

Dear Team SB,

The State/OPWDD (Office of People With Development Disabilities) has established several Workforce Stabilization Initiatives that are focused on the agency's DSPs (Direct Support Professionals). This initiative is waiting final approval from the federal government and is part of the NYS 2022 budget.

Every position with our agency has a code from 100-600 based on the reporting requirements from the State/OPWDD. DSPs are 200 code and are the only code included in this initiative. Our positions that are included consist of the following:

Day DSDSP - I, II, III  
Residential DSP - I, II, III  
Residential ARM - I, II, III  
Residential Managers - I, II, III  
Supportive Apartment DSP  
Family Support Services DSP  
Placement and Employment Specialists

The directives and rules of the initiatives come directly from the State/OPWDD and are subject to be audited.

**COVID/Hero's Payment:**

The COVID/Hero's payment relates to DSPs being employed from March 17, 2020 through September 1, 2021.

- If a DSP worked over 30 hours/week for at least 90 days during that timeframe they are eligible for \$1,000.
- If a DSP worked 20-29 hours/week for at least 90 days hours during that timeframe they are eligible for \$500.
- If a DSP worked less than 20 hours/week for at least 90 days during that timeframe are eligible for \$250.

Staff must be employed at the time the agency distributes the payments. Once the State/OPWDD funds the agency, payment will be made to our DSPs. Hourly employees who are not DSPs but worked as a DSP based on the 90 days and timeframe above, will be included as well.

**Longevity Payment:**

The longevity payment relates to DSPs who being employed from April 1, 2020 through March 31, 2021. There will be a payment distribution from our 2019 cost report which details the DSP code 200 hours and wages. Each DSPs' longevity payment will be their base annual salary multiplied by the payment distribution percentage %. Hourly employees who are not DSPs will be included based on the time they worked as a DSP.

Staff must be employed at the time the agency distributes the payments. People who were employed and have since left the agency have the opportunity, if they left in good standing, to be rehired and will be eligible based on the timeframe of the longevity payment. We are waiting for additional guidance from the State/OPWDD.

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**Retention Payment:**

The retention payment relates to DSPs employed from April 1, 2021 through March 31, 2022. There will be a payment distribution from our 2019 cost report which details DSP code 200 hours and wages. Each DSPs' retention payment will be their base annual salary multiplied by the payment distribution percentage %. Hourly employees who are not DSPs will be included based on the time they worked as a DSP.

Staff must be employed at the time the agency distributes the payment or a group of payments. People who were employed and have since left the agency have the opportunity, if they left in good standing, to be rehired and will be eligible based on the timeframe of the retention payment. We are waiting for additional guidance from the State/OPWDD.

In my 30-year career at Saratoga Bridges, I have not seen any initiative like this! The State/OPWDD is more than aware of our staffing crisis, and that these payments demonstrate a true commitment to recognizing our dedicated DSPs. We hope it will help with recruitment and retention and encourage former DSPs to return to Saratoga Bridges. I truly wish this initiative would be available to our entire team; but it is explicitly for DSPs based on the directive from the State/OPWDD.

I continue to be grateful for everything you all do!



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