

## **Direct Support Professional Motivation Assessment Inventory Manual (DSP-MAI Manual)**

When managers and administrators review the staff currently on their payroll, the number of direct support professionals who are still there from when the manager first started at the company is typically a low number. Like it or not, we work in a field where there is potential for a lot of burnout and, unfortunately, a lot of turnover. The goal of this manual is to help managers and administrators to become a little introspective about their company's personnel and think about what is working, what could be working better, and what can be done about it.

The Direct Support Professional Motivation Assessment Inventory was designed to assist organizations in exploring how employees who provide direct care to clients are motivated and perceive the support that they get from their co-workers, supervisors, and company administration. In addition to background questions and one exploratory employee benefits question at the end of the assessment, the 35-item inventory consists of yes/no questions investigating 7 categories that empirical literature reveals are common challenges in employee retention. Those categories are: financial, access to benefits, scheduling, team membership, supervisor acknowledgement, training and professional growth, and community/co-worker closeness. The assessment contains 5 questions for each of the 7 categories. Each of the 35 questions are randomly placed throughout the assessment to avoid revealing the nature of the question category. Additionally some questions are reverse scored to ensure that participants are not simply selecting all "yes" or all "no". A key is provided at the end of the assessment to reveal which questions are associated with which category as well as how to score each question.

### **Assessment Survey Administration**

To use this assessment, it should be given to every direct support professional in the company along with a timeline for returning it. In pilot research using this assessment, companies who provided small incentives for returning/completing it received an average response rate from participants. Average response rate for companies in the human service industry is 30-40%. Anything lower than this response rate indicates a potential lack of reliable representation from your staff and may misrepresent problems and/or successes that the assessment reveals. One company during the pilot testing of this assessment offered an additional incentive for responding to the survey. In addition to \$10 gift cards provided to a randomly selected 10% of respondents from all pilot companies, they awarded a \$50 gift card to one randomly chosen participant as well as an incentive to program managers (house managers) with the highest employee response rates. Multiple email reminders were also sent out to participants. The company with the highest response rate during pilot testing also offered a \$20 bonus to all employees who returned the survey.

In order to access the most honest responses possible, it is crucial that employees are given the opportunity to answer the assessment anonymously. If anonymity is not assured to employees then, because of the apparent conflict of interest, they have motivation to misrepresent their responses. As such, it is highly recommended that, when using the DSP-MAI, company administration attempts to

make survey responses as anonymous as possible, possibly even having a third party administer the survey.

**Assessment/Survey Results Analysis**

Once all responses have been collected, data should be entered into a database (excel or google sheets both work fine) so that the administrator can examine trends. Questions from each category should be scored together. For example, questions that address financial issues would be scored and responses totaled as a “financial category” score. Each item that scores a point according to the rubric in Appendix 1 should be considered an opportunity for intervention, with priority given to categories in which multiple items are endorsed. Any category where the average participant identifies three or more questions as a ‘challenge’ should be targeted for intervention first. For categories where the average is 2-3, they should be targeted next in order. For categories where the average is not 2 or greater, average participant responses to individual questions should be analyzed for potential companywide improvements.

**Intervention**

Based on the results of the DSP-MAI, there are a series of intervention strategies associated with specific categories a company is having challenges with. Table 1 displays the category and associated recommended interventions for each category. These intervention approaches were determined based on the empirical literature, when available, as well as common employee retention strategies used in business and healthcare. Similar to previous assessments on human performance improvement (Carr & Wilder, 2013), recommended interventions may be run concurrently (preferred) or individually if company resources are limited. Explanations for these recommended interventions follow the table.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Recommended Interventions</b>
Monetary/Financial	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase in salary/hourly rate. (2009 DSP Wage Study)</li> <li>2. Make employee pay schedule public</li> <li>3. Non-competitive bonus opportunities               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Monthly, quarterly, annual</li> <li>b. Awards for completing requirements (orientation, training, etc)</li> <li>c. Awards for making tenure (6 months, 1 year, 3 years, etc)</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Competitive bonus opportunities               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Staff who go above and beyond                   <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Requires objective criteria</li> </ol> </li> </ol> </li> <li>5. Educate administration through state/national comparisons               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. How does your organization compare?</li> </ol> </li> <li>6. Be careful NOT to reward new employees over existing (long term employees)</li> </ol>
Scheduling	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Internal evaluation of scheduling system               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Where is it failing to get the desired shifts to the correct employees?</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Re-evaluation of Supervisor training to fill shifts?               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Is this the right person for the job?</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Increase on-call employees</li> <li>4. Additional “tips” can be found in the “scheduling” webinar.</li> </ol>
Team membership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Peer to peer training opportunities</li> <li>2. Supervisor Recognition of a team (not only individual)</li> <li>3. Supervisors monitor and report staff retention</li> <li>4. Happy Notes Box- Staff acknowledgment and Reward combined with team building at staff meetings</li> <li>5. Increase opportunities for team-building</li> </ol>
Supervisor Acknowledgement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. National Frontline Supervisor Competencies- from University of Minnesota.</li> <li>2. Recognition on a timeline (MUCH more frequent early on-first 6 months).</li> <li>3. (A) Celebrate DSPs (directsupportprofessional.org) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Public Acknowledgement of the Profession</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. (S) Goal Setting Theory <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Team member participation in development</li> </ol> </li> <li>5. (S) Supervisor understanding of employee motivation (HOW do individuals like to be recognized?)</li> <li>6. (A) Announcements about employees taking advantage of professional development opportunities</li> <li>7. (A&amp;S) At least one hand written (behavior specific) thank you- Every Supervisor Meeting</li> <li>8. (A &amp; S) Contests, Reward or point programs- Ritualized, Consistent, Fair, Transparent</li> <li>9. (S) Acknowledgement of how employees performance influences the performance of the team and the organization</li> </ol>
Training and Professional Growth	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Realistic Job Preview- Prior to offering a job (directsupportprofessional.org)</li> <li>2. Recruitment Process <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <a href="http://rtc.umn.edu/docs/toolkit.pdf">http://rtc.umn.edu/docs/toolkit.pdf</a></li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Ongoing training for long-term professional Development <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Supervisor knowledge of opportunities</li> <li>b. Not Required, but rewarded</li> <li>c. Challenge employees to find opportunities and propose them to the organization</li> <li>d. Challenge employees to find resources relevant to DSPs and individuals they are supporting</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
Access to Benefits	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide health insurance</li> <li>2. Free or low cost continuing education opportunities</li> <li>3. Survey your staff to find out what benefits are important to them</li> </ol>
Co-worker Closeness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Team training</li> <li>2. Outside organization-wide or house-wide events- unpaid, pizza provided, etc.</li> </ol>

Table 1. Recommended interventions for increasing retention of direct support professionals.

To help understand the specifics of table 1, explanations are provided below.

### Detailed Explanations for Table 1

1. **Financial:** In an ideal world all direct support professionals (actually, all healthcare workers) would be paid significantly higher wages than they currently receive. While particular political and societal constraints often prevent that from happening as well as most companies would prefer, there are a number of opportunities that incentivize employees to increase job satisfaction and retention.
  - a. For obvious reasons an increase in hourly rate for Direct Support Professionals is dependent on state funding for such increases. That said, research is mixed in support of minor increases in pay rates as a basis for staff retention. A 2004 study of homecare workers in San Francisco found that a \$1 increase in pay rate resulted in a 17% increase in employee retention. What research also suggests, however, is that increases in wages help significantly in staff recruitment, but, unless additional resources are dedicated to supporting staff satisfaction, those employees often do not remain with the company long term.
  - b. Making your DSP hourly pay schedule public/transparent to employees is one method that allows employees to feel more comfortable with the hourly rate they are receiving. It decreases any apparent perception of unfair treatment from one employee to another. Additionally, announcing and providing clear guidelines on how an employee can progress from one rate to another demonstrates transparency in the administration and builds trust among employees. This strategy, however, can also easily become a challenge if current wages are revealed to competing companies. Therefore, it is important to include non-disclosures with new hire paperwork.
  - c. Non-competitive bonus opportunities provide all staff incentives to meet company goals concerning training, orientation, and other company or state requirements. These bonus opportunities should be made contingent on staff completing required company requirements (as opposed to hitting time-based goals such as employment for 3 months, 1 year, etc.).
    - i. Additional awards can be given for making tenure (3 months, 6 months, 1 year, 3 years, etc.). However, these awards should be less focused on monetary rewards and more focused on Administrative recognition (such as certificates, company announcements, company SWAG, etc.).
  - d. Competitive bonus opportunities are intended for staff members who clearly demonstrate behavior that is going beyond what is expected of their job duties. This is often referred to in the literature as “discretionary effort”. However, in order to provide this acknowledgement, companies are required to provide clear, explicitly written, objective criteria for what is “expected”. This also requires that supervisory staff are watching for and recording when staff engage in this discretionary effort and then report it to those who would be able to provide bonuses. In some cases, companies provide a small budget to house managers/ supervisors for exactly these bonus opportunities. These bonuses can be in the form of gift cards, monetary bonus, paid time off, or other forms.
  - e. General statement about bonus opportunities (non-competitive and competitive): These bonuses should not be a substantial cost burden to the company. A common misconception by administrators is that a bonus must be considerable in order to be effective. In contrast,

research suggests that bonuses that are small but frequent are considerably more effective at increasing staff satisfaction with their job and the company than large infrequent bonuses (e.g. annual bonus).

- f. Administrators should also be aware of and frequently updating their organizational comparisons regarding pay rates as compared to averages at competitors locally and statewide. While not all companies are public about their wage rates, many are. This is important for recruitment purposes as well as long-term staff retention. An employee who is working at a company for 5 years who finds out that they could be making the same amount when starting at a competitor can easily become frustrated and their morale becomes compromised. Additionally, the business literature frequently reveals that companies who have phenomenal company culture, but whose base employee wages are below the competition, frequently fail at employee retention.
  - g. Lastly, while frequent acknowledgement for new employees is very important for retention, it is more important for longer-term employees (those who have been with the company 1 year or more) not to perceive that the company values new employees over those who have remained with the company. So, procedures should be maintained to show the value that those employees provide to the company. As a rule, new employees should be acknowledged and reinforced more **frequently** at the beginning. However, the overall **amount** of reinforcement and reward (whether measured in dollar amount or another metric) should always be greater for longer-term employees.
2. **Scheduling-** A common challenge for direct care providers is that they are either feeling overworked and expected/pressured to work more than they are scheduled, or they want hours, but there aren't opportunities during the hours that they have availability.
- a. As a start, it is important for company administration to conduct an evaluation of the existing scheduling system for how current direct support professional employees are assigned their work shifts. Where is it failing to get the desired shifts to the correct employees? Is there a failure of the infrastructure of your current system (computer program/software) to do what you need it to do? For example, does your current system project shifts more than a couple of weeks in advance and highlight open shifts that a scheduler can be proactively filling now rather than reactively in the last minute?
  - b. Alternatively, is it possible the person/people responsible for inputting the data into the system and administrating the system do not have the training and/or technical ability to utilize the system to its full potential? Most scheduling software programs include tutorials or trainings for more advanced use.
  - c. If the filling of shifts is less structured, doesn't use software to support it and/or is left to Supervisors or House Managers, is it possible your staff don't have sufficient training in executive functioning/planning to be able to understand how best to fill shifts?
  - d. Lastly, is it possible to begin a program for or increase the number of on-call employees to fill open shifts? While there are costs associated with on-call employees, it can be a meaningful approach to filling some openings. Where it becomes a risk is when a large majority of shifts are filled with on-call employees. When this happens client care can

quickly become compromised because they don't know the clients as well. Additionally, employee cohesiveness becomes endangered when employees don't know each other well and no longer function as a team.

3. **Team Membership-** While employees often do not overtly reveal that "being part of a team" is an important reason why they stay, interviews with employees who have high satisfaction with their jobs state that a lot of their job satisfaction is due to the fact that they feel they are a contributing and valued member of a team. As such, it is important to create opportunities that allow employees to become members of the team.
  - a. One opportunity to create team membership is to allow short DSP colleague training opportunities during house meetings. For example, if it was noticed that a particular team member is skilled at de-escalating an upset client, then he could be asked to do a short 5-minute description to his peers about what he does with particular clients that is so successful.
  - b. Another opportunity for increasing opportunities for team membership is for the supervisor/house manager to provide regular ongoing recognition of the house as team, not only specific individuals. While individual acknowledgement is important in employee motivation (see above), the acknowledgement and recognition of the entire team helps employees see that the work they are doing is part of a larger puzzle.
  - c. Supervisors monitor and report staff retention- Another important component for administrators to understand is that they should be keeping supervisors and house managers aware of and tracking staff retention for those houses for which they are responsible. When a house manager is more fully aware of staff retentions challenges and successes that are specific to their houses, they become more focused on that issue and work harder to create team cohesiveness and membership.
  - d. Happy Notes Box- Obviously you don't need to call it this if you don't want to. However, a happy notes box is literally just a box that is in every house where staff members have the opportunity to write anonymous notes of thanks or acknowledgement to each other. Then, these notes are read amongst the group during regular staff meetings. When this strategy is initially started, it often requires the manager as the one writing the notes for a while until employees start seeing the benefits of hearing praise for each other. However, eventually it becomes self-fulfilling and employees buy in to it. The obvious team support that these notes create is undeniable. Every company that implements this with fidelity has noted its effectiveness in helping to increase team value in each other.
  - e. In every staff meeting supervisors should try to build in some 5-10 minute team building activity. There are millions of them online and they are usually very easy to implement. Everything from 1 truth 2 lies to physical trust building activities. They can often appear cheesy at the time, but as they become commonplace and routine, employees develop an appreciation of them and actually look forward to them at each meeting.

4. **Acknowledgement from Superiors/Supervisors:** (A)= *intervention provided by administration*; (S)= *intervention provided by employee's direct supervisor*
- a. As a general rule, it is important to acknowledge staff early and frequently when they are new hires. They need to understand that your company values their effort in getting up to speed on what is expected of them and this only comes from frequent acknowledgement from their direct supervisor and above. Recognition does not need to be formal nor does it need to include a significant financial cost to the company. In the notes below, I give some ideas/suggestions for no cost/low cost/ and higher cost ideas for acknowledging employees.
  - b. (A) One form of acknowledgement that is often missing from many companies is an explicit effort from administration to publicly celebrate the actual position of Direct Support Professional. This can be in the form of posters around the main office and in each of the residences. Acknowledgment can be company-wide emails that thank DSPs for the hard work that they do. Or, it can be any idea that the administration brainstorms would demonstrate an appreciation. Resources for this can be found at the web address in the table above.
  - c. (S) Goal setting theory suggests that the more an employee participates in professional goals that pertain to her DSP position, the more likely she will be motivated to see those goals through (and hence remain with the company). By having clearly defined and objective goals that are agreed up on by the management (e.g., supervisor) and employee, the management now has a template for how to evaluate the employee and when to reward effort toward those goals.
  - d. (S) Different employees have their own means by which they appreciate acknowledgement. For some personalities, being acknowledged in front of others is aversive, while a different person might find the experience very motivating. As such, it is important when a supervisor is sitting down with an employee to develop professional goals that she explicitly inquires how the employee wants to be acknowledged for doing well. Does he like small gift cards? If so, to where? Is personal time valuable to him? Would getting off of a shift an hour early mean more or less than a \$10 gift card to Starbucks? etc.
  - e. (A & S). Employees often have opportunities to become more skilled professionally by taking voluntary trainings or getting additional education. Employees who take advantage of these opportunities should be celebrated within the company. Company-wide announcements or "shout outs" by supervisors and administration demonstrate that the company values employees who go out of their way to be better at their job.
  - f. (A & S). An easy way to acknowledge employees frequently and consistently is to begin every administrative meeting with supervisors and/or administrators writing at least 1 thank you note to a DSP that they have observed that week. It doesn't have to be a thank you note for employees who are going far above and beyond, it could be a simple thanks to show appreciation for taking the extra time to help a client put her seatbelt on in a way that made her more comfortable, for example. Noticing the small things that your employees are doing for your clients and for each other goes a very long way in employee satisfaction.
  - g. (A & S). Contests and competitions for desired employee behavior are easy and structured strategies to acknowledge employees. The most important aspects of contests or reward

- programs is that they are ritualized or structured, consistently implemented across all DSP staff, fair, and transparent in implementation and judging. Incentive reward programs that do not only reward one or two individuals is also important. Many staff will feel that a reward program is not worth their effort if they don't feel that they have a good chance of getting the reward. So, in addition to rewarding the few individuals who "win", it's important to acknowledge each of the DSPs who were "in the running" to receive the reward.
- h. (S). An important concept for supervisors and house managers to understand and communicate is that the behavior of one individual staff member affects the entire staff in that house. So, she should be celebrated when an employee is exhibiting discretionary effort because it's likely that that small effort is affecting the well-being of the entire house. This 'celebration' can be done in the moment or at staff meetings. However, the focus should not only be on praising the individual, but explaining and/or demonstrating how her decisions and behavior contributed to the benefit of the entire house.

5. **Training and Professional Growth-** A common request among DSP staff is for additional training to help them feel more successful at their job and to continue growing as professionals in this field. For staff who are new to the position of a DSP, they may not demonstrate a lot of interest in their continuing education. However, it becomes very relevant to more experienced staff (those who stay on as a DSP for longer than 9 months or so) who see themselves as staying in the field.

- a. Realistic Job Preview- While folks who are new to the field may not be immediately interested in ongoing continuing education, it is vitally important that they have a realistic understanding of the job they are signing up for. In discussions with dozens of residential service provider companies throughout Washington state, every provider lamented at the high numbers of staff who go through the onboarding process as a new hire only to quit during training, soon after training, or within the first several weeks of working in the homes. Because of this high level of early staff turnover, it is very important for companies to add to their interview process a Realistic Job Preview **prior** to offering a DSP position. Before a company invests time, expense, and company resources into an individual you will need to know that the individual is knowledgeable about what he/she is agreeing to when taking the job of a DSP in your company. The purpose is not to frighten the DSP candidate/applicant, but rather help to eliminate those individuals who aren't willing to invest themselves in a position which isn't always easy, which is sometimes exhausting, but is often emotionally rewarding. There are number of different places to learn more about the realistic job preview. However, simply doing a Google Search for "realistic job preview direct support professional" will show some excellent resources in the first 10 results. Both the University of Minnesota and Direct Support Professional Workforce website have a number of resources to help in this activity.
- b. Ongoing training opportunities for long term professional development. For those DSP employees who are with the company for 9 months or longer, having ongoing opportunities to grow as a professional is important both for their sense of fulfillment in their careers as well as their daily lives.

- i. Supervisor knowledge- the first place administrators should look is whether their supervisors and/or house manager actually know what opportunities are available for their DSPs. These mid-level professionals can't make appropriate recommendations to their staff without first knowing what opportunities are available.
  - ii. Not required, but rewarded- The next thing to consider is whether training opportunities are "required" vs "rewarded". There will inevitably be trainings that require companywide participation. However, those trainings typically do not create staff motivation, they simply meet a need of the company. Rather, to truly create excitement and motivation within an employee companies should be providing incentives for employees to go to trainings and bring that information back to the house in which they work and impart that information on others.
  - iii. Challenge employees to find opportunities and propose them to the organization. Another way to motivate DSPs to seek out meaningful training opportunities is to promote the idea that DSPs can propose education opportunities to the company that may get funded. For example, if an employee in Yakima sees a good training opportunity in Seattle, can she write up a proposal and potentially get funded for a night's hotel and expenses to participate?
  - iv. Challenge employees to find resources relevant to DSPs and individuals they are supporting.
6. **Access to Benefits-** It is often quite difficult for businesses that employ low wage workers to afford benefits such as healthcare. Because the form of benefits that are valued from one population of individuals to another varies it is important for companies to have the ability to provide a diverse portfolio of benefits for employees.

Begin by brainstorming with the leadership team a list of all of the possible benefits that the company might be able to provide. Encourage participants to truly think "outside of the box" when coming up with this list. While typical benefits such as health care and retirement should be easy to come up with, benefits can also include more atypical forms such as paid conferences/workshops and other professional development (or a stipend for this purpose), job resources, flex time, etc. Once you have your list you need to find out which of the items on the list are important to your employees. You can do this by conducting an annual survey of your DSP employees which, among other things, asks them to rate the level of importance for the various forms of benefits that your leadership team created. Always have an "other" option as well so that employees can enter in other forms of benefits that the team may not have thought of.

The most common benefits offered by employers continue to include health insurance, paid holidays and vacation, and retirement plan benefits, despite the rising costs of doing so. Additionally, as the debate of single payer or government subsidized healthcare continues, it's becoming more and more apparent to DSP employees that health insurance is a commodity that is highly valued. It is also a benefit that research has demonstrated to increase staff retention. In one

Bay Area California study, the single change of adding health insurance for DSPs increased staff retention by 21%.

7. **Team Cohesiveness/Opportunities to Bond with Co-workers.** The last area that DSP employees state is a reason they stay with companies is that they feel close with their co-workers. One of the strongest single social predictors of employee retention is having a close friend at your work. In contrast, a common reason for DSP employee decreased job satisfaction is a lack of comfort with fellow employees.
  - a. If the DSP-MAI that was given to your employees revealed this area as an area of concern, what your DSP employees are saying is that they feel that working with employees they “like” is really important to them and that your company should have more opportunities to build relationships among employees. There are a number of methods that companies can use to help with this effort, though many of them typically require some level of payment for the time of the employees.

For example, any training in which a group of employees who work together is receiving education as a unit should be supplemented with an activity whose primary focus is team building. This team building effort does not need to be explicit. These do not need to be lengthy activities either. However, they should be rewarding and not seen as a “waste of time” in the eyes of the employee. Additionally, while other company wide professional development trainings should be voluntary (as noted above), trainings that are focused on a group of individuals who work closely with each other (such as a ‘house’wide training) and will have a portion of team building, should be required. This ensures that all team members are sharing in the team building experience and none are excluded.

During one Washington staff retention training, one company described how their houses have “swing shift” picnics. It’s a two hour picnic. The early shift prepares some buffet items with house clients during the day, then goes to the picnic with clients. For the first hour they are responsible for watching the clients while the late shift gets to enjoy the picnic without client/work responsibilities. Then, in hour two the second shift takes over client caregiving and the first shift DSP employees can enjoy themselves without the responsibility to care for clients.

## **Additional Tools and Tips for Effective Employee Motivation**

### **Basics of Staff Recognition**

- Recognition must be sincere.
- Recognition must be heartfelt.
- Recognition must be specific.
- Recognition must be purposeful.
- Recognition is best when it is immediate.
- Recognition may be given publicly or privately.
- Recognition can be spontaneous.
- Recognition must be positive.
- Recognition must be geared to the individual (personalized).

### **Primary Skills for DSP Supervisors**

- Supervisors recognize the need for and plan celebrations with staff.
- Supervisors treat DSPs as professionals and acknowledge DSPs' unique skills and contributions.
- Supervisors effectively use organization-wide recognition plans and invent personal ways of acknowledging others for work well done.

### **Related Skills**

- Supervisors know how to develop and implement a plan for reducing unwanted turnover and vacancies at their own site or across the organization as a whole.
- Supervisors support other Supervisors in understanding and learning about recruitment and retention strategies and why they are important.
- Supervisors monitor turnover, recruitment success, and employee satisfaction and use the results to improve personnel practices.
- Supervisors identify necessary resources for individuals supported and DSPs and advocate for these resources with their managers.
- Supervisors' efforts in these areas is recognized and rewarded from administration.

### **Overcoming Implementation Barriers**

Numerous factors can be barriers to the use of effective recognition and motivation strategies:

- Supervisors and managers treat all employees the same and use identical strategies of motivation and recognition for all.
- Recognition is mandated but not supported at all levels of the organization.
- There is unfair and inconsistent use of recognition and motivation strategies.
- New programs of recognition are implemented without consideration for long term employees who may not have had similar opportunities.
- Recognition occurs during annual events instead of also being incorporated into daily operations.
- Recognition is provided for meeting basic expectations rather than for going above and beyond minimal expectations.

## **Questions for your company to consider**

1. What motivates you to do more or better work?
2. How do you like to be recognized?
3. How do you motivate and recognize the people you supervise?
4. What formal recognition programs exist within your organization? Are they fair, equitable, and consistently used? Explain why or why not.
5. Is recognition a part of daily operations within your organization? In what informal ways do your organization's supervisors, managers, and administrators recognize employees?
6. How are long-term employees motivated and recognized within your organization?
7. What professional development opportunities exist for employees who are motivated by growth and new learning?

## **Additional Forms of Employee Motivation Strategies**

*Note: the effectiveness of many of these depends on a Supervisor's previous discussion with the employee on what form of recognition they appreciate.*

### **No cost**

- Verbal thank you
- Verbal praise for a specific action
- A note of thanks on organization letterhead or on the supervisor's business card
- Certificates of achievement
- Inclusion of recognized direct support professional (DSP) in decision making for the organization
- Newsletter article describing staff successes or important personal events (e.g., graduation)
- Recognition of birthdays or anniversaries
- Delegation of tasks (doing so says "I believe in you")
- Congratulations to someone who handles a tough situation well
- Recognition cards completed by co-workers or individuals supported posted on a bulletin board
- Acknowledgment of concern for personal circumstances (e.g., death, birth, graduation from college, illness, child graduation, etc.)
- Having the supervisor or manager do the DSP's job for 1 hour or 1 day
- Respect given to DSPs the same way other professionals would be respected
- Recognition of tenure benchmarks (starting at 6 months or 1 year)

### **Low cost**

- Clothing with company logo
- Dinner with the supervisor or manager
- Gift certificate
- Plaques, trophies, and awards
- Team dinner or outing
- Tickets to a concert
- Fees paid to attend a local professional conference
- Flowers
- Baked treats
- A bunch of balloons
- Day off for individual or the entire group
- Paid time off to take a college class

**Higher cost**

- \$25 check on each person's birthday
- Small pay raise
- Small cash award (\$20–\$50) with a personal thank-you note
- \$100 for the best innovative solution to a problem at a staff meeting
- Organization-wide celebration (picnic or holiday party)
- Promotion to a new position
- All-expenses-paid weekend at a bed and breakfast
- Fees paid to attend a professional conference in another city or state

## Appendix 1

### Direct Support Professional Motivation Assessment Inventory Rubric

*Total for a category that is between 2 and 3 is an area of concern*

*Total for a category that is greater than 3 is in need of intervention*

#### Categories

1. Financial
  - a. Are you satisfied with your current hourly rate/salary? **No=1, Yes=0**
  - b. Do you believe that you are paid equal to other employees in your position at other companies? **No=1, Yes=0**
  - c. Do you believe all Direct Support Professionals in this company deserve a higher rate/salary? **Yes=1, No= 0**
  - d. Does this company have other financial rewards (e.g. bonuses, gift cards, etc) for specific employees who do their job well? **No=1, Yes=0**
  - e. If financial bonus opportunities were available that required you to perform additional duties (work more shifts, work longer shifts, take on additional responsibilities) would this be important to you? **Yes=1, No= 0**
2. Scheduling
  - a. Are you satisfied with the hours/schedule you are currently receiving? **No=1, Yes=0**
  - b. Do you want to work more hours than you currently are scheduled for? **Yes=1, No= 0**
  - c. Do you feel pressured to take more shifts/additional hours than you would like to have in your schedule? **Yes=1, No= 0**
  - d. Do you want the same amount of hours but at a different location, or with different clients, or with different co-workers? **Yes=1, No= 0**
  - e. Do you feel that it is easy to tell your supervisors when you don't want to take a shift (because you are sick, because you are feeling overworked, or because you simply don't want to, etc.)? **No=1, Yes=0**
3. Team membership
  - a. Do you feel that your supervisors/house managers consider you to be part of the "treatment team" for your clients? **No=1, Yes=0**
  - b. Do you feel that upper management/administration consider direct support professionals (people in your position) to be part of the "treatment team"? **No=1, Yes=0**
  - c. Do you feel that you are part of the team who makes decisions about the treatment (e.g. daily schedules, behavior support plans, etc) of the clients you work with? **No=1, Yes=0**
  - d. Do you feel comfortable talking with other team members about what you think a particular client needs (e.g. changes to the current plan, schedule, etc) in order to be more successful? **No=1, Yes=0**
  - e. Do you wish that your opinion was invited more often for decisions about treatment (e.g. daily schedules, behavior support plans, etc) for your clients? **Yes=1, No= 0**

4. Acknowledgement from Superiors/Management
  - a. Do you feel like management/administration understands and recognizes the work that you do? **No=1, Yes=0**
  - b. Do your direct supervisors frequently tell you when you are performing well at your job? **No=1, Yes=0**
  - c. Do you think management/administration and/or this company's direct supervisors need to recognize the work you are doing for clients more often? **Yes=1, No= 0**
  - d. Do you feel that your direct supervisors or upper management understand how hard you work? **No=1, Yes=0**
  - e. Do you appreciate it when supervisors or administrators make a point to acknowledge employees in front of other employees (e.g. being recognized at a staff meeting)? **Yes=1, No= 0**
5. Training/Education/Professional Growth/Potential to Advance
  - a. Do you want to grow professionally and move up to a higher position within this company? **Yes=1, No= 0**
  - b. Does this company provide educational opportunities to grow as a professional (e.g. in-service trainings, access to webinars, reimbursement for continuing education, etc.)? **No=1, Yes=0**
  - c. Does this company provide opportunities to advance and get a higher level job? **No=1, Yes=0**
  - d. Do you feel that the training you received is sufficient to do your job well? **No=1, Yes=0**
  - e. Do you want more training? **Yes=1, No= 0**
6. Access to benefits
  - a. Does this company provide any employee benefits (e.g. health insurance, paid time off, etc.)? **No=1, Yes=0**
  - b. Are you satisfied with your current benefits? **No=1, Yes=0**
  - c. Are employee benefits important to you? **Yes=1, No= 0**
  - d. Is your access to benefits an important reason that you stay employed with this company? **Yes=1, No= 0**
  - e. Do you know other employees at this company who are NOT satisfied with their benefits? **Yes=1, No= 0**
7. Community/Co-worker closeness
  - a. Does this company provide enough opportunities outside your typical shifts for co-workers to interact or get to know each other (events paid for and hosted by the organization)? **No=1, Yes=0**
  - b. Do you feel that you get along well with your co-workers? **No=1, Yes=0**
  - c. Do you feel confident that, if you needed it, your co-workers would help you at work? **No=1, Yes=0**
  - d. Is working with co-workers you like and/or getting along well with them important to you? **Yes=1, No= 0**

- e. Do you want this company to have more employee relationship building activities?  
**Yes=1, No= 0**