

I am DSPAM

Winter 2011

The Direct Support Professional Association of MN.

A Note from the President: We need your experience, your voice and we need your passion.

Our communities need your help to strengthen the direct support professional (DSP) workforce and improve the quality of human services provided to persons with disabilities. We need your participation, your presence, your experience, and your passion. Without your voice, DSPAM's voice and the voice of our community are weaker. Due to recent budget cuts and the threat of more cuts in the future, the voice of DSPAM and the voice of our community need to be as unified, strong, and loud as possible.



Many times, DSPs may feel that their employers and coworkers do not want them to advocate for our work-related issues, including livable wages, health insurance, and career development. But, all those issues impact the quality of services that our employers are able to provide to persons with disabilities. As we've

witnessed, if the funding for disability services is reduced, the revenue earned by our employers is reduced. If our employers' revenues decrease, our wages, benefits, and career development are negatively impacted. When these cuts happen, it reduces the ability of our employers to provide quality services. And this ultimately hurts persons with disabilities.

Sure, our employers and other advocacy organizations fight for disability service funding. But, as we've discovered time and again: no matter how long our programs have been around, no matter how many professional lobbyists are fighting for the issues we care about, the most impactful voice comes from those of us on the frontlines -- DSPs, the self-advocates we support, and families. We can share our direct experience about how funding impacts the quality of supports we can offer. We need you to share your experiences. We need you to share your voice.

In other words, we are all in this together. Ask your supervisor if your employer will support you to become more involved with DSPAM. Will they support your efforts to attend DSPAM board meetings, committee meetings, and other activities that benefit all of us -- DSPs, employers, self-advocates, and our families? Will they offer you two or three hours of work time each month so you can become more involved with DSPAM?

No matter how long our programs have been around, no matter how many professional lobbyists are fighting for the issues we care about, the most impactful voice comes from those of us on the frontlines -- DSPs, the self-advocates we support, and families.

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We definitely need your participation, and hope your employer will support you to become more active with DSPAM. We are currently looking for at least four new board members. Plus, we need several more members to join our various committees. For more information about these opportunities, please take a look at the article "DSPAM Seeks Applications for Both Volunteer Board and Committee Members", which appears on pages 4 and 5 of this newsletter. Would you be willing to volunteer for our board? How about one of our committees? If so, please let us know as soon as possible so we can be sure to include you on the ballot for our upcoming membership meeting. If you can, please join us for this meeting during the afternoon of December 13 in Minneapolis. More information about the meeting can be found on the next page.

Remember, your investment as a member of DSPAM not only benefits to you, but also benefits your employer and our entire community. Finally, be sure to review the DSPAM benefits on page 3 to be sure you are making the most of your membership.

Please feel free to call me with any questions at 651-895-7210.

I look forward to hearing from you, seeing you at our annual meeting, and working with you during 2012. Together we can strengthen the Direct Support Professional (DSP) workforce and improve the quality of human services provided to persons with disabilities.

Don Krutsinger, DSPAM President

You Are Invited.

What:

DSPAM's Annual Meeting &
2012 Board Member
Elections

When:

December 13th, 2011
3:00-4:30 pm

Where:

Northeast Library Meeting Room
2200 Central Ave. NE
Minneapolis, 55418

*Light refreshments served during meet &
greet which will begin at 2:30pm.*



Our \$20 Membership just got better! Did you know that as of September 2011, memberships to join NADSP and DSPAM for DSPs are only \$10 annually?

The best return on self- investment!

Now is the time to invest in YOU as a highly competent and professional direct support home& community health care worker!

- Challenge the negative societal perceptions about DSPs and promote their commitments and contributions. **DSPs deserve to be valued and respected in their communities;**
- Receive livable wages and benefits. **We will assist you with understanding your rights, advocating for fair wages and partnering with others to develop more benefit and training opportunities;**
- Complete one or more levels of a national DSP credentialing program. **We are working with employers to create funding opportunities for this certification process;**
- Collaborate on diverse projects with self-advocates, families, and community allies. **Attend local, state and National conferences as a DSPAM representative;**
- Develop and use your leadership and advocacy skills through community outreach, social media networking! **Add your voice to a growing workforce; use that voice to shape health and human services policies!**

DSPAM Membership Includes:

- Dual membership in NADSP
- *I am DSPAM* e-newsletter
- Front Line *Initiative* newsletter
- DSPAM/NADSP membership card
- NADSP Code of Ethics Card
- Preferred pricing on DSPAM sponsored events.

ARE YOU A MEMBER?

To learn more about NADSP/DSPAM dual memberships, please visit us at:

<https://www.nadsp.org/membership.html>

Want a closer look at what membership offers? Take a look at our **Frontline Initiative Quarterly Magazine** that is included in your membership:

<https://www.nadsp.org/communication/frontline-initiative.html>

Ready to become a member?

Complete this on-line application:

<https://www.nadsp.org/membership.html>



DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MINNESOTA **Seeks applications for both volunteer board & committee members**

DSPAM is a non-profit 501(c) (3) membership organization working to improve the quality of human services provided to persons with disabilities by strengthening the Direct Support Professional (DSP) workforce. DSPAM is a volunteer-driven organization affiliated with the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP). DSPAM strives to help reduce turnover rates; increase the social status; improve training opportunities and programs; increase educational and career opportunities; plus enhance wages paid and benefits offered for DSPs.

Members of DSPAM generally fall into three categories:

- DSPs and front-line supervisors are the largest membership group.
- Self-advocates (i.e. individuals experiencing chronic illness or disability) and family members are the second category.
- The third group is made up of other professionals who work in Minnesota's chronic illness and disability communities.

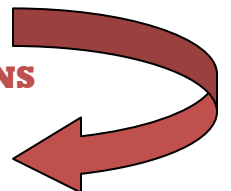
The board of directors has operating and oversight responsibility for the Minnesota chapter. Presently, the Board meets quarterly in St. Paul. The Board is responsible for ensuring that the organization is operating within the legal standards governing non-profit corporations in the general areas of finance, programming, and oversight. The board must approve the policies, positions, budgets, and plans for the organization.

Each board member is responsible for preparing for, then attending, quarterly board meetings. Board members are encouraged to stay up-to-date with issues impacting DSPs, asking questions, or otherwise gathering needed information. Board members also represent the organization at community events, as well as those events hosted by DSPAM. In addition, each board member must serve on at least one DSPAM committee.

DSPAM is also recruiting community members to actively participate with their committees. These committees meet once a month during months when there isn't a full board meeting. **DSPAM has three basic committees with a variety of subcommittees available for participants:**

- The Legislative Policy Committee keeps tabs on laws, regulations, and policies that might impact DSPs in Minnesota. Committee members often talk with legislators and decision-makers to be sure they are informed of these issues. Sometimes, committee members will testify at the Legislature or even help to write pieces of bills with legislators.
- The Internet Communication Committee helps to develop content for the organization's website, Facebook page, and LinkedIn group. Plus, that committee is responsible for creating a newsletter that is distributed via e-mail.
- The Membership Development Committee is the third committee. This committee focuses on recruiting new members to the organization, creating training opportunities for DSPs, plus hosting an annual celebration and awards banquet.

FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN VOTE IN THE 2012 BOARD ELECTIONS



YOUR PARTICIPATION IS NEEDED!

As a member of the Direct Support Professional Association of Minnesota (DSPAM), your participation is requested for our annual membership meeting. **You can participate by doing the following:**

✓ **Volunteering for and/or nominating board & committee members for 2012-2013**

✓ **Attending the Annual Meeting on Tuesday December 13th.**
Please see Official Notice of the Order of Business for our 2011 Annual Membership Meeting



To Vote In-Person:

WHERE: Meeting Room at the Hennepin County Northeast Library;
2200 Central Avenue NE; Minneapolis, 55418

WHEN: Tuesday, December 13, 2011 from 2:30 PM to 4:30 PM

— OR —



To Vote Online: Online voting instructions will be sent on or before Monday, December 5th to DSPAM members who've provided an e-mail address for our records. If you haven't already registered your e-mail address, please e-mail your full name, mailing address, phone number, and e-mail address to iamdspam@gmail.com before Friday, December 2nd so we can update your membership record.

For more information, please view the: enclosed article & opportunity posting online.

To nominate someone, please submit the full name, e-mail address, and phone number for you or the person you're nominating:

- Use our online form by **11:59 p.m. Central Time on Friday, December 4;**
- Mail the information **postmarked no later than Friday, December 2** to DSPAM; 800 Transfer Road, Suite 7A; St. Paul, MN 55114.

As a DSPAM member, your participation in this & other DSPAM events is critical to strengthen the Direct Support Professional (DSP) workforce and improve the quality of human services provided to persons with disabilities. We hope to see you at our Annual Membership Meeting and look forward to working with you in 2012!

Thank you for your consideration, participation and support!

Lance Hegland, Donald Krutsinger & Lindsay Short, DSPAM Nominating Committee



NADSP Updates

NADSP Announces New Membership Schedule

Read any newspaper headline from around the country and you will agree that we are facing a critical juncture in our history of supporting people with disabilities. The economic crisis from which we are slowly recovering has resulted in an uncertainty of services and funding cuts in most in states. But one thing remains certain: now, more than ever, people with disabilities need a stable, competent and committed workforce to directly support and walk with them in their journey toward a life of opportunity, well-being, freedom and contribution. Now, more than ever, the work of the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) is essential.

Over the last 15 years we have tried to build and keep a professional direct support workforce, one that is guided by a Code of Ethics and proficient in universal community support skills. We've offered a three-tiered, voluntary, competency-based credentialing program in nationally validated community support skill standards and disseminated information and training tools. With over 3,000 members and maintaining our stance of union neutrality, we have given voice to nearly 1,000,000 direct support workers across the country who speaks passionately and eloquently about the abilities, desires and needs of the people they support, as well as their own desires and needs as care givers.

Today, we need your help so we can continue our important work during a very critical time. NADSP has recently shifted to a "fixed" annual membership enrollment period, which will begin the month of September of each year. This is very different than our previous "rolling" system in which members would join at any time of the year, but have to keep track of when your membership expires and when dues need to be paid. We believe this new system will help all of us keep better track of membership status.

**Please join us as a new or
renewing member today!**

To learn more about
NADSP/DSPAM dual
memberships, please visit
us at:

<https://www.nadsp.org/membership.html>

Want a closer look at what
membership offers? Take a look at
our **Frontline Initiative Quarterly
Magazine** that is included in your
membership:

<https://www.nadsp.org/communication/frontline-initiative.html>

Ready to become a member?

Complete this on-line application:

<https://www.nadsp.org/membership>.

A Special THANK YOU to our SPONSORS:

Dear Members and Community Partners,

The Direct Support Professional Association of Minnesota (DSPAM) has successfully concluded its annual DSP recognition event: **Honoring Commitments**. As part of the National DSP Recognition Week, our event provided the opportunity for direct support professionals to be recognized, celebrated and rejuvenated on the afternoon of Sunday September 18th, 2011. With the generous service donations from **Spa Blu**, we were able to offer free hair, nail and massage services to say thank you to the DSPs who provide direct services to our aging and disability communities.

Also, during the **Honoring Commitments** event, we hosted a luncheon at **Aviand's** to present awards to direct support professionals who exemplify the Code of Ethics and promote self-determination, inclusion and leadership.

We could not have put together this event without the financial support of our community partners. DSPAM wishes to once again recognize and thank our event sponsors for their generous support.

Please enjoy the pictures we have provided for you, as well as highlights from the event. Please also take a moment to read about our event sponsors.

Thank you for helping us to recognize, celebrate and rejuvenate DSPs!

Sincerely,

DSPAM Event Planning Committee

Mike Harrison, Muhannah Kakish, Don Krutsinger, Brigette Menger-Anderson & Bridget Siljander

DIAMOND LEVEL: *Spa Blu* SAPPHIRE LEVEL: *A'viand's*
FOOD & SERVICES MANAGEMENT

EMERALD LEVEL: **EyEs' Ltd.**

DARRYL HOYER CAKES



LEROY MILLER DESIGNS

FRIENDS LEVEL:





Honoring Commitments...

A summary of our Annual DSP Recognition Event, by: Bridget Siljander



The Governor & Mayoral Proclamations



DSPAM & NADSP Materials



Cake by Darryl Hoyer



Services provided to DSPS & their guests by Spa Blu

Honoring Commitments was an opportunity to gather together in support of direct support professionals and to celebrate the Mayoral and Governors Proclamations, declaring National Direct Support Professional Recognition Week.

It was an inspiration to see everyone from DSPs, self-advocates, providers and community partners in attendance to help us commemorate this event.



Catering by Aviand's



After complimentary hair, skin and nail services, our guests enjoyed a delicious buffet of foods and desert. Guests also took the time to network with each other, renew or register their dual memberships in NADSP & DSPAM, and participate in DSPAM's traveling "wall of Shame," by adding their messages to our banner!



We had many volunteers on hand to help us greet guests, direct them to the salon and restaurant. We were thankful to have a local Girl Scout troop that organized an arts and

crafts play area, complete with a junior nail art station and temporary tattoos!



Volunteers make these events happen!





Guests registering for the event

Guests awaiting their Spa services

Our guest speaker, John Sauer, presented on what he has been working on

around workforce development and provider partnerships with our national affiliate, the NADSP. DSPAM is very fortunate to have this close working partnership with John as our National contact, right here in Minneapolis with us! We look forward to assisting with the development and presentation of trainings and workshops for providers and DSPs.



Guests networking



DSPAM presented three awards to individuals who have made a difference for DSPs: Lance Hegland, Katie Whiteford, and Brigette Menger-Anderson.



DSPAM also presented community partner of the year awards to Spa Blu and Aviand's for their generous donation of time & services.



Muhannah Kakish presents awards to our community sponsors.



Bridget Siljander cuts the cake with the assistance of Leroy Miller.

2011 Award Recipients



Congratulations to DSP Advocate of the Year, Lance Hegland.

Lance is the founder of DSPMatch (<http://www.dspmatch.com/>). Lance began advocating for consumers, families, and DSPs in 2001 while he was a resident at a nursing home. He relocated back to the Twin Cities to live independently with the aid of in-home DSPs in 2003. He then began exploring new models and tools for delivering better direct support services. One of his new projects is IndependencePartners. IndependencePartners will bring together individuals with disabilities, DSPs, and others and offer new independent-living tools for our communities. The first tool they are working on is DSPMatch. DSPMatch offers quick, safe, and individualized matching and relationship-building tools for direct support consumers and high-quality professionals.



Congratulations to DSP of the Year, Katie Whiteford. Katie has been a DSP for 20 years, with 10 years at Rise Data Ability, where she currently works as a follow-up specialist. According to Katie's supervisor, who nominated her, "Her relationships with the individuals she provides services to are built on trust and mutual respect. She provides them with opportunities to learn more about being a positive self advocate and encourages them to advocate on their own behalf at all times." She exemplifies the value of partnership between DSPs and consumers.

Congratulations to DSPAM Board Member of the Year, Brigette Menger-Anderson.

Brigette has been a prominent advocate for DSPs in her 15 professional years in the disability field. She is very committed to systems advocacy, has lead DSPAMs Policy committee and has co-chaired the Consortium for Citizen's with disabilities PCA committee. Brigette developed and co-authored the quarterly newsletter *I am DSPAM* and was a driving force behind this year's event; producing all of the marketing and outreach materials, as well as

engaging members of the board and volunteers to make the event possible. Her passion and talent have been critical to the success of DSPAM and the DSP movement.



Many thanks to our sponsors!

Urgent Notice:

Judge temporarily blocks DHS from imposing 20% reduction on family caregivers!

In the last newsletter, we provided you with a legislative update, focusing on the unprecedented 20% rate cut for providers who were billing for PCA services provided by caregivers of family members. This statute deeply impacted the disability and DSP community immediately. Many providers reduced the wages of their workers to compensate for the reduction. Some DSPs recently blogged on the DCA that they are now down to \$7.75 an hour and can't even afford the gas to get to provide the supports that are needed. DSPs wrote into DSPAMs Facebook page and shared that they live in small rural towns and feel that it is unlikely to get someone else to fill these

shifts and that the providers are banking on the genuine caring and giving nature of DSPs to continue to do their job.

What we need for our legislators and the general public to understand is that direct support workers are provided a service that is the least costly and offers the most opportunity for dignity and independence to the individuals who receive direct care services.

As our legislators continue to balance their budgets undoubtedly on the backs and wallets of the DSP workers, they are ultimately contributing to an unsafe work

environment for the DSPs as well as jeopardizing the health and safety of the individuals receiving services.

One only has to look at a recent tragedy here in Minnesota to see the impacts that these cuts have on our communities;

<http://www.startribune.com/local/north/130797448.html> "State worker charged in group home drowning."

{*Stiles, 62, was arrested at her home in Pine City on Thursday. Her first court appearance is Friday afternoon. If convicted of second-degree manslaughter, she faces up to 10 years in prison and \$20,000 in fines.*}

In a previous interview, Tim Stiles said his wife was a 37-year state employee with an excellent work record. He said that staff cuts had made her job harder and that answering the phone was a critical part of her responsibilities. She also had to lift residents in and out of the tub by herself because there was no equipment to help her, he said.

Stiles described his wife as a caring and compassionate person who was close to Hyska's family. He said Hyska's death was "like losing a child to her." He said his wife had trouble sleeping after the incident and was undergoing counseling to help deal with the trauma.}

This is a heart-wrenching story on so many levels. In anger we want to point fingers and assign blame *to the DSP*, but we need to make sure that people understand the physical and emotional stress DSPs are put under in their jobs. It's easy to say "she should not have been on the phone, especially with her son," but **trying to balance the duties of being a poorly supported worker and meeting the needs of her family on such poor wages and unsafe working conditions leads to preventable tragedies like this.**

To read additional commentary, about these cuts, please visit:

http://rtc.umn.edu/dspam/I_am_DSPAM_Summer_2011_Newsletter.pdf
Page 5: Is there a 20% wage reduction in your future?

<http://blog.directcarealliance.org/2011/09/minnesota-personal-care-assistants-face-20-pay-cut/#more-4223> Read what Tim Plant and other DSPs have to say about labor discrimination!

<http://www.startribune.com/opinion/editorials/133843838.html>
'Heaping cuts on relatives who care for disabled is unfair.'

This DSP was working in a group home with four individuals, all severely physically and or mentally impaired- and she was by herself. She did not have the proper medical equipment or staff assistance to aid in the transferring of this individual.

Her employer helped create these unsafe work conditions in trying to manage program budgets with the additional rate cuts that our legislators imposed upon the disability community.

*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."
Margaret Mead.*

In October, 2011, shortly after the Department of Human Services acted on this new legislative mandate, they distributed new billing guidelines, imposed additional out of pocket administrative expenses to providers by requiring them to collect disclosure of relationship statements from its employees, and implemented new fines for failure to use the reduced rate billing code. **Out of anger and disbelief in this latest round of cuts, a small group of self-advocates and providers began networking with each other.** From these meetings, they formed a coalition which would file a suit, citing that this legislation was discriminatory and greatly affected the working poor and people of color as well as underserved populations in rural communities.

On October 26th a Ramsey County Judge issued a Temporary Restraining Order preventing the state from moving forward with implementation of this cut until further developments regarding the lawsuit unfold.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

DHS issued the following statement to PCA providers on November 01st:

"On Oct. 26, 2011, the Second Judicial District Court issued a temporary restraining order about PCA Relative Caregiver payment rates. Until the Department of Human Services is ordered to do otherwise, Minnesota Health Care Programs will pay PCA relative caregiver claims at the same rate as the non-relative caregiver rate. This is for any PCA claims submitted on or after Oct. 26, 2011, for dates of services on or after Oct. 1, 2011. Providers must continue to identify and document the individual PCA provider relationship with each recipient for whom they provide service."

WHAT THIS MEANS:

Since a judge has temporarily blocked this legislation, providers are no longer mandated by the State to submit for a 20% reduction for paid caregivers of family members. If they are getting paid in full- your wages should also be reinstated and back-paid!

HOWEVER...

DHS Also recently issued this notice to providers:

"Until the Department of Human Services (DHS) is ordered to do otherwise, MHCP will pay fee-for-service PCA relative caregiver claims at the same rate as non-relative caregiver rate. This is for any claims submitted on or after 10/26/11 for any dates of service on or after 10/1/11.

During this period, providers must continue to identify and document the relationship of each individual PCA provider with each recipient for whom they provide services:

- *Complete the Individual PCA Relationship Acknowledgment form and keep in your agency files and the recipient health service record*
- *Identify the relationship on the agency's PCA*

Time and Activity Documentation each pay period and keep in your agency files

<Make sure you are working with your provider to complete these mandatory forms!

Providers may submit replacement claims to receive adjustments for PCA relative caregiver claims submitted before 10/26/11.” <If your provider resubmits the claim, they should issue you the difference back in your wages!

“If the final decision of the court is to uphold the PCA Relative Caregiver payment rate, MHCP may recover any overpayments.”

< VERY IMPORTANT!

Budget carefully. Providers can and will do a wage take back if the State makes them pay back the 20%. Most providers will take these wages back from your next check and legislatively; they *might* have the protection to do so. We all know that a 20% pay cut per check is the difference between gas and groceries- make sure you create a budget that considers this wage reduction and /or wage take-back.

In closing, I want to remind you that while you may feel like a marginalized, single-out, small segment of the working population, in actuality you are an employee of one of the largest, fastest growing workforces. There are over 60,000 registered DSPs in the state of Minnesota. Collectively you have the power to demand the changes that are needed to ensure your job security and safety. You have the ability to negotiate with your employers for better wages, benefits and working conditions. You have the right to contact your local department of labor to ask for their help with fighting this recent discriminatory legislation. I just happen to have room for one more link;

<http://www.dli.mn.gov/LS/FaqMain.asp>

**Brigette Menger-Anderson,
DSPAM Vice President**

DSPAMs Policy Committee is seeking stories from DSPs regarding how these continued cuts to your wages, benefits, hours, shift availability, etc., has impacted your life.

Please send your letters to:
iamdspam@gmail.com.

Don't forget to “Like Us” on Facebook and join our member page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/42551416801/>

A Special Notice:

We have been asked to help the Minnesota consortium for citizens with Disabilities (MN CCD) identify any individuals who have been seriously impacted by the PCA cut who would be interested in testifying in conjunction with the lawsuit filed on this issue should this need arise.

Serious impact means having to move to a more institutional placement (i.e., nursing home, assisted living, etc.) or losing key relative caregivers.

If you fit these criteria and are interested in the possibility of testifying, please contact Anni Simons at 651-523-0823, ext. 112 or asimons@arcmn.org.

DSPAM Mission

DSPAM is dedicated to the development of a highly competent and professional human services workforce by supporting and working together with DSPs, self-advocates, families and allies.



DSPAM Vision

DSPAM has a vision in which all Minnesota Direct Support Professionals:

- are valued and respected in their communities;
- receive livable wages and benefits;
- stay longer with their employers;
- complete one or more levels of a national DSP credentialing program;
- collaborate on diverse projects with self-advocates, families, and allies;
- use their leadership skills by presenting at conferences.

DSPAM

800 Transfer Road
Suite 7A
St. Paul, MN 55114

SAVE THE DATE!

Please join us for our annual meeting on Tuesday December 13th, details inside!