

# Direct Support Professional University

Direct Support Professional University (DSPU) is a competency-based training and certification program specifically for DSPs. The DSPU is designed to have three tiers of enhanced training aimed at promoting services that are person-centered, culturally and linguistically sensitive, and that improve outcomes for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

For more information, please contact us at [workforce@dds.ca.gov](mailto:workforce@dds.ca.gov)

## **Q1. What is Direct Support Professional University (DSPU)?**

A1. DSPU is a free, voluntary, statewide, competency-based training and certification program for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). It provides structured training through three tiers of training content.

## **Q2. Why was DSPU created?**

A2. DSPU was established to improve service quality, promote equity and culturally responsive services, strengthen the DSP workforce, and support retention through career pathways as required by [California Code, WIC 4511.5](#).

## **Q3. Is participation in DSPU required?**

A3. No. Participation in DSPU is voluntary.

## **Q4. When does DSPU take effect?**

A4. DSPU is available now.

## **Q5. Who is eligible to participate in DSPU?**

A5. Anyone can access the material but only training completed by DSPs will be tracked and only DSPs will get access to Mandated Reporter Training. Eligible DSPs must meet all the criteria below:

- Primarily provide direct support to children and/or adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).
- Providing support and supervision.
- Supporting people to learn new things, or to continue, to do as much as they can on their own.
- Ensuring optimal health and safety and help with the upkeep of a person's home to encourage that it is clean, safe, and hazard free.
- Assisting individuals with IDD with skills development, guidance, and personal

assistance.

- Spending at least 50% of their hours doing direct support tasks.
- Being funded by the regional center.

#### **Q6. Who is not eligible to participate in DSPU as a DSP?**

A6. People who are not defined as a DSP, even if a portion of their work involves providing direct support, include:

- Staff (other than Intermediate Care Facilities staff) paid through a funding source other than the regional center, such as health insurance or a school district.
- Behavioral specialists, behavioral technicians, or behavioral clinicians (RBTs, BCBA's).
- Clinically licensed or certified staff (CNAs, nurses, therapists, social workers).
- Those who only provide transportation, home modification, and/or meal delivery services.
- Staff who are hired through temporary personnel agency.
- Contract or 1099 workers.
- On-call or PRN workers.
- Volunteers.
- Administrative or supervisory staff, unless they spend 50% or more of their time doing direct support work.

#### **Q7. Are supervisors or administrators eligible if they provide some direct support?**

A7. The DSPU is specifically for DSPs, however anyone can access the material but only DSPs completed trainings will be tracked and only DSPs will get access to Mandated Reporter Training. To be considered a DSP the individual must meet all eligibility requirements listed here: [DSP Definition](#).

#### **Q8. How is DSPU training delivered?**

A8. All DSPU training courses are self-paced and delivered online through the Department of Developmental Services' (Department) Employee Development, Growth, and Education (EDGE). EDGE is a new Department training platform.

#### **Q9. What are the DSPU training tiers?**

A9.

1. Tier 1: Provides DSPs with a foundational understanding of the context in which they work, the individuals they support, and the core knowledge and skills necessary to encourage health, safety, and well-being.
2. Tier 2: Focuses on strengthening DSP practices to promote higher-level quality of life outcomes beyond safety and physical well-being.
  - a. Please note that the Mandatory Reporting training courses included in Tier 2 will only be paid once by the Department per DSP per certificate.
3. Tier 3: Provides either greater depth on previously covered topics or advanced specialization in specific areas of practice.

#### **Q10. Do DSPs have to complete all tiers?**

A10. No, however, tiers must be completed in order.

**Q11. How many hours are each tier?**

A11. Each tier is approximately 48 hours total. This number can change in the future at the discretion of the Department.

**Q12. Will these tiers count towards college credits?**

A12. At this time no, completion of tiers will not count towards college credits.

**Q13. Does a DSP need to pass all content at each tier?**

A13. Yes, DSPs must pass all assessments with a minimum passing score of 80%. DSPs will have an unlimited number of attempts to achieve a passing score.

**Q14. Are there competencies that are associated with each tier?**

A14. Yes, each tier has 16 competencies that are met with the content and include the following:

1. Communication
2. Person Centered Support and Practices
3. Assessment (evaluation and observation) and Documentation
4. Positive Behavior Supports and Crisis Prevention
5. Safety, Health, and Wellness
6. Community Living Skills and Support
7. Community Inclusion
8. Professional education and Self Development
9. Linguistic and Cultural Competency and Diversity
10. Professional Behavior and Ethics
11. Individual Rights and Choice
12. Building and Maintaining Relationships
13. Vocational, Educational, and Career Support
14. Trauma-Informed Care
15. Understanding Dual Diagnoses: Developmental Disabilities and other co-occurring disorders
16. Understanding Developmental Disabilities

**Q15. Are there any Mandated Reporter courses within the DSPU?**

A15. Yes, there are two mandated reporter training courses that provide a certificate of completion which you can provide to your employer. Please note that these courses can only be taken once through DSPU. Please see training titles below.

- CA Child Abuse Prevention General Training
- CA Elder Abuse Prevention General Training

**Q16. What are the steps for participating in the DSPU Program?**

A16. DSPs who wish to participate must enroll themselves into the program. The steps to enroll into the program are as follows:

1. DSP accesses the online enrollment form.



2. DSP completes the form, providing their personal information and their employer information.
3. After enrollment form submission, the DSP receives an email with their username and temporary password to login to EDGE and access DSPU courses.
4. DSP completes tiers.

**Q17. How does a DSP access the enrollment link?**

A17. A DSP can access the enrollment link by visiting the [DSP University : CA Department of Developmental Services](#) webpage and clicking the dropdown for “Enroll in EDGE”.

**Q18. Can DSPs enroll themselves without their employer?**

A18. Yes, DSPs will enroll themselves without their employer but will provide information about their employer, the regional center service provider, in the enrollment form.

**Q19. Does the regional center service provider need to be listed in the provider directory?**

A19. No, however, providers must be a regional center service provider to participate in DSPU.

**Q20. Can a DSP continue participating in the DSPU program if they change employers to a different regional center service provider?**

A20. Yes, as long as the DSP remains eligible and is employed by a participating, regional center service provider.

**Q21. What are the responsibilities of regional center service providers?**

A21. Regional center service providers must verify DSP employment and eligibility status after each tier completion. This will be done through an email from the Department. Service providers have 7 days to verify their DSPs employment status.

**Q22. What are the responsibilities of regional centers?**

A22. Regional centers:

- Designate DSPU points of contact.
- Distribute enrollment flyers and information to their service providers.

**Q23. Who should DSPs contact with questions?**

A23. DSPs should contact [Workforce@dds.ca.gov](mailto:Workforce@dds.ca.gov).

**Q24. Who should regional center service providers contact with questions?**

A24. Regional center service providers should email the Department at [Workforce@dds.ca.gov](mailto:Workforce@dds.ca.gov).

**Q25. Who should regional centers contact with questions?**

A25. Regional centers should email the Department at [Workforce@dds.ca.gov](mailto:Workforce@dds.ca.gov).

**Q26. Can DSPs participate in DSP University if they have not completed DSP 1 or DSP 2?**

A26. Yes. DSPs may participate in DSP University regardless of whether they have or have not completed DSP 1 or DSP 2.

**Q27. Is DSP University the same training as DSP 1 and DSP 2?**

A27. No. DSP University is a separate, competency-based training and certification program. While some topics may overlap, DSP University includes expanded content, structured tiers that are not part of DSP 1 or DSP 2.

**Q28. Is DSP University mandatory for DSPs?**

A28. No. Participation in DSP University is voluntary.

**Q29. Can DSPs who work in non-licensed or community-based settings participate in DSP University?**

A29. Yes. DSPs working in non-licensed or community-based settings may participate, as long as they are employed by a regional center service provider.

**Q30. If a DSP completed training in the past that is part of DSP University, can those certificates be applied toward DSP University courses?**

A30. Yes. Previously completed training may be accepted if the certificate was completed within the past 12 months. DSPs must upload the certificate during enrollment for review and verification.

**Q31. Can an In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) worker participate in DSP University?**

A31. Only if the IHSS worker is also a DSP as defined above. IHSS workers who are not a DSP are not eligible to participate in DSP University by using the enrollment form because they are not employed by a regional center service provider, however IHSS workers can access DSPU content by logging in through the EDGE webpage.

**Q32. Can someone in Self-Determination Program (SDP) participate in DSP University?**

A32. An individual in SDP can access DSP University content, however they must enter through the EDGE platform. Individuals in SDP will not have access to Mandated Reporter Training and their trainings will not be track in the EDGE platform.

