



## UDDC 2015 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY

### INCREASING DIRECT CARE WORKER WAGES IS CRITICAL FOR UTAH'S FAMILIES

The Utah Developmental Disabilities Council (UDDC) believes that increasing direct care staff minimum wage is critical to support Utah's families who have a family member with a significant disability. Direct care workers support individuals with disabilities in their homes and communities to help the individual maintain health and safety, remain as independent as possible, reduce costs, and support families.

The UDDC intends to increase awareness among the general public, policy makers and families about the importance of sustaining direct care staff and the vital support direct care staff professionals provide individuals with disabilities.

Utah serves families and their family member with a disability through a strong public and private partnership. Basically, the Department of Human Services, through its Division of Services for People with Disabilities, contracts with private sector organizations that provide supported living, group homes, respite, supported employment, and other direct supports so that each individual with a disability can contribute fully to their community.

- Direct care worker wages are so low that recruitment and retention is at critical levels. Today, providers are cutting essential services and not enrolling new individuals because there are no staff available.
- Because of low entry-level wages, staff turnover rates average 86% statewide. Individuals need to be able to depend on trained direct care providers. These turnover rates place families and individuals with disabilities at-risk.
- Private providers of services for people with disabilities are operating tightly on rates that, excluding modest cost-of-living increases, have not been adjusted for over 20 years.
- The average direct care pay rate is \$8.00 per hour. This hourly pay rate for skilled and trained workers cannot compete with other jobs, especially those with less demanding work.
- Today's direct care provider hourly wage rates were given a modest increase in 2008. These wages are not keeping pace with Utah's growing population and economy.
- Currently, providers are challenged even getting people to apply for open positions. This incredibly high turnover rate and lack of ability to attract employees will lead to serious health and safety concerns for Utah's most vulnerable population.
- We encourage the Utah State Legislature to upgrade community services to adequately support the needs of people in 2015. This would include funding \$5 million each year for the next three years for direct support worker wages and compensation benefits.