

# Direct Support Professional Quarterly

Winter Issue  
January 2023

Learn more about developments in the profession and useful skills to support people with disabilities



## Welcome

Welcome to The Boggs Center's Direct Support Professional (DSP) Quarterly, a periodic newsletter for New Jersey's direct support professional workforce. Through this newsletter, we will bring you content to inform, educate and inspire. This is YOUR newsletter, so we invite feedback about what you've read and what you'd like to read. If you know any DSPs who would like to receive the DSP Quarterly and other information useful to the disability community, they can [click here subscribe to The Boggs Center's mailing list](#).

## Establishing Direct Support Professional Competencies in New Jersey

A well-trained, competent Direct Support Professional (DSP) workforce is key to the well-being and inclusion of people with disabilities. Establishing DSP competencies helps to ensure that individuals have the support they need to be full participants in their lives and in their communities. The NJ Division of Developmental Disabilities' (DDD) Money Follow the Person (MFP) DSP Competency & Capacity Building Stakeholder Committee is in the process of establishing core competencies for direct support professionals that work in the state of New Jersey. In the upcoming year, the committee will submit these competency recommendations. Training that aligns with these competencies will be selected and developed to create a statewide Career Pathway for NJ DSPs.

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## What are Direct Support Professional Competencies?

Competencies are the knowledge, skills, abilities, and behavior that contribute to job performance. Direct support professionals (DSPs) must possess many competencies to provide high quality supports. This includes an emphasis on ethical practice, professionalism, and person-centered practices. States that adopt core sets of DSP competencies can help to make sure that this essential workforce receives the training they need to develop skills to provide support to people with disabilities in their homes and the community.

## Why do we need DSP Competencies?

Competencies are intended to define professional knowledge, skills, and expectations. They serve as a guide that covers important aspects of a person with disabilities' life and concepts necessary for direct support professionalism. DSP competencies exist to:

- Standardize the knowledge and skills of DSPs
- Set expectations for job performance
- Ensure that the support DSPs provides aligns with the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Service's Home and Community Based Services Settings Rule and other requirements
- Promote best practices for performing job responsibilities
- Create a foundation for career pathways and professional credentials

## Example of Competency Area

Here is an example of one of the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) Competency Areas:

### Competency Area 1: Participant Empowerment

The Direct Support Professional enhances the ability of the participant to lead a self-determining life by providing the support and information necessary to build self-esteem, and assertiveness; and to make decisions.

#### Skill Statements

- The competent DSP assists and supports the participant to develop strategies, make informed choices, follow through on responsibilities, and take risks.
- The competent DSP promotes participant partnership in the design of support services, consulting the person and involving him or her in the support process.
- The competent DSP provides opportunities for the participant to be a self-advocate by increasing awareness of self-advocacy methods and techniques, encouraging and assisting the participant to speak on his or her own behalf, and providing information on peer support and self-advocacy groups.
- The competent DSP provides information about human, legal, civil rights and other resources, facilitates access to such information and assists the participant to use information for self-advocacy and decision making about living, work, and social relationships.

Go to [NADSP](#) and [CMS DSW Core Competencies](#) to learn about other competency sets.

# Home and Community-Based (HCBS) Settings Rule and the Role of Direct Support Professionals

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People with disabilities have long advocated to be supported in ways that help them to be active, valued, and included members of our communities. Many people have been supported to do this, while others continue to live, work, and participate in activities in places that segregate and isolate them from community life. The HCBS Settings Final Rule requires that people with developmental disabilities be supported to have full access to community life and receive services in the most integrated setting possible. States must ensure that all providers of Home and Community-Based Services are in compliance with the Rule by March 2023.



## Role of DSPs in relation to the HCBS Settings Rule



As a DSP, you play an important role providing supports that help people with disabilities realize their rights and be integrated and participating members of the community. There are many ways you can do this.

- Use person-centered thinking, planning, and practices.
- Uphold people's rights of dignity, respect, and freedom from coercion and restraint.
- Support people's right to have visitors.
- Help people to make choices about where they live and the supports they receive.
- Ensure people have privacy, including the supports they need to lock their doors.
- Assist people to choose who they want to live with and how they want their homes to look.
- Support people to control their own schedules and activities and have access to food based on their needs and preferences.
- Ensure that people's homes are physically accessible.
- Help people be active and valued members of their communities.

# Home and Community-Based (HCBS) Settings Rule and the Role of Direct Support Professionals 4

## Learn more about the HCBS Settings Rule

To read more about the HCBS Final Settings Rule and DSP roles, visit:

- [Supporting the Right to a Community Life \[The Boggs Center\]](#)
- [A Provider Guide to the Home and Community Based Services Final Settings Rule \[NJ DDD\]](#)
- [Direct Support Professionals and The Home and Community Based Service Settings Rule \(HCBS\): What You Need to Know \[NADSP\]](#)



## The HCBS Settings Rule and People with Disabilities

What do people with disabilities have to say about The HCBS Final Rule? Over the summer, The Boggs Center travelled around the state to find out how this Rule is important to people with disabilities. Click the video below to be taken to [The Boggs Center's Video Library](#) and select the "Community Life Video Series" to learn more.



# Self Care

## Who is taking care of YOU?

Direct Support Professionals have demanding jobs with vast responsibilities and can experience high levels of stress, burnout, emotional and physical exhaustion which can lead to compassion fatigue. This can impact your ability to provide the best supports to people with disabilities. To help prevent burnout and compassion fatigue, as well as improve care, it's important for DSPs to practice self-care.

Self-care is a set of behaviors that ensure overall well-being, counteract the effects of stress, and foster resilience. This includes making sure basic needs are met, such as food and sleep, but also other activities that strengthen your ability to manage conflict, overcome challenges, and cope with stress. Research shows that DSPs who are resilient to stress and burnout are most successful. Self-care has been shown to improve the quality of life in physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual, relational, and workplace domains. It's important for DSPs to engage in self-care on their own time, but it is also essential for employers to provide resources and information that promotes self-care.



### Article Sources:

Crane, J. M., & Havercamp, S. M. (2020). Who thrives as a direct support professional? Personal motivation and resilience in direct support. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, 106, 103764.

Keesler, J. M., & Troxel, J. (2020). They care for others, but what about themselves? Understanding self-care among DSPs' and its relationship to professional quality of life. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 58(3), 221-240.



## Self Care Resources

[5-Minute Meditation](#) - Goodful

[6 Mental Health Tips Psychologists Use](#) - American Psychological Association

[Tuning in: How music may affect your heart](#)  
[Self-Care Tips](#) - Harvard Medical School

[Manage stress: Strengthen Your Support Network](#) - American Psychological Association

# Self Care Tips

## 1. Stay Connected:

Spend time with close friends and family. Their love, support and kind words are vital to well being. Prioritize talking with or visiting loved ones.



## 2. Meditation:

Research has shown that mindfulness meditation can reduce anxiety and stress. Find a guided meditation, move into a comfortable position, then gently close your eyes. Follow the guided meditation steps to shift all attention to yourself. Slow down, be present and relax.



## 3. Listen to Music:

Enjoying music is part of being human. We respond to music on a deep and fundamental level, below our level of consciousness. Playing a favorite playlist, dancing, singing, or just simply sitting while listening to the music are precious mini breaks.



## 4. Enjoy Time Outside:

Nature, fresh air and sunshine are refreshing. Imagine being in a green forest, on the beach, or just sitting in the garden. A change of scenery can bring good feelings. So step outside, take a deep breath, enjoy nature, and get refreshed!



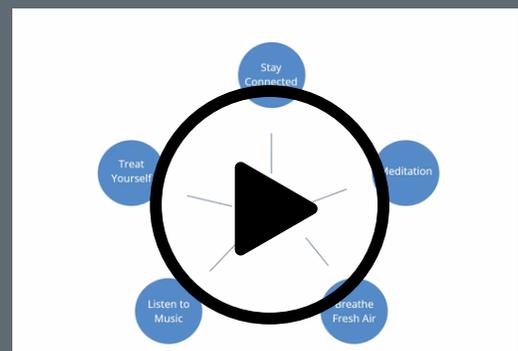
## 5. Treat Yourself

Self-care means taking care of yourself so you can be healthy. It's not selfish. Is there a restaurant you've been wanting to go for a long time? Is there a video game you want to play? Is there a hair color you want to try? Now, just do it! Do something that really makes you happy and boosts your mood.



## Self Care Video

Click the image below to be taken to a brief video on how to practice self care techniques.



# DSP Spotlight - Brian McCrystal

According to Brian McCrystal, three of the most important qualities a DSP should have are patience, humility, and reliability. He believes that, as a DSP, people depend on you to be there when you say you will. They also appreciate when they are supported by DSPs who have the patience to work with people who may have differences in how they communicate, move, and connect with others. This empathy is part of what makes Brian great at what he does. Brian has a passion for helping people and learning about mental health, which led him to become a DSP.



Brian McCrystal

After graduating from college, Brian knew he wanted a job in the human services field. He found what he was looking for with Royal Community Support, where he has worked for the past year. “After meeting Patty and hearing their [Royal Community Support] philosophy about helping to empower individuals with disabilities to be independent and foster confidence, I saw quite the connection between counseling and supporting someone with a disability. So I decided to try it out. I’m so glad I did!” Brian is also currently in graduate school, studying to become a mental health counselor.



Cortez (left) and Brian (right) at a Jujitsu class.

## Building Relationships

Brian prioritizes the relationships he builds with the people they support and wants them to know he’s there for them. He believes in genuinely “connecting with them first and really understanding what they’re going through and getting to know them as people.” This helps him to deliver person-centered support and encourages individual choice. Brian encourages other DSPs to support people to make their own decisions, even if they make what’s considered a poor choice. “You might be able to try and talk them out of it. In the long-term, that mistake may be the one they needed to re-think their goals and put them on a brighter path. I think life is a more superior teacher than any singular person. Sometimes you have to let life teach the person you support too.”

# DSP Spotlight - Brian McCrystal

## Mentor and Friend

Brian's connection with the people he supports has helped them to blossom socially. Cortez shared that he went from not even having conversations with Brian to building the confidence and skills to start striking up conversations with new people in public. "I am lucky because of having Brian help me in my life," remarked Cortez. Some of the other individuals Brian supports have said how much of a relief it is just to be heard by him. For others, Brian is a mentor and friend. One of his favorite memories is of taking one of the people he supports to their first concert. It was especially meaningful since this particular artist was also the first concert Brian attended. When Brian isn't working, he enjoys watching Mix Martial Arts and has attended UFC fights. He also finds time to connect with his family, friends, and partner. A highlight of each month is traveling to the Pine Barrens to go hiking.



Brian (right) and Cortez (left) enjoying time together.



## Did you know?

The HCBS Final Settings Rule requires that individuals with disabilities have the right to privacy, dignity, and respect. This means that each individual has privacy in their sleeping or living unit, including lockable doors and choice of roommates. They also must have freedom to furnish or decorate their in the way they choose. People with disabilities must have the space and opportunity for privacy when speaking on the phone/computer, reading mail/email, and spending time with a guest.

[Read more about the HCBS Final Settings Rule by clicking here.](#)

## The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities

The Boggs Center develops and provides a variety of trainings aimed at improving the DSP workforce, spanning from supporting community inclusion through effective behavior supports. Trainings focused on best practice and practical application of knowledge and skills are available year-round. Many topics are addressed, including:

- Person-Centered Community Supports
- Positive Behavior Supports
- Mental Health and Dual Diagnosis
- Employment for People with Disabilities
- Frontline Supervision

To learn more, view the training calendar, and register for The Boggs Center's trainings, [click here](#).

## College of Direct Support

The College of Direct Support (CDS) is a state-of-the-art online curriculum designed to educate direct support professionals as well as other professionals in the healthcare workforce that support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The CDS contains an abundance of educational material associated with nationally recognized, standardized core competencies and skill sets to help improve job satisfaction, promote growth in performance, and reduce turnover. Trainings mandated by the Division of Developmental Disabilities for agency staff and self-directed employees are accessed online through the College of Direct Support (CDS). In addition to these required trainings, provider agencies can use the CDS to provide additional professional development opportunities to DSPs.

You can check out the Course Catalog to find courses that are available in the CDS. If there are courses that interest you, let your supervisor know so they can support you to learn more.

- [CDS Course Catalog](#)
- [New Jersey CDS Login](#)



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