



## Recognizing Direct Support Professionals: **Congress Should Act Now**

### Direct Support Professionals Need Federal Occupation Data Collection

**Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) support millions of people with disabilities to help them live in the community. DSPs need a federal designation specific to their occupation to recognize the profession and inform policy-making.** The DSP profession centers on helping people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD) live full lives in the community instead of in large state-run institutions. These supports are primarily funded by Medicaid and cover a wide range of services, from assisting people with I/DD with finding employment, going grocery shopping, getting ready in the morning, or keeping track of taking critical medications. Currently, “Direct Support Professional” is not recognized as a profession at the federal level because the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has not given it a Standard Occupational Classification (SOC). Congressional action is needed to encourage BLS to create a SOC for DSPs because:

- **The umbrella SOC that BLS categorizes DSPs under does not accurately reflect the profession.** BLS mixes DSPs into an umbrella category that includes home health aides, social workers and camp counselors. While there is some overlap between DSP duties and those professions, DSPs have much higher levels of responsibility not reflected in current BLS descriptions.
- **This is problematic because SOCs are heavily used to inform policy-making.** SOCs are used to help all levels of government (local, state, federal) identify employment trends and design policies including: state rate setting for Medicaid supports, investment decisions by Workforce Investment Bureaus, and targeted recruitment programs. The current classification does not reflect the true nature of DSP work, preventing policy-makers from making the most informed decisions in these areas.
- **Creating a SOC would not cost the federal government anything.** BLS already collects data from I/DD agencies which employ DSPs, so this would not be a question of creating a new data collection system – it would simply be adding the DSP data in the data set. Given that DSPs are one of the most needed professions of the next decade the data results would make a difference!

### How Can Congress Help?

U.S. Representatives Pete Roskam (R-IL) and Joe Courtney (D-CT) are currently gathering signatures for a Congressional letter to BLS requesting a SOC for DSPs. Please contact their labor and health staff to learn more and sign on.

### For More Information:

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