How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted direct support professionals across the United States?

Julie Kramme, MA; Sandra Pettingell, PhD; Julie Bershadsky, PhD; Amy Hewitt, PhD; & Jerry Smith, MBA

Initial survey
March-April 2020, n = 8914

6-month follow-up
November 2020–January 2021, n = 8846

Safety measures
DSPs were asked to report on the kinds of personal protective equipment (PPE) provided by their employer, whether they had adequate training in using PPE, and other safety measures that were taken.

- I have had an adequate supply of PPE to keep myself and the people that I supervise safe
- I participated in a training on how to safely use PPE
- I have had resources about COVID-19 available to me

12-month follow-up
June–July 2021, n = 5356

Number of respondents
19%
8%
I was not diagnosed but suspect I had it
73%
69%
3%
2%
26%
no
I was not diagnosed
no
COVID-19 diagnosis

Key recommendations

• Ensure DSPs are identified as essential workers in comprehensive, organized and funded response plans at national and state levels for additional waves of COVID-19 and future pandemics.

• Develop vaccination campaigns that target DSPs.

• Access to childcare and support if schools or daycares close.

• Wage increases for essential workers commensurate with the increased level of exposure.

• Access to career ladders that lead to increased skills and compensation.

• Create systems-level pathways and incentives to enter this workforce.

Vaccination status
- yes, fully
- yes, partially
- no yet, but scheduled
- no

Percentage of people supported with COVID-19 diagnosis
- 7%
- 9%
- 18%
- 22%

Wages and extra pay
- 21% receiving extra pay due to COVID-19 risks
- $13.62 average wage of DSP before pandemic

Respondents experienced significant schedule changes
- 24% working more hours
- 18% working fewer hours
- 50% working different shifts
- 29% working in different settings
- 13% reported they were more short-staffed than before the pandemic

Pandemic effects on DSP turnover
- 42% knew someone in the DSP workforce who left their job due to the pandemic
- 24% feared becoming infected
- 25% had childcare issues
- 9% felt after testing positive for COVID-19

Additional hours worked per week
- 1-15 hours
- 16-20 hours
- 21+ hours

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