



**Office for People With
Developmental Disabilities**

Code of Ethics for Direct Support Professionals



The Code of Ethics developed through the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) guides DSPs through the ethical dilemmas they face daily and encourages the highest professional ideals. Direct support staff, agency leaders, policymakers, and people receiving services are urged to read the code and to consider ways that these ethical statements can be incorporated into daily practice. This code is not the handbook of the profession, but rather a roadmap to assist in staying the course of securing freedom, justice, and equality for all.

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1. Person-Centered Supports:

As a DSP, my first allegiance is to the person I support; all other activities and functions I perform flow from this allegiance

As a DSP, I will:

- Recognize that each person must direct his or her own life and support and that the unique social network, circumstances, personality, preferences, needs and gifts of each person I support must be the primary for guide the selection, structure, and use of supports for the individual.
- Commit to person-centered supports as best practice.
- Provide advocacy when the needs of the system override those of the individual(s) I support, or when individual preferences, needs or gifts are neglected for other reasons.
- Honor the personality, preferences, culture and gifts of people who cannot speak by seeking other ways of understanding them.
- Focus first on the person, and understand that my role in direct supports will require flexibility, creativity and commitment.

2. Promoting Physical and Emotional Well-Being:

As a DSP, I am responsible for supporting the emotional, physical, and personal well-being of the individuals receiving support. I will encourage growth and recognize the autonomy of the individuals receiving supports while being attentive and energetic in reducing their risk of harm.

As a DSP, I will:

- Develop a relationship with the people I support that is respectful, based on mutual trust, and that maintains professional boundaries.
- Assist the individuals I support to understand their options and the possible consequences of these options as they relate to their physical health and emotional well-being.
- Promote and protect the health, safety, and emotional well-being of an individual by assisting the person in preventing illness and avoiding unsafe activity. I will work with the individual and his or her support



network to identify areas of risk and to create safeguards specific to these concerns.

- Know and respect the value of the people I support and facilitate their expression of choices related to those values.
- Challenge others, including support team members (e.g. doctors, nurses, therapists, co-workers, family members) to recognize and support the rights of individuals to make informed decisions even when these decisions involve personal risk.
- Be vigilant in identifying, discussing with others, and reporting any situation in which the individuals I support are at risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation or harm.
- Consistently address challenging behaviors proactively, respectfully, and by avoiding the use of aversive or deprivation intervention techniques. If these techniques are included in an approved support plan I will work diligently to find alternatives and will advocate for the eventual elimination of these techniques from the person's plan.

3. Integrity and Responsibility:

As a DSP, I will support the mission and vitality of my profession to assist people in leading self-directed lives and to foster a spirit of partnership with the people I support, other professionals, and the community.

As a DSP, I will:

- Be conscious of my own values and how they influence my professional decisions.
- Maintain competency in my profession through learning and ongoing communication with others.
- Assume responsibility and accountability for my decisions and actions.
- Actively seek advice and guidance on ethical issues from others as needed when making decisions.
- Recognize the importance of modeling valued behaviors to co-workers, persons receiving support, and the community at-large.
- Practice responsible work habits.

4. Confidentiality:

As a DSP, I will safeguard and respect the confidentiality and privacy of the people I support.

As a DSP, I will:

- Seek information directly from those I support regarding their wishes in how, when and with whom privileged information should be shared.
- Seek out a qualified individual who can help me clarify situations where the correct course of action is not clear.
- Recognize that confidentiality agreements with individuals are subject to state and agency regulations.
- Recognize that confidentiality agreements with individuals should be broken if there is imminent harm to others or to the person I support.

5. Justice, Fairness, and Equity:

As a DSP, I will promote and practice justice, fairness, and equity for the people I support and the community as a whole. I will affirm the human rights, civil rights and responsibilities of the people I support.

As a DSP, I will:

- Help the people I support use the opportunities and the resources of the community available to everyone.
- Help the individuals I support understand and express their rights and responsibilities.
- Understand the guardianship or other legal representation of individuals I support, and work in partnership with legal representatives to assure that the individual's preferences and interests are honored.

6. Respect:

As a DSP, I will respect the human dignity and uniqueness of the people I support. I will recognize each person I support as valuable and help others understand their value.



As a DSP, I will:

- Seek to understand the individuals I support today in the context of their personal history, their social and family networks, and their hopes and dreams for the future.
- Honor the choices and preferences of the people I support.
- Protect the privacy of the people I support.
- Uphold the human rights of the people I support.
- Interact with the people I support in a respectful manner.
- Recognize and respect the cultural context (e.g. Religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, socio-economic class) of the person supported and his/her social network.
- Provide opportunities and supports that help the individuals I support be viewed with respect and as integral members of their communities.

7. Relationships:

As a DSP, I will assist the people I support to develop and maintain relationships.

As a DSP, I will:

- Advocate for the people I support when they do not have access to opportunities and education to facilitate building and maintaining relationships.
- Assure that people have the opportunity to make informed choices in safely expressing their sexuality.
- Recognize the importance of relationships and proactively facilitate relationships between people I support, their family and friends.
- Separate my own person beliefs and expectations regarding relationships (including sexual relationships) from those desired by the people I support based on their personal preferences. If I am unable to separate my own beliefs/preferences in a given situation, I will actively remove myself from the situation.
- Refrain from expressing negative views, harsh judgments, and stereotyping of people close to the individuals I support.

8. Self-Determination

As a DSP, I will assist the people I support to direct the course of their own lives.

As a DSP, I will:

- Work in partnership with others to support individuals leading self-directed lives.
- Honor the individual's right to assume risk in an informed manner.
- Recognize that each individual has potential for lifelong learning and growth.

9. Advocacy:

As a DSP, I will advocate with the people I support for justice, inclusion, and full community participation.

As a DSP, I will:

- Support individuals to speak for themselves in all matters where my assistance is needed.
- Represent the best interests of people who cannot speak for themselves by finding alternative ways of understanding their needs, including gathering information from others who represent their best interests.
- Advocate for laws, policies, and supports that promote justice and inclusion for people with disabilities and other groups who have been disempowered.
- Promote human, legal, and civil rights of all people and assist others to understand these rights.
- Recognize that those who victimize people with disabilities either criminally or civilly must be held accountable for their actions.
- Find additional advocacy services when those that I provide are not sufficient.
- Consult with people I trust when I am unsure of the appropriate course of action in my advocacy efforts.