

ADvancing States Recognizes Direct Support Professionals Week



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ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA - ADvancing States celebrates the week of September 13th – 17th as Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) week. As an association whose mission is to design, improve, and sustain state systems delivering long-term services and supports (LTSS) for older adults, people with disabilities, and their caregivers, we understand the vital role DSPs provide to populations served by publicly funded programs. Whether receiving home and community-based services (HCBS) or facility care, hardworking DSPs serve a key role in America’s LTSS system that too often goes overlooked and underappreciated.

ADvancing States Board President Curtis Cunningham knows the value of the DSP workforce, sharing “The DSP workforce ensures older adults and people with disabilities have access to care in their community and home. It’s heartening to have a week dedicated to DSPs, but the truth is they deserve recognition year-round. Without dedicated and caring Direct Support professionals, HCBS programs wouldn’t exist. We all owe a great debt of gratitude for the work of Direct Support Professionals.”

The association is keenly aware of the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic presented in LTSS, exacerbating many already prevalent issues including the workforce shortage of DSPs. Board Vice President Kathleen Dougherty believes DSPs are the backbone of LTSS programs. “DSPs assist with everything from activities of daily living to social interaction, while simultaneously helping the people we serve stay healthy and achieve their goals. After almost two years fighting this pandemic, everyone should recognize now more than ever the incredible talents and contributions of DSPs in all settings.”

ADvancing States is proud to support DSP week and engage in technical assistance with state aging and disability directors looking to improve the DSP workforce in their state. The association hopes to improve workforce issues by supporting and spearheading efforts like ConnectToCareJobs.com, where DSPs can register to match with employers with job openings according to their preferences. Martha Roherty, Executive Director, supports policy changes that strengthen the workforce. “We are seeing more and more states give this issue the time and attention it deserves and know they are making a wise investment in the future of their LTSS programs. Investing in DSPs through recruitment and retention strategies can only help prepare states for the projected increased need for HCBS.

About ADvancing States

ADvancing States was founded in 1964 under the name National Association of State Units on Aging



(NASUA). In 2019, the association changed its name to Advancing States. Today, Advancing States represents the nation's 56 state and territorial agencies on aging and disabilities and long-term services and supports directors.