

Why Care?



Some 23,000 individuals with developmental disabilities are supported in community settings in Illinois, but many of the direct support employees who provide that support don't earn enough to support their own families.

Fact: Direct support workers earn wages below the poverty level.

A recent IARF (Illinois Association of Rehabilitation Facilities) salary survey pegged the average direct support wage in Illinois at \$9.35 per hour-21% below the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty threshold of \$11.32 for a family of four. This largely female workforce is often forced to work many overtime hours or even hold down a second job just to make ends meet. Many of these workers and their families have to fall back on public benefits such as Medicaid and food stamps, creating additional expenditures for state government.

Fact: No Cost of Doing Business Increase for community providers since 2007.

Low wages are a consequence of the historically low reimbursement rates for community services. According to the State of the States in Developmental Disabilities report, Illinois ranks 41st of 50 in fiscal effort for these services. The General Assembly has not awarded a Cost of Doing Business Increase to community developmental disability agencies since 2007. Over the last 10 fiscal years, increases in state funding to these agencies have averaged less than 1% per year, for a total of 9.5%. By contrast, the CPI increased 23% over the same period. Community agencies were forced to cover increases in health insurance, fuel, and other costs from the small rate increases, while wages fell further behind.

Fact: Low pay drives high staff turnover.

The lack of adequate wages for employees who perform the challenging work of supporting individuals with disabilities results in high employee turnover, which in turn, negatively impacts the quality of services provided. In 2008, the Arc of the United States documented annual turnover rates among direct support staff of 35% to 70%. According to a 2007 study, the national turnover rate averages 50% (Hewitt and Larson, 2007). Higher wages are proven to reduce staff turnover, improving stability and quality of services while reducing employer training costs.

The Care Campaign solution.

We propose increases in reimbursement rates linked directly to increases in direct support staff wages. The goal is to increase those wages to \$13 an hour at minimum. To achieve this goal, the Care Campaign supports **Senate Bill 2604**, sponsored by Sens. Heather Steans and Mattie Hunter, and **House Bill 3698**, sponsored by Rep. Robyn Gabel.



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