



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The voluntary competency based DSPU program provides training and certification for DSPs and is open to anyone interested in learning more about the DSP workforce. Only the training courses completed by DSPs will be tracked. DSPU has three tiers that are designed to enhance training aimed at promoting services that are person-centered, culturally and linguistically sensitive, and that improve outcomes for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

Q1: What is 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. It is authorized by [Welfare and Institutions Code section 4511.5](#).

Q3: Is participation in DSPU required?

A3: No. Participation in DSPU is voluntary. Employers may choose to pay employees to complete DSPU courses, but DSPs are not required to complete DSPU courses.

Q4: When is DSPU available?

A4: DSPU is available now.

Q5: Who is eligible to participate in DSPU?

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

- Primarily provide direct support to children and/or adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD)
- Provide support and supervision
- Support people to learn new things, or to continue, to do as much as they can on their own
- Ensure optimal health and safety and help with the upkeep of a person's

- home to support cleanliness and safety
- Assist individuals with IDD with skills development, guidance, and personal assistance
- Spend at least 50 percent of their hours doing direct support tasks
- Be 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:

- Employees (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 (Registered Behavior Technicians, Board Certified Behavior Analyst)
- Clinically licensed or certified staff (certified nursing assistants, nurses, therapists, social workers)
- People who provide only transportation, home modification, and/or meal delivery services
- Employees who are hired through temporary personnel agency
- Contract or 1099 workers
- On-call or pro re nata (PRN) workers
- Volunteers
- Administrative or supervisory employees, unless they spend 50 percent or more of their time doing direct support work

Q7: How is DSPU training delivered?

A7: All DSPU training courses are self-paced and delivered online through the Employee Development, Growth, and Education (EDGE) platform operated by Sacramento State University. Learners can expect to receive internal notifications through EDGE regarding content updates from CSUS. All other communications will come directly from the Department of Developmental Services.

Q8: What are the DSPU training tiers?

A8:

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. Please note that the Mandatory Reporting Training Courses can only be taken once per DSP.
2. Tier 2: Focuses on strengthening DSP practices to promote higher-level quality of life outcomes beyond safety and physical well-being.
3. Tier 3: Provides either greater depth on previously covered topics or advanced specialization in specific areas of practice.

Q9: Do DSPs have to complete all tiers?

A9: No. However, tiers must be completed in order.

Q10: How many hours are each tier?

A10: Each tier is approximately 48 hours total. This number may change in the future.

Q11: Will these tiers count towards college credits?

A11: At this time, completion of tiers does NOT count towards college credits.

Q12: Does a DSP need to pass all content at each tier?

A12: 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.

Q13: Are there competencies that are associated with each tier?

A13: Yes, each tier has 16 competencies that are met by completing the content:

Q14: Are there any Mandated Reporter courses in DSPU?

A14: Yes, there are two Mandated Reporter training courses that provide a certificate of completion which you can provide to your employer. Please note, these courses can only be taken once through DSPU by each DSP.

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

Q15: What are the steps for participating in the DSPU Program?

A15: DSPs who wish to participate must enroll in the program. The enrollment process is as follows:

1. DSPs access the online enrollment form through DSPU:
<https://www.dds.ca.gov/initiatives/workforce-initiatives-4/dsp-university/>..
2. DSPs complete 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. DSPs must complete each tier before moving to the next one.

Q16: How do DSPs access the enrollment link?

A16: DSPs can access the enrollment link by visiting the [DSP University : CA Department of Developmental Services](#) webpage and clicking the dropdown for "Enroll in EDGE."

Q17: Can DSPs enroll without their employer?

A17: Yes, DSPs will enroll themselves without their employer but will provide information about their employer in the enrollment form.

Q18: How can a non-DSP access DSPU content?

A18: For all other learners who are not DSPs, such as regional center employees, Department employees, providers, and community members, EDGE accounts can be created by completing the following [form](#).

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

A19: No. Providers must be a regional center service provider to participate in DSPU.

Q20: Can a DSP continue participating in DSPU 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 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 completion of each tier. Verification will be done through an email from the Department. Service providers have 7 days to verify the DSP's 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, regional center service providers and regional centers contact with questions?

A23: Questions should be directed to Workforce@dds.ca.gov.

Q24: Is DSPU the same training as DSP 1 and DSP 2?

A24: No. DSPU is a separate, competency-based training and certification program. While some topics may overlap, DSPU includes expanded content and structured tiers that are not part of DSP 1 or DSP 2.

Q25: Can DSPs participate in DSPU if they have not completed DSP 1 or DSP 2?

A25: Yes. DSPs may participate in DSPU regardless of whether they have or have not completed DSP 1 or DSP 2.

Q26: Can DSPs who work in non-licensed or community-based settings participate in DSPU?

A26: Yes. DSPs working in non-licensed or community-based settings may participate in DSPU as long as they are employed by a regional center service provider.

Q27: If a DSP completed training in the past that is part of DSPU, can those certificates be applied toward DSPU courses?

A27: Yes. Previously completed DSPU training may be accepted if the training was completed within the past 12 months. DSPs must upload the training certificate during enrollment for review and verification.

Q28: Can an In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) worker participate in DSP University?

A28: Only if the IHSS worker is also a DSP as defined above. IHSS workers who are not DSPs are not eligible to participate in DSPU because they are not employed by a regional center service provider. However, IHSS workers can access DSPU content by completing the following [form](#).

Q29: Can someone in the Self-Determination Program (SDP) participate in DSP University?

A29: An individual in SDP can access DSP University content through the EDGE platform. Individuals in SDP will not have access to Mandated Reporter Training and their training will not be tracked in the EDGE platform.

For more information, please contact us at workforce@dds.ca.gov.