



# People with Disabilities Deserve More

## THE CRISIS NOW

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) deserve the opportunity to lead full, meaningful lives. But most need support for everything from eating, bathing and administering medication to job and life-skills training. That support comes from a statewide network of community provider agencies and their dedicated, trained workforce of **direct support professionals (DSPs)** — a workforce that is in tragically short supply.

Long before COVID-19, community providers were already struggling to keep and recruit DSPs because of significant underfunding from the state. The current “Great Resignation” only worsens the existing problem as qualified caregivers seek higher paying, less demanding jobs. Unlike retail or restaurants facing staff shortages all over the country, providers can’t trim back hours or close on certain days. **People with IDD need consistent, uninterrupted care — most need it 24/7, 365 days a year.**

DSPs have been risking their own health and family time daily to keep people with disabilities safe and healthy. Sadly, these frontline heroes continue to be among the low-income workers hit hardest by the pandemic’s economic and societal fallout. And, more and more providers have been forced to shut down programs or homes and turn families away who need and deserve support.

## THE SOLUTION

After decades of inadequate support, the state has increased funding to providers in steady increments over the past five years, including \$170M in FY'22, a major portion dedicated toward implementation of the state's Guidehouse Rate Study recommendations, which provide a roadmap to stabilizing services.

This is a step forward, but not nearly enough to address the funding crisis facing agencies who care for people with disabilities. Additionally, historically high inflation has blunted the impact of DSP wage increases, and the percentage difference between the minimum wage and the state DSP wage rate has actually decreased over time.

**The state must provide an increase of \$246.8M to fully fund the Guidehouse Rate Study recommendations for FY'23.**

**Support HB4832 and SB4063.**

Without this critically needed funding, the safety and well-being of thousands of people with disabilities is gravely at risk.

THEY DESERVE  
**MORE**

## THE STAFFING CRISIS BY THE NUMBERS

The following data is from a January 2022 survey conducted by They Deserve More. Sixty-seven community providers and agencies from across the state participated, representing a majority of people served.

# 2,514

Number of unfilled DSP positions at 67 Illinois provider agencies, averaging 38 unfilled positions per agency

# 27%

DSP vacancy rate — providers reported an **additional 17%** of staff were unable to work for COVID-related reasons

# 14,000+\*

Number of people unable to access services because of limited State funding and capacity for providers to care for them

# 54%

Percentage of agencies actively planning to consolidate residential sites due to inadequate staffing

# 59%

Percentage of agencies actively planning to suspend admissions due to inadequate staffing

\*Source: Illinois Department of Human Services, 1/18/22

## PROVIDERS FOCUS ON STAFF WITH STATE DOLLARS

DSPs are the backbone of the community provider system. Agencies have always prioritized increases to DSP wages in order to reward and retain this essential workforce. Here are a just few examples of how providers utilize increases from the state as part of a total compensation package to retain and recruit:

- Hourly wage increases
- Sign-on bonuses
- Retention bonuses
- Seniority bonuses
- Length of service bonuses
- Year-end recognition bonuses
- Extra paid time off
- No cap on sick time accrual
- Holiday/overtime pay
- Monthly bonuses for those who have taken on extra responsibilities
- Increases to retirement plan matching
- Improvements to health, life and disability insurance
- Raffles, gift cards and cash prizes

As a result of the DSP staffing crisis, providers are competing fiercely to fill widespread vacancies while an increasing number of jobs in the marketplace pay more than they are reimbursed by the state. If a provider does not retain the flexibility to reward staff in a variety of ways, it would soon lose its direct support staff to other providers and other jobs.



## ABOUT THEY DESERVE MORE

They Deserve More is a statewide coalition of nearly 90 community provider agencies, trade and advocacy organizations, and friends and family of people with disabilities. The coalition was founded in 2017 to ensure that Illinois meets its obligation to support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

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