

# 2011 KEY FINDINGS

## Ohio Compensation, Benefits & Turnover Survey



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

Direct support staff turnover has reached an alarming rate of 42.8%. The level remains substantially higher than the Bureau of Labor Statistics' comparative benchmark of 27% for its Healthcare and Social Assistance classification.

**"As a mother of a disabled son (Christopher), I am able to enjoy life because of DSPs providing supports to him. Turnover greatly affects his life due to his challenging behaviors. Having consistent care enables Christopher to build a relationship, providing a feeling of being safe and valued, which enriches his life." - Shirley Russell**

Direct Support Professionals (DSP) account for the vast majority of employees providing direct care at OPRA-member facilities, yet their average pay places them below the Federal Poverty Guidelines (for a family of four). **90% of reporting agencies have employees receiving public assistance.**

|   | 2009          | 2011          | % Change |
|---|---------------|---------------|----------|
| Federal Poverty Level <sup>1</sup>        | \$10.60       | \$10.75       | 1.4%     |
| Direct Support Professionals <sup>2</sup> | \$9.62        | \$9.71        | 0.9%     |
| <b>DSP% Under Poverty Level</b>           | <b>-10.2%</b> | <b>-10.7%</b> |          |

<sup>1</sup>Reflects the Federal Poverty Level for a family of four

<sup>2</sup>OPRA member employees with front line, support responsibilities

In addition, a major wage disparity remains a key problem between the private and public sectors in Ohio and nationally. In 2011, wages for Direct Support Professionals at OPRA-member agencies varied widely from pay rates for Therapeutic Program Workers (TPW), a comparable position at Ohio's state-operated developmental centers. The wage gap continually broadens, and community-based DSP wages are nearly 70% under the going rate for TPWs at state institutions.

|   | 2009          | 2011          | % Change |
|---|---------------|---------------|----------|
| Therapeutic Program Workers <sup>1</sup>  | \$13.21       | \$16.46       | 24.6%    |
| Direct Support Professionals <sup>2</sup> | \$9.62        | \$9.71        | 0.9%     |
| <b>DSP% Under Poverty Level</b>           | <b>-37.3%</b> | <b>-69.5%</b> |          |

<sup>1</sup>Pay rates for TPWs from Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities

<sup>2</sup>OPRA member employees with front line, support responsibilities

#### 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 have been frozen since 2005, and are based on 2003 costs;
- Increased demands on direct support staff in non-direct care areas;
- Workforce shortages caused by a 42.8% turnover rate among direct support staff; and
- Rising employee related expenses, such as health care premiums.

Employee benefits continue to suffer. The median percentage of health care insurance premiums paid by employers in 2011 was 75%, representing a three percent decrease since 2009, when 78% were paid.

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 to accommodate increases in costs such as 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 the gap in wages and benefits between public and private sectors.
- Examine administrative costs of Medicaid services, especially those not associated with direct care. Reinvest savings back into direct support staff wages, benefits and training.



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

**Julie P. Gentile, M.D.**  
Wright State University School of Medicine

#### 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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