

Relias DSP Survey 2019 Results

Direct support professionals working for intellectual and developmental disability service providers speak out about turnover, management and their love for their work



Introduction

The problem of turnover among direct support professionals in the intellectual/developmental disabilities services field is well documented. According to the [President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities' 2017 report](#):

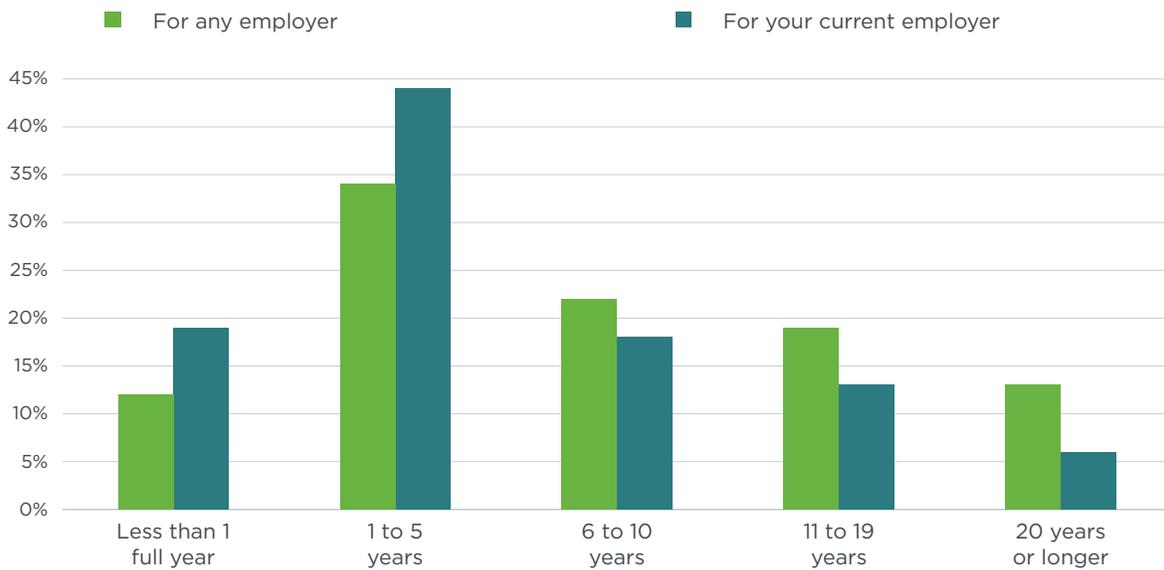
- **The national average annual turnover rate of DSPs is 45%.** “The magnitude of this workforce issue is hardly seen in any other industry, thus making running an efficient and effective direct support business nearly impossible.”
- Given current turnover rates, **the field needs 574,200 new DSPs every year** just to maintain the current levels of service.
- The national cost of replacing DSPs was estimated to be **\$2,338,716,600** in 2015.
- **Nine percent of all available DSP positions go unfilled.** “Unfilled positions undermine the quality of care, overburden DSPs remaining on the job and are a clear symbol of the crisis of providing sufficient numbers of DSPs to meet the needs of persons with ID/DD and their families.”

DSP turnover affects both an organization's quality of care and its ability to run the business effectively.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

This survey was created with the goal of understanding how agencies can boost DSP retention and was distributed to direct support professionals via SurveyMonkey during July 2019. Email, social media and partner organizations, including the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals, The Arc of the United States and the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR), were used as distribution methods for the survey. A total of 842 responses were received. Different question sets were distributed to DSPs with tenures of less than six years, and those with six or more years. Over half of the respondents fell into the latter category. You can see the full list of questions in Appendix A and a full breakdown of the responses in Appendix B.

How long have you worked as a direct support professional?



Long-Serving DSPs: Looking for Respect and Appreciation

Of the 842 responses received, 456 came from those who said they had been DSPs for six years or longer, referred to in this report as “long-serving DSPs.” Given the high turnover in this industry, DSPs who have served for an extended period of time could provide valuable insight into what motivates their long-standing tenure.

“We stay because of the connection, the care and the support. Leaving feels like abandoning an elderly family member, and it hurts just as bad.”

In response to the question, “What do you like most about your job?” the top response was, “I make a difference in the lives of the people I support,” followed by “I enjoy being with the people I support.”

Among the comments left by long-serving DSPs were the following:

“I like the sense of purpose that I feel knowing that I have an impact on someone’s life... Their happiness and seeing them grow and integrate

into the community has had such a profound, positive impact on my life.”

“The people I work with have taught me so much about myself. I am truly blessed to be a DSP for such great people.”

“I love my job and I have nothing negative to say after almost 19 years. ❤️”

“There are always days at any job where a person feels like they ought to be paid triple what they make. I have those days. I also have days where I feel like I should pay my employer to be at such a cool job. That is a wonderful feeling. I enjoy my job.”

“I love being able to teach my individuals new skills and to be able to see the progress of their skills from the day I started. I also love being able to help individuals in all of the areas that they need help. I also love being able to connect with my individuals on many different levels.”

“You spend a great deal of time with the wonderful people you end up serving. Most of the good DSPs stay because we care for them, want them to be healthy, well taken care of and succeed in all aspects of their life. We stay because of the connection, the care and the support. Leaving feels like abandoning an elderly family member, and it hurts just as bad. We care for them, and in return they care back.”

“I choose to be a DSP worker because of the positive and empowering impact I am able to make in the lives of the people we care for.”

“I love the work, it’s immensely rewarding and incredibly fun as well. I have learned so much about myself and the world.”

THE IMPORTANCE OF APPRECIATION AND RESPECT

For the question, “What do you dislike most about your job?” the most common response was, “I am not fairly compensated for my work.” The second most-selected answer was, “Other.” Long-serving DSPs then left comments that

centered around three common themes: lack of appreciation, ineffective communication and inadequate supervision and accountability for co-workers.

Lack of appreciation:

“Management is not always supportive. As staff we get talked down to and made to feel unimportant. We work very hard and it is not appreciated to be made to feel and or treated like a 5 year old.”

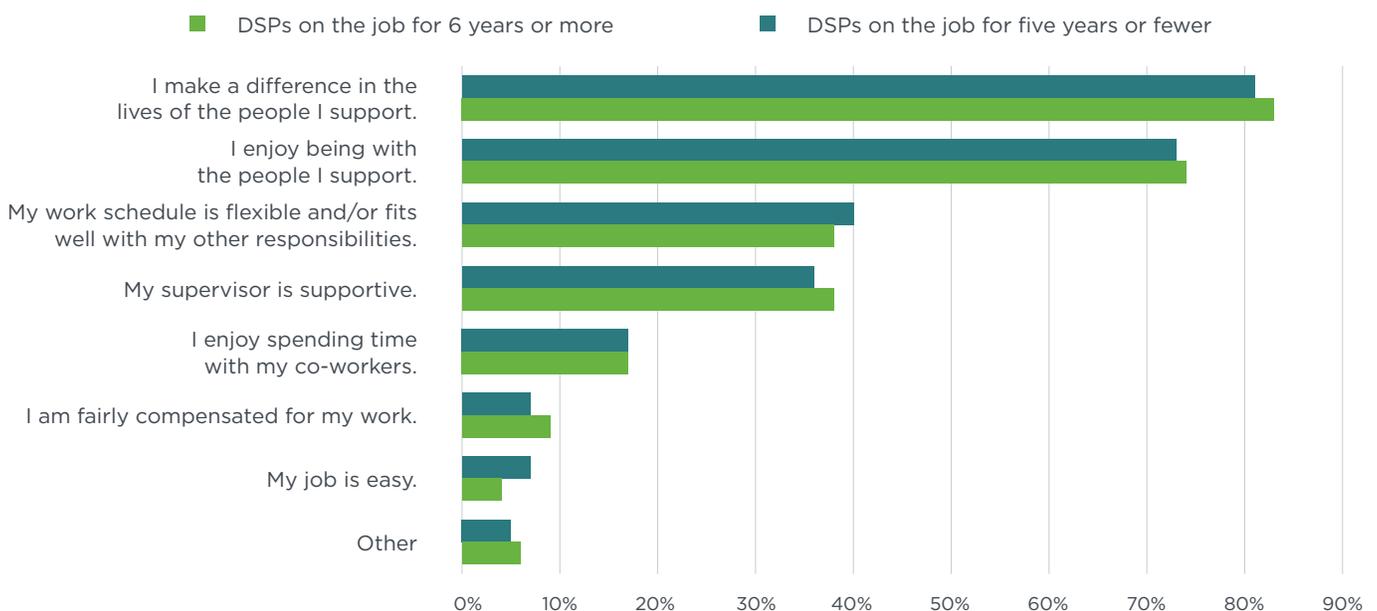
“Many staff feel unappreciated and the pay is poor for those that have been loyal employees for years.”

“People always say they appreciate me and the job I do, but I don’t always feel that’s true.”

Ineffective communication:

“Lack of communication from managers and area director about staff changes and other issues negatively impact the support we provide.”

What do you like most about your job? (Please select up to 3 answers.)





Being on Your DSPs' Team "100%"

Tammi Stutzman emailed us to say, "I have been with KenCrest for 13 years and I absolutely love what I do." She said one of the main reasons she is so enthusiastic about her job is the appreciation her supervisor shows. "I am very thankful that I have a supervisor who values my work and tells me often how good I am doing, which means a lot." She continued, "We all go through things, but if you have a supervisor who is on your team 100%, it makes it so much easier."

We followed up with Tammi's supervisor, Aruna Conteh, to learn more about his leadership approach. He said he strives to build a connection with his DSPs that goes beyond work. "I try to build a common ground where we can develop relationships of trust. It's not just about work. It's more showing them that I care about them, in work and outside of work."

Aruna makes sure his staff recognize their value to the company and to the people they serve. "How I treat my staff is going to affect how they treat the consumer and how they treat one another," he said. "I want to make sure they understand their value, because without the staff, there would be no KenCrest."

Aruna also stressed that he considers it to be his job to help his staff succeed. "I don't count my success by how much education I have, how much money I make or whatever. I count my success when I'm able to help my staff be successful."

"Poor communication between supervisor to staff in regards to important things that are told to one staff and assumed to be passed on from that single staff to all other staff, rather than being written in [a post on their electronic documentation system] or bulletin/note put out for ALL staff to see, then signed by all staff confirming that all staff were aware of new changes, etc. Rather than the hit-and-miss communication that the majority of us never even find out about what changed till months later when we get called out for something that we were never notified of or told of."

Inadequate supervision and accountability for coworkers:

"I believe that there is no accountability when it comes to certain aspects of co-workers [and] their approach with the individuals."

"I do not like working with others who do not show respect to the clients and their homes/ personal belongings."

"I work hard, and when I come back after 1 or 2 days off, messes are left for me. I wish my co-workers were more motivated and pulled their weight."

"Sometimes you work with staff that appear to not like their job, or see their job only as a job, and they bring that negativity into the environment."

THE NEED FOR BETTER-TRAINED SUPERVISORS

A close look at these themes reveals a need for improved supervision. While several long-serving DSPs acknowledged the considerable workload and stress that their immediate supervisors deal with, many also mentioned their frustrations could potentially be addressed with stronger

leadership and management skills from those in supervisory positions.

In many cases, front-line supervisors and qualified intellectual disability professionals (QIDPs) began their careers as DSPs. Often, these individuals have had little to no previous experience supervising others. Courses to help supervisors understand the importance of avoiding preferential treatment, reducing work politics, providing positive feedback and giving consistent communication could potentially improve the work environment for DSPs.

Providing effective supervision requires communication, conflict management and guidance when dealing with difficult situations. In situations where a front-line supervisor does not have those skills, some DSPs are more likely to leave the job.

HOW DSPS CAN BE ENCOURAGED TO STAY

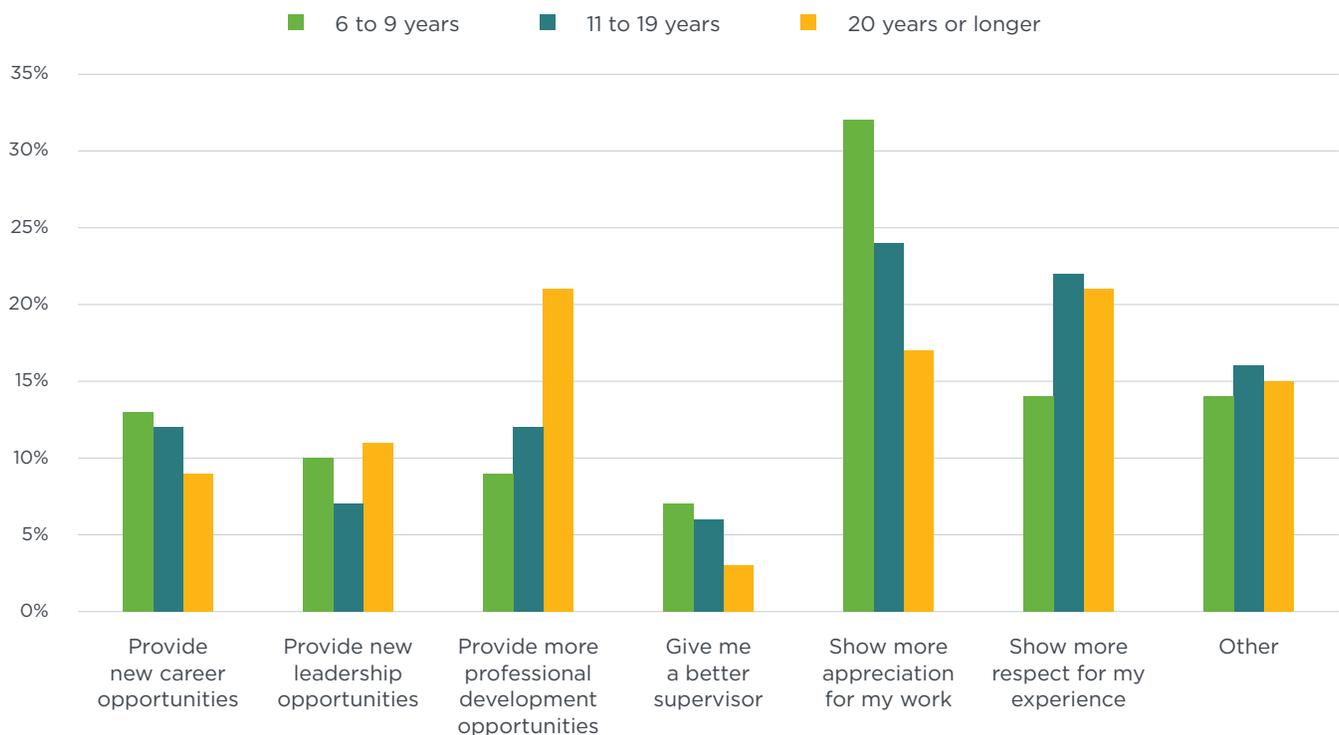
When long-serving DSPs were asked, “Besides increasing your pay or benefits, what is the most important thing your employer could do to make sure you stay with them for the next five years?” the top two responses (from a combined 45% of respondents) were “Show more appreciation for my work” and “Show more respect for my experience.”

What Does Respect Look Like?

A follow-up email was sent to some long-serving DSP respondents around the topic of respect and appreciation.

In their responses, these long-serving DSPs stated a desire to be treated like partners by their supervisors and upper management. DSPs are the ones “in the trenches” and have specific ideas on how to better serve individuals and

Besides increasing your pay or benefits, what is the most important thing your employer could do to make sure you stay with them for the next five years?



improve program operations. “Let the DSP workers have a deciding factor in decisions, as we work with them daily and hands-on, higher up management does not,” one DSP wrote.

The DSPs who responded expressed frustrations when changes to programs and policies are made without their input. “I have been in the field for 25 years, yet I find myself in a position of not being listened to or my opinions taken into consideration,” one DSP wrote. “It’s frustrating to have someone treat you with little respect for your experience, especially when they don’t have the day-to-day experience with our program or clients.”

Overall, these long-serving DSPs expressed that there appears to be a communication breakdown—DSPs are not involved in making decisions, and management is not informing them about the reasons behind organizational changes.

“It’s frustrating to have someone treat you with little respect for your experience, especially when they don’t have the day-to-day experience with our program or clients.”

Increasing transparency around the decision-making process may go a long way toward relieving some of the frustrations DSPs feel and making them feel more like respected partners.

Small Acts of Appreciation

Long-serving DSPs emphasized their desire for appreciation from upper management:

“It’s the little things that make a huge difference. Let us know that we are doing a great job by a note in our mailbox, a can of soda, a lunch paid for by the company or a breakfast. I love my job and I love the individuals that I work with, which makes coming to my job every day worth everything else.”

“Just a simple thank you would be nice.”

“Take part in DSP Appreciation Day. Be sure those of us who are not at the office that day are reached out to personally by our direct

continued on page 8

Training and Appreciation Create a Strong Program and Happy DSPs

Given that many of the comments left on our survey were negative, we were blown away by what Lorna Kitchens wrote about her employer, the Rutledge Center in Newnan, GA:



Lorna Kitchens and Ann Newton at the Rutledge Center.

“There is nothing that I don’t like about my job. I love my job!!!!” and “I have no complaints about my place of employment. I plan to stay until I retire.”

The Rutledge Center is a day program southwest of Atlanta. They serve about 70 individuals and have 20 people on staff.

When we called Lorna to follow up, she raved about the center’s executive director, Ann Newton. “She’s really awesome. She treats everybody the same across the



board, and that's what I love," Lorna told us. "She tries really hard to support us and to give us the information that we need... If you have any questions and you go and ask her for help, she'll help you."

Ann attributes her hands-on and caring management style to the fact that she worked as a special education teacher and a developmental disability professional before becoming executive director. "I had been in the trenches, and I think that helps me to see both sides."

When we asked Ann what she thought makes her center such a great place to work, the first thing she mentioned was Relias, which she uses as a tool to educate and empower her staff.

"I believe that the more people understand things, the more skills and education they have, the more confident they will feel

to handle a situation," Ann said. "I'm a big proponent of lessons and education so people have some autonomy in their decisions because they've been trained to do so."

Ann also makes sure her staff feel appreciated and nurtured. For example, once a month she brings in someone to give a presentation on personal finances, such as investments, money-saving tips and taxes.

"This isn't developmental disability-related, but if you're staff's not happy and they're worried about money and how they're going to pay their bills, they sure aren't thinking about the clients," Ann said. "We feel like it's really important for them to come from a good place, and if we can help them, we do."

supervisor or his supervisor. We seem to be 'forgotten.' They seem to trust me to do my work, but do not bother to even acknowledge we are 'on the team.'"

Long-serving DSPs expressed a desire for their organizations' leadership to be aware of and appreciate the difficulty of the work they do. As one DSP wrote, "We never see anyone from head office. It would be lovely if they would come to our center and join us maybe 3 or 4 times a year. Get to know our clients and participate in some of our programs."

Another DSP commented,

"Very seldom to we see or hear from any of our administration, and when we do we are not acknowledged... We completed annual staff surveys, but never see the results. We do not get information on our budget status or efforts to recruit newer staff. I think if the level of communication was increased a lot of the perception of being underappreciated would go away."

Calling Us Out

The survey question about how employers could encourage DSPs to stay began with a caveat, "Besides increasing your pay or benefits..." However, as one DSP commented, "It's a bad dodge to say besides pay, because that is ultimately why most people work, while also being the way to show you care for your workers and respect them, paying decent and fair wages/benefits."

For most agencies, the money to increase DSP wages just isn't there. However, the responses from DSPs raise questions about their understanding of their organizations' finances. Do they know about their organization's budget challenges? Do they understand that most, if not all, services are funded through Medicaid and that charging more for services is not an option? These kinds of communications, based on the feedback received, could be critical.



Clockwise from bottom left: Jaleh Campbell, Mike Thirtle, Amy Lieske, James Windle, Miles Floetker, Fidel De Castro, Mary Fix and Judith Foster

Making DSPs Part of the Solution: Bethesda Lutheran's DSP Leadership Team

Bethesda Lutheran Communities employs thousands of direct support professionals in 13 states. About two years ago, the agency created its DSP Leadership Team in order to better engage its workforce and strengthen its programs.

The goal of the team was to create transparent and constructive engagement between DSPs and Bethesda's regional and corporate leadership. DSPs applied to be on the team, and leadership picked one DSP from each of Bethesda's nine regions.

"This will be the third November now they've come to our headquarters in Watertown [Wisconsin]," Mark Hagen, Bethesda's Corporate Director of Public Policy said. "Our CEO

always makes sure he takes time to sit down and talk to them and let them know how much he appreciates the time and effort they've been putting into it. They have lunch with our board of directors who give them that same message.”

From the first meeting in 2017, the team and leadership identified challenges and started developing ways to address them. For example, the team shed light on the issue of employee turnover.

“The team said they know within five minutes if a new DSP will be around in two weeks or not,” Mark explained. “It was surprising how really tuned in they are to

who's going to stay and who's not.” Thanks to the leadership team, Bethesda's human resources department now has a better idea of what to look for in a DSP candidate.

The creation of the team has increased understanding and appreciation in both directions. The DSP Leadership Team now recognizes the challenges Bethesda faces when it comes to budgets and regulations.

Mark also educated the team about the DSP workforce crisis. “I asked them to read ANCOR's white paper on the DSP workforce

crisis. They were shocked! They told us, ‘We just thought Bethesda didn't know what it was doing. We didn't know this was a national problem. We didn't know all other providers were going through it.’ While it didn't make their lives providing supports any easier, it did change their perception of the organization.”



Front row (left to right): Judith Foster, Jaleh Campbell, Millie Martini, Mary Fix
Back row (left to right): Macneil Toweh, Miles Floetker (Indiana), James Windle and Amy Lieske

Thanks to the team's input, Mark launched a weekly newsletter for all Bethesda staff. “We're really trying to do a better job of educating DSPs on how the system works and what it means to them, and also better engage them in the process. Now we're having our DSP leadership team really drive

some of our DSP advocacy efforts on the state level.”

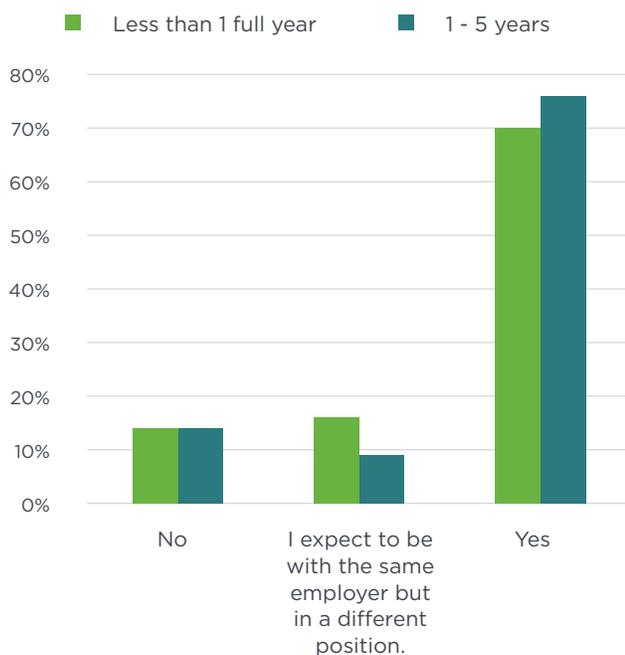
While it's too soon to know if the DSP Leadership Team will have an effect on retention, employee surveys show that DSPs feel more appreciated now. Mark says the team members “feel like it not only honors them but it honors their colleagues. I know they're telling people about this team and encouraging people to apply for a position on it. All of the members so far have found great value in it and feel much more valued as a member of the Bethesda team.”

New and Intermediate DSPs: The Factors That Drive Turnover

Of the 842 responses received, 103 respondents said they had been a DSP for less than one full year (new DSPs), and 284 said they had been a DSP for one to five years (intermediate DSPs).

When these respondents were asked if they thought they would still be working as a DSP a year from now, 75% said yes, while another 11% said they expect to be with the same employer but in a different position. For new DSPs, 70% said they expect to stay and 16% said they expect to be with the same employer in a different position.

Do you think you will be in this job a year from now?



Robust national research more clearly illustrates the challenges of retaining DSPs, especially new DSPs. According to the [National Core Indicators' 2017 Staff Stability Survey Report](#), half of the DSPs who left the job that year had been on the job for 12 months or fewer.

Why is the percentage of new and intermediate DSPs who expect to be on the job in a year so high in the Relias survey? One reason may be that DSPs who love their job and are committed to it were more likely to respond. Here are some of the comments left by DSPs who plan to stay on the job:

"I have and still learn from the clients and staff. Being here has been a blessing to me. 🙏❤️😊"

"I love what I do and am glad I can help make each individual day happy and bright."

"I love my girls and what I do to support them."

"It is very rewarding work and I enjoy my job."

"I enjoy this new career as a DSP and hope to remain in the field for many years to come."

THOSE STAYING VS. THOSE LEAVING

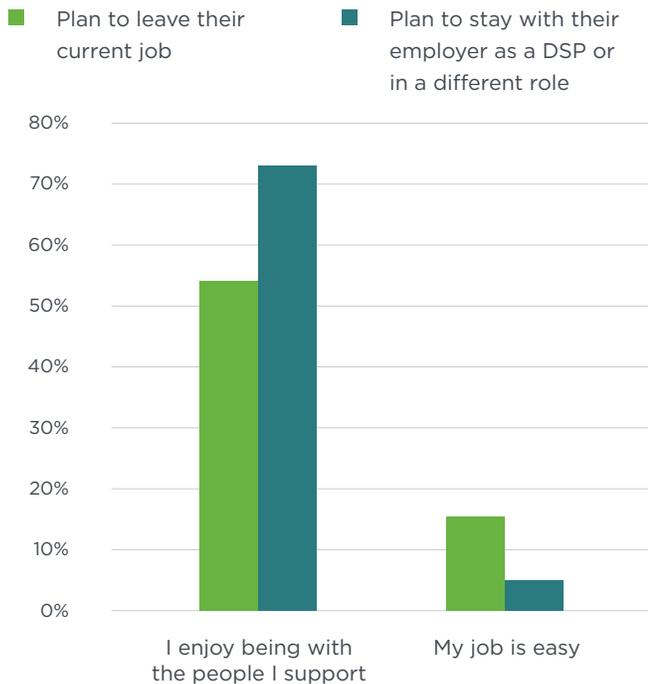
There are differences in the responses of new and intermediate DSPs who intend to stay compared to those who don't.

When asked, "What do you like most about your job?" a higher percentage of DSPs who intend to stay selected "I enjoy being with the people I support" (73%) than those who intend to leave (54%). Those who intend to leave were more likely to select "My job is easy" (20%) than those who intend to stay (7%).

These responses may indicate that some of the DSPs who plan to leave simply are not suited for the job or may not have the empathy and compassion necessary to provide quality direct care.

New and intermediate DSPs were also asked, "What topics do you think you needed more

What do you like most about your job?



training on before you started providing direct support?” The top two answers for both DSPs who intend to stay and those who intend to leave were “The conditions/disorders of the people I support” and “Positive behavior supports/how to deal with behavior problems.” However, the percentages were higher among those who intend to leave.

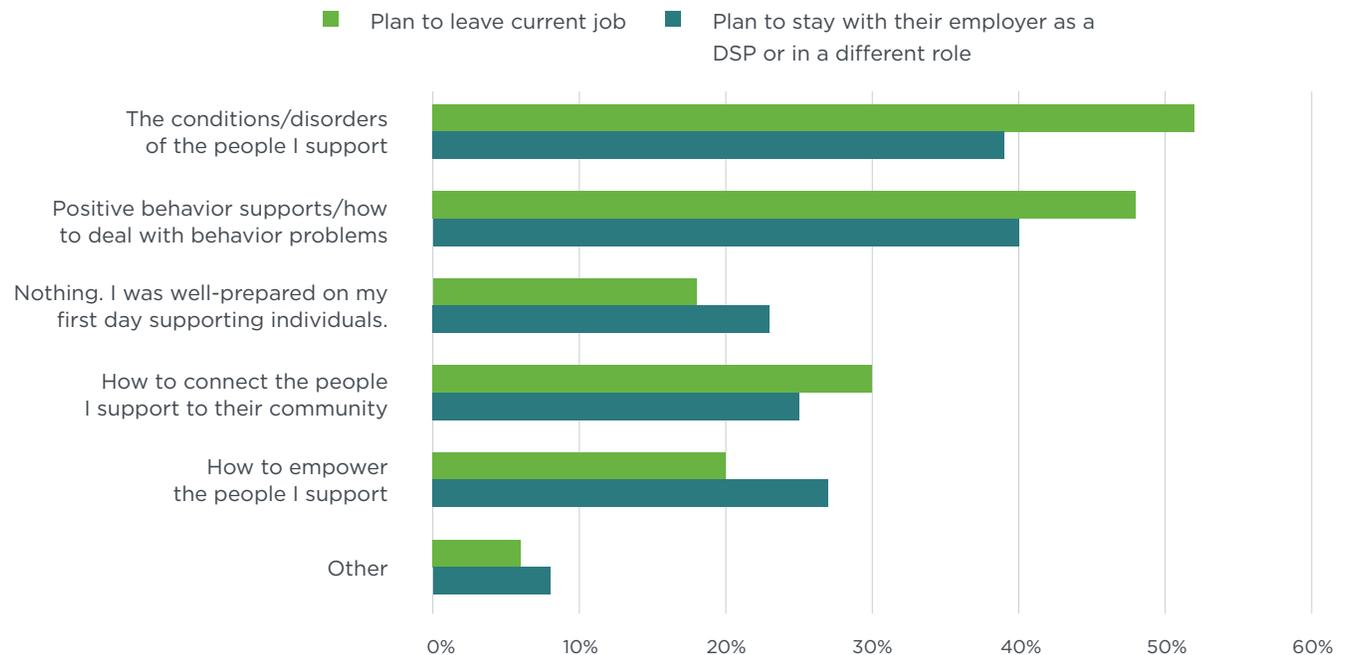
This may indicate that DSPs who intend to leave were not adequately trained for their jobs, which would understandably cause frustrations and a desire to find a new job.

CHALLENGES WITH SUPERVISORS

Those DSPs who plan to leave are less satisfied with their supervisors.

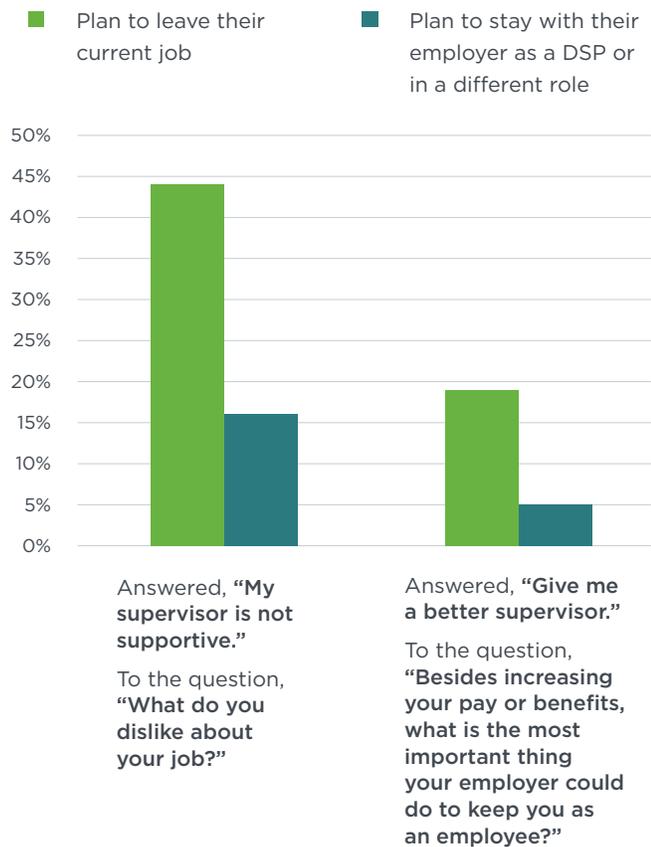
For the question, “What do you dislike most about your job?” respondents selected up to three answers. Of those who plan to leave

What topics do you think you needed more training on before you started providing direct support?



the job, 44% selected “My supervisor is not supportive” compared to only 19% of those who plan to stay.

DSPs who say they plan to stay vs. DSPs who say they plan to leave



For the question, “Besides increasing your pay or benefits, what is the most important thing your employer could do to keep you as an employee?” 16% of those who plan to leave selected “Give me a better supervisor” compared to just 5% of those who plan to stay.

Throughout the survey, DSPs of all tenures expressed dissatisfaction with supervisors and management, indicating that organizations may need to take a closer look at how they are preparing their front-line supervisors for leadership positions. Organizations may want to

ask themselves if they are providing adequate leadership and management training. They may need to determine if their QIDPs and managers know how to communicate with their direct reports, maintain professional boundaries, avoid the perception of favoritism and deal with performance issues in a way that encourages longer tenures in members of their team.

There is no question that providing effective training for front-line supervisors is an essential piece of any effective DSP retention effort.

The Big Take-Aways

The DSP workforce crisis is not just “a fact of life.” It is a problem with real drivers and real solutions. The key takeaways from both survey answers and respondent input are as follows:

Focus on showing increased appreciation. Being a DSP can be hard work—physically, mentally and emotionally. Like all employees, DSPs need to know that when they do good work or go above and beyond, someone notices and appreciates their efforts.

Managers of DSPs can’t be everywhere and see everything, so they should get others involved. They may want to engage the individuals they serve and their families in identifying times when a DSP made an extra effort. They can reach out regularly to ask for feedback on their DSP rather than waiting until the annual support plan meeting. Managers should also consider giving their DSPs regular opportunities to recognize their coworkers.

Create a culture of respect. This should be your organization’s default position. DSPs are an invaluable resource for information and ideas on programs, policies and the needs and goals of individuals. Organizations should

engage DSPs in conversations at all levels of the organization and allow visibility into budget and process development so DSPs more clearly understand the organizations' challenges and priorities. Treating DSPs like partners may go a considerable way in helping your organization increase performance.

Organizations should also invest in the development of DSPs. The chart on page 5 shows that DSPs who have been on the job for 20 years or more want professional development opportunities. Experienced DSPs may be good candidates for advanced training and for becoming mentors to newer employees.

Hire the right people. Many, if not most, IDD service providers face staffing shortages, and the temptation to hire quickly can be strong; however, organizations should also take into account the tangible costs of inadequate hires. The most committed DSPs may be frustrated by coworkers who don't take the job seriously and don't provide quality care, leaving them feeling overworked and underappreciated. In addition, underperforming DSPs are likely to leave, resulting in lost training costs for their employers.

Knowing as much as possible about new employees and providing them with the right training is essential. Personnel assessments can help. Discussions with numerous IDD service providers found that the core characteristics they consider critical in a great DSP are compassion, empathy, reliability and judgment. Situational assessments designed to gauge these characteristics can help organizations make better placement decisions, identify and work to overcome shortcomings, and provide guidance that can help new hires improve and grow in their role. In addition, job knowledge

assessments help ensure a competent staff, which can improve service quality and reduce staff frustrations.

Provide leadership and management training to your front-line supervisors. DSPs want supervisors who do more than make sure they follow the rules and get their paperwork in on time. They want supervisors and QIDPs who are supportive and appreciative, who hold everyone accountable for doing a good job and who proactively address conflicts and problems.

These skills require training. Providing front-line supervisors with education on communication, leadership, constructive feedback and conflict resolution is an essential part of any effective DSP retention strategy.

Finding Solutions

Relias helps address the hiring, training and retention challenges faced by IDD service providers.

Using a comprehensive online assessment and training platform, Relias offers:

- Unrivaled content that gives employees the knowledge and skills they need to provide excellent person-centered care
- Innovative tools to ensure competency and boost knowledge retention
- Assessments to inform and improve hiring, placement and training
- A learning management system that makes assigning, tracking and reporting on training easy
- Professional development courses for people at every level of your organization

[LEARN MORE](#)

Appendix A: Relias Survey for Direct Support Professionals

Q1: What do you like most about your job?

- I enjoy being with the people I support.
- I make a difference in the lives of the people I support.
- I enjoy spending time with my co-workers.
- I am fairly compensated for my work.
- My job is easy.
- My supervisor is supportive.
- My work schedule is flexible and/or fits well with my other responsibilities.
- Other (please specify)

Q2: What do you dislike most about your job?

- I feel like I am not making a difference in the lives of the people I support.
- I do not enjoy spending time with my coworkers.
- I am not fairly compensated for my work.
- My job is too hard.
- My supervisor is not supportive.
- My work schedule is not flexible and/or conflicts with my other responsibilities.
- I do not enjoy spending time with the people I support.
- Other (please specify)

Q3: How long have you worked as a direct support professional?

- Less than 1 full year
- 1 – 5 years
- 6 – 10 years
- 11 – 19 years
- 20 years or longer

Q4: How long have you worked for your current employer?

- Less than 1 full year
- 1 – 5 years
- 6 – 10 years
- 11 – 19 years
- 20 years or longer

IF THE ANSWER TO Q3 IS 6 – 10 YEARS, 11 – 19 YEARS, OR 20 YEARS OR LONGER:

Q5: With 1 being the answer that has the most impact on your work, please rank your answers to the question, “What do you like about your job?”

Q6: With 1 being the answer that has the most impact on your work, please rank your answers to the question, “What do you dislike about your job?”

Q7: What motivates you to continue working for your current employer?

- The respect and appreciation my employer shows me
- My relationships with the people I support
- My relationships with my coworkers
- Benefits (health insurance, retirement account, paid time off, etc.)
- The professional development the organization provides
- The opportunities I have to move up in the organization
- Other (please specify)

Q8: Besides increasing your pay or benefits, what is the most important thing your employer could do to make sure you stay with them for the next five years?

- Provide new career opportunities
- Provide new leadership opportunities
- Provide more professional development opportunities
- Provide better benefits
- Give me a better supervisor
- Show more appreciation for my work
- Show more respect for my experience
- Other (fill in)

Q9: We would love to do a follow-up interview with you about your experiences as a DSP. If you are willing to be interviewed, please give us your contact information. We will not share your responses with your employer.

- Your name
- Your email

IF THE ANSWER TO Q3 IS LESS THAN 1 FULL YEAR OR 1 - 5 YEARS:

Q10: What topics do you think you needed more training on before you started providing direct support?

- Nothing. I was well-prepared on my first day supporting individuals.
- The conditions/disorders of the people I support
- How to empower the people I support
- Positive behavior supports/how to deal with behavior problems
- How to connect the people I support to their community
- Other (please specify)

Q11: Besides increasing your pay or benefits, what is the most important thing your employer could do to keep you as an employee?

- Provide opportunities for career advancement
- Provide opportunities for professional development
- Provide better/more training
- Provide more flexibility in my schedule
- Give me a better supervisor
- Other (please specify)

Q12: Do you think you will be in this job a year from now?

- Yes
- No
- I expect to be with the same employer but in a different position.

IF THE ANSWER TO Q12 IS YES

Q13: Why do you think you will not be in this job a year from now?

- I am/will be going to school.
- I expect to move into a different profession.
- I expect to continue as a DSP but with a different employer.
- Other (please specify)

TO ALL RESPONDENTS

Q14: Anything else you want us to know about why you work as a DSP? Please tell us!

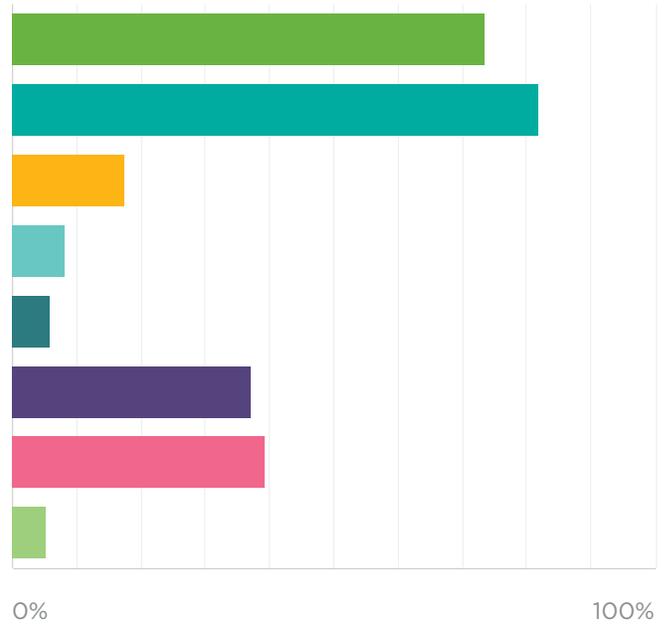
Q15: Thank you for your participation! Relias will produce a report using the results from this survey. If you would like to be notified when the report comes out, please give us your email address. Your survey responses will remain anonymous.

- Your Email Address

Appendix B

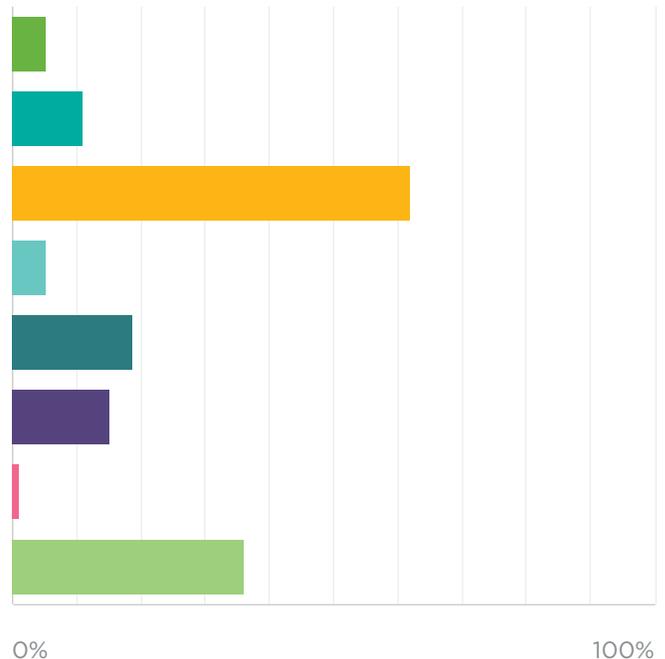
Q1: What do you like most about your job? (Please select up to 3 answers.)

Answer Choices	Responses	
I enjoy being with the people I support.	73.33%	605
I make a difference in the lives of the people I support.	81.82%	675
I enjoy spending time with my coworkers.	17.45%	144
I am fairly compensated for my work.	8.12%	67
My job is easy.	5.82%	48
My supervisor is supportive.	36.97%	305
My work schedule is flexible and/or fits well with my other responsibilities.	39.27%	324
Other (please specify)	5.33%	44
Total Respondents 825		



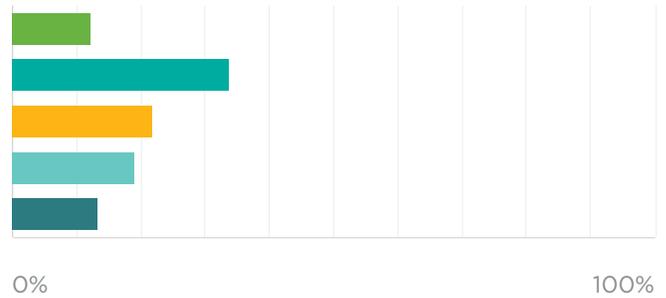
Q2: What do you dislike most about your job? (Please select up to 3 answers.)

Answer Choices	Responses	
I feel like I am not making a difference in the lives of the people I support.	5.14%	37
I do not enjoy spending time with my coworkers.	10.83%	78
I am not fairly compensated for my work.	61.94%	446
My job is too hard.	5.28%	38
My supervisor is not supportive.	18.61%	134
My work schedule is not flexible and/or conflicts with my other responsibilities.	15%	108
I do not enjoy spending time with the people I support.	1.11%	8
Other (please specify)	35.97%	259
Total Respondents 720		



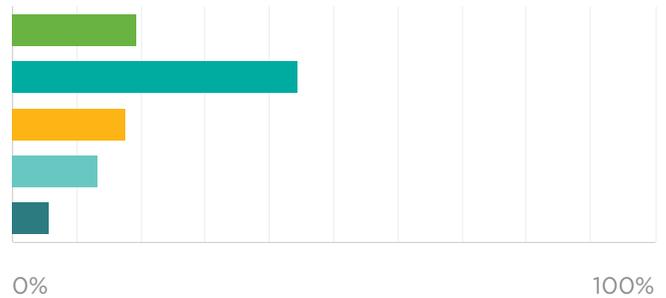
Q3: How long have you worked as a direct support professional (for any employer)?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Less than 1 full year	12.22%	103
1 - 5 years	33.69%	284
6 - 10 years	21.83%	184
11 - 19 years	19.10%	161
20 years or longer	13.17%	111
Total Respondents	843	



Q4: How long have you worked for your current employer?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Less than 1 full year	19.22%	162
1 - 5 years	44.37%	374
6 - 10 years	17.67%	149
11 - 19 years	13.17%	111
20 years or longer	5.58%	47
Total Respondents	843	



IF THE ANSWER TO Q3 IS 6-10 YEARS, 11-19 YEARS, OR 20 YEARS OR LONGER:

Q5: With 1 being the answer that has the most impact on your work, please rank your answers to the question, “What do you like about your job?”

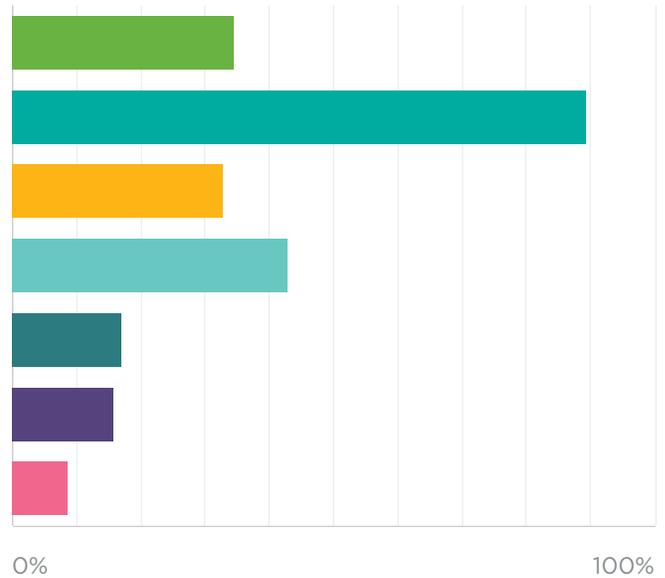
Answer Choices	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total	Score
I enjoy being with the people I support.	46% 102	46% 102	8% 18	0	0	0	0	0	222	7.4
I make a difference in the lives of the people I support.	65% 171	28% 73	6% 17	.38% 1	0	.38% 1	0	0	263	7.5
I enjoy spending time with my coworkers.	8% 4	19% 9	52% 25	12% 25	6% 3	2% 1	0	0	48	6.04
I am fairly compensated for my work.	17% 4	25% 6	29% 7	21% 5	4% 1	4% 1	0	0	24	6.2
My job is easy.	15% 2	15% 2	46% 6	8% 1	8% 1	8% 1	0	0	13	6
My supervisor is supportive.	24% 29	22% 27	45% 54	4% 5	4% 5	1% 1	0	0	121	6.5
My work schedule is flexible and/or fits well with my other responsibilities.	22% 28	17% 21	46% 58	8% 10	4% 5	2% 2	1% 1	0	125	6.4
Other (please specify)	41% 7	30% 5	12% 2	18% 3	0	0	0	0	17	6.9

Q6: With 1 being the answer that has the most impact on your work, please rank your answers to the question, “What do you dislike about your job?”

Answer Choices	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total	Score
I feel like I am not making a difference in the lives of the people I support.	63% 5	25% 2	13% 1	0	0	0	0	0	8	7.5
I do not enjoy spending time with my coworkers.	35% 9	42% 11	23% 6	0	0	0	0	0	26	7.1
I am not fairly compensated for my work.	79% 136	12% 21	8.1% 14	.58% 1	0	0	0	0	172	7.7
My job is too hard.	21% 4	58% 11	21% 4	0	0	0	0	0	19	7
My supervisor is not supportive.	47% 28	58% 11	21% 4	0	0	0	0	0	59	7.3
My work schedule is not flexible and/or conflicts with my other responsibilities.	33% 13	46% 18	21% 8	0	0	0	0	0	39	7.1
I do not enjoy spending time with the people I support.	0	100% 2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	7
Other (please specify)	77% 83	19% 20	4% 4	1% 1	0	0	0	0	18	7.7

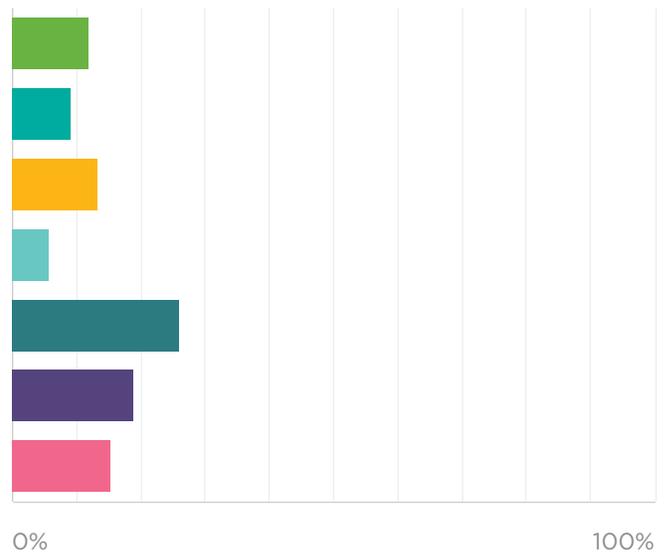
**Q7: What motivates you to continue working for your current employer?
(Check all that apply.)**

Answer Choices	Responses	
The respect and appreciation my employer shows me	34.47%	141
My relationships with the people I support	89.24%	365
My relationships with my coworkers	32.76%	134
Benefits (health insurance, retirement account, paid time off, etc.)	42.79%	175
The professional development the organization provides	16.87%	69
The opportunities I have to move up in the organization	15.65%	64
Other (please specify)	8.56%	35
Total Respondents	409	



Q8: Besides increasing your pay or benefits, what is the most important thing your employer could do to make sure you stay with them for the next five years? (One answer only.)

Answer Choices	Responses	
Provide new career opportunities	11.92%	46
Provide new leadership opportunities	9.07%	35
Provide more professional development opportunities	13.21%	51
Give me a better supervisor	5.70%	22
Show more appreciation for my work	25.91%	100
Show more respect for my experience	18.91%	73
Other (please specify)	15.25%	59
Total Respondents	386	



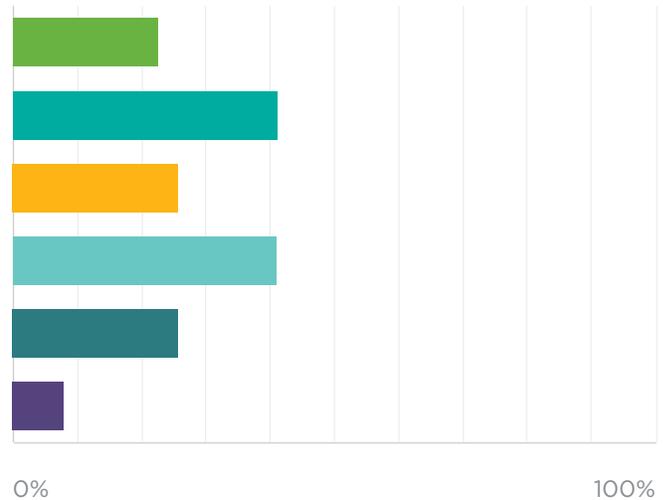
Q9: We would love to do a follow-up interview with you about your experiences as a DSP. If you are willing to be interviewed, please give us your contact information. We will not share your responses with your employer.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Name	100%	135
Email Address	97.78%	132

IF THE ANSWER TO Q3 IS LESS THAN 1 FULL YEAR OR 1 - 5 YEARS:

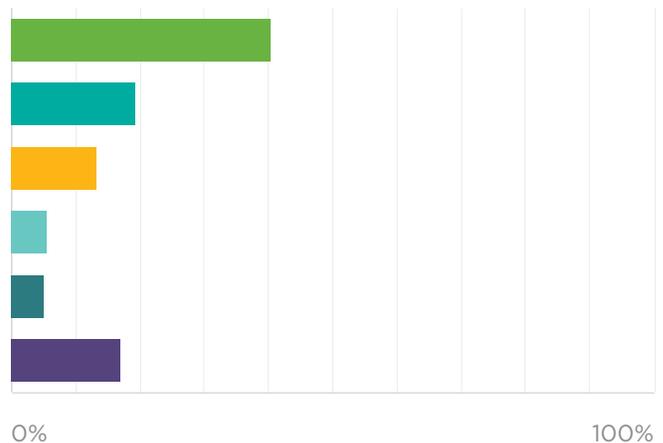
Q10: What topics do you think you needed more training on before you started providing direct support?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Nothing. I was well-prepared on my first day support individuals.	22.64%	79
The conditions/disorders of the people I support	41.26%	144
How to empower the people I support	25.79%	90
Positive behavior supports/how to deal with behavior problems	40.97%	143
How to connect the people I support to their community	25.97%	90
Other (please specify)	8.02%	28
Total Respondents		349



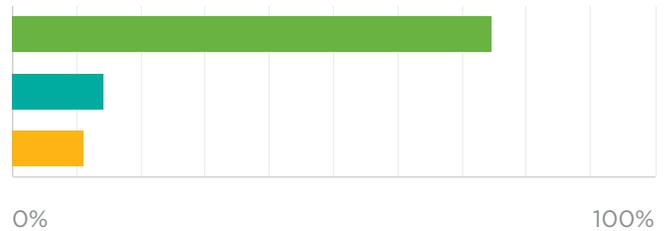
Q11: Besides increasing your pay or benefits, what is the most important thing your employer could do to keep you as an employee?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Provide opportunities for career advancement	40.41%	139
Provide opportunities for professional development	19.19%	66
Provide better/more training	13.08%	45
Provide more flexibility in my schedule	5.52%	19
Give me a better supervisor	4.94%	17
Other (please specify)	16.86%	58
Total Respondents		344



Q12: Do you think you will be in this job a year from now?

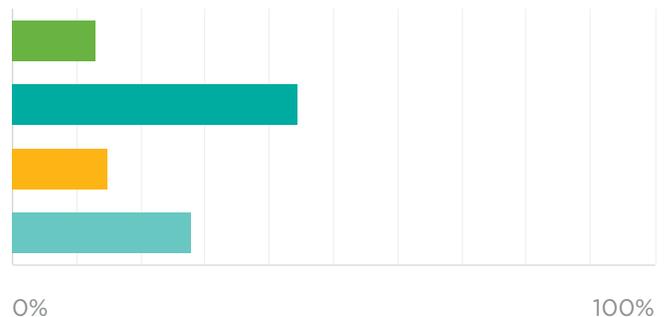
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	74.79%	264
No	14.16%	50
I expect to be with the same employer but in a different position.	11.05%	39
Total Respondents	353	



IF THE ANSWER TO Q12 IS YES

Q13: Why do you think you will not be in this job a year from now?

Answer Choices	Responses	
I am/will be going to school.	12.96%	7
I expect to move to a different profession.	44.44%	24
I expect to continue as a DSP but with a different employer.	14.81%	8
Other (please specify)	27.78%	15
Total Respondents	54	



TO ALL RESPONDENTS

Q14: Anything else you want us to know about why you work as a DSP? Please tell us!

Q15: Thank you for your participation! Relias will produce a report using the results from this survey. If you would like to be notified when the report comes out, please give us your email address. Your survey responses will remain anonymous.

Your Email Address

HHS0919WP2087-00

(877) 200-0020

