The Impact of Continuity of Supports and Services

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**Introduction**

- Illinois is currently facing a Direct Support Professional (DSP) crisis.
- An estimated 27,000 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) are supported by over 34,000 DSPs in residential, vocational, and community settings.
- Illinois state funding for DSP wages stalled nine years ago at $9.35 per hour.
- This has led to an enormous staffing crisis across the state due to the extremely low wages from DSPs.
- Many agencies have vacancies and high staff turnover rates for staff; therefore, DSP assignment are not consistent.
- The perspective of individuals supported by DSPs are important to incorporate in the conversation about the importance of the DSP crisis.

**Aims**

This project aims to understand how DSP vacancy and turnover affect people with IDD who use DSP.

**Methods**

- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with self-advocates as well as guardians of individuals with IDD who currently use DSP services.
- 3 self advocates and 6 guardians were interviewed.
- Topics covered included type and intensity of support they needed from DSPs and the benefits and drawbacks of working with new or different DSPs.
- Qualitative analysis will be conducted. Themes were identified.

**Results**

**Different DSP**

**Benefits**
- New Opportunities
- Possible Better Fit

**Drawbacks**
- Loss of routines
- Lack of opportunities
- Poor adherence to medically necessary diets, such as diabetic diets
- Mental health consequences such as anxiety

- "It was kind of hard (when a new DSP started.) I'm not use to this, their way of doing things, but in the end you get used to it after a while, like ok... we can always come in the middle and connect. (Self Advocate)

- "For (my daughter), who is diabetic, sometimes the most problem is with the type of food and the type of meals that they are making... when one staff moved on it was harder to get the same quality of care with the diet, even though she (the DSP) gave the recipes to the next person.” (Family member)

**Same DSP**

**Benefits**
- Improved individualized care
- Increased rapport
- Increased opportunities

- "He had trouble articulating, so I think these people who were there over many years and related to him related to him very well, because they were able to anticipate some of his needs.” (Family member)

- "When they have somebody consistent on the weekends... they can schedule more outings and get out more.”

**Discussion**

- Preliminary data suggests that although there are benefits to having same and different DSPs, consistency of care may be more important to those requiring greater levels of support.
- People who require less support may be less affected by staff turnover because they can express their needs and desires, and feel they can help train new staff.
- People who require more support seem to benefit from more consistency so they can build rapport especially if verbal communication not possible with their DSP's and avoid anxiety.
- Given DSP shortages and high turnover, agencies could consider this when creating staffing schedules and assigning DSPs.
- Additional data analysis is ongoing.

**Perspective varied by respondent**

- 2 Self advocates who are fairly independent reported less drawbacks of different DSPs than guardians.
- These self advocates interviewed also indicated that available staff was more important that consistent staffing.
- These perceptions were not shared by families interviewed.
- “(When a DSP leaves), well then we’d be short one staff but we have plenty of other staff too, so I really don’t see an issue with that.” (Self Advocate)

**References**


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