find choose & keep great DSPs

A toolkit for people with disabilities

looking for quality, caring and committed direct support professionals

UIC UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO Department of Disability and Human Development
COLLEGE OF APPLIED HEALTH SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

RTC
Research & Training Center on Community Living

Printed September 2006
Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota

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This product was developed under an investment from the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities. Additional funding was provided by the Administration on Developmental Disabilities (grant #90DD0577) awarded to the Institute on Disability and Human Development (IDHD) at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research through the Research and Training Center on Community Living (RTC/CL) (grant # H133 B031116) at the Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota.

The content, interpretations, and conclusions are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of ICI or RTC/CL at the University of Minnesota or IDHD at the University of Illinois at Chicago or their funding sources.

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Alternate formats are available upon request.

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“Being able to find and keep good staff is so important to me.”

User’s guide

Version for people with disabilities

Purpose

This toolkit is designed to provide easy-to-use tips and strategies to help you find, choose, and keep high quality Direct Support Professionals. The tools were created so you can pick and choose what strategies work best for you. It’s not necessary to use the entire toolkit, and it’s not necessary to use the tools in order.

Defining DSPs

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) play an important role in the lives of people with disabilities. DSPs assist people with disabilities with activities of daily living, social activities, personal contacts, coordination of health care, community interactions and more. The support they provide depends upon the situation of each person and can encompass a wide range of possible activities such as helping maintain a home, meeting friends, finding work, providing transportation, making important decisions, taking medications, learning new skills, paying bills, getting a job and/or providing physical assistance. DSPs also facilitate connections to the people, resources and experiences necessary for individuals to live fully and safely in their neighborhoods and communities. The quality of support individuals with disabilities receive from DSPs has a profound effect on the quality of their daily lives.

Different terms and titles are used for people who do such work, including “personal care attendant” or “direct care worker.” This toolkit uses the term Direct Support Professional or DSP.

Who should use this version of the toolkit?

- ☐ **People with disabilities:** This toolkit was designed and written to be accessible to people with a wide range of disabilities including, but not limited to, developmental, intellectual and/or physical disabilities.

Contents of the toolkit

The toolkit is set up as a resource guide organized into the three-step process of finding, choosing and keeping great DSPs. It includes four tools for each topic area —

Find

- Look for the right person
- Identify your wants and needs
- Use the best sources
- Market to the right person

Choose

- Share the real story
- Develop your real story
- Ask the right questions
- Select the best person

Keep

- Welcome new DSPs
- Teach DSPs to do the job
- Help DSPs avoid stress and burnout
- Celebrate a job well done

How to use the toolkit

There are two different versions of this toolkit — one for people with disabilities and one for their family members and support providers. These toolkits can be used together or separately. Both versions have the same sections and similar information. Both versions were developed and reviewed by people with disabilities and their family members to make sure they are appropriate, relevant and accessible for people with a wide range of disabilities.

Think about where you are in terms of finding, choosing and keeping DSPs —

- Are you just beginning the process of finding a new DSP to work for you and need some tips on how to get started? If so, look at the "Find" section.
- Are you in the process of hiring someone and want to learn how to identify who you should select for the job? If so, look at the "Choose" section.
- Do you currently have a DSP that is great and want to learn how to keep him or her working with you? If so, look at the "Keep" section.

Some people have more than one DSP working with them and therefore may be at different phases with different DSPs. For example, Joe may have Bob come every morning to assist him in getting ready for work, but Joe may be looking to find someone else to help him in the afternoons with grocery shopping and bills. Therefore, Joe could use the strategies in the "Keep" section for Bob as well as the strategies in the "Find" section to hire someone else. Where you are in the process will help you determine where to look.

Additional tips

- All of the tools may not be relevant to you; some of them may fit your personal situation more than others.
- There is no particular order in which you should use this toolkit. It is not like a book that you need to read from front to back, but rather has a variety of different resources that you can pick and choose from depending on your situation. Use the toolkit in whatever way works best for you.
- Also, the toolkit is not meant to be a curriculum or a way to learn everything, but rather a guide with tips and highlights on how to find, choose and keep great DSPs. It is meant to be a resource and could be used as a supplement to training.
- The toolkit does not serve as a legal reference for ensuring that you are following appropriate employment laws. It was not intended for this purpose. Please consult other resources for this information.

Worksheet and template CD

The toolkit has various activities/worksheets that can help you through the process of finding, choosing and keeping great DSPs. For your convenience, all activities, worksheets and realistic job preview PowerPoint templates are included in the CD found in the back cover of the toolkit. You may use the worksheets right in this toolkit, or photocopy or print out worksheets so you can use them a few times.

Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota

The Institute on Community Integration (ICI) was founded out of the belief that universities had a great deal to offer people with disabilities in our society. Bringing together expertise from different fields — from the health sciences to education, psychology, social work and many others — creates a center of academic strength to push the frontiers of knowledge, and to connect that knowledge and the development of ideas to the needs of people with disabilities, their families and their communities.

ICI, a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities based at the University of Minnesota, is home to six affiliated centers and over 100 projects. Its work is guided by the belief that all people with disabilities should experience the benefits of family and community living while receiving the services necessary to fully develop their potential in the areas of personal independence, self-care, educational and vocational achievement and social participation.

Research and Training Center on Community Living

The Research and Training Center on Community Living (RTC/CL) is one of ICI's six affiliated centers providing research, evaluation, training and technical assistance and dissemination to support the aspirations of people with disabilities to live full, productive and integrated lives in their communities. RTC/CL also works to find creative solutions to DSP workforce challenges of recruitment, retention and training. RTC/CL operates with primary funding from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR). It also receives funding from the Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD) and other federal agencies. For more information, contact —

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Institute on Disability and Human Development at the University of Illinois at Chicago

The Institute on Disability and Human Development (IDHD), a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research and Service (UCEDD), is dedicated to promoting the independence, productivity and inclusion of people with disabilities into all aspects of society. This mission is addressed by conducting research and disseminating information about disabilities to scholars, policymakers, businesses, government agencies, service providers and the general public. The Institute's mission includes providing an extensive array of clinical and community service activities and, through the Department of Disability and Human Development and other academic departments, offering interdisciplinary pre-service training. The values of cultural diversity, consumer choice and self-determination are emphasized across the life span in all training, public service and research activities of the Institute. For more information contact —

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Look for the right person

What type of person do you want your DSP to be? If you know what qualities you want in a DSP ahead of time, it will help you find the right person.

Think about the DSPs you have had in the past and make a list

- ☐ What did you like about the good DSPs?
  - What were they like?
  - What did they like to do?
  - What was going on in their life?
  - Where did they live?
  - Were they a man or a woman?
  - How old were they?
- ☐ Think about the DSPs that stayed the longest —
  - Why did they stay?
  - When did they leave?

> "I really want to find someone who likes sports, going out to eat and movies."

Circle the qualities that you want your DSP to have — and add some of your own!

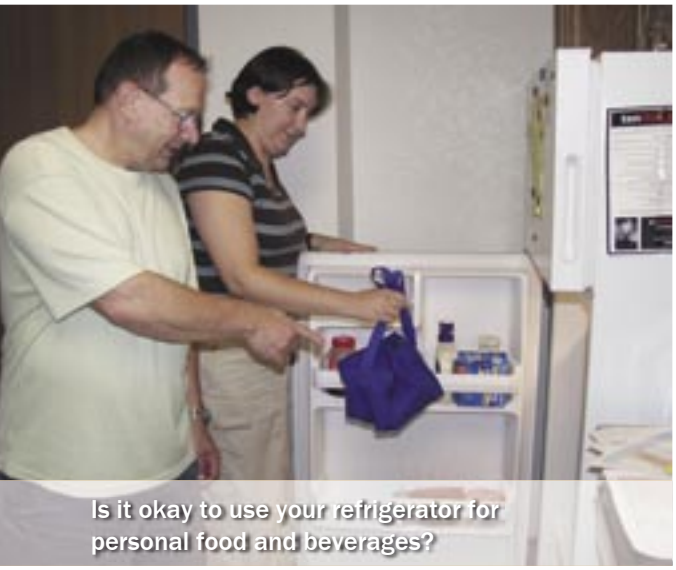
Assertive	Creative	Honest	Resourceful
Balanced	Decisive	Insightful	Respectful
Calm	Dependable	Takes initiative	Self-directed
Caring	Determined	Mature	Sincere
Committed	Diplomatic	Modest	Smart
Common sense	Empathetic	Objective	Understanding
Communicative	Encouraging	Organized	Visionary
Compassionate	Enthusiastic	Patient	_____
Conscientious	Flexible	Positive	_____
Consistent	Good sense of humor	Professional	_____
Cooperative		Punctual	_____

Make a list of the things you want your DSP to do

- ☐ What would you like your DSP to know and be able to do? Consider the following when making your list —
  - Prepare meals
  - Help you eat
  - Help you dress and undress
  - Take you places
  - Help with bathing and grooming
  - Clean your house
  - Help you go to the bathroom
  - Run errands
  - Help you be healthy

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____

Are personal phone calls okay at work?



Is it okay to use your refrigerator for personal food and beverages?

Will the DSP support you even if they don't agree with your values?

Identify your wants and needs

B

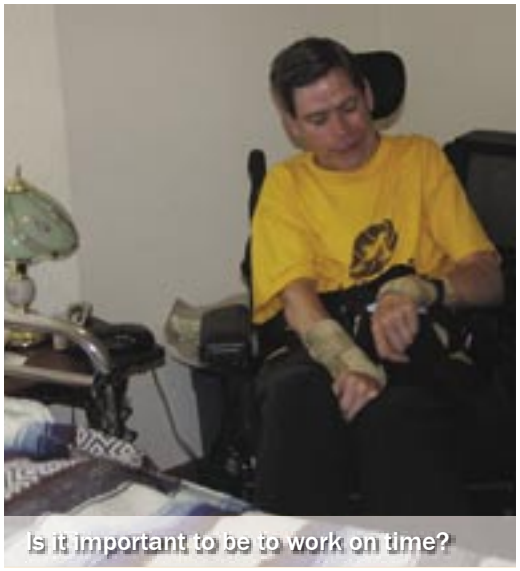
Making a list of what you expect and the supports you need and want will help you find a DSP that is a good match for the job.

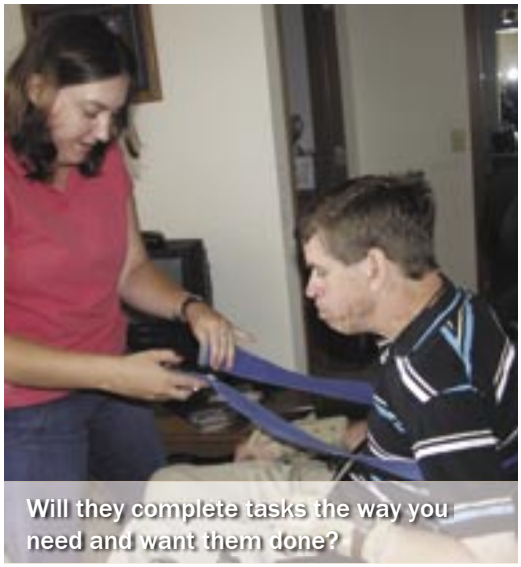
What do you expect from DSPs?

- ☐ Make a list of what you expect from DSPs. Here are some ideas to get you started —
  - Be to work on time.
  - Communicate with you well.
  - Work as a team with the other DSPs who support you.
  - Be willing to work extra when another DSP is sick or on vacation.
  - Respect your values even if the DSP does not share them.
  - Complete tasks and duties the way you want and need them done.

What do you require from DSPs

- ☐ Make a list of the standards you have for DSPs. Here are some questions to get you started —
  - Is it okay to share information about you with co-workers and others?
  - Is it okay to make personal phone calls while working a shift?


Is it important to be to work on time?


Will they complete tasks the way you need and want them done?

Will DSPs be required to cook?

- Is it okay to use your refrigerator and stove for personal refreshments and meals?
- Is it okay to open your mail in your presence or at any time?
- Is it important to share thoughts and feelings honestly and respectfully with you and other DSPs?

Supports you want and need

☐ Make a list of the supports you want and need from DSPs. Here are some questions to get you started —

- What things do you do every day?
  - What does a good day look like?
  - What does a bad day look like?
  - How are morning, afternoon, evening and nighttime routines different and/or the same?
- What do you do on the weekend? How is that different from weekdays?
- What do people need to know to keep you safe and healthy?
- What are your interests and hobbies?
- What is really important to you? What matters less to you?
- What are the places a DSP can help you get to? How and when will this happen?
- What is the time of day you need the most help and for how long?
- What bothers you the most? What makes you angry?
- What is most important for people to know about you?

Narrow down what is most important to you when choosing a DSP

1. Think carefully about the three lists you have just created: things you expect from DSPs, requirements you have for DSPs and supports you want and need from DSPs.
2. Pick the top 10 things that are most important to you. Write them in the column at right.
3. When you are done with your top 10 list, review it again. This time choose the top 5 most important things and mark them with an X in the box.

Top areas to focus on when choosing a DSP

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Use the best sources

Knowing where to look can help you find the right DSP for you. There are two types of sources you can use to find new DSPs: inside sources and outside sources.

Inside sources

- ☐ Inside sources are people you already know, including your family, friends and DSPs who work for you now. Inside sources can be very helpful in finding a new DSP because —
  - They can share stories about what it's like to work for you, and when people know what it is like to work for you before they apply, they usually stay longer.
  - It costs less than other ways of finding new DSPs.

Outside sources

- ☐ Outside sources include newspaper help wanted ads, internet ads, flyers and other job postings. Outside sources have a few drawbacks —
  - They do not give potential DSPs a lot of information about what it's really like to work for you.
  - Using outside sources can cost a lot of money.

"One of the best people I ever hired was someone who was a friend of someone who worked for me."

What source should you use?

- ☐ Use inside sources first because they cost less and work better!
- ☐ Here are some ideas of how you can encourage people you know (inside sources), to help you find new DSPs —

  - **Offer a recruitment bonus**
    Reward people you know for helping you find new DSPs by giving them money or other gifts, called recruitment bonuses. Set it up so they get something when the new DSP finishes orientation, another part when the DSP completes 6 months of work and a final amount/item after the new DSP has worked for 12 months. Use the worksheet on the next page to help you develop your recruitment bonus program.

  - **Reward new DSPs with a hiring bonus**
    Reward new DSPs for coming to work for you by giving them money or other gifts, called hiring bonuses. You can give new DSPs cash, quick raises or some type of gift when they complete orientation, another bonus at 6 months, another at 12 months and another at 24 months. Use the worksheet on the next page to help you develop your bonus program.

  - **Use contact cards**
    Help the people you know find new DSPs for you by giving them a contact card. A contact card is like a business card that has your name, phone number and email address on it so people can contact you about the job. You can print cards on a computer or write the information neatly on note cards. Here is an example —

Develop your bonus program worksheet

Read the questions in the first column and think about your answers. Then write your answers under the recruitment and hiring bonus columns to help you develop a bonus program that will work for you.

Questions to answer	**Recruitment bonus** Given to existing DSPs for finding new DSPs who stay for a specific time	**Hiring bonus** Given to new people who come to work for you
How much or what is the bonus?		
What specifically will people need to do to earn the bonus?		
When will the bonus be given? (Consider a staggered schedule like: at 30 days, 6 months and 12 months)		

Market to the right person

Once you know what type of person you are looking for, you should begin to think about where you can find these types of people in your community.

D

Think about where in the community you have found the best DSPs

- ☐ For example, if you are looking for a young man who likes to ride bikes and be outdoors and who has a lot of energy, where in your community are you likely to find this type of person?
  - A local bike shop?
  - A local college in the physical education department?
  - A local gym?

"I get good people by going to the local college and talking to occupational therapy students that I know I can keep around until they get done with school. Students seem to like the flexibility and experience and they think the wage is pretty good."

Create a plan

Use the steps on the following page to help you make a targeted marketing plan. Answer each question and use your answers to help you figure out what kind of person you want to hire. Use the Marketing Information Sheet on the page D-13 to help you find places in the community where you are most likely to find the people you want.

- ☐ **Step 1:** Describe your current and past DSPs. (You may want to refer to the tool, "Identify Your Wants and Needs" on page A-1) —
  - What do you think they liked about working with you?
  - What do you think they disliked about working with you?
  - What was important to them?
- ☐ **Step 2:** Describe yourself (You may want refer to the tool, "Develop Your Real Story" on page E-15) —
  - What is important to you?
  - What do you like to do?
  - What are the good and hard parts about working with you?
- ☐ **Step 3:** Identify reasons people have left their job with you —
  - Why have people left their job with you in the past?
  - Is there anything you can change so this will not happen again?
- ☐ **Step 4:** Where can you find the people you are looking for? (Use the Targeted Marketing Information sheet on page D-13.)
- ☐ **Step 5:** Here are some ways to let people know about the job —
  - Spread the word by talking to others.
  - Tell your friends, family members, relatives and co-workers.
  - If you meet someone who seems right for the job, ask them to consider interviewing for it.
  - Make and give out business/marketing cards to people while you are shopping, waiting for a movie to begin or at a sporting event.
  - Post flyers that describe who you are, the type of support needs you have and the kind of person you want to work with you.
  - Write and place articles in local newspapers or bulletins about who you are and what type of support you are looking for.

Marketing information sheet

There are places in your community where you are most likely to find specific types of people. Some examples are listed below —

- ☐ **Faith-based organizations**
  Synagogues, churches, mosques, temples, spiritual centers and holiday events.

  Speak to the leader of the particular community you are targeting and ask them what they think is the best way to help you spread the word about your need for new DSPs. They may allow you to place something in their religious bulletin or mailing, speak at a service or gathering or post brochures or flyers in their building(s).

- ☐ **Gen Y'ers**
  Web sites (e.s., Monster.com), high schools, colleges, coffee shops, hangouts and shopping malls.

  This group may appreciate your creative approach to recruitment. Reach them where they live: on the computer, with their friends or hanging out!

- ☐ **Retirees**
  Senior centers, senior publications, senior Web sites, community centers, volunteer organizations, churches and senior apartment/condo communities.

  Many seniors or retired persons have time, energy and tremendous gifts and skills to share. Contact the director of a community center and ask them how they reach their senior population, or contact your local chapter of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). Such organizations are well-equipped to help you reach this population in your immediate area.

- ☐ **Stay-at-home moms and dads**
  Family publications, community centers, neighborhood newspapers, child-friendly community events and places, grocery stores, schools, libraries and churches.

  Are you a parent or do you know parents that have children who participate in a play group? What a perfect place to start spreading the word. Also, consider any place where parents gather or where they perform basic functions in their lives. You may contact your local elementary school principal and ask to speak at a meeting of the parent teacher organization, post flyers on the grocery store

bulletin board or leave some flyers at the local laundromat. Target parent publications. Be creative!

- ☐ **Students**
  Classroom instructors, community and technical colleges and universities, high school career days, campus job fairs, campus human resources and financial aid offices, school newspapers and student Web sites.

  Reach out to students who are specifically interested in a career in human services. Try to contact an instructor who teaches human service courses or talk to current DSPs who are in school and ask them to introduce you to those instructors. Suggest that you speak to their class about working with people with disabilities or being an person with a disability who uses supports. This isn't just a recruitment opportunity, but a chance to educate students. You can also disseminate information about the work opportunities that you have and professional training you can offer and leave recruitment or contact cards in case students are looking for employment providing supports to people with disabilities.

- ☐ **Cross-cultural communities**
  Cultural centers, community centers, newspapers, Web sites and radio stations, ethnic shops and services.

  A diverse workforce creates richness in your community, as well as in the lives of persons receiving supports like yourself. You must, however, be prepared to appreciate, respect and train DSPs from various cultures as well. Recruiting within a specific cultural community can be very effective. Make sure that you communicate early on whether or not the applicant must be able to speak English to meet your support needs.

Additional Resource

Direct Support Professional Recruitment Toolkit
Research and Training Center on Community Living
204 Pattee Hall
150 Pillsbury Dr SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
612.625.6328
www.rtc.umn.edu/dsp

Share your real story

Before you choose a DSP, make sure they know the real story about working with you. Sharing your real story is a tool called a realistic job preview and can help you find good DSPs that stay longer.

E

Why is a realistic job preview a good idea?

- ☐ Telling the real story about the job means you tell someone what the job is really like, with both the good and difficult parts.
- ☐ Sharing your story will help you know if the person is the right fit for the job. Some people may decide not to take the job because of what they learned in your realistic job preview, but that is okay because they probably would have left the job anyway.
- ☐ Telling the real story will make it easier for you to choose people who want to work with you.

Plan how you want to tell your story

- ☐ What do you want people to know about you?
  - Ask family and friends for ideas to add to your story.
  - Ask your current DSPs for ideas to add to your story.

> "I always show job candidates my realistic job preview before I make a job offer."

- ☐ What is it really like to help you on the good days and bad days?
  - Use "Develop Your Real Story" on page F-17 to help you write your story.

How do you want to share your story?

- ☐ Look at the samples provided on the CD included in this toolkit. Then think of ways you can put your story together. Here are some suggestions —
  - Scrapbooks or photo albums.
  - Slide shows or PowerPoint presentations.
  - Audio tapes with DSPs talking about what it is like to work with you.
  - Pictures and descriptions your DSPs do for you.
  - Videos about working with you.
  - Pages from "Develop Your Real Story" on page F-17.
  - Web pages.
  - Have job seekers talk to DSPs who work for you.
  - Have job seekers work alongside current DSPs before they make up their mind about whether to work with you.

When should you tell your story?

- ☐ When you are interviewing new people, think about when you want to share your real story — in the beginning, in the middle or at the end of the interview — but always before you make a job offer.

How will you update your story?

- ☐ When things change for you, how will you change your story to match?

Develop your real story

This tool can help you develop your real story that you can share with potential DSPs. Your real story is also called a *realistic job preview.* On the next several pages is a worksheet that will help you create your real story. You can also use a computer to do this worksheet. You will find this worksheet and other templates to create your very own realistic job preview on the CD that comes with this toolkit (see the inside back cover).

F

How to use this tool

- ☐ This tool can help you organize information that you want to tell potential DSPs.
- ☐ While using this tool, it is important to think about both the good and difficult parts of the job so potential DSPs know the real story.
- ☐ When you are done with the tool, you can use the information to create your very own realistic job preview.
- ☐ You can use this tool all by itself or you can use the ideas in it to create a realistic job preview that tells your real story in a way that works for you.

"My DSP helped me get my real story on the computer. Now, before I hire new DSPs, they can learn about me by watching my realistic job preview."

My real story

This is the real story about working with me. I hope it will help you decide if this is the right job for you or not. I am going to tell you about both the fun and hard parts of the job, including what the job is like, what I want and need help with, why direct support professionals like working with me and what you need to know before you decide if you want to work with me.

insert photo here

Here is what you need to know about me

Make a list of five things you want people to know about you.

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Meet my family and friends who help me

Make a list of family and friends and how they help you.

- ☐ _____
  _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____
  _____

insert photo here

insert photo here

Other DSPs who work with me

Make a list of the DSPs who already work for you and tell something brief about what you like about each one.

- ☐ _____
  _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____
  _____

insert photo here

insert photo here

insert photo here

insert photo here

People and places I like

Make a list of people and places you like. Tell what you like about these people and places. Paste some photos here that show who and where you like.

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

What I do every day

Make a list of what you want and need to do every day. Add pictures to show potential DSPs what they will have to help you with. Make sure you include some of the things that you don't like to do but are important for you to do.

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

insert photo here

insert photo here

What I want and need my DSPs to do

Make a list of what you want and need to do every day. Add pictures to show potential DSPs what they will have to help you with. Make sure you include some of the things you don't like to do but that are important for you to do.

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

insert photo here

insert photo here

Things I need help with but don't like to do

Make a list of things that you need help with but don't like to do. These might be things that will challenge DSPs while they help you. Add pictures and suggestions that will make things go more easily for you and your DSPs.

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

insert photo here

insert photo here

What my DSPs likes about working with me

Have your current DSPs tell you or write down things they like about working with you.

- ☐ _____
  _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____
  _____
- ☐ _____
  _____
  _____

Helpful things that my DSPs want to tell you about working with me

Have your current DSPs tell you or write down for you things that make working with you go more smoothly.

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

insert photo here

insert photo here

insert photo here

insert photo here

You need to be able to do the following things in order to work well with me

Make a list of things DSPs need to be able to do and what qualities you look for in people who work with you.

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Here are some favorite moments I want to share

Add your pictures here to help potential DSPs get to know you better.

insert photo here

insert photo here

insert photo here

insert photo here

Make your decision

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about me. You need to decide if working with me is a good fit for you. I want DSPs who will take a personal interest in me and who will remain committed to me. I also want DSPs who will learn about the supports I need and provide these to me. It is very disruptive and hurtful to me when DSPs come and go. Think about what you have learned about me and working with me, sleep on it and then make your decision. I look forward to hearing from you!

Ask the right questions

Take time to plan for an interview and learn to ask the right questions. This will help you find the right person. Here are some ideas to help you create and use the right questions.

- ☐ Make a list of the skills and qualities you are looking for in a DSP based on your needs and wants. You may want to refer to the tool "Identify Your Wants and Needs" on page B-3.
- ☐ Think of questions you could use to find out if the person has the qualities you are looking for.
- ☐ Ask questions about their work experiences and skills.
- ☐ Ask what they did on a typical day at their last job.
- ☐ Ask about their education and training.
- ☐ Ask about specific examples from work situations —
  - What was the situation?
  - What did they do?
  - What happened as a result?
- ☐ Ask what someone "would do if…" — make up an example they have to talk about.

> "All I want is someone who likes to work with me and do what I want to do."

G

- ☐ Ask them about their interests and hobbies.
- ☐ To avoid asking illegal or unfair questions. Stick to questions about the job you want them to do.

Additional tips

- ☐ Does this person have what you are looking for?
- ☐ Compare what they say on their resume or application with your list of needs and wants.
- ☐ If they don't measure up, don't waste your time talking to them.
- ☐ Check references listed on the application or resume.
- ☐ Ask what kind of worker the person was.
- ☐ Ask if they came to work on time.
- ☐ Ask if there were any problems with how they did their job.
- ☐ Check a person's criminal background.

Sample interview questions

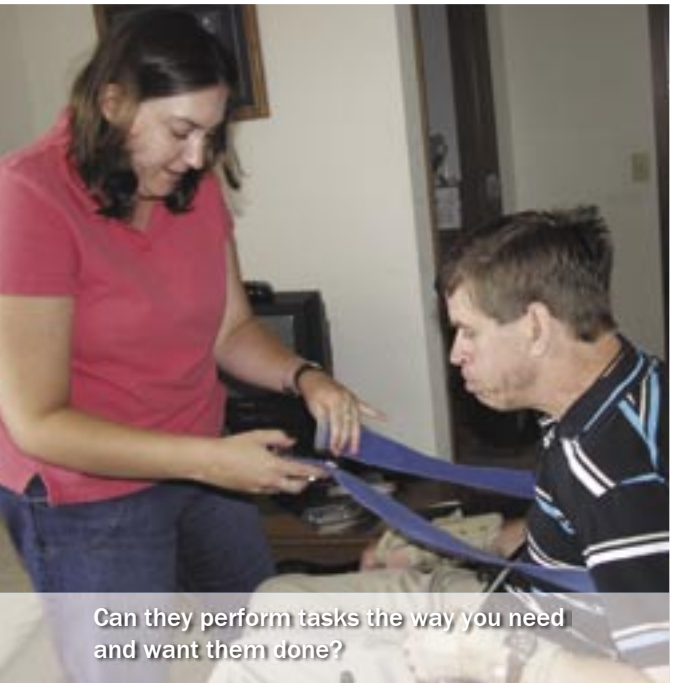
Here are some sample questions. Feel free to make up your own questions.

- ☐ Why do you think you would like this job?
- ☐ What experiences have you had that prepare you for this job?
- ☐ Tell me about where you have worked in the past and how long you were there. What was your reason for leaving? (If you notice gaps in work history, ask the person to explain these.)
- ☐ Describe a typical day in your most recent job working with people with disabilities. What was your favorite thing to do? What was your least favorite?
- ☐ What goals do you have for your future career and how do you plan to accomplish them?
- ☐ Describe a disagreement or conflict you had at your most recent job. What happened? What did you do to resolve it? What was the result? What did you learn from the situation?
- ☐ Tell me about the most difficult situation you have ever encountered and how you dealt with it.

- ☐ Describe your skills and experience in providing assistance and support with personal care and household chores.
- ☐ Describe a time when you helped someone you supported advocate for something they really wanted. What was the situation? What did you do and say? What happened? What did you learn?
- ☐ My friend wants to learn how to cook but her mother is afraid she won't be safe in the kitchen. If you worked with my friend, how would you help her learn to cook? What would you say to her mother about her safety concerns?
- ☐ Tell me what you like to do for fun.
- ☐ What is your favorite hobby or sport?

Do they like to do the things you like to do?

Can they do the things you need them to do, like cook?



Can they perform tasks the way you need and want them done?

Select the best person

Don't settle for just any DSP. Take the time to pick the best DSP for you.

When choosing a DSP, think about the following things —

- ☐ Does the person share your values?
- ☐ Do they like to do the things you like to do?
- ☐ Do you like how they treat you?
- ☐ Are they willing and able to support you the way you want to be supported?
- ☐ Can they do the things you need and want them to do? You may want to refer to the tool, "Identify Your Wants and Needs" on page B-3.
  - Can they cook what you want?
  - Can they help you shop?
  - Can they help you take a bath?
- ☐ Don't choose people who don't meet your needs.
- ☐ Try to choose people who meet your needs AND wants.

H

Select the best person worksheet (sample)

Pick the best person for the job. Put them in order from best to worst, using the form on the next page. Here is an example of how you can use this form to help you select the best person for you.

List the most important things you need and want.	List the names of the people you talked to. Put an X in the box if the person can do it.		
	Zander	*Ramone*	*Kateya*
Will you arrive on time?	X		
Will you be able to work weekends?	X		
Will you take me to the movies?	X	X	
Are you a good listener?			
Will you help me with my bathroom needs?	X		X
Will you ask me how I am feeling?		X	
Total Xs	*4*	*2*	*1*
What was your gut feeling?	*I liked him*	*She was quiet*	*I didn't like her*
Things they like to do and are good at	*Camping and going to movies*	*Watching TV*	*Didn't say*

How did the person make you feel?

Bad.

Okay.

Great!

Select the best person worksheet

List the most important things you need and want.	List the names of the people you talked to. Put an X in the box if the person can do it.		
Total Xs			
What was your gut feeling?			
Things they like to do and are good at			

Welcome new DSPs

Take time to welcome new DSPs. It pays off! By making DSPs feel welcome, they will be motivated to do a good job supporting you.

Starting a new job

Starting a new job can be stressful and overwhelming. DSPs say the hardest parts of starting a new job are —

- ☐ Getting to know you.
- ☐ Learning routines and completing tasks.
- ☐ Getting to know other DSPs and adjusting to their schedule.
- ☐ Learning and remembering everything.
- ☐ Getting used to a person with a disability being the employer or boss.

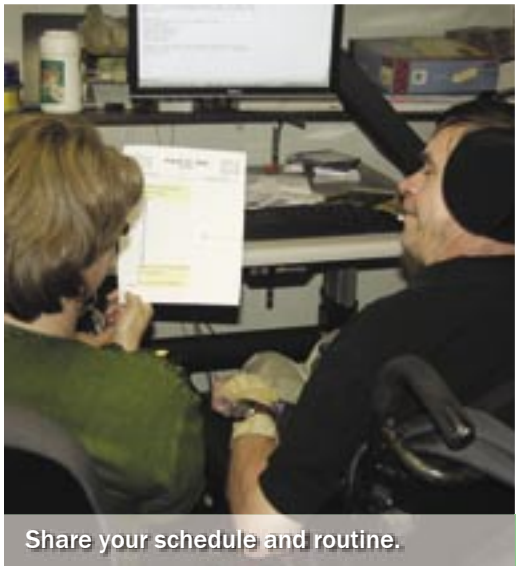
> "I always try to do something special or personal to welcome my new DSPs."

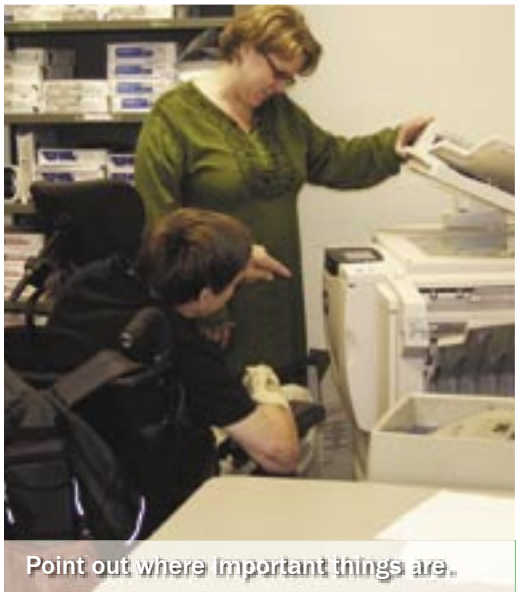
Why is welcoming new DSPs important?

When you welcome new DSPs, it helps them —

- ☐ Feel comfortable about working for you.
- ☐ Build a positive connection to you and their job.
- ☐ Build trust.

Introduce the new DSP to important people.


Share your schedule and routine.


Point out where important things are.

- ☐ Learn about what is important to you.
- ☐ Understand your needs and how you want to be supported.

Suggestions

Here are some suggestions for welcoming new DSPs. You can use any combination of ideas that you like and think would help you make a new person feel welcome —

- ☐ Welcome your new DSP when he or she arrives the first day.
- ☐ Invite the new DSP to sit and talk with you about their new role.
- ☐ Share your schedule and routine.
- ☐ Go over the new DSP's schedule and what you want him or her to do.
- ☐ Show the new DSP around your place. Point out where important things are like the phone and the bathroom.
- ☐ Introduce the DSP to important people in your life such as family and friends or the maintenance person in your building.
- ☐ Tell the new DSP about what you like and don't like, as well as how you spend your time.
- ☐ Talk about rules of your house such as when or if it is okay for them to use your phone, and when and where they can eat.
- ☐ Teach them about how you want them to do the job and how they should behave on the job.

Teach DSPs to do the job

Choose the things you want your DSP to know and do and the attitudes they need to have. What skills and values does a DSP need to help you reach your dreams? Ask the DSPs to show you what they can do in areas that are important to you.

- ☐ What do you need and want the DSP to do? You may want to refer to the tools "Look for the Right Person" on page A-1 and "Identify Your Wants and Needs" on page B-3.
- ☐ Of the things you need and want, what can the DSP already do?
- ☐ What knowledge, skills, and attitudes does the DSP need to do the job you want him or her to do?
- ☐ How can you best teach the DSP to support you the way you want?

"I want my DSP to listen carefully to instructions, help me with my personal care in the bathroom, have a trusting relationship with me, purchase groceries from a list, provide basic medical care, help me cook, do my laundry and vacuum my carpets once a week."

J

What can your DSP already do?

Ask the DSP to show you or tell you how he or she would support you in important areas of your life. For example, you could ask the DSP the following —

- ☐ "How would you assist me in managing my money and budgeting to save up for a trip?"
- ☐ "How would you help me get a tattoo even though you do not agree with my decision to do so?"
- ☐ "What would you do if I wanted your support to go on a date?"

Knowledge, skills and attitudes

Build on the knowledge, skills and attitudes that your DSP already has —

- ☐ Knowledge – A DSP may know what a catheter is, but maybe needs to learn more about what community inclusion means.
- ☐ Skills – A DSP may be able to make meals and follow directions, but may need to learn how to clean your room the way you want it done.
- ☐ Attitudes – A DSP respects your beliefs and choices and supports you to do things that are important to you, even if he or she does not agree with the importance of an activity.

How best to teach your DSP

Every person who directs their own supports has their own teaching style that works for them. However, it is also important for you to think about the DSPs you are trying to teach and how they learn best.

Adult learning styles

There are three common ways for adults to learn —

- ☐ Seeing (visual learner)

- ☐ Hearing (auditory learner)

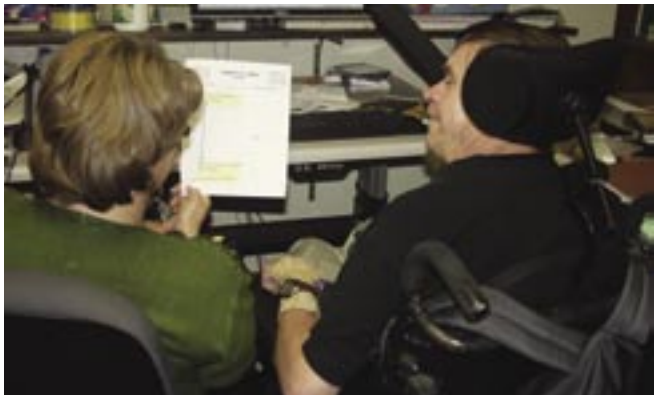
- ☐ Doing (hands-on learning)

Talk with your DSP to find out his or her best way of learning new things.

Teaching methods

The following are some examples of basic teaching methods that fit with the three common ways of learning —

- ☐ For visual learners — people who learn best by seeing directions —
  - Show pictures, write or type things out, make diagrams and charts, or use forms and worksheets.



- ☐ For auditory learners — people who learn best by hearing directions —
  - Explain things in words, discuss an activity, or read a book or manual.

- ☐ For hands-on learners — people who learn best by doing the task —
  - Show the person how to do something and then let them try it themselves.

Give feedback

Giving feedback is a positive way to teach and support DSPs —

- ☐ Review how the DSP's is doing often, like every month or two.
- ☐ Tell the DSP what he or she is doing well.
- ☐ Explain what the DSP could do better.
- ☐ Listen to the DSP's concerns about the work situation.
- ☐ Ask questions about how the DSP can support you better.
- ☐ Be clear about what you expect on the job and how to do it.
- ☐ Provide the right tools so the DSP can do the job better.
- ☐ Celebrate the DSP's good work.

If you need to tell DSPs how to do something better, ask yourself the following questions —

- ☐ How would you like to hear the feedback you are giving?
- ☐ How will you tell your DSP about the things they could do better?

Help your DSP improve their profession

- ☐ Support your DSP to join a national or state professional organization.
- ☐ Purchase a subscription to a professional publication for your DSP.
- ☐ Support your DSP to become credentialed as a DSP-Registered, DSP-Certified, or DSP-Specialist.
- ☐ Support your DSP to pursue additional training.
- ☐ Encourage your DSP to participate in rallies at the legislature.
- ☐ Support your DSP to participate in local and state conferences and workshops.

Professional development resources

Here are some important resources to help your DSPs do their jobs —

- ☐ National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals is a professional organization for DSPs.
- ☐ *Frontline Initiative* is a newsletter by and for DSPs. Each issue focuses on topics relevant to DSPs and the people they support. Articles include personal stories,

policy information, the latest research and intervention activities. Subsribe at www.nadsp.org.

- ☐ The College of Direct Support is an online competency-based training curriculum created from a national set of skill standards. It uses the latest technology to deliver a vibrant learning experience for today's DSPs. You can view a sample lesson at www.collegeofdirectsupport.com
- ☐ Centers of Independent Living (CILs) have many classes to teach people with disabilities about advocacy and independent living. To find a CIL near you, visit www.virtualcil.net/cils/
- ☐ Quality Mall is a database of over a thousand of the person-centered and community-based products and services that help DSPs provide more effective supports to people with disabilities. Check it out at www.qualitymall.org

Subscribe to professional periodicals like *Frontline Initiative*.

Support your DSP to become credentialed.

Make a plan

Sometimes, a plan can help you support your DSP and give them more formal feedback about their job. You can use the worksheets on the next 2 pages for ideas on how to make a plan with a DSP so he or she can learn what his or her strengths and weaknesses are and how he or she can grow and develop.

Provide opportunities for DSPs to receive additional training.

DSP work review and improvement plan

Name of DSP_____ Date_____

☐ List the top three things you want your DSP to do:

☐ How well is the DSP supporting your needs and wants?

☐ List the tasks or duties that the DSP knows and can do best:

☐ List the tasks or duties that the DSP might be able to improve on:

☐ List some ways that the DSP has continued to grow
(Examples: takes classes at a local college, become a member of the State chapter of NADSP, goes to the state Arc conference):

☐ List some duties or responsibilities the DSP would like to or needs to know more about:

Work and professional growth plan

Instructions: Do this plan together with your DSP. Use the information you and your DSP have talked about in the DSP's performance review to help guide you in creating this plan.

- ☐ Describe 2 or 3 goals to help the DSP improve their work and continue to grow professionally.

- ☐ State specific action steps the DSP will take to meet their goals:

- ☐ Describe the resources and supports the DSP will need to meet their goals. How will you help the DSP achieve these goals?

- ☐ How will you and the DSP celebrate when the goals are achieved?

Help DSPs avoid stress and burnout

The job of your DSP is to support you, but you also need to support your DSP. By supporting DSPs, you help them avoid stress and burnout so they continue to work with you.

What causes stress on the job?

The work of DSPs can sometimes be stressful and you can help them avoid burnout. Learn what causes stress for the DSPs who support you. Discuss ways they can better manage that stress —

- ☐ Recognize signs of stress in DSPs by noticing if they seem overwhelmed, angry, sad, or irritable.
- ☐ Ask DSPs what makes work with you stressful.
- ☐ Ask DSPs how they avoid stress.
  - Maybe they avoid stress by getting enough sleep and learning new tasks one step at a time.
- ☐ Ask how they manage stress.
  - Maybe they manage stress by exercising or talking to a friend about difficult situations.

> "Sometimes before I get upset with my DSP, I need to remember it is a very stressful job."

K

- ☐ Learn what works for each person in managing stress.
  - Maybe it will help one person to talk with you about a difficult task, while another person may need time alone to think through a difficult situation on their own.

Starting a new job

Starting a new job can be stressful and overwhelming. DSPs say the hardest parts about starting a new job are —

- ☐ Getting to know you.
- ☐ Learning routines and completing tasks.
- ☐ Getting to know other DSPs and adjusting to their schedules.
- ☐ Learning and remembering everything.
- ☐ Getting used to a person with a disability being the employer or boss.

Teaching DSPs

DSPs who have been properly trained are happier in their jobs and have less stress. It is your responsibility to make sure that DSPs know how to do their job. Take time to explain and demonstrate the skills they need. You can teach the DSP how to do a better job by using the following method (you may want to refer to the tool, "Teach DSPs to Do the Job" on page J-35) —

- ☐ Show — Show a DSP what you want him or her to do.
- ☐ Tell — Explain to the DSP what he or she needs to be doing.
- ☐ Do — Have the DSP do the task while you watch to make sure it is done the way you want it done.
- ☐ Check — Make sure the DSP does the task correctly and give him or her immediate feedback about their work.

Don't forget to celebrate accomplishments. It makes DSPs happy to know that the work they do is valued and meaningful. You may want to refer to the tool, "Celebrate a Job Well Done" on page L-45.

Resources

Basics of Time and Stress Management, by Carter McNamara
www.managementhelp.org

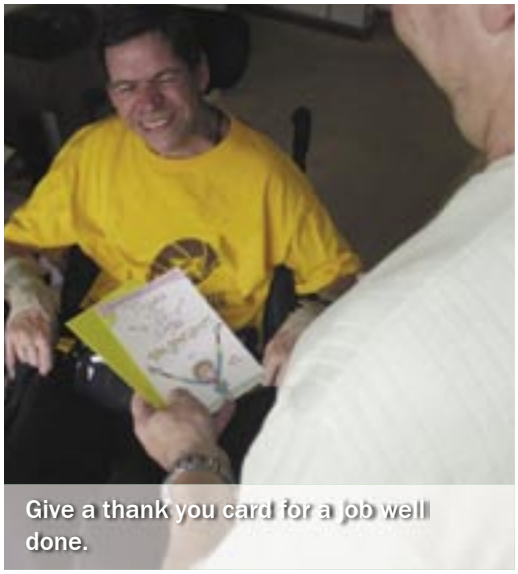
Celebrate a job well done

Show your DSP that you value him or her. DSPs will stay in their positions longer and will do a better job if they like where they work and feel good about the work they are doing.

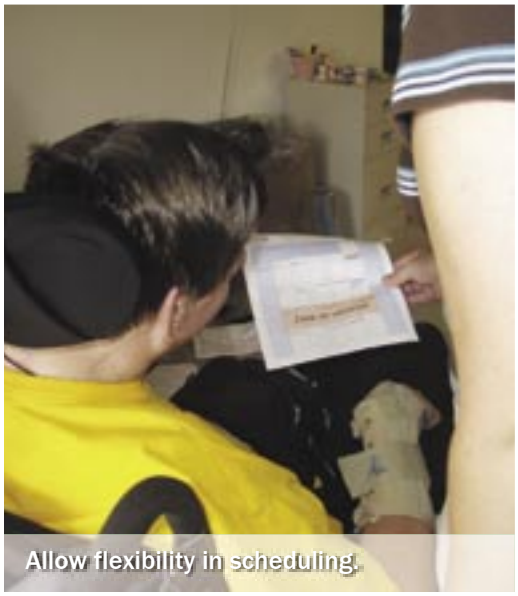
Recognize good work

- ☐ When people are recognized for the good work they are doing it often makes them want to keep doing good work.
- ☐ When DSPs know that the work they do is valued and meaningful, they are better at their job.
- ☐ DSPs need and want honest feedback.
- ☐ Show DSPs specific appreciation for specific things they do.
  - Example: Give your DSP a thank you card or a gift when they fill in for another person on short notice.
- ☐ Provide a good place to work by creating a comfortable, fun, and exciting environment.
- ☐ Make sure your rewards are fair, timely, and consistent.

"I know that I have to show that my staff do a good job. I try to notice one good thing each time they work with me and then I share it with them. It works to let them know I think they are great."


Give a thank you card for a job well done.

Give a gift card or small amount of cash.


Allow flexibility in scheduling.

Ways to recognize DSPs

The same things do not motivate all people. Learn what each DSP likes and figure out the best way to recognize him or her. Here are some ideas —

- ☐ Tell the DSP when he or she is doing a good job.
- ☐ Give a thank you card for a job well done.
- ☐ Allow flexibility in their schedule.
- ☐ Tell the DSP what they are doing well.
- ☐ Allow the DSPs to attend workshops or conferences to learn more and meet other people doing similar work. Support them by paying the attendance fee and giving them time off.
- ☐ Give a small bonus of extra money for a very good job done.
- ☐ Make your reward personal — something that you know that person will appreciate.

Activities, worksheets and presentations CD

This toolkit has various activities/worksheets that can help you through the process of finding, choosing and keeping great DSPs. For your convenience, all activities, worksheets and realistic job preview PowerPoint templates are included in this CD. You may use the worksheets right in this toolkit, or photocopy or print out worksheets so you can use them a few times.