



# Division Update for Individuals, Families and Providers

December 18, 2025

# Agenda

- Next DDD Update Webinar
- Direct Care Workforce Strategic Plan
- VF/EA Fiscal Intermediary Transition
- NJ's Jan. 1 Minimum Wage Increase
- Peer-to-Peer Networking Session
- Family Networking Session
- WIN Time Series Session
- Transition to Adult Life Winter Welcome Sessions
- January 1, 2026, DSP and DSP Supervisor Wage Increase
- New Jersey Care Workforce Needs Assessment
- Resources

# Next DDD Update Webinar

- Reminder – The next DDD Update Webinar is scheduled for Thursday January 22, 2026, at 10:30am.
  - [Register for January Webinar](#)
- The complete 2026 schedule of DDD Update Webinars, including registration links, will be available on the Division's [Public Update Meetings](#) webpage shortly.

# Direct Care Workforce Strategic Plan

- DHS has released the [New Jersey Direct Care Workforce Strategic Plan](#), a comprehensive roadmap to support, grow, and stabilize the workforce that provides essential care to older adults, individuals with disabilities, and residents with behavioral health needs.
- Aided by a technical assistance opportunity provided by the Direct Care Workforce (DCW) Strategies Center, the plan outlines more than 40 data-driven strategies to improve recruitment, strengthen training and career pathways, and support the long-term retention of direct care workers including direct support professionals (DSPs), certified home health aides (CHHAs), personal care assistants, certified nursing assistants (CNAs), peer recovery specialists, youth support professionals, and self-directed employees.

# Direct Care Workforce Strategic Plan

- The plan was developed through a robust interagency working group that included representatives from the following New Jersey agencies and divisions:
  - The Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOL)
  - The Department of Education (DOE)
  - The Department of Children and Families (DCF)
  - The Department of Health (DOH)
  - The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE)
  - The Division of Consumer Affairs (within the Office of the Attorney General)
  - The Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA)

# Direct Care Workforce Strategic Plan

- DHS also included representatives from the following internal divisions:
  - The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)
  - The Division of Aging (DoAS)
  - The Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)
  - The Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services (Medicaid/DMAHS)
- The plan focuses on work across three major areas.

# Direct Care Workforce Strategic Plan

- **Strengthening Data Collection & Stakeholder Input.** To better understand workforce needs and measure progress, the plan calls for:
  - **Regular listening sessions** with workers, employers, and service recipients.
  - **A formal Direct Care Workforce Advisory Board** to elevate worker voices in policymaking.
  - **Incentives to boost employer participation in existing surveys**, including the National Core Indicators DSP workforce survey.
  - **Expanded surveys and focus groups** examining job satisfaction, turnover, training barriers, and advancement needs.
  - **Monitoring** to ensure wage increases and rate enhancements reach workers.
  - **Centralized, cross-agency workforce data collection.**
  - **Federal advocacy** for a national occupational classification code for DSPs.

# Direct Care Workforce Strategic Plan

- **Attracting Talent & Building Educational Pathways.** To expand the talent pipeline, recommendations include:
  - **Integrating direct care options into job seeker services**, including one-stop and community-based programs.
  - **Statewide outreach on training, scholarships, apprenticeships, and programs** such as community college DSP training, CHHA scholarships, and home- and community-based services loan redemption.
  - **Strengthening training pathways** across high schools, community colleges, and adult education.
  - **Developing stackable credentials** across direct care roles.
  - **Expanding employer partnerships** to connect trainees to jobs more quickly and reduce onboarding barriers.



# Direct Care Workforce Strategic Plan

- **Creating a Sustainable, Rewarding Workplace.** To retain experienced workers, the plan recommends:
  - **Career ladders and advancement opportunities**, especially for DSPs and workers without industry-recognized credentials.
  - **Improved supervisory training** to better support frontline staff.
  - **Recognition programs** that highlight the value of direct care work.
  - **Supports that reduce employment barriers, including** child care, transportation, and mental health resources.
  - **Burnout-prevention strategies** such as workload management and wellness supports.
  - **Employer tools and technical assistance** to strengthen workplace culture, scheduling, and data tracking

# VF/EA Fiscal Intermediary (FI) Transition

- The VF/EA FI Transition from PPL to Acumen has concluded.
- Any persons with outstanding issues must immediately engage their Support Coordinator and Acumen (if they have not already done so).
- Resources
  - [Acumen – NJ](#) website
  - NJ Client Service Agent: 848-400-5903 or [Enrollment-NJ@acumen2.net](mailto:Enrollment-NJ@acumen2.net)
  - Vendor Service Agent Team: 848-400-5738 or [Vendor-NJ@acumen2.net](mailto:Vendor-NJ@acumen2.net)
  - For 24/7 payroll, technical, and after-hours support: 833-892-0413

# VF/EA Fiscal Intermediary (FI) Transition

- Unless directed otherwise, SDEs and vendors will have three pay cycles — *including the pay cycle in which December 6 falls* — to submit their time and service entries to PPL for payment.
  - For SDEs, the last date to submit hours to PPL that were worked on or before December 6, 2025, is **January 6, 2026**.
  - For vendors, the last date to submit services to PPL that were delivered on or before December 6, 2025, is **January 14, 2026**.

# NJ's Jan. 1 Minimum Wage Increase

- New Jersey's statewide minimum wage will increase to **\$15.92** per hour on **January 1, 2026**.
- This means all New Jersey employers, *including individuals/families who employ a self-directed employee (SDE)*, must make sure their employee hourly wages are at or above \$15.92 as of January 1 for any DDD-funded service.
- Please note that fiscal intermediaries are prohibited by law from compensating self-directed employees for any amount less than \$15.92 per hour beginning January 1, 2026.

# NJ's Jan. 1 Minimum Wage Increase

- For (VF/EA) Participants, with Acumen as the Fiscal Intermediary:
  - Acumen will send Support Coordinators new billable rates for any SDE whose hourly wage is below the 1/1/2026 minimum. The notice will include instructions for employers wishing to make a further change to the SDE's hourly wage.
- For Agency with Choice (AWC) Participants, with Easterseals NJ as the Fiscal Intermediary:
  - Easterseals provided managing employers of any SDE whose hourly wage is below the 1/1/26 minimum wage instructions on submitting required wage change form(s). If you have questions or need help, please contact [awcverification@nj.easterseals.com](mailto:awcverification@nj.easterseals.com).
- In all cases, plans must be revised and approved, with a billable rate that reflects at least \$15.92 per hour, on or before **December 19, 2025**.



## The DDD Office of Education on Self-Directed Services Winter Networking Sessions

### Virtual Peer-to-Peer Networking Session

For adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD) who are or are interested in self-directing all or some of their DDD services.

**Wednesday, January 14, 2026**

**6 – 7:30 p.m.**

**[Register for Jan. 14 Peer-to-Peer Networking Session](#)**

### Virtual Statewide Family Networking Session

For families that are or are interested in self-directing all or some of their family member's DDD services.

**Wednesday, January 27, 2026**

**1 – 2:30 p.m.**

**[Register for Jan. 27 Family Networking Session](#)**



# Upcoming WIN Time Virtual Session

- WIN Time virtual sessions provide a standing opportunity for support coordinators, supports brokers, providers and others to learn and ask questions about self-directed services, and network with other professionals.
- Next WIN Time Session:
  - January 21, 2026 12 – 1 pm
  - [Register for Jan. 21 WIN Time Session](#)

NEW JERSEY HUMAN SERVICES  
Division of Developmental Disabilities

Office of Education on Self-Directed Services (OESDS)  
Presents:

## W.I.N. Time

**Who?**  
Virtual **What I Need** (W.I.N.) Time is for professionals who have questions or just want to learn more about DDD self-directed services.

**When?**  
Every other month!  
Next session is  
**Jan. 21, 2026**  
**12 – 1 p.m.**

**What?**  
A time for **YOU** to tell **US** what you need to better educate and support people who want to self-direct their services.

**Where?** **VIRTUAL!**  
**REGISTER HERE**  
Or scan the QR code  
Questions? Email Us!  
DDD.OESDS@DHS.NJ.GOV

**Why?**  
To give support coordinators, supports brokers, providers, and others a standing opportunity to learn about DDD self-directed services, ask questions, and network.

# WELCOME

Individuals & Families

## Transition to Adult Life Winter Welcome Sessions

### Transition to Adult Life Winter Welcome Sessions

- January 8, 12–1 PM: [DDD Lunchtime Welcome Session](#)
- January 22, 6–7:30 PM: [DDD Evening Welcome Session with Topic Breakouts](#)



# January 1, 2026 DSP and DSP Supervisor Wage Increase

- During the Murphy Administration, significant gains in Direct Support Professional (DSP) and DSP Supervisor wages were achieved.
  - In 2018, the average DSP wage was \$12.66 per hour.
  - In 2025, it is projected to be at ~\$20 per hour.
- Each year, the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development sets the minimum wage for the coming year based on Consumer Price Index (CPI) data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- Effective January 1, 2026, the State of New Jersey's statewide minimum wage will increase by .43 cents to **\$15.92** per hour for most employees.

# January 1, 2026 DSP and DSP Supervisor Wage Increase

- To avoid eroding the gains made between DSP and DSP Supervisor wages and minimum wage during the Murphy Administration, the NJ Legislature allocated \$9.1M (State) to the Division.
- Effective January 1, 2026, this funding will be used to increase DSP and DSP Supervisor wages by about .46 per hour.
  - The required Public Notice for the Rate Changes to support the increase will occur shortly.
  - Individual budgets will receive a corresponding increase to support the increased rates to applicable services.

# New Jersey Care Workforce Needs Assessment

- The New Jersey Department of Labor (DoL) is conducting the **New Jersey Care Workforce Needs Assessment**.
- **Purpose & Goals:** The initiative will identify the care workforce needs and guide solutions to address persistent challenges such as high turnover, low wages, limited advancement opportunities, and uneven access to education and professional development.
- **Learn more** by watching a recording of the introductory webinar held on October 23, 2025. [Introductory Webinar Recording](#)
- **What?** DoL is seeking existing groups of care professionals they can join to conduct a focus group session, like association meetings, advisory councils, or other gatherings of care professionals.

# New Jersey Care Workforce Needs Assessment

- The focus groups are an integral part of the statewide initiative and invite **frontline care professionals** to share detailed experiences beyond survey responses. These conversations will explore challenges such as high turnover, low wages, limited career advancement, and uneven access to training. By creating space for candid dialogue, the focus groups ensure that care professionals' voices directly inform actionable strategies to be included in the forthcoming Care Workforce Report and Implementation Plan. Insights gathered will guide recommendations for policy, funding, and program improvements aimed at building a more sustainable and equitable care system across New Jersey.

# New Jersey Care Workforce Needs Assessment

- **Who?** Focus group participants are frontline care professionals providing direct assistance to people who cannot fully care for themselves due to age, illness, disability, or other conditions. These roles include child care professionals, youth serving professionals, home health aides, certified nursing assistants, direct support professionals, self-directed employees, doulas, and community health workers, to name a few. They work in homes, hospitals, long-term care facilities, and community settings. Their experiences and perspectives are critical as we shape a roadmap leading to the **Care Workforce Report and Implementation Plan**, to be delivered in early 2026.

# New Jersey Care Workforce Needs Assessment

- **Time Commitment:** Each focus group will be approximately 60 minutes in length.
- **Details:** Focus group members will receive a stipend for participation. Most focus groups will be held virtually. Focus groups will be recorded, but no individual names will be published in the report.
- **Contact:** Interested individuals can contact [pattie@leadingtomovement.org](mailto:pattie@leadingtomovement.org) before December 31, 2025.
- If you haven't yet completed the survey, complete it here: <https://link.edgepilot.com/s/11d198ee/AnFUjglxpEu8GXH71InbPQ?u=https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NJCareWorkforce>
- The survey takes approximately 15 minutes. Please **share the survey link with others** in the care workforce.

# Resources

## Community Resources

- [Disability Rights New Jersey](#)  
800-922-7233 (toll-free in New Jersey only)
- [Ombudsman for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities and their Families](#)  
609-984-7764
- [New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities](#)  
800-792-8858
- [The Boggs Center on Disability and Human Development](#)  
732-235-9300

## DDD Resources

- For issues, call the DDD [Community Services Office](#) for your county or 800-832-9173.
- For routine questions:  
[DDD.FeeForService@dhs.nj.gov](mailto:DDD.FeeForService@dhs.nj.gov)
- To report suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation:  
Call 800-832-9173, then press 1