



Autism Society of North Carolina

I/DD Workforce Crisis Pt 2 Meet the Need NC

Presented by

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Autism Society of North Carolina

Key Points

- Decades of reforms, population increases, demand for community-based care, aging caregivers, and a lack of investments in health and disability services have put an enormous strain on us and our system.
- DSP wages have increased since 2019, but they remain below market value
- Our system is a privatized, for-profit illness and “care” model that relies on the “free market,” but our main source of funding is government controlled public tax dollars for health and disability services.
- DSP wages and rates for Innovations aren’t the only workforce shortage affecting people with I/DD
- Providers and people who need services have to work together to advocate for change

How did we get here?

- **Fast growing state:** population has increased more than 2.6 million since 2000 – roughly 25% more people!
- **Growth in need:** increase in people with I/DD, in particular those on the autism spectrum. People with I/DD are living longer, their families are aging.
- **Demand for community-based living:** increase in rights and awareness of rights, desire to live integrated into community
- **Decades of “reforms:”** intended to improve things, they have also created a constant state of change, deterring interest by those entering workforce
- **Long history of under-funding human services:** historic poverty and low revenue agricultural state, lots of "catching up." Current focus on lowering taxes, funding other priorities = lack of investments in I/DD.

Innovations DSP Wages Timeline

- 2019: Study finds average wages are \$11.50 per hour, decade+ of no increases in rates
- 2020-2021: Global pandemic, funding from federal gov = more funding to states for Medicaid. NC uses funds to retain DSPs, pay for cost of virus precautions, increase provider rates, and pay DSP bonuses
- 2021-2033: Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) goes into effect, participating providers get rate increase associated with this requirement
- 2022: COVID funding/rates go away, NCGA provides funds for increasing IW DSP rates/wages, IW providers start paying \$13-13.50 per hour
- March 2023: Rate study shows NCGA increase resulted in average wages of **\$13.12** per hour, 87-93 million needed to increase wages to 18.00 per hour
- Sept 2023: state budget includes 60 million for IW DSP wage increase, waiting for DHB to determine new base rates (LMEs can pay more if they have the funds)

What does rate to a provider pay for?

DSP wages/direct service staff wages

Supervisory wages

Payroll taxes, employee benefits (when possible)

Transportation costs

Costs for recruitment and hiring (HR staffing, advertising/recruiting, interviewing, background checks, medical testing, etc.)

Training (CPR, safety, working with clients, use of technology, etc.)

Administrative costs (admin staffing, payroll, contracting, billing, required data collection, licensing, quality control, physical location(s), communications, responding to inquiries, regulatory compliance)

Other costs associated with specialized services

Workforce Shortages and Rate Issues Affect All of Health Care and Disability Services

Dental Care – low rates, lack of training = lack of access

Psychiatrists and Psychologists – access to appropriate medications, diagnosis, and psychological assessments

Nurses – needed for IDD complex medical care, CAP C, etc.

DSPs across service areas - CAP D, state funded services, B3 services, employment services, aging and home health

Services to support mental health and substance use recovery – counselors, in home behavioral supports, inpatient services.

BCBAs and ABA providers – year long or more waits to start services, lack of access in rural areas. Note: *This may not be as much a rate issue as one of workforce training catching up with population growth, payor growth*

What's Next?

Those working in the system (providers, DSPs, families providing direct care) and those directly served with lived I/DD experience need to advocate together for increased investments in our workforce, in services, and in and policies that support community integration in an equitable way.

Resources

Autism Society of North Carolina Help/Talk with a Resource Specialist:

<https://www.autismsociety-nc.org/talk-with-a-specialist/> or call 1-800-442-2762

Autism Society of North Carolina Advocacy Resources: <https://www.autismsociety-nc.org/make-voice-heard/>

Jennifer Mahan, ASNC Director of Public Policy, Contact info: jmahan@autismsociety-nc.org,

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DHB report on Innovations wage increases to NCGA:

<https://webservices.ncleg.gov/ViewDocSiteFile/80776>

DHB Proposed Plan for Innovations to NCGA (not yet funded):