

September 9, 2026

G-2026-Workforce-001

TO: REGIONAL CENTER EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSITY

The Direct Support Professional University (DSPU) launched on March 30, 2026. This guidance provides information about DSPU, including eligibility, participation, responsibilities and resources.

Background

AB 136 (Chapter 76, Statutes of 2021) added [Welfare and Institutions Code \(WIC\) Chapter 1.6, Section 4511.5](#). This law requires the Department of Developmental Services (Department) to establish and implement enhancements to the quality of services that individuals receive from their direct support professionals (DSPs). DSPU is being developed to comply with this law, through voluntary online completion of available courses. Courses eventually will include, but are not limited to, improving DSP knowledge about general health and safety issues, principles of self-determination to promote dignity of the recipient and the regional center service provider, and improving the quality of services and quality of life, including advancing health equity for individuals receiving regional center supports and services.

Please note: DSPU is a separate, competency-based certification program distinct from the [required DSP 1 & 2 training](#).

Direct Support Professional University Overview

The voluntary, competency based DSPU program provides training and certification for DSPs and is open to anyone interested in learning more about the DSPs workforce. Only the training courses completed by DSPs will be tracked. DSPU eventually will provide three tiers of enhanced training aimed at promoting person-centered services, cultural and linguistic responsiveness, and improved outcomes for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, as described below. Only part of Tier 1's courses are available as of the date of this letter.

Tier 1: Provides DSPs with 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.

Tier 2: Focuses on strengthening DSP practices to promote higher-level quality of life outcomes for people receiving services, beyond safety and physical well-being.

Tier 3: Provides either greater depth on previously covered topics, or advanced specialization in specific areas of practice.

Direct Support Professional Eligibility Requirements

Participation in DSPU is voluntary. To be eligible, participants must be a DSP, as defined below, and meet all other requirements identified below.

DSPs are paid workers whose responsibilities include the following:

- 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 people with skills development, guidance, and personal assistance
- Spend at least 50 percent of their work time doing direct support tasks
- Funded by the regional center

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 hired through a temporary personnel agency
- Contract or 1099 workers
- On-call or pro re nata (PRN) workers
- Volunteers
- Administrative or supervisory staff, unless they spend 50 percent or more of their work time doing direct support work

Accessing and Account Creation

For DSPs

- DSPU is accessed through the Employee Development, Growth, and Education (EDGE), a centralized, web-based training platform. Refer to **G-2026-Workforce-002** the ([EDGE guidance document](#)) for additional information.
- **Requirement:** DSP learners are required to use a personal email address when creating an account to ensure continuous access, such as if they change employers.

For Non-DSPs

- 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](#).
- **Requirement:** Regional center staff must use their official regional center email address when creating an account.

Steps for DSPs Participating in Direct Support Professional University

1. Access the online enrollment form through DSPU:
<https://www.dds.ca.gov/initiatives/workforce-initiatives-4/dsp-university/>.
2. The DSP completes the form, providing their personal information and their employer information. DSPs should use their personal email address to have continuous access, such as when they change their employer.
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 complete the training courses in each tier before moving to the next tier.

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

Other important information about the DSPU:

- This program is online and can be paused and resumed at a learner's convenience.
- Employers may choose to pay employees to complete DSPU courses, but DSPs are not required to complete DSPU courses.
- DSPs must complete the tiers in sequential order.
- More information can be found at: [Workforce Initiatives: CA Department of Developmental Services](#)

Regional Center Responsibilities:

- Regional centers should share Attachment with their service providers and request it be distributed to all DSPs. Regional centers should share the Attachment with their service providers and request it be distributed to all DSPs.

Help Desk and Support:

- For technical troubleshooting, including requests for assistance with login and navigation of the system, contact the California State University of Sacramento - College of Continuing Education Help Desk at cce-dds-support@csus.edu.
- For questions related to curriculum and training content, please contact workforce@dds.ca.gov.

- Requests for information, including the link for DSPs to access the initial enrollment form, course participation and completion reports, course analytics, data privacy, and data usage can be sent to the Service and Workforce Development Branch at EDGE@dds.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Signed by:

JENNIFER PARSONS
Deputy Director
Service Innovation and Oversight Division

Attachment

cc: Regional Center Administrators
Regional Center Directors of Consumer Services
Regional Center Community Services Directors
Association of Regional Center Agencies