

Caring People Supporting Quality of Life for All



United Community Independence Programs

UNITED COMMUNITY INDEPENDENCE PROGRAMS

DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL

JOB PREVIEW

This Realistic Job Preview is designed to help you decide if working with people who have mental and physical disabilities could be the right job for you. It is important that you know about both the rewards and the challenges of being a Direct Support Professional or DSP before applying for a job with UCIP.

If you have never spent time with a person who has a disability, it may feel awkward or uncomfortable at first. If you take the time, however, you'll soon discover that you have more in common with people who need support than you might think. In the end we are all People.

Because DSP turnover can be hard on the people we support, we ask that all applicants read this realistic job preview. You will find information that will aid in your understanding of direct support work and working for UCIP in this job preview. This way, you can be sure that you understand the job duties and responsibilities for working as a DSP at UCIP.

What is Direct Support?

UCIP provides a variety of supports to people with disabilities in their homes, in the community or on the job. Most of the people you would support need assistance with a variety of day-to-day activities such as: household chores, getting ready for work, going out and having fun with friends and family, meeting new people and being active members in community organizations and places of worship, running errands like going to the bank, the doctor, or the grocery store, or performing work tasks. As a DSP, you will spend most of your shift in direct contact with people who need assistance. Some people with disabilities require only minor assistance; for example, help with going to the bank. Others need significant daily assistance with activities such as bathing, dressing, and eating.



People are more alike than different.



Your specific duties will vary, depending on your location, the people you support and the hours you work.



We want the persons we support to be a part of their community, so you may spend some of your work hours "out and about". You could be involved in various community activities such as going to a movie, attending a sporting event or enjoying a picnic at a park.

Having Fun!

Requirements to be a DSP

The requirements for getting a job as a DSP are not many. In order to become an UCIP employee, you must be at least 18 years of age and have a high school diploma or GED. You will also need a valid driver's license and an acceptable driving record. You cannot have been convicted of a felony in any state.

Your availability to work shifts that occur in the days, evenings, overnights, early mornings, weekends and holidays will be important. We provide supports around the clock for many of the people we serve; therefore, we need DSPs that are willing to be flexible in their work schedules.



Working on Holidays



Sharing Talents

Once you are employed, there are many skills you must master to do the job well. We will train you on the specific tasks you need to succeed. Being reliable is very important. So is a desire to help people live better lives and to share your own unique talents.

What DSP's Do at Work

As a Direct Support Professional (DSP), you will support people in their homes or at their jobs. You may be providing assistance with cooking meals, house cleaning, or laundry. For some individuals, you may be helping with personal care such as bathing, dressing or eating. You may be assisting people to take their medication or to exercise. The range of job duties in which you may be involved differs according to the individuals with whom you work.



Cooking



Exercising

While there are plenty of responsibilities in direct support work, perks of the job include a sense of accomplishment, having fun, getting to know unique people, and participating in new experiences.

If you have not spent much time around people with disabilities, it can be hard to know if this job is for you. Many people find the work of providing direct support to people with mental and physical disabilities is a rewarding and enjoyable career



Laundry

Other Duties Include Documentation, Communication & Following Regulations

While the primary role of a DSP is to provide daily support at home, on the job and in the community, other important parts of the job include:

- Understanding and following the many county, state and federal rules and regulations that govern this type of service.
- Attending regular training and staff meetings, which may be at times different than your regular shift schedule.
- Writing and reading a variety of documents such as ISPs, daily logs or medical logs.
- Communicating with family members, case managers and professionals such as nurses or physicians.
- Using alternative communication systems designed for the people you support — for example communication booklets, electronic talkers, or basic sign language.
- Driving the people you support, either in a company-owned vehicle or your own vehicle, to places they want to go.

Scheduling, Pay and Benefits

UCIP DSPs work shifts that include block shifts as well as evenings, mornings, days, weekends and overnights. Many of the people served by UCIP cannot be left alone in their homes or on the job, therefore, it is very important that you show up for scheduled shifts on time and work on scheduled holidays.

Benefits are based on the number of hours you are hired to work each week. DSPs begin at a starting wage, which can differ depending on your work assignment. In addition, people who work at UCIP receive regularly scheduled raises and are paid for attending training.



**Being on time is IMPORTANT.
Ten minutes late isn't on time.**

Training, Orientation and Support

Because there is a lot to learn in direct support, sometimes new workers feel overwhelmed or unsure about what they are doing for the first several weeks on the job. To help you with this transition, UCIP provides you with a two day Orientation Class, Job Shadowing with experienced DSPs and a three-month training and orientation period to give you time to learn the skills you need.

You are required to attend monthly group training sessions as well as team training sessions as scheduled by your supervisor. All new DSPs have questions. If you come to work for UCIP, and you are not sure of something, it will be important to ask questions directly to your co-workers, the people you support, and your supervisor to get the right information. Our doors are always open to help and support you in your job.



CPR Classes

The staff at UCIP works together in teams. You will be given the opportunity to talk about your work and to network with co-workers and with your supervisor at scheduled, mandatory staff/house meetings.

It is your responsibility to assist your supervisor in identifying your training and development needs.

Significant Health and Personal Care Needs, Medication Administration & Medical Appointments

UCIP supports many people who have physical disabilities and who need assistance such as transferring from a bed to a wheelchair, from a wheelchair onto a toilet, or from a wheelchair into a bathtub.

Although in many situations you will have equipment to assist you, to support these individuals it will be important that you are able to lift 50 pounds or more. Some individuals may also need assistance with all of their self-care needs, including help in changing adult disposable briefs.



Use of oxygen

Providing personal care tasks and medical treatments can be awkward at first, but remembering to extend the same courtesies (such as a respectful manner, attending to privacy, being calm and gentle), toward people with disabilities that you would expect will go a long way in keeping both you and the people you support comfortable during personal care.



Assisting people with wheelchairs

Depending on where you work you may be required to take courses in medication administration. Once trained, you will give medications to people to whom they are prescribed. DSPs may also provide certain prescribed medical treatments, such as tube feeding, glucose testing, or administering suppositories.

UCIP has a RN available to train you, provide consultation, and to ensure your competence. She can be reached when needed. You will be expected to document all of the medications you administer and all of the treatments you provide each and every time you complete these tasks. You will also be responsible for monitoring the general health and safety of all the people who you support.



Documentation



Passing medications

On occasion, you might be asked to take a person to a medical or dental appointment. It is extremely important that people do not miss these appointments, so you must be on time (usually 10-15 minutes before a scheduled appointment). For each appointment, you will need to be prepared to speak with medical professionals by reviewing the person's medical notes and other information prior to the appointment and completing follow-up after the appointment, including accurate documentation.

Challenging Behaviors & Behavior Support Plans

Some of the people who receive supports from UCIP have challenging behaviors. This might mean that, depending on the situation, a person who you are supporting could yell at you, call you names, pinch you, spit on you, throw something at you or hit you.

This may sound scary at first, but with training, many new DSPs with no prior experience have learned how to respond to people in a way that helps them calm down and move on. You would not be sent to work with people who have challenging behaviors without knowledge or specific training on how to prevent these situations and how to handle them when they occur.

You may find you are good at counseling and supporting people with these needs and will enjoy watching their progress and sharing in their success. Many people with these types of behaviors have been able to change with Positive Approaches and the help of competent and caring support workers.

Many people who have challenging behaviors also work with psychologists or behavior specialists. These professionals work directly with UCIP to develop and implement plans designed specifically to help people with challenging behaviors learn new positive ways of expressing themselves.

As a DSP, you will receive training on these plans. You will need to keep accurate records and share information clearly with others. You will be the most important person in helping the person with challenging behaviors be successful.

Who Would Make Good Direct Support Professional?

Anyone who has the following characteristics:

- Caring and compassionate
- Honest and loyal
- Accepting of others as they are
- Flexible and dependable
- Shows initiative and creativity
- Hard working and a team player
- Interested in learning
- Good at communicating with others
- Respectful of other people



If you feel you would be good at direct support, UCIP might be the place for you. If you are hired, there are many opportunities for paid training and for growth and promotion within the agency. For many people who work at UCIP, the best thing about working here is the people, both their co-workers and the people they support.

Thank you for completing the UCIP Direct Support Professional job preview and for taking the time to learn more about UCIP and our services for people with developmental disabilities. We hope you are ready to join the UCIP team!

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