

Charles Ramsey
Testimony on HB 33
Supporting the DD Workforce
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I am retired, and I work as a Direct Service Provider.

What I've discovered has changed my life. Having no experience with these special people, I was thrown in. I picked up my first guy; was grinning ear to ear. So ready to go have some fun. What I've learned: these people, in many ways, are more normal than the "normals". One counts money faster than I, but has no sense of value. Another has the worst stutter ever heard, but he is a computer when it comes to comic book, TV, and movie characters, actors, and directors. A third client has a vocabulary better than mine, but cannot understand counting money or it's value. He also hears voices telling him to hurt people. He is on meds for it, and receives counseling. Am I worried of danger? Some, but every visit he tells me how much he likes me and launches into a review of all our fun together. Like a wise man once told me- "you are right where you are supposed to be". I tell their stories, sometimes with a tear. Is that tear because of my eyes being opened? Or because of the sadness that most people will only see them as less than "normal"? Yes, I am a paid friend. We do many different and fun activities together, which have the simple value of a change of scenery, a different person to talk to, etc. But to do this job well, it takes more. Since these people are very willing to follow suggestion (a development from wanting to fit in and be liked?), thought must be given to conversation subjects and pathways. Finding out what THEY really want to talk about is where the relationship and trust begins. Unfortunately, there are more special people in need of life enrichment than there are caregivers. 2 reasons: 1, most people are not comfortable with these special people. Their loss. 2, the pay does not attract the right people. Too many people consider it baby sitting; no effort needed. Higher pay brings quality people; very needed here.