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## ACL Seeks Inventive Solutions to Address the Direct Support Professional Crisis

*Coming Soon! Apply to a New Challenge Competition Starting November 20 for Improving the Direct Support Professional Workforce.*

The Administration for Community Living (ACL) is looking for inventive solutions to strengthen the direct support professional (DSP) workforce and to improve the overall quality of home- and community-based services (HCBS) for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD). Our goal is to encourage the development of innovative business models that will help to stabilize the DSP labor market.

### The Problem

The DSP workforce provides vital services that ensure Americans with ID/DD have the support they need to live independently in the community. Demand for these essential professionals is at an all-time high and growing. With an average turnover rate of 45 percent and the significant challenges of recruiting and retaining DSPs, the demand far exceeds supply. The University of Minnesota's Institute for Community Integration estimates that there are 1.3 million DSPs supporting individuals with ID/DD. To sustain this level of service at the current turnover rates, 574,200 new DSPs need to be hired into the workforce every year. In addition, at least another 167,000 would be needed to serve individuals who are on waiting lists for HCBS[1].

Due to the lack of stability in the workforce, many people are unable to obtain all of the services they need, which limits full participation and true inclusion in society. It also significantly impacts the quality of HCBS people with ID/DD who are living in the community[2]. There are multiple reasons for difficulties in attracting and retaining DSPs, including the rising need for services, which creates competition for workers; shifts in the types of services needed; low wages; a lack of benefits; and a lack of training and promotion opportunities.

### The Prize Competition

ACL is seeking innovative business models to overcome these challenges in order to improve the stability and increase the size and capability of the DSP workforce.

"Every day, Americans with disabilities live, work, learn, grow, and enjoy life in their communities. For many of us, direct support professionals are critical to our ability to do those things safely and freely," said Julie Hocker, the Commissioner of ACL's Administration on Disabilities. "With this prize competition, ACL is challenging the industry to re-imagine how we recruit, develop, and grow DSPs to ensure that all Americans with disabilities have access to the services they need."

The competition will include three phases, and cash prizes will be awarded to winners in each phase. All winners will receive mentorship from experts in the field, and the winners' business models will be featured in Challenge materials.

## Phase 1 Submission Timeline

Submissions can be entered starting November 20, 2020. They must be received by 5:00 pm ET on February 12, 2021.

Watch [the ACL webpage for more information](#) for additional details – judging criteria and descriptions of the competition phases will be added soon.

[1] [Direct Support Workforce](#)

[2] American Network of Community Options and Resources, Addressing the Disability Services Workforce Crisis of the 21st Century, 2017