



A letter from our President and CEO



Dear Friends,

Undoubtedly, you've heard about it everywhere: worker shortages in healthcare. How did we get here? What is Richmond doing to help mitigate the problem and where do we stand today?

In 2020, the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR) surveyed providers about the already existing shortage of staff who work with individuals with disabilities (direct support professionals or DSPs). These shortages arose due to low wages and competition with higher-paying entry-level jobs. Why the low pay?

Many providers, RCS included, rely primarily on Medicaid funding, and are limited to paying salaries that reimbursement rates allow.

Then, the pandemic hit. And with it, more DSPs left the field due to personal risk concerns, the lack of increased wages/hazard pay, higher unemployment benefits, declining vaccination, workplace culture, and caregiver responsibilities. At RCS, 37% of employees complete less than one year with the organization. With this sobering news, how do we move forward?

Governor Hochul recently announced that the new state budget includes \$10 billion in funding to restore and improve the healthcare industry. Some of the funds were allocated to provide one-time payments to DSPs who worked during the pandemic, with additional funds going to those that are COVID vaccinated. Additionally, monies will be provided for bonuses and continuing education. While these are well-earned bonuses, there is cause for concern that it may result in additional resignations.

Given the complexity of the issues, Su-Zann Tracey, Director of Human Resources, and her team have implemented a multi-point solution:

- Providing a welcoming and collaborative work environment
- Recognizing and rewarding outstanding employees
- Re-examining management styles
- Upgrading training processes and incorporating knowledgeable, seasoned employees in the process
- Improving RCS's social media and community presence
- Increased recruitment advertising

Currently, RCS offers a wealth of incentives to entice new DSPs including sign-on, referral, and retention bonuses, offering comprehensive and affordable benefits, and additional pay for working less common shifts and locations. With a variety of employment opportunities, RCS appeals to a wide range of workers.

The worker shortage is a complex problem that requires creative recruiting practices and advocacy for funding. We look forward to rolling out these new initiatives and welcoming new staff to our team.

With gratitude,

Paca Lipovac

Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week

Richmond hosted a well-deserved celebration filled with fun events during DSP Recognition Week, September 12-18. DSPs, who are the heart and soul of organizations that offer services to the ID/DD community, support residents with employment skill development, basic life skills, keeping medical appointments and engaging with families.

Claudius Johnson, Director of Workforce Development, and other senior leadership staff, arranged for every DSP to be recognized; not an easy task due to COVID restrictions and guidelines! DSPs throughout the agency were treated to gift bags, lunches, cakes, treats from the ice cream truck and car washes. The week ended with raffles for cash prizes, electronics, and appliances.

This has been an incredibly challenging year for DSPs who have shown amazing innovation and dedication in safeguarding their residents. Being able to recognize the exceptional work of the staff is one way to attract and maintain a quality work force.

