

# State of the Direct Support Workforce

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## Direct Support **Workforce Solutions**

A national consulting group

INSTITUTE *on* COMMUNITY INTEGRATION | UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



INSTITUTE *on*  
COMMUNITY  
INTEGRATION

ICI improves policies and practices to ensure that all children, youth, and adults with disabilities, and those receiving educational supports, are valued by and contribute to their communities of choice.



## The State of the Direct Support Workforce

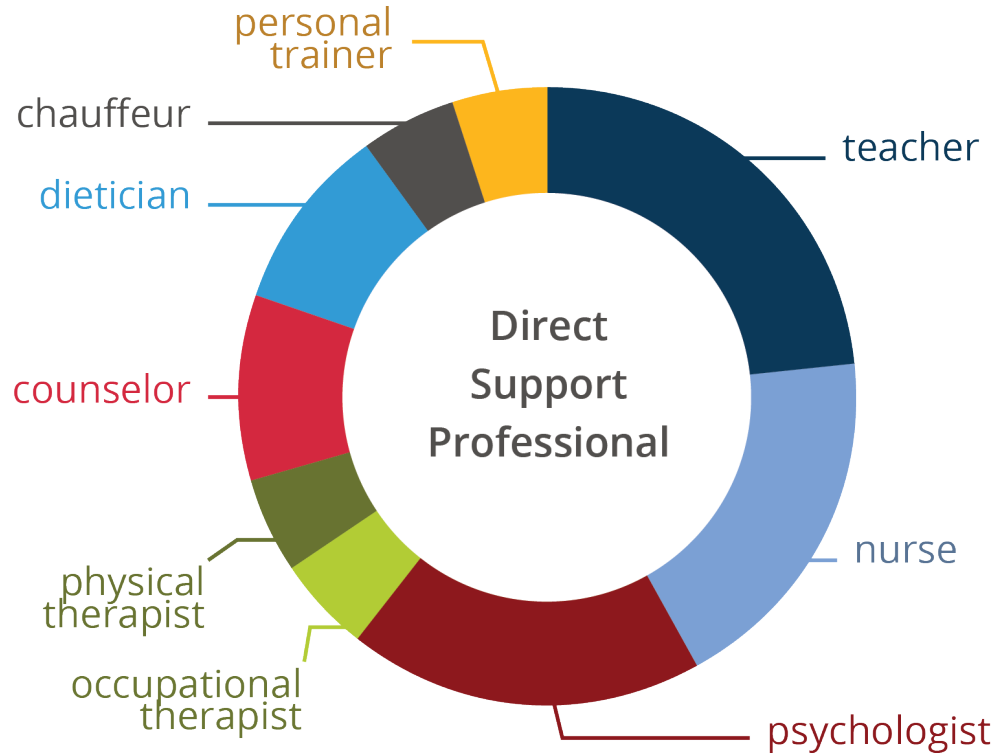
# Who are “DSWs”?

- Direct Support Professionals
- personal care attendant
- direct care worker
- direct support staff
- community living specialist
- job coach
- employment specialist

Others?



# DSW Scope of Practice - Multidisciplinary

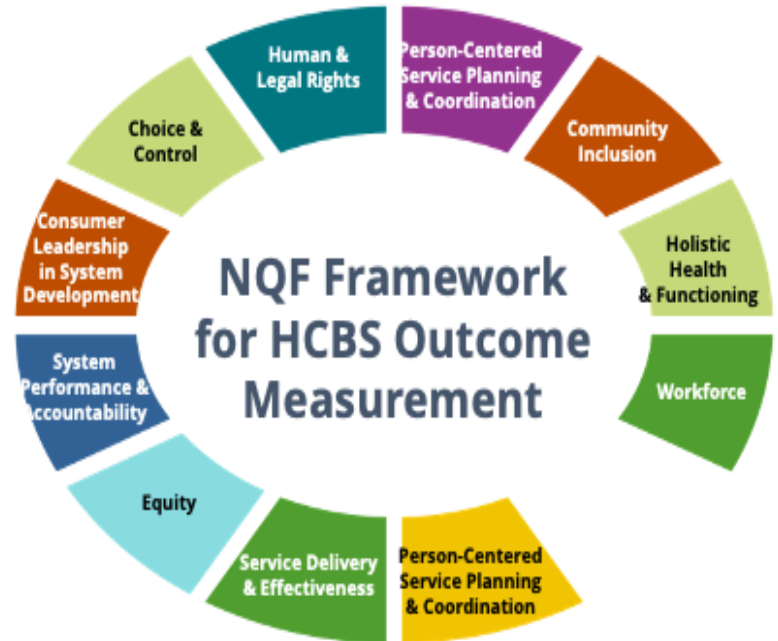


# Intersection Between Workforce and LTSS

Direct Support  
Workforce



Long-Term Services  
and Supports



# An Increasingly **Diverse** Home Care Workforce

**87%**

WOMEN

**43%**

PUBLIC  
ASSISTANCE

**61%**

PEOPLE OF  
COLOR

**47**

MEDIAN AGE

**29%**

IMMIGRANTS



**PHI**

QUALITY CARE  
THROUGH  
QUALITY JOBS

SOURCE: PHI (2022). For detailed citations and information about PHI's research methodology, please contact [info@phinational.org](mailto:info@phinational.org)



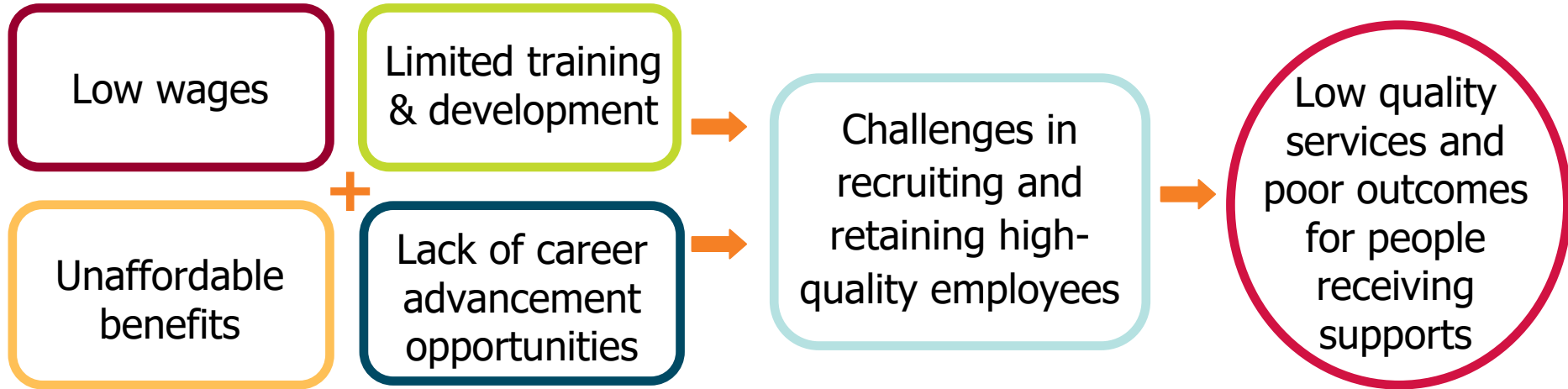
Challenges to the Workforce



**According to PHI, due to projected job growth and job separation, there will be **7.9 Million** direct care job openings between 2020 and 2030.**



# A National Problem



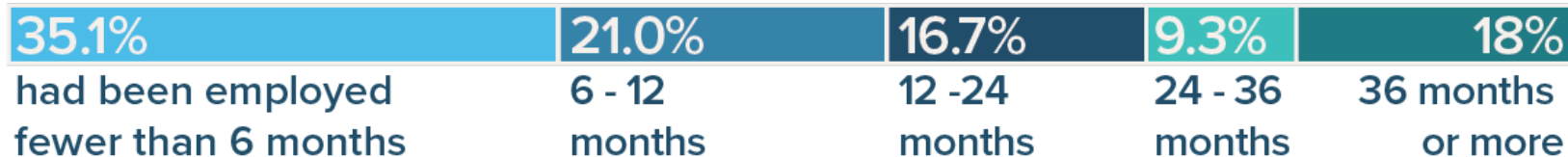
# Direct Support Workforce: Turnover

Average turnover range for DSPs: 28.5% - 87.5%



**43.3%** state average turnover rate for DSPs

Of the DSPs who left positions in the calendar year 2021:



(NCI, 2022)

# Direct Support Workforce: Status & Wages

Of the DSPs employed in the 3,838 reporting organizations in 29 states



**29.3%**  
were part-time

**70.7%**  
were full-time



Wages paid by responding providers



**\$14.41 average hourly wage**

average hourly wage range: \$6.50-\$29.15

(NCI, 2022)

## **Initial survey**

April-May 2020 (N=8,914)

## **6-month follow-up survey**

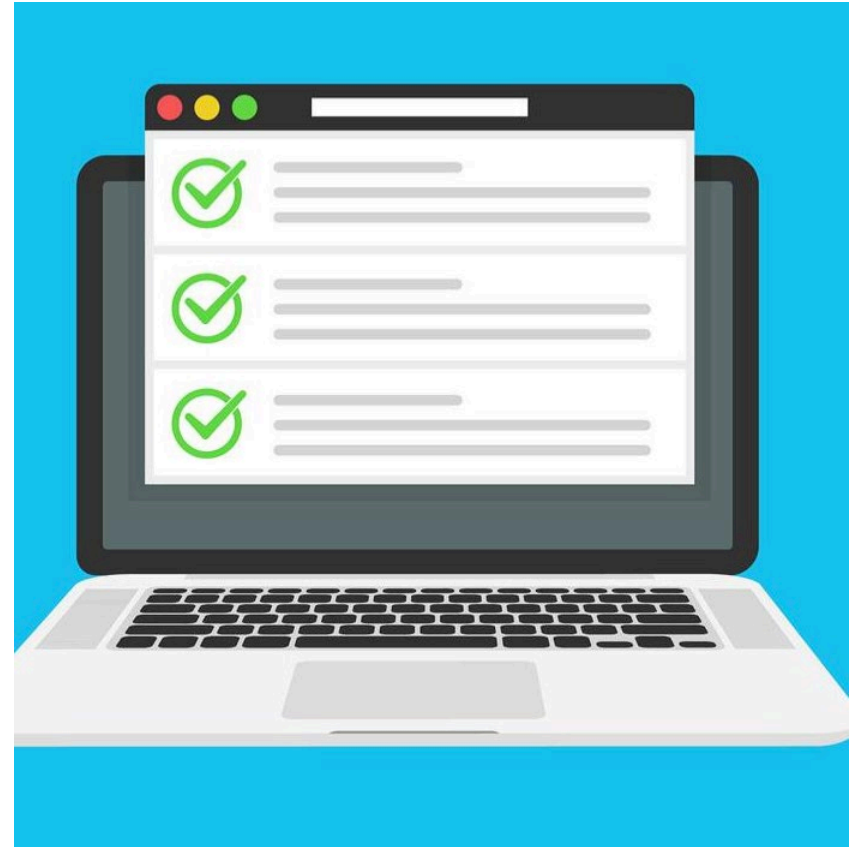
November 2020-January 2021 (N=8,846)

## **12-month follow-up survey**

June-July 2021 (N=5,356)

## **24-month follow-up survey**

June-July 2022 (N=2,657)



## Wages

Primary wage earners:	73%
Pre-pandemic average DSW wage:	\$15.31
Current DSW average hourly wage:	\$16.58
<b>Not</b> getting paid more during COVID:	47%



Pettingell S, Bershadsky J, Hewitt A, Lahti Anderson L, Hall S, Smith J, Sanders M, Kleist B, Zhang A, & Oteman Q. (2022). *Direct Support Workforce and COVID-19 National Survey Report: 24-month Follow-up*. <https://www.ici.umn.edu/covid19-survey>



## Additional hours worked

No additional hours:	33%
1-15 additional hours:	35%
16-30 additional hours:	16%
31+ additional hours:	16%



(Pettingell et al., 2022)



What are one or two major ways that staff turnover and vacancies at your primary employer (if any) have affected you and your co-workers?





## Impact of Turnover & Vacancy Responses

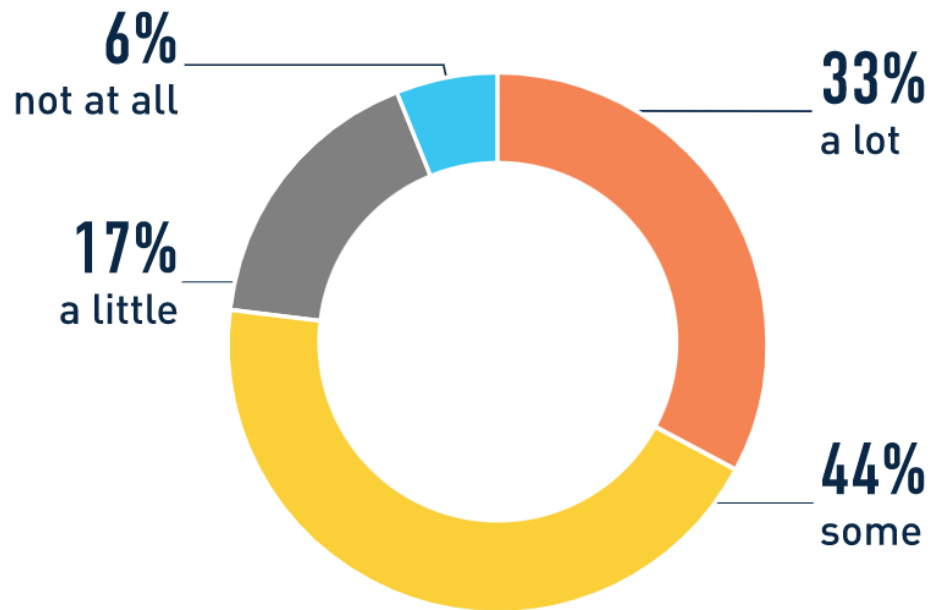
- Changes in workload
- Pay & workload disparity
- Stress & burnout
- Staffing issues



- Anxiety 56%
- Physical and/or emotional burnout 55%
- Sleep difficulties 43%
- Depression 40%
- Physical health complications 21%
- Post-traumatic Stress Disorder 9%
- Other mental health issues 10%
- Suicidal ideation 4%
- Other reasons 4%



# Impact of Health Experiences on DSP Work Life



What was the most significant positive change in your work life two years after the start of the pandemic?



## Positive change for Respondents: Trends

- Positive changes in the work environment
- Increased pay
- Things returning to normal
- Improved supports and services
- Personal benefits



(Pettingell et al., 2022)



*"Seeing the people we work with have more fulfillment as they are able to get out, socialize and learn to grow into as much independence as they are able to do so" (DSP)*

*"Pay raise. Feel more appreciated at my job" (DSP)*

*"Staff all getting along better, and communication has improved" (DSP)*

(Pettingell et al., 2022)



## Positive change for DSWs: Quotes, continued

*"I have a lot more understanding of the importance of my position, and of this field in general. Without direct care support staff, people who are mentally and physically handicapped could not live their lives to the fullest, as they deserve. I have more of an appreciation for the clients that I help support, because I've seen how much they need people like me and my coworkers, and trust us to their full capacity to provide them with a life worth living" (FLS)*

*"Gained a better perspective on engaging the people I support in and around the neighborhood they live in." (DSP)*

(Pettingell et al., 2022)



**Thank you!**







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