



June 13, 2017

The Honorable Scott Oelslager, Chair  
The Honorable Gayle Manning, Vice Chair  
The Honorable Michael Skindell, Ranking Member  
The Honorable Members of the Senate Finance Committee

Re: Ohio Budget 2018-19

The Ohio Association of Adult Services (OAAS) and the Privatization Support Group (PSG) represents a combined statewide membership of more than 100 agencies that provide direct care services to people with developmental disabilities. We appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony on the challenges we will face in the delivery of services under the newly mandated system changes without adequate funding to support the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities budget proposal introduced by Director Martin.

❖ **Waiver Funding**

- Home and Community Based Services Requirements
  - Community Integration - In recent years, it has become more apparent that community integration as a right and as mandated by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services for individuals with disabilities will require a collaborative effort bringing together individuals with disabilities, provider programs, DD system decision-makers and the broader community to address the barriers that keep people with disabilities from pursuing the opportunities in life that are available to others. OAAS and PSG recognize and support initiatives towards the transformation of Ohio's developmental disabilities system to improve services. Although engagement in community integration can be challenging due to lack of precedents, limited funding, and competing priorities, it is imperative that state and provider agencies embrace this challenge and take a leading role to champion the right to community integration. This is, exponentially, more challenging with the drastic cuts passed by the House in H.B. 49.

❖ **DSP (Direct Support Professional) Wage Increase**

- A Workforce in Crisis
  - High Expectations for Low Pay – A DSP is responsible to deliver the quality of care expected by family members and federal and state governmental

agencies which includes; implementing service plans, assuring health and safety, administering medications, and providing personal care for approximately \$10.00/hour. There are many DSP's who have been providing services for much of their working life and have the heart, and most likely, other financial support to be sustainable in the position. However, in the current workforce environment, more often than not, because the wage does not support a living, DSP's cannot afford to work a job because it feels good; and the reality is they say that they just "don't get paid enough to do this job".

- In-Demand Occupation – Ohio Means Jobs “In-Demand Occupations” allows employers to utilize WIOA funds for training for those positions. It is evident we are experiencing a workforce crisis shortage, and people are being denied services because providers just do not have the staff to cover shifts, especially for HPC services. A wage criteria must be met at 80% of the state wide median wage which is \$13.47. The average wage for DSP's is \$10.15 per hour according to 2016 Staff Stability Survey results.
- Compromised Quality
  - Lack of Continuity – For the effective provision of services and care, it is crucial and humane for the recipient of services to develop positive, trusting relationships with a DSP who may be providing intimate care. However, DSPs can often earn higher wages in other fields, leading to high turnover and the need for relationship building to start again from the beginning. It is not realistic to think that a typical DSP will keep a low-paying job because they love caring for people. It is an unfortunate cycle in which the workforce turns over at a rate of 45% nationwide according to the National Core Indicator's 2016 survey.
  - Inexperienced DSP's – a mandate of more training is not the answer; DSP's need the hands-on experience that longevity in the field provides.
- Overtime burden
  - Employee Burnout – When a DSP separates employment, the burden falls upon the other DSP's to cover shifts, often resulting in overtime. For smaller agencies, this impact is greater because there are less DSP's to pick up the hours.
  - Inadequate rates – From a business perspective, providers must find the “sweet spot” in the bottom line which can mean reducing volume, thus reducing overtime expense. This means making difficult decisions on whether to pay overtime wages which the rates do not bear, or giving up contracts in order to pay straight time in alignment with the rates. The latter means people may go without necessary services.
- Putting this all together, we urge our legislature to:
  - Use the term Direct Support Professional or DSP in all of their communication, information, legislation, and materials.
  - Address the DSP workforce shortage crisis by increasing wages for DSP's.

- Continue to increase wages for DSP to be listed as an in-demand occupation so employers can access additional funding to train DSP's in providing quality services in the community setting.

Respectfully, we request recognition of the significance of these issues, and a revisiting of Director Martin's budget proposal to increase wages for DSP's.

Again, the opportunity to provide input from an operational standpoint on service provision is appreciated. Please feel free to call on our membership for expertise on the day-to-day reality, challenges, and solutions.

***Anne Haning, President  
The Ohio Association of Adult Services Board of Directors***

***Van Viney, Chief  
The Privatization Support Group***

**OAAS MISSION**

To be the voice of adult services in Ohio; to provide support and leadership and to promote quality services that are responsible to the needs and choices of individuals served.

**PSG**

The PSG network provides and shares resources to support QUALITY Disability Services in Ohio through supporting best practices of service delivery and business sustainability.