Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities
Workforce Supports Subcommittee Meeting
Meeting Minutes

Date of Meeting: Monday, August 31, 2026
Time: 2 PM – 3 PM
Virtual

This is a meeting of the **Workforce Supports Subcommittee** of the permanent Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. This subcommittee will collect data and analyze initiatives that address the workforce crisis for people who provide services to individuals with disabilities.

	Members Participating Remotely
1	Leo Sarkissian – The Arc of Massachusetts
2	Chris White – Road to Responsibility, Inc
3	Ann Lynch – Massachusetts Attorney General's Office
	Members Not Present
4	Hon. Denise Garlick – Commission Chair
5	Carl Richardson – Massachusetts State House
6	Rachel Kaprielian – Triangle, Inc
7	Senator Vanna Howard – Massachusetts Senate
8	Rep. Jay Livingstone – House of Representatives
9	Victoria Gill – Disabled Persons Protection Commission
	Advisory Council Members Present
1	Erin Weinman – MicroTek, Inc

	Action items	Person responsible
1	Reach out to Executive Office of Economic Development Assistant Secretary Vega regarding: ▪ Statewide workforce development and partnership strategies to address disability service workforce shortages and ▪ Explore community-based workforce models serving BIPOC communities to understand local recruitment and retention approaches.	Chris (two emails sent)
2	Lurie Disability Center nationwide direct care workers survey results and findings (fall 2026)	Imene
3	Explore a panel of 2-3 peer states (Indiana, New Jersey, Maryland, North Carolina) to share strategies addressing workforce shortages in disability services. (Imene – SAME, Leo – The Arc.)	Leo & Imene

4	Develop proposal for a panel on the profile of WS staff, including workforce size, lived experience and working conditions, workplace stressors, compensation and value, and opportunities for career pathways and professional development (internal and external).	All

Agenda

1. Welcome, Roll Call

2. Human Services Research Institute Presentation by: Kate Brady, Grassroots Project Co-Director; Alixe Bonardi, Vice President - IDD, Aging & Disability; Lindsay DuBois, Research Associate
    - Key highlights:
        - Kate Brady, Alixe Bonardi, and Lindsay DuBois of the Human Services Research Institute presented on the State of the Direct Support Workforce, with a focus on National Core Indicators (NCI) data and current workforce conditions affecting services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
        - The presenters explained that National Core Indicators (NCI) is used to turn the experiences of people receiving services into data that can be used for quality monitoring. NCI collects information directly from people who use disability and aging service systems, families, and those who deliver services. The presentation noted participation by 48 states in NCI-IDD individual and family surveys, 26 states in NCI-Aging and Disabilities, and 30 states in the NCI-IDD State of the Workforce survey.
        - The presentation emphasized that the DSP workforce crisis is longstanding, with high turnover among Direct Support Professionals for more than 30 years. Unlike many other occupations, DSP wages do not respond in the same way to typical labor-market dynamics because reimbursement rates are largely determined by state Medicaid agencies and legislatures.
        - Presenters described a workforce system facing both persistent staffing shortages and growing demand for services. Staffing shortages have resulted in agencies turning away referrals and long waiting lists. At the same time, the presentation cited an estimate that LTSS employers will need to fill 9.3 million direct-support job openings between 2021 and 2031.
        - Massachusetts-specific NCI data highlighted concerns about the consistency of direct support. 63% of Massachusetts respondents reported that staff change too often, compared with the NCI-IDD average of 42%. Massachusetts also fell below the NCI-IDD average on several measures of people's experiences with staff: 79% compared with 86% said staff do things the way the person wants them done; 85% compared with 90% said staff support them in the way they want when in the community; and 85%

compared with 91% said staff always come and leave when they are supposed to.
    - The presenters reviewed how the NCI State of the Workforce survey gathers workforce information. The survey is administered annually to eligible provider agencies serving adults receiving supports through state developmental disability systems, with provider agencies self-reporting their workforce data through an online collection system.
    - The 2024 State of the Workforce data represented more than 344,000 DSPs and 3,936 provider agencies across 26 states and Washington, D.C. Among participating agencies, 70% provided residential supports, 49% provided in-home supports, and 56% provided non-residential supports.
    - The presentation also identified a shift in the types of agencies providing services. The percentage identified as private for-profit agencies increased from 45% in 2020 to 62% in 2024, while private nonprofit agencies declined from 50% to 35% over the same period.
    - Wages and economic stability were another major focus. The national median DSP wage in 2024 was $18.39 per hour, and the presentation compared DSP wages with the amount an individual would need to earn to meet a living-wage standard.
    - Looking at national workforce trends, the presentation showed that DSP wages increased between 2021 and 2024 while turnover and the percentage of agencies turning away referrals declined. Median hourly wages increased from $14.50 in 2021 to $18.39 in 2024; turnover declined from 43.3% to 37.1%; and the percentage of responding agencies turning away or stopping new referrals because of staffing issues declined from 52.6% to 26.6%.
    - Despite those improvements, the data continued to show significant workforce instability. The presentation reported a 37% turnover rate, and among DSPs who left responding agencies, 64% had been employed for less than one year. It also reported that 27% of responding agencies had turned away or stopped accepting new service referrals because of staffing issues.
    - Massachusetts data from the ADDP Workforce Metrics Survey showed improvement in staff vacancy rates, declining from 24% in 2023 to 19% in 2024 and 15% in 2025. For context, the presentation noted that the overall statewide job-opening rate reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics was just over 3% in December 2025. The ADDP survey covered staffing across residential services, Day Habilitation, Community-Based Day Supports, supported employment, Shared Living, and Adult Foster Care.
- Discussion:
    - Members discussed the 63% figure related to staff changing too often, noting that the number was concerning and could potentially be even higher.
    - The discussion noted that many states used ARPA funding for workforce-related investments and enhancements.

- Members questioned whether the improvement in the 15% Massachusetts provider vacancy rate fully reflects current workforce conditions, including whether limited expansion of services may have affected the reported vacancy rate.
- Immigration-related workforce challenges were discussed, including the loss of 119 staff at one provider agency related to Haitian Temporary Protected Status (TPS). Members noted that workforce needs continue to grow and that providers are increasingly serving people with significant medical and behavioral support needs, making recruitment particularly challenging.
- Members discussed how quality improvement efforts and measures of satisfaction can be complex, noting that lower satisfaction scores do not necessarily mean that quality has declined and may sometimes reflect increased expectations.
- The discussion addressed retention and job quality, including concern that economic circumstances or limited employment alternatives may contribute to workers remaining in DSP positions, which does not necessarily translate into a stable, high-quality workforce.
- Members also noted that immigration status can limit employment opportunities for some workers.
- The discussion highlighted that some long-term DSPs remain in direct support roles because they value the work and do not necessarily want to move into supervisory or management positions.
- Wage compression was raised as a concern, particularly when experienced DSPs who have worked in the field for many years earn only slightly more than newly hired staff.
- Members discussed future planning for people with disabilities, including how families can build networks of support that will remain in place as parents and caregivers age or are no longer able to provide support.
- The importance of grassroots advocacy and building stronger advocacy networks was also discussed.
- Members discussed the challenge of balancing state budgets with the need to adequately fund the workforce. The discussion included work with health economists examining the broader public cost when workers are not paid a living wage and must rely on other state-funded programs for support.
- Members also discussed the importance of presenting workforce investments in the context of fiscal responsibility and the broader costs associated with inadequate wages.
- The Subcommittee discussed exploring a future panel with two to three peer states, including Indiana, New Jersey, Maryland, and North Carolina, to learn about strategies being used to address workforce shortages across disability services.

3. Adjournment

Next meeting dates

- November 19, 2026