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Michigan’s Direct Care Workers honored during Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week

Recognition essential as staffing shortage worsens, wages remain uncertain

This week, Michigan’s 50,000 Direct Care Workers are being honored for their tireless efforts supporting individuals with mental illnesses and developmental disabilities.

September 12–18 is national Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week, an opportunity to thank and recognize the hardworking individuals who act as first responders for the state’s most vulnerable residents and their families. Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer also has [proclaimed DSP week in Michigan](#).

Direct Care Workers provide much-needed personal care, training, emotional support, and respite to an estimated 100,000 Michigan individuals.

“The quality care provided by Direct Care workers often goes unnoticed but is literally the lifeline for so many Michiganders with disabilities,” said Todd Culver of Incompass Michigan. “We owe our Direct Care Workers a tremendous amount of gratitude for all they do for those they care for, this week and all year round.”

The current labor shortage is making it harder to keep Direct Care Workers on the job, and a broad coalition of disability rights advocates is urging Michigan legislators to make the wage increases approved last year permanent, at minimum. Many acknowledge that, even with these past increases in place, DCW compensation and career pathways still are woefully out of line with today’s job market.

“The Direct Care industry is in crisis and Michigan’s most vulnerable are the ones paying the price,” said Robert Stein of the Michigan Assisted Living Association. “We must remember just how critical the support of Direct Care Workers is to Michigan families and work with our leaders to keep them on the job.”

Michigan’s Direct Care Workers are severely underpaid, making less money than many fast-food workers, but with significantly greater responsibility.

“The stakes are high for Michigan families who rely on Direct Care support,” said Sherri Boyd of The Arc—Michigan. “Time is long overdue to actually recognize these essential support staff by properly paying them. Some progress has been made but prioritizing funding to pay for care of those in need is the way to truly honor this valuable workforce.”

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