared to 2020 US Census data (<https://dtl.ri.gov/labor-market-information/data-center/census-data>) fewer FLSs are Asian, White, Hispanic/Latino, or more than one race/ethnicity or another race/ethnicity than would be expected based on state population demographics. Additionally, there is a higher percentage of FLSs who are Black/African-American when compared to the state population.

Frontline Supervisor Gender

Organizations were asked the number of FLSs on payroll on 12/31/24 who identified as male, female, non-conforming, and unknown. Organizations reported 26% of the FLSs on the payroll on 12/31/24 identified as male and 74% female. When compared to DSPs, there are fewer male FLSs.

Table 38. Frontline supervisor gender

On 12/31/24, how many FLSs identified as being in each of the following gender groups?	FLS N	FLS Percentage	DSP N	DSP Percentage
Male	81	26%	1,089	34%
Female	235	74%	2,045	63%
Non-conforming	0	0%	0	0%
Unknown	0	0%	86	3%

Note: 32 organizations provided data

Frontline Supervisor Age

Organizations were asked the number of FLSs on payroll on 12/31/24 who identified in various age groups. Organizations reported that 0% of the FLSs on the payroll on 12/31/24 were 15-20 years old, 13% were 21-30 years old, 21% were 31-40 years old, 30% were 41-50 years old, 24% were 51-60 years old, 9% were 61-70 years old, 2% were 71+ years old, and 1% unknown. Four organizations were unable to provide age group data. When compared to DSPs, a larger percentage of FLS are above the age of 40 (65% compared to 59%) but more DSPs (13%) are above age 61 when compared to FLS (11%).

Table 39. FLS age

On 12/31/23, how many FLSs were in each of the following age groups?	FLS N	FLS Percentage	DSP N	DSP Percentage
15-20 years	0	0%	59	2%
21-30 years	39	13%	739	24%
31-40 years	63	21%	756	24%
41-50 years	90	30%	555	18%
51-60 years	74	24%	546	17%
61-70 years	27	9%	332	11%
71+ years	6	2%	59	2%
Unknown	4	1%	79	3%

Note: 4 organizations were unable to provide data



Emergency & Disaster Planning

Organizations were asked if they had emergency management and/or disaster preparedness plans for potential future evacuations or shelter-in-place orders (for example, those related to hurricanes, fires, or pandemics), and if so, did the preparedness plan include actions to take in the case of potential DSP staffing shortages. Thirty-three (100%) of organizations reported having an emergency management and/or disaster preparedness plan, and of those with a preparedness plan, 88% (29 organizations) said the plan included actions to take in the case of potential DSP staffing shortages.

Table 40. Organization disaster management plans

Does your agency have an emergency management and/or disaster preparedness plan for potential future evacuations or shelter-in-place orders (for example, those related to hurricanes, fires or pandemics)?	N
Yes	33
No	0

Does your agency's emergency management plan and/or disaster preparedness plan include actions to take in case of potential DSP staffing shortages?	N
Yes	29
No	4

Workforce Trends

Workforce data have been collected in RI by the court monitor over the past few years. July – December 2022 and January – June 2023 data were collected by the court monitor directly from provider organizations. Beginning with the July – December 2023 time period, data were collected in the Direct Support Workforce Solution's SupportWise Data. For comparison and trending purposes, we are presenting data collected via both mechanisms.

When examining three of the more important workforce metrics (turnover ratio, vacancy rate, and wages), all show encouraging trends. The turnover ratio was 20.7% on December 31, 2022, had decreased to 16.6% on June 30, 2023, remained consistent at 16.9% on December 31, 2023, decreased slightly to 15.1% on June 30, 2024, and increased slightly again back to 16.9% on December 31, 2024. The vacancy rate was 17.1% on December 31, 2022, remained consistent at 17.5% on June 31, 2023, decreased again to 14.0% on December 31, 2023, 11.9% on June 30, 2024, and 10.7% on December 31, 2024. Average starting hourly wages across all services and supports have increased consistently across time. They were \$18.87 during July 1, 2022, to December 31, 2022, \$20.25 during July 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023, \$20.69 during January 1, 2024, to June 30, 2024, and \$20.70 during July 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024. Average hourly wages across all services and supports have increased consistently over time as well. They were \$18.94 during July 1, 2022, to December 31, 2022, \$20.82 during July 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023, and \$21.12 during January 1, 2024, to June 30, 2024, and \$21.48 during July 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024.

Additionally, it is important to note that the number of organizations that turned away referrals due to DSP staffing shortages has also decreased from 63% in the July – December 2022 period to 30% in the current reporting period of July to December 2024.

Table 41. DSP and FLS data trends over time

	Data Collected via Direct Submission to Court Monitor*		Data Collected via SupportWise Data		
	July-Dec 2022	Jan-June 2023	July-Dec 2023	Jan-June 2024	July-Dec 2024 (Current time period)
# Agencies reporting	32	32	34	33	33
Number of agencies that turned away referrals due to DSP staffing issues	20 (63%)	13 (41%)	12(35%)	11 (33%)	10 (30%)
Total number of DSPs	2,771 [^]	3,015	3,058	3,210	3,275
Difference in number of DSPs between end of data period and start of data period (6 months)	-55	+58	+45	+148	+35
Number of DSP separations	573	503	518	485	554
DSP Turnover ratio (separations/number of DSPs)	20.7% ^{^^}	16.6%	16.9%	15.1%	16.9%
Early turnover (% DSP separations within the first 6 months of tenure)	—	—	37%	42%	35%
% of DSP separation due to terminations	—	—	32%	34%	26%
Total full-time DSP positions	2,328	2,464	2,592	2,657	2,668
Total part-time DSP positions	903	1,136	962	987	1,001
Full-time DSP vacancies	324	389	303	270	231
Part-time DSP vacancies	152	242	193	164	163
Total vacancies	476	631	496	434	394
DSP Vacancy rate (vacancies/number of DSP positions)	17.1% ^{^^^}	17.5%	14.0%	11.9%	10.7%
Average DSP starting wage	\$18.87	\$18.43	\$20.25	\$20.69	\$20.70
Average DSP hourly wage	\$18.94	\$18.97	\$20.82	\$21.12	\$21.48
% of total payroll for DSP overtime costs	6.7%	10.8%	7.7%	7.9%	11.8%
% of DSPs receiving overtime	63%	64%	58%	55%	63%
DSPs eligible for health insurance	1,966	NA	2,657	2,555	2,583
DSPs enrolled in health insurance	1,089	NA	1,293	1,206	1,349
Total number supervisors (FLSs)	326	323	310	298	319
FLS Turnover ratio (separations/number of FLSs)	—	—	—	4%	6%
FLS Vacancy rate (vacancies/number of FLS positions)	—	—	—	6%	10%
% FLSs receiving overtime	59%	48%	49%	45%	55%

* NOTE: this is historic data collected by the court monitor directly from provider organizations.

[^] NOTE: Wrong number here. This was the number of people receiving services, not the number of DSPs.

^{^^} NOTE: This is wrong because the wrong denominator was used. Calculation with correct denominator gives 22.3%.

^{^^^} NOTE: Wrong formula used (used total number of DSPs as denominator; should be total number of DSP positions), also was the wrong number in the number of DSPs.

Implications of Findings

Rhode Island's key workforce indicators of turnover ratio, vacancy rate, and wage are on a positive trajectory toward improved stability. The DSP turnover ratio has dropped from 21% in December 2022 to 17% in December 2024 and DSP vacancy rates have dropped from 17% to 11% in that same timeframe. DSP average wages have increased from \$18.94 in December 2022 to \$21.48 in December 2024 and starting wages in that same period moved from \$18.87 to \$20.70. Additionally, far fewer providers are turning away referrals due to workforce shortage, this number has fallen from 63% to 30%.

While positive trends are occurring, there are still remaining challenges that need continued attention. These are described below.

1. Increased pay for DSPs is always a good thing. That said, it is not a single solution. This is evident by the continued range in turnover ratios, with some providers having 0% DSP turnover and others having a rate of 31% (average at 17%). This indicates that other things are influencing turnover within provider organizations. These differences are likely a combination of ineffective practices and organizational culture. Additionally, there remains significant wage compression between new entrants into the field and longer-term employers. The difference in DSP entry wage and the average wage is now only 78 cents. If you are an employee that has worked for an organization for ten years and the difference in your pay and that of a new employee is less than one dollar it does not result in you feeling as if your tenure matters much. Organizations need continued support to best understand their specific challenges and tailor interventions to address them. Building pay increases for DSPs commensurate with increased competence can help reduce this turnover and wage compression. Oftentimes this is paired with completing initial training, gaining a credential, or moving through an established career pathway. Of note, less than half (48%) of all organizations in this reporting period reported that they have an established career ladder, 64% support staff to get credentialed, and 45% provide bonuses, stipends, or raises for completion of a credential. Yet, there is currently no statewide credentialing program with aligned pay increases for completion.

2. Organizations in RI that provide wage bonuses to their DSPs have lower vacancy rates (9% compared to 15%). Nearly two thirds of organizations gave wage bonuses to DSPs. Specifically, 44% gave referral bonuses to current employees, 24% performance recognition bonuses, 16% hiring bonuses to new hires, 16% years of service bonuses, and 28% another type of bonus. Referral and hiring bonuses are recruitment strategies that can be used to address early turnover and vacancy. Performance recognition, years of service bonuses and other types of bonuses are often used to improve tenure of employees. It is important to identify the types of bonuses that are most effective and to ensure that all employers of DSPs are aware of this effective strategy. This is an area for further exploration with employers.
3. Early turnover continues to be a significant challenge in RI, with 72% of separations happening with DSPs before they reach one year of tenure and 35% leaving within the first six months. This early turnover means that money is being invested into DSPs who leave before they can fully contribute to the organization. Far too many separations are due to terminations. In the most recent data collection cycle, 26% of DSPs who left their positions were terminated. There are three key areas to continue to explore with employers:
 - refining their selection processes to ensure they are carefully reviewing and choosing candidates with the skills needed to be effective in the DSP roles,
 - exploring with employers the reasons for terminations, and
 - identifying any systemic causes of the terminations such as delayed background checks or other obstacles.

Additionally, putting selection techniques into place, such as structured behavioral interviewing and correctly using realistic job previews (RJPs), can help select employees who are more likely to stay in their positions. According to the data provided, 85% of RI organizations indicate that they are already utilizing a realistic job preview. Continuing to hone that practice, ensuring that the RJPs are used correctly, and that providers are using the RI-specific realistic job preview is important.

4. There is a continued significant concern about the low percentage of DSPs enrolled in health insurance programs in RI. While most organizations offer insurance to DSPs, only 41% of all DSPs are enrolled in insurance and only 79% of DSPs are even eligible for health insurance. This is alarming because providing direct care is one of the highest-risk jobs related to injury and workers' compensation. Given the fact that most DSPs in the US are single heads of households, it is highly unlikely they are getting insurance through a spouse or lifetime partner. One cannot assume that DSPs have insurance elsewhere as currently, this is unknown. Benefits do not benefit employees if they do not use them. It is important to better understand why employees are not using employer provided health insurance and explore where DSPs who do not take up health insurance from their employers are receiving it if at all. Finding strategies to bring low-cost health insurance to DSPs in RI remains a priority.
5. Organizations that offer paid sick leave have lower DSP turnover (13%) than those that do not (18%). Additionally, organizations that offered paid personal time off had lower turnover (13%) than organizations that did not offer this benefit (16%). Employers should be encouraged to offer paid sick leave and paid personal time off for DSPs. Targeted training and support should be provided to those that do not offer these benefits about how they work, how to leverage the funding, and what the positive outcomes are.
6. The direct support workforce is aging in Rhode Island. Thirteen percent of the DSP workforce is almost at or beyond retirement age. This is predictable turnover, and data must be collected to identify the number of DSPs who retire each year and to continue to monitor age trends. Providers need to be encouraged to use their data to proactively identify and plan for this reduction in their DSP workforce.
7. Vacancy rates have decreased considerably from 17% to 11%. Open positions are often filled by overtime hours paid to DSPs. This cost over 11 million dollars in the last six-month data collection cycle and comprised 12% of payroll costs during that period. Turnover is costly, and filled vacancies could be diverted to other needs such as bonuses, professional development, or higher wages. Additionally, it was surprising to see that the overall vacancy rate was reduced but overtime expenses went up slightly. More exploration is needed to understand if those organizations with the highest vacancy rates had a higher percentage of the overtime expenses or if other explanations are needed. Sometimes, overtime is used as a retention strategy, and it is important to understand and differentiate the cause.
8. Vacancies also result in frontline supervisors filling in for DSP hours. Organizations that paid FLSs overtime were much more likely to have significantly higher FLS vacancy rate compared to those that didn't offer that benefit (16% vs. 5%). That said, every hour that FLSs spend providing direct care reduces the time they can commit to providing coaching and training to DSPs particularly in the first year when a DSP needs the most support from their supervisor. Reducing the need for FLSs to work direct care will increase the attention they can pay to supporting and retaining DSPs.
9. Half (50%) of organizations offered overtime to FLSs. Continuing to offer opportunities for frontline supervisors to earn more than DSPs is a key retention strategy for this group of employees who often work significantly more than 40 hours each week and can be difficult to recruit and retain. The average FLS turnover rate was 6%, and the average FLS vacancy rate was 10%. Turnover and vacancy rates increased 2% and 4%, respectively, from the previous 6-month data collection period, suggesting a need for further monitoring of this upward trend.
10. While the vacancy rate continues to decrease, 30% of reporting organizations still indicated that they had to turn away or stop accepting new service referrals due to DSP staffing issues. Continuing to find new marketing and recruitment opportunities and creating career pipelines to enter the direct support workforce on a statewide level will help decrease vacancy rates and increase capacity for new service referrals.

- 11. This data only represents DSPs employed by provider organizations and does not include DSPs employed by people who self-direct their services. Additionally, this data only represents DSPs who support adults with IDD and is not inclusive of the DSP and FLS workforce that provide services and supports to children with IDD. The University of Minnesota is working with key collaborators in RI to assist them in developing processes within SupportWise Data to collect data from self-direction and children's services. This will offer a better understanding of the full picture of DSPs in Rhode Island and continue to support the state and employers to make data-based decisions to better recruit and retain DSPs.
- 12. Poor or lack of supervision is likely one of the reasons DSPs leave their jobs and may be a contributor to DSP turnover in Rhode Island. Continuing to refine techniques to select, train, and retain the right FLSs for the job will help to improve DSP retention by creating general stability in the workforce and quality of services for people supported. The Supervisor Training Series, sponsored by CPNRI and facilitated by the University of Minnesota Direct Support Workforce Solutions team is an example of best practices in training for supervisors to increase competence.
- 13. DSPs are more diverse than the general population in RI and their supervisors. It is important for supervisors and managers within provider organizations to be trained in cultural competence and culturally responsive practices. Additionally, the University of Minnesota will work with Sherlock Center and other key collaborators in Rhode Island to ensure resources and materials are available in Spanish and alternative formats. Focusing on culturally responsive practices will also benefit employers target recruitment efforts.

Ongoing Efforts to Improve Rhode Island Direct Support Workforce Stability

Support has been provided in Rhode Island to evolve the infrastructure needed to sustain and stabilize the direct support workforce. Starting in 2021, the University of Minnesota's Direct Support Workforce Solutions consultants and Sherlock Center workforce coaches provided organizations with support and intensive technical assistance by identifying and implementing workforce strategies that are informed by their organizational data and align with best practices. Eleven organizations have received individualized consultation through the Discovery and Action Planning and Implementation phases. Table 42 indicates the year that each organization was engaged in Discovery and Action Planning and Implementation phases.

Table 42. Organizations Receiving Intensive Technical Assistance

Year	Total Organizations Received Intensive Technical Assistance*	Organizations in or having completed Discovery Phase	Organizations in Action Planning and Implementation Phase
2021	5	5	1
2022	5	5	4
2023	8	8	4
2024	11	11	9

*Total may be less than total number of organizations in Discovery and Action Planning and Implementation because some organizations participated in both Discovery and Action Planning and Implementation phase during the same calendar year.

Twenty-five organizations (including the 11 organizations receiving intensive technical assistance) have participated in workforce webinars to support their learning on various workforce strategies to recruit, select, train, and retain the direct support workforce they employ. Webinar topics covered in 2023 and 2024 include:

- Competency-based training
- Credentialing and career pathways
- Realistic job previews
- Competency-based job descriptions and job analysis
- Employee engagement
- Competency-based skills evaluations and competency-based performance reviews
- Recruitment marketing

- Structured behavioral interviewing and developing the score guide.

Supporting organizations to understand their key workforce indicators and implement workforce strategies to address their turnover and vacancy rates through intensive technical assistance, coaching, and training continues.

Three cohorts, consisting of a total of 147 supervisors from 26 organizations, have completed the Foundational Skills in Supervision supervisory training, a collaborative effort between CPNRI, UMN ICI, and DLT. An additional cohort of 65 supervisors is in progress. Of the first three cohorts, 69% said they were more likely to stay at their organization or in their position because of the training, and 74% of the participants indicated they will perform their job better because of the training. Forty-one supervisors from 14 provider organizations continued their training and completed the Developing the Direct Support Workforce training series. Another cohort is in progress. These 6-month blended learning training series focus on increasing supervisor competence to better support, coach, train, develop, and retain direct support professionals. Two RI-based trainers employed by participating provider organizations completed their first year of training to sustain the efforts to train supervisors across Rhode Island.

On a statewide level, the Rhode Island State Workforce Initiative Coordinating Council and corresponding workgroups are developing tools, processes, and recommendations that align with effective workforce practices. The University of Minnesota, in partnership with BHDDH, Sherlock Center, CPNRI, and other key collaborators in Rhode Island, is supporting the implementation and alignment of these recommendations to provide statewide resources to employers of DSPs and FLSs. The Coordinating Council works to ensure the implementation of key workforce recommendations identified in this report. This work is accomplished by state workgroups that are organized along five key workforce areas:

1. Data and reporting
2. Policy and worker voice
3. Marketing and recruitment
4. Selection and retention
5. Training and professional development.

Each workgroup is co-led by leaders invested in the Rhode Island State Workforce Initiative with support and guidance from Sherlock Center's Workforce Team and the University of Minnesota's Direct Support Workforce Solutions consultants. State work-

groups use data from Workforce Data Summary reports and feedback from the community to inform their goals and objectives each year. Below are examples of activities each workgroup produced in previous years and their focus for 2025.

The Data and Reporting workgroup focused on dissemination of workforce data results and development of SupportWise Data. In 2024, they provided reviews and plain language reports for the 7/1/24-12/31/24 and 7/1/24-12/31/24 statewide reports. In addition, along with key collaborators, they provided feedback for the development of a data collection model for self-directing employers. Another of their roles has been to provide the other RI workgroups with key workforce metrics to use in their individual work. In 2025, key activities are focused on dissemination of two rounds of provider workforce data collection and expanding current data collection to include the implementation of the self-direction workforce data approach.

The Policy Guidance and Worker Voice workgroup developed a recruitment flyer for those connected to the workforce to join the RISWI, conducted listening sessions across Rhode Island, and discussed various methods of communicating with DSPs and other professionals. In 2025, they will be using the results of these listening sessions to inform goals to better understand and enlist diverse voices, expand engagement of DSPs in statewide workforce activities and development an annual policy advocacy plan in addition to other activities.

The Marketing and Recruitment workgroup focused efforts in 2024 creating targeted public service announcements (PSA) and recruitment flyers to broaden awareness of DPS role and messaging for organizations to seek pathways to new prospective employees. Key systems barriers to employment were identified and key stakeholders began working on solutions. In 2025, the workgroup goals focus on rollout of a marketing toolkit for effective use of recruitment flyers and PSAs as well as increasing engagement of untapped pools and pathways to employment through engagement with institutions of higher education and pathways for high school students.

The Selection and Retention workgroup goals in 2024 included developing competency-based job descriptions, skills assessments, structured behavioral interviewing tools and score guides, stay interviews and surveys, and sharing recommendations for development of peer mentors. They provided feedback regarding a state-specific Realistic Job Preview. In

2025, the Selection and Retention workgroup goals focus on strengthening the investment across employers in using selection and retention tools that have been collected as well as a process for feedback and updating a list of resources for employers and DSPs; collaborating with the Training and Professional Development workgroup to recommend a statewide career pathway program for DSPs and FLSs; and assessing and monitoring statewide workforce data aligned with the adoption of selection and retention strategies such as RJPs, career paths, and structured behavioral interviewing.

The Training and Professional Development workgroup developed RI-specific competency sets for DSPs and FLSs and an onboarding and orientation guide for employers. In 2025, one goal focuses on collaboration with the Selection and Retention workgroup in gathering information to inform recommendations for a career pathway and/or corresponding credential for employed DSPs that aligns with a set of RI-specific competencies for DSPs and FLSs. Additionally, the workgroup will develop an orientation and onboarding template for FLSs as a statewide resource for employers.

Conclusion

There is much to be excited about regarding the improvements made in Rhode Island efforts to address direct support workforce stability. The systems level approach, dedicated employees within the provider organizations, and the collaboration across key collaborators have been important to the successes experienced to date. The turnover ratio increased slightly in the last 6 months to 16.9% but is still 4% lower than when tracking began in 2022. The vacancy rate decreased from 11.9% to 10.7% in the past six months and is down at least 7% from when tracking began in 2022. Both average starting and hourly wages have increased from \$18.87 to \$20.70 and \$18.94 to \$21.48 respectively. Compared to the previous 6-month period, the percentage of agencies turning away referrals due to DSP staffing issues decreased from 33% to 30%. The total number of DSPs employed increased from 3,210 to 3,275. Additionally, there are more DSPs eligible for and enrolled in health insurance.

There is still a need to continue the momentum and monitor these trends. Ultimately, as this work continues, the hope is that other key workforce indicators continue to improve in all services and supports for persons with IDD irrespective of their age or the types of services they receive. These efforts will result in improved services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities being supported in the state.

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