



Mental Health Association  
in Michigan



MICHIGAN ASSISTED LIVING ASSOCIATION



Michigan Developmental  
Disabilities Institute



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# Michigan behavioral health leaders honor Direct Support Professionals, call for emergency funds as crisis worsens daily

## *Without Direct Care Workers, Michigan’s behavioral health framework quickly collapses*

It’s Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week in Michigan and behavioral health leaders have an important message for state lawmakers: honor these essential workers by providing emergency funding to keep them on the job.

“Direct Support Professionals provide critical support to Michigan’s most vulnerable families and without their support, many families are forced to go without much-needed care or entering emergency rooms for extended periods of time,” said Sherri Boyd, executive director of The Arc Michigan. “As we honor these critical workers this week, we urge legislators to take action to support them and our vulnerable families before the entire behavioral health framework collapses.”

Direct Support Professionals (often known as Direct Care Workers) provide a broad range of support to individuals with disabilities and mental illnesses including assistance with personal care, appointments, medication administration, preparation of meals, and other general matters, as well as transportation to work, school and additional activities.

“Michigan families are facing a state of emergency as it’s getting harder and harder to keep Direct Care Workers on the job due to low pay,” said Jan Lampman, owner of Community Drive. “Our labor market, coupled with inflation and gas prices is pushing many direct support professionals away from the system that needs them so badly.”

All across the state, salaries are going up for everyone except Direct Care Workers. Recent survey findings show that workers earn a starting wage of \$14.35 an hour, that includes the \$2.35 per hour premium pay increase the state provided.

“Despite increases in recent years, the level of compensation for direct support professionals is still too low to keep them on the job,” said Todd Culver, CEO of Incompass Michigan. “Today, employee turnover among Direct Care Workers is nearly 45 percent, which leaves thousands of families in the lurch with little to no options for critical care and support.”

Governor Whitmer proclaimed Sept. 11-17, 2022 as Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week in Michigan. Among the well-deserved recognition, a broad coalition of organizations that supports people with developmental disabilities and mental illnesses is continuing to call for action. That urgency of that call has escalated as Michigan families face a state of emergency due to the lack of available care.

The coalition is seeking \$175 million in emergency funds from the Legislature to keep Direct Care Workers in the behavioral health sector on the job. Those funds would pay retention bonuses for more than 50,000 Direct Support Professionals to keep them on the job.

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