

Direct Support Provider/Caregiver Crisis Questions and Answers

May 2023 Meet the Need NC Lunch & Learn Webinar

My son's Care Manager suggested that my son w/IDD work with a "peer support specialist" rather than a DSP. Is there a difference between the two? Is this an appropriate suggestion?

It depends on the circumstances and the need as to whether it would make sense to work with a Peer Support Specialist or a DSP. You can find information about Certified Peer Support Specialists in North Carolina [here](#) and [here](#). They are typically individuals with lived experience in mental health or substance use who provide support to others. Direct Support Professional (DSP), which is also called a Direct Care Worker (and other titles), is an individual who assists a person with a disability in their activities of daily living or instrumental activities of daily living. This includes activities like locomotion, eating, toileting, and other supports.

As additional information, the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities has funded an initiative through [Community Bridges to pilot training for Peer Mentors](#) for people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (I/DD). Also, care management through the Tailored Plans can now include individuals with lived experience, such as Certified Peer Specialists, family navigators, and individuals with I/DD as part of the Care Management teams. You can find a white paper about this by Community Bridges [here](#).

I would like to make sure that I heard right...parents/family caring for adult children will not be expiring?

For Innovations Waiver beneficiaries who are adults, relatives who live in the same home if they meet the qualifications provide services, they can provide Community Living and Supports. This was allowable through the Innovations Waiver prior to COVID19 / Appendix K. However, relatives were allowed to exceed the typical weekly limits under Appendix K. After Appendix K expires on 11/11/23, relatives will need to return to the limits outlined in Clinical Coverage Policy 8P Attachment G which are typically 40 hours per week, with some limited exceptions (see page 132 <https://medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/8p/openfor>). Consideration is being made if relatives will be able to continue to provide Supported Living for Innovations beneficiaries who use that service. Employers of Record (EORs) will no longer be able to hire themselves to provide Innovations direct care services after 11/11/23.

For additional questions regarding your specific situation, please contact your Tailored Care Manager or Care Coordinator.

I do agree that DSPs are not paid as they should be. Are the rates going to be increased for services so that providers are able to pay these rates? That is the struggle we have.

There are various proposals currently in front of the General Assembly to ensure that most of the payments go directly to the Direct Support Professionals but that also ensures providers have the funding to pay for the costs of increasing DSP rates. A common proposal is to have 75% of the increase go directly to the DSP.

With increasing pay rates, would there also be increasing individual annual budgets on waivers?

It will be important for advocates to discuss with DHHS leadership, particularly the Division of Health Benefits, the importance of increasing annual budgets and the budget cap for Innovations Waiver if and when DSP rates are increased.

What specific verbiage should parents use when expressing the need for full funding of DSP rates?

We cannot recommend specific language. That said, the state would need to increase the Innovations budget by approximately 90 million dollars to increase DSP rates to \$18.00 an hour.

Talley did you say there are 189,000 DSP openings in NC?

According to the "[Essential Jobs Essential Care North Carolina](#)" brochure, it was estimated that there would be 182,400 job openings for DSPs between 2016-2026. EJEC has a terrific newsletter that you can follow [here](#).

Where can we find the film UNMET?

You can find information and upcoming showings of UNMET [here](#).