In general, direct support professionals (DSPs) in Indiana enjoy the work they do, the people they support, and the chance they have to make a difference for someone. Like their counterparts around the nation, however, they struggle financially with low wages as well as with understaffing and on-the-job stress.

Last spring, a total of 103 Indiana direct support professionals (DSPs) made their voices heard. At Forums held around the state, small groups of DSPs, representing nine organizations providing services to people with developmental disabilities, sat down together and talked about their lives, education, work days and careers.

The Forums, facilitated by the Center on Community Living and Careers of the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community at Indiana University, were a way to obtain feedback about Foundations for Direct Support Professionals, an orientation training, and Ivy Tech DSP certification courses, components of the state’s Direct Support Professional Development initiative. A total of 72% of the Forum participants

Three new online tools are now available to help Indiana trainers access information about upcoming trainings, link to resources, or chat amongst themselves:

1. The new Indiana Trainers Network website provides information about co-training and Train-the-Trainer opportunities as well as links to other resources. Connect to www.iidc.indiana.edu/ccic and type “Trainers Network” in the search bar.
2. At www.indianatrainers.blogspot.com trainers will find weekly postings about books, DVDs, podcasts and other resources featured in the INTrain Library. (See “Library Links” on page 3 for more information.)
3. Members of the Indiana Trainers Network can now talk online through the network’s new Facebook site. At www.facebook.com, connect to your account (or create one), type “Indiana Trainers Network” in the search bar, and send a request to become a member.
Okay, maybe not really speed dating. But close. In June, trainers had a Speed Meeting, an opportunity for trainers from Outreach and the nine Phase One provider agencies participating in the Direct Support Professional Development initiative to meet Indiana trainers with disabilities who have completed a co-training workshop. Though it wasn’t necessarily a matchmaking session, it was a fun way for trainers to get to know one another and exchange information.

Outreach Services and provider agency trainers were given time at each of 14 stations manned by a trainer with a disability to ask that person questions and collect contact information. They found out about co-training experiences, training interests, how far a trainer might want to travel and as much other information as possible before the 5-minute buzzer sounded.

Trainers Network chair Kristi McCann, of the Center on Community Living and Careers at Indiana University’s Indiana Institute on Disability and Community, said the Speed Meeting also served as an opportunity to develop an Indiana Trainers Network co-training directory, which will be distributed to members.

For information about an upcoming November co-training workshop, contact jeptodd@indiana.edu or ksmccann@indiana.edu or at 812-855-6508/TTY 812-855-9396.

Trainings! Mark Your Calendar

Every issue of INTrain Newsletter will highlight future trainings that may interest you. Each event is also on the INTrain online calendar. www.iidc.indiana.edu/training.

August 11, 9:30 a.m. – 5p.m. Introduction to Dual Diagnosis. Outreach Services training. Online registration at https://ddrsproviders.fssa.in.gov/Events/Default.aspx. For more information, contact Patty Cook, 812-265-7490, patty.cook@fssa.in.gov


Do you have ideas and suggestions for INTrain about training you’d like to see in the future? Do you have any questions about our growing system of education and training? Please feel free to contact Mary Held (maheld@indiana.edu).
Libary Links

Need some summer reading/listening/videos? To browse or borrow materials from the INTrain library (also known as CeDIR), go to www.iidc.indiana.edu/cedir. And check out the new resource blog just for trainers at www.indianatrainers.blogspot.com!

- CeDIR has podcasts! Subjects listed include “Tourettes Syndrome,” “Nutrition,” and “Inclusion in Faith Communities.” Search and listen at: http://cedir.blogspot.com/search/label and click on “Did You Hear” in the right-hand column.


- Unlikely Travelers, DVD documentary, directed by Michael Noonan, Accent Film Entertainment (2008). Six individuals with intellectual disabilities embark on a 2-week trip from Australia to Egypt. Part one captures preparations; part two records the trip itself. Facing fears, chasing dreams, exploring the unknown, changing lives.

Ready to borrow? Visit www.iidc.indiana.edu/cedir. Items will be mailed to you at no cost; all you have to do is pay for return postage.

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DSP Graduates Celebrate Achievements

This past May, 43 direct support professionals (DSPs) from nine agencies who provide services to people with developmental disabilities in Indiana became the first class to receive the Direct Support Professional Human Services Certificate through Ivy Tech. The DSP Human Services Certificate earns DSPs college credit and combines in-depth instruction on disabilities, health and wellness, positive personal supports, support teams, and community integration with 300 hours of on-the-job training or work experience.

Graduate Dee Quaglio, of Logansport, has already recommended the courses to co-workers and thinks the certificate program is a “wonderful opportunity for people coming into the job.” Given that there is now more responsibility placed on the shoulders of DSPs than when she began working with Cardinal Services 16 years ago, Quaglio believes the courses “really give you insight into the importance of changing rules and regulations in the field.

Quaglio jokes that after so many years working for one employer, she’s obviously not a fan of change. She emphasizes, though, that because Cardinal Services has always been person-centered—”It’s really about the people we serve”—she continues to love working as a DSP.

Tony Peterson of Akron, Indiana, is an 8-year veteran of Cardinal Services. He started out in direct care but is now a residential manager. He’s also a May graduate of Ivy Tech, with a DSP Certificate in Human Services.

Peterson liked the course information on positive support teams, the information on augmentative communications, and tips on better positioning for patients with GERD. He also valued the information on stress, not only for consumers, but for DSPs themselves. “It’s important that we learn about ourselves, too—how we manage stress and our own health and stamina. We need to get ourselves together in order to give the best quality of service to others.” Like Quaglio, Peterson has also recommended the Ivy Tech courses to fellow employees at Cardinal Services.

To view the May virtual graduation video or see photos of DSP grads from various state providers, go to www.in.gov/fssa/ddrs and click on “INTrain/DSP Initiative.”

More than 75 additional DSPs are expected to graduate on August 14, 2009. Virtual ceremonies will take place at 1:30 p.m. Connect to the site listed above for more information and a link to the August graduation.
Direct Support Professional Issues

Fast Facts

Social services agencies, government representatives and—perhaps most of all—families are quickly learning that as the numbers of people with disabilities increase, the greater the need there will be for direct support professionals with training, expertise and experience in everything from applied behavioral analysis to person-centered planning.

Despite high demand, DSPs and the people they support face a number of challenges that will need to be overcome for the nation to address this issue. Here, to keep in mind (and for ready access), are a few facts:

- In 2006, the nation’s community service workers for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities earned an average of $10.71 per hour. In Indiana they earned $9.62 per hour. Interestingly, that same year, people who were considered to be at the poverty level in the United States also made an average of $9.62 per hour. In 2008, the nation’s garbage collectors made an average of $14.93 per hour. Braddock, D., and Hemp, R. (2008). “Establishing a tradition of commitment: Intellectual and developmental disabilities services in Indiana.”


- By 2020 we will need 1.2 million full-time DSPs to provide services to 1.4 million people with intellectual or developmental disabilities. Since about one-third of DSPs are part-time workers, the actual number needed, however, may be two or three times that 1.2 million. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2006). “The supply of direct support professionals serving individuals with intellectual disabilities and other developmental disabilities: Report to Congress.”

- By 2016, it is estimated the U.S. will have 4 million direct care workers—more than teachers, registered nurses, law enforcement/public safety workers, or fast food workers. Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute (2008) "Occupational projections for direct-care workers 2006-2016.”

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DSPs Voice Opinions, from page 1

said that the Ivy Tech courses were “very useful” or “useful;” 99% characterized Foundations as “very useful” or “useful.”

Facilitators also used the opportunity to collect other information from DSPs on how they came to be a DSP, what makes them stay in their jobs and what would make them want to leave.

The greatest percentage of Forum participants (38%) confirmed that an acquaintance suggested they apply for their first DSP position, while 20% said a family member works or worked at the same provider agency. Another 21% answered an ad in the paper.

While low wages and job stress were mentioned most often as the reason a DSP might leave his or her job, 72% of participants cited “satisfaction with helping people” as the reason they continue to work as a DSP and stay in their present positions.

Next Issue

Our next issue will be available in October 2009. Please submit your suggestions for news, profiles, upcoming trainings, events and kudos.

The editor reserves the right to edit information for length, style and content.

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