

# 2009 KEY FINDINGS

## Ohio Compensation, Benefits & Turnover Survey



### Ohio is facing a workforce shortage crisis of care givers for individuals with developmental disabilities.

#### Direct support staff turnover has reached an alarming rate of 50.3%.

This turnover rate results in inconsistency of care which can be extremely detrimental to individuals with developmental disabilities. Lower wages for direct support staff, increased autonomy and responsibility makes recruiting and retaining staff nearly impossible.

*"My brother's care givers are like family and provide stability. He bonds so closely with them that when they leave he acts out and gets extremely depressed and sad."*

- Alice Schlemmer, Sister of 52-year old brother with Down Syndrome

**There is a major wage disparity between the private and public sector in Ohio and nationally.** In 2009, wages for direct support staff at OPRA member agencies and state operated developmental centers varied significantly. The average hourly rate from the OPRA Compensation, Benefits and Turnover survey is \$9.62. The developmental centers' estimated average hourly wage is \$16.66. This is a difference of \$7.04 per hour or 73%.

**Wages of direct support staff in Ohio actually decreased on average of .21% annually from 2007 to 2009, and have not kept pace with inflation.**

Direct Care Wages	CPI	Social Security
-.21%	2.8%	4.1%

#### The future for increases in direct support staff wages is impacted by several factors:

- Wage compression resulting from the mandated annual increases in minimum wage;
- In the waiver environment, provider reimbursement rates haven't been frozen since 2005, based on 2003 costs;
- Increased demands on direct support staff in non-direct care areas;
- Workforce shortages caused by a 50.3% turnover rate among direct support staff; and
- Rising employee related expenses, such as health care premiums.

**Employers are hard pressed to maintain current employee benefits.** The median percentage of health care insurance premiums paid by employers is 78% and continues to fall compared to previous studies. Eighty percent of reporting agencies have employees receiving public assistance.

**The wage compression associated with frozen rates, the regular increases to minimum wage, the growing need for employees in comparable jobs and the projected lack of available workforce contribute to the crisis we are facing in Ohio. We need to act now!**

### RECOMMENDATIONS TO EASE CRISIS

- Adjust waiver payment rates annually to keep pace with increases in costs such as the minimum wage, health care, and workers' compensation.
- Simplify waiver service and billing documentation requirements.
- Adequately fund the ICF/MR program to reflect the costs built into the reimbursement formula.
- Develop statewide strategies to address direct support staff turnover and vacancy rates.
- Study and close gap wage disparity between wages and benefits between public and private sectors.
- Examine administrative cost associated with providing Medicaid services, especially costs not associated directly with direct care. Reinvest any savings from efficiencies in direct support staff wages, benefits & training.



*"The consistency of direct care staff significantly impacts the quality of lives."*

Julie P. Gentile, M.D.  
Wright State University

### IMPACT ON FAMILIES & INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

"A high turnover rate for direct care staff is a critical problem for those with developmental disabilities. Often these staff fill the same role as a family member. If a direct care staff leaves with no warning, it can take months or years for a patient to recover from the loss.

Direct care staff are also a vital source of collateral data that directly affects clinical decision making. If the direct care staff are not familiar with the patient they are accompanying to a doctor appointment, it can be disabling to me as a psychiatrist."

Julie P. Gentile, M.D.  
Associate Professor of Psychiatry  
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The OPRA 2009 Compensation, benefits and turnover study was completed in July-September, 2009 by:

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