



## DDSN Executive Memo

**TO: EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS, DSN BOARDS  
CEOS, CONTRACTED SERVICE PROVIDERS**

**FROM: SUSAN KREH BECK, ED.S., LPES, NCSP, ASSOCIATE STATE DIRECTOR-POLICY**

**DATE: NOVEMBER 18, 2020**

**RE: Direct Support Professional (DSP) Training Program - Provider Guidance**

### Purpose

The purpose of this memo is to provide DDSN Providers a basic understanding of the DSP training program purpose, program guidelines, and the competencies and standards met by DSP Program Graduates who obtain certification. This memo provides guidance to providers regarding how to review DSP training program completer's certification and apply for an exception/test out options for those applicants who seek employment at a DDSN qualified provider.

### Overview of the DSP Training Program

In 2019-2020, DDSN implemented a pilot program to provide introductory training to high school students as Direct Support Professionals. Given the shortage of DSPs statewide and nationally, DDSN designed this program to introduce and recruit young adults to the profession. The DSP training program includes direct experience with individuals with disabilities to provide a realistic picture of the job and a basic understanding of disabilities and the role of the DSP. The program is designed to recruit potential employees who will be retained by understanding the job upon entry.

The DSP Training program provides a foundation for providers to build upon and is not meant to replace providers' training. Providers will view the DSP Program graduates' training and determine which portions of the training will be accepted. This will allow providers to waive training for areas in which they deem competency has been established. Providers will realize a training cost savings for areas the trainee has successfully demonstrated competency and experience a faster onboarding due to prior skill development.

The DDSN training program allows schools and other entities to apply to DDSN to become an established training program provider. Training programs will be required to demonstrate they have qualified instructors, follow DDSN training standards and have a working relationship with an established local DDSN providers that will enable practicum training experiences. To provide state-wide program standardization, training programs will be audited every two (2) years to include an on-site visit, review of training documentation and evaluation of trainee outcomes. Complete information can be found in the [SC DSP Training program manual](#).

### DSP Training Program Guidelines and Trainee Requirements

DDSN approved DSP Training programs offer three (3) levels of certification for trainees and maintain a registry of these individuals.

The three (3) levels of certification are as follows:

South Carolina Basic DSP: (minimum of 70 hours total)

60 hours of classroom Instruction in minimum requirement areas outlined, and  
10 hours of approved, supervised practicum experience

South Carolina Initial DSP: (minimum of 86 hours total)

60 hours of classroom instruction in minimum requirement areas outlined, and  
10 hours of approved, supervised practicum experience  
16 hours of approved medication technician training program

South Carolina Advanced DSP: (minimum of 110 hours total)

60 hours of classroom instruction in minimum requirement areas outlined, and  
10 hours of approved, supervised practicum experience  
16 hours of medication technician training/ supervised medication pass requirement  
8 hours of Defensive Driving training from an approved program  
16 hours of approved crisis prevention training

Students participating in the DSP Training Program are required to participate in a statewide exam administered by DDSN to receive certification. A score of 80% or higher is considered passing. The purpose of the exam is to document graduate competency of the training curriculum. This exam will also ensure consistent training standards across training sites.

Additionally, instructors will utilize a skills checklist for the practicum training to help assure the trainee has demonstrated competency in identified key skill areas.

Refer to the [SC DSP Standards and Training Requirement](#) document for more specific details.

#### Integration of DSP Trainee Completers into DDSN Provider Employment

DSP training graduates will have certifications that strengthen their qualifications for DDSN provider job openings. DDSN Certifications are valid for one (1) year from the date of issue. If applicants indicate certification on their application or upon hire, providers can verify certification level and date from DDSN. The applicant is responsible to provide specific documentation of completion requirements (such as American Red Cross First Aid training, CPR, OSHA, etc.) and DSP trainees are encouraged to keep a portfolio containing these documents to present for provider review upon hire. Providers can review the method, date and type of training completed to meet the minimum requirements and Providers may determine to re-train in part or in whole the training referenced in DDSN Directive: 567-01-DD, Employee Orientation, Pre-Service and Annual Training Requirements, or those relate to the specific training requirement (i.e., DDSN Directive 603-02-DD: Employee Health Requirements, DDSN Directive 567-04-DD: Preventing and Responding to Disruptive Behavior and Crisis Situations, DDSN Directive 603-13-DD: Medication Technician Certification, etc.).

Per DDSN Directive 567-01-DD: Employee Orientation, Pre-Service and Annual Training Requirements, new employees for whom training is deemed appropriate will be trained to a minimum level of competency according to the curriculum outline as part of the directive. The directive indicates competency will be demonstrated by a combination of written tests and skills checks. The current "test out" option is limited to those who have two (2) years of full time experience working with individuals with disabilities or those who have demonstrated competency in another job within 12 months prior to their hire date and have presented documentation of successful completion of the required training.

DDSN Directive 567-01-DD: Employee Orientation, Pre-Service and Annual Training Requirements, will be updated in the coming months to include guidance on the DSP Training Program completers. Until this Directive is updated, Providers can review applicants' documentation and submit an exception request to allow individuals to meet the "test out" option for part or all of the training requirements per guidelines for exceptions in DDSN Directives 104-01-DD: Certification and Licensure of DDSN Residential and Day Facilities, and DDSN Directive 104-03-DD: DDSN Contract Compliance/Quality Assurance Reviews for Non-Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ICFs/IID) Programs. Providers can make this request using the Request for Exception Form indicating specific areas deemed to be met and signed by the Executive Director and the Board Chairperson. This form can be found on the DDSN application portal in Business tools and submitted to Ann Dalton, Quality Management Director at [Adalton@ddsn.sc.gov](mailto:Adalton@ddsn.sc.gov).

If you have any questions, please contact Laura Elder at (803) 898-1031 or by e-mail at [Lelder@ddsn.sc.gov](mailto:Lelder@ddsn.sc.gov). Thank You.