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Department of Disabilities  
and Special Needs**

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**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Executive Directors, DSN Boards providing Day and Residential Services  
CEOs, Contracted Service Providers of Day Services and Residential Services

FROM: Janet Brock Priest, Associate State Director-Operations 

DATE: April 16, 2025

SUBJECT: National Core Indicators (NCI) State of the Workforce Survey

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The South Carolina Department of Disabilities & Special Needs (DDSN) and its contracted service providers will again participate in the annual State of the Workforce Survey, coordinated as a part of the National Core Indicators (NCI).

DDSN has partnered with the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS) and Human Services Research Institute (HSRI) to administer NCI surveys for over a decade. This survey has provided DDSN with data about the strengths and weaknesses of our system and valuable information about our direct support workers (DSPs) who are instrumental in the provision of supports for adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (ID/DD).

The State of the Workforce Survey provides a reliable measure for the average length of DSP employment, number of DSPs employed by various types of agencies, vacant positions, wages, benefits and recruitment and retention strategies. For your reference, summaries of state and national 2023 data collected have been attached to this memo. You may access the full report at 2023 NCI State of the Workforce Survey Report ([www.nationalcoreindicators.org](http://www.nationalcoreindicators.org)).

In the coming week, you will receive an email from HSRI with instructions on how to complete this survey using their online data entry system. Results of the survey will only be reported in the aggregate and your organization will not be identified in any way. The survey should be completed by your Human Resources or Finance offices and reflect direct support professionals who were on the payroll during any period between January 1, 2024, and December 31, 2024. Responses to this survey must be submitted no later than June 30, 2025.

DDSN understands there are many competing interests for staff time and resources. We appreciate your participation in this important statewide survey. Every provider response counts. Please feel free to contact Bill Simpson in the Quality Management Division if you have any questions regarding the survey or accessing the reporting tool. You may contact Bill at (803) 898-9614 or by email at [bsimpson@ddsn.sc.gov](mailto:bsimpson@ddsn.sc.gov).

Thank you for your help compiling this information.

# NCI'S 2023 STATE OF THE WORKFORCE REPORT

## SOUTH CAROLINA VS. NCI STUDY AVERAGES



### WAGES

Average hourly wage received by DSPs:

\$15.70 (SC) vs. \$17.30 (NCI Study Average)



### BENEFITS

Offered by employers to some or all DSPs:

	<u>SC</u>	<u>NCI Study Average</u>
Paid Sick Leave:	73.7%	67.0%
Paid Vacation:	77.2%	69.6%
Health Insurance:	93.3%	60.2%
Retirement Plan:	86.7%	55.9%



### TENURE

Percentage of DSPs on the job for:

	<u>SC</u>	<u>NCI Study Average</u>
Less than 6 months:	18.2%	20.4%
12-24 months:	16.3%	18.1%
36 months or more:	42.3%	32.2%



### TURNOVER

Ratios for DSPs: 40.7% (SC) vs. 39.7% (NCI Study Average)



### VACANCY

Rates for full-time DSP positions: 14.8% (SC) vs. 12.2% (NCI Study Average)

Rates for part-time DSP positions: 19.2% (SC) vs. 14.6% (NCI Study Average)



NCI

# STATE *of the* WORKFORCE

2023 SURVEY RESULTS

## ABOUT THE SURVEY

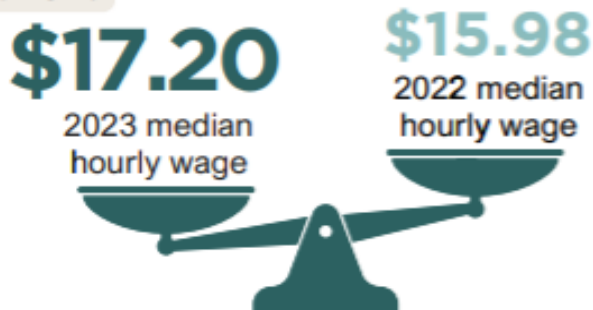
Each year National Core Indicators® Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (NCI®-IDD) implements the State of the Workforce Survey. The survey collects comprehensive data on provider agencies and the **Direct Support Professional (DSP)** workforce providing direct supports to adults (age 18 and over) with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The goal of the survey is to help states describe their workforce, measure challenges, and monitor improvements. The data presented in this summary represent the weighted NCI-IDD average survey results and refer to the period between **Jan. 1, 2023, and Dec. 31, 2023**.

## PARTICIPATING STATES & AGENCIES

More than **325,591** DSPs with  
**3,934** provider agencies  
in **26** states & D.C.



## WAGES



**Among 24 states** that participated in both the 2022 and 2023 survey, all had an **increase in median hourly wage between 2022 and 2023**. However, **no state** has a median hourly wage that is at or above living wages in their state.

## TURNOVER

Average **turnover ratio**  
across participating states

**40%**



Among 24 states that participated in both the 2022 and 2023 survey, 17 states saw a decrease in turnover ratio from 2022 to 2023. States with the largest decreases are shown to the left.

## AGENCY CHARACTERISTICS

70% provided residential supports

52% provided in-home supports

64% provided non-residential supports

**59%**

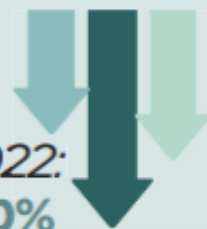
Percentage of agencies that are private for-profit organizations

On average, 38% of agencies say they  
**turned away or stopped accepting  
referrals due to staffing issues.**

Among 24 states that participated in both the 2022 and 2023 survey, 23 states saw a decrease in agencies turning away referrals due to staffing issues between 2022 and 2023.

2023:  
**38%**

2022:  
**50%**





### TENURE



Of those DSPs who left employment at their agency in 2023, **2 out of 3 DSPs (66%)** had been employed for less than one year.

Of those DSPs who were employed at their agency at the end of 2023, nearly **1 out of 3 DSPs (32%)** had been employed with that agency for 3 or more years.



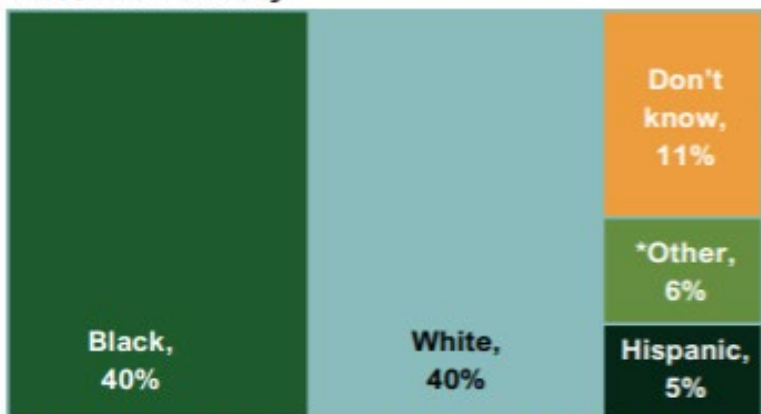
These data demonstrate that many DSPs leave employment in the first year. This points to the importance of exploring how benefits, recruitment, and retention practices can address early turnover.

### BENEFITS



### DSP DEMOGRAPHICS

#### Race and Ethnicity



\*Other category includes DSPs who are American Indian/Alaskan Native (1%), Asian (1%), Pacific Islander (1%) Other (1%) and More than one race/ethnicity (2%)



#### Gender Identity

67% Female  
28% Male  
5% Don't know  
<1% Non-binary

### RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

# 82%

of agencies offered a realistic job preview to candidates

# 53%

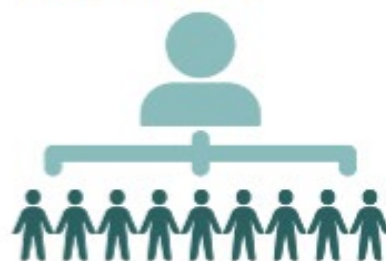
of agencies offered a pay incentive or referral bonus program

**29%** of agencies utilized DSP ladder to retain highly skilled workers in DSP roles

**28%** of agencies gave stipends or raises to DSPs at key steps throughout credentialing process

**21%** of agencies included DSPs in agency governance

### FRONTLINE SUPERVISORS



**Average ratio of 1 Frontline Supervisors to 9 DSPs**