



# The State of the Direct Support Workforce & NADSP's 2025/2026 Priorities



**NADSP**

Joseph M. Macbeth  
President/Chief Executive Officer

## NADSP VISION STATEMENT

A world with a highly qualified and professional direct support workforce that partners with, supports and empowers people with disabilities to lead a life of their choosing.

## NADSP MISSION STATEMENT

To elevate the status of direct support professionals by improving practice standards, promoting system reform, and advancing their knowledge, skills and values.



Making a world of difference  
**in people's lives**



# CRISIS IN THE DISABILITY FIELD: ESSENTIAL WORKERS FACE FOOD AND HOUSING INSECURITY



# Lived-experience data:

## 4,000+ DSPs in New York State

**“I did not realize this field was a dream job to me. But this has been the best 9 months of my life and and I do not want to leave. Money is the only reason I would have to leave. Bills need to be paid, house repairs, medical expenses, this field needs to be paid more.”**

Dr. Jennifer Cohen  
NADSP Research Advisor  
& Associate Professor  
at Miami University

**“Everything is expensive. I go to Dollar Tree for bread, eggs, hot dogs, canned foods. I cannot afford the food from supermarket.”**

# Satisfaction with DSPs' work is high

**85% Very Satisfied or Satisfied with  
the work they do**

**94% started and 93% stayed in the job  
because they want to help people**

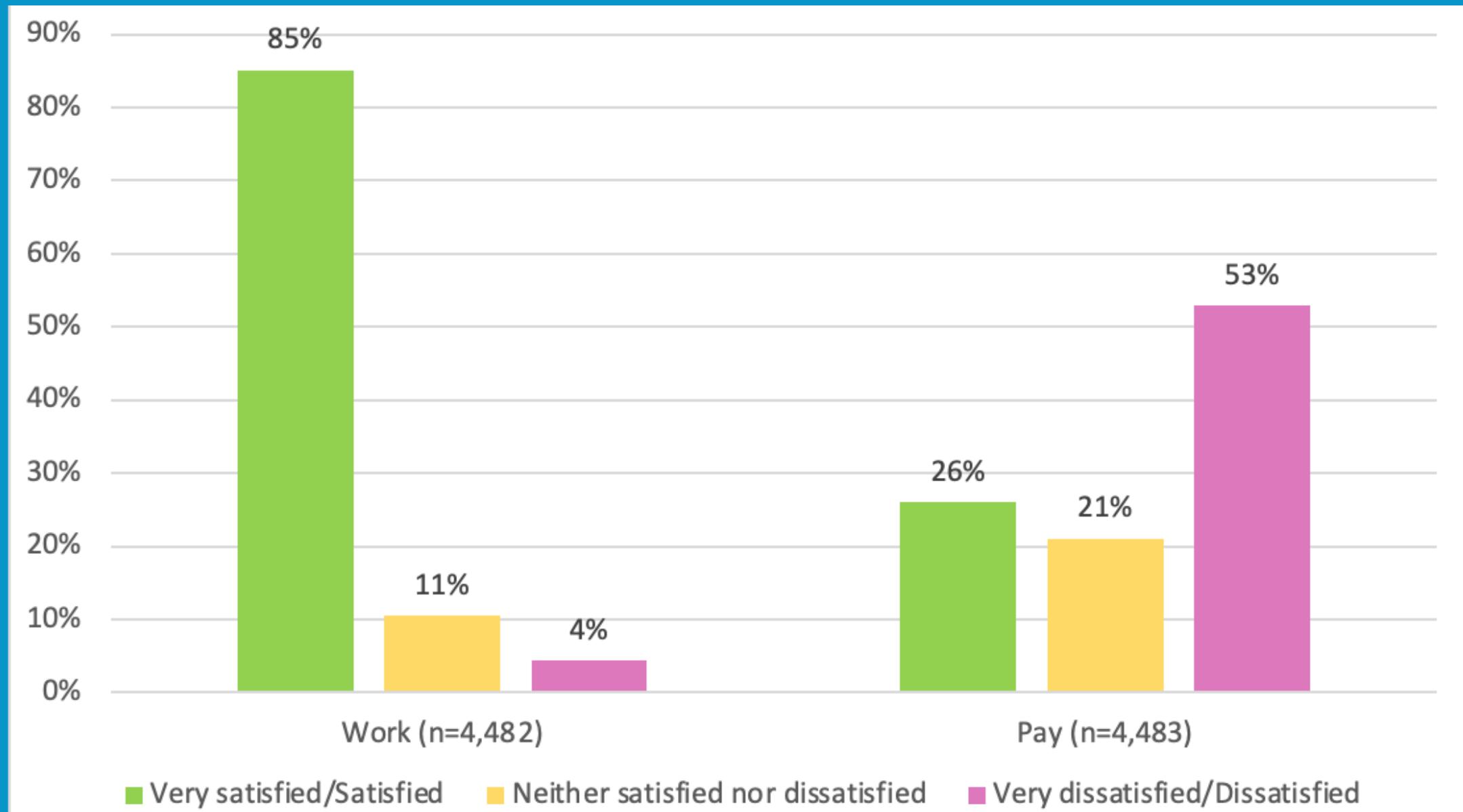
*“[I stay in the job]...to be there for someone...so  
they know they’re not alone and can trust that I  
will be there for them...”*



*“My greatest  
satisfaction is when I  
get to work 1:1 or in a  
small group helping other  
people find the resources  
they need to succeed...”*

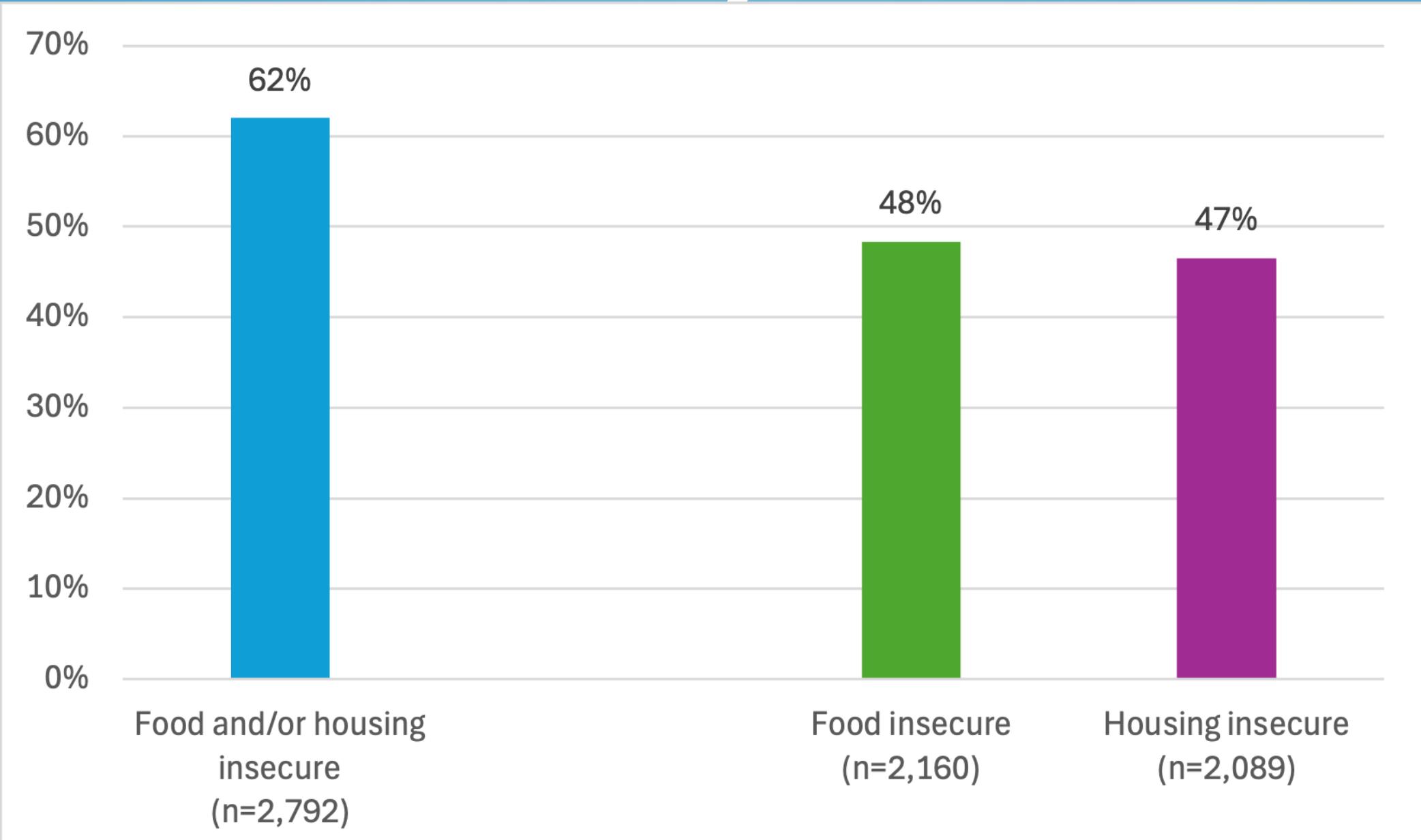
***It is as much who I  
am as what I do.”***

# The Satisfaction Gap: work vs. pay



**This is the  
workforce  
employers want.**

# Insecurity Overall



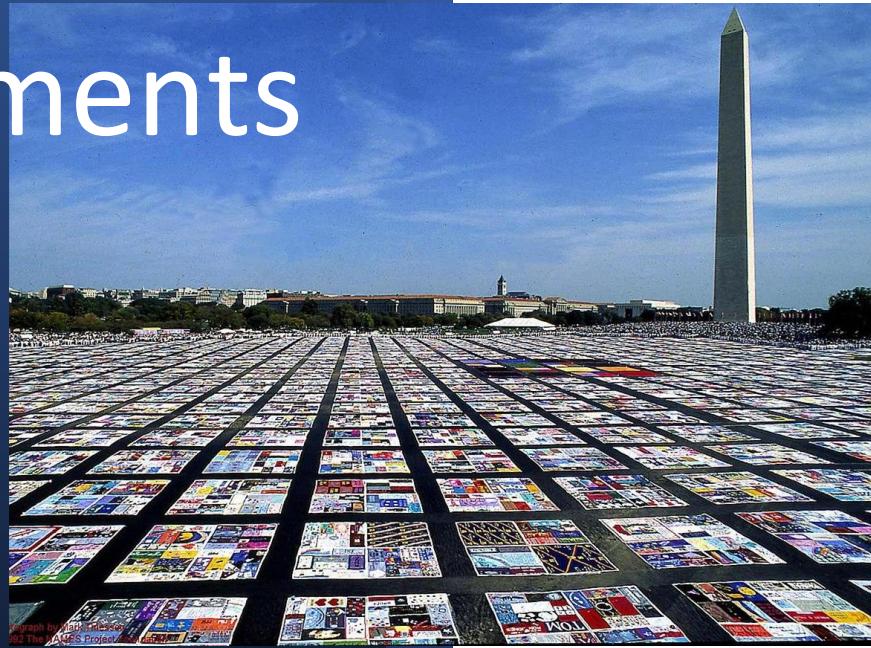
Insecurity Matters.

# ADVOCACY



# Looking Back on Social Justice

## Movements





People at the center of impact are the most powerful advocates for change.



# The Power of Lived Experience & Advocacy

- Authenticity & Credibility
- Empathy & Connection
- Representation & Diversity
- Resilience & Determination
- Expertise & Insight

“Power concedes  
nothing without a  
demand”

\*Frederick Douglass

What is the DSP demand?



# Profession

# Securing a Professional Identity with a Standard Occupational Code

The 2018 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system was used by Federal statistical agencies to classify workers into occupational categories for the purpose of collecting, calculating, or disseminating data.

All workers are classified into one of 840 detailed occupations according to their occupational definition. To facilitate classification, detailed occupations are combined to form 461 broad occupations, 97 minor groups, and 23 major groups.



**\*Our efforts to have  
DSP recognized as a job title  
were denied in 2018.**

# All "Direct Care" Jobs Are Not the Same!

NADSP Competencies	DSP	NA	HHA	PCA	LPN
Participant Empowerment	✓	□	□	□	□
Communication	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Assessment	✓	✓	□	✓	✓
Community and Service Networking	✓	□	□	□	□
Facilitation of Services	✓	□	□	✓	□
Community Living Skills and Supports	✓	✓	✓	□	□
Education, Training and Self-Development	✓	✓	□	□	✓
Advocacy	✓	□	□	□	□
Vocational, Educational and Career Support	✓	□	□	□	□
Crisis Prevention and Intervention	✓	□	□	✓	□
Organizational Participation	✓	□	□	□	□
Documentation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Building and Maintaining Friendships and Relationships	✓	□	□	□	□
Provide Person-Centered Support	✓	□	□	□	□
Supporting Health and Wellness	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

# Securing a Professional Identity with a Standard Occupational Code



The NADSP's highest policy priority was to advocate with legislators to support federal legislation that would require the US Department of Labor's Office of Management and Budget to consider establishing a separate category within the Standard Occupational Classification system for direct support professionals during their typical review processes. We also had broad bipartisan support in both houses of Congress.

The "*Recognizing the Role of Direct Support Professionals Act*" (S. 1332) was unanimously passed by the Senate. Unfortunately, its companion Bill (H.R. 2941) was sent back to committee for an amendment and was not passed by the House during the previous congressional term. For a variety of reasons, it has not been reintroduced by this Congress.

# Securing a Professional Identity with a Standard Occupational Code



Last summer, the Office of Management and Budget opened public comments for new occupational classifications during its new 10-year cycle, and we estimate that more than 10,000 direct support professionals submitted comments. The title "Direct Support Professional" received a lot of advocacy and attention, not only here, but in several white papers and recommendations to government officials.

The Bureau of Labor statistics are in the process of studying potential new occupational categories. This process occurs every 8-10 years and we hope that, given all the information that we provided along with our advocacy efforts, "direct support professional" will become an official job title and classification after the BLS process ends.

I remain cautiously optimistic. It helps me function....

Contact Us!

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**THANK YOU!**