

THE NJ DSP CAREER PATH QUARTERLY

FALL 2008



NJ DIVISION OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES TO MAKE CAREER PATH AVAILABLE TO DSPs STATEWIDE

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New Jersey, like many other states, is facing a workforce crisis. By 2016, the demand for direct support workers in home and community based settings will outstrip supply by 30% (PHI, 2007). Low wages and high demand on workers leave agencies with high turnover rates and challenges to providing quality supports. The NJ Direct Support Professional Workforce Development Coalition developed the NJ Career Path for DSPs to increase their skills and enable them to earn more money through the completion of coursework provided by The College of Direct Support (CDS), mentoring, and the development of a portfolio documenting job competency. The NJ Council on Developmental Disabilities funded a pilot of the Career Path project for two years. In 2009, The NJ Division of Developmental Disabilities will subscribe to the College of Direct Support, making the Career Path available to all DSPs who work with people and agencies who receive HCBS waiver funding. Agencies will be able to make the courses in both Level I and II of the Career Path available to all DSPs. In addition, they will be able to use the CDS to assign courses of their choosing to their staff. Participation in the Career Path is voluntary, and the amount of salary increase given is determined by the agency. Participation is highly recommended to reduce staff attrition, increase morale, and recognize the professionalization of DSPs. There will be no fee for agencies to access the CDS. In addition to the Career Path, the CDS will be used to keep track of pre-service training so using the CDS will be mandatory—see below. All agencies will need to identify a CDS Administrator (or collaborate with another agency)—see How to Choose Your CDS Admin on pg. 7. Technical support will be provided by the CDS System Administrator and training will be provided by The Boggs Center. All agencies will submit a list of current staff to DDD for bulk upload into the CDS, have a representative attend a training on CDS Administration, and enter new hires into the CDS. Agencies will be given access to the CDS through the regional rollout process taking place in 2009. Informational sessions on the statewide rollout of the CDS will be held at all of the membership associations and are available by request.



DID YOU KNOW?

A Direct Support Professional (DSP) is one whose primary job responsibility is to provide support, training, supervision, and personal assistance to people with disabilities where at least 50% of their hours are spent in direct support tasks.

NJ TO USE THE COLLEGE OF DIRECT SUPPORT LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM TO TRACK PRE-SERVICE TRAINING

The College of Direct Support (CDS) is a learning management system that has the ability to track both online and in person classroom training. As such, it has been selected as the means by which NJ will meet its federal requirement to have a centralized system to track the completion of pre-service training to ensure the requirement is met within 120 days of hire. All NJ pre-service trainers will use the CDS as the primary tool for new hire registration into pre-service training events, data tracking, and record keeping. In addition, the CDS will track CPR certifications and will alert the agency administrator when someone's certification is about to expire. This functionality will allow DSPs to have a learning transcript which reflects all of their pre-service and online learning as well as their current certifications. Training for pre-service trainers who will be using the CDS will be offered free of charge through The Boggs Center and will be announced.

THANK YOU, NEW JERSEY COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES!

In August, Colleen McLaughlin and Bill Gaventa of The Boggs Center were invited by the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities to lead a Sunday morning session of Partners in Policymaking on the workforce development initiatives in New Jersey and around the country. Colleen and Bill had a wonderful time fielding the questions and comments from people with developmental disabilities and family members who were present. Their interest level was exceptionally high, which is, in fact, as it should be, for ultimately individuals and families are the ones who

depend most on an effective direct support workforce, whether at home, school, or the workplace. Several of the families expressed interest in using their skills developed in Partners in Policymaking in support of the workforce initiatives.

This is just one example of the role that the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities has played in moving the statewide career path and other projects of the Workforce Development Coalition from dreams to real possibility and reality. Their funding of the pilot project

of the Career Path last year built the momentum from the 2006 Statewide Forum on Career Paths, and allowed the New Jersey DSP Workforce Development Coalition to begin putting plans into action. That grant also just supported the overbooked "Make a Difference" conference for direct support professionals. A second grant funding the continuation of the pilot past September of 2008 into 2009 allows New Jersey to continue to learn from the experience of the pilot agencies while gearing up for expansion of the career path option on a statewide basis.

On behalf of the Workforce Development Coalition, thank you, NJCDD, for the key support to build the Career Path project in New Jersey and for the ways this will facilitate many more partnerships between individuals with disabilities, families, direct support professionals, and provider agencies.

To use a metaphor from the Garden State, the Council has helped water and nourish some young seedlings at just the right time, and the garden is just beginning to bear fruit.

ABOUT THE NJ DSP WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COALITION

The New Jersey Direct Support Professional Workforce Development Coalition's mission is to promote the recruitment and retention of a professional workforce to enhance the quality of direct supports for people with disabilities and their families. We do this by:

- Supporting the choice of direct support professional as a life long career through:
 - Advocating for wages and other benefits that allow direct support professionals to remain in the profession.
 - Building the competencies of direct support professionals through opportunities for education and professional development.
 - Increasing public awareness and appreciation of direct support professionals.
- Building partnerships among agencies, funding sources, educational institutions, families, and consumers to:
 - Develop effective strategies for recruitment and retention.
 - Shape policies that strengthen the quality of direct support professionals on a state and national level.
- Improving the quality of the work environment for direct support professionals, through:
 - Promoting innovative management practices.
 - Strengthening skills of front line supervisors.
 - Creative uses of direct support professionals that value their skill and experience.

The Coalition's membership includes:

Direct Support Professionals
 Families of People with Developmental Disabilities
 Alliance for the Betterment of Citizens with Disabilities
 The Arc of New Jersey
 Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development/Community Colleges of New Jersey
 Division of Developmental Disabilities, New Jersey Department of Human Services
 Division of Disability Services, New Jersey Department of Human Services
 The Elizabeth M. Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities
 New Jersey Association of Community Providers
 New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities

If you are interested in joining the Coalition's List Serv, please contact: Beth Ong at Elizabeth.Ong@umdnj.edu

**The New Jersey
 Direct Support
 Professional
 Workforce
 Development
 Coalition's mission
 is to promote
 the recruitment
 and retention of
 a professional
 workforce to
 enhance the
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THE CAREER PATH PILOT PROJECT

The project, funded through a grant from the NJ Council on Disabilities, involves the piloting of the career path in order to build the competencies, rewards, and professionalism for direct support professionals in New Jersey. The information found throughout this newsletter is a result of learning that took place during this innovative project.

Staff from agencies of various sizes in all four regions of New Jersey participated in the pilot. The partnering agencies include: Allies, Inc., The Arcs of Atlantic, Middlesex, Somerset, and Warren Counties, Caring with Compassion, Matheny Medical and Educational Center, Bancroft Neurohealth, Partnerships for People, and United Cerebral Palsy of Hudson County. The Arc of Mercer County won a year's subscription and Cerebral Palsy of North Jersey purchased the CDS for individual agency use.

The first year of the pilot was a great success with 92 DSPs and 49 mentors enrolled in the Career Path and an additional 105 agency staff taking courses through the CDS. Participating DSPs were elated to have the opportunity to learn more and be recognized for the hard work they do everyday. Involvement in the career path not only increased their skills, but also helped to build stronger relationships with their colleagues and the people they support. Many report that they were given great opportunities and that they probably wouldn't have had if it weren't for the project and say that was a lot of hard work that was well worth it. Through the dedication of many of the agency coordinators, participants shared their ideas, discussed best practice, displayed true professionalism, and enhanced the vision of possibilities for the people they support.

AN AGENCY PERSPECTIVE

LINDA COBB, TRAINING DIRECTOR & LYNN LIPPERT, HUMAN RESOURCE DIRECTOR- THE ARC OF ATLANTIC COUNTY

When this pilot program was first suggested, our agency was intrigued by the idea of a mentoring system woven in with the online training we had heard about from the University of Minnesota. Because our agency is one who welcomes the challenges of new projects, we joined in and traveled to 'North Jersey' to The Boggs Center to check it out. We had attempted to develop mentoring projects in the past, but we seemed to be missing some key element to make it successful. The Boggs Center and the Career Path curriculum are the keys we needed. Fiscal considerations are usually one of the first topics of conversation of course, but we felt we needed to have a long range plan to assure people who use our services would have continuity in their lives.

We figured it out and joined the group. The employees who volunteered to participate stepped up to the challenge and began the coursework. It was time consuming, but when the coordinators and participants (soon to be mentors) had our regular meetings (an essential part of our success), it was evident that each of us had learned new things. Even the most seasoned employee learned something new. We continued to attend agency coordinator meetings at The Boggs Center and attended the National Symposium on Workforce Development. The group's synergy continued as they were assigned mentees and completed level one. We then attended the very first New Jersey Direct Support Professional conference, coordinated by The Boggs Center, where our 'graduates' received their certificates. We continue to meet and hold our discussions of the material and guide each other toward success. This pilot program has proven to be the key we were missing all along.



"This pilot program has proven to be the key we were missing all along"

**- Linda Cobb,
Training Director,
Arc of Atlantic
County**

MY CAREER PATH EXPERIENCE

BEVERLY PAVLOFF, DSP- THE ARC OF ATLANTIC COUNTY



When The Arc asked for volunteers to participate in the Career Path, I knew that it sounded like something I just had to try. I began by attending a training given at The Boggs Center, which was extremely helpful in thinking about my future as a Mentor. The next challenge was the online training courses, which I found fascinating. The other Mentors and I often found that the training gave us a sense of renewed energy and enthusiasm for our work. The training challenged us to go to the next level, beyond just assuring that individuals have their basic needs satisfied, but also to consider the ethical issues, community relationships, rights, and improvement of the quality of life for people. This fits right in with the mentoring process, because I am able to give helpful feedback, assist someone to embrace the challenges of their work and encourage professionalism in the field. Participating in the Career Path

has given me the opportunity to attend the National DSP conference in Baltimore, the NJ DSP conference and form great new working relationships with the other mentors and mentees. At the NJ conference, I was honored to be on a discussion panel and participate in a national ANCOR webinar as a speaker, where I shared my experience with others. This is a great experience and I look forward to continuing the Career Path coursework. I encourage other Direct Support Professionals to take advantage of this opportunity.

MENTORING AND THE CAREER PATH

Mentoring is a vital component of NJ's Career Path for DSPs. National research shows that mentoring reduces staff attrition and increases job satisfaction by pairing more experienced DSPs with less experienced staff to coach, build skills, act as a role model, and provide support. In the Career Path pilot, DSPs stated that having a mentor provided them with encouragement, initiative, motivation, and built camaraderie. "We like each other more" a DSP said as she reflected on working with her mentor. All mentors who participated in the pilot were selected based on their ability to lead, years as a DSP, and desire to be a role model. Mentors were required to complete all CDS coursework and attend an Essentials of Mentoring training which included the role of a mentor, communication skills, setting goals, problem solving, and providing feedback. It was important that mentors knew their role was to support their mentees in the Career Path, not to supervise. All mentors received a bonus or pay increase. Mentors in the Career Path must make a commitment to meet with their mentees to help them with coursework, to discuss their portfolio activities, and to help them actively use their competencies on the job. Good mentors share a love of the job, are a partner in the learning experience, are supportive and approachable, are energetic and motivating, and take time to celebrate achievements. Their advice for new mentors? "Do it from the heart and have passion for the work that you do" and "Take the time to listen."

"As a mentor, I am an ambassador to the profession. It is a good feeling to be a leader."

DSPs TALK ABOUT BEING ON THE CAREER PATH

"I like that the Career Path addresses turnover. More pay and better support for clients. Finally something is being done for this profession!"

As the first year of the pilot ended, 20 DSPs who had been participating in the career path gathered in focus groups to talk about their experiences. When asked why they participated in the pilot they said: "I wanted to learn as much as I could"; "I wanted recognition"; and "To support the professionalization of the field." They discussed the CDS coursework and felt that: "It applies to my job and I can apply it to my work right away"; "It enhanced my knowledge and gave me good new ideas"; "It helped me think differently about the things that I do routinely"; "It makes you sharper." What motivates them to finish? "Respect, more money, better skills"; "I am proud of myself for doing it on my own. I am building my competencies"; "Career advancement"; "Self-motivation — I am driven to get it done"; and "I can better support people and do a better job." Some of the challenges they faced on the career path included not having access to computers, time limitations to meet with their mentors and to complete the portfolio, and length of coursework — "It is a lot of work!" When asked what they would recommend agencies do to let new DSPs know about and support them on the career path they said: "Give them time at work to do it. Even 2 hours a week would make a big difference"; "Let them know that they will gain respect"; "Let DSPs know that they will learn a lot"; "Make it personal, share DSP and client experiences." One DSP summarized his experience by stating: "The career path makes the agency better. Simple as that."

TECHNOLOGY NEEDED TO UTILIZE THE COLLEGE OF DIRECT SUPPORT

The College of Direct Support is easily accessible and available through the internet 24 hours per day 7 days per week but requires some basic technology:

- IBM-compatible computer usually called a PC. CDS is not Mac compatible.
- 500 MHz processor, running Microsoft Windows 98® (second edition) or later.
- 128 MB RAM.
- 56k modem or high speed-connection. A high-speed connection such as DSL is highly recommended.
- Color monitor capable of 800 x 600 resolution.
- Audio sound card with amplified speakers.
- Printer.
- Internet Explorer® (preferred) or Netscape Navigator® version 4.0 or later.
- Macromedia Flash Player 6® plug-in.
- Window Eyes® screen reader is the recommended screen reader for Flash compatibility.



CDS COURSES REQUIRED FOR THE CAREER PATH

There are 3 levels to the NJ Career Path, all of which require DSPs to complete CDS coursework and a portfolio of competencies displayed on the job while being mentored. The courses chosen correspond with the National Alliance for Direct Support Professional (NADSP) credentialing requirements which are based on nationally validated Community Skill

Support Standards.

Level I coursework includes:

Direct Support Professionalism
Safety at Home & in
Community Documentation
Community Inclusion
Individual Rights and Choices
Teaching People with DD
Cultural Competence

Level II coursework includes:

Employment Supports
Person-Centered Planning

Supporting Healthy Lives

You've Got a Friend
Positive Behavior Support
Working with Families
Everyone Communicates

Level III of the Career Path is in development and will allow DSPs to specialize in a content area of their choice through a combination of CDS and other training options.

“The CDS courses taught me how to think about myself as a professional – what I am doing and why I am doing it.” - Career Path DSP

BEST PRACTICES IN IMPLEMENTING THE CAREER PATH IN YOUR AGENCY

The Career Path pilot partner agencies gathered to share the strategies for implementation that they felt worked best. Here are their recommendations:

Project Coordination — Schedule specific start dates (quarterly or by the academic semester) to enroll DSPs into The Path. This allows you to release CDS courses in a planned way. Hold regular meetings with mentors and DSPs to discuss progress and challenges. Have more than one person coordinate the process / administer the CDS — you may need someone to fall back on. Know that a good Project Coordinator will increase his/her workload by about 20%.

Mentoring — When selecting mentors handpick people who have been with your agency for at least 1 year and have them complete Level I and the portfolio before assigning them a DSP to mentor. When selecting DSPs, make sure they have completed the probationary period

and all pre-service training requirements. Recommend English as a second language classes to those who may struggle with writing in English. A lateral/peer match works best when pairing DSPs and mentors. Look at personalities and learning styles. Set aside time for the mentors and mentees to meet. Be flexible and encouraging to the mentor/mentee relationship.

Portfolio Development — Don't overlook the importance of the portfolio — it is where on the job competencies are recorded to demonstrate skills and a requirement for NJ certification. Have good examples available for review. Meet and discuss portfolio work as a group in scheduled 'seminars'. Mentors should be giving feedback on portfolios, not grading them. Don't get caught up in grammar and spelling. Be sensitive to cultural differences and language barriers. Complete the portfolio along with the corresponding module in the CDS.

Portfolios should describe best practice and document how new skills are used on the job.

Motivating Staff — Have regular meetings at predetermined dates and times. They provide a chance for DSPs to get together and increases accountability. Give incentives such as gift cards or conference attendance to DSPs who stay on track. Encourage mentors to support each other. Recognize staff who are participating by naming them at staff meetings and internal publications. Have celebrations or luncheons. Publicly recognize DSPs who complete the levels. Allow them to attend the certificate ceremony at the Making a Difference DSP Conference. Use mentors as role models & coaches throughout the agency.

Remember that by improving the skills of your DSPs and rewarding them for that, you are improving the quality of your supports and your agency as well.

THINGS TO AVOID ON THE CAREER PATH

Below are some tips from the pilot agencies to help you avoid the problems that they encountered: Don't mandate that all of your staff participate. Don't rush into the process without outlining a plan for implementation. Don't open it up to too many DSPs at one time; limit the group until you get a handle on how much time coordinating The Path will take. Don't choose direct supervisors to mentor DSPs that they will also be evaluating. Don't leave frontline managers out of the process. Don't do something that works for another agency — figure out what will work best for your agency.



HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR AGENCY CDS ADMINISTRATOR

The CDS will be the management system used by the state to track Pre-Service Training — requiring each agency to have a CDS administrator. The primary duties of the administrator will be to manage learners (employees) for his/her agency by creating and entering user IDs and to assign courses to those DSPs who are on the career path.

Current employees will need to be entered into the CDS. This will be easy to do if you have an electronic record, like an excel spreadsheet, of the employees

in your agency. Request for this information will come from DDD and a bulk upload will be arranged through MCStrategies (the company that runs the CDS).

Your CDS Administrator should be someone from your Human Resource or Training Department with moderate computer skills. He or she does not have to be a computer genius to manage the CDS Training on how to administer the CDS will be offered free of charge and will be announced. In addition to having some computer knowledge, your

administrator should have the following qualities:

- Be a good communicator
- Be a multi-tasker
- Pay attention to detail
- Be a good planner
- Be organized
- Be motivating and empowering

The amount of time required to administer the CDS will depend on how large your staff is but should not take up more than a few hours per week. Most of the



time invested will be early in the learning and start up process.

ABOUT THE COLLEGE OF DIRECT SUPPORT (CDS)



To view a demo of the College of Direct Support visit their website at:

www.collegeofdirectsupport.com

The College of Direct Support is a Web-based training curriculum based on a national set of skill standards offered on a platform that is user friendly, convenient and offers flexibility and customization. It uses the latest technology, a proven curriculum, and a national board of editors to create vibrant, multi-modal learning experiences for today's Direct Support Professionals. The

CDS competency based training is built on a comprehensive job analysis and promotes career development for DSPs by supporting learners to develop and demonstrate the skills, attitudes and knowledge needed to provide high quality support.

The CDS provides:

- A Learning Management System that tracks

and records all training activities.

- A Spanish language glossary in excess of 30,000 words and acronyms in both English & Spanish.
- A calendar of events
- An electronic journal for notes
- And much more!

COLLEGE OF FRONTLINE MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISION

The quality and stability of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) is more often than not related to the quality and stability of their supervisors. In many instances good DSPs are promoted to supervisory positions without receiving the focused training they need to be effective leaders and managers in their new roles.

To respond to this, the CDS offers the College of Frontline Supervision and Management

(CFSM). Its instructional capabilities and administrative functions are identical to those of the College of Direct Support. Its target audience is Frontline Supervisors, lead workers, and DSPs who want to move into supervisory roles.

All CFSM courses will be available statewide through the CDS for your management staff.

Courses currently being offered in the CFSM include:

Training and Orientation

This course gives a comprehensive overview into considerations for revising training and orientation practices.

Fueling High Performance

This course is an overview of interventions that help reduce turnover, but also increase employee satisfaction, productivity, and competence.

Developing an Intervention Plan

This course summarizes the steps of developing an effective plan for reducing turnover and vacancy.

Recruitment and Selection

This course gives a comprehensive overview into considerations for revising selection and hiring practices.

Preparing for the Supervisors Job —

Just released!

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: A DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS CONFERENCE

On September 25, 2008, the first Making A Difference Conference to inspire, innovate, and recognize DSPs supporting people with developmental disabilities was held in Somerset, NJ to a maximum capacity crowd. The event's theme centered around the difference that DSPs make in the lives of the people they support when they are co-generators of possibilities. Beth Mount Ph.D, founder and Director of Capacity Works and winner of the 2004 NADSP National Moving Mountains Award for her Everyday Heroes Leadership Initiative, provided an insightful keynote presentation on Co-creating Community Membership and Contribution. Each conference participant received her "Make A Difference Guidebook for Person-Centered Direct Support" to take away as a resource. Workshops included content from the practicalities of the Career Path, to creative ways to make a difference, to increasing skills in stress management, communication, building community connections, and sharing DSPs knowledge when planning for those they support. The day's highlight was the afternoon Award Ceremony where Alison Malnak of the Arc of Somerset received the 2008 Making A Difference award and over 60 DSPs who completed Level I of the NJ Career Path received their certificates (see below). The day culminated in a showing of the movie Higher Ground which captured the dedication of DSPs during and after hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. The event was attended by nearly 300 DSPs demonstrating their commitment to enhancing their profession and making a difference in the lives of the people they support.



“This Conference should be the first of many! Very informative, inspirational and FUN! Great topics and presenters.”



“The Make a Difference Conference was a celebration of the achievements of Direct Support Professionals and a fantastic motivational experience, which creates the desire for even more information. The conference fed not only our bellies, but our mind and souls. The conference opened with a substantial continental breakfast leaving one feeling comfortably full to start the day. The Keynote speaker, Beth Mount was enthusiastic, idealistic, dignifying, and compassionate. The presentation was an excellent vehicle to show the tools for person centered planning, and the above and beyond steps Direct Support Professional have taken to ensure excellent quality of life for those they serve. The message was well received. However, idealistic - leaving one with the real questions of considerably more staffing, funding, satiated job markets, and volunteer positions and proximity questions. It was a great inspiring presentation. The first workshop was fun. The team work between the instructors and the audience was humorous, informative and eclectic in tools for stress reduction and the laughter lightened the day and paved the way for a wonderful (healthy) lunch buffet. The second workshop, Addressing workforce development issues, through the College of Direct Support & the Career Path was informative with excellent research and visual tools. The session left me wanting more information, data, and questions about making the program work. The entire Conference a fantastic success that leaves our minds, bodies, and souls swell.”

- Deborah Anne Domico, DSP, Bancroft Neurohealth



NJ'S INAUGURAL CLASS OF DSPs RECEIVE CAREER PATH CERTIFICATES

The NJ DSP Workforce Development Coalition would like to congratulate the 2008 NJ Career Path in Developmental Disabilities Level I Certificate Recipients:

* = Mentor

Elsie Adaros
Toyin Akinpeloye
Giovanna Alves
Ofelia Angeles *
Binta Badji
Sineta Barksdale *

Zoubir Bittout *
Cheryl Brantley *
Theresa Bryant
leasha Caraway *
Lauritz Cayo *
Nancy Clements *
Alexis Cole
Sandra Conover *
Wanda Conquest
Olynda Constantino *
Sandra Davis *
Angela Dickey *
Safy Diedhiou *
Deborah Anne Domico *
Janetta Ewers

Paula Fadell
Brenda Ford
Jannette Garcia
Ketsela Gebretsadick *
Patrick Glatz *
Nakia Godbold *
Nicole Greene *
Barbara Guevara *
Ethredge Hansen *
Vickey Heymach *
Brenda Hoagland *
George Joseph
Konstantinos Karaminas *
Tesyfaye Kebede
Michelle Lee

Alison Malnak *
Samantha McCarthy
Nina Metzner
Janeth Moreno
Twanda Morton
Peter Njgenga
Brian Odenath
Beverly Pavloff *
Thomas Piravmthottiyil
Ana Ramirez
Odalis Rivera
Luz Rojas
Hana Said
Ekram Said
Vickie Santini *

Amber Santini
Virginia Segree *
Colleen Shaw
Elda Sichuco
Senait Tesfaye
Nadine Thompson *
Richard Triggs
Toni Vargas
Angela Warner *
Andrew Whitaker *
Antoinette Wiggins *
Elfinesh Wondafrash
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**THE NEW JERSEY DIRECT SUPPORT
PROFESSIONAL WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT COALITION**

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**The New Jersey
Direct Support Professional
Workforce Development Coalition**

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VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

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**THE INFORMATION YOU NEED ABOUT NEW JERSEY'S DIRECT SUPPORT
PROFESSIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE**