

Economic Impact Assessment

Executive Summary



Background: In North Carolina, there are an estimated 200,000 people living with an intellectual or developmental disability (IDD). People with IDD represent an array of conditions including but not limited to, autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, Williams syndrome, and Fragile X syndrome. Many people living with IDD rely on Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) every day for basic tasks such as bathing, dressing, eating, and transportation. All of these tasks are critical for people with IDD leading productive lives.

Problem: DSPs fulfill a critical role, and yet they are not well compensated. Providers and care management agencies are competing with businesses, such as Starbucks or Target, willing to pay the same or more per hour, offer benefits, and management opportunities. In December 2021, the North Carolina General Assembly passed a state budget that included funding intended to increase wages for DSPs to make up for the decrease in Medicaid rates for home and community-based care. In late 2023, the North Carolina General Assembly increased the wages of direct care workers providing services under the Innovations waiver program, however additional funds are needed to ensure a living wage for DSPs and their supervisors.

Solution: Funding is needed to address the low pay rates for DSPs and their supervisors. Ensure continued funding to increase service rates designed to pass through as pay increases for DSPs, and their supervisors and cover accompanying costs, such as taxes, insurance, paid leave and the administration of these increases.

Value Proposition: The analysis conducted indicates for every dollar spent on the DSP workforce, there is an additional \$1.17-\$1.63 generated in economic output in North Carolina.

Conclusion: Given the results of this study, we can continue to cultivate a deeper insight into the intricate dynamics of the economic contributions and challenges faced by individuals with IDD. We must also consider the need for more Innovations waiver services/slots to be funded. The lack of increased pay rates and lack of services funded are interwoven and have become inseparable because of the continued lack of funding for increased rates and increased services. All of these issues must be addressed together in order for informed policy decisions and more inclusive practices. This will ultimately foster a more prosperous and equitable societal landscape for everyone. Prioritizing the economic well-being of the IDD community and combining systematic reviews with detailed economic impact analysis will enable us to derive more precise and meaningful monetary values that contribute to a more inclusive and prosperous society.

This Executive Summary includes information from "A Report on the Economic Impact of the IDD Community", Emefa Surprize Buaka and Jeremy W. Bray, Ph.D.