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 Contact: Stephanie Van Koevering, 517-974-6065

Survey of Michigan Direct Care Workers Shows Impact of COVID-19 on Profession

Temporary Wage Increase Essential for Michigan DCWs

State policymakers’ decision to add funding to support Michigan’s Direct Care Workers has made a notable difference to their compensation, according to a national survey released this month.

While Michigan’s Direct Care workforce started off at a mean hourly wage that was substantially lower than their peers across the U.S., 75 percent of them benefited from the temporary wage increase introduced by the governor and legislature, compared to just 30 percent across the nation.

“These increases show that Michigan families facing developmental disabilities and mental illness were better supported during the pandemic by workers with added incentives to be on the job,” said Sherri Boyd, executive director of The Arc Michigan. “We very much hope the temporary increase is made permanent, so we can continue to offer the strongest possible services to Michigan families.”

The survey also showed Michigan’s Direct Care Workers were well-supported during the pandemic with PPE, training, and social distancing. These protections allowed them to provide essential personal care, training, emotional support and respite to an estimated 100,000 Michigan residents with mental illnesses or developmental disabilities.

“During the hardest period in recent memory, Michigan can be proud of the fact that its people—from the state capitol to the smallest, quietest moment of generous service from one human being to another—all of us rose to the occasion,” said Scott Schrum, CEO of Residential Opportunities Incorporated. “It’s humbling.”

The Institute on Community Integration and the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals collaborated to gather evidence about the experiences of the direct support workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic and to inform efforts to better prepare for future waves of this pandemic. Full survey results are available at <https://ici.umn.edu/covid19-survey>, with the Michigan-specific results available [here](#).

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