Direct Support Professional Proposal

OVERVIEW:

According to the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Development Services, Direct Support Professionals(DSPs) are people who "provide day-to-day supports and who are employed by provider agencies in the Commonwealth's Medicaid Waiver system, may be referred to by many different names such as, direct care staff, direct support provider, direct support worker, residential counselor, daily living specialist, relief staff, direct service worker, developmental disabilities specialist, home care aides, and various other unofficial titles (2022)." Because of their role in working independently with individuals, VHWDA aims to create a standardized training program for high school students and individuals interested pursuing the DSP role.

TRAINING:

The training program will be created in a learning management system, CANVAS. It will incorporate the training materials provided by VCU's Partnership for People with Disabilities (Orientation Manual and PowerPoint), the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals and cover the following core competency areas that are required for qualification to provide DD Waiver Services in Virginia:

- **I.** The Role of the DSP
- **II.** Person-centered Supports
- **III.** Participant Empowerment
- **IV.** The Values that Support Life in the Community
  - I. Community Living Skills & Supports
  - II. Community and Service Networking
- **V.** Introduction to Developmental Disabilities
- **VI.** Communication
- **VII.** Assessment
- **VIII.** Facilitation of Services
- **IX.** Documentation
  - I. Waivers
  - II. Confidentiality
- **X.** Building and Maintaining Friendships & Relationships
- **XI.** Health and Safety
  - I. Supporting Health and Wellness
  - II. Crisis Prevention and Intervention
  - III. Choking Risk (Required)
  - IV. Changes in Mental Status (Required)
- **XII.** Organizational Participation
- **XIII.** Vocational, Educational & Career Support
- **XIV.** Advocacy
- **XV.** Ethics
- **XVI.** Professional Development

Additionally, the training program will incorporate Universal Instructional Design (UID), which incorporates the following principles:

- Instructional activities should be accessible and fair to all students.
- Flexibility: Provide flexibility in how students participate, present, and use materials.
- Perceptible information: Present information using multiple sensory strategies.
- Supportive environment: Create a supportive learning environment that accommodates both students and instructional methods.
- Assessment: Use fair, valid, and transparent assessment methods that provide multiple opportunities for expression.
- Understand: Understand the strengths and barriers of each student, as they may learn best in different ways.

Basic Life Support (BLS) Training

Basic Life Support (BLS) training equips Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) with essential life-saving skills, including CPR, AED use, and how to respond effectively to choking or cardiac emergencies. As DSPs often work with individuals who have disabilities or health conditions that may increase their risk for medical emergencies, this training is crucial. BLS ensures DSPs can provide immediate care while waiting for emergency responders, potentially preventing severe injury or death. The training also promotes confidence and preparedness, reinforcing a DSP's role in safeguarding the health and well-being of the people they support. The BLS training will be a certified program that will yield a recognized FA/CPR certificate.

TIMELINE:

November 2024: Consider drafting a Section 1 bill requiring VHWDA to develop an online asynchronous DSP training. (may not be needed or feasible without attaching to another bill given the bill limit this cycle)

January 2025 - April 2025: Collect resources, meet with key stakeholders, and formalize course outline.

April – July 2025: Curriculum development in Canvas and beta test course.

August 2025: Partner with the Department of Education to engage with Career and Technical Centers and school systems to offer the DSP training opportunity. Additionally, reach out to Community Colleges and other academic credential training providers.

September 2025: Launch and market DSP Training to the public and facilities needing DSPs.

November 2025: If engagement DOE engagement is low, partner with DBHDS, DMAS, and the Virginia Network of Private Providers to craft a section 1 bill authorizing DOE to offer DSP training as an option for Career Technical Center programs. Identify an appropriate member in the House and Senate to carry the bill.

BUDGET:

Item	Description	One-Time	Reoccurring
Curriculum Development	Instructional Designer	$14,000	
	Videos	$1000	
	NADSP Curricula	$4000	
	Materials	$1000	
LMS ***(VHWDA)***	CANVAS Access and Technical Assistance		$10,000
Program Manager ***(VHWDA)***	Full-time, Salary and Benefits.		$81,250
Marketing and Recruitment ***(VHWDA)***	Social Media, Exhibiting at Conferences, Printing		$12,000
NADSP Professional Affiliation ***(VHWDA)***	Affiliate Membership		$500
Immersion Activities ***(VHWDA/Student Expense)***	BLS Training (for 100 trainees)		$20,000
	Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare (for 100 learners)		$20,000
	Nutrition (for 100 learners)		$20,000
32-hour Medication Aide Training and Licensure ***(VHWDA/Student Expense)***	Course Tuition for 100 Trainees		$35,000
Total		$20,000	$178,750

Additional Recommendations (included in above Budget):

To enhance the skills and effectiveness of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), we recommend incorporating a 32-hour Medication Aide didactic training. This training equips DSPs with the knowledge to safely administer medications, an essential component of their role in providing comprehensive care to individuals with disabilities or chronic conditions. The training will cover medication management, safe administration techniques, recognizing side effects, and legal responsibilities, preparing DSPs to better support clients with complex health needs and medication regimens.

In addition, two immersion days are recommended to focus on nutrition education and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare. The nutrition immersion will equip DSPs with practical knowledge about healthy eating, dietary needs, and how to support clients in making informed nutritional choices. The AI immersion will introduce DSPs to emerging AI tools and applications in healthcare, with a focus on how these technologies can enhance personalized care and improve health outcomes. Together, these additional trainings aim to provide DSPs with a well-rounded skill set to offer higher-quality, more informed support.