



FLINTHILLS SERVICES, Inc.

Developmental Disability Community Service Provider

02/12/2020

To Whom it May Concern:

I'd like to share with you a recent exchange between two former Flinthills employees on social media:

" We need to be paid more than fast food places!"

"Yes I agree. I loved working for Flinthills and it's the best job I ever had. Unfortunately, I am a single mom and couldn't support my family on 40 hours. I had to work massive overtime just to have a little left over. So unfortunately, I had to leave my work family for a better paying job. Sure miss my wonderful clients."

The job of a Direct Support Professional (DSP) is not easy; they are charged with giving medications, providing personal care, teaching individuals how to be more independent, helping individuals access community resources, and managing challenging behaviors and serious medical conditions for some of our most vulnerable amongst us, **INVISIBLE KANSANS** with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) Most of DSP jobs start at around \$10/hour due to inadequate HCBS reimbursement rates for the past decade in Kansas.

You could go to any provider in the state of Kansas and would find similar scenarios, where qualified, well-meaning employees leave the important job as DSP because they can't make a living wage. They are finding better paying jobs, even though they love the work and are dedicated to their clients. In October, 2019, approximately **40%** of employees leaving employment at Flinthills did so for higher paying jobs. Fast forward just 4 months and this figure is closer to **55%**.

At Flinthills, the turnover rate among DSP's in FY 19 was **74%** and the percentage of DSP's that maintained successful employment form 6 months from hire date was only **57%**. All staff wages, including all mid and upper management have remained stagnant since early 2018.

As a result, the I/DD system in Kansas is experiencing a workforce crisis , exacerbated by record low unemployment and rising entry level wages for positions that require comparable qualifications. We recently lost an employee of 3 ½ years, making a little over \$10/hr to a \$14/hr job at Walmart. Her job at Walmart is now doing personal shopping for folks who order their groceries on-line and pick them up at the store. A job that requires far less skill level and

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emotional investment that that of a DSP. I/DD providers simply can't compete and the labor pool with which we are left, often does not meet acceptable standards set by both the state and the organization. The waiting list for I/DD services is over 4000, yet even if half the waiting list was funded today, it would only compound the problem of under by bringing more needs into an already underfunded service system. This pattern repeats itself exponentially across the state and it is rapidly eroding the sustainability of the I/DD system.

Today you will hear many more facts and figures related to the DSP workforce crisis, so I won't continue to site more data in this written testimonial, but let me leave you with this additional thought: I/DD providers across the state are doing more with less, but no business can continue to operate when revenue doesn't keep up with expenses. We cannot pass on the increasing cost of doing business such as; competing wages, business insurance, utilities, supplies, and employee benefits to our clients and we cannot expect to maintain quality services when we can't hire and retain qualified DSP's. It is time to take action on behalf of the **INVISIBLE KANSANS**.

On behalf of our clients and their families , the staff, and the board of directors of Flinthills Services, Inc., we ask that you support HB 2550 and SB 348. Let this be the year that we do the right thing and that Kansans with I/DD remain **INVISIBLE** no more.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathy Walter".

Kathy Walter
Executive Director