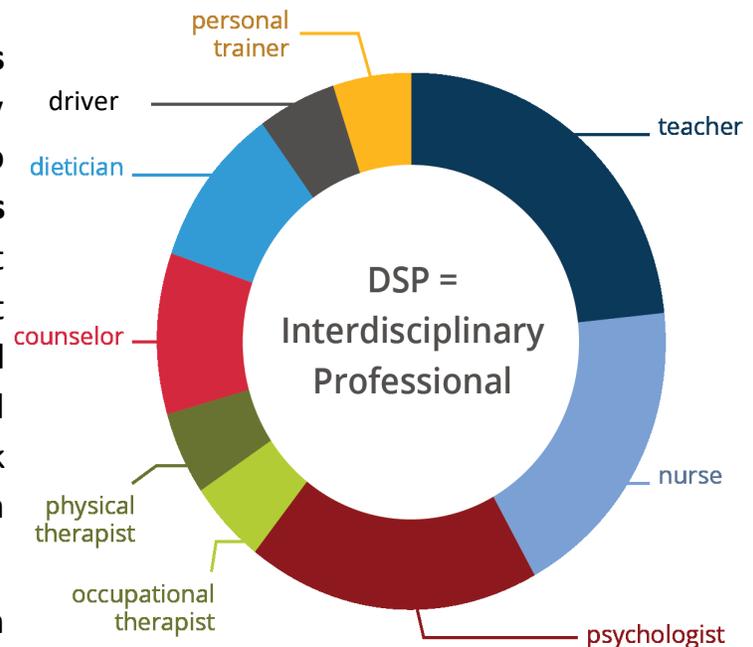


DSP Scope of Practice

The role of a **Direct Support Professional (DSP)** is **complex**. It is unlike any other job, and virtually unknown to the general public. It is hard to explain, which makes it difficult to recruit for. **It is not simply a care-taking job.** The independent nature of the DSP profession requires significant skill, judgment, independent problem-solving and decision-making. The amount of time DSPs spend with the people they support, makes their work different from the roles filled by anyone else in their lives.

Over the years, great strides have been made in supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In the process, DSPs have been left behind to implement advanced supports and practices, with little support themselves. As the shift to home and community based services continues, **Direct Support Professionals will continue to take on ever-greater responsibility and accountability.** DSPs spend a lot of time with the people they support, which gives them a unique lens into their lives. In many ways, DSPs are interdisciplinary professionals, **with a wide scope of practice.**



This graphic represents the time DSPs spend practicing a variety of disciplines to meet the needs of people with disabilities. Source: Hewitt, 2017

- ◇ Like teachers, DSPs continuously develop and implement effective strategies to teach people new skills.
- ◇ Like nurses, DSPs routinely dispense medications, administer treatments, document care, and communicate with medical professionals.
- ◇ Like various allied health professionals, DSPs assess needs, implement specific treatment plans, and document progress.
- ◇ Like social workers, DSPs help connect people to community resources, and support the formation of natural supports, friendships, and other relationships.
- ◇ Like counselors, DSPs listen, reflect, and offer suggestions.

Source: 2017 PCPID Report