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August 30, 2024

TO: REGIONAL CENTER EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING: DIRECT SERVICE  
PROFESSIONAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The purpose of this correspondence is to announce the Direct Service Professional (DSP) Internship Program and provide regional centers with information for the service provider community.

### **Background**

In June 2022, Senate Bill (SB) 188 (Chapter 49, Statutes of 2022) added [Welfare and Institutions Code Section 4699.3](#), which requires the Department of Developmental Services (Department) to administer an entry-level training and internship program for individuals interested in becoming a DSP. The DSP Internship Program (Program) is intended to enhance the quality of services received by individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) by increasing the hiring and retention of direct support professionals leading to career opportunities while providing them with the skills they need to deliver high-quality services.

The Program will provide 2,500 entry-level interns the opportunity to be paid for up to 30 hours per week for up to three months while learning high-quality DSP skills alongside a qualified DSP in a variety of settings performing a variety of functions. The recruitment of DSP Interns will focus on populations that reflect California's diverse population and specifically those who do not traditionally have a pathway towards jobs in the field of providing services to individuals with I/DD. Through this Program, DSP Interns who become permanent DSP employees with a regional center service provider will earn a \$625 (before taxes) retention stipend after six months of continuous employment and another \$625 (before taxes) retention stipend after 12 months of continuous employment.

All's WELL Healthcare Services (All's WELL) will serve as the Department's contractor to recruit and train DSP Interns and serve as the employer of the DSP Intern while they are placed with a regional center service provider, learning the functions of a DSP alongside a qualified DSP. All's WELL will recruit and interview potential DSP Interns, facilitate and pay for background checks, provide interactive trainings, and make recommendations for placement of DSP Interns with each service provider. Regional centers should work with their Vendor Advisory Committee to identify how All's WELL should tailor their approach to implementing the Program for their provider community.

### **DSP Intern Eligibility Requirements**

DSP Interns must:

- Be at least 18 years of age;
- Have a high school diploma, General Educational Development (GED) equivalent, or a Certificate of Completion;
- Have a valid Government-issued identification card;
- Pass the background check and other required health screenings; and
- Execute and abide by the DSP Intern Agreement (Enclosure A) with All's WELL.

### **Service Provider Eligibility Requirements**

Participating service providers must:

- Be in good standing with the regional center and not be subject to any sanction while participating in the Program;
- Execute and abide by the DSP Provider Participation Agreement (Enclosure B) with All's WELL;
- Have a qualified DSP employee willing to and capable of mentoring and supervising, at all times, an entry-level DSP Intern; and
- Provide the DSP Intern with orientation and task-oriented training.

### **Process for Service Providers Requesting to Participate in the Program**

- Step 1: Service providers must contact their regional center if interested in participating in the Program. Providers will need to provide the regional center their vendor number, vendor name and address, primary service code, the name of the provider's point of contact, email and telephone number. A list of regional center contacts for this Program may be found on the Department's [Workforce Initiatives webpage under the DSP Internship Tab](#).
- Step 2: Regional centers shall inform the Department of the interested service provider by submitting the provider's information into the online platform. A link to the online platform will be emailed to the regional center primary and secondary contacts.
- Step 3: Once the service provider is identified by the Department, All's WELL will contact the interested service provider, survey their program needs, work together to execute the DSP Provider Participation Agreement and onboard the provider with the process for the DSP Intern submission of timecards, oversight and other programmatic procedures.
- Step 4: Once the DSP Provider Participation Agreement has been executed and a DSP Intern has been identified, All's WELL will work directly with the service provider to collaboratively make the intern placement. Service providers shall be actively engaged in the selection process.

- Step 5: Once the DSP Intern has been placed, the service provider is encouraged to contact their assigned All's WELL recruiter and report any concerns or provide feedback about the DSP Intern when such arises.
- Step 6: Service providers may hire the DSP Intern as their own employee at any time during the internship; All's WELL will assist with the conversion.

### **Readying the DSP Intern for Placement with Service Provider and Payment of Wages**

All's WELL will:

- Ensure each DSP Intern meets essential requirements, including, but not limited to Livescan fingerprinting and background checks;
- Provide the required Department-approved training for DSP Interns prior to placement;
- Work directly with the service provider to establish the DSP Intern's start date and work schedule;
- Onboard the service provider to All's WELL timecard system; and
- Pay all wages due to the DSP Intern weekly and maintain workers' compensation insurance for such DSP Intern.

### **Payment of Retention Stipends to Former DSP Interns**

All's WELL shall pay DSP Interns who become permanent DSP employees with a regional center service provider a \$625 (before taxes) retention stipend after six months of continuous employment and another \$625 (before taxes) retention stipend after 12 months of continuous employment. All's WELL shall validate the continuous employment status with the regional center service provider prior to making payment.

### **DSP Internship Program Reporting Requirements**

All's WELL will maintain all reporting requirements for regional centers and the Program including, but not limited to, reporting to the Department on service provider participation, number of DSP Intern participants, DSP Intern demographics, number of DSP Interns converted to permanent employment, number of six-month and 12-month retainer stipends and total wages.

### **Points of Contact at Regional Centers**

Within 14 days of the date of this correspondence, regional centers must submit the following information to [Workforce@dds.ca.gov](mailto:Workforce@dds.ca.gov):

- Regional center contact information for the primary and secondary points of contact for this program.

Regional Center Executive Directors  
August 30, 2024  
Page four

- The regional center email address that service providers may use when requesting to participate in the Program. This information will be posted on the Department's website.

Regional centers should share this guidance as well as the enclosed Fact Sheet (Enclosure C) with their service provider community. Service providers should contact their regional center with any questions. Regional center questions may be directed to [Workforce@dds.ca.gov](mailto:Workforce@dds.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

*Original Signed by:*

VICKI L. SMITH, Ph.D.  
Deputy Director  
Policy and Program Development

Enclosures

cc: Regional Center Administrators  
Regional Center Community Services Directors  
Regional Center Directors of Consumer Services  
Association of Regional Center Agencies  
Nancy Bargmann, Department of Developmental Services  
Brian Winfield, Department of Developmental Services  
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