



## Rhode Island Statewide Workforce Initiative SupportWise Workforce Data Summary Easy Read Report: January–June 2025

This report is about the people who support adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in Rhode Island.

It shares information about Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and Frontline Supervisors (FLSs) who work for provider agencies.

The goal is to see if Rhode Island's statewide efforts are helping make DSP jobs stronger and more stable.

### About the Employers

Thirty-two provider organizations in Rhode Island shared their data for this report. All of them serve people with IDD. Most offer support in different settings, including homes and community programs. Sixty-nine percent of organizations provided residential supports, meaning they help people who live in group homes or provider housing. Sixty-three percent provided in-home supports in people's own homes, and almost all (97%) offered non-residential supports, such as employment or day programs.

Some agencies still had to limit new service referrals because of staffing shortages. Between January and June 2025, thirty-seven percent of organizations said they turned away or stopped accepting new service referrals. While this is a small increase from thirty-three percent in mid-2024, it is still better than in 2022, when sixty-three percent of organizations had to turn people away.

## About the People

The agencies reported 2,676 people were receiving services on June 30, 2025, which is 21 less than reported on January 1.

## About the DSPs

On June 30, 2025, there were 3,078 Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) working for these organizations. Over half of these DSPs were women (62%). Most DSPs were either Black/African American (39%), White (41%), or Hispanic/Latino (9%). Most DSPs were between 21 and 50 years old (68%). About one in four DSPs (25%) had worked at their job for less than one year. Nearly three in ten (29%) had worked for one to three years. Almost half (46%) had worked for more than three years.

## How much were DSPs being paid?

DSPs usually start at \$20.87 an hour. This is more than \$18.87 in 2022 and \$20.69 in 2024. The average pay for all DSPs is \$21.77 an hour, up from \$18.94 in 2022 and \$21.12 in 2024. The difference between new and experienced DSPs is small, less than \$1. Many DSPs earn extra money. About 65% worked overtime, and overtime made up 10% of total payroll. Almost half of organizations (47%) gave bonuses, like referral bonuses for bringing in new staff or awards for good work. Most bonuses were between \$200 and \$500 or more.

## DSPs Leaving and Vacant Jobs

Some DSPs left their jobs in early 2025. About 16% of DSPs left, which is a little better than in 2022 when 21% left. It is about the same as mid-2024 (15%). There were also open jobs. About 13.4% of DSP positions were open. This is a little more than in 2024 (11.9%) but better than in 2022 (17%). Many DSPs who left did so very early. About 37% of those who left had only worked for six months or less. Overall, the number of DSPs went down by 55 between January and June 2025.

## Paid Time Off and Other Benefits

Almost all agencies offered paid time off (97%). Most also offered health insurance (91%), but only about 45% of DSPs signed up. Dental coverage was offered by 94% of agencies, vision by 72%, and retirement plans by 84%. Many agencies also gave other benefits like tuition help, disability insurance, and Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs).

## How Did Employers Bring in and Keep DSPs?

Agencies used many strategies to hire and keep Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) between January and June 2025:

- 91% gave a realistic job preview so DSPs knew what the job was like.
- 100% trained DSPs on a code of ethics.
- 44% used a DSP career ladder to help skilled DSPs grow in their roles.
- 72% supported DSPs to get credentials from state or national organizations.
- 38% gave bonuses, stipends, or raises for completing credential steps.
- 78% asked DSPs about their job experience through surveys or other feedback.
- 84% had recognition programs to reward DSPs for achievements and milestones.
- 38% included DSPs in agency decision-making.
- 84% required extra training beyond what the state required.

Most agencies focused on training, recognition, and career growth to help DSPs stay in their jobs and feel valued.

## About the FLSs

There were 332 Frontline Supervisors (FLSs) working across all agencies. Most were women (74%) and over half were White (57%). About 14% of FLSs left their jobs in early 2025, which is more than in late 2024 when only 6% left. About 6% of FLS jobs were open, which is about the same as last year. More than half of FLSs (56%) worked overtime. Most FLSs are older than DSPs. About 63% are over 40 years old.

## How are Frontline Supervisors Paid?

Most agencies pay their Frontline Supervisors by the hour, which means they can earn overtime. 51% of agencies pay all supervisors hourly. Some agencies pay supervisors a salary instead, so they do not get overtime. 39% of agencies pay all supervisors a salary. A few agencies use both ways, some supervisors are hourly, and some are salaried. That happens in 10% of agencies.

## FLS Overtime

Some agencies pay Frontline Supervisors extra when they work more than their normal hours. Between January and June 2025:

- 44% of agencies said “Yes,” supervisors got extra pay for overtime.
- 56% said “No,” supervisors did not get extra pay for overtime.

In total, agencies paid 17,939 overtime hours during this time. The average was 1,196 hours per agency, but some paid as few as 6 hours and others as many as 3,690 hours.

About 186 supervisors (56% of all supervisors) received overtime pay during this period.

## Emergency and Disaster Planning

Organizations were asked if they had plans for emergencies or disasters, like hurricanes, fires, or pandemics. These plans explained what to do if people needed to evacuate or stay in place.

All organizations said they had an emergency or disaster plan (100%). Most of these plans also included steps for what to do if there were not enough DSPs to work. 88% of organizations included actions for DSP staffing shortages in their plans.

## Workforce Trends

When looking at three important measures - turnover, vacancy rate, and wages - the overall trend shows steady improvement.

- Turnover, which means how many DSPs leave their jobs, has gone down over time. It was about 21% at the end of 2022 and dropped to 16% by June 2025. This means more DSPs are staying in their jobs longer.
- Vacancy rates, or the number of open DSP positions, have also improved. They went from 17% in 2022 to about 13% in mid-2025. Fewer open jobs mean more positions are being filled, though some organizations still struggle to find enough staff.
- Wages have continued to rise every year. The average starting pay for DSPs increased from \$18.87 per hour in 2022 to \$20.87 in 2025. The average overall wage increased from \$18.94 in 2022 to \$21.77 in 2025.

Overall, these trends show that Rhode Island's workforce is becoming more stable, pay is improving, and fewer DSPs are leaving their jobs.

### What's Happening Now

The University of Minnesota (UMN) is working with local teams, like the Sherlock Center, to fix problems with support jobs (DSPs).

#### What They Did:

- **Training Local Leaders:** UMN is training local staff (workforce coaches) to make sure this support work continues in Rhode Island.
- **Intensive Help:** Nine organizations had special coaching to help them keep their workers longer and fill open jobs faster.
- **New Hiring Tools:** UMN finished new posters and announcements and is pushing employers to use a "realistic job preview" to stop people from quitting quickly after they start.
- **Making it a Profession:** A plan was written for a new statewide credential program to make the DSP job more recognized and help keep experienced staff.
- **Better Supervisors:** New classes started for supervisors to improve their skills. This training is working: 69% of those who finished said they were more likely to stay in their job.
- **Statewide Planning:** A large group (the Coordinating Council) is managing the work across five key areas through smaller teams called Workgroups:
  - Data and reporting
  - Policy guidance and worker voice
  - Marketing and recruitment
  - Selection and retention
  - Training and professional development

All these efforts will keep going, and the teams will continue to track data to see what works best.

### Final Thoughts

Work to make DSP jobs stable in Rhode Island is still getting better! This success comes from working together across the whole system. Overall, the job numbers look good, especially since the rate of people quitting (turnover) went down. Pay is also steadily increasing, and more DSPs are getting health insurance. However, there are still challenges: the number of open jobs (vacancy rate) went up, and more agencies had to turn away new people because they don't have enough staff. It is important to keep watching these numbers, help organizations understand their job data, and continue the work to make services better for all people with disabilities in Rhode Island.

