



APSE Statement on Supported Workers and Job Coaches as Essential Staff

At APSE, our top priority continues to be the health and safety of our members. We continue to monitor emerging guidance related to COVID-19, and are doing our best to get information out to you in real time. We encourage our members to defer to your state and local guidance regarding who should or shouldn't report to work at this time. As the only national organization committed to promoting Employment First, we are working hard to ensure that as many workers with disabilities (and those who support them) remain in the workforce as possible.

We recognize that many parts of the country have called for only "essential workers" to report, and we fully support compliance with the guidance you may be receiving. However, we know that many supported workers are classified as essential staff – especially those working in grocery stores and similar retail, hospitals, etc. If these workers have no underlying health concerns, they SHOULD report to work as instructed, practice frequent hand-washing and other mitigation strategies, as well as follow the guidelines offered by their employer.

We also recognize the need for ongoing supports during this time. Supported workers may need assistance to fully understand universal precautions, to make adjustments to work tasks that are changing in real time and to ensure communications are understood. Additionally, there is need to provide assistance to mitigate anxiety and other emotional responses as best as possible.

To that end, we are actively working with other national disability organizations to seek Federal guidance and to classify direct support staff (including job coaches) as protected and essential staff to ensure that people with disabilities receive the supports they are entitled to under VR and Medicaid. How these supports are delivered is going to vary by state and locality, but APSE fully supports and encourages the use of available technology to provide remote services to supported.

TAKE ACTION!

Tell Governors to classify Direct Support Professionals as essential staff!

Job Coaches and other Direct Support Professionals are essential to ensuring the safety and health of people with disabilities who receive employment supports. Many people with disabilities work in jobs that are considered "essential" and are reporting to work at healthcare facilities, grocery stores and the like.

However, Direct Support Professionals (including Job Coaches) are not often thought of when essential staff exemptions are established.

APSE urges our members, including DSPs, provider organizations, people with disabilities, and any other interested advocates to contact your governors and Members of Congress with the following asks:

Governors must:

- Issue an executive order designating direct support professionals as “essential workers”
- Publicly recognize the important work direct support professionals do in the community
- Encourage displaced workers to consider applying for jobs as Direct Support Professionals

Tweet Your Governor: Direct Support Professionals provide essential care to ppl w/ #disabilities during #COVID19 & beyond. Pls take action to declare: #DSPsAreEssential! See this letter from @TheRealANCOR to learn how how --> <https://bit.ly/2Qxu2MG>

Tell Congress to pass a COVID-19 relief package that addresses the critical needs of people with disabilities!

Congress must:

- Increase Medicaid funding for home and community-based services
- Provide paid leave coverage for when a person needs to fill in to provide care to a family member with a disability because their care worker is sick or their program closes
- Ensure that emergency income relief that includes people with disabilities

Call your Members of Congress (U.S. Capitol Switchboard: **202-224-3121** or Google the phone number for your local office). Don't forget to provide your name and city/state where you live.

Email you members. You can reach your members directly using this helpful [portal](#), which was put together by NDSC.

Send a [Tweet at Congress](#).

Example Tweet: @MEMBER-OF-CONGRESS, pass a new #COVID19 relief bill that addresses the needs of people with disabilities and their direct supports during this crisis! #WhatWeNeed #DSPsAreEssential

Uncertain who your Members of Congress are? Find out here:

[Find Your Representative](#)

[Find Your Senator](#)