



Rhode Island Statewide Workforce Initiative (RISWI)

SupportWise Workforce Data Summary and Implications
for Reporting Period July 1–December 31, 2025

Prepared for the Rhode Island Statewide Workforce Initiative Coordinating Council
and Community Collaborators



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Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of aggregate provider organization workforce data, including strengths and areas of growth on a statewide level. By examining this data on an annual, statewide basis, the report enables the Rhode Island Statewide Workforce Initiative Coordinating Council and Community Collaborators to identify trends over time, benchmark progress, and better understand systemic challenges and opportunities across the workforce. This report documents key workforce data points and trends to help inform next steps of the Rhode Island Statewide Workforce Initiative and support data-driven decision-making as the workgroups and coordinating council identify priorities. It also serves as a useful resource to policymakers and elected officials, organizational leaders, advocates, direct support professionals, and other key constituents. For questions or more detailed data analysis, contact riswi@umn.edu.

Introduction & Background

In 2013, the Department of Justice investigated Rhode Island's services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) which led to a 2014 Consent Decree. The decree required that all persons with IDD in Rhode Island could have jobs, be a part of community integrated settings, and make their own life choices. The Consent Decree acknowledged that achieving these outcomes depends on a well-trained and stable direct support professional (DSP) workforce. In 2021, Rhode Island began developing a plan to strengthen the stability of the DSP workforce. A State Coordinating Council was established, along with five workgroups, to guide Rhode Island's efforts. Current workgroups include:

- Data and reporting
- Policy guidance and worker voice
- Marketing and recruitment
- Selection and retention
- Training and professional development

This work is a collaborative effort involving multiple constituents working together to meet the plan requirements, including the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration and Rhode Island College's Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities, with

support from employers of DSPs and others invested in improving workforce retention. As part of this plan, collecting and reporting workforce data was identified as a key requirement. This report summarizes data from the most recent data collection cycle of July 1 – December 31, 2025, and examines workforce trends over the last several years.

Who Is Represented in the Data?

Rhode Island organizations providing services to adults with IDD have been reporting their workforce data for several years. Self-directed employers completed a separate workforce survey that was piloted last year, and the results are summarized in a separate report with recommendations.

For this report, provider organizations were asked to provide their workforce data from July 1 – December 31, 2025, using SupportWise Data (University of Minnesota Institute on Community Integration, 2026). A total of 32 of Rhode Island’s 34 IDD provider organizations responded¹.

Organizations reported on the types of services they provided to adults with IDD as of December 31, 2025, including non-residential supports, in-home supports, and/or residential supports. Nearly all (91%) of the organizations reported providing non-residential supports, over half (59%) in-home supports, and 69% residential supports.

¹ 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, 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., and Work Opportunities Unlimited Contracts Inc.

Latest Workforce Results

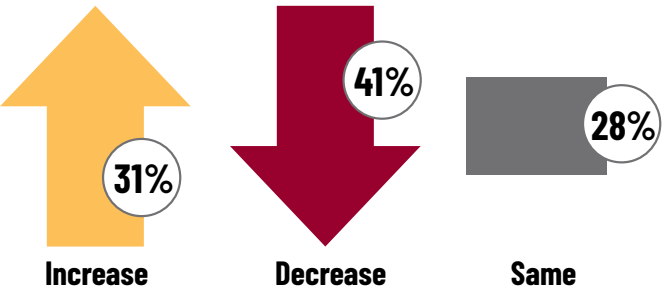
This section provides an overview of the most recent workforce data, from 7/1/25-12/31/25. The data below highlight key indicators and provide a snapshot of the current state of the workforce across participating organizations in Rhode Island. The data includes information about direct support professionals (DSP) and their direct supervisors (frontline supervisors (FLS)) who are employed by participating organizations.

Number of Staff on Payroll

DSPs

The total number of DSPs can tell a state generally how large their workforce is. It is expected that this number will fluctuate over time based on the number of people supported and the amount of service provided. The number of DSPs on payroll on 7/1/25 was 3,150 (range 2-346 DSPs). The total number of DSPs on payroll on 12/31/25 was 3,179 (range 2-353 DSPs). Nearly one-third (31%) of organizations had more DSPs on payroll on 12/31/25 than on 7/1/25, 28% had the same number of DSPs on payroll, and 41% had fewer DSPs on payroll.

Figure 1. Percentage of Direct Support Professionals on Payroll Between 7/1/25 and 12/31/25



Note: 32 organizations provided data

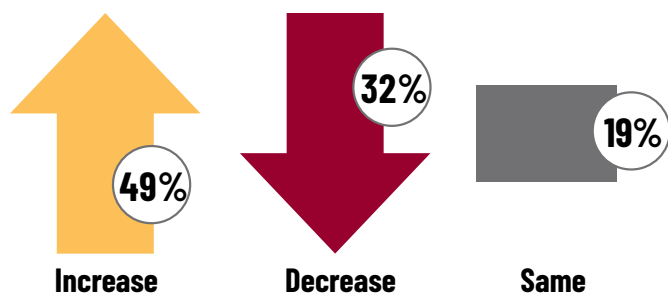
FLSs

The total number of FLSs employed across organizations on 12/31/25 was 318.

Number of People Supported

Organizations indicated the number of adults with IDD that were enrolled in residential, in-home, and/or non-residential services. The total number of adults with IDD enrolled in residential, in-home, and/or non-residential services on 7/1/25 was 2,584 (average = 83 adults with IDD, range 12-314 adults with IDD). The total number of adults with IDD enrolled in residential, in-home, and/or non-residential services on 12/31/25 was 2,464 (average = 79 adults with IDD, range 0-317 adults with IDD). Nearly half (49%) of organizations had more adults with IDD enrolled in residential, in-home, and/or non-residential services on 12/31/25 than on 7/1/25, 19% had the same number of adults enrolled, and 32% had less adults enrolled.

Figure 2. Percentage of Adults with IDD Supported Between 7/1/25 and 12/31/25



Note: 31 organizations provided data

Organizations Not Accepting Service Referrals

An indicator of workforce stability is the capacity of an organization to accept new service referrals. Organizations were asked if they turned away or stopped accepting new service referrals due to DSP staffing issues during 7/1/25-12/31/25. Eleven organizations (34%) indicated they had turned away or stopped accepting new services referrals while 21 (66%) had not. This is slightly higher when compared to national numbers of 26% turning away referrals due to staffing numbers (NCI-IDD, 2025).

Staff Demographics

The demographics of DSPs and FLSs employed by participating RI organizations are provided in this section. Staff demographics can provide insight into who is being recruited, who is being promoted to FLS, and who is missing.

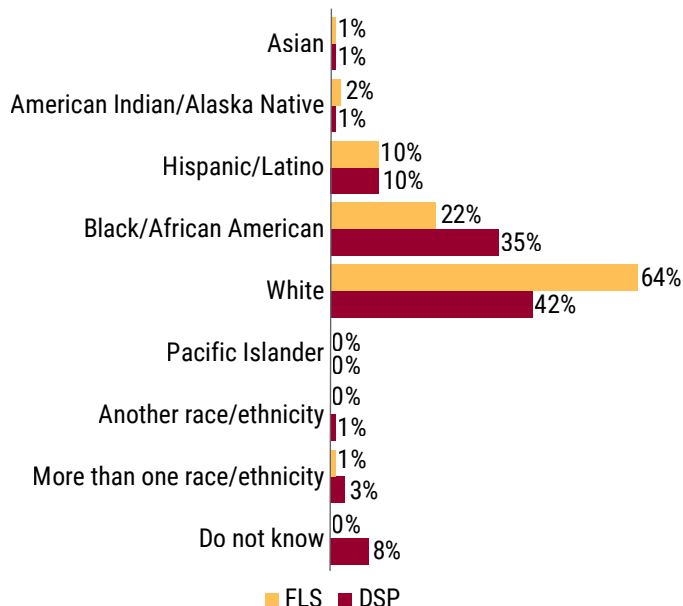
Race and Ethnicity

Organizations reported the race and ethnicity of the DSPs and FLSs they employ. They indicated nearly half DSPs as white (42%), one-third Black/African American (35%), and 10% Hispanic/Latino. Similarly, organizations reported two-thirds of FLSs identified as white (64%), nearly one-quarter Black/African American (22%), and 10% Hispanic/Latino.

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 FLSs, and fewer 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. More DSPs and FLSs are Black/African American when compared to the RI statewide demographic data.

When comparing RI DSP and FLS demographics, DSPs indicated a much higher percentage who were Black or African American and FLSs had a higher percentage who were White. Additionally, a higher percentage of DSPs had race and ethnicity that was unknown to their employers. Two organizations were unable to provide race and ethnicity data.

Figure 3. Race and Ethnicity for direct support professionals and frontline supervisors

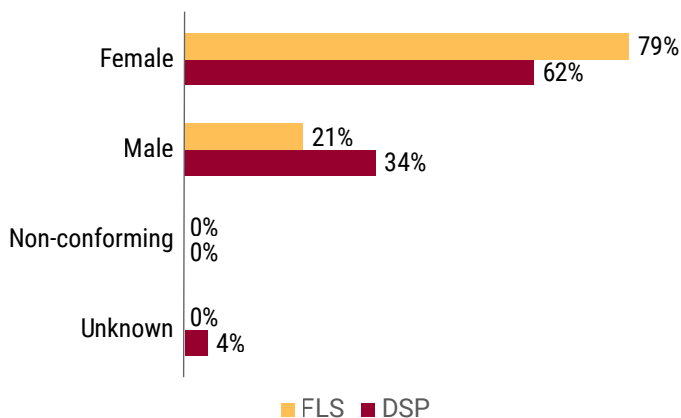


Note: 30 organizations provided data

Gender

Nearly two-thirds (62%) of DSPs and three-quarters (79%) of FLSs were identified as female, respectively. Compared to DSPs, there are fewer male FLSs.

Figure 4. Gender identity for direct support professionals and frontline supervisors

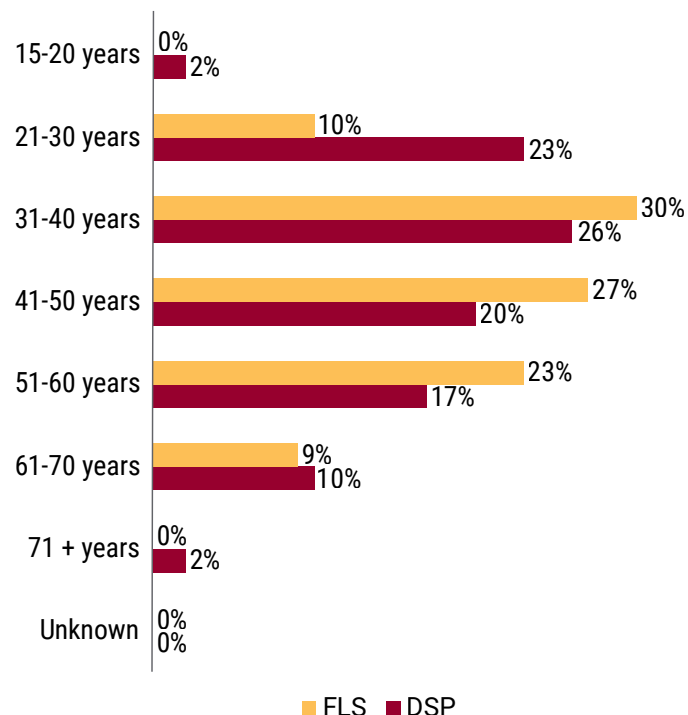


Note: 30 organizations provided data

Age

The age ranges of the DSPs and FLSs were reported. Half (51%) of DSPs were under 40 years of age, 20% were 41-50 years old, and 29% were over 50 years of age. For FLSs, 40% were under 40 years of age, over one-quarter (27%) were 41-50 years old, and one-third (33%) were over 50 years of age. When compared to DSPs, a larger percentage of FLS were between 31 and 60 years of age. Knowing the age of DSPs and FLSs helps identify who organizations employ, which employees are nearing retirement, and it can help organizations understand who is more likely to be retained based on age.

Figure 5. Age for direct support professionals and frontline supervisors



Note: 25 organizations reported DSP data; 24 organizations provided FLS data

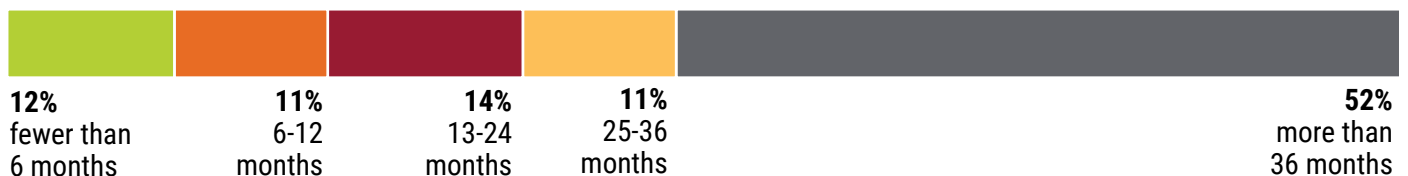
Staff Tenure

Organizations were asked about the tenure of their DSPs and FLSs on payroll on 12/31/25. Understanding the tenure of DSPs and FLSs helps to understand the needs of the current staff within and across organizations. For DSPs, one quarter (23%) had been continuously employed for less than 12 months, 25% 13 to 36 months, and 52% more than 36 months. For FLSs, 4% had been continuously employed for less than 12 months, 9% 13 to 36 months, and 87% more than 36 months.

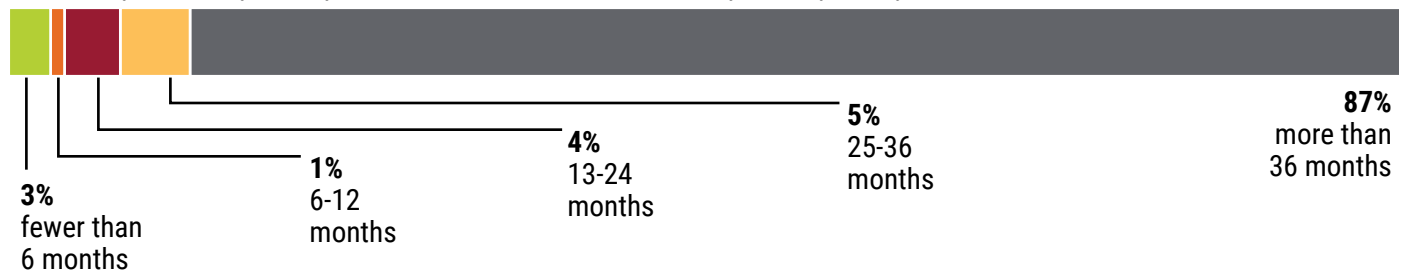
Only 16 organizations reported FLS tenure data, resulting in a much lower response rate compared to the DSP workforce data. This may be because FLS tenure data is not requested by the court monitor and is not included in the National Core Indicators State of the Workforce Survey. In total, 30 organizations reported DSP tenure data, while 16 organizations reported FLS tenure data.

Figure 6. Employment tenure for direct support professionals and frontline supervisors

How many DSPs on your payroll on 12/31/25 were continuously employed at your organization for:



How many FLSs on your payroll on 12/31/25 were continuously employed at your organization for:



Note: 30 and 16 organizations reported DSP and FLS tenure data, respectively.

When compared to national numbers (30.3%; NCI-IDD, 2025), Rhode Island relies much more heavily on tenured DSPs employed more than 36 months (52%). Tenured employees may be more likely to be looking for career pathways where they can stay in their role and be acknowledged for more advanced expertise. As DSP demographics indicate an aging workforce, it's important to focus recruitment efforts and awareness campaigns on the emerging workforce, together with strategies for retention.

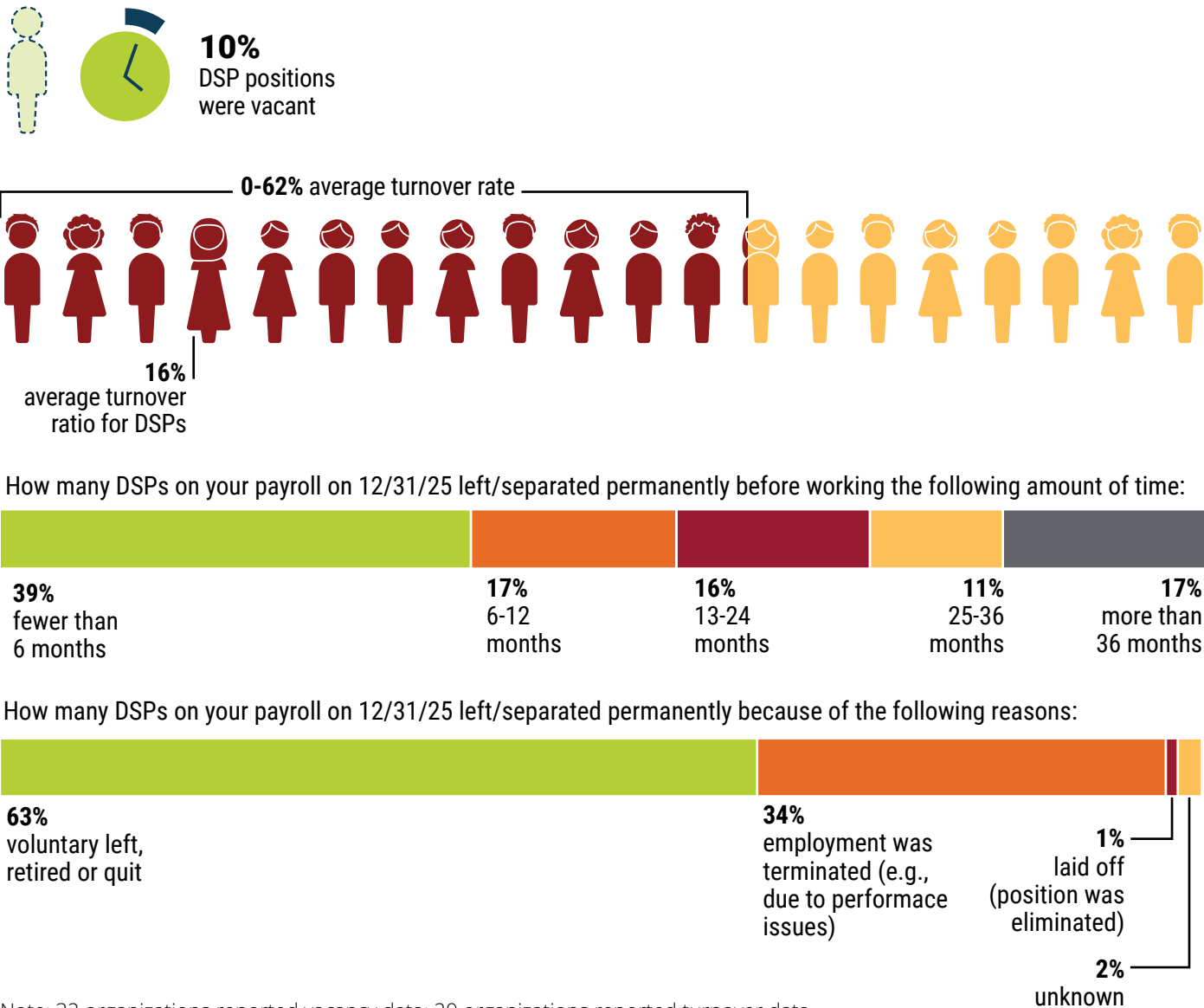
Staff Retention and Vacancy

DSP Vacancy and Turnover Rates

Organizations reported vacant DSP positions and the number of DSPs who permanently separated from their organization during 7/1/25-12/31/25. DSP vacancy and turnover are some of the most important indicators of workforce development outcomes.

There were 3,548 DSP positions on 12/31/25. Three quarters (75%) were full-time DSP positions, and 25% were part-time DSP positions. There were 369 vacant DSP positions. Of those, 60% were full-time positions and 40% were part-time positions. The overall DSP vacancy rate was 10%. The DSP turnover ratio was 16% (range 0%-62%) and 3 organizations reported 0% turnover.

Figure 7. Vacancy and turnover rates for direct support professionals



Note: 32 organizations reported vacancy data; 29 organizations reported turnover data.

Of DSPs that permanently left the organization, 39% of the DSPs who left/separated permanently worked for less than 6 months, 17% between 6 and 12 months, 16% between 13 to 24 months, 11% between 25 and 36 months, and 17% more than 36 months. For those who left/separated, 63% left voluntarily, retired, or quit while 34% were terminated, 1% laid off (position was eliminated), and for 2% the reason was unknown.

Over half of the DSPs who separated permanently (56%) left within a year of employment, a costly form of turnover. While lower than the national average (64%; NCI-IDD, 2025), these DSPs typically receive high investment in time and initial training but never

get to the point where they can independently provide support. Often, those DSPs are leaving due to a lack of understanding of the job and/or poor initial support and orientation/onboarding. This can also indicate the need to strengthen selection and training processes and continue to provide professional development and training opportunities for frontline supervisors. Currently, CPNRI hosts a training series for Rhode Island supervisors to help address this challenge. In addition, a Rhode Island specific realistic job preview is available to organizations; nearly all (94%) indicate they currently use a realistic job preview to help select candidates. It may be worth learning how they are using the realistic job preview: if it is with fidelity and aligns with recommended practices.

During this reporting period, the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration (ICI-UMN) notes that some organizations experienced turnover in leadership and/or administrative roles. These changes may affect organizational stability and can influence direct support professionals (DSPs) and frontline supervisors (FLSs), potentially contributing to turnover and vacancy rates as staff adjust to new leadership. Turnover or vacancies in administrative positions may also affect recruitment, hiring, and training processes. Greater stability in these roles may support more consistent implementation of recruitment, hiring, training, and workforce engagement practices. It is also an opportunity for new leaders to engage in statewide (and organization-wide) workforce development work to gain an understanding of the current state of their organization and contribute new ideas and practices.

FLS Vacancy and Turnover Rates

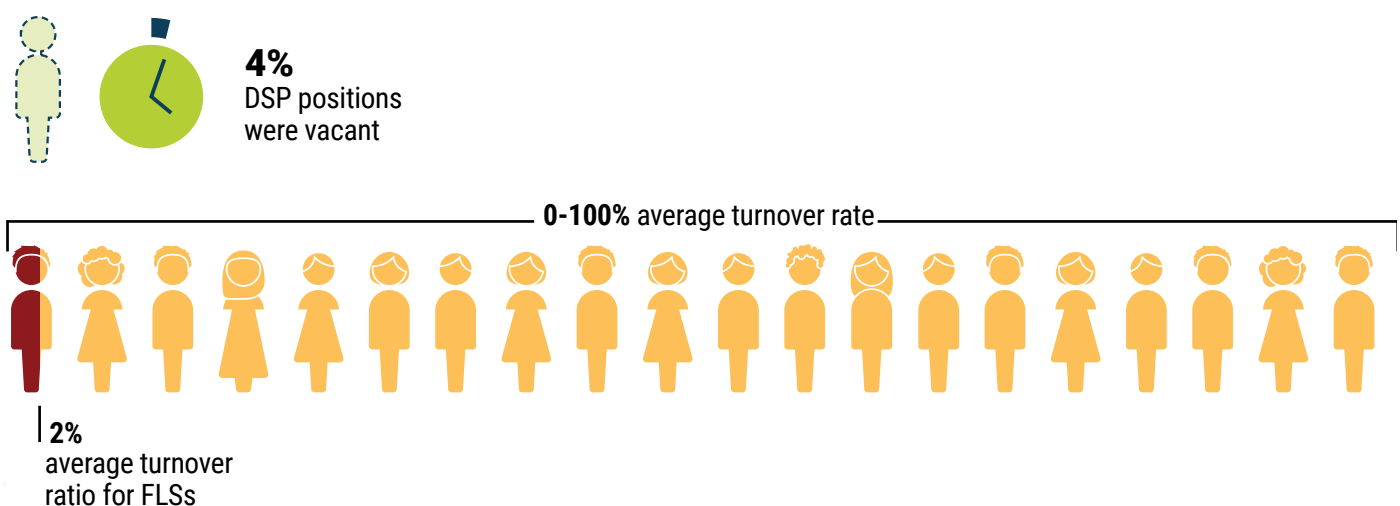
Organizations reported vacant FLS positions and FLSs permanently separating from their organization during 7/1/25-12/31/25.

The FLS vacancy rate was 4%. The FLS turnover ratio was 2% (range 0%-100%); 15 organizations had 0% FLS turnover.

FLS turnover and vacancy rates are not a part of national survey data, so there are no national comparisons to make (NCI-IDD, 2025). However, a FLS turnover ratio of 2% is a strength of Rhode Island's workforce. Stable FLSs who are well trained support retention of DSPs. At the same time, low turnover and vacancy rates means there is little opportunity for DSPs to be promoted into FLS roles, strengthening the argument for clear career pathways and/or credentialing with wage incentives to align with increased competence.

Even a 4% FLS vacancy rate can be a challenge, because this means that there are DSPs who are not currently being supervised due to that vacancy rate. Continuing to make the position appealing to current DSPs, building formalized pathways to the FLS position, and providing supervisor training opportunities to current DSPs interested in being FLSs are practices that can help reduce that vacancy rate.

Figure 8. Vacancy and turnover rates for frontline supervisors



Note: 19 organizations reported vacancy and turnover data.

Staff Wages and Salaries

Identifying wage trends can help organizations and a state understand if there is wage compression within or between positions and can measure the impact rate changes are having on DSP and FLS wages. Organizations reported average DSP starting and hourly wages during 7/1/25-12/31/25 across all services and settings (residential, in-home, and non-residential supports) as well as separately for each service/setting. The average DSP starting hourly wages across all services and settings, reported by 31 organizations, was \$20.90 (range \$20.00-\$25.00). The average DSP hourly wages across all services and settings, reported by 32 organizations, was \$21.73

(range \$20.00-\$25.00). These wages are higher than the national average DSP wage (\$18.39; NCI-IDD, 2025). Still, even with the significant rate increases for RI provider organizations in recent years, wages remain below a living wage for a single adult with no children of \$25.01 (living wage data sourced from the Living Wage Institute via <https://livingwage.mit.edu>). Organizations also reported the average FLS starting and annual salaries during 7/1/25-12/31/25. The average FLS starting salary was \$53,675 (range \$39,000-\$67,350). The average FLS annual salary was \$57,102 (range \$42,328-\$76,000) and reported by 13 organizations. Nearly half (47%) of organizations reported their FLSs are paid hourly, 38% salaried, and 16% a mix of hourly pay and salaries.

Table 1. Direct support professional wages and frontline supervisor salaries

DSP starting hourly wage between 7/1/25-12/31/25 for:	Amount	Range
All services and settings combined	\$20.90	\$20.00-\$25.00
Residential supports	\$20.80	\$20.00-\$20.92
In-home supports	\$20.99	\$20.00-\$23.00
Non-residential supports	\$21.02	\$20.00-\$25.00

DSP average hourly wage between 7/1/25-12/31/25 for:	Amount	Range
All services and settings combined	\$21.73	\$20.00-\$25.00
Residential supports	\$21.58	\$20.00-\$24.11
In-home supports	\$21.71	\$20.00-\$24.11
Non-residential supports	\$21.88	\$20.00-\$25.00

FLS starting and average salary between 7/1/25-12/31/25:	Amount	Range
Average starting salary	\$53,675	\$39,000-\$67,350
Average annual salary	\$57,102	\$42,328-\$76,000

Note: DSP starting hourly wages across all services and settings was reported by 31 organizations, residential by 25 organizations, at-home by 24 organizations, and non-residential by 30 organizations; DSP hourly wages across all services and settings was reported by 32 organizations, residential by 25 organizations, at-home by 24 organizations, and non-residential by 31 organizations; FLS starting and annual salaries were reported by 14 and 13 organizations, respectively.

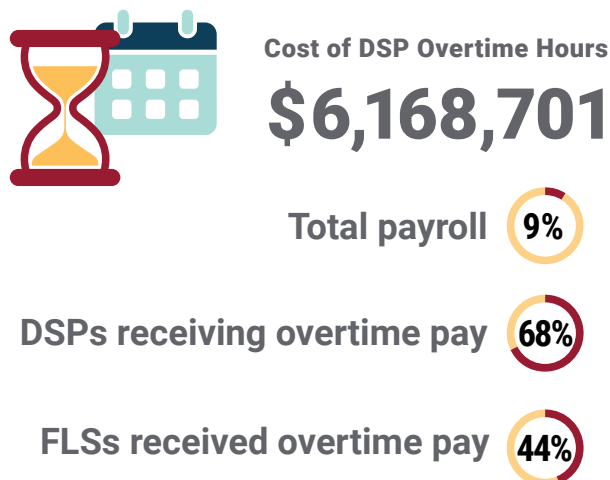
Staff Overtime

Often, DSPs and FLSs work overtime to fill shifts left by vacant positions. Sometimes, DSPs will intentionally work overtime to get closer to earning a living wage. Organizations reported on their total payroll costs and total overtime costs during 7/1/25-12/31/25. The total payroll cost for DSPs supporting adults with IDD was \$66,071,594. The total overtime cost was \$6,168,701, which is 9% of the total payroll.

There were 2,175 DSPs who received at least one hour of overtime pay, which is 68% of all DSPs. Organizations also reported on FLS overtime. Nearly half (42%) of organizations indicated their FLSs received additional pay/wages for overtime hours. Between 7/1/25-12/31/25, 15,940 overtime hours (average = 1,328 hours, range 13-3,670 hours) were paid to FLSs. There were 141 FLS who received overtime pay which is 44% of FLSs. Only twelve orga-

nizations provided FLS overtime data; FLS overtime cost was not available as not enough organizations reported both FLS salary and overtime hours which are needed to compute overtime cost.

Figure 9. Overtime for direct support professionals and frontline supervisors



Note: 29 and 30 organizations reported payroll and DSP overtime data, respectively. 12 organizations reported FLS overtime data

DSP Bonuses and Benefits

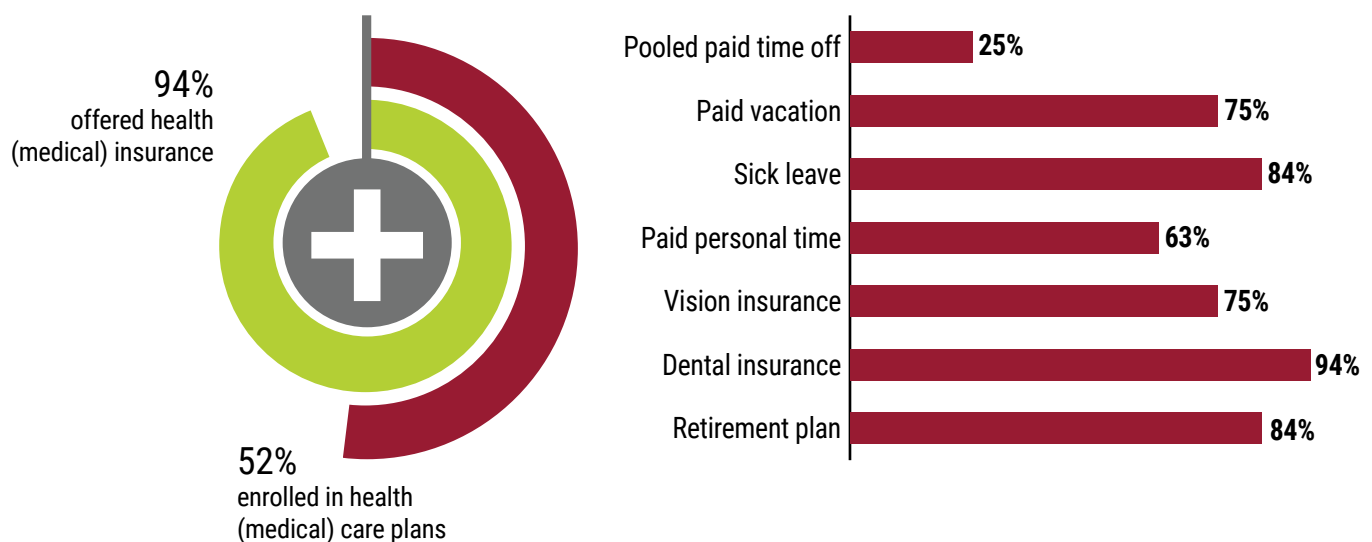
Bonuses

Organizations indicated whether they provided any wage bonuses to their DSPs. Over half (59%) of organizations offered wage bonuses to their DSPs. In addition, 75% of organizations reported offering a pay incentive or referral bonus for current DSPs to bring in new recruits. Referral bonuses are a useful recruitment strategy, because current DSPs understand the job and who would be a good fit for it. Thirty-two organizations provided data.

Benefits

Thirty-two organizations reported data on benefits they provided to some or all DSPs during 7/1/25-12/31/25. Benefits included pooled paid time off, paid vacation time, paid sick time, paid personal time, medical health insurance, vision and dental insurance, an employee-sponsored retirement plan, and other benefits. One quarter (25%) of organizations offered pooled paid time off, 75% paid vacation time, 84% paid sick time, and 63% paid personal time to some or all DSPs.

Figure 10. Benefits provided to direct support professionals



Nearly all organizations (94%) offered health (medical) insurance coverage to some or all DSPs during 7/1/25-12/31/25. Over three-quarters (77%) of all DSPs were eligible for health (medical) insurance. However, only 40% of all DSPs (52% of eligible DSPs) were enrolled in health (medical) insurance coverage through their organization.

Seventy-five percent of organizations provided vision coverage, 94% dental coverage, 84% employer-sponsored retirement plan (401K, 403b, or other plan), and 94% other benefits not previously listed. These included bereavement, pet insurance, life insurance, identity theft insurance, AAA discounted membership, and Verizon wireless discount.

Longitudinal Workforce Trends

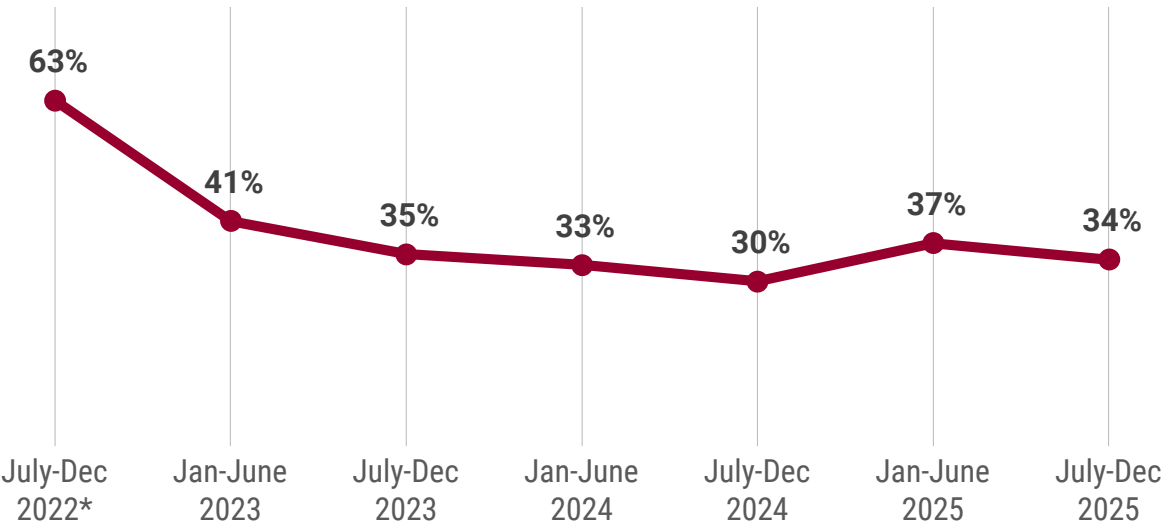
Workforce data have been collected in RI since 2022. The University of Minnesota’s Institute on Community Integration (ICI UMN) began working with BHDDH

through the Sherlock Center to address workforce stability in Rhode Island at the end of 2021. Activities continue to be conducted at a statewide and individual organization level. As of the end of this reporting period, thirteen organizations (40% of organizations who are included in this report) are engaged in intensive technical assistance to address workforce stability at the organization level with a goal of reducing turnover and vacancies and improving quality of supports and services.

Organizations Not Accepting Service Referrals

The percentage of organizations that turned away referrals because of DSP staffing issues had reduced over time with slight variations in the numbers. From July-Dec 2025, the percentage is slightly less (34% vs. 37%) than the last 6-month cycle, but higher than the national average (26.6%, NCI-IDD, 2025).

Figure 11. Trends for organizations not accepting service referrals



* This is historic data collected by the court monitor directly from provider organizations.

Staff Retention and Vacancy

DSP Vacancy and Turnover

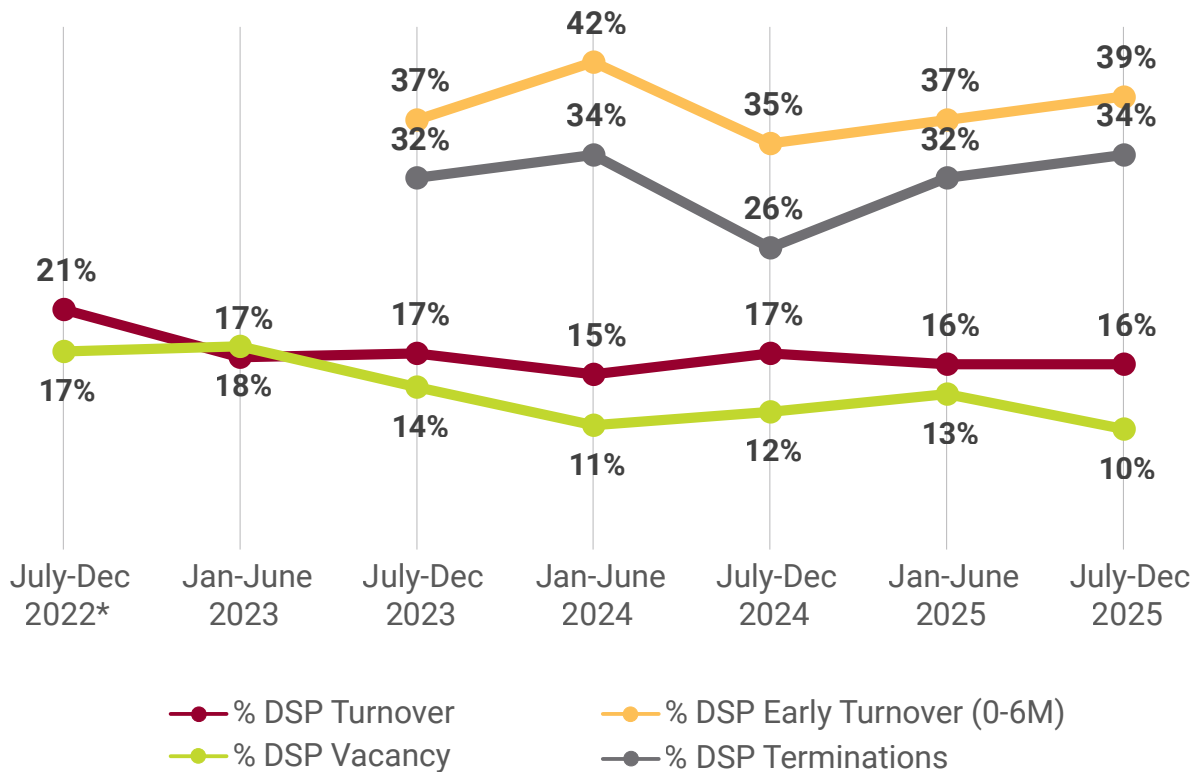
With respect to DSP retention, the turnover ratio was 21% on December 31, 2022, and has decreased significantly over the last three years. It was at 16% on December 31, 2025, which is consistent from the previous 6-months.

Early turnover, defined as turnover prior to 6 months of employment, continues to fluctuate and was 39% this reporting period. During this time, ICI UMN continued promoting the Rhode Island-specific realistic job preview and supporting organizations in implementing selection tools, such as structured behavioral interviewing, to improve hiring decisions and select staff who are a strong fit for the role. Organizations remain at different stages of implementing these practices. Continued support for organizations and hiring staff in adopting these tools may help

reduce early turnover over time. While organizations are becoming more selective in their hiring processes, anecdotal reports also suggest they are reviewing existing staff and terminating employees who are not a good fit for the role. This may be contributing to the increase in DSP terminations. Regardless, it will be important to continue tracking and analyzing both voluntary and involuntary turnover, as well as the reasons staff are leaving organizations.

The vacancy rate was 17% on December 31, 2022, and has dropped reasonably consistently over the last three years. It was at 13% on June 30, 2025, and dropped to 10% on December 31, 2025. This fits well with the national vacancy rates which were 9.7% for full-time DSPs and 13.2% for part-time DSPs (NCI-IDD, 2025). Continuing to fill these vacancies with employees who are a good fit for the organization can reduce stress and burnout in current DSPs and FLSs.

Figure 12. Trends for DSP retention and vacancy



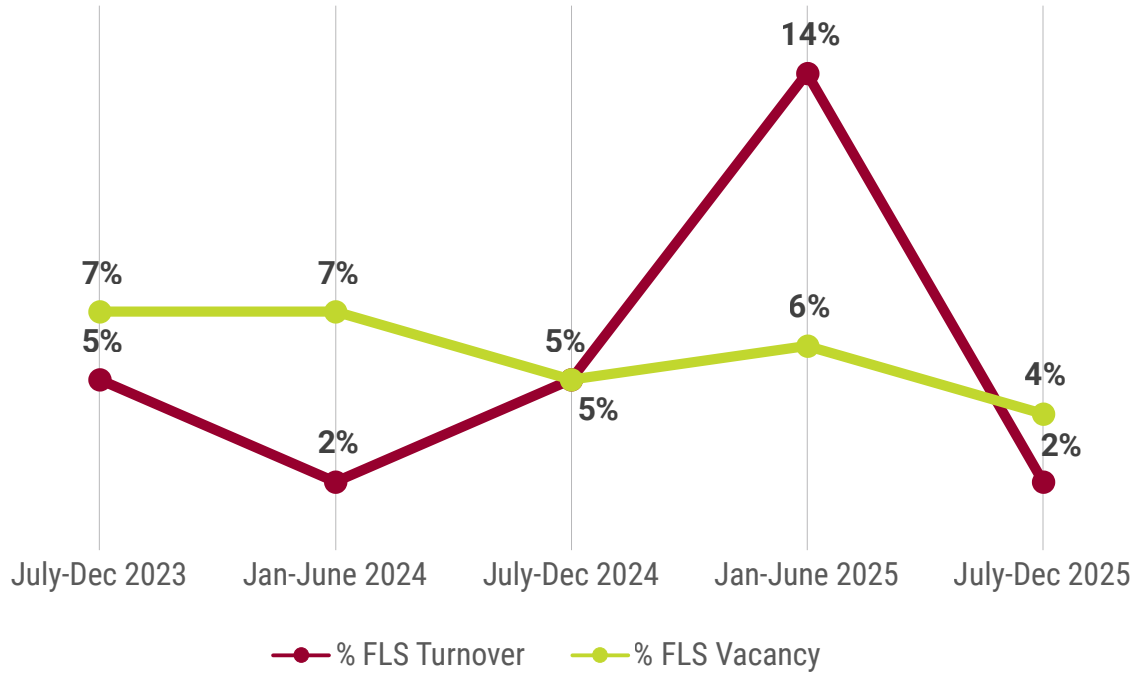
* This is historic data collected by the court monitor directly from provider organizations.

FLS Vacancy and Turnover

With respect to FLS retention, the turnover ratio was 5% on December 31, 2023, and fluctuated over the last two years. After a significant spike in January-June 2025, it dropped significantly to 2% on December 31, 2025. The vacancy rate was 7% on December 31, 2023, and has dropped slightly over the last two years. It was at 6% on June 30, 2025, and dropped to 4% on December 31, 2025.

Nineteen of the thirty-two organizations reported FLS turnover and vacancy. The more organizations who can report this data, the more representative it will be of the FLS workforce strengths and challenges in RI. The data that was reported highlights a strength on FLS turnover and vacancy. Research indicates that poor or no supervision is one of the reasons DSPs leave (Hewitt, et al., 2019). The importance of supervisor training programs, such as CPNRI's supervisor trainings, can build the competence of current supervisors who are stable in their positions.

Figure 13. Trends for FLS retention and vacancy



Note: Number of agencies reporting: July-December 2023 n=17, January-June 2024 n=21, July-December 2024 n=19, January-June 2025 n=16, July-December 2025 n=19.

Staff Wages, Overtime, and Benefits

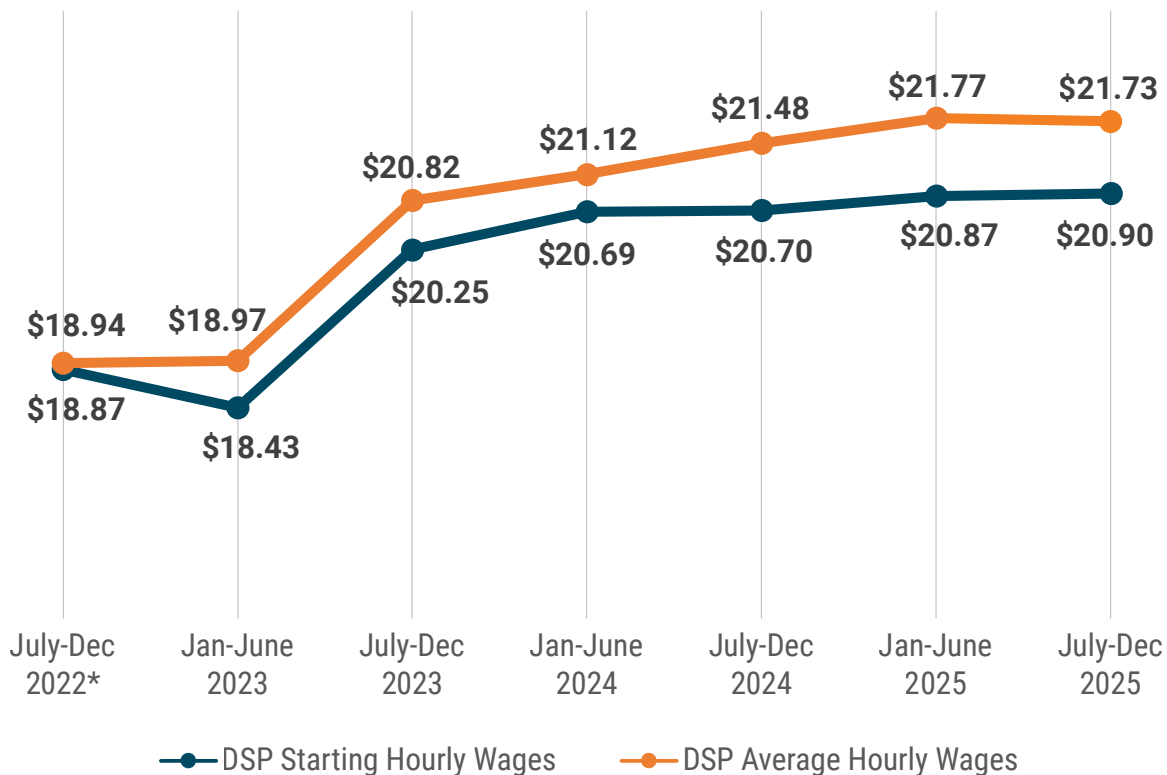
Wages and Salaries

The average DSP starting hourly wages across all services and supports have increased consistently over time. Average hourly wages across all services and supports have increased consistently over time, except for this last cycle.

Rhode Islanders continue to advocate for higher rates to pay DSPs higher wages; this advocacy

accounts for the increase in wages. The difference between starting and average wage, 83 cents, decreased from 90 cents in the previous reporting period. Wage compression happens when new employees make a similar wage to well-trained tenured employees. This compression is a challenge for long-term DSP retention. Implementing career pathways for DSPs with wage incentives and recognizing years of service with wage increases can be helpful to reduce wage compression. Statewide, instituting a credential that aligns with rate differentials can contribute to reducing wage compression as well.

Figure 14. Trends for DSP average hourly wages

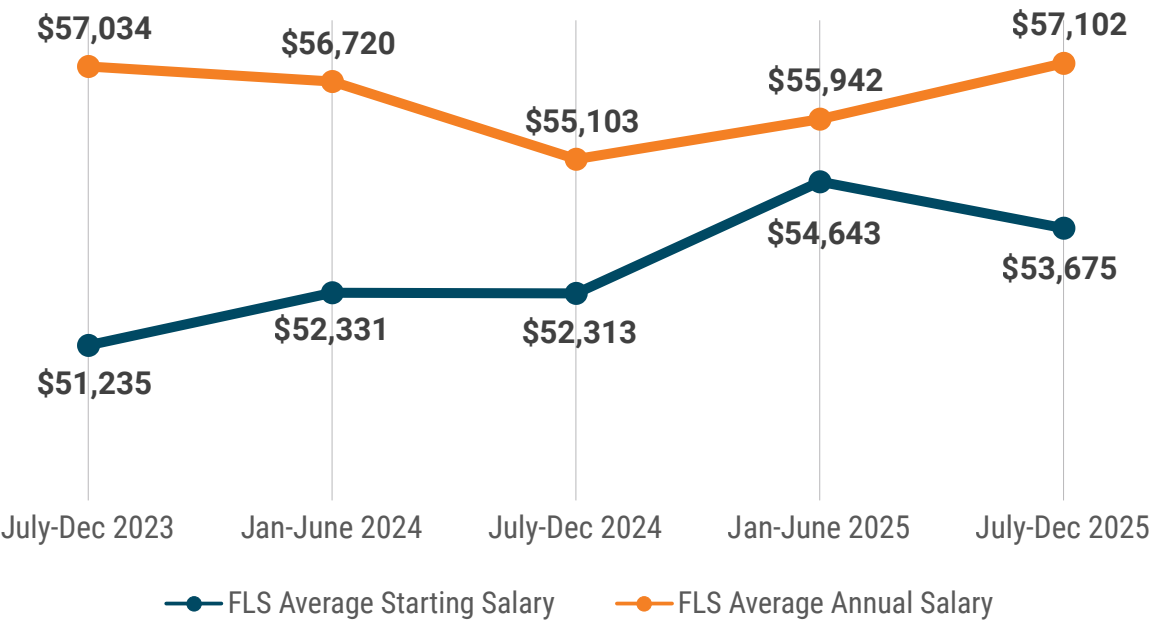


* This is historic data collected by the court monitor directly from provider organizations.

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The average FLS starting salary has increased over time and average annual salaries have fluctuated over time. These are data points reported by less than half of organizations, so are not fully representative of FLSs in Rhode Island.

Figure 15. Trends for FLS average salaries



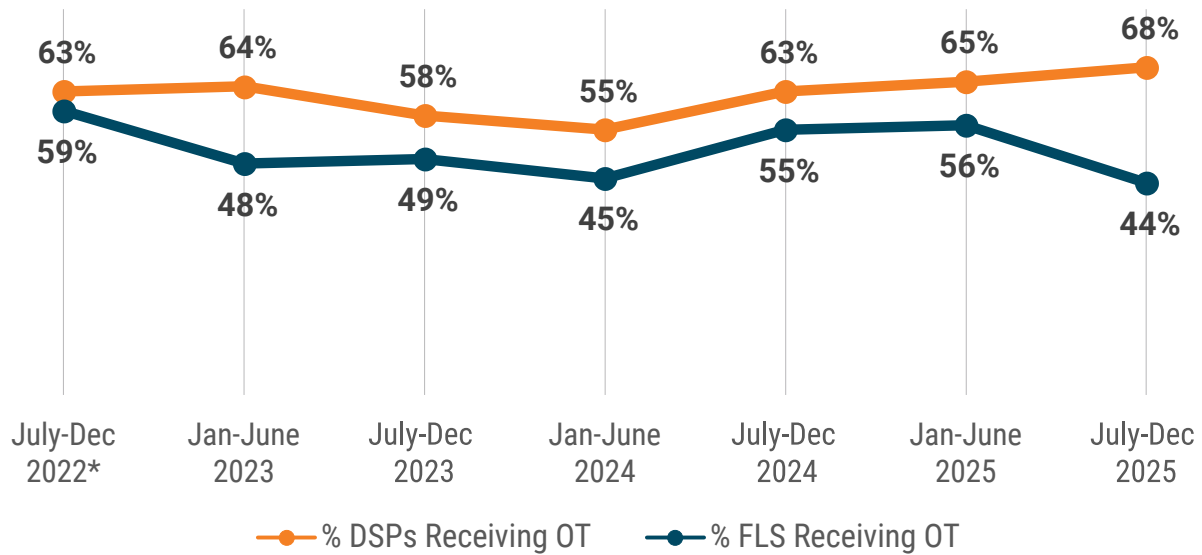
Note: Number of agencies reporting: July-December 2023 n=14, January-June 2024 n=14, July-December 2024 n=15, January-June 2025 n=11, July-December 2025 n=13.

Overtime

The percentage of DSPs receiving overtime was 63% in July–December 2022. After declining in July–December 2023 and January–June 2024, it increased to 68% in July–December 2025. The percentage of supervisors receiving overtime declined from 59% in July–December 2022 to 42% in July–December 2025. Among FLSs, 59% received overtime in July–December 2022. Rates declined over the next three reporting periods, increased in July–December 2024 and January–June 2025, then dropped to 44% in July–December 2025.

A reduction in overtime hours supervisors need to work can help reduce FLS stress and burnout. As vacancy rates continue to decrease, DSP overtime continues to increase. Sometimes, low wage workers such as DSPs will work overtime to fill in financial gaps they may be facing to better support themselves and their families. Other times, DSPs may feel guilty not filling in open shifts when it impacts people supported. It may be worth looking further at the continued increase in DSPs receiving overtime.

Figure 16. Trends for percentage of DSPs and FLSs receiving overtime



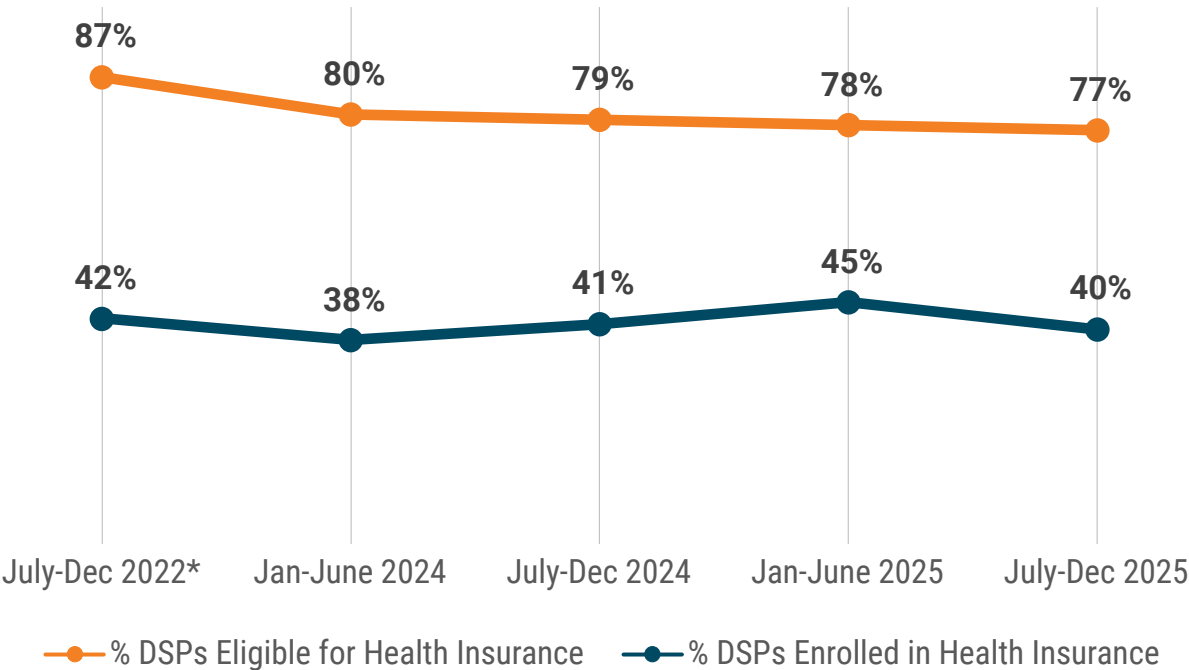
* This is historic data collected by the court monitor directly from provider organizations.

DSP Benefits

With respect to eligibility for health insurance, there was a decline in the percentage of DSPs eligible between July-December 2023 and January-June 2024; however, the percentage has remained consistent since that time. For the percentage of DSPs enrolled in health insurance, the percentage has been consis-

tent (average 41%) since tracking began in July-December 2023. Continuing to understand eligibility requirements for DSPs employed by organizations while also understanding from DSPs why their enrollment has decreased will be important for next steps. If it's due to price of benefits, it may be worth exploring group buying power for healthcare benefits to reduce expenses for both employers and employees.

Figure 17. Trends for percentage of DSPs eligible and enrolled in health insurance



* This is historic data collected by the court monitor directly from provider organizations.

Implications and Recommendations

The Rhode Island Statewide Workforce Initiative continues to work together to improve and expand this critical workforce. There are still challenges that remain. Recommendations aligned with those challenges are listed below and grouped to align with the five Rhode Island Statewide Workforce Initiative workgroups supporting this work.

Recruitment and Marketing

- Vacancy rates continue to trend down, which is positive for the RI workforce. That said, there will always be turnover, the workforce is aging, and there is a need to recruit people who are motivated by the work and mission of employers. It is important to continue to find new sources to attract candidates interested in the field who are more likely to stay.
- It is important to understand and remediate barriers that employers experience in finding new DSPs.
- Employers must understand what strategies they are trying work and which ones do not work. This can be done by monitoring recruitment sources and who is hired from each type, and who stays from each type. Providing tools and resources for how to follow and document these outcomes is needed.
- Form partnerships with K-12 education, post-secondary education, and workforce centers/programs to identify options for marketing and recruitment in their programs.

Selection and Retention

- Early turnover continues to be a challenge, with over half of DSPs who leave happening before a year of employment. Early turnover is a strong indicator that new DSPs either don't understand the job prior to accepting the job, aren't properly selected, or don't receive adequate early support and training in orientation and onboarding. It might also mean that providers are spotting

employees who are a poor fit earlier in the process. Explore the reasons for this early turnover with participating providers and, as a result:

- » Support employers to understand and implement selection strategies such as the Rhode Island-specific realistic job preview and structured behavioral interviewing.
 - » Work with employers to understand the reason for an increase in terminations and explore strategies to support employers in reducing terminations if appropriate.
 - » Support providers to complete the data entry for the "cost of turnover calculator" within SupportWise data so they can see how costly this early intervention is to their organization and the implications system-wide.
- Some employers have significantly improved DSP retention. It is important to identify the factors contributing to their success, share successful practices with other employers, and support networking and collaboration across RI to improve DSP and FLS retention and reduce vacancies.
 - Track wage compression both within the DSP position and between the DSP and FLS position.
 - » Support employers to develop internal career pathways and/or wage increases based on tenure and positive performance reviews to reduce wage compression.

Training and Professional Development

- Early turnover continues to be a challenge, with over half of DSPs leaving within the first year of employment. Early turnover may indicate that new DSPs are not receiving adequate early support and training in orientation and onboarding. Support employers to put orientation and onboarding strategies in place that align with research-based strategies.
- Wage compression within DSP positions remains a challenge. This creates an opportunity to provide transferable training opportunities across organizations that align with wage differentials tied to DSP credentials. Support the development of a statewide credential that reflects competence and advances the professionalization of the DSP role.

- Identify and report frontline supervisor training needs, including needs related to CPNRI's supervisor training program, to strengthen supervisory competence and support for DSPs.
- Partner with K-12 education, post-secondary education, and workforce centers/programs to develop pre-service and in-service training and credentialing programs statewide.

Policy Guidance and Worker Voice

- Rhode Islanders have a history of strong advocacy for rate increases. Continued advocacy is necessary because wages and benefits remain critical to reducing DSP turnover. Increased wages have been directly correlated with lower turnover.
- DSP wages continue to rise but remain below a living wage for a single person with no children in RI. Continue advocating for higher reimbursement rates at the legislative level so that DSPs can earn a living wage without relying on overtime.
- Train DSPs in how to tell their own story and engage in policy advocacy. Establish annual goals for the number of DSP stories that are shared with elected officials outside of Disability Day at the Statehouse.
- Seek DSP perspectives on what workforce data findings mean to them. Continue to talk with and understand DSP experiences and challenges, compare them to challenges seen in quantitative data and exploring issues identified in this data, such as low benefit utilization and continued increasing overtime.
- Consider conducting a DSP survey to gather additional stories and perspectives to complement provider data.

Data and Reporting

- Some workforce indicators, such as FLS demographics, wages, vacancy, and turnover, have lower response rates. To have data that are representative of the RI workforce, it is important to support organizations to understand and learn how to collect and report this data. It is

also important to understand their challenges and problem-solving with them about solutions. Set expectations for 100% compliance with data requests.

- Although a pilot workforce survey of self-directed employers was conducted in 2025, the results are not representative of the self-direction population in RI. Identify opportunities to collect workforce data from self-directed employers to fully understand the state of the workforce in Rhode Island and the differences and similarities in challenges in self-direction and traditional provider-delivered services.
- Identify new ways to present and communicate workforce data to those who can use the information effectively. Educate employers on how to use this data and statewide data to make decisions.
 - » As a part of this work, support providers to understand the importance of reporting data beyond what is required (such as FLS turnover, vacancies, and wages) so that additional data is fully representative of the workforce in RI.
- Continue to collect and report this data, transitioning from 6-month to 12-month reporting period to align with National Core Indicators workforce metrics, reducing the data burden on organizations, and giving workgroups additional time to review and use the results of the reports to inform their workgroup priorities.
- Continue working with provider organizations to reduce their data reporting burden.

Other Non-Workgroup Recommendations

- Continue providing individualized technical assistance to organizations seeking support to improve vacancy and turnover outcomes.
- Create opportunities for current provider organizations to share successful and unsuccessful workforce strategies with one another.

Conclusion

Rhode Island's key workforce metrics continue to show generally encouraging trends, with some expected fluctuations. Compared to the previous six-month reporting period, the percentage of organizations turning away referrals due to DSP staffing issues decreased from 37% to 34%—approximately half of the rate observed during the first data collection in 2022. The DSP turnover ratio remained stable at 16%, which is 4 percentage points lower than in 2022. The vacancy rate declined from 13% to 10%, nearly 7 percentage points lower than when tracking began. The average starting wage increased to \$20.90, while the average hourly wage decreased slightly by \$0.04.

Overall, these indicators suggest continued improvement, and ongoing investment in the workforce will help sustain these trends. Data for frontline supervisors (FLSs) have remained relatively consistent over time; however, some variability may reflect the smaller number of organizations reporting these data.

Several measures continue to present challenges. Early turnover has remained unchanged, and terminations have increased, indicating areas for further examination. While the percentage of DSPs eligible for health insurance has remained stable, the proportion enrolled has declined slightly. Wage compression within the DSP role also persists, suggesting a need to explore strategies that recognize increased experience and tenure. Continued efforts to better understand the needs and preferences of DSPs and FLSs may help inform strategies to support and retain this workforce in Rhode Island.

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Appendix A

Additional analyses were conducted to see if there were differences in vacancy and turnover rates between those organizations that offered and didn't offer wage bonuses and benefits to their staff. The results are shown below.

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

There were 19 organizations that gave wage bonuses to DSPs and 13 that didn't. The turnover rate was the same for organizations that did and did not provide wage bonuses (16%). Organizations providing wage bonuses were very similar with respect to vacancy rate to those that didn't provide them (10% vs. 11%).

Table 2. Differences in turnover and vacancy rates based on DSP wage bonus

Wage Bonus	N	Turnover Rate %	Turnover Rate Range	Vacancy Rate %	Vacancy Rate Range
Yes	19	16%	0%-50%	10%	0%-50%
No	13	16%	0%-62%	11%	0%-35%

Note: 32 organizations provided data

Organizations that Offered Paid Vacation Time to DSPs Versus Those that Did Not

There were 24 organizations that offered paid vacation time to DSPs and 8 that didn't. For organizations that offered paid vacation time to their DSPs, their turnover rate was lower than those that didn't offer paid vacation time (15% vs. 21%). For organizations that offered paid vacation time to their DSPs, their vacancy rate was higher than those that didn't offer paid vacation time (11% vs. 7%).

Table 3. Difference in vacancy and turnover rates based on DSP paid vacation time

Offered Paid Vacation Time	N	Turnover Rate%	Turnover Rate Range	Turnover Rate %	Turnover Rate Range
Yes	24	15%	0%-50%	11%	0%-50%
No	8	21%	0%-62%	7%	0%-35%

Note: 32 organizations provided data

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

There were 27 organizations that offered paid sick time to DSPs and 5 that didn't. For organizations that offered paid sick time to their DSPs, their turnover rate was lower than those that didn't offer paid sick time (15% vs. 24%). For organizations that offered paid sick time to their DSPs, their vacancy rate was higher than those that didn't offer paid vacation time (11% vs. 5%).

Table 4. Difference in vacancy and turnover rates based on DSP paid sick time

Offered Paid Sick Time	N	Turnover Rate		Vacancy Rate	
		%	Range	%	Range
Yes	27	15%	0%-62%	11%	0%-50%
No	5	24%	0%-31%	5%	0%-9%

Note: 32 organizations provided data

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

There were 20 organizations that offered paid personal time to DSPs and 12 that didn't. For organizations that offered paid personal time to their DSPs, their turnover rate was lower than those that didn't offer paid personal time (14% vs. 20%). For organizations that offered paid personal time to their DSPs, their vacancy rate was slightly higher than those that didn't offer paid personal time (11% vs. 9%).

Table 5. Difference in vacancy and turnover rates based on DSP paid personal time

Offered Paid Personal Time	N	Turnover Rate		Vacancy Rate	
		%	Range	%	Range
Yes	20	14%	0%-33%	11%	0%-21%
No	12	20%	0%-62%	9%	0%-50%

Note: 32 organizations provided data

Organizations that Offered Health (medical) Insurance to DSPs versus Those that Did Not

There were 30 organizations that offered health (medical) insurance to DSPs and 2 that didn't. For organizations that offered health (medical) insurance to their DSPs, their turnover rate was lower than those that didn't offer health (medical) insurance (16% vs. 42%). For organizations that offered health (medical) insurance to their DSPs, their vacancy rate was lower than those that didn't offer health (medical) insurance (10% vs. 23%).

Table 6. Organizations that Offered Health (medical) Insurance to DSPs versus Those that Did Not

Offered Health (medical) Insurance	N	Turnover Rate %	Turnover Rate Range	Vacancy Rate %	Vacancy Rate Range
Yes	30	16%	0%-50%	10%	0%-50%
No	2	42%	6%-62%	23%	0%-35%

Note: 32 organizations provided data

Organizations that Paid Overtime to FLSs versus Those that Did Not

There were 7 organizations that paid overtime to FLSs and 12 that didn't. For organizations that paid overtime to their FLSs, their turnover rate was nearly the same as those that didn't pay overtime (2% vs. 3%). For organizations that paid overtime to their FLSs, their vacancy rate was slightly higher than those that didn't pay overtime (7% vs. 5%). Only 19 organizations provided data on FLS overtime.

Table 7. Organizations that Paid Overtime to FLSs versus Those that Did Not

Paid Overtime	N	Turnover Rate %	Turnover Rate Range	Vacancy Rate %	Vacancy Rate Range
Yes	7	2%	0%-11%	7%	0%-22%
No	12	3%	0%-100%	5%	0%-50%

Note: 19 organizations provided data