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NEW YORK STATE WORKFORCE CREDENTIALING PROGRAMS COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Executive Summary

Competent, qualified, committed direct support professionals (DSPs) are foundational to supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to live, work, and participate in the community. DSPs provide an array of supports, including personal care, employment, transportation, recreation, habilitation, medication administration, health and allied health interventions, home living and other supports that assist people to lead self-directed lives as active participants in their communities of choice.

DSPs are vital supports for people with IDD, and competency-based credentialing programs designed to teach the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required of DSPs providing high-quality support have been implemented on an organizational level in a small number of organizations in New York. These credentialing programs have been identified as a promising solution to: (1) increase DSP tenure, (2) reward greater competency with a higher wage, and

(3) provide professional recognition and a professional career path for skilled workers. They also greatly influence the actions DSPs take to improve the lives of people with disabilities to whom they provide support.

Such credential initiatives have demonstrated the ability to increase the quality of supports provided to people with IDD so they can live more self-directed lives in their communities. Many of these programs utilized short-term grants for startup funds, and they would not have been sustainable without additional investments. Organizational-level workforce interventions, particularly those with an educational component, typically take several years to reach sustainability. They require initial implementation, evaluation and refinement before they can be taken to scale. State-level investments that are made in competency-based credentialing initiatives to increase the skills, knowledge, and attitudes of DSPs may save

money as they are implemented over time and may allow reinvestment to sustain some of the costs of credentialing initiatives.

This report summarizes the evaluation of seven existing organization level credentialing programs in New York. It is intended to inform efforts to develop a statewide credentialing initiative in New York. The credential pathways used by organizations that are summarized in this report are:

- National Alliance of Direct Support Professional (NADSP) Certified-I (DSP-C1) and Certified-II (DSP-C2) and NADSP Frontline Supervisor Credential (FLS-C)
- NADSP E-badge Academy
- The partnership established between DirectCourse - College of Direct Support and the New York Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation
- The Direct Support Practice Certificate through Dutchess and Ulster Community Colleges
- The Direct Support Professional Apprenticeship Program through New York State Department of Labor, and
- The Training Collaborative for Innovation and Leadership Coursework and the NADSP FLS-C

Multiple strategies and informants were used to evaluate these credential programs through calendar year 2019. These included: (1) interviews with program coordinators, (2) analysis of program outcomes, including turnover, wages, and average retention among credentialed and

non-credentialed staff, and 3) Interviews with DSP and FLS credentialing participants.

All of the credentialing programs included in this report were aligned with OPWDD's 23 DSP competencies, the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) core competencies for direct support professionals and/or the National Frontline Supervisor Competencies. These credentialing programs used a variety of established learning methods to deliver competency-based curricula. The programs have been implemented for varying lengths of time and are shifting in design and program elements over time as well as with the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, some programs that use the NADSP credentials shifted to the E-badge delivery model in 2020, while simultaneously phasing out the portfolio-based credentialing programs.

Each credential program in this report includes a wage increase and/or bonus when the DSP or FLS is awarded their credential. The wage increase and bonus amounts varied by program. Some programs made multiple credential levels available, making it possible to receive multiple hourly wage increases based on the number of credentials successfully achieved. Once sustainable in an organization, they provided a career ladder for committed DSPs and FLSs seeking a professional role. Many organizations are seeking to provide additional professional development opportunities by creating advanced credentialing opportunities for staff to earn additional credentials.



Background

Competent, qualified, committed direct support staff are foundational to supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to live, work, and participate in the community. DSPs support people in ways that enhance independence and inclusion in the community. They provide an array of supports, including personal care, employment supports, transportation, recreation, habilitation, medication administration, health and allied health interventions, home living and other supports that assist people to lead self-directed lives in their communities of choice. They serve as bridge builders to the community, make ethical decisions and support people with IDD in making choices and decisions each day. DSPs work in a range of settings, including with families, homes owned by the person supported, group homes, community job sites, vocational and day training programs, among others.

Given their day-to-day contact, DSPs have a unique professional relationship with the persons with IDD to whom they provide support.

Some of the roles performed by DSPs are similar to other professionals, including teachers, physical therapists, counselors, nurses, psychologists, occupational therapists, dietitians, chauffeurs, and personal trainers, among others. Despite the overlap with many licensed professional roles, no national or statewide credentialing program has been adopted and implemented for the direct support workforce in New York. However, several national and state DSP-specific competency sets have been identified and refined over the past 20 years. These competency sets are intended to identify the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to support healthy lives and community participation for people with IDD. Two examples of such competency sets that were used within the credential programs reviewed for this report are the New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD, 2014) and the National Alliance of Direct Support Professionals 15 Competency Areas, (NADSP, 2016). The OPWDD DSP Core Competency Goal Areas are depicted in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. New York Office for People With Developmental Disabilities
Direct Support Professional Core Competencies seven goal areas**



Regional Centers for Workforce Transformation in New York

To support implementation of these competencies and ethical standards for the direct support workforce, OPWDD established Regional Centers for Workforce Transformation (RCWT) through grant funding in 2013 and dedicated state funding in 2016 to continue operation. OPWDD mandates that all DSPs statewide are trained and evaluated on the competencies. The RCWT are networks offering free training, technical assistance, and shared resources to foster DSP development in nonprofit and state agencies. As of June 2021, 100% of New York State's 378 provider agencies and at least 100 additional organizations have participated in some way in the work offered through the Regional Centers for Workforce Transformation. Now a team of 25 employees, the RCWT has hired additional staff to enhance our diverse collaboration to include five people living with IDD and two DSPs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the RCWT shifted the way resources were delivered to meet the needs of providers and their staff. This included virtual meetings, on-line staff development opportunities, and an on-line Learning Management Platform for mandated DSP trainings. The website is being revamped to meet the high traffic and additional resources added due to provider's request. Additional projects enhance the profession, include completing this updated comparative analysis of credentialing programs, research and local data collection with The State University of Albany, and partnership with BOCES (NYS Board of Cooperative Educational Services) to create a pipeline of young adults and older adults into the profession. These efforts as well as others of the RCWT are actively supporting the standards of professional development for DSPs and other professional in the field as well as the people they support.

Demand for a Competent Direct Support Workforce

DSP positions are often considered entry-level. However, the emphasis on supporting implementation of the competencies and ethical

standards helps demonstrate that in reality, these jobs require more than entry level skills. Instead, employees need training to gain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required of their roles. DSP credentialing creates an opportunity for training, as well as a pathway for professional recognition and support that creates a highly qualified, professional workforce. Credentialing supports a workforce that is committed to the profession, and that stays in their jobs. Like other credentialing programs in human service fields, credentialing typically awards completion of the credential with a wage increase and/or bonus. The wage increase or bonus is intended to distinguish a credentialed employee for their development of demonstrated competence and quality performance in their work.

The direct support workforce is one of the careers in highest demand in the nation (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). The need for workers is increasing, but compensation and benefits are not provided at commensurate rates to keep DSPs in their jobs. Despite the often-rewarding work, there is a high rate of turnover. The statewide annual DSP turnover rate in New York was 36.2% in 2019, and 11.9% of full-time DSP positions were vacant (National Core Indicators, 2020). Of those DSPs who left their job, 28.8% had been employed for less than six months. Only 72.2% of staff that remained in their position in 2019 had been with the organization for more than 12 months. Additional costs are associated with replacing each worker who leaves an organization. Using an estimate of \$4,073 per employee who leaves an organization, an estimated \$79,804,549 was needed to replace the DSPs in NY who left their jobs using turnover rates reported in 2015 (Hewitt et al., 2015; Larson et al., 2016). Eliminating these expenses could add an estimated \$2,000 to the pay of each DSP (President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities, 2017). This would make a significant difference in the lives of DSPs in providing a livable wage.

Credentialing programs are a promising solution to increase DSP tenure and decrease organizational turnover. As a means of increasing

the skill, knowledge, and attitudes of their current workforce and increasing retention of committed employees, some organizations in New York are implementing workforce credentialing initiatives. These initiatives are paired with a wage increase and/or bonus for completing the credential. These pathways can (1) increase the commitment and professionalism of the current workforce, (2) reduce costs associated with turnover, (3) impact organizational culture in a positive way, and (4) result in higher-quality, community-based supports based in best practice. They also greatly influence the actions DSPs take to improve the lives of people with disabilities to whom they provide support.

The goal of a credential is to invest in highly qualified employees and provide a career path that allows the worker options for skill specialization and professional development. Aligning the training with established standards or accrediting bodies provides the DSP with assurance that their efforts will be recognized across their state and/or nation.

Offering a wage increase associated with the credential is an important strategy to encourage participation and completion of the program. The average hourly wage of DSPs in New York state was \$15.31 in 2019, and the average starting DSP wage was \$14.28 (National

Core Indicators, 2020). The breakdown of average wages by setting where supports were provided is in Table 1. These wages are significantly less than workers in other health and human service sectors, such as nursing assistants. In 2015, a series of focus groups in New York identified essential features of successful credentialing initiatives for this workforce from various stakeholder perspectives (e.g. administrators, family members, people with IDD, DSPs, FLSs and managers; Hewitt et al., 2015). Given the low wages paid to DSPs, funding and supporting all aspects of the credentialing program was consistently identified by participants as an essential ingredient to a successful statewide credential. A complete list of the key design elements of the New York DSP statewide credential model recommendations, known as Career GEAR Up, are available in Appendix A.

Minimum wage rates differ in New York based on industry and region. Yearly increases in rates paid to DSPs will occur until the minimum wage reaches \$15 an hour (New York State Department of Labor, 2021). In calendar year 2019, the minimum wage was mandated to be at least \$11.10. Therefore, \$11.10 was the state minimum wage, but \$15 was the minimum wage for New York City Large Employers (with 11 or more employees) and \$13.50 for

Table 1. DSP wages in New York State by setting type*						
NYS	Average Starting Hourly Wage*	Average Hourly Wage (\$)	Std. Deviation	Median Hourly Wage (\$)	Minimum Average Hourly Wage (\$)	Maximum Average Hourly Wage (\$)
All DSPs	\$14.28	\$15.31	\$1.98	\$15.00	\$12.00	\$24.21
DSPs Providing Residential Supports	\$13.77	\$14.83	\$1.78	\$15.00	\$11.74	\$24.18
DSPs Providing In-Home Supports	\$14.36	\$15.15	\$1.85	\$15.00	\$11.15	\$22.00
DSPs Providing Non-Residential Supports	\$14.26	\$15.39	\$2.06	\$15.00	\$11.97	\$24.21

*Source: National Core Indicators Staff Stability Survey from 2019



New York City Small Employers (with 10 or less employees). Minimum wage for Long Island and Westchester was \$12 per hour, and \$11.10 for the rest of the state. When fully implemented, the wage increase will slightly exceed the new mandatory New York minimum wage. While wages will increase for DSPs in New York, they will simultaneously increase for other service sector positions. As such, recruitment will remain a challenge. Credentialing efforts can work alongside wage increases paid to DSPs to stabilize the workforce. They will also increase quality of supports provided to people with IDD.

Impact of COVID-19 on the Direct Support Workforce

In a recent study of DSPs during the COVID-19 pandemic, those in NY reported an average wage of \$14.86, and as of November 2020 only 8% reported received any salary increase or augmentation due to continuing to provide services during the pandemic (Hewitt et al, 2021). Of those receiving extra pay, 22%

received a lump sum bonus, 56% received \$2.00 an hour or less and 22% received more than \$2.01. Several of the provider organizations interviewed in this report stated that 2019 was even more difficult than previous years to find and retain qualified DSPs. During the time of data collection for this credentialing comparative analysis, the unemployment rate had decreased, and competition for workers in other entry level positions has increased. Then in 2020 the pandemic hit and this made recruitment even more challenging as unemployment skyrocketed but people did not necessarily want high risk jobs for which they were paid such little money. As such, it is important to investigate which effective methods are being used across the state to stabilize the workforce, increase the competence of DSPs, and create professional pathways to keep quality DSPs in the field. Models of implementation and lessons learned from organizations and inter-organizational collaboratives already implementing credentialing programs can provide a basis for scaling to a statewide credential.

Aims of this project

This report contains a comparative analysis of seven existing direct support workforce credentialing programs that are being implemented in the state of New York. With slight variation, the organizational goals sought by all these credentialing programs aimed to increase the competence and professionalism of direct support staff. Additionally, these programs are intended to increase retention and reduce turnover of quality staff by providing opportunities for growth and career enhancement. Several programs also provide credentialing opportunities for frontline supervisors (FLS). These aim to increase leadership skills of FLSs so that DSPs receive better support in their jobs. Each program reviewed for this comparative analysis reported difficulties of keeping quality staff. Credentialing provides organizations a means of increasing the likelihood that DSPs will provide quality supports, and it rewards them with a wage increase with successful completion of the credential. Successful completion of the credential in each of the programs included in this report was

paired with a wage increase and/or bonus for the accomplishment.

To enhance efforts of creating and implementing a statewide direct support workforce credentialing program in New York Alliance for Innovation and Inclusion, through a contract from the New York Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) worked with the Research and Training Center on Community Living at the University of Minnesota to complete a follow up to an initial comparative analysis of these workforce credentialing programs in New York. The original analysis was completed in 2017 and included a review of five programs (Kramme & Hewitt, 2018). The follow up evaluation included two additional years of data and provides an initial summary of three additional credentialing programs. Continuing to examine these existing programs will help inform efforts to scale up a credentialing implementation through a statewide program.

Method

Information was collected between January and November 2020. Several methods and informants were used and are described below.

Interviews with program coordinators in each credentialing program

Staff in program coordinator or program administration roles were the initial point of contact in each organization. A survey was used to collect descriptive information about each credentialing program. Coordinators were asked to provide collateral documents that were reviewed to inform findings. These included: annual reports, marketing information, training materials and other supporting documents. Each program coordinator also participated in a structured interview that lasted approximately 1-1.5 hours. Organizations that participated in this project in 2017 were asked to review the summary and update the description with new information and developments since that

time. All data were analyzed and coded for detailed information about each program, and to identify themes across programs. Program coordinators reviewed the summary for their program for accuracy and completeness.

Outcomes of the programs

A standardized instrument was used to collect quantitative data from organizations in order to compare credential program participants with non-participants in the same job role (i.e., DSPs, FLSs). Data on employee retention, turnover (crude separation rate), vacancy rates, and wages were collected. Data reported were from October 1, 2017 through September 30, 2019 unless otherwise noted. Turnover, tenure, and wages of employees who participated in the credentialing program and those who did not participate were examined separately. Organizations were also asked to provide their OPWDD reporting region, the number



of people who receive services and supports in the organization, and the number of DSP and FLS positions (full-time, part-time, and vacancies) in the organization. Organizations provided the number of employees who have completed the credentialing program in the organization, and how many of those employees are still employed in the organization.

The following formula was used to calculate annual turnover (crude separation rate):

$$\text{Turnover} = \frac{\text{number of leavers in 12 months}}{\text{number of positions}} \times 100$$

The number of positions in the organization included full-time, part-time, and the total number of vacancies reported. Turnover was considered separately between DSPs and FLSs in each organization. Credentialed and non-credentialed staff were also computed separately.

The following formula was used to calculate average tenure of current employees by organization:

$$\text{Average years tenure of current employees} = \frac{\left(\frac{\text{total sum of months' tenure of all current staff}}{\text{total number of positions in the organization}} \right)}{12 \text{ months}}$$

The number of months of tenure was divided by 12 months, so that years rather than months could be reported. The number of positions

in the organization included full-time, part-time, and the total number of vacancies in the organization. Average tenure was calculated separately between DSPs and FLSs in each organization and credentialed and non-credentialed staff were separately computed.

Organizations were asked to report the average hourly wage for (1) credentialed DSPs in the organization, and (2) non-credentialed DSPs in the organization. For FLSs, organizations could report wages of credentialed and non-credentialed FLSs in either hourly wage or annual salary.

Interviews with credentialed staff

Several recent participants in each of the credentialing programs were identified by program coordinators to participate in in-depth interviews. Participants in each program and from each organization were interviewed about their experiences with the credential program and its impact on their work. Interviews were intended to identify individual stories of how the credential program impacted participant work performance, the lives of the people to whom they provided support, and both positive and challenging aspects of completing the credential program. Length of participant interviews for the follow study ranged from .5 to 1 hours with each participant. The interviews were conducted over zoom or the telephone. They were recorded and transcribed to identify common themes.

Descriptive overview of the credential programs and organizations

This report provides descriptive information about seven direct support workforce credentialing programs implemented in various organizations within the state of New York. Table 2 includes the name of each credential program, the role of participants in the credential program, and the name(s) of organizations in which the programs are implemented. All the programs except for the Training Collaborative provided credentialing opportunities for DSPs, and four programs provided opportunities for credentialing for DSPs and FLSs.

Figure 2 is a map of New York showing the locations of administrative offices of organizations that provide the credentialing programs detailed in this report. The organizations that were included in the previous version of the credentialing comparative analysis are indicated by a blue dot. The four organizations in the New York City area that comprise the original

organizations in the Training Collaborative are indicated by the large blue dot. The two new programs included in the current comparative analysis are indicated by red dots. Organizations are located throughout the state of New York and provide services to people in surrounding areas across setting types.

Organizations reported which OPWDD regions they were in, the total number of people served, and the settings in which they provide services. These data are summarized in Table 3, based on the calendar year October 1, 2018-September 30, 2019, along with the total number of DSPs and FLSs credentialed to date at the time of data collection.

An in-depth review of each of the credential programs is included below. A cumulative evaluation and conclusions related to these workforce credentialing efforts in New York follows the reviews.

Table 2. The five credential programs included in the comparative analysis, roles of participants, and organization names where programs are offered

Name of credential	Role of participants	Organization name
Conover Scholars	DSP, FLS	Wildwood Programs
Direct Support Professional	DSP, FLS	Ability Beyond
National Alliance of Direct Support Professional (NADSP) Certified Initial Levels (DSP-C1; DSP-C2)	DSP, FLS	Arc of Sullivan-Orange County
NADSP DSP-C1; FLS-C	DSP, FLS	Arc of Monroe
NADSP DSP-C1; FLS-C; DSP-I	DSP, FLS	Arc of Mid-Hudson
DC-1, DC-2; Apprentice; DSP-C1	DSP	New Horizons Resources
Training Collaborative; NADSP FLS-C	FLS	Training Collaborative

Key: DSP = direct support professional; DSP-C1 = direct support professional certified initial level; FLS = frontline supervisor

Figure 2. Map of New York state depicting the headquarters for the organizations implementing the credentialing programs in this report

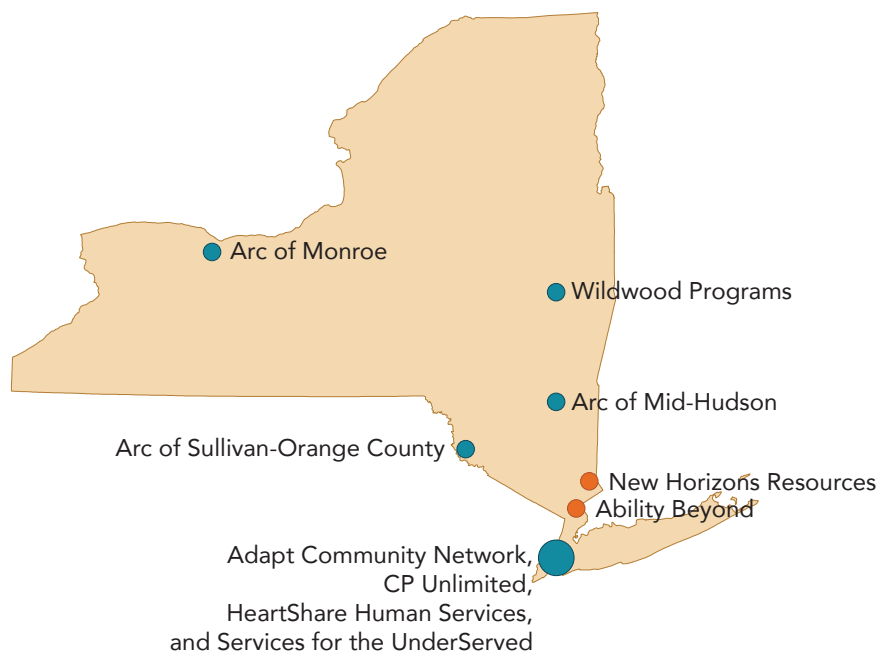


Table 3. 2019 Organizational Services and Credentialed Staff to Date Summary

	Wildwood	Ability Beyond	Arc Monroe	Arc Mid Hudson	New Horizons	CP Unlimited	Services for Underserved	Heartshare
OPWDD Region	III	III	I	III	III	III, IV	IV	IV
People served	1339	922	1156	2074	315	2405	604	1625
Agency/ Facility	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Family/ individual homes	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Job sites	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Other sites				Day hab				X
Credentialed DSPs	225	341	8	14	37	-	-	-
Credentialed FLSs	39	25	0	2	6	2	3	8

Note. These data were not available for Arc of Sullivan-Orange and Adapt Community Network. The Training Collaborative includes four organizations, three of which provided data for this report and are included here.

Wildwood Programs Conover Scholars

Wildwood Programs was created in 1967 when a group of parents found that the needs of their children did not fit within existing programs that were otherwise available. The program began with several preschoolers and has grown into an organization providing comprehensive supports and services for thousands of people and their families per year. Wildwood supports children from age three through older adults. The organization aims to work collaboratively with families and the community, empowering and enabling children and adults with neurologically-based learning disabilities, autism, and other developmental disabilities to lead fulfilling, independent and productive lives.

Wildwood has long recognized the need to ensure a competent, qualified workforce. For several years prior to implementing the credential program, Wildwood offered the College of Direct Support (CDS) to employees through CDS’s partnership with the New York Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation. The CDS is a competency-based on-line training program that offers interactive learning and on-the-job checklists designed to yield the NADSP competencies. After implementation of the CDS, Wildwood staff realized that many staff were beginning but not completing the training courses. Longtime friend of Wildwood, Bart Conover left an endowment

to the organization. As a means to better support and provide incentive for DSPs to complete the training program, Wildwood developed the Conover scholarship program to encourage DSPs to complete the program. Conover credential recipients are recognized as “Conover Scholars.” Successful completion of the CDS modules leads to a wage increase. Since the Conover Scholarship program was implemented in 2012, 225 successful Conover Scholars have completed the program. The goals of the program are to, (1) use existing resources and leverage State reimbursements, (2) build direct support competence, (3) provide a source of pride and status to successful employees, (4) increase pay for commitment to direct support work, (5) memorialize and create a legacy for the program donor, Bart Conover, and (6) preserve the endowment by using earnings rather than principle. Basic information about the Conover Scholars program is presented in Table 4.

Enrollment criteria

Acceptance into the Conover Scholars requires that interested participants submit a brief application. Enrollment criteria and stipulations were mandated by the endowment. The first criterion is that the DSP or FLS is employed in a residential, day program, transportation services, or community habilitation.

Table 4. Wildwood Programs Conover Scholarship At-A-Glance

Roles of participants	DSP; FLS; managers
Credential attained	Conover Scholar
Number of credentials awarded	225
Year the credential began	2012 (spring)
Learning Delivery Method	Online via College of Direct Support
Alignment with core competencies	OPWDD, NADSP
Costs covered	Enrollment fee in CDS, wage increase
Wage increase for credential completion	DSP: \$1 per hour, plus annual bonus FLS: \$500 bonus, plus annual bonus
Typical enrollment per enrollment period	10-15 learners
Typical time for credential completion	12 months for DSPs, 16 months for FLS

Supervisors and managers at all levels are also encouraged to participate. Wildwood operates some additional programs that are not eligible for the Conover Scholars credential. Applicants must be a regular employee working at least half time, and they must have been employed at Wildwood for three months in a direct support role prior to starting the first module. All applicants must be current on required training and have satisfactory job performance at the time of application. Being employed at Wildwood for 90 days prior to enrolling coincides with their initial evaluation completed after their introductory period of employment.

The Conover Scholars program is marketed to all new employees during orientation. Current employees are alerted to the opportunity to apply for the program through emails and/or text messages that are sent three times per year prior to each session (winter, spring, summer). There is no fee required from the employee to enroll in the program, and there is a wage increase and annual bonus associated with successful completion of the program. The Conover Scholars program has been successful in attracting participants. There is approximately 10-15 learners enrolled in the program during each term. Supervisors often encourage eligible staff to enroll.

Attaining the credential

Coursework modules are delivered through the CDS, a web-based learning platform (see the Textbox 1 description on the partnership between CDS and the New York Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation). DSPs complete three modules on the CDS to attain the Conover Scholar credential (modules 1, 2, and 4). FLSs complete an additional module, for a total of four modules to attain the Conover Scholar credential (modules 1-4). DSPs who have completed the Conover Scholar status and are promoted to a FLS role in the organization maintain their status as Conover Scholars. They can also enroll to complete module 3 and earn the bonus for completing the module. Table 5 details the modules and

courses included in each module that are required for the Conover Scholar Credential that were developed in the partnership between the CDS and the New York Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation.

Learners sequentially enroll in the modules, completing module one before proceeding to module two, and so forth. Learners have three months to complete each module (March-May, July-September, and November-January). This allows participants maximal flexibility in the pace they wish to complete the program. Typically, DSPs complete the program in one year, given that they can complete one module in each of three sessions throughout the year.

Wildwood works in close collaboration with the New York Alliance. Weekly progress reports of learners' lesson completion are sent to all program directors at the sites where learners are working. If a learner falls behind in their coursework, the program director or supervisor at their site can reach out to the learner and encourage them to set aside time to complete the lessons. The New York Alliance also handles enrollment of all participants in the applicable module on CDS. Technical issues and troubleshooting are handled by the New York Alliance or Elsevier (the company that offers the CDS and its learning management platform). This minimizes the amount of time that the program coordinator at Wildwood needs to attend to such issues.

Learners are responsible for completing the module in which they are enrolled within three months. Wildwood pays the learner's enrollment fee for access to the module one time. If the learner does not complete the module during that time, they may reenroll in the module at their own cost as many times as needed. In such a case, Wildwood will reimburse the learner for the enrollment fee when they successfully complete the module, however the learner must front the money until they have completed it. The maximum amount Wildwood will pay in enrollment fees for any eligible applicant is \$600, whether the applicant is a DSP or FLS.

Table 5. Courses included in the CDS Training Modules through the Partnership with the NY Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation

Employee group	Module	Required College of Direct Support courses
Direct Support Professionals	1	Cultural Competence
		Introduction to Developmental Disabilities
		Individual Rights and Choice
		Maltreatment: Prevention and Response
		Safety
		Supporting Healthy Lives
		Teaching People with Developmental Disabilities
Direct Support Professionals	2	Community Inclusion
		Direct Support Professionalism
		Functional Assessment
		Person-Centered Planning
		Positive Behavior Supports
		Professional Documentation Practices
		Working with Families and Support Networks
		You've Got a Friend
Direct Support Professionals	4	Civil Rights and Advocacy
		Emergency Preparedness
		Employment Supports for People with Developmental Disabilities Exploring Individual Preferences for Job Attainment
		Everyone Can Communicate
		Home and Community Living
		Introduction to Medication Supports
		Personal Care
		Supporting Jobs and Careers in the Community
		Universal Precautions
Frontline Supervisor	3	Developing an Intervention Plan
		Fueling High Performance
		Preparing for the Supervisor's Job in Human Services
		Recruitment and Selection
		Training and Orientation
		Your First Few Weeks and Months as a Supervisor

Textbox 1. The New York Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation and The College of Direct Support

Partnership between The College of Direct Support (CDS) and the New York Alliance for Innovation and Inclusion (formerly New York State Association of Community and Residential Agencies or NYSACRA) has existed since 2006. The New York Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation offers agencies the opportunity to enroll DSPs and FLSs in the CDS at a reduced tuition rate. This partnership provides organizations with cost-effective, quality, cutting-edge training for their employees. CDS utilizes curricula aligned with nationally recognized competency sets, as well as OPWDD's established core competencies. It is a web-based platform, administered and managed by the New York Alliance staff. The New York Alliance provides credential program coordinators with regular updates toward course completion. Staff in organizations can use this information to check in with learners seeking credentialing to ensure that they stay on track. When necessary, they can alert a supervisor to encourage the DSP learner to complete their lessons.

Four modules were created from existing CDS web-based content for use in this program across the state of New York. Modules 1, 2, and 4 are aimed toward DSPs. Module 3 includes specialized content for FLSs. The lessons included in each module are listed in Table 5. Learners apply for each module through their organization. If their application is accepted, they are enrolled in one of three annual sessions. During that session, learners have 90 days to complete the learning module. Fees associated with each module are \$150 per learner for employees of the New York Alliance member agencies (\$170 per learner for non-member agencies). The New York Alliance handles distribution of learner user ID and password to access the CDS module.

More information is available: https://nyalliance.org/articles/College_Direct_Support

Wage increases

Successful attainment of the Conover Scholar credential is paired with a wage increase based on the scholar's role in the organization and their base rate of pay:

- Full time credentialed DSPs receive an hourly wage increase of \$1 per hour (\$2,080 annually). Employees who work less than 40 hours per week receive a pro-rated increase of \$.50 per hour (for example, \$.50 per hour for an employee working 20 hours per week).
- Frontline supervisors receive a \$500 bonus upon completion of the program. Frontline supervisors must complete all the DSP modules (modules 1, 2, and 4), as well as a module specially designed for DSPs (module 3).

In addition to these incentives, all Conover Scholars are eligible for an annual distribution that is based on the earnings from the endowment. This is an additional amount that the scholar receives on top of the wage increase from successful completion of the credential. At the end of the fiscal year, each Conover Scholar employed in the organization receives a payout from the endowment's earnings. To date, this payout has typically been several hundred dollars per scholar each year.

Learning supports available

Learners in the Conover Scholar program are allowed to use work computers to complete the lessons in the CDS modules on their breaks or after work. They are expected to complete the lessons on their own time, and are not explicitly paid for their

time to complete CDS coursework. Applications for program enrollment include a box to check for participants who require assistance with computer access, reading, or learning supports. This has been utilized by only a few learners since 2012, with a few learners requesting assistance with computer skills or reading. Some learners need a laptop computer to access the lessons, as they do not have one at home. Learners can check out a computer through technology services for a weekend or a week for this purpose. Wildwood's training department also has laptops that can be used in their training classrooms when the rooms are not in use.

Portability of the credential

A few new hires have come to Wildwood Programs with successful completion of the New York Alliance/CDS modules when they worked for another organization. In these cases, the program coordinator can call the New York Alliance to verify the person's completion. The New York Alliance keeps a database of successful completion of modules at organizations across the state. When completion is verified, Wildwood does not require participants to take the modules again unless the content of those modules had significantly changed. When asked about "portability" of the credential, the program coordinator indicated that it could be portable given the New York Alliance's centralizing of such information. Other courses or work experiences are not accepted toward completion of the credential. Wildwood has never assessed whether Conover Scholar status is recognized by other agencies, but given that the CDS is used by many agencies in New York and that the New York Alliance centralizes a database of modules completed, it is possible that the coursework would be recognized by other organizations. It is unknown whether the completion of this coursework would be portable and linked to higher wages in other organizations.

Program evaluation

Wildwood's board of directors evaluates the impact of the Conover Scholars program yearly. Enrollment is examined, and turnover rates are assessed. The high number of learners who have completed this credential is a testament to its successful utilization (see the Outcomes of the Conover Scholars program section).

Future directions

Given the successes of the Conover program at Wildwood, there are several new initiatives being explored with the potential for scaling up. These programs have been available to staff who have successfully completed the Conover Scholars program. All are intended to continue to encourage staff to develop their skills and competencies related to direct support. Three newer initiatives are detailed here.

Module 5 Specialization. The New York Alliance created a Module 5 in the College of Direct Support package that has a specialization focus. There are six courses included in the module focus on the following disabilities: autism, brain injury, cerebral palsy, depression, diabetes, and epilepsy. Causes, characteristics, and symptoms of the disabilities are shared to help DSPs understand how these disabilities impact peoples' lives and needs for supports. DSPs learn effective support strategies and resources. Wildwood staff piloted the lessons and are determining how to make this module accessible to learners. Wildwood staff are determining whether this would be offered as an additional specialty credential or as a portion of the core credential modules. Many people who receive supports with Wildwood have dual diagnoses. The content was determined to add significant value for Wildwood staff, and the flexibility of being able to access the content at the learner's pace makes it ideal for getting needed competency to advance the quality of their support.

DSP Career Path. DSPs who complete the Conover program are eligible to participate in the DSP Career Path. To further recognize DSPs who are demonstrating core competencies and positive job performance (e.g.,

Textbox 2. New York State Department of Labor Apprenticeship Program

“Direct Support Professional” is identified as a registered competency-based program with the New York State Department of Labor (DOL) Apprenticeship Program. Participants are paired with a professional mentor and completion is awarded with a recognized certificate of completion from the DOL. Learners complete 3000 hours of work-based learning and hands-on support from their supervisor. Learners keep track of their apprenticeship activities in their “blue book.” Using a blue book to track hours is a long-standing tradition in apprenticeship programs across service fields. The learner’s supervisor is responsible for reviewing and signing off on weekly activities in the blue book to keep learners on track toward completion. When they have completed 3000 hours of work-based learning, they are distinguished by the New York DOL as a DSP-J, or “Journeyman.” The learning for this credential happens at work, utilizing computers on the job. The program typically takes about two years to complete the hours of learning and activities.

arriving on time, staying engaged at work), DSPs can work with their supervisor or manager on the DSP Career Path. By demonstrating such things, DSPs can be recognized with an additional bonus after evaluation in six month increments. DSPs need to be employed at Wildwood for at least one year to be a part of this program, and they must want to advance in their work. DSPs work with their supervisor to monitor their progress toward the bonus. Evaluation happens twice a year in six month increments. Supervisors review an evaluation form submitted by DSPs who opt into this program, and a steering committee evaluates each DSP’s progress.

This program is in its first year. This program was announced in October 2019 and it began in January 2020. DSPs are awarded a bonus if they demonstrate the expected behaviors in six month increments based on supervisor feedback. The first round of bonuses were awarded after June 2020 for the amount of \$500.

NYS DOL Apprenticeship Program. Wildwood received some grant funds from the state Department of Labor to support some learners through the Apprenticeship program, which includes learning through the CDS and on-the-job training (see Textbox 2 on the NY Department of Labor Apprenticeship Programs). This program began with the

grant funds in the spring of 2019. Learners record their training hours completed as an apprentice on their timesheet and complete interviews with their DOL contact as a part of this program. The state Department of Labor approved the use of the CDS curriculum as the related instruction for the apprenticeship program. Twenty-five DSPs who had previously completed the Conover Scholars enrolled in this program and nearly all of these learners have completed their training requirements and expect to be credentialed through this program. Learners who enroll in this program receive \$500 upon enrollment and \$500 upon completion of the credential. In the long term, Wildwood hopes to have additional opportunities for newer staff to complete this program if they continue to get funding to do it. Wildwood staff believe this is another important opportunity for professionalizing the role of the DSP.

Outcomes of the Conover Scholars Program

Wildwood Programs provided supports and services for over 1,300 people with disabilities in 2019. To date, 225 DSPs and FLSs have completed the Conover Scholars program, completing learning requirements and earning the credentials. The percentage of credentialed DSP staff among all DSP positions was 42% in 2018 and 47% in 2019.

Direct Support Professionals

As of December 31, 2018, Wildwood Programs had 205 total DSP positions (including full time, part time, and vacant positions). Eighty-two these DSPs had earned the Conover Scholars credential. On December 31, 2019, there were 167 total DSP positions, including 96 credentialed DSPs. Tenure and turnover data are reported in Table 6 for credentialed and non-credentialed DSPs for each year. Wage data were not available.

DSP Annual Turnover. Annual turnover rates between January 1-December 31 calculated for each year ending 2018 and 2019 were 39% and 32% respectively among non-credentialed DSPs. Ten credentialed DSPs left in 2018 and 10 in 2019. The credentialed DSP annual turnover rate was 12% in 2018 and 10% in 2019.

DSP Tenure. Non-credentialed DSP average tenure on December 31, 2018 and December 31, 2019 was 5.7 years and 9.4 years respectively. Credentialed DSP average tenure on December 31, 2018, and 2019 was 14.4 years and 13.3 years respectively.

Frontline Supervisors

There were 42 FLS positions at Wildwood Programs on December 31, 2018, and 39 FLS positions on the same date in 2019. There were 25 FLS who had earned one or more of the credentials offered through Wildwood Programs on December, 2018, and 26 on the same date in 2019. Tenure and turnover data are reported in Table 7 for credentialed and non-credentialed FLSs for each year. Wage data were not available. The percentage of credentialed FLS staff among all FLS positions was 60% in 2018 and 67% in 2019.

FLS Annual Turnover. Annual turnover rates between January 1-December 31 were calculated for each year ending 2018 and 2019 were 12% and 23% respectively among non-credentialed FLSs. The credentialed FLS annual turnover rate was 4% in 2018 and 12% in 2019.

FLS Tenure. Non-credentialed FLS average tenure on December 31, 2018 and December 31, 2019 was 5.8 years and 8.4 years respectively. Credentialed FLS average tenure on December 31, 2018 and 2019 was 14.8 years in both years.

Table 6. Wildwood Programs DSP Outcomes Summary

	2018		2019	
	Non	Credentialed	Non	Credentialed
N	118	87	71	96
Tenure	5.7	14.4	9.4	13.3
Turnover	39%	12%	32%	10%

Table 7. Wildwood Programs FLS Outcomes Summary

	2018		2019	
	Non	Credentialed	Non	Credentialed
N	17	25	13	26
Tenure	5.8	14.8	8.4	14.8
Turnover	12%	4%	23%	12%

Ability Beyond Credential Program

Ability Beyond provides services for thousands of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Connecticut and in New York's lower Hudson Valley. Ability Beyond has provided services since 1953, and their services include residential alternatives, employment training, career counseling, job placement services, cognitive and life skills instruction, and clinical and therapeutic support.

Ability Beyond has experienced direct support workforce shortages for decades, including a shortage of qualified applicants to fill vacant positions, limited budgets for professional development, and difficulties retaining DSPs in an industry where compensation does not keep pace with the professional demands of DSPs. Their organizational credentialing program, called Pathways to Excellence (PTE) was piloted and implemented in 2008 as a career pathway to provide opportunities for qualified DSPs to increase their professional skills and receive a commensurate wage increase associated with completion of the program. Over the years that the credentialing program has been operating,

the discussion about the program has turned from how to allocate funds and resources to support the program to how to invest time and resources into the program. The return on investment through staff retention and training a more skilled, more engaged, and high quality workforce places a high value on the program. When facing budget cuts, administrators have taken measures to ensure that the credentialing program can continue given its value in retaining DSPs and developing leaders.

DSPs at Ability Beyond are hired as "Life Skills Instructors." When they complete the level one credential program, they are distinguished as "Direct Support Professionals." There is a new job description for Direct Support Professionals (see Textbox 3). The level one credential program is a cohort experience that includes classroom instruction and discussion, and online learning modules through the College of Direct Support, and structured reflection assignments. Additional specialty credentials are also offered. The most commonly offered specialty credential is Mentoring and Supervision. Basic information about the Level 1 Pathways to Excellence credential is included in Table 8.

Table 8. Ability Beyond Pathways to Excellence Credential At-A-Glance

	Level 1 Program*
Roles of participants	DSP (Life Skills Instructors), FLS
Credential attained	Direct Support Professional
Number of credentials awarded	353
Year the credential began	2008
Enrollment periods	Varies, average two per year
Learning Delivery Method	Classroom, Online via CDS
Core competencies	OPWDD
Costs covered	Tuition, fees, wage increase
Wage increases	\$0.50/hr, plus up \$500 bonus at graduation and \$500 after 6 mos. and completed goals*
Typical enrollment per cohort	15-20 learners
Typical time for credential completion	6 months*

*Note. DSPs and FLS who have completed the level one PTE program are eligible to complete up to three additional specialty credentials. Each of these credentials takes about 3-4 months per specialty credential. Wage increases for each specialty credential are \$0.75/hr per credential plus \$250 at graduation.

Attaining the credential

Direct support staff are hired at Ability Beyond as Life Skills Instructors. The job description for Life Skills Instructor includes basic skills for providing direct support including, physical transferring and maneuvering, grooming and dressing, assistance in housekeeping, and other supports. When Life Skills Instructors complete the Pathways to Excellence level one program, they are distinguished as a Direct Support Professional. With this distinction, the job description for a DSP includes expectations around person-centered planning, professionalism, communication skills, community integration and others. The position summary for Direct Support Professional is in Textbox 3. More advanced competence is expected of the Direct Support Professional who has attained the credential through Pathways to Excellence. The training for the position of Direct Support Professional is obtained through Pathways to Excellence, and a higher level of competence is expected of these employees. After obtaining the credential in the level one Pathways to Excellence program, DSPs can enroll in up to three specialty programs to earn additional credentials.

Classroom instruction is delivered at the main headquarters buildings. Learners are reimbursed for mileage to class if it exceeds their typical commute to work. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, classes are delivered virtually through Zoom. Learners may use their own devices to complete the College of Direct Support (CDS) modules, but they can also request agency devices as needed to complete the course requirements.

Table 9. College of Direct Support (CDS) Modules utilized as part of the Pathways to Excellence Program

Community Inclusion
Cultural Competence
Direct Support Professionalism
Everyone Can Communicate
Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
Individual Rights and Choice
Introduction to Developmental Disabilities
Maltreatment: Prevention and Response
Person-Centered Planning
Positive Behavior Supports
Safety
Supporting Healthy Lives
Teaching People with Developmental Disabilities
Working with Families and Support Networks
You’ve Got a Friend

Level one program (Pathways to Excellence).

The level one program is about six months long, including classroom learning and online instruction through the College of Direct Support. Courses included in the PTE program are listed in Table 9. The level one program meets for six in-class sessions that are one hour each per month for six months. The first session is

Textbox 3. Position Summary for Direct Support Professional (credentialed through the Pathways to Excellence Program)

The Direct Support Professional serves as a role model for both fellow staff and individuals served in all aspects of their job including integrating individuals with disabilities into the community to participate in work, recreational, leisure, and volunteer activities. The Direct Support Professional will work with the individuals served to help them achieve their goals based on their individual preferences and abilities, and will serve as a mentor to other staff by modeling professionalism and best practices in direct support. The Direct Support Professional will provide training and support needs to the individuals in the community and at home, and fellow staff persons as requested by supervisor.

orientation. The CEO of the company comes to this session to welcome and congratulate learners. After the orientation session, the five classroom discussions build on the learning content of the CDS modules, and most learners will complete the courses ahead of that class discussion in order to better participate in those discussions. Learners are paid their hourly rate while attending class.

The CDS courses are self-paced, but there is a suggested schedule for learners to help them stay on track. Most learners stay on track, and have the courses completed by the classroom discussions. A few learners may fall behind in each cohort. In these cases, the program coordinator will reach out to the learner and their supervisor to problem solve. The class discussions have shifted to meet by Zoom after the COVID-19 pandemic, and some of the class discussions were rescheduled due to workload changes from the pandemic.

Specialty credentials.

Ability Beyond has developed two specialty credentials, and they are continuing to develop others as needs arise. The specialty credentials that have been developed are the (1) mentor and supervision specialty, and

(2) aging specialty. They have also been developing a specialty credential in behavioral specialty. When this is fully developed, staff who complete the Pathways to Excellence program could complete up to three specialty credentials.

The mentor and supervision specialty has been the most successful specialty program. The aim of this specialty was to further develop DSP leaders, and to develop skills among DSPs who aspire to be supervisors and managers. In this program, peer mentors are trained to pair with new hires in their first few months on the job. These DSPs participate in a formal mentoring program where new hires are paired with top DSP talent during onboarding. This helps introduce new hires to the organizational culture and core values, and to learn more about direct support and provide peer support. This positively impacts retention of new Life Skills Instructors.

The specialty credentials require more in-class learning, which includes small group activities and role playing. The specialized skills associated with these credentials are better taught through hands on activities, small group discussion, and role playing.



Sometimes there is difficulty in allocating staff time for instructors who can teach these classes. For example, releasing nursing staff who can teach the aging specialty can be a challenge for already strapped staff to designate the needed time on top of their other work responsibilities. Online learning in the Mentoring and Supervision Specialty comes from the College of Frontline Supervision and Management in DirectCourse. The time to complete each specialty credential is about three to four months per credential.

Enrollment criteria

Learners are recruited in a number of ways. All Life Skills Instructors learn about the program during job orientation. Learners are also recruited through email blasts and communications from supervisors. Some DSPs and managers have created videos about their experiences in and with DSPs who have completed the program. These have been successful recruitment tools. DSP mentors (those who have completed the specialty credential) have also recruited some of the Life Skills Instructors who have been strong in their commitment to direct support. Learners have mentioned that it is powerful to have information about the program and its importance coming from their peers.

Applications for all the programs are emailed and announced to all staff. Applicants need to be employed at Ability Beyond for at least six months, be up to date on required trainings, have an at least an average score of their last annual performance evaluation, and supervisor approval. They must not have any disciplinary actions with the past year, and no more than two within the last five year of employment. Program coordinators have emphasized "self-selection," that the program is about investing in their self and their professional skills.

When an application is submitted, the program coordinators check to ensure that the candidate is up to date on required training, and their record of any disciplinary actions. The application includes basic questions about where they would utilize their skills.

The application for the level one PTE program also asks candidates to detail their interest in specialty credentials they may wish to earn in the future. The supervisors of each qualified applicant receive an approval form for the candidate. They need to sign the approval form indicating their support for the applicant, and they must detail any concerns they have about the applicant. All of this information is considered by the program coordinators about each candidate.

In the application process, supervisors sign a statement of support to approve the candidate. Most supervisors at Ability Beyond strongly support and promote the credential programs due to the skills developed that result in higher quality supports provided by credentialed staff. Most of the Life Skills Instructors who start the program complete it and become distinguished as a DSP.

All program areas at Ability Beyond have access to the credentialing programs, but some years some programs receive some additional weight or emphasis so that the positive impact of the programs can be distributed across programs. Program coordinators work with area program directors to evaluate opportunities in the program areas where credentialed staff would add the most value. Sometimes spots are reserved when a class is opening in order to recruit someone that meets particular criteria. In those cases, recruitment for the programs is increased in those areas in order to fill those spots.

Cohorts for the level one PTE program are 15-20 learners, although 20 is sometimes a little large for everyone to participate in classroom discussion. Twenty is the optimal size for the specialty credentials to ensure that small groups have enough learners for the interactive activities. There are often a lot of applications for each credentialing cohort. In the last enrollment period, there were 81 applications for 20 spots. In such cases, the program coordinators did a "lottery" with the names of qualified candidates for the 20 spots. The qualified candidates that didn't get a spot got a "preferred" spot for the next cohort.

Wage increases

Level one Pathways to Excellence Program.

Upon successful completion of the PTE level one program, the Life Skills Instructor is promoted to "Direct Support Professional." They are qualified at this point for the new job description which includes more competencies related to person-centered practices, community inclusion and others. Direct Support Professionals earn an hourly wage increase of \$0.50 per hour, and they receive a stipend. The stipend is \$500 upon graduation, and then \$500 after six months of utilizing new skills. Direct support professionals develop goals in cooperation with their supervisor. The DSP and supervisor partner together to build on the skills developed in the credential program and identify areas where those skills can be put to good use. This is intended to continue to ensure professional growth for the DSP, and return on investment for the program. Upon successful completion of the goals, the DSP earns the additional \$500 stipend for a total of \$1000. The PTE program concludes with a graduation celebration where family and friends can come to celebrate the achievement. Ability Beyond recognizes the achievement on the agency intranet and social media platforms.

Specialty Program.

There is a \$0.75 per hour wage increase for completing any specialty credential. There is also a stipend for completion of \$250 for each credential. Learners in the specialty credentials are paid for their time attending classroom learning and discussion. Learners that earn more than one specialty credential would receive the wage increase and stipend for each specialty credential completed.

Learning supports available

Program coordinators utilize all methods of support for learners to engage the material and complete the credentials. Many learners in the credential programs over the years have been English language learners. This has never presented a problem for learners

to complete the courses. Some learners with learning disabilities have struggled to complete some of the online learning requirements, but the program coordinators have always found appropriate accommodations to support learners with learning disabilities, such as giving additional time and supports when needed.

Program Evaluation

The program was piloted and launched in 2008. Program coordinators have adjusted the program according to what has worked to support high quality candidates to attain credentials. Over time, the program has been assessed in the face of budget cuts. The program is costly for the organization to operate. However the return on investment has proven to be invaluable to staff morale and retention. There is recognition of the value of investing in staff to learn skills, acquire competence, and provide high quality supports. Over time, the conversation surrounding the program's funding has shifted from, "how are we going to fund this program?" to "how could we afford not to fund this program?" Ultimately, while costly to operate, the investment in developing staff competence is needed for operation. In terms of turnover, across the first ten years of operating the PTE program, credentialed DSPs were twice as likely as uncredentialed staff to stay with the organization. DSPs who earned a specialty credential were three times more likely to stay.

Learners in PTE are assessed primarily through classroom discussion and group activities where they demonstrate the skills learned in lessons. They utilize the skills through demonstration activities, and scenarios with fictitious characters. Learners also complete monthly written assignments to assess their understanding of materials. They receive feedback on their written work, which enhances their connection and engagement with the materials. Learners are encouraged to ask follow up question to increase their understanding.

Outcomes of Ability Beyond Credential Programs

As of September 30, 2019, 366 DSPs and FLSs completed the level one Pathways to Excellence credentialing program funded by the organization. The credentialing program has operated since 2008. Additional specialty credentialing opportunities are offered to those that have completed the level one program. About 81 staff had completed these credentials. Upon completion of the level one program, learners earn the title of “Direct Support Professional,” an hourly wage increase of \$0.50, and \$1000 in stipend paid out in two \$500 installments over six months. Completion of each specialty credential includes an hourly wage increase of \$0.75 plus a \$250 stipend.

Direct Support Professionals

As of September 30, 2018, Ability Beyond had 575 total DSP positions (including full time, part time, and vacant positions). One hundred fifty-one of these DSPs had earned one or more credentials in the organization’s credentialing programs. On September 30, 2019, there were 693 total DSP positions, including 133 credentialed DSPs. Wage, tenure, and turnover data are reported in Table 10 for credentialed and non-credentialed DSPs for each year.

DSP Annual Turnover. Annual turnover rates between October 1-September 30 were calculated for each year ending 2018 and 2019 were 26% and 23% respectively among non-credentialed DSPs. Thirteen credentialed DSPs left in 2018 and 14 in 2019. The credentialed DSP annual turnover rate was 9% in 2018 and 11% in 2019.

DSP Tenure. Non-credentialed DSP average tenure on September 30 of 2018 and 2019 was 6.7 years and 5.3 years respectively. Credentialed DSP average tenure on September 30, 2018, and 2019 was 12.3 years and 13.5 years respectively.

DSP Wages. The average hourly non-credentialed DSP wage on September 30, 2018 was \$15.24. It was \$15.51 on the same date in 2019. The average hourly wage of credentialed DSPs \$18.80 per hour on September 30, 2018. It was \$19.59 on the same date in 2019.

Frontline Supervisors

There were 64 FLS positions at Ability Beyond on September 30, 2018, and 61 FLS positions on the same date in 2019. There were 24 FLS who had earned one or more of the credentials offered through Ability Beyond on September 30, 2018, and 25 on the same date in 2019. Of the 25 credentialed FLS on September 30, 2019, 13 had earned both the level one PTE credential and the mentoring and supervision specialty credential. FLS earn the same wage increase awarded to DSPs when completing the credential programs, and they keep the wage increases if they earn the credential as a DSP and are promoted to an FLS position. Wage, tenure, and turnover data are reported in Table 11 credentialed and non-credentialed FLSs for each year.

FLS Annual Turnover. Annual turnover rates between October 1-September 30 were calculated for each year ending 2018 and 2019 were 8% and 6% respectively among

Table 10. Ability Beyond DSP Outcomes Summary

	2018		2019	
	Non	Credentialed	Non	Credentialed
N	424	151	560	133
Wage	\$15.24	\$18.80	\$15.51	\$19.59
Tenure	6.7	12.3	5.3	13.5
Turnover	26%	9%	23%	11%

Table 11. Ability Beyond FLS Outcomes Summary

	2018		2019	
	Non	Credentialed	Non	Credentialed
N	40	24	36	25
Wage	\$29.16	\$25.13	\$28.01	\$25.97
Tenure	10.3	11.2	13.5	12.4
Turnover	8%	0%	6%	8%

non-credentialed FLSs. No credentialed FLSs left in 2018, but two left in 2019. The credentialed FLS annual turnover rate was 0% in 2018 and 8% in 2019.

FLS Tenure. Non-credentialed FLS average tenure on September 30 of 2018 and 2019 was 10.3 years and 13.5 years respectively. Credentialed FLS average tenure on September 30, 2018, and 2019 was 11.2 years and 12.4 years respectively.

FLS Wages. The average hourly non-credentialed FLS wage on September 30, 2018 was \$29.16. It was \$28.01 on the same date in 2019. The average hourly wage of credentialed FLS was \$25.13 per hour on September 30, 2018. It was \$25.97 on the same date in 2019.

Arc of Sullivan-Orange Counties NADSP Credentials

The mission of the Arc of Sullivan-Orange County is to “support people with unique abilities to live as valued and contributing members of the community.” They provide supports to over 2,000 people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and their families in day services, residential services, family support services, guardianship services, supported employment, recreation, and education services for children. Between 2017 and 2019, the Arc of Orange County and Sullivan Arc formalized the merger of two agencies across two counties to become the Arc of Sullivan-Orange. Sullivan Arc did not previously have credentialing opportunities for their direct support staff, but administration supported learners currently enrolled in the credentialing program to complete it. The

merger of the two organizations, as well as NADSP’s transition to the E-Badge Academy has presented an opportunity for the organization to reevaluate the program prior to enrolling new participants. The program focuses on supporting current learners to increase the quality of supports provided as they build skills, knowledge, and attitudes for a career in direct support.

In addition to the merger, it has been increasingly difficult to recruit and retain sufficient numbers of DSPs in the counties where Arc of Sullivan-Orange provides services. These issues have increased in difficulty since 2016 due to market competition for jobs in the area, new job creation in other industries, and a very low unemployment rate. It has been difficult to retain staff, even very committed staff, when other industries can pay higher wages. This has impacted some DSPs who started in the credentialing program. DSPs who do stay work overtime or another job in order to support their daily living needs. Because of these factors, the credential program has adjusted expectations over time in delivering the in-class course components of the program, as well as in-class time to receive support to complete their credentialing portfolio. These are detailed in the “Attaining the Credential” section below.

The Arc of Orange County long recognized the important role of skilled, consistent support provided by DSPs in the quality of life of the people to whom they provide support. In 2009, DSP turnover in this organization was 40% annually. In an effort to address this high rate of turnover, the Arc of Orange began implementing an organization-wide effort at increasing the competence of their direct support staff.

Textbox 4. The Portfolio-Based National Alliance of Direct Support Professionals-Certified Level I and Level II (DSP-C1; DSP-C2)

The National Alliance of Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) aims to “elevate the status of direct support professionals by improving practice standards, promoting system reform, and advancing their knowledge, skills, and values” (see more on www.nadsp.org). NADSP offers opportunities for DSPs and FLSs to seek credentialing opportunities through a multi-tiered credential that requires that DSPs demonstrate knowledge, skills, and values characteristic of highly competent DSPs and FLSs. These are aligned with a nationally validated competency set with 15 domain areas and corresponding skill statements. All learners seeking an NADSP credential commit to NADSP’s Code of Ethics for professional practice.

These NADSP credentials include the submission of a portfolio that demonstrates the competence of the DSP or FLS through work samples and reflections. When the portfolio is submitted to NADSP, an independent committee reviews each portfolio and determines its acceptability. The DSP-C1 and DSP-C2 each require that DSPs demonstrate four of the 15 DSP competencies through work samples (eight competencies for C1 and C2 together).

The NADSP DSP-C1 and DSP-C2 credentials also require 100 hours each of education for each credential. These hours can be delivered in a number of formats, including classroom and online learning from accredited training curricula. Related webinars, conferences, and trainings may also be used for these hours. The College of Direct Support and Relias Learning are two of NADSP’s accredited training curricula that are used in credentialing programs included in this report.

In early 2019, the NADSP rolled out the E-badge Academy which will replace the portfolio-based credentialing program (see Textbox 5).

Staff enrolled to complete modules from the College of Direct Support (CDS), administered through The New York Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation. Completing each module was paired with an hourly wage increase. Successful completers of module 1 received a \$1.00 per hour wage increase, and successful completion of module 2 was paired with a \$.50 per hour wage increase. In assisting employees to access CDS content, staff were also eligible for a no-interest loan to purchase a laptop computer. There was a regular payroll deduction until the cost of the computer was fully paid. All registration costs for CDS were also covered by the Arc of Orange. Hundreds of employees completed the modules. This initiative aimed to increase competence, but it did not lead to an officially recognized credential.

In 2014, the Arc of Orange expanded its professional development opportunities to include

classroom instruction and development of a credentialing portfolio to submit for one or more multi-tiered credentials through the National Alliance on Direct Support Professionals (NADSP; see Textbox 4). In addition to completing the CDS modules, the expanded staff development initiative includes a classroom learning component (four two-hour classes), and access to a learning cohort of students from the organization who are completing the credential. These components further the knowledge, skills, and values that participants learn through CDS modules, and lead to the construction of work samples as a part of compiling a professional portfolio. Completion of the portfolio includes opportunities for reflection on professional practices, and discussion with other professionals in the field.

The credentialing initiative provides professional development for DSPs to enhance their

skills and abilities, and to create a career path for DSPs who wish to be skilled professionals in this field. Participants have the opportunity to complete DSP-C1 and DSP-C2 levels of the NADSP credential framework. The goal of the program is to have participants complete the DSP-C1 credential within 1½ years. Completion of the DSP-C2 also has an estimated equal duration of 1½ years. However, work demands have limited many staff's progress in completing the requirements, with credentialing requirements taking longer than 1½ years. The credentialing components have increased the effectiveness of training employees toward competence as community navigators, and in creating DSP leaders in the organization. Basic information about the Arc of Sullivan-Orange NADSP portfolio-based credential program are presented in Table 12.

Enrollment criteria

DSPs and program managers are eligible to apply for the DSP-C1 credential. Staff who attain the DSP-C1 credential can apply to enroll in the DSP-C2 credential. Employees must have been employed for six months and have positive job performance to be accepted into the program. Participants complete two modules through CDS, administered by the New York Alliance

for Inclusion and Innovation. (see Textbox 1). After completion, they apply to become part of a classroom cohort to work further toward their DSP-C1. In 2017, the Arc of Sullivan-Orange reduced the requirement from one year of employment to six months of employment before applying to be in the credential program. This change was intended to more quickly catch motivated DSPs who have completed their CDS coursework to engage in working on their portfolio. As a part of their application for the program, participants submit a Letter of Interest and Letters of Recommendation from two people who attest to their character and commitment to the organization's mission.

The first cohort of the credentialing program at the Arc of Sullivan-Orange included participants who were selected by administrators. However, attrition of participants from this group was large, with most discontinuing the program. Since then, the credential program is voluntary for all DSPs. Employees choose to apply for the program when it fits them. Credentialed staff have been the best means to recruit new candidates to the program. Requirements of the program are clearly presented to interested employees. Forty-eight employees have voluntarily applied for the credential program since 2015.

Table 12. The Arc of Sullivan-Orange NADSP Credential At-A-Glance

Roles of participants	DSPs and program managers
Credentials offered	NADSP DSP-C1, DSP-C2, DSP-Specialty
Number of credentials awarded	7 DSP-C1, 3 DSP-C2
Year the credential program began	2014
Learning Delivery Methods	Online College of Direct Support modules (via New York Alliance), classroom training, portfolio development with work samples
Core competencies	OPWDD, NADSP
Cohort model	Yes
Costs covered by the organization	CDS coursework, NADSP application fees, wage increase, classroom instruction, mileage to classroom instruction
Wage increase	\$1.50 per hour for DSP-C1; additional \$1.50 for DSP-C2
Typical enrollment per enrollment period	Approximately 10 participants
Typical time for credential completion	1½ years (for DSP-C1) and 1½ years (for DSP-C2)

Seven have completed the DSP-C1 credential. Four of these pursued the DSP-C2, and three attained the DSP-C2 credential in 2019. Nineteen participants in the program are in process of completing the DSP-C1 portfolio. Work samples take significant time, effort, and oftentimes creativity to overcome barriers. A few learners who began the program are no longer pursuing the credential, but retention of participants in the programs increased dramatically when learners voluntarily entered the credentialing process. Some learners also discontinued the credential program when they were promoted to FLS positions in the organization.

Attaining the credential

After completing two CDS modules, learners enroll in the DSP-C1 program and they attend four, two-hour classes. The focus of the classroom sessions are detailed in Table 13. A cohort model is used so that participants can support and learn from one another. Participants are paid for their class time, but they are expected to complete their CDS coursework on their own time. Getting started on their work samples as soon in the process as possible is an important component to keeping participants engaged. Participants also spend time reflecting verbally in class and through a journal about their work as a way to help them complete their work samples. All coursework is aligned with the NADSP Core Competencies and Code of Ethics and OPWDD competencies. Work samples are directly aligned with the NADSP Core Competencies and example skill statements. People with disabilities participate in and lead some classroom trainings.

Classroom trainings used to be offered once a month and were delivered in this way for several years. Given increased staffing difficulties due to many vacant positions, it was sometimes difficult for DSPs to be released for classes. To support credentialing participants to complete classroom instruction, the program coordinator started holding regular office hours to deliver content and help with writing work samples. Learners could attend as they were able, and learners that were seeking the DSP-C1 and DSP-C2

Table 13. DSP-C1 Classroom Content Areas at the Arc of Sullivan-Orange
Role of the DSP
Credentialing Process and Expectations
Person Centered Planning (language, definition, methods of assessment)
Types of Individual Supports Provided by the DSP
Supports for the DSP
Inclusion
Challenges the DSP May Face
Planning and Implementation of Person Centered Supports
Documentation and Use of Professional Language

credentials were often learning in the same room as one another. This became space for solving problems using resources and ideas across expertise levels and program areas. For example, a work sample that supports a person from a residential setting to gain employment could exchange ideas with a person in a job program to help a person receiving supports to achieve their goals. These were unintended but invaluable benefits in the new delivery of classroom instruction. Sometimes DSPs would also help deliver instruction to other learners and motivate them in the process.

In 2017, four staff who had completed the DSP-C1 credential began work on the DSP-C2 credential. This included work on the four competency-based work samples associated with this credential level, as well as additional training. Given the small group of learners, the training was individualized to the learners’ needs and aligned with compiling the work samples. In addition, training focused on Assessment for Person-Centered Planning and Community Networking. Learners also attended conferences and community trainings that were related to increasing competence.

Classroom training is held at the administration buildings of the Arc of Sullivan-Orange

County. Learners are reimbursed for their mileage to class, which is approximately 27 miles one way. Knowledge is assessed in CDS using pre-test and post-test assessments. Ultimately, learner competence is demonstrated in their work samples. The program coordinator often needs to seek the support of supervisors to release employees from their duties so they can attend classes. The program coordinator emphasizes the importance in communicating with supervisors and to encourage DSPs to use what they have learned in their training on a daily basis at work.

Wage increases

Successful completion of each credential level is paired with the following wage increases:

- \$1.50 per hour wage increase for learners who complete the NADSP Certified Initial Level (DSP-C1),
- \$1.50 per hour wage increase for learners who complete the NADSP-Certified Advanced Level (DSP-C2),
- \$2.00 per hour wage increase for learners who complete a credential in one of the NADSP-Specialist (DSP-S) areas: Inclusion, Health Support, Positive Behavior Support, Employment Supports, Aging Supports.

Learners who attain all three multitiered credentials are eligible to receive a total of \$5.00 per hour wage increase for their efforts. At this time of data collection, no staff had completed the DSP-S.

Learning supports available

Staff at the Arc of Sullivan-Orange County recognized after implementing the credential program that some participants who wanted to complete the credential did not possess the necessary written language and/or computer skills. Some participants had never taken an online course, and had difficulty navigating CDS independently. Participants also had difficulties writing and presenting, which were barriers to completing the credential. In response, staff are assigned to meet with participants and

provide individualized supports intended to maximize completion rates.

Support from supervisors was another important component that contributes to participants' successes in the credential. Given the demand for the participants' time to attend classes and complete work samples, the program coordinator found it important to work alongside DSP colleagues and FLS to ensure that they recognize how important it is to support the learner. On a day-to-day level, support from the FLS was identified as an important component to keep up the learner's motivation, self-esteem, and confidence. The program coordinator is also available to provide support to any learner at a mutually-agreed upon time.

Program evaluation

Learners are evaluated informally through the activities in the coursework, as well as through their work on the work samples. The development of DSP leaders who are interested to invest in other learners has been an important outcome of the credentialing program. Learners and credentialed staff have positively impacted the lives of the people supported toward their person-centered goals. The program is currently in a time of transition, and they will make decisions in the next months about the future of the program as the portfolio-based credentialing opportunities are phased out at NADSP for the E-Badge Academy.

Future Developments

The Arc of Sullivan-Orange has been experiencing many transitions for the last several years, including the merger with another organization and their administrative staff. The NADSP retired their portfolio-based credentialing program in 2020 for a switch to the NADSP E-badge Academy. Furthermore, the Arc of Sullivan-Orange has been using both Relias and CDS for employee orientation since each organization used a different system before the merger. They have not decided which curriculum they will use now

that the merger is complete. The Arc of Sullivan-Orange has developed several wonderful credentialed DSP leaders in this program, and these leaders have provided mentoring and support to others as they completed the credential. These leaders are interested to participate in future planning and they are interested to support another cohort to enter the program. Decisions had not been made about continuing to support credentialing opportunities through the E-badge Academy.

Outcomes of the Arc of Sullivan-Orange Credential

The last cohort of learners was brought into the program in 2017; no new learners entered the credential program since this time. As of September 30, 2019, seven DSPs have completed the DSP-C1 credential since 2014. Three of these staff have also completed the DSP-C2. All except one are still employed in the organization. Several credentialed DSPs have been promoted to positions as FLS and management. The program outcomes could not be updated with 2018 and 2019 data, so the data from 2017 are reported here.

Direct Support Professionals

Note: Arc of Orange County did not provide data for this 2019 update report. The information shared below includes only the 2017 data.

As of September 30, 2017, the Arc of Orange County had 309 total DSP positions. The three credentialed DSPs who are still working as DSPs make up less than 1% of the DSPs employed in the organization. However, 19 DSPs are actively in process of completing their classroom training and/or work samples.

DSP Annual Turnover. There were three credentialed DSPs employed at the Arc of Orange as of September 30, 2017. All of the credentialed DSPs were still employed on September 30, 2017. The credentialed DSP turnover rate was 0%. The average tenure of all credentialed staff at the Arc of Orange, including DSPs and those working in FLS positions was 15 years.



There were 306 non-credentialed DSPs positions in the organization as of September 30, 2017. In the calendar year ending on September 30, 2017, 60 DSPs left the organization. The non-credentialed DSP turnover rate was 19.6%. Average years of tenure for non-credentialed DSPs was 4.3 years.

DSP Wages. The average starting wage of DSPs at the Arc of Orange County was \$10.51, and the average wage was \$12.21 per hour as of September 30, 2017. The average wage of credentialed DSPs was \$14.74 per hour. The wage increase associated with successful completion of the credential program is \$1.50 per hour.

Frontline Supervisors

As of September 30, 2017, there were 33 FLSs employed at the Arc of Orange County (including three credentialed staff), and two vacancies (35 positions). Credentialed staff currently make up three of these positions (8.6%).

FLS Annual Turnover. As of September 30, 2017, three credentialed staff at the Arc of Orange County work in FLS roles. All of these staff were still employed on September 30, 2017. In the calendar year ending on

September 30, 2017, five non-credentialed staff turned over for an annual turnover rate of 15.6%.

FLS Wages. The average hourly wage among credentialed FLSs at the Arc of Orange County is \$22.69 per hour. The average hourly wage among non-credentialed FLSs at the Arc of Orange County is \$19.33 per hour.

Arc of Monroe NADSP Credentials

The Arc of Monroe has been offering supports for people in residential, day services, community habilitation, employment, respite, recreation, service coordination, and clinical operations for over 60 years. The mission of the Arc of Monroe is to, “create an inclusive society where the people we support may live truly integrated lives and reach their full potential as a part of our community.” They wanted to help their employees reach their full potential by evolving and implementing a credential program designed to build competence and retain skilled DSPs. They also utilize the NADSP Frontline Supervisor Curriculum and provide the opportunity for FLS to earn a NADSP FLS Credential.

To first implement the DSP credential, the Arc of Monroe won a competitive grant from the New York Department of Labor (DOL). This provided funds to implement the credential for cohorts 1 and 2, but the organization covered wage increases associated with completing the credential. The first cohort began in

June 2017, and the second cohort began in January 2018. The third cohort started in October 2019, and four of 15 class sessions were completed before the NADSP announced that they would not accept portfolios past summer 2020. The Arc of Monroe is transitioning to the E-badge Academy (see Textbox 5) and have had successes with credentialing DSPs through this program in just a few months.

In addition to the DSP credential opportunities, the Arc of Monroe provides opportunities for FLS to earn the NADSP’s FLS credential. The Arc of Monroe utilizes the NADSP Frontline Supervisor curriculum, which includes creation of a competency-based work sample. After completing the in-class curriculum, motivated FLS can complete additional coursework and work samples to submit to NADSP for credentialing. About 170 FLS have been trained in this curriculum. About 20 of these were working on their portfolio at the time of data collection.

Basic information about the Arc of Monroe’s NADSP credential programs are presented in Table 14. Information in this summary focuses on the implementation and operation of the portfolio based NADSP credential for DSPs and FLSs. The transition to the E-badge Academy credentialing opportunity is summarized in the section on Future Developments of the Program, as these happened after the period included in data collection.

Textbox 5. Using Relias as a part of the NADSP DSP-C1 Credential

The NADSP DSP-C1 portfolio-based credential requires that learners complete 100 hours of related education toward their credential. According to the NADSP Certification Program Guide-book, this can be delivered through one of the NADSP Accredited Curricula, NADSP provided trainings, or by participating in discussions with mentors or peers. These hours are documented in the application for the credential. Relias Learning is one of the NADSP Accredited Curricula. The Arc of Monroe and the Arc of Mid-Hudson credential programs in this comparative analysis use Relias Learning for a portion of the required hours of education toward their credential. Relias learning can be utilized alongside in-class discussions or classroom instruction for additional related education hours.

Enrollment criteria

DSP Credential. Applicants in the DSP credentialing program must be: (1) employed at the Arc of Monroe for six months, (2) an employee in good standing, and (3) up-to-date on all required training. However, someone with performance issues in the past would be considered for participation if the concern had been rectified. The first DSP cohort began in June 2017 with 17 learners, and the second and third cohorts began with 10-12 participants. Each cohort had about 50% of learners drop out of the program. Reasons for discontinuing were varied, including changes in personal and family responsibilities, and inability to keep up with credential requirements and the pace of learning. All learners who discontinue may participate in a future cohort. One learner from cohort 1 that dropped out did participate in cohort 2 and completed the training.

FLS Credential. Seeking the FLS credential is voluntary for all learners, but participation in the classroom learning component is required in some program areas. All FLS in day and residential services, including nurses, are required to take the course. Arc of Monroe hopes to expand

this learning opportunity into other programs areas where it is currently voluntary. The class is offered 2-3 times per year, and as such FLS take this course within the first six months of employment. Learners in the FLS credential complete the 24 classroom hours. There have been 15 cohorts that have completed this training, and size of cohorts has varied. The FLS cohorts began in 2018, but the credentialing opportunity was not offered until 2019. To complete the credential, learners complete additional instruction through Relias and they complete additional work samples needed to submit the portfolio. All FLS in the credential program have been recruited from the NADSP training in which they complete their first work sample.

Attaining the credentials

The Arc of Monroe engaged the leadership of an existing employee who was already NADSP faculty to serve as a program coordinator. The program coordinator was the primary contact for all credentialing cohorts but utilized mentors from the NADSP in early cohorts until she mastered the materials. The program coordinator facilitated all class sessions for the third cohort.

Table 14. The Arc of Monroe's NADSP Credentials At-A-Glance

Roles of participants	DSPs, FLSs
Credential attained	DSP-C1, FLS-C
Number of credentials awarded	8 DSP-C1; 2 FLS Portfolios submitted
Year the credential began	2017 for DSP-C1; 2019 for FLS-C
Number of cohorts	2 DSP cohorts; 15 FLS cohorts
Learning Delivery Method	Online via Relias, classroom, work samples
Core competencies	OPWDD, NADSP, FLS
Costs covered by the grant or the agency	Application fees for Relias and NADSP, wage increase, annual credentialing fees to NADSP, mileage to classroom instruction
Wage increase after successful credential completion	\$1.00 per hour (DSP-C1); \$500 bonus (FLS)
Typical time for credential completion	10 months (DSP-C1); 6 months (FLS)

Table 15. List of required Relias coursework included in the Arc of Monroe NADSP DSP-C1 Credential

Abuse and Neglect of Individuals with I/DD

Bon Appetite! An Overview of Safe Eating and Drinking Focused Learning Boundaries and Dual Relationships for Paraprofessionals

Client/Patient Rights

Conflict Management

Co-Occurring Disorders: An Overview for Paraprofessionals Cultural Competence for the DSP

Cultural Diversity

Dental and Oral Health for Individuals with I/DD Disabilities Overview

Employment Support Focused Learning Fall Prevention Focused Learning

Fall Prevention Focused Learning

Fire Safety

HIPAA Overview

Incident Reporting

Infection Control

Influenza Prevention and Preparedness

Managing Challenging Behaviors Focused Learning

Medication Management for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities Part 1

Medication Management for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities Part 2

Overview of Serious Mental Illness for Paraprofessionals

Risk Management for Individuals with IDD Safety in The Field

Strategies for Socialization and Integration for People with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Stress Management in the Workplace

Supervision and Leadership

Supporting Quality of Life for a Person with Developmental Disabilities

Team Building: Introduction

Understanding Substance Abuse Problems in the Workplace

For the DSP and FLS credentials, the Arc of Monroe uses a blended learning model of online learning, classroom instruction and discussion, and development of a portfolio with work samples to submit to NADSP. These components are aligned with the NADSP DSP, FLS, and OPWDD competencies. Online learning is delivered via Relias (see Textbox 5). Learners access the Relias course content at work on agency laptops, and learners are paid for their time to complete the online coursework during their work hours. Relias learning is supported through classroom instruction and discussion.

Learners in the DSP credentialing cohorts attend 15 two-hour classes at the organization administrative offices. The list of Relias Courses that learners are required to successfully complete as a part of the DSP credential are listed in Table 15. Classes are offered at two times 1–3 p.m. and 4–6 p.m. Learners are reimbursed for mileage to classroom instruction, with seven miles as the average one-way distance.

The FLS credential includes learners who have completed the NADSP FLS Curriculum (24 hours) which includes creating one competency based work sample based on the National Frontline Supervisor Competencies (see Textbox 6). The topics covered in this curriculum are detailed in Table 16. These learners have the option to enroll in additional coursework through Relias and complete of two additional work samples to submit their portfolio for review to the NADSP. The Relias coursework comes from the list of NADSP accredited curricula.

Wage increases

Successful completion of the DSP-C1 credential results in a \$1.00 per hour increase in pay for credentialed DSPs. The Arc of Monroe has allotted funds for this pay increase. Successful completion of the FLS credential will result in a bonus of \$250 upon completion of the credential, plus another \$250 bonus six months later. Wages for FLS are already very competitive; hence a bonus was considered

Table 16. Topics covered in the NADSP Frontline Supervisor Curriculum

Purpose of the Frontline Supervisor Training – “The Why”
NADSP National Competency Areas – The Foundation of It All
National Frontline Supervisor Competencies
Using the NADSP Code of Ethics
Recruiting, Hiring, and Developing Direct Support Professionals
Developing Oneself as a Leader and Manager
Difficult Conversations We Have as a Frontline Supervisor
Relating and Responding to a Multi-Generational Workforce
The NADSP Universal Evaluation Tool Based on the NADSP Competencies
The Great Egg Drop and Leadership and Team-Building Exercises
“Putting It All Together” and the NADSP FLS Leadership Development Plan

sufficient for awarding the initiative to become credentialed.

Learning supports available

Learners in the credential programs flex their work schedules in order to attend classes and complete online learning. Relias learning modules are completed at the learners’ work sites when there is down time. Learners complete

these, for example, when people supported have gone to bed, or are away at day program. They also have flexibility to access the courses from home or another location. Most learners have electronic devices that they can use both at home and work to complete training requirements. Learners complete these requirements with the permission and support of their supervisor. Despite supports offered,



Textbox 6. National Frontline Supervisor Competencies

The National Frontline Supervisor Competencies (NFSC) are an evidence-based set of knowledge, skills, and abilities that reflect best practice in the supervision of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) who work with individuals with disabilities in residential, work, and community settings. They were developed at the University of Minnesota, Research and Training Center on Community Living. Competencies are considered a foundation for workforce development and standardization in all fields and at all levels. When rigorously developed and effectively implemented, competencies serve the important function of providing individuals with information about the requirements of a given profession, and they provide a basis for training, orientation, and continuing staff development. The utilization of competencies in the direct service workforce reinforces shared values of all service providers' skills and growth (Hoge et al., 2008). Nationally recognized and validated competencies also serve to promote the recognition of the role of the FLS, the development of career ladders, and the development of a more competent, stable workforce to meet the growing demand of long-term services and supports.

The NFSC are designed to be used as a tool to develop knowledge, skills, and abilities in an FLS within approximately one year of employment, or other established time frame as determined by an organization to achieve the highest quality service delivery and supervisory skills. It is not intended to suggest an incoming FLS would be competent across all areas to start, but that an organization would use the competencies as a way to develop professional development goals. The NFSC are utilized by the National Association of Direct Support Professionals' (NADSP) as the foundation of the FLS credential.

The NFSC competency areas describe the knowledge and skills FLSs must have, including:

- Direct Support
- Health, Wellness and Safety
- Participant support plan development, monitoring and assessment
- Facilitating community inclusion across the lifespan
- Promoting professional relations and teamwork
- Staff recruitment, selection and hiring
- Staff supervision, training, & self-development
- Advocacy and public relations
- Leadership, professionalism and self-development
- Cultural awareness and responsiveness

some learners chose to discontinue participation in the programs.

Program evaluation

The biggest factors in supporting these credentialing initiatives at the Arc of Monroe has been longer retention of credentialed staff, their increased skill on the job, and the promotion of DSPs who have earned the DSP-C1 to FLS roles where they share their knowledge

with DSPs that they supervise. Learners in both the DSP and FLS credentialing cohorts complete a pre-coursework self-assessment of their understanding and use of the NADSP and OPWDD competencies prior to beginning the coursework for the credentials. They complete the same self-assessment during the final class. Learners also complete post-tests on the Relias lessons after completing each lesson. The program coordinator monitors

learners' completion data from Relias to ensure that learners stay on track. Since learners access Relias lessons at their work site, the program coordinator has called supervisors to ask them to encourage learners who are falling behind. Successful and timely completion of learners' portfolios is a main goal.

New York state also mandates a competency based annual evaluation for each DSP. The program coordinator, impressed with the increased competence of learners after completion of the program, pulled annual evaluation data pre and post completion of the DSP credential. The average increase in evaluation scores was over 10% higher for DSPs in cohort 1 after participating in the credential. Credentialed staff were more likely to noticeably demonstrate the competencies on the job after credentialing.

Future Developments

The Arc of Monroe had recruited and begun the third cohort in the DSP credentialing program when they received word that the NADSP would be discontinuing their portfolio-based credential. DSP learners had participated in four of fifteen class sessions toward the DSP-C1 credential. The NADSP E-badge Academy will take the place of the portfolio-based credential (see Textbox 7 on the NADSP E-badge Academy). The Arc of Monroe purchased user licenses for the NADSP E-badge Academy, and they were able to fill 25 spots with DSPs in cohort 3 and FLSs seeking the credential. The organization is making decisions about how they will promote and recruit additional learners to the 25 open spots.

The E-badge requirements do not currently require a cohort or hybrid model for learners to earn credentials through the E-badge Academy. However, the program coordinator had been a reviewer of e-badge submissions. She recognized a notable lack of understanding of how to apply the Code of Ethics among some submissions. She developed two courses to support learners to pursue credentialing through the E-badge Academy. The courses are:

- An introduction to the electronic platform and requirements for submitting an e-badge, and
- The Code of Ethics, focused on applications of the Code of Ethics to direct support related instances.

The intention of these classes is to set learners up for success in credentialing as well as their commitment to the field. These classes were offered in January and February 2020. The E-badge Academy is set up such that both DSPs and FLSs seeking credentialing must first earn the DSP-I credential, so DSPs and FLSs could work on the same trajectory to reach a credential. The first DSP from Arc of Monroe earned a DSP-I credential through the E-badge Academy in January 2020. Staff are optimistic about the opportunities in the E-badge Academy for increasing skill of DSPs and FLSs, as well as creating an attainable career ladder for staff.

The hours of classroom and online learning required for credentials in the E-badge Academy is half of what is required for the portfolio-based credentials. The FLS credential requires the learners first earn the DSP-I credential level (this aligns with the first FLS competency of direct support). The FLS credential requires only 25 hours of accredited instruction. The currently offered 24-hours of the competency-based NADSP FLS Curriculum will cover this requirement, alongside of one additional hour through Relias.

Given that the requirements for these credentials are quite streamlined in comparison to the portfolio-based credential, the Arc of Monroe expects that many more staff will pursue credentials. They are determining how they will change application and enrollment criteria, and potentially incentives for completing the program in order sustain the program.

Outcomes of the Arc of Monroe credential

The Arc of Monroe provides supports and services for over 1,100 people with disabilities. On September 30, 2019, two cohorts had completed the training for the NADSP DSP-C1 portfolio-based credentialing program. Eight

Textbox 7. NADSP E-badge Academy (DSP-I, DSP-II, DSP-III, FLS)

The NADSP E-badge Academy was launched in 2019 as a way for DSPs to earn electronic badges by demonstrating knowledge, skill, and values that are characteristic of high-quality direct support professionals on the job. The E-badge Academy is a way for the direct support workforce to, “demonstrate . . . an up-to-date and relevant skill set, highlight [their] professional achievements, and document the value [they] bring to [their] employer and the people [they] support” (NADSP, 2020). The e-badges are aligned directly with the CMS Core Competencies, but also cross-walked with the NADSP and OPWDD Core Competencies, and the National Frontline Supervisor Competencies (Sedlezky et al., 2013). Learners sign up for online access to the E-badge Academy, and they first earn The Code of Ethics Commitment badge as the foundation of their practice. Development of e-badges is ongoing, but those currently available are listed in the E-Badge Academy catalog.

The E-badge Academy is expected to replace the portfolio-based credentialing program. One barrier to credentialing in the portfolio-based system was the significant time commitment needed to create a portfolio, which was only reviewed after submission (within 90 days in most cases). In contrast, turnaround time for review of an e-badge submission is three business days. This means that learners receive feedback throughout the credentialing process. Some learners can earn their credential much more quickly in this model, while others accumulate badges gradually, making progress toward certification when their schedules allow. Comparison of these two NADSP Credentialing programs is detailed here. All reviewers complete training for assessing submissions and are tested at least twice yearly for inter-rater reliability.

DSP-I Certification | Learners earn 15 total badges prior to being awarded this credential, including the Code of Ethics Commitment badge. As a part of the credential, learners submit proof of 50 hours of accredited education. Learners demonstrate competency by earning at least one Core Competency E-badge from (1) crisis prevention and intervention competency area, (2) safety competency area, (3) person centered practices competency area, and (4) health and wellness competency area. Learners apply for the DSP-I certification (and accompanying DSP-I e-badge) when all certification requirements are met.

DSP-II Certification | Learners earn a total of 30 e-badges prior to being awarded this credential. These include the DSP-I E-badge, and at least one Core Competency E-badge from (1) evaluation and observation competency area, (2) communication competency area, (3) professionalism and ethics competency area, and (4) community inclusion and networking competency area. Learners also submit proof of 100 hours of accredited education (cumulative, including the education in the DSP-I credential).

DSP-III Certification | Learners earn a total of 50 e-badges prior to being awarded this credential. These include the DSP-II E-badge, and at least one Core Competency E-badge from (1) empowerment and advocacy competency area, (2) community living skills and supports competency area, (3) education, training and self-development competency area, and (4) cultural competence competency area. No additional hours of accredited education beyond the 100 hours in the DSP-II are required.

The FLS Certification includes the DSP-I credential as the first credentialing benchmark, given that the first FLS core competency in the National Frontline Supervisor Competencies is in direct support. Organizations offering this opportunity to their FLS are having them complete the DSP-I on the way to completing their FLS Certification. Additional DSP badges are available through the E-badge Academy.

DSPs had attained the DSP-C1 credential at the time of data collection. Another five DSPs were working on completing their portfolio, along with 20 FLS who were working toward the FLS credential. Two FLSs had submitted their portfolio for review at the time of data collection.

Direct Support Professionals

On September 30, 2017, the Arc of Monroe had 416 total DSP positions. There were 10 DSPs enrolled in the first cohort of the credentialing program at that time. On September 30, 2018, there were 425 non-credentialed DSP positions, and 8 credentialed DSPs. On September 30, 2019, there were 432 non-credentialed DSP positions and 7 credentialed DSPs. On September 30, 2019, 1.8% of the DSP positions were credentialed. DSP data are summarized in Table 17.

Annual DSP Turnover. There were 416 DSP positions at the Arc of Monroe on September 30, 2017. In the calendar year ending September 30, 2017, 159 DSPs left the organization. The annual DSP turnover rate was 38.2%. The average DSP tenure was 3.8 years. On September 30, 2018, there were 425 non-credentialed DSP positions, and there were 210 non-credentialed DSPs that left in the 12 months ending on September 30, 2018. The turnover rate was 49.4% among non-credentialed DSPs. Eight DSPs earned their credential during that year, and none of those DSPs left the organization. The average DSP tenure was similar between non-credentialed DSPs and credentialed DSPs, 4.6 and 4.8 respectively. On September 30, 2019, there were 432 non-credentialed DSP positions, and there were 226 non-credentialed

DSPs that left in the 12 months ending on September 30, 2019. The turnover rate was 52.3% among non-credentialed DSPs. There were still 8 DSPs who had earned the credential in the organization, but one left the organization in 2019. There was a 12.5% turnover rate among credentialed DSPs in the twelve months ending on September 30, 2019. The tenure of non-credentialed DSPs in 2019 was 4.3 years, while the tenure among credentialed DSPs was 5.9 years.

DSP Wages. Among non-credentialed DSPs, the average wage was \$12.03, \$12.99, and \$13.12 per hour in 2017, 2018, and 2019 respectively on September 30 in each year. The average wage among credentialed DSPs on September 30, 2018 was \$13.53, and on September 30, 2019 was \$13.95. The wage increase associated with successful completion of the credential is \$1.00 per hour.

Frontline Supervisors

There were no credentialed FLS by September 30, 2019 although two FLS had submitted their credentialing portfolio to NADSP for review. The bonus associated with successful completion of the FLS credential was \$500. The number of FLS positions was 41 on September 30, 2017, and 55 and 60 on the same date in 2018 and 2019 respectively.

The Arc of Mid-Hudson NADSP DSP-I Credential

The Arc of Mid-Hudson provides support for more than 2,000 people with disabilities throughout Ulster, Greene, and Putnam counties in New York, through residential,

Table 17. Arc of Monroe DSP Outcomes Summary

	2017		2018		2019	
	Non	Credentialed	Non	Credentialed	Non	Credentialed
N	416	0	425	8	432	7
Wage	\$12.03	-	\$12.99	\$13.53	\$13.12	\$13.95
Tenure	3.8	-	4.6	4.8	4.3	5.9
Turnover	38.20%	-	49.40%	0%	52.30%	12.50%

day habilitation, community habilitation, and vocational supports. The Arc of Ulster-Green merged in summer of 2019 with the Arc of Putnam to become the Arc Mid-Hudson. The Arc of Ulster-Green had been operating a NADSP DSP credentialing program since January 2015. Four cohorts completed the Arc of Ulster-Green portfolio-based credentialing program. Beginning in 2017, the Arc of Ulster-Green also offered the NADSP Frontline Supervisor curriculum and offered the opportunity for FLS to earn the FLS-C credential through the portfolio-based system. Prior to the merger, the Arc of Putnam had not previously provided credentialing opportunities to their employees, but they were thrilled that the merger provided such an opportunity. The Arc of Mid-Hudson rolled out the E-badge Academy credentialing opportunities in August of 2019 for their DSPs and FLSs. The aim of the credentialing program is to support staff to achieve higher levels of performance and to engage in longer term commitment to the organization. A thorough description of the Arc of Ulster-Green NADSP portfolio-based credentialing opportunities is available in Kramme and Hewitt (2018). This Arc of Mid-Hudson summary focuses on the transition to offering the E-badge Academy

DSP-I credential (see Textbox 7 on the NADSP E-badge Academy). Since its roll out in August 2019, several Arc of Mid-Hudson staff have successfully completed this credential, and many more are in process. However, as of September 30, 2019 these staff had not attained the credential through the E-badge Academy. At the time of data collection in early 2020, 11 Arc of Mid-Hudson staff had earned the DSP-I through the E-badge Academy since October 1, 2019. Table 18 presents basic information about the NADSP credentials offered by Arc of Mid-Hudson as of September 30, 2019.

Attaining the credential

Four cohorts were recruited for the DSP-C1 credential which included classroom instruction aligned with Relias training, and the development of a portfolio of competency-based work samples for submission to the NADSP. The cohorts began in January 2015, January 2016, June 2017, and June 2018. Cohort 4 was started in the portfolio-based model prior to the transition to the E-badge Academy. Learners in cohort 4 transitioned to the E-badge academy in September 2019. Learners in cohorts 1-3 who had not yet submitted their portfolio were given until the summer of 2020 to complete the portfolio submission, or

Table 18. The Arc of Mid-Hudson NADSP Credentials At-A-Glance

Roles of participants	DSP and FLS
Credential attained	DSP-C1, FLS-C (portfolio); DSP-I (E-badge Academy)
Number of credentials awarded	14 DSP-C1; 2 FLS-C
Year the credential began	2015 for DSP-C1; 2017 for FLS-C; 2019 for DSP-I
Enrollment periods	Fall, spring
Total enrolled to date	42 (E-badge Academy)
Learning Delivery Method	Online via Relias, classroom, work samples
Core competencies	OPWDD, NADSP, FLS
Costs covered	Application fees for Relias and NADSP, annual bonuses, credentialing fees to NADSP, mileage to classroom instruction
Typical enrollment per enrollment period	50 learners (E-badge Academy)
Typical time for credential completion	6-12 months per credential

they could transition to the E-badge Academy for submission.

The E-badge Academy model offered some advantages when compared to the portfolio-based model. It eased the time and travel burden off of learners and allowed more flexibility for completing the credential for staff who could not make it to blended learning classes that were previously offered in the portfolio-based credential. Learners in the portfolio-based credential attended 26 two-hour class sessions with their cohort and were paid for mileage if they were coming from work. Learners in the E-badge Academy attend two four-hour workshop sessions and they complete learning modules through Relias Learning at their own pace. The program coordinator was able to track learners' progress through the administrator dashboard on Web Coursework, the website that hosts the E-badge Academy. The two class sessions that go alongside of the Relias Learning were developed to support learners to understand vital concepts to providing high quality support and to better understand the E-badge Academy platform and requirements. The two class sessions include the following components:

- Orientation and overview of the program, including how to get e-badges. This session aims at providing person-centered practices and person-centered language. This session was first offered in October 2019 and was attended by a staff member from NADSP. The NADSP staff helped people to get logged in to the computer system and showed them how to earn their first e-badge for "commitment."
- Submitting for the DSP-I credential. This class was offered in March 2020 but had to be rescheduled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It will be carried out as a web-based meeting when rescheduled. Coordinators hope that since several staff have earned their credential since the first class in October 2019, they will attend the next session to describe their experiences and encourage others to complete the credential.

The in-person classes are offered on-site at the main staff development building in Cottekill, although staff are able to attend by SKYPE as needed. Given the broad geographic area in which staff employed by the Arc of Mid-Hudson, some staff drive an hour to attend. Attending online is intended to help relieve the burden and cost of staff travel when possible. To allow for more flexibility, the program coordinator also provides an option for staff to take individual sessions at any of the administration buildings in Kingston, Putnam or Green Counties. Some staff have attended these sessions in Kingston and Putnam counties.

Learners attaining the DSP-I credential in the E-badge Academy complete 50 hours of competency-based instruction, including the classroom instruction. Learners earn 15 e-badges for the DSP-I credential, which includes the badge for the DSP Code of Ethics. E-badges in the DSP-I credential must also be earned from four competency areas. These are detailed in Textbox 7 on the NADSP E-badge Academy.

There are two writing prompts that each learner submits for attaining each E-badge in the Academy. For example, the learners explain how their work in providing direct support helps the person they support to be part of their community, or how they utilized the Code of Ethics in their work. Prior to submitting for the credential, learners are encouraged to meet with the program coordinator for an "end interview." To structure this interview, the program coordinator utilizes a standard form to discuss with learners their progress, to encourage opportunities for reflection, and to ensure that they have completed all requirements. The aim of the interview is to create an opportunity to make a personal connection and to touch base one more time before they achieve their final certification. This touch point has been beneficial for DSPs to share their ideas and to discuss their motivation and inspiration prior to submitting for their credential. It is also a time for learners to provide feedback on ways to improve the program and the overall structure of supports provided by the Arc of Mid-Hudson to improve peoples'

lives. The end interview provides an opportunity to learn what is working and not working for learners in the credential. These end interviews can happen at an in-person meeting, by phone, or by SKYPE.

There were lessons learned in this first session of offering the courses to support learners through the E-badge Academy. Some learners were confused that they could pace themselves to complete e-badges that were most relevant to their work at a pace that accommodated their schedule. Program coordinators believe that this increases accessibility of the credential and provides a career pathway for the learner.

The demands on the learner to demonstrate skills on the job in the E-badge Academy are similar to the portfolio-based credential. Support from supervisors is critical, and the program coordinator frequently sends learners to supervisors to get feedback and support to complete requirements. The point of difference is that learners do not receive support from their cohort as frequently as they did in the portfolio-based credential. Especially in the case where there was lack of support from a supervisor or colleagues, the class sessions were a place of ongoing support where problem solving happens. They are currently unsure if a replacement for such support may be needed.

With the reduced requirements in the E-badge Academy, program coordinators were initially concerned that there would be a lack of pride or distinction in earning the credential compared to the portfolio-based credential. At the time of data collection, they noted that this was simply not the case. Learners had accomplished important learning and skill in professional practice. They saw the opportunities through the E-badge Academy as important steps in their careers.

Learners who were completing the FLS-C were also given the opportunity to complete the credential through the E-badge Academy. Some learners are pursuing the DSP-I, as this is the first milestone in attaining the FLS credential through the E-badge Academy.

Continuing education. Learners who have attained a credential need to keep the credential current with the NADSP. Learners who have earned a credential need to do 20 hours every two years of accredited education through the NADSP, and they submit these hours to both NADSP and the Arc of Mid-Hudson using a log. This keeps their credential current. The Arc of Mid-Hudson pays for this continuing education through access to Relias coursework and in some cases sending staff to state conferences and the Annual NADSP National Conferences. Both coursework and attending accredited conferences meet the standard for continuing education. With a small number of credentialed staff, it has not been difficult to track this information. They are tracking these hours through Relias. They set up reminders to be sent to staff about their continuing education, encouraging them to make a lesson plan. This might become more difficult to do however when there are larger numbers of credentialed staff in the organization. They are unsure of the method they will use to track this information on a larger scale.

Enrollment criteria

Learners in the cohort-based credentialing program applied for 12 spots in the credentialing cohort. Learners were initially required to be employed for at least 12 months when they applied for the credential program. This was shortened to six months in cohorts three and four. Learners completed a written application that included a letter of support from a person they support and their supervisor. There were 41 learners in cohorts 1-3 working toward the DSP-C1 credential, and 14 completed this program.

Learners in the E-badge Academy must be employed full time with no disciplinary action for two years prior to application. There is no longer a seniority requirement that the learner has been employed for at least six months. Administrative staff found that new staff were most excited about the credentialing opportunity and the organization wanted to engage learners earlier in their employment to help them stay in their role. This was

reinforced by the fact that a learner who began with Arc of Mid-Hudson in the summer of 2019 had completed the DSP-I through the E-badge Academy in January 2020, after less than six months of employment with the organization.

There were 42 learners enrolled in the E-badge Academy when it was rolled out in the fall of 2019. This includes participants from day habilitation, employment supports, residential, and community habilitation. To enroll, employees submit an application with a recommendation from their supervisor. The requirement to have a recommendation from a person they support as well as a longer questionnaire was reduced in order to streamline the application process. Learners enroll twice per year, in the spring or the fall. Enrollment for the spring session was still several months away at the time of data collection, and applications to participate had already been received.

With each cohort, program coordinators had to do less to get buy in from learners and supervisors to support enrollment in the credentialing program. The reputation of the program spoke volumes in the high quality of supports and the direct application to learners' workplace. In order to engage supervisors to support learners, program coordinators started offering a session about the credentialing opportunities in the third cohort, but not all supervisors attended this. In cohort 4 and for learners in the E-badge Academy, they started offering virtual options for supervisors to attend, such as including information in Relias that supervisors could access. Supervisor support continues to be a critical component in supporting learners through both the portfolio-based credential as well as the E-badge Academy, but more supervisors have become familiar with the program and support it.

Wage increases

Wage increases associated with the credential have been restructured several times. Cohorts 1-2 received a \$0.50 per hour raise after

completing the first online training module, and an additional \$0.75 per hour raise after they successfully achieved the credential. Cohorts 3-4 received a \$0.50 per hour raise after completion of the Relias coursework, plus a \$1,000 annual bonus following the achievement of the DSP-C1 credential. Credentialed FLS earned a \$1,000 raise in salary. The annual bonus was paired with a holiday celebration, where credentialed staff were recognized and received their bonus check.

Given the growing number of staff seeking the credential through the E-badge Academy and the reduced demand on learners' time to achieve it, the DSP-I credential is now awarded a \$500 annual bonus. The wage increases for the DSP-II and FLS-C credentials through the E-badge Academy had not yet been determined at the time of data collection. The bonus will be awarded each year that the credentialed staff keeps their credential current with the NADSP (see "Attaining the credential").

Learning supports available

Learners are encouraged to complete the Relias coursework on-site in their downtime, but their ongoing work in direct support takes precedence. Learners can also complete the work toward the credential in their personal time on their own computers. Learners who do not have access to a computer or internet service can utilize work computers. Program coordinators are available for support at any mutually agreed upon time by phone, email, SKYPE, or in-person meeting.

Language and technology assistance are supports that are provided, but few learners in the program sought this assistance. Relias offers courses in Spanish that learners can use to complete their requirements. However, the tests that are associated with the courses are in English. Learners who took the courses in Spanish indicated that they'd prefer to have tests also in Spanish. A few learners with learning disabilities have requested additional supports from the program coordinators, and their needed supports were provided.

Getting support and engagement from the DSP's supervisor at their work site has become an issue in a few cases. Sometimes supervisors would not release the learner for classroom instruction when needed. In other cases, they would not support the learner in completing their work samples or learning requirements. Beginning in 2016, program coordinators required that supervisors who manage a DSP enrolled in a credential program attend an orientation to the credential. The supervisor orientation includes an overview of the credential, an explanation of the work samples, and the expectations for the DSP's schedule. They also describe how the person will be evaluated. This has been a successful strategy. Now that the organization spans multiple counties, the orientation has been offered at multiple sites as well as by SKYPE. The slides for the supervisor orientation have also been uploaded to Relias web based platform for use by supervisors as desired.

Program Evaluation

Given the amount of independence afforded by the E-badge Academy, the program coordinators encourage learners to meet with them when they are ready to submit for the DSP-I, and they encourage the same meeting for learners who apply for additional credentials. This can happen at one of the administration buildings, on the phone or over SKYPE. The program coordinators developed an evaluation tool to guide this conversation. They ask learners about their work, what they have learned, what were the challenges, and to explain the work they did to complete the e-badges. They have found this is a valuable experience for learners to reflect on what they have done and learned. Information from these conversations provides important information for supporting future learners to complete the credentials.

The most notable impacts of the credential on the organization has been the increased level of confidence and engagement of staff who complete the credential program. Credentialed staff have a positive influence on others at work. The program has had positive impacts both on

retention and on promotions. Arc Mid-Hudson has successfully promoted the program as an effective recruitment benefit. Now that there are a larger number of staff earning credentials through the E-badge Academy, they will be more intentional in tracking of trends between credentialed and non-credentialed staff along a number of dimensions.

Future Developments

The E-badge Academy has already offered increased access to credentialing for Arc of Mid-Hudson staff. It provides a career pathway that keeps staff engaged in learning more about direct support. The first learners began in the program in August 2019, and at the time of data collection in mid-2020, 11 staff already achieved the DSP-I credential. This led the program coordinators to think about new ways to engage people in the field of direct support through employment and the E-badge Academy. Beginning in spring of 2020, the Arc of Mid-Hudson plans to recruit up to eight junior and senior high school students in the Junior DSP program. Each student will work alongside of a veteran DSP to learn about the field. They will also be enrolled in the E-badge Academy. They will have the opportunity to earn e-badges and potentially be credentialed. The program coordinators have developed a job description for a Junior DSP, and they will attend a career day at a local high school to recruit students to participate in the program doing summer part time paid work. The program coordinators already have a relationship with the high school, specifically with the guidance counselor as they have recruited from the high school in the past. As a part of this program, current staff who mentor the Junior DSP will earn a mentoring e-badge. The student could complete at least half the DSP-I credential during their job. They are excited for this potential new component to their credential program, as they consider it a pathway to recruit highly qualified staff and to expose more people to the field of direct support.

Outcomes of the Arc of Mid-Hudson credential programs

The Arc of Mid-Hudson provides supports and services for over 2,000 people with disabilities. The Arc of Ulster-Green merged in summer of 2019 with the Arc of Putnam to form the Arc of Mid-Hudson. In addition to this, a second human resources director was hired whose focus was on recruitment and retention of new DSPs, which increased recruitment efforts by 30%. For this reason, DSP and FLS staffing increased in 2019. As of September 30, 2019, 14 DSPs completed the NADSP DSP-C1 credentialing program since 2015. As of the same date, two FLS had completed the NADSP FLS-C credential. Several additional DSPs have been hired out of a DSP credentialing program at the local SUNY community college. These DSPs earn a wage increase at the Arc of Mid-Hudson, but the outcomes data below reports only on the DSPs and FLSs credentialed through the Arc of Mid-Hudson’s NADSP credential program.

Direct Support Professionals

As of September 30, 2017, the Arc of Ulster-Greene had 628 total DSP positions (including full time, part time, and vacant positions). Eight of these DSPs were credentialed in the organization’s credentialing program. On September 30, 2018, there were 796 total DSPs positions, with 9 of these credentialed. They merged with the Arc of Putnam in 2019 and became the Arc of Mid-Hudson. On September 30, 2019, the Arc of Mid-Hudson had 1,141 total DSP positions, including 10 credentialed DSPs. Wage, tenure, and turnover data are reported in Table 19 for each year. At the time of data collection, there were an additional 13 DSPs who were completing their portfolio for the

DSP-C1 credential, and 42 had enrolled in the E-badge Academy for the DSP-I credential.

DSP Annual Turnover. Annual turnover rates calculated between October 1-September 30 each year ending 2017, 2018, and 2019 were 12%, 32%, and 23% respectively among non-credentialed DSPs. No credentialed DSPs left in 2017 or 2018, but two credentialed DSPs left in 2019. The credentialed DSPs annual turnover rate in 2019 was 20%, although there were a very low number of credentialed DSPs in the organization compared to the number of non-credentialed DSPs.

DSP Tenure. Non-credentialed DSP average tenure on September 30 of 2017, 2018, and 2019 was 6.4 years, 6.1 years, and 4.3 years respectively. Credentialed DSP average tenure on September 30 of 2017, 2018, and 2019 was 9.3 years, 11.4 years, and 11.2 years respectively.

DSP Wages. The average hourly non-credentialed DSP wage on September 30, 2017 was \$11.45. It was \$14.21 on the same date in 2018 and \$14.08 on the same date in 2019. The average hourly wage of credentialed DSPs \$13.62 per hour on September 30, 2017. It was \$16.32 on the same date in 2018 and \$17.81 on the same date in 2019.

The first two cohorts of the credential received a total of \$1.25 per hour wage increase when they earned the DSP-C1 credential After re-structuring the program for the third and fourth cohorts, the wage increase was \$0.50 per hour when completing the credential plus an annual bonus.

Frontline Supervisors

Table 19. Arc of Mid-Hudson DSP Outcomes Summary

	2017		2018		2019	
	Non	Credentialed	Non	Credentialed	Non	Credentialed
N	620	8	787	9	1,131	10
Wage	\$11.45	\$13.62	\$14.21	\$16.32	\$14.08	\$17.81
Tenure	6.4	9.3	6.1	11.4	4.3	11.2
Turnover	11.60%	0%	32%	0%	23%	20%

The first frontline supervisors at the Arc of Mid-Hudson to earn the FLS-C credential was in 2018, so this outcomes summary focused on credentialed staff from 2018 and 2019. On September 30, 2018, there were 70 non-credentialed FLS and two credentialed FLS. On September 30, 2019, there were 95 non-credentialed FLS and one credentialed FLS. One credentialed FLS left the organization in 2019. In the 12 months ending on September 30 in 2018 and 2019, the average non-credentialed FLS turnover rate was 30% and 35% respectively. Given the small number of credentialed FLS, the average turnover rate should be interpreted with caution. It was 0% on September 30, 2018 and 50% on September 30, 2019.

The average salary of non-credentialed FLS was \$51,147 on September 30, 2018, and it was \$51,771 in 2019. The average salary of credentialed FLS was higher than this in each year (over \$79,000), but given that this was only across two staff these results should be interpreted with caution. The average tenure of non-credentialed staff was 14.4 years on September 30, 2018, and 10.6 years on September 30, 2019. The average tenure of credentialed staff was lower than credentialed

staff (4.2 and 9.5 years in each year respectively), but given that this was only across two staff these averages should be interpreted with caution.

New Horizons Resources Credential Programs

New Horizons Resources has provided services since 1981 to people in Dutchess and Ulster Counties. They operate residential services in thirty residences, community habilitation, day habilitation, weekend respite, and summer camp services at Briggs Farm. Since the late 1990s, they have operated credentialing opportunities for DSPs as a way to increase skills and commensurate rate of pay. These credentialing programs highlight the organization's value on education and rewarding motivated DSPs as professionals.

New Horizons Resources fully funds DSPs to complete coursework at either Dutchess Community College or Ulster Community College in a certificate program called the Direct Care Certificate program. This certificate program comprises about half of an Associate of Arts degree, and some continue on to

Table 20. New Horizons Resources Credentials At-A-Glance

	Certificate	Apprenticeship
Roles of participants	DSP	DSP
Credential attained	DC-1, DC-2	DSP-J; DSP-C1
Number of credentials awarded	28	10
Year the credential began	Late 1990s	2005
Enrollment periods	Fall, spring, summer terms	About every two years
Learning Delivery Method	Classroom	Online via CDS, work-based learning, work samples, discussion
Core competencies	-	OPWDD, NADSP
Costs covered	Tuition, fees, books associated with instruction	CDS modules fees, portfolio reviewing and credentialing fees to NADSP, wage increases
Typical enrollment per enrollment period	2-3 per year	4 per cohort
Typical time for credential completion	2 years	2 years

earn the Associate of Arts degree through the organization’s tuition support program. They also operate a parallel apprenticeship program through the New York State Department of Labor (DOL) that includes coursework through the College of Direct Support modules from the NY Alliance, work-based learning, and the creation of a portfolio of competency-based work samples for submission to the National Alliance of Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) for the DSP-C1. Some DSPs participate in both programs, earning the distinctions associated with each credential and the commensurate wage increases. There have been 37 DSPs who have completed one or both of these programs, and 6 of these have been promoted to FLS. Basic information about these programs are included in Table 20.

Attaining the credential

Direct Care Certificate Program. The Direct Care Certificate Program is a series of courses in which learners can attain a recognized certificate through taking traditional community college coursework. The Direct Care Certificate Program is offered through Dutchess Community College and Ulster Community College. DSPs from New Horizons Resources have attended the coursework for the programs at each of these community colleges. The coursework at each college differs slightly. The courses included at each community college are listed in Table 21. New Horizons Resources covers all registration, tuition, fees, and books that learners need to complete the courses.

Learners take the courses outside of their workday onsite at the community colleges; at the time of this summary no online courses

Table 21. Courses in the DC-1 and DC-2 Credentials by Community College

SUNY Dutchess Community College Child Care: Direct Care Certificate	SUNY Ulster Community College Direct Support Practice Certificate
DC-1	DC-1
BHS 110 Introduction to Human Services	ENG 101 College English
CHC 103 Child Care and Youth Practicum I	HUS 103 Introduction to Human Services
PSY 102 Interviewing and Counseling Skills	PSY 101 General Psychology
PSY 111 Introduction to Psychology	HUS 202 Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
CDC 203 Child Care and Youth Practicum III	HUS 104 Direct Support Practice in Human Services
DC-2	DC-2
PSY 134 Group Dynamics	HUS 211 Human Services Interview and Counseling
CHC 104 Child Care and Youth Practicum II	HUS 209 Ethics and Standard in Human Service
PSY 235 Psychology of Exceptionality	HUS 212 Human Services Field Practicum and Seminar in General Practice I
BHS 242 Drug and Alcohol Use and Abuse	HUS 213 Human Services Field Practicum and Seminar in General Practice II
CDC 206 Child Care and Youth Practicum IV	
ENG 101 Composition I	

were offered for these programs. The courses take place at various times of the day. When learners enroll in the courses, they fill out a form that is signed by their FLS to indicate the hours that they will be in classes. The FLS is informed of the learners' needs and can have conversations at that time with the DSP about balancing their schedule. After the FLS signs off on the coursework that the DSP will take, the form is sent to administration to cover the associated costs. Learners must maintain a grade of "C" or better to remain eligible for assistance. If they do not earn a "C," learners retake the courses on their own and earn an eligible grade to get further tuition assistance. Learners are not paid for their time in class or their mileage to travel to class. Learners complete the requirements of the DC-1 prior to the courses prior to completing the DC-2.

While the courses at each community college for Direct Care Certificate Program differs slightly, the learning objectives of each are the same. Learners are introduced to Human Services, including members of the service

respect for diversity, and understanding the use of technology and its impact on services. More information is available at www.sunydutchess.edu and www.sunyulster.edu. About 2-3 DSPs per year typically enroll in one of these programs.

New Horizons Resources has a strong value on education, which is demonstrated through their support of educational opportunities. The Direct Care Certificate Program comprises about half of an Associate of Arts degree, and it has pushed some learners toward further education. All costs for the Direct Care Certificate Program are covered by the organization. Additional learning opportunities are also available, should learners wish to complete them. New Horizons Resources supplements any educational courses that DSPs wish to take, at a rate of \$500 per course for full time staff or \$250 per part time staff, up to \$1000 per year. DSPs at New Horizons Resources participate in a variety of educational programs, regardless of whether the content of the programs are directly relevant to human services.

NY Department of Labor Apprenticeship Programs. New Horizons Resources also operates a registered apprenticeship program for DSPs (see Textbox 2). Participants are paired with a professional mentor and completion is awarded with a recognized certificate of completion from the DOL. This program includes online learning through the College of Direct Support. The modules developed and administered through the NY Alliance are utilized (see Textbox 1). With hands on support from their supervisor, and a monthly 30-minute meeting with the program coordinator they discuss what they are learning. During their 3000 hours of related learning, learners are working on competency-based work samples that are a part of the portfolio-based credentialing program through the NADSP (see Textbox 4). Entering the program and completion of four work samples is a benchmark toward completion of this credential. When the learner has completed the portfolio, the portfolio is reviewed by the NADSP for the DSP-C1 credential. Even with the transition to the E-badge Academy at the NADSP, New



delivery team, client assessment, referral and advocacy, the history and future trends in human services, applying a strengths based approach in counseling, self-awareness and

Horizons Resources has entered into a contract with the NADSP to continue reviewing completed portfolios as a part of this program. When they have completed their work-based learning, they are distinguished by the New York DOL as a DSP-J, or "Journeyman." The learning for this credential happens at work, utilizing computers on the job.

Enrollment criteria

All programs are publicized at new hire orientation, as well as through recruitment activities when the programs start. These programs are not limited to any program area; they are open to all program areas and all DSPs whether they work full time or part time hours. DSPs rather than FLSs are targeted for enrollment in these programs. New Horizons Resources also participates in learning opportunities for FLS, but these opportunities do not offer credentialing.

Certificate program. Enrollment for courses is concurrent with the two community college schedules, with courses available in fall, spring, and summer. DSPs enroll for classes and then they must complete organization-specific application paperwork with their supervisor to ensure that the courses do not interfere with their work schedule. Following this, the supervisor sends the form to administration to cover costs. There is no limit to the number of learners admitted per year to this program.

Apprenticeship program. Recruitment for the apprenticeship program is limited to four slots for DSPs. In the last recruitment period, there were six DSPs who applied. Three DSPs were chosen for the program. Given that there is one unfilled slot, recruitment for this slot may happen this year. The last recruitment period happened in the fall of 2019, and learners started in March 2020. It takes learners about two years to complete the program, so recruitment would happen again after learners complete the program.

The program is publicized across the organization through emails and supervisors. Learners submit a form to indicate where they work and in which program, whether they are full time or part time, and how many years they have worked at New Horizons Resource. While

there is no longevity requirement, preference is given to DSPs with longer tenure. Candidates complete an interview with the program coordinator. They also submit a writing sample. Administration makes final decisions about who is admitted into the program.

Wage increases

Certificate program. Two wage increases are associated with completion of the courses in the DC-1 and DC-2 curriculum. When the courses in the DC-1 block are completed, the learner earns an additional \$0.37 per hour. When the courses for the DC-2 block are completed, the learner earns an additional \$0.39 per hour. This totals a wage increase of \$0.76 per hour.

Apprenticeship program. There are five benchmarks in the apprenticeship program. Entering the program, the learner earns an additional \$.31 per hour. Completion of the first three work samples results in an additional wage increase of: (1) \$0.32 per hour, (2) \$0.30 per hour, and (3) \$0.32 per hour. The fourth wage increase happens when the learner reaches the Journey Worker credential through the New York DOL. This increase is \$0.31 per hour. Learners can also submit their portfolio of four work samples to the NADSP for review for the DSP-C1 credential. The total wage increase after all five benchmarks are completed in this credential is \$1.56 per hour.

DSPs at New Horizons can complete all of these credential opportunities. If a learner completed both the certificate program and the apprenticeship program, they could earn a total wage increase of \$2.32.

Learning supports available

Learners in the certificate program would have access to supports provided at the community college, and could seek support from colleagues and their supervisor as needed. No physical or learning supports are typically provided in the apprenticeship program, as learners demonstrate their writing skills prior to admittance into the program. Learners in the apprenticeship program are paired with



a mentor, in addition to working alongside of their supervisor. Needs for support could be communicated to their supervisor or mentor if barriers to completion arise.

Program Evaluation

These programs are well established into staff development after decades of implementation. No formal evaluation continues. The success of the program continues to be demonstrated by retention of these staff, as well as promotion of them to supervisor positions in a few cases.

Outcomes of New Horizons Resources Credential Programs

New Horizons Resources provides supports and services for over 300 people with disabilities. As of September 30, 2019, 37 DSPs completed a credentialing program funded by New Horizons Resources since the late 1990s. Six of these DSPs worked in FLS positions. DSPs earn a wage increase when completing the DC-1 credential and the DC-2 credential. They also earn wage increases at five benchmarks in the NY DOL Apprenticeship program. Each of these benchmarks in each credential program are awarded with a wage increase between \$0.30 per hour and \$0.39 per hour. The six DSPs who were credentialed and promoted to FLS positions retain the wage increases earned through credentialing.

Direct Support Professionals

As of September 30, 2018, the New Horizons Resources had 305 total DSP positions

(including full time, part time, and vacant positions). Thirty of these DSPs had earned one or more credentials in the organization's credentialing programs. On September 30, 2019, there were 330 total DSP positions, including 31 credentialed DSPs. Wage, tenure, and turnover data are reported in Table 22 credentialed and non-credentialed DSPs for each year.

DSP Annual Turnover. Annual turnover rates between October 1-September 30 were calculated for each year ending 2018 and 2019 were 33% and 36% respectively among non-credentialed DSPs. No credentialed DSPs left in 2018 or 2019. The credentialed DSP annual turnover rate was 0% each year.

DSP Tenure. Non-credentialed DSP average tenure on September 30 of 2018 and 2019 was 6.6 years and 6.2 years respectively. Credentialed DSP average tenure on September 30, 2018, and 2019 was 15.3 years and 15.9 years respectively.

DSP Wages. The average hourly non-credentialed DSP wage on September 30, 2018 was \$14.85. It was \$14.69 on the same date in 2019. The average hourly wage of credentialed DSPs \$19.11 per hour on September 30, 2018. It was \$19.14 on the same date in 2019.

Frontline Supervisors

There were 27 FLS positions at New Horizons Resources on September 30, 2018, and 29 FLS positions on the same date in 2019. There were six of these FLS in each year who had earned one or more of the credentials offered through New Horizons Resources. Each FLS had earned the credential when they were a DSP in the organization and had since

Table 22. New Horizons DSP Outcomes Summary

	2018		2019	
	Non	Credentialed	Non	Credentialed
N	275	30	299	31
Wage	\$14.85	\$19.11	\$14.69	\$19.14
Tenure	6.6	15.3	6.2	15.9
Turnover	33%	0%	36%	0%

Table 23. New Horizons FLS Outcomes Summary

	2018		2019	
	Non	Credentialed	Non	Credentialed
N	21	6	23	6
Wage	\$20.84	\$24.01	\$20.74	\$24.24
Tenure	12.7	16.8	11.8	17.8
Turnover	0%	0%	4%	0%

been promoted to an FLS. When promoted, staff keep their wage increases that were earned through the credential programs. Wage, tenure, and turnover data are reported in Table 23 credentialed and non-credentialed FLSs for each year.

FLS Annual Turnover. Annual turnover rates between October 1-September 30 were calculated for each year ending 2018 and 2019 were 0% and 4% respectively among non-credentialed DSPs. No credentialed FLSs left in 2018 or 2019. The credentialed FLS annual turnover rate was 0% each year.

FLS Tenure. Non-credentialed FLS average tenure on September 30 of 2018 and 2019 was 12.7 years and 11.8 years respectively. Credentialed FLS average tenure on September 30, 2018, and 2019 was 16.8 years and 17.8 years respectively.

FLS Wages. The average hourly non-credentialed FLS wage on September 30, 2018 was \$20.84. It was \$20.74 on the same date in 2019. The average hourly wage of credentialed FLS was \$24.04 per hour on September 30, 2018. It was \$24.24 on the same date in 2019.

Training Collaborative for Innovative Leadership NADSP Frontline Supervisor Credential

The Training Collaborative represents a shared effort among four community providers in or near New York City: Adapt Community Network, CP Unlimited, HeartShare Human Services, and Services for the Underserved. Some additional organizations also take part in the trainings, but these four organizations originally came together to develop and deliver the curriculum. The Training Collaborative is an in-person competency-based training program designed to increase the quality of support and leadership provided by FLS. The credential offered in this program was an additional effort to provide professional development and work-based learning opportunities to FLS. The credential drew upon the initial training provided through the Training Collaborative, as well as technology-based opportunities to develop and submit a portfolio for the NADSP-FLS credential.

The Training Collaborative is a partnership among organizations whose executives have known each other for many years. They

embrace a shared philosophy that emphasizes: (1) building effectiveness among FLS, (2) supporting quality culture, and (3) developing emerging leaders who will train and mentor DSPs. A major aim of the Training Collaborative is to foster such leadership in order to reduce the high rate of DSP turnover. A premise of the shared belief is that if DSPs feel supported, they will work to provide quality, reliable services, and more likely to remain in their job (Larson & Hewitt, 2012; Mittal et al., 2009). The classroom components of the Training Collaborative curriculum are aligned with the National Frontline Supervisor Competencies, OPWDD's Core Competencies and NADSPs Code of Ethics.

At the time of data collection, over 525 FLS or directors had been trained in the curriculum since 2014. In 2017, the four organizations also provided an opportunity for Training Collaborative alumni to complete a FLS portfolio-based credential through the NADSP. The credential components incorporated their learning and work sample completed with the Training Collaborative. Additional components were delivered through coursework and developing two additional work samples to submit a competency-based credential for review to the NADSP. Twenty-two FLS completed this credential in December 2017. Almost all credentialed FLS continue to be employed in 2020, with several having been promoted to manager or

administrative positions. To provide this opportunity, the Training Collaborative utilized grant funds provided by a federal Balancing Incentives Program through New York's Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) to pay for the program. These funds were exhausted after the first round of the credential, but the Training Collaborative would be interested in continuing this opportunity if additional funds could be allocated. Basic information about the Training Collaborative FLS NADSP credential program is presented in Table 24.

Enrollment criteria

Participants in the FLS credentialing program were recruited from a pool of FLSs who had already completed the Training Collaborative leadership training curriculum. This served as a pre-requisite of the credential program for this first cohort. The leadership training takes about 1½ years to complete and includes training in creating a strong team-approach to promote quality outcomes creating a culture of accountability, and the role of the FLS in promoting quality supervision, communication skills, and leadership. Throughout this process, participants create a work sample and a presentation about their efforts. The training includes 100 hours of instruction and time associated with development of projects.

The content of these courses are aligned with the National Frontline Supervisor Competencies

Table 24. The Training Collaborative NADSP Credential At-A-Glance

Roles of participants	FLS
Credential attained	NADSP FLS
Number of credentials awarded	22*
Year the credential program began	2017 May
Number of cohorts	1
Learning Delivery Method	Classroom, work-based learning, portfolio
Core Competencies	OPWDD, National FLS Competencies
Anticipated time for credential completion	5 months*
Wage increase for successful completion	\$2,000 bonus

Note. *This credential builds upon the learning curriculum in the Training Collaborative, in which 525 FLS had completed at the time of this summary. The credential cohort completed additional requirements to complete the credential.

(Sedlezky et al., 2013; see Textbox 6). When developing the curriculum, the organization's training staff divided up the content to develop focused content. Trainers from all four organizations deliver the training content. The training is delivered in monthly full day training with learners from their organization, the other organizations in the Training Collaborative, and sometimes other organizations that participate. There are homework and reflection activities associated with each day of training, and chances for learners to discuss and collaborate with one another as they are learning. Learners also complete the Leadership Practices Inventory prior to the start of training and upon completion of training. This provides them with feedback on their leadership from colleagues and super-visees. Learners complete a competency-based work sample. They present this project to their peers and administrators from the organizations. Learners receive feedback on their work sample, and they must demonstrate specific required elements within a rubric to pass. Upon completion of the program, learners that successfully complete the program receive an hourly wage increase of \$0.20 per hour after successful completion. Over time, many FLS who have completed the Training Collaborative for Innovative Leadership are promoted in leadership roles as such opportunities become available. Given the collaborative relationships established between the organizations, some are also promoted between organizations in the Training Collaborative. The organizations in the collaborative are enthusiastic and collegial about such opportunities for their staff, and they believe in the mutual benefit of such opportunities for their graduates.

For each cohort in the Training Collaborative, ten FLSs are selected to participate from each of the four organizations (total of 40 learners per cohort). There is no length of tenure required for a FLS to be selected to participate, but the learner having desire to participate, time to dedicate to the coursework and projects, and a manageable workload are considered.

To participate in the credential, FLS who successfully completed the leadership training were eligible to apply. In addition to having completed the leadership training,

participants must have been employed in their organization for at least two years (although tenure of most learners was about 4-6 years with their organization).

Attaining the credential

All learners in the credentialing program were in one of the previous cohorts that completed the 100 hours of leadership training from the Training Collaborative, including completion of the first work sample for the submission of their portfolio submitted to the NADSP. The curriculum for the FLS credential program included further classroom instruction and completion of the additional two work samples for the portfolio. There was no online learning component associated with this credential program. Classroom instruction for the credential included five full day classroom sessions. These included many opportunities for reflection, with self-reflection being an important skill honed by learners throughout their training.

The requirements of the NADSP FLS portfolio-based credential are similar to the NADSP DSP-C1 credential in the requirement of education or training from an accredited curriculum (totaling 50 hours) and the completion of work samples (three work samples are required). However, both of these components are aligned with the eleven National Frontline Supervisor competencies rather than the 15 DSP competencies. Like the portfolio for the DSP-C1 credential, learners create and submit an e-portfolio to NADSP for evaluation. The portfolio includes demonstration of education/instruction, letter(s) of support, commitment to the NADSP Code of Ethics, and work samples to demonstrate competence in three of eleven national FLS competencies, among several other requirements. Application for submitting a FLS credentialing portfolio to NADSP is \$200, and \$50 annually for recertification.

Classroom instruction was held at City University New York (CUNY), which is located off of the metro line. Learners were given a release from some of their typical responsibilities in order to attend classes. Class was taught by one of the trainers from the organizations that represent

the Training Collaborative. The lessons were devised, and trainers were assigned following the development of the curriculum schedule.

Wage increase

Successful completion of the credential resulted in a one-time \$2,000 bonus for each FLS. This was funded through a federal Balancing Incentives Program grant through OPWDD.

Learning supports available

Learning and technology supports were available upon request. Learners had access to computers and tablets through their organizations. Portfolios were compiled and submitted electronically, and a number of learners utilized resources and support for increasing technology and computer skills.

Program evaluation

Learners' progress in classroom instruction is monitored informally by instructors. The completion of the portfolio is ultimately the gauge of the learner's credentialing successes. Prior to submission of the portfolio to NADSP, learners present their work samples to the chief executive officers at each organization. This is an opportunity for the emerging leaders to share with executives their ideas that will impact organizational change. Learners' progress is also assessed using the Leadership Practice Inventory, which is an established, multi-informant tool that helps inform learners about their progress in evolving qualities that the organizations' leadership staff hope for in their employees. DSP turnover in organizations, FLS retention, and career advancement are monitored by the supervisors and administrators of programs, and human resources.

Future Directions

Leadership 101. Given the successes of the Training Collaborative for professional development, two additional programs have been developed to provide professional development opportunities for staff. One is a Leadership 101 course that targets motivated DSPs and new FLSs with additional training

and development opportunities. This had been offered to three cohorts at the time of data collection. Four in-person full day classes are held at The City University of New York (CUNY). The topic covered in class include: Mission Driven Cultures, Communication, Teamwork and Coaching. Training is taught by graduates of the Training Collaborative with reflection activities required following the sessions and a final project.

Advanced Leadership Program. The first cohort of an Advanced Leadership Program was also developed and had been operating for less than a year at the time of data collection. This program focused on strategies and leadership development for staff identified as future leaders in their organizations who wish to advance to administration positions. All learners in this program are alumni of the Training Collaborative for Innovative Leadership, which is a prerequisite to participate in the Advanced Leadership Program. Each of the sessions in the program includes a "Round Table" discussion with one of the CEO's from the member agencies. This provides an opportunity for the participants to ask questions and discuss current and future challenges that will be faced by our industry in the next decade. The lessons in the program are: (1) The Role of the CEO: What is it Really?, (2) The Legislative Process, (3) Building an Organization, (4) Changing Supports: Building Resources, (5) Quality Outcomes: A Leader's Role, (6) A Leader's Role in Change, and (7) Possibilities and Innovations.

Outcomes of the Training Collaborative NADSP credential

Three of the four organizations that are part of the Training Collaborative separately provided information on employee positions, tenure, turnover, and wages. This information is presented below. Twenty-two FLSs were credentialed in 2017. At the time of data collection, 525 FLS, managers or program directors had participated in the Training Collaborative for Innovative Leadership, the prerequisite for the credential. Upon successful completion of the credential, each FLS

received a one-time \$2,000 bonus when their portfolio was approved by NADSP. This bonus was not included in the wage increases reported below for credentialed FLSs. Given that one aim of the Training Collaborative and the credential program is to stabilize the DSP workforce by means of providing quality leadership and support to DSPs, data on DSPs were collected and are reported below along with the FLS data.

The organizations differed in the number of people served by the organization. The organizations reported providing services to 604, 1,625, and 2,405 people with disabilities in 2019. Number of DSP positions (including part-time, full-time and vacancies) in 2018 ranged from 644 to 1,662 on September 30, 2018, and 808 to 1,647 on September 30, 2019. Number of non-credentialed FLS positions (including vacancies) ranged from 89 to 347 on September 30, 2018, and 88 to 289 on September 30, 2019. Note that the organizations included FLS as well as managers, program directors, and regional directors in these counts. The three organizations that reported data continued to employ 13 of the 22 credentialed FLS. Only two of the FLS who had completed the credential had left the organizations across the three organizations that reported. Data from one organization that credentialed seven of the 22 FLS were not reported.

Direct Support Professionals

Annual DSP turnover ranged from 12% to 29% in the organizations between October 1, 2017 and September 30, 2018 and from 12% to 26% between October 1, 2018 and September 30, 2019. Average DSP tenure in organizations ranged from 3.9 years to 5.5 years on September 30, 2018, and 3.7 to 5.7 years on September 30, 2019. Average hourly DSP wages ranged from \$13.71 to \$15.00 in 2018, and from \$14.50 to \$15.98 in 2019.

Non-credentialed Frontline Supervisors

Annual non-credentialed FLS turnover ranged from 7% to 31% between October 1, 2017 and September 30, 2018 and from 9% to 36%



between October 1, 2018 and September 30, 2019. Average non-credentialed FLS tenure information was only available from two organizations. Average non-credentialed FLS tenure on September 30, 2018 was two years in one organization and 6.7 years in another organization. Average non-credentialed FLS tenure on September 30, 2019 could be reported by just one organization, which was 6.4 years. Two organizations reported average non-credentialed FLS wages on September 30, 2018 and they were \$28.00 and \$32.08. On September 30, 2019, average non-credentialed FLS wages was reported for three organizations, and it ranged from \$22.00 to \$32.29.

Credentialed Frontline Supervisors

Three organizations reported information on 13 credentialed FLS. None of the credentialed FLS at these organizations left between October 1, 2017 and September 30, 2019 for an annual turnover rate of 0% at each organization for credentialed FLS. Average credentialed FLS tenure ranged from 4 years to 10.5 years on September 30, 2018. Average tenure on September 30, 2019 ranged from 5.1 to 11 years. Average hourly wages for credentialed FLS ranged from \$28.00 to \$34.76 on September 30, 2018, and from \$28.00 to \$42.47 on September 30, 2019.

Interviews with Credentialed Direct Support Professionals and Frontline Supervisors

A component this evaluation of credentialing programs in New York was to conduct interviews with credentialed DSPs and FLSs who participated in the credentialing programs. A total of 20 DSPs and FLSs from the seven credentialing programs were interviewed for this project using a set of structured questions intended to elicit stories about their experiences and the impact of the credential on their work. Interviews with each respondent were recorded and transcribed. They were reviewed by researchers and coded to identify themes. These are summarized by question, providing insight into the impact of these credentialing programs.

How did you get into the credentialing program?

Nearly all of the respondents reported that their agency had an application process. Information about the program was shared by hosting informational meetings for all staff. Sometimes these sessions were simply sharing information through regularly scheduled staff meetings. Others reported an agency wide meeting. The majority of participants indicated that their manager reached out to them to encourage application into the program and personally recommended them for it. Nearly all reported that there were some required components of the application process. These often included the DSPs having to obtain a letter of recommendation and complete a personal statement about their interest in the program. Many reported that their immediate supervisors/managers supported them in completing the application process.

Can you describe your experiences in the credentialing program?

Positive aspects

The overwhelming response to this question by DSP and FLS credential participants was that the credential program gave them a much better sense of teamwork and the ability

to get to know co-workers and organization better. They often spoke of how the credential program brought them together and was unifying with DSPs and FLSs from other parts of their organization. Most talked about the opportunity for networking and having a group with whom they could problem solve various challenges they face as DSPs together. Most appreciated opportunities to learn from one another and to hear different perspectives on how to approach specific scenarios/situations and their work in general.

Many participants shared that their experience in the credentialing program gave them a strong sense that they were learning new skills, despite how long they'd been working as a DSP/FLS. One example shared was that the credentialing participant realized they had been doing a great job at caregiving. In the credential program, they learned how to move to a support and facilitation approach to direct support.

The credentialing program completion opened up other opportunities for many of the DSPs and FLSs involved. Respondents identified opportunities such as attending conferences, co-instructing orientation for DSPs, and writing opportunities because their skills in this area were recognized. Participants appreciated the positive feedback they received from their instructors, mentors, supervisors and other participants in the program. They were particularly pleased with how their supervisors were positive and helpful/supportive of their participation.

Challenges

Participants described many of the challenges they encountered as they were going through their credentialing program. Most responded that scheduling and fitting the credentialing program into their busy lives was challenging and they had significant time management issues. The cohort model in some programs brought challenges for staff in learning and engaging with coworkers who had very different personalities. Getting everything done that was required to complete the credential



was stressful for many participants. Many had not been engaged in school found it very difficult to complete the writing required in some of the programs. Lastly, some participants indicated that it was difficult to prioritize the training when they were not paid for all of the effort it took to complete the program.

What did your organization do to support you to complete the program?

Participants were asked to identify what their organizations did to help them complete the credential programs. Nearly all respondents said that encouragement to complete the credential and ongoing monitoring of how they were progressing was very helpful. They also described how important the accessibility of mentors and trainers was to their success. Most organizations made it very easy for DSPs/FLSs to attend the training. Some even provided laptop computers for the participants to use at home. Many appreciated the ability to participate in discussion with cohort members. Several participants mentioned that they appreciated the release time and flexibility given to them in getting work hours in while simultaneously working around the training schedule. Many participants were paid for their time in class and nearly all mentioned the incentives provided to them through increased wages and/or bonuses upon completion of their credential supported them to complete the program.

How has your job and approach to your work changed since you went through the program?

The participants identified many ways in which their participation in and completion of the credential changed their approach to their work. Some indicated that they learned how to teach and support new staff in different ways that were more supportive and focused on teaching them how to do their job. – “I was always a strong hold, described as a sergeant in the military. To be honest, I became more mild-mannered to deal with the younger workers coming in so I am able to teach them the correct way based on individual needs - soft and assertive based on worker coming in and helping them to excel.”

The credential programs resulted in many participants gaining a better ability to consider and seek out new and different perspectives. For example, understanding challenging behavior exhibited by persons supported and what is being communicated by them. - “I learned to take more time to understand a situation and look at it from all angles. It helped me to slow down and look at everything I was doing and decide if I was doing it correctly. Stop, listen and learn.”

After completing the credential, some graduates reported that they had improved confidence and felt a sense of being validated for what they

knew and had been doing for years in their jobs. They also reported improved advocacy skills and the ability to make things happen for the individuals to whom they provided support.

One common change in their approach to work was that many of the credentialed staff who participated in the interviews indicated that their jobs had completely changed because they were promoted. Some were promoted to lead roles as DSPs, others to FLS positions and also to management position.

How did training in your credential help you respond to the demands of COVID-19?

Creativity and flexibility - "...we are doing Zoom sessions now and I have had to pull my creative side. Weeks where I feel drained and I am not reaching people in same way. Remaining positive and finding alternate solutions. Typical days now during COVID-19, our building can only have 30 people at a time and only people who will wear mask and wash hands. I am doing everything from home - weekly calendar and we zoom with clients. Music, yoga, brain games and stuff like that. Tour of apple orchard. Tour local firehouse. Definitely helps to know what people like and find things to draw them in. I've had to access community resources and that community has responded."

"....a lot of the staff get frustrated because the job is very different now using Zoom, all verbal and interacting with individuals who are nonverbal. Not same response as when in person. Staff struggle with this. Understand we are not asking you to go out of comfort zone, we have to do things differently. It is our new situation and difficult for all of us. Respect and patience to get through it. [It is] Hard to communicate with no feedback and yet this is what is required of us now."

"...More hygiene training and hand washing helped me prevent the spread of germs. I learned more about boundaries and asking people to respect boundaries in polite manner. [To] Explain why it is important."

"...One thing was making sure we knew when to tap out. We got stir crazy from being in the house all of the time. We need to lean on one another and give each other breaks."

What keeps you working in your organization?

The most common response to this questions was that people stayed with their organizations because of the many growth and development opportunities they have been given. Most also indicated that they remain in their organizations because of the relationships they have with the people supported and the sense of purpose they find in their work. They also indicated that incentives and opportunities for advancement, excellent supportive supervisors and managers and flexibility have resulted in their continued loyalty to their organization. Lastly, many described their organizations as being open, wanting to hear from DSPs and listening to them. These were critical factors in their tenure.

What are the greatest challenges of working as a DSP?

Participants in this evaluation identified many challenges of working as a DSP. The pervasive lack of enough staff, having to work too many hours and the pressure they feel to fill openings on the schedule were significant challenges. Many described the increased focus on paperwork, documentation and other admin responsibilities distracting them from actually being able to work with individuals supported. Another area of struggle for the DSPs was around staff dynamics, including conflict, lack of commitment, inflexibility, unwillingness to try new things, and gossip. Lastly, nearly all of the DSPs indicated that working during COVID-19 was significantly challenging as it changed not only where they work but also how they are able to do their work.

Discussion

This section integrates what was learned in examining the credentialing programs included in this report. It conveys the themes that arise when looking across the various programs by exploring the overall impact on DSP retention and wages, barriers to completion, and strategies for successful implementation.

Credential impacts on DSP retention and wages

Each of the credentialing programs included in the report is intended to result in greater workforce stability measured by longer retention and lower rates of organizational annual turnover among direct support staff.

Table 25. Comparison of credentialing program models

	Wildwood Programs	Ability Beyond	Arc of Orange-Sullivan	Arc of Monroe	Arc of Mid-Hudson	New Horizons Resources	Training Collaborative
Name of credential	Conover Scholar	Direct Support Professional	NADSP C1, C2	NADSP C1, FLS-C	NADSP C1, FLS-C, DSP-I (E-badge)	DC-1, DC-2; Apprentice; DSP-C1	Training Collaborative; NADSP FLS-C
Learning Delivery Methods	Online	Online, Classroom	Online, Classroom, Portfolio	Online, Classroom, Portfolio	Online, Classroom, Portfolio (C1, FLS-C)	Classroom (DC-1, DC, 2); Online, Work-Based, Portfolio	Classroom, Portfolio
Multi-tiered for specializations	yes*	yes*	yes*	no	yes*	yes*	no
Curricula Used	CDS	CDS	CDS	Relias	Relias	CDS	Training Collaborative
Competency Alignment	OPWDD, NADSP	OPWDD	OPWDD, NADSP	OPWDD, NADSP, FLS	OPWDD, NADSP, FLS	OPWDD, NADSP	OPWDD, FLS
Wage increase for initial credential	\$1.00/hr; annual bonus	\$0.50/hr, \$500 bonus at graduation + \$500 after 6 months and goals	\$1.50/hr	\$1.00/hr	\$0.50-1.25/hr (portfolio); \$500 (E-badge)	\$0.30-0.39/hr per benchmark	\$250 bonus; \$2000 bonus
Number of Credentials Awarded to date	225	353	8	10	16	38	22

Note. (*) All multi-tiered credentialing options provide additional wage increase or bonus for additional credentials earned.

Successful completion of each credential is awarded with higher wages or a bonus. Overall information about the credentialing programs summarized in this report are in Table 25, and outcomes information for the DSP credential programs is summarized in Table 26. The organizational-level data collected in this report suggest that credentialed staff have longer retention and lower rates of organizational turnover when compared with non-credentialed staff. A number of factors should be considered in interpreting these data.

Diverse programs. Credentialing programs included in this report differ in several ways, including (1) which educational components were included in the credential, (2) number of hours associated with each learning component, (3) delivery methods used in instruction, (4) length of time in which the credentialing initiative has been implemented, and (5) wage increases associated with the credential. The number of credentialed and non-credentialed staff in each organization differed in every organization. These factors may impact the outcomes data. Research should explore different aspects of credential programs to inform best practice.

Table 26. Summary of 2019 outcome data of credentialed DSPs and non-credentialed DSPs in organizations implementing a DSP credentialing program

	Ability Beyond	Arc of Monroe	Arc of Mid-Hudson	New Horizons Resources	Wildwood Programs
Credentialed DSPs	133	7	10	31	96
Non-Credentialed DSPs	560	432	1,131	299	71
Credentialed Annual Turnover	11%	12.50%	20%	0%	10%
Non-Credentialed Annual Turnover	23%	52.30%	23%	36%	32%
Average Credentialed Retention (yrs)	13.5	5.9	11.2	15.9	13.3
Average Non-Credentialed Retention (yrs)	5.3	4.3	4.3	6.2	9.4
Average Credentialed Hourly Wage	\$19.59	\$13.95	\$17.81	\$19.14	na*
Average Non-Credentialed Hourly Wage	\$15.51	\$13.12	\$14.08	\$14.69	na*

Note. Data were not available for the Arc of Sullivan-Orange. *Wage data were not available for Wildwood.

Better outcomes among credentialed staff.

Keeping these interpretive points in mind, preliminary outcome data for the programs that had learners who had successfully completed the credential program by the time of data collection. Credentialed staff were less likely to turnover and had longer retention when compared to non-credentialed DSPs. Outcomes data from 2019 in organizations that implement one or more DSP credential program are summarized in Table 26. It is reasonable to conclude that credential programs were a contributing factor to these differences. Average wages for credentialed DSPs are also higher, as should be expected from the wage increase associated with successful completion of the credential. The combination of increased competence and higher wages may be important factors keeping DSPs in their job. These preliminary data support the notion that participating in a credentialing program is associated with increased retention and lower turnover compared to those who have not participated in a credentialing program, although these data should continue to be monitored to increase the confidence in the findings.

Barriers to implementing a credentialing program

Several organizational barriers to implementing a credentialing program were noted by the programs included in this report. These are summarized below and should be attended to in continued implementation of existing programs, in newly implemented programs throughout the state, and in a coordinated statewide effort.

Costs. Organizations reported that it was initially difficult to allocate staff time and startup costs. However once programs were implemented, the higher quality work of credentialed staff made it easier to justify costs. Several programs utilized grant funds to help with startup. Organizational funds were needed to sustain the credential program. However if such funding options are no longer available, the programs may not be viable.

Staff shortages. Credentialing program participants who attend classroom instruction may be met with challenges if staff cannot be located to cover their shifts of providing direct support. Programs often utilized methods of ensuring that FLS were aware of the requirements of the program among the DSPs that they supervise, and that the FLS was supportive of the DSPs participation. Many FLS were happy to do this, recognizing the benefit of how DSPs' professional practices are enhanced through the classroom instruction and interaction. DSPs frequently mentioned that their FLS was the person to recommend and support them to enroll in the credential. However, work priorities and high vacancy rates in organizations can make it difficult at times to release DSPs to attend class. Consistent relief opportunities have to be available to any DSP who is accepted into a credential program.

Lack of administrative and supervisor buy-in. Most DSPs mentioned that supervisors were supportive of their participation in the credential programs, but lack of support from managers and supervisors may negatively impact participants' class attendance and completion of requirements. Buy in from administrators was needed for many programs to become established and to receive needed resources. When programs became established, it became easier to elicit support and earmark needed resources for the program to continue. In other words, the programs demonstrated their value by the longer tenure and higher quality of support provided by credentialed staff. Some programs also included the administrator or director of the organization in the orientation or presentation of work samples to recognize participants for their commitment to advancing their skills and quality of supports.

Lack of available expertise to develop and deliver a curriculum. Implementing a credentialing program in an organization can take extensive coordination and oversight, depending on the required components of the credentialing program. The credentialing programs included in this report employed staff with strong understanding of credentialing and program administration. Organizations

without such leadership may experience difficulties in implementation without support. Using online education modules or technology to deliver some or all instructional content was used in credentialing programs in this report. Developing inter-organizational capacity and/or utilizing technology for training may be valuable strategies to meet this need.

Mandatory participation in the credential.

There was difficulty in retaining committed participants in the credential when learners did not voluntarily enroll. Making the credential program voluntary was an important feature that appears to impact participants' completion of the credential.

Wage increase. The credentialing programs varied in the dollar amount they used to reward successful completion of the credential. The structure of the payment also varied by timing or milestones recognized and the role of the credentialed employee (i.e., DSP or FLS). It is unclear how much of a wage increase is needed to incentivize completion. However, formalizing the structure of the credential and including a wage increase at important milestones in the credential process increased the completion rate of learners through the training modules. Including a wage increase with completion of the credential should be considered necessary in implementing a successful program, but further exploration of amount and frequency of wage increases are questions for further exploration.

Change in national credential resulted in delays. The change in the NADSP credential program delayed or halted some programs in their cohort implementation. Some programs had started a cohort and had to reconfigure and restart when they learned that the NADSP was no longer accepting portfolios due to moving exclusively to the E-badge Academy effective June 2020 (see Textbox 7).

Strategies for successful implementation in organizations

Several strategies to support successful implementation can also be drawn from the

credentialing programs included in this report. Those strategies are summarized below.

Utilize ready-made curricula and/or those already in place. Several of the credentialing programs already implemented training in their organization to increase the competence of their workforce. For example, the Arc of Sullivan-Orange County already utilized CDS, and the Arc of Mid-Hudson and Arc of Monroe utilized Relias for preservice training. Each added coursework and opportunities through the NADSP to enhance the strategies they already used for increasing knowledge, skills, and abilities of staff. Several other established pathways were drawn upon by organizations for the coursework component, although some utilized classroom learning components. The Apprenticeship programs through the Department of Labor and the certificate programs through the Dutchess and Ulster Community Colleges were examples of recognized coursework curricula to distinguish staff and increase skills.

Collaboration among organizations. Organizations that are implementing successful credentialing programs can play an important role in increasing service quality by sharing their experiences with other organizations wishing to complete a credential. Using collaboration and established competency sets, organizations can work together toward common goals. They can also potentially save costs by partnering and drawing upon successful strategies and lessons learned from other organizations. The Regional Centers for Workforce Transformation are another avenue and opportunity for organizations to participate in discussions regarding credentialing.

Appoint a person in the organization to promote and administer the program. Each credentialing program was managed by one or two staff in the organization whose role was to promote the program, and ensure that participants remained on track toward completion of the credential. Strategies to ensure that participants remained on track were varied among the organizations, including regularly sending emails to credentialing participants

and supporting access to online drives and the E-badge Academy. Program coordinators helped to assess learner progress and support submission of portfolios and e-badge applications. Having this committed coordinator was also helpful to serve as a point person when learners needed support or help resolving conflicts as they pursued the credential in their professional setting.

Ensure administrative and supervisor support. Organizations used several strategies for eliciting support, including regularly looking at and summarizing data from the credential to show its impact. Some organizations in this project also formalized their communication with credentialing participants' supervisors to ensure that they understood the credential program, its requirements, and how they were to support participants who were completing the requirements.

Provide supports for credentialing participants. Many kinds of supports were offered in the credentialing programs, including use of work computers, space, paid mileage

or subway to class, assistance with technology or learning supports. All of the program coordinators responded that they would work with any eligible learners' circumstances to help them achieve their goal of completing the credential. Some organizations utilized testimonials from previously credentialed staff to promote the credential opportunity for non-credentialed staff, and that this was a successful strategy.

Plan to implement for several years. Program coordinators noted that the first years of implementation were the most difficult, and the program shifted in several ways over the first few years of implementation. Attrition of participants in the program in the first cohort was often high, and recruitment for the first few cohorts was sometimes difficult. Planning for and funding implementation over several years is an important strategy to ensure the success of a credential program. Implementation efforts can be aided by regularly collecting and reviewing organizational data, and eliciting feedback from participants.

Conclusion

DSPs are essential to successful inclusion of people with IDD in their communities. Providing quality support requires that DSPs are trained in and can utilize knowledge, skills, and attitudes that promote inclusion. In New York, these knowledge, skills, and attitudes are defined in the OPWDD DSP Core Competencies and the NADSP Code of Ethics. FLSs draw upon the National Frontline Supervisor Competencies.

This report summarized seven existing credentialing programs that include DSPs and FLSs. The basis of each program was the respective competency sets. Positive stories of professional change were reported by credentialed learners and program coordinators. Credentialed staff were also more likely than non-credentialed staff to have longer tenure and less

turnover. OPWDD can draw upon the successes of these programs as they seek to further its efforts to implement a statewide credential. Key aspects of that task are (1) identifying funding and (2) detailing which pathway(s) will be used for credentialing of the direct support workforce. This analysis found that credentialed staff or employees pursuing a credential were less likely to turnover and more likely to have longer retention in the organization when compared with non-credentialed staff. These outcomes support the notion that when implemented over several years, funds that were previously used for hiring and training new employees may be reallocated to support professional development opportunities for the direct support workforce.

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Appendix A: Career GEAR Up Proposed New York Credentialing Model Recommendations

Proposed New York DSP Credentialing Model

- 1. The credential model instructional design is a hybrid model, which includes on-line training, interactive classroom learning and work- based learning opportunities.
 - a. DSP Credential I: 20 on-line, 10 classroom and 20 work-based learning
 - b. DSP Credential II: 40 on-line, 20 classroom, 40 work-based learning
 - Includes a specialization emphasis in Supporting Older Adults, Behavioral Support, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Complex Medical Needs.
 - c. DSP Credential III (Mentor): 12 on-line, 8 classroom, 20 work-based learning.
 - Includes training in Person Centered Planning.
 - d. Frontline Supervision and Management Credential: 20 on-line, 5 classroom,

15 work-based learning

- 2. The competencies used as the basis of the credentialing program are —
 - a. The New York State Direct Support Professional Core Competency Goals
 - Putting people first
 - Building and maintaining positive relationships
 - Demonstrating professionalism
 - Supporting good health
 - Supporting safety
 - Having a home
 - Being active and productive in society
 - b. The National Frontline Supervisor competencies, also used in NADSP Credentialing for Frontline Supervisors

- Direct support
- Health, wellness, and safety
- Participant support plan development, monitoring, and assessment
- Facilitating community inclusion across the lifespan
- Promoting professional relations and teamwork
- Staff recruitment, selection, and hiring
- Staff supervision, training, and development
- Service management and quality assurance
- Advocacy and public relations
- Leadership, professionalism, and self-development
- Cultural awareness and responsiveness

These competencies are the identified outcomes of the credentialing program. They will be assessed during different levels of training across the credential program.

- 3. Participation in the credential is voluntary, with targeted annual enrollment rates. Annual enrollment growth targets are incremental for DSPs statewide —

Estimated growth —

1st Cohort = Yrs. 1 & 2 = 3% of DSPs statewide

2nd Cohort = Yrs. 2 &3 = add 2% of DSPs statewide

3rd Cohort = Yrs. 3 &4 = add 5% of DSPs statewide

4th Cohort = Yrs. 4& 5 = add 5% of DSPs statewide

5th Cohort = Yrs. 5 & 6 = add 5% of DSPs statewide

The DSP Credential I, DSP Credential II, and DSP Credential III (Mentor) Credentials must be taken in sequence.

The DSP Credential II includes an allotted number of hours for a “specialized focus.” These specialized foci may include supporting older adults, autism spectrum disorders, behavioral supports, or complex medical needs.

The DSP Credential III includes an emphasis on person-centered planning and the creation of a person-centered plan. This will include skills mentoring, preparing mentors to support other learners through the credentialing process.

The Frontline Supervisor & Management Credential may be completed after the DSP Credential III is completed.

4. Credentialing is a multi-year process with provider rate incentives after each level.
5. DSP eligibility for credentialing is at employer discretion, after the DSP completes the employer’s required probationary period.
 - a. DSP Credential I Assessments may be completed only after the DSP has clocked at least 1 year of full-time employment as a DSP.
 - b. DSP Credential II Assessments may be completed only after the DSP has clocked at least 2 years of full-time employment as a DSP.
6. Individuals with disabilities must be involved in the on-line and classroom educational components of the credential program.
7. An independent, third-party, objective credentialing program body will be established and will provide recommendations for assessment at each level of the credential. Assessment will include on-the-job skill demonstration by the supervisor or a skill mentor (initial, proficient and advanced levels), response to scenario testing (initial and proficient levels) and written test (advanced and specialized levels). The credentialing program governing body will also provide guidance on curriculum by identifying required instructional criteria for an approved instructional program.
8. A Board of Directors (including direct support providers, frontline supervisors, provider organizations, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, family members, content experts and individuals with expertise in credentialing/certification and instructional design) will govern the independent third-party credentialing program body.
9. OPWDD could release an RFP to determine credentialing organization.
10. Provider will only receive incentive (cover costs and increased wages) if they meet pre-determined threshold (e.g. 3%, 5%, 10% enrollment).
11. A Grandperson Clause will be developed that allows existing DSPs and FLSs who have passed their probationary period two years prior to the implementation of the credential program to “test out” at each level of the credential by completing the assessment package for each level for which they want to achieve the credential.
12. Certified DSPs must provide evidence of 36 hours (also referred to as units) of acceptable continuing education. This is at a rate of one hour per month over the three-year period. The continuing education requirement will not apply to newly certified DSPs but will go into effect after they renew their registration for the first time. Acceptable continuing education units are those whose topics are directly aligned with the content of the Core Competencies for New York Direct Support Professionals published by the NY Office for People with Developmental Disabilities inclusive of the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals Code of Ethics.