

2006-2007 National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals

# Moving Mountains Awards

## Reinventing Quality Conference 2007

Charleston, SC  
March 6, 2007

The Moving Mountain Awards are Presented by:



The Moving Mountains Awards are presented to organizations and agencies that have demonstrated best practice in direct support workforce development. They are awarded by the Research and Training Center on Community Living at the University of Minnesota in partnership with the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP). Nominations are solicited through NADSP member organizations and submissions are reviewed by a panel of NADSP members. Selection criteria are based on the mission and five goals of the NADSP.

Mission: To promote the development of a highly-competent human services workforce that supports individuals in achieving their life goals.

Goals:

1. Enhance the status of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs).
2. Provide better access for all DSPs to high quality educational experiences (e.g., in-service training, continuing and higher education) and lifelong learning which enhances competency.
3. Strengthen working relationships and partnerships among DSPs, self-advocates, and other consumer groups and families.
4. Promote systems reform that provides incentives for educational experiences, increased compensation, and access to career pathways for DSPs through the promotion of policy initiatives (e.g., legislation, funding, best practices).
5. Support the development and implementation of a national voluntary credentialing process for DSPs.

The 2006-2007 Moving Mountains Award recipients are —

- Support Providing Employees Association of Kentucky:  
For excellence in pre-service orientation, mentoring of new hires, in-service training, and promoting DSP recognition and professionalism.
- Alaska Alliance for Direct Service Careers:  
For excellence in developing ongoing statewide initiatives that build direct support professional careers

# Support Providing Employees Association of Kentucky (SPEAK)

Louisville, Kentucky

Support Providing Employees Association of Kentucky (SPEAK) is a DSP organization supported by a collaborative of community support providing organizations in the metro Louisville region. Through this organization, DSPs are given many opportunities to network with other DSPs, to attend specialized trainings, and to attend special DSP appreciation events. As DSPs reach milestones in tenure, SPEAK helps celebrate their accomplishments. Members also are given opportunities to mentor new DSPs. SPEAK helps discover what supports are necessary and then provides those that will help keep DSPs in the workforce.

SPEAK is guided by two lead agencies:

- The Council on Mental Retardation
- Seven Counties Services, Inc

Additional SPEAK Partners include:

- Cedar Lake Residences
- Community Living, Inc.
- Dayspring
- Dreams With Wings
- Exceptional Teens & Adults
- Louisville Diversified Services
- The Mattingly Center
- Harbor House of Louisville, Inc.

DSPs working for partnering agencies receive a free SPEAK membership once they have reached one year of tenure or beyond. All DSPs (new and seasoned) in partnering organizations can attend trainings and events free of charge. DSPs in a non-partnering agency may attend the lectures and/or brown bag lunches for a small fee.

SPEAK Services

SPEAK offers an array of services and supports to DSPs. Those services include:

Pre-service orientation: Gives DSP job applicants a realistic preview

of the work prior to being hired. The pre-service orientation includes a 2 hour site visit, a one hour visit with a consumer and/or family member, and an explanation of national trends in DSP workforce and SPEAK's efforts to improve turnover and retention outcomes. Each DSP applicant is paid \$50 for their time during the orientation. Those who complete the orientation receive a Completion Certificate. The SPEAK coordinator meets with each applicant to guide them through the orientation process. After the orientation, the coordinator prepares a brief written summary of the visit for the hiring manager in the organization where the applicant applied.

**Mentor/apprenticeship program:** Pairs up newly hired DSPs with a seasoned DSP to help new applicant adjust to a new work environment and learn best practices from a peer. SPEAK pays mentors \$15 per hour in addition to their regular hourly pay. SPEAK expects each apprentice to receive a total of 18 hours of one-to-one support from their mentor in the first 6 months of their employment.

**Training and discussion opportunities for DSPs:** The Leadership Institute publishes a quarterly lecture series on topics related to DSP work. Brown bag lunches are scheduled for DSPs to informally network with other DSPs. Topics and schedule of the lecture series and brown bag lunches are published in the quarterly newsletter and also can be accessed at [www.dspspeak.org](http://www.dspspeak.org). Approximately 15-20 DSPs attend brown bag sessions each month. In addition SPEAK members have access to an information exchange, regional collaboration opportunities and networking opportunities.

**Monetary and commemorative recognition for reaching tenure milestones:** DSPs reaching six months of tenure will receive \$75. DSPs reaching one year of tenure receive \$100, a certificate, a SPEAK membership pin, and a note from the SPEAK coordinator. All DSPs reaching tenure benchmarks have their names printed in the quarterly Newsletter. SPEAK also hosts a yearly DSP Appreciation Banquet for all DSPs employed by partner agencies. Approximately 200 DSPs have participated in this banquet each of the last two years.

SPEAK participants have access to a SPEAK Manual which is a guide for Direct Support Professionals. This 44 page guide is a compilation of resources to help DSPs. The manual includes the following sections:

- The National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals Code of Ethics and Guiding Principles
- The Community Support Skill Standards
- Understanding Kentucky's Service System

- Don't forget about families... Bridging the gap effective communication with families
- The power of one: A letter to the Direct Support Professional (from a parent)
- What's this thing called self-advocacy and self-determination
- A credo for support
- Taking care of you! If you don't take care of yourself who will?
- A dozen ways to improve your walking workouts
- 14 keys to a health diet
- The wellness guide to preventative care
- Stress: Why you have it and how it hurts your health
- Community Resource network Human Services Database: Kentucky and Indiana

#### Funding

SPEAK primarily is funded by a 3-year grant through the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). SPEAK receives additional funding from partnering agencies that implement the goals and objectives of SPEAK through contractual agreements with Seven Counties Services, Inc.

SPEAK accomplishments include:

- In less than two years, 220 DSP applicants have completed Pre-Service Orientation. Of those 80% were hired by a partner organization. Of those who were hired, 93% stayed with their organization for at least three months.
- 43 experienced DSPs have become Mentors for SPEAK.
- 280 tenure milestone incentives have been awarded by SPEAK.
- 96 DSPs have attended the SPEAK lecture series.
- 210 DSPs and community stakeholders attended the 2006 DSP Appreciation Banquet.
- When the project began, partnering organizations averaged 62% DSP turnover annually. After one year turnover was 44% and in the second year turnover was 27%.

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 Website: [www.dpspeak.org](http://www.dpspeak.org). Email: [jwalker@uwoyo.edu](mailto:jwalker@uwoyo.edu).

# Alaska Alliance for Direct Service Careers (AADSC)

Anchorage, AK

The Alaska Workforce Development Initiative began in 2000. The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, a public trust established by the state of Alaska to ensure an integrated, comprehensive mental health program, provided seed money to staff and provide resources for the Initiative. Beneficiaries of the Trust are individuals with developmental disabilities, Alzheimer's disease and related disorders, mental illness, and chronic alcoholism. The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education was the lead agency. The University of Alaska's Center for Human Development (UCEDD) obtained additional resources to support Initiative activities.

The Initiative was implemented by a steering committee composed of 34 representatives from community agencies (rural and urban), state agencies, and advocacy organizations. During the first year the Steering Committee focused on data gathering (wage and benefits study, focus groups, and surveys), obtaining technical assistance and information from other states, and developing a strategic plan. The initiative was named the Alaska Alliance for Direct Service Careers (AADSC) and developed the following mission: "to promote the development of a highly competent direct support workforce that supports people with disabilities in achieving their life goals".

The strategic plan included the following goals: 1) improve the status and public image of direct support staff, 2) expand the DSP recruitment pool, 3) develop effective retention strategies, and 4) achieve a living wage and benefits. Subcommittees were formed to develop and implement activities for each strategic area. Direct support personnel and family members were recruited for each subcommittee. Some of the key accomplishments achieved by the AADSC since its inception included:

Goal 1 – A statewide media campaign (TV, radio, newspapers) to improve the status and image of direct support professionals (DSPs), showed individuals needing supports working collaboratively together in a variety of situations. In addition, posters and brochures describing the work of, competencies needed by, and benefits for DSPs were distributed widely and in diverse targeted sites throughout Alaska.

Goal 2 - To expand the recruitment pool of DSPs for organizations, a website was developed including job postings, events calendar, education links, a bulletin board and numerous recruitment and marketing tools. In

addition, outreach efforts (conference presentations and display booths, talk radio programs, and organizational staff meeting presentations), joint participation with other health care and human service professional associations in a statewide career fair, and the creation and dissemination of job description fact sheets to clarify misconceptions about what the direct support profession is and what DSPs do.

Goal 3 – As strategies to develop effective retention practices, AADSC developed and implemented the following initiatives:

- A statewide conference for direct service professionals (the Full Lives Conference) has been held each year since 2002. Approximately 70% (250) of the conference participants have been DSPs with the remaining 30% have been persons experiencing disabilities and family members. The planning committee for this annual event includes direct support personnel, agency supervisors and managers, state agency representatives, trade association personnel and family members.
- The Direct Support Professional of the Year Award is a special feature of the Full Lives Conference. Four awards are granted each year, one from each of the four Trust beneficiary groups. Winners receive a certificate and a paid trip to a conference of their choice anywhere in the United States. DSPs are included in the nomination and award review committees.
- The AADSC created a Frontline Supervisor Leadership Institute in 2003 and it has been held annually ever since. The Leadership Institute uses a multi-faceted training approach that includes a skill-training workshop, mentoring, guided practice, distance-delivered discussion opportunities, and a competency evaluation.
- The Initiative created an electronic source book that is located on their web site and includes about 50 links to related web sites with numerous retention strategies, tools, and resources.

Goal 4 – The three main activities in this area have been: a presentation by AADSC to the Alaska Legislature to educate lawmakers about the important work of and the poor wages received by DSPs, a statewide information initiative to make DSPs aware of some public benefits for which they may be eligible, especially the Earned Income Tax Credit, and a campaign to request DSPs to support and sign the ANCOR petition that urges states to contact their governors and legislators to address the issues of recruitment and retention of direct support personnel.

The AADSC, while always reflecting on and learning from the past, is also looking forward. In April 2005 the Alaska Alliance for Direct Service Careers (AASDSC) hosted a Summit to develop a revised strategic plan to address the issues of recruitment, retention, and career development of

direct service personnel working in Alaska. The more than 100 attendees included representatives from provider agencies across the state. Funding has been obtained beginning July 2008 to implement aspects of the new plan.

In addition, funding was obtained that began July 2006 to provide resources for provider agencies to obtain training and technical assistance to develop agency-specific plans to increase recruitment and retention of direct support personnel.

For more information, contact: Heidi Frost, AADSC Project Coordinator, Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education, P.O. Box 240249, Anchorage, AK 99524-0249 Phone: 907-269-8999; Email: [anhjf@uaa.alaska.edu](mailto:anhjf@uaa.alaska.edu); [heidi@uaa.alaska.edu](mailto:heidi@uaa.alaska.edu)



Direct Support Professionals enable our most vulnerable citizens to live self-directed lives with dignity and pride. You are the everyday heroes who help people with disabilities realize their dreams and enjoy the daily liberties and human rights that the rest of us take for granted.

Together, we can make a world of difference.

## Join the NADSP Today!

- Be a part of a growing national movement to elevate the status of DSPs.
- Learn about national and international successful practices, such as certificate programs, apprenticeships, credit-bearing coursework, and ways to improve agency cultures.
- Help educate policymakers and legislators about the importance of high quality human services.
- Learn about and gain access to public forums and conferences focusing on DSP issues.
- Learn how to develop and enhance DSP regional affiliations.
- Develop leadership skills in the field of direct support.

[www.nadsp.org](http://www.nadsp.org)



# UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



The Research and Training Center on Community Living is dedicated to supporting the aspirations of people with developmental disabilities to live full, productive, and integrated lives in their communities. The RTC/CL is located at the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration (ICI), a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities. ICI and the RTC/CL bring together expertise from across the University to push the frontiers of knowledge and connect that knowledge and the development of ideas to the needs of people with disabilities, their families, and their communities.

RTC/CL nationally-recognized resources include —

- [IMPACT](#)
- [Policy Research Brief](#)
- [DD Date Brief](#)
- [Frontline Initiative](#)
- [DSP Recruitment Toolkit](#)
- ["Direct Support: A Realistic Job Preview"](#)
- ["We Watch the City: Stories in the Shadow of 9/11"](#)
- [Quality Mall](#)  
[www.qualitymall.org](http://www.qualitymall.org)
- [DSP and Frontline Supervisor Resources](#)  
[rtc.umn.edu/dsp](http://rtc.umn.edu/dsp)
- [National Goals Conference Proceedings](#)  
[rtc.umn.edu/goals](http://rtc.umn.edu/goals)
- [College of Direct Support and Frontline Supervision](#)  
[www.collegeofdirectsupport.com](http://www.collegeofdirectsupport.com)
- [National Alliance of Direct Support Professionals](#) [www.nadsp.org](http://www.nadsp.org)
- [LifePages](#)  
[www.lifepages.org](http://www.lifepages.org)
- [Self Advocacy Online](#)  
[www.qualitymall.org/sa](http://www.qualitymall.org/sa)