

New Report Highlights Persistent Challenges and Signs of Progress in the Aging & Disability Direct Service Workforce

CAMBRIDGE, MA, UNITED STATES, April 28, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Human Services Research Institute (HSRI) and ADvancing States announce the release of the National Core Indicators® (NCI®) State of the Workforce for Aging and Disability 2024 report—the only state-comparative study focused on provider agencies and the Direct Service Worker (DSW) workforce supporting older adults and people with disabilities through state Aging and Disabilities service systems. As states face increasing demand for home- and community-based services, the 2024 findings reflect both ongoing workforce pressures and the impact of targeted recruitment and retention strategies on access to services.



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2024 REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

Data were collected from 966 provider agencies representing 100,631 Direct Service Workers across seven states: Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Dakota, and Oklahoma.

KEY FINDINGS INCLUDE:

--Wages remain stagnant: The NCI-AD median hourly wage for DSWs is \$16.00, unchanged from 2023. No participating state reports median wages above a living wage for a single adult.

--Turnover remains high: The weighted average turnover ratio is 45%, with 70% of DSWs who left

employment in 2024 having been employed for less than one year.

--Benefits are limited: Fewer than half of agencies offer paid time off (49%), and just 37% provide health insurance.

These rates are well below those

reported by IDD provider agencies in 2024: 70% of IDD agencies offered paid time off and 57% offered health insurance to Direct Support Professionals.



National Core Indicators - Aging & Disabilities logo

--Improved service access: 18% of agencies reported turning away or stopping new service referrals due to staffing shortages, down from 29% in 2023. All states participating in 2023 and 2024 data collection saw improvements in this area.



The data confirm that DSWs are essential, yet the system still relies on jobs that often don't provide financial security. When states use data to guide workforce strategies, progress is possible."

Dorothy Hiersteiner

The report also documents workforce strategies currently in use, including apprenticeships, training and credentialing, realistic job previews, and financial incentives aimed at recruitment and retention.

The data provide states, providers, and advocates with tangible evidence to support Medicaid funding decisions and workforce policy reforms aimed at strengthening the

direct service workforce.

"The data confirm what states already know: direct service workers are essential, yet the system still relies on jobs that often don't provide financial security," said Dorothy Hiersteiner, co-director of HSRI's National Core Indicators program. "At the same time, the improvements in service access show us that progress is possible when states invest intentionally and use data to guide workforce strategies."

Rosa Plasencia, Director of the National Core Indicators at ADvancing States, added: "State aging and disability agencies are under enormous pressure to meet growing needs with a stretched workforce. This report equips states with credible, comparable data they can use to make the case for investments that strengthen the direct care workforce and expand access to services for older adults and people with disabilities."

ACCESS THE REPORT

[NCI State of the Workforce for Aging and Disability 2024 Report](#)

[2024 NCI AD State of the Workforce Data At A Glance](#)

National Core Indicators® Aging and Disabilities (AD) Website

About Human Services Research Institute (HSRI)

Human Services Research Institute (HSRI) is a national nonprofit research and consulting organization that partners with states, communities, and public agencies to improve systems that support people with disabilities, older adults, and others who rely on publicly funded services. HSRI leads the National Core Indicators® (NCI®) programs, providing states with rigorous, comparable data to inform policy, planning, and quality improvement.

About ADvancing States

ADvancing States is a national membership organization representing state agencies on aging and disability and long-term services and supports directors. The organization supports states through policy analysis, technical assistance, and peer learning to advance thoughtful, data-driven approaches to aging and disability services nationwide.

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