

4/27/2023

Hello, my name is Mindy Moats. I have been a paid employee in this field for the past 15 years, but have been in the field my entire 44 years. I had a sister that was born with spina bifida. She was paralyzed from the waist down and permanently in a wheelchair. My mom taught me how to care for her specialized needs and I was on my own to care for her starting at the age of 8 while my mom worked. My mom and I were her sole providers. I was in charge of medicine, bathing, catheterizing, cooking, clean-up, and her quality of life care.

My love for my sister led me to a career in the field. I started out as a Direct Support Professional (DSP) working nights, then became a Direct Support Manager (DSM) while being a trainer for CPR/First Aid. Currently I am doing 2 positions DSM and Program Coordinator. I have to do this because I can't find quality staff to work hours in my home. The guardian at my home wants the best care possible for her loved one and I can't seem to find more people like me because they are going to jobs that pay much better with less work. I am dedicated to do this as long as God provides the way.

This job is 24/7. We need to be a team player and flexible. There are going to be sickness, emergencies, and things that come up that we may have to come in early, work late, or work a long shift. We can't just call in and miss work. We need to find a replacement and work together. We may miss things in our personal lives because our consumers need us. This is more than just a job to me. I care deeply about my consumers and staff. I want them all to be happy and healthy. This is a career for me and I take pride in knowing everything I do is to better their lives. It would be nice if this was recognized as a specialized field in the medical industry because the knowledge, skills, and training we need is extensive to be successful. My company and bosses have done a great job at making me feel appreciated and valued for the job I do. Unfortunately, this feeling does not pay bills, which is the reason we need to be paid a fair wage.

A lot of my Program Coordinator job is training and compliance. I see firsthand the lack of quality applicants we get and the quality applicants we do get choose other jobs because they pay quite a bit more for less work. I've always had another job and picked up overtime when possible. Financially I never could have done this job just working 40 hours. God gave me the skills and energy to do this job I love. I know you can never pay us totally what we are worth, but I hope and pray every day that God will open the minds of you that make the decision to pay us more will see that we are paid a wage where we can live in some comfort. It sure would be nice to be able to work just 40 hours and still afford to live.

I thank you so much for the opportunity for me to advocate for our consumers for the quality of care they deserve by the quality of staff we are able to provide for them. We have to be able to pay our staff a living wage so they can do more than just survive. If staff are stressed out about lack of money, bills piling up, proper medical care, and not having their basic needs met, how do we expect them to go in our consumer's homes and provide a healthy, happy and stress-free environment for our consumers?

We expect them to go in the homes and pass meds (nursing duties), bathing, cooking, cleaning, laundry, grocery shopping, dr. appointments, balance receipts and monies, pay bills on time, and documentation all while multitasking to take personal care of the specialized needs and possible behaviors or situations of the consumers. This task is not easy and exhausting and can be mentally and physically draining. To provide the quality of care our consumers deserve, the staff we hire have to be skilled in all these tasks plus more. When we work in the home the staff is solely responsible for all of these duties. As you can see these skills that are needed for success are that of a nurse, STNA, and management. We are nowhere paid the amount of wages that these positions currently hold and we do all 3 in one. We have the responsibility to provide the best possible care for our consumers. We can only do this by providing staff proper pay so they can provide for themselves and their families and don't have to choose between which bill they can pay and what they have to go without. Some of the same rights and luxuries we grant for our consumers we can't for our staff because they can't afford it with such low wages.

If you had to pay to provide care for one of your loved ones, do you think pay barely above minimum wage is appropriate? What kind of care do you think they will receive for this pay? If staff is stressed and tired from working many hours or more than one job, do you think there is a greater chance for them to make a mistake? What do you think can happen when we are forced to hire staff that are lacking in some of these skills? Abuse, medication errors, neglect, misappropriation, and many other bad things. We have our consumers lives in our hands and if we don't pay more to get qualified staff these actions or inactions could cause death, hospitalization, or permanent damage.

I thank you so much for taking time to listen to what I have to say and I ask that you please think and pray over our work life and bring up our wages to match the quality of work that is necessary for our consumers and staff to have the quality of life they deserve

Thank you so much for listening and may you have a blessed day!