

# Providing Support During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Direct Support Professionals 6-month follow-up survey | Pennsylvania profile

**97%**  
were  
classified  
as essential  
workers



**77%**  
feel their work  
is appreciated by  
their organization

Direct support professionals (DSPs) provide an array of critical supports making it possible for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to live, work, and thrive in their communities. The pandemic has affected this work in many ways. This survey, completed by 656 DSPs from Pennsylvania, gathered information about the experiences of DSPs intended to inform efforts to prepare for future waves of the pandemic.

## WAGES

DSPs reported on their wages before the pandemic and on whether they received extra pay for pandemic-related risks. Many received extra pay, although states and businesses had varying levels of access to additional dollars to compensate essential workers.

**\$14.22** mean hourly wage for DSPs before pandemic

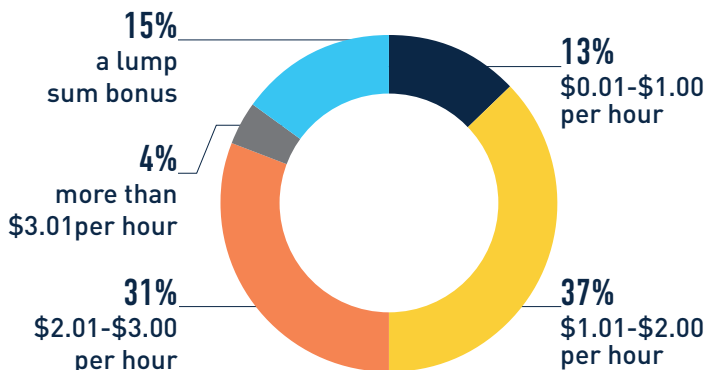
(this wage is higher than expected or typical based on previous studies [NCI,2020])

**46%**  
received  
COVID-19  
augmentation  
or bonus pay



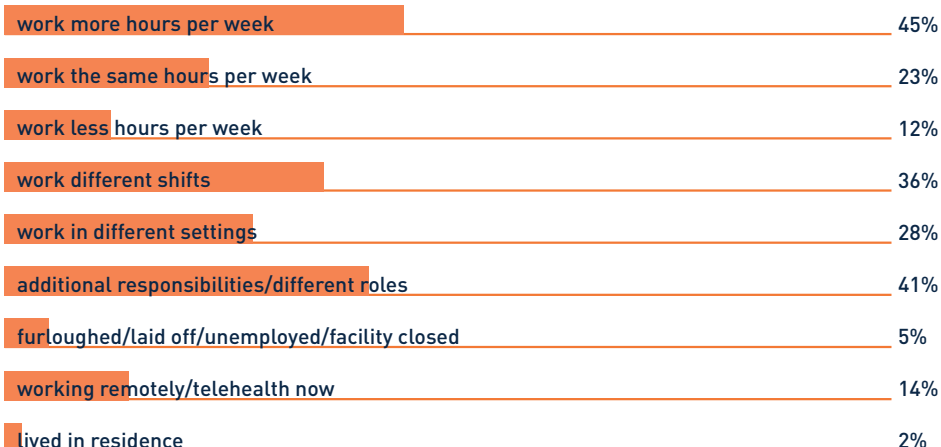
**54%**  
didn't receive  
COVID-19  
augmentation  
or bonus pay

Of those receiving  
extra pay:



## SCHEDULES AND STAFFING

DSPs were asked to report on how the pandemic affected the number of hours they worked, where and when they worked, and how their role may have shifted.



The locations in which I work have been adequately staffed

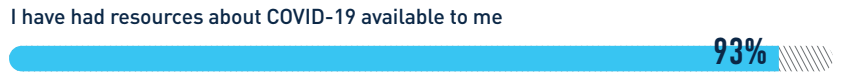
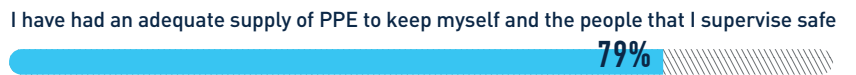
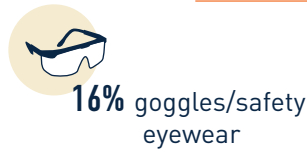


If staff where I work display symptoms of COVID-19, they are guaranteed paid time off



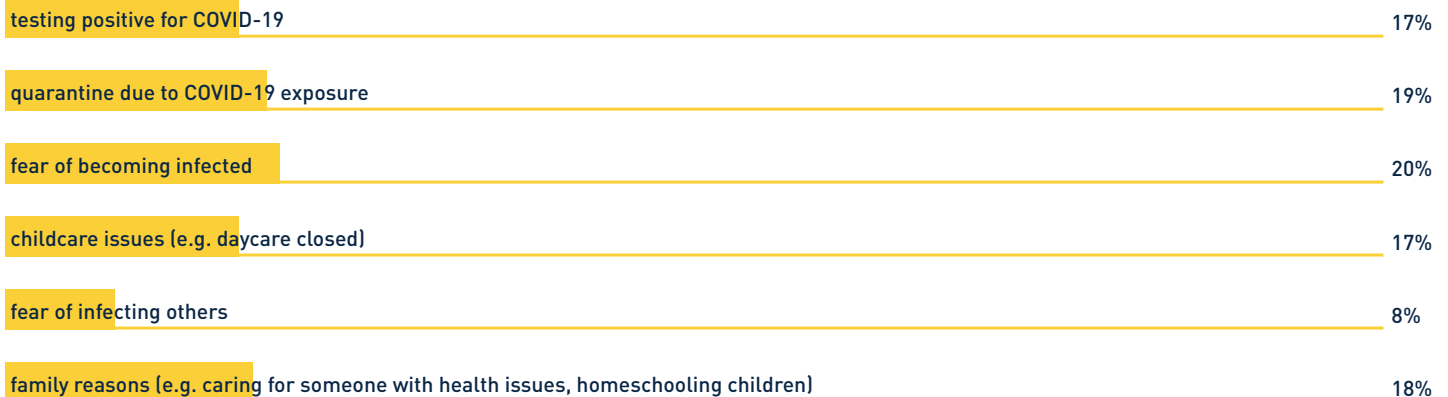
## SAFETY MEASURES

DSPs were asked to report on the kinds of personal protective equipment (PPE) provided by their employer, whether they had adequate training in using PPE, and other safety measures that were taken.



## REASONS FOR LEAVING DSP POSITION

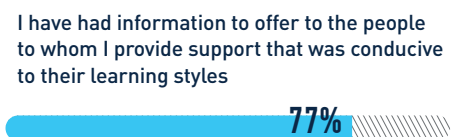
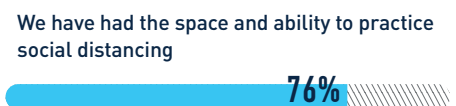
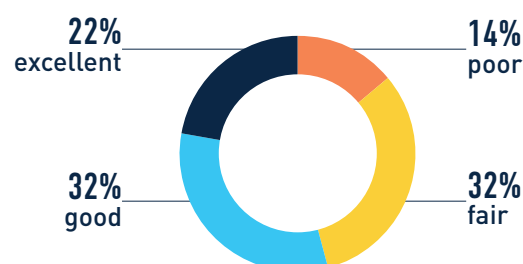
The pandemic affected many aspects of peoples' lives and their ability to work. DSPs reported on reasons that they or their co-workers were no longer working in direct support.



## SOCIAL DISTANCING

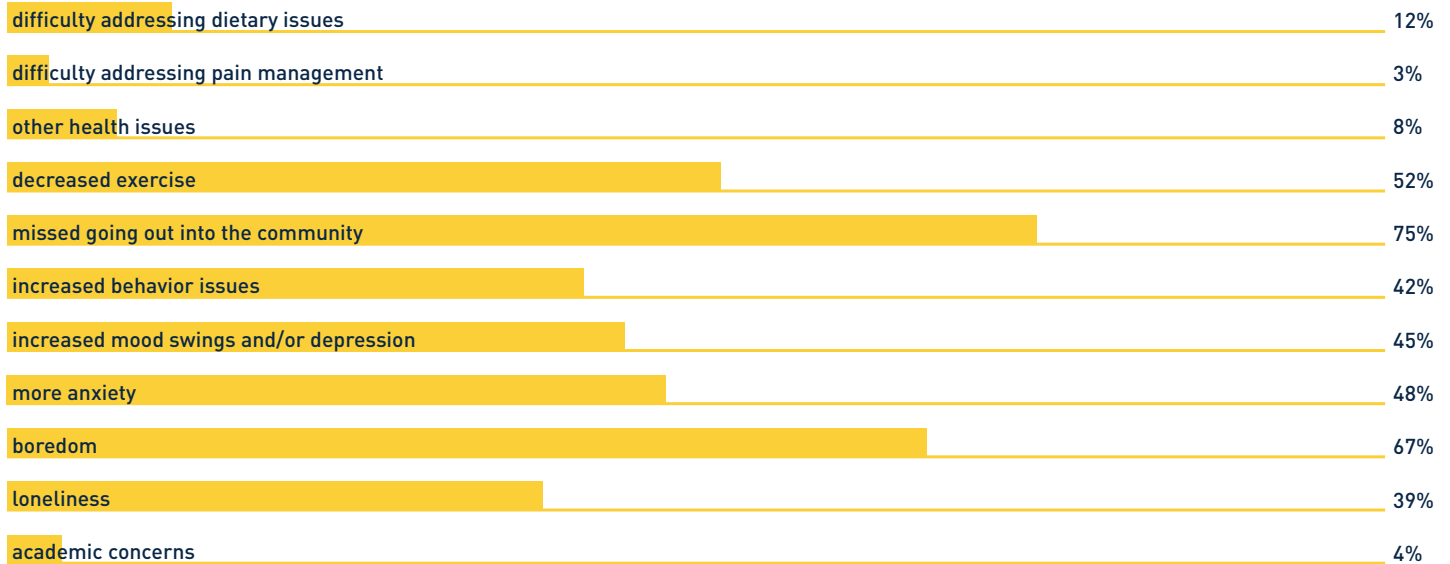
DSPs were asked to gauge how well the people they supported were following social distancing measures.

DSP perceptions of social distancing practices of people supported



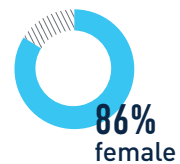
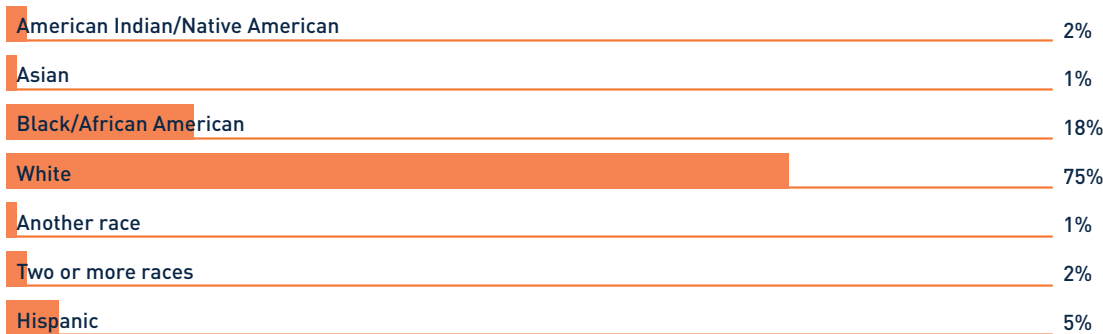
## IMPACT OF ISOLATION ON PEOPLE SUPPORTED

Many people experienced social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. DSPs were asked about the consequences of increased isolation on the people they supported.

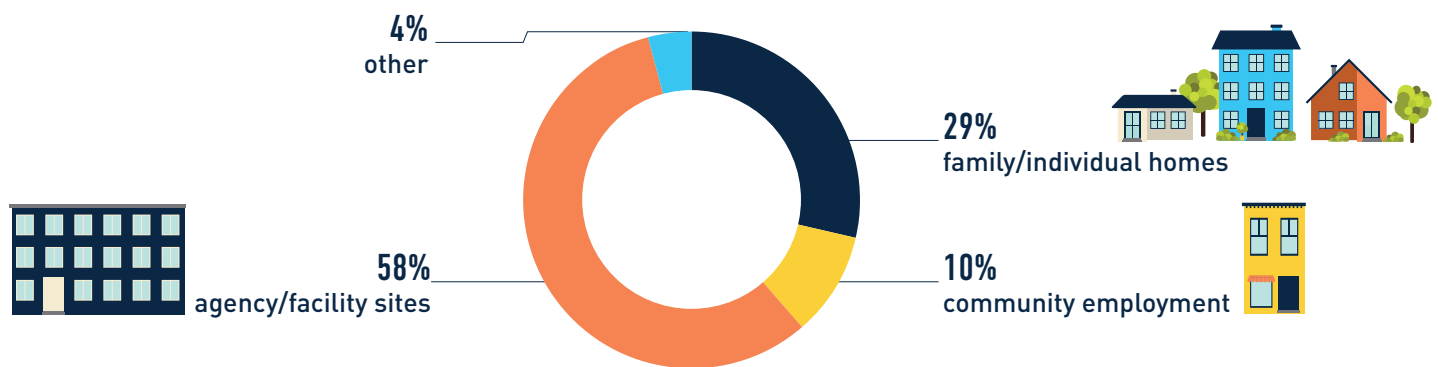


## DEMOGRAPHICS, ROLE, AND SETTING

DSPs self-reported demographic information and the primary setting where they worked.



average age  
46 years



[45% of DSPs reported working in more than one setting]

Please contact Jerry Smith with questions at [smith495@umn.edu](mailto:smith495@umn.edu). View the full report at [z.umn.edu/dsp-covid19](http://z.umn.edu/dsp-covid19).

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