



**Office for People With  
Developmental Disabilities**

# **NADSP Code of Ethics**

## **Preamble**



## The NADSP Code of Ethics ® Preamble

**Vision.** Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) who support people in their communities are called upon to make independent judgments on a frequent basis that involve both practical and ethical reasoning. The people who assume this complex role must examine their own values and beliefs while honoring those of the people they support.

**Purpose.** A primary purpose of the DSP is to assist people who need support to lead self-directed lives and to participate fully in our nation's communities. This emphasis on empowerment and participation is critical. There are numerous pressures coming from organizations, government, social policy, and societal prejudice that can shift focus and allegiance away from the people who are being supported. DSPs face ethical decisions on a daily basis and consistently feel the tension between the ideals of the profession and its practice.

In order to maintain the promise of partnership and respect that must exist in a supportive relationship, a strong ethical foundation is critical to help DSPs navigate the maze of influences that bombard them. The prejudices of society form powerful barriers, yet too often, the very social policies and service systems designed to help can create additional barriers that prevent many people with intellectual, developmental or physical disabilities from enjoying a rich and fulfilling life.

**Mission.** Therefore, it must be the mission of the DSP to honor the individual path suggested by the unique gifts, preferences, and needs of each person they support. DSPs will walk in partnership with the person, and those who are significant to them, toward a life of opportunity, well-being, freedom, and contribution. While other professional groups (such as doctors, nurses, service coordinators, and social workers) are directed by clearly defined criteria, the DSP is directed by the person they support. Therefore, the DSP must exemplify ethical practice, high standards, and creative vision as they partner with those they support in order to engage community and make everyday choices about their personal finances, physical well-being, social and intimate relationships, and employment. The entire landscape of a person's life can change through ethical and intentional direct support services.

**Values, Skills and Knowledge.** The knowledge and skills of community support practice must be joined with the ethical principles to create the environment needed to fully support people in making life choices. To do so effectively, we must all recognize DSPs as professionals who have values, skills, and knowledge that constitute a unique and important profession, and who can infuse these beliefs into practice. Furthermore, there must be a commitment to hiring, developing, and supporting DSPs to create a healthy sense of their own worth and potential.

Direct Support Professionals must embrace their role to foster a spirit of cooperation and mutual responsibility with other DSPs regarding ethical practice.

Revised & Approved

NADSP Board of Directors

April 12, 2016