

## **Appendix: A.2 Assessment Requirements**

### **Overview of Requirements**

The NADSP/ANCOR Direct Support Professional (DSP) apprenticeship program consists of educational instruction and experiential learning in fifteen competency areas adopted by the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals. These nationally recognized competencies are the key areas of expertise necessary to provide high quality direct support in community-based human services. The candidate's (apprentice's) path to DSP status is divided into three sequential certificate levels, the DSP – Registered (R), DSP - Initial Certificate (IC), and the DSP - Advanced Certificate (AC). Upon completion of the AC, the DSP has completed the apprenticeship and is recognized as a Direct Support Professional (journeyworker).

To earn the DSP Registered credential the candidate must meet the following requirements: (click on this link for these requirements: [Direct Support Professional-Registered \(DSP-R\)](#))

1. Pass criminal background check that shows clearance to work with vulnerable adults and children in the state in which employed.
2. Complete 40 hours of education/related instruction based on validated, occupational analyses and educational standards relevant to the direct support role. Letter from employer indicated all required training and orientation as prescribed by state and organization has been met.
3. Proof of continuous employment in community human services.
4. Letter of professional commitment that describes candidate's values and commitment to the direct support profession.
5. Commit to performing direct support practice that conforms to the NADSP Direct Support Code of Ethics

To earn the DSP Initial Certificate, the candidate must meet the following requirements: (click on this link: [Direct Support Professional- Certified \(DSP-C\)](#) ).

**(Note that NADSP does NOT split out the DSP-C certificate into Initial and Advanced levels. To obtain NADSP's DSP-C certificate, an apprentice must complete the requirements for Initial and Advanced Certificates and other NADSP requirements to obtain the DSP-C certificate.)**

1. Complete the requirements of the DSP – Registered level (DSP-R)
2. Complete 72 hours of an approved educational/training program (total of 112 hours including Registered and Initial Certificate levels) that is focused on six of the fifteen required competency areas including Community Living Skills and Supports, Communication, and Documentation.
3. Provide work samples in four of the fifteen required competency areas that meet defined standards of proficiency. The DSP IC candidate is mandated to complete portfolio work samples in these three competency areas: 1)

Community Living Skills and Supports; 2) Communication; and, 3) Documentation. The candidate may choose any of the remaining competency areas for their fourth sample.

4. Provide proof of one year of continuous employment and proof of 1200 to 1800 hours (cumulative total of 1280 to 1900 hours including Registered and Initial Certificate levels) of on the job learning guided by a skills mentor in the competency areas identified in number 2;
5. Provide direct support that meets the expectations of an individual that the apprentice supports;
6. Complete a professional resume;
7. Provide a professional commitment statement that describes the apprentice's career goals and commitment to the field;
8. Commit to performing direct support practice that conforms to the Direct Support Code of Ethics.

To earn the Advanced Certificate in Direct Support, the candidate must complete the following requirements **(See the link and Note for the Initial Certificate level)**:

- ✓ Complete 108 hours of an approved educational/training program (cumulative total of 220 hours including Registered, Initial, and Advanced Certificate levels) focused on the remaining nine required competency areas
- ✓ Provide work samples in four of the fifteen required competency areas that are different from the areas the candidate addressed in the Initial Certificate
- ✓ Provide proof of one additional year of continuous employment and 1800-2700 hours (cumulative total of 3080-4600 hours including Registered, Initial and Advanced Certificate levels) of OJL guided by a skills mentor that focuses on the 9 remaining competency areas

### **The Candidate's DSP Portfolio**

A DSP Portfolio is a collection of work related materials that the candidate assembles to provide evidence that he/she has met the requirements of the DSP-IC and the DSP-AC. It contains the work samples that are used to demonstrate the candidate's mastery and ethical application of direct support skills and knowledge; in addition to work samples, other information is assembled in the Portfolio by the candidate to prove satisfactory completion of the other requirements necessary to achieve DSP status.

Once the Portfolio is complete, the candidate submits the DSP Portfolio to a team of trained portfolio reviewers who use published guidelines to evaluate the DSP Portfolio evidence and determine if the candidate has earned the DSP status.

### **The DSP Portfolio Method**

Candidates seeking recognition as DSPs must assemble a DSP Portfolio that is composed of eight work samples (four work samples at the IC level and 4 work samples at the AC level) that are included in their Portfolio along with other materials that provide

evidence that the candidate has successfully fulfilled all apprenticeship requirements. A work sample is an authentic and substantial example of the candidate's best work in a competency area. The sample (work example and reflective statement) must have the necessary depth and complexity to show that the candidate has mastered most of the skill standards in the selected competency area.

The DSP Portfolio serves as the final assessment that determines whether the candidate has earned DSP status. While many other certification and apprenticeship programs use a national multiple choice examination to judge candidate competence, the NADSP has elected to use the Portfolio method as it provides a window into the real work performance of the candidate, and also provides the candidate with some flexibility in selecting the competency areas in which they will demonstrate their skill and knowledge. Each work sample in the portfolio must be focused on a single competency from the fifteen DSP core competencies enabling reviewers to look closely at the candidate's performance in eight of the fifteen core competency areas.

DSP-Certified applicants will assemble a portfolio of eight work samples (four for the IC and four for the AC) and other materials to demonstrate the candidate's mastery of the competency areas approved by the NADSP. At the IC level, candidates are mandated to prepare work samples in three required competency areas including: 1) Community Living Skills and Supports, 2) Communication and 3) Documentation. For the AP level work samples, candidates will choose at their discretion an additional four competency areas as topics for work samples from the twelve remaining competency areas.

### **DSP Portfolio Components**

In addition to the eight competency-based work samples, The DSP Portfolio has other requirements. The work samples and the other required elements of the DSP portfolio were selected to permit a structured and reliable review process and to enable the candidate to choose areas of strength in which to provide evidence of a broad array of the skills, values and attitudes that are associated with excellence in direct support work in community settings.

The required DSP Portfolio components are as follows:

1. **Title Page:** a cover page that contains information to identify the applicant.
2. **Table of Contents:** an organizational page that shows the reader how sections are arranged and the page numbers and contents of each section.
3. **Letter of Professional Commitment:** provides the reader with an introduction to the applicant's professional goals and views on community human services.
4. **Resume:** an organized summary of the applicant's work history.
5. **Letter/Communication of Support:** at least one letter of support from a person the applicant supports or their legal representative.
6. **Code of Ethics Commitment:** a signed commitment by the applicant that they agree to adhere to the DSP Code of Ethics.

- 7. Eight Work Samples (four for IC and four for AC):** Each sample is comprised of **a)** an example of the applicant's hands-on work in community human services accompanied by **b)** a reflective-statement about the work sample. The reflective statement must contain a description of the work example, and an explanation of how it demonstrates the candidate's mastery of standards in the competency area and how it relates to the individual outcomes of the people supported by the applicant.

At the IC Level, three of the four samples must address these competency areas:

- Community Living Skills and Supports
- Communication
- Documentation

The fourth work sample competency is chosen at the discretion of the candidate.

- 8. Training/Education Records:** Copies of the applicant's training or education records demonstrating that the education and training requirements for each level of credential have been met.

## **Creativity and the DSP Portfolio**

Each DSP-Certified applicant has the opportunity to use the DSP Portfolio to document skills, knowledge and experience in highly unique and innovative ways. A broad range of media is permitted within the portfolio format. For example, portfolios are likely to include printed documents, but may also include other forms of media such as photographs, videotapes, audiotapes, or other creative products illustrating the applicant's abilities in a particular competency area.

Portfolios are a useful tool for tracking an applicant's professional growth and development. For example, the applicant might document the growth of an empowering support relationship through journal entries over a period of time and submit these as an authentic work sample. The portfolio that the applicant assembles is an opportunity to showcase the skills necessary for supporting people in achieving their personal and desired outcomes. Portfolios tell the story of the applicant's professional journey.

## **Developing the Portfolio**

Organizing a quality portfolio takes time and commitment, but it can be a fun and formative process. The portfolio may be developed as a component of your participation in an instructional program that teaches the skills and knowledge in the required competency areas. Your employer or classroom instructor might offer you the opportunity to work with a group of DSPs who are also preparing portfolios. Together, DSP applicants can brainstorm ideas and think through the aspects of different ways to develop authentic work samples. Applicants may also find it helpful to ask for support from other DSPs, education/training instructors or mentors as they develop their unique portfolio.

Portfolio work samples will show the applicant's mastery of eight of the 15 competency areas approved by the NADSP. Work samples are put together over a period of time and show mastery in actual work situations. Work samples must include a reflective-statement which describes the work sample. Work samples are creative products illustrating competency and may be both written and non-written.

Work sample formats include (but are not limited to the following list):

- ✓ Written journal entries
- ✓ Communication logs
- ✓ Photo essays
- ✓ Scrapbook entries
- ✓ Video tapes or DVD
- ✓ Audio tapes or CD-ROM
- ✓ Oral presentation
- ✓ Project products and summaries
- ✓ Photo Albums
- ✓ Brochures
- ✓ Posters

## **Evaluation of Portfolios**

Each candidate portfolio is reviewed by a team of trained reviewers who apply specific criteria to determine whether the portfolio meets the quality necessary to be approved for the award of the Initial certificate or the Advanced certificate level.

**The criteria used by teams in the evaluation process include the following:**

1. A list of the required elements of the DSP Portfolio (see the section: **Direct Support Professional Portfolio Components**)
2. The skill standards of each competency area addressed by a work sample (click on this link: [15 Competency Areas](#)) used in rating work samples
3. The NADSP DSP Code of Ethics (click on this link: [Code of Ethics](#) )
4. The NADSP DSP Competency Profile (see: **NADSP Portfolio Review Competency Profile**) used in rating work samples

### **NADSP Portfolio Review Competency Profile**

**Practice** = The work sample, demonstrates a basic level of knowledge and skill in the competency area necessary to be somewhat effective in building participant trust, competence, and achievement of goals in an ethical manner.

*The work sample demonstrates:*

- basic mastery of the knowledge and skill standards in the competency area leading to the achievement of some desired outcomes of the person he/she supports in an ethical manner;

- beginning ability to support personal choice and self-determination, individualization, community inclusion, and advocacy with the persons he/she supports; and,
- modest abilities in observation, organization of information, assessment, analysis, problem solving, flexibility, creativity, communication, interpersonal competence, and teamwork.

**Proficient** = The work sample indicates mastery of a sufficient level of the knowledge and the skill standards in this competency area necessary to be moderately effective in building participant trust, competence, and achievement of goals in an ethical manner.

*The work sample demonstrates:*

- intermediate mastery of the knowledge and skill standards in the competency area leading to the moderate achievement of desired outcomes of the person he/she supports in an ethical manner,
- strong understanding and a solid practice supporting personal choice and self-determination, individualization, community inclusion, and advocacy with the persons he/she supports; and
- Intermediate abilities in observation, organization of information, assessment, analysis, problem solving, flexibility, creativity, communication, interpersonal competence, and teamwork.

**Advanced** = The work sample demonstrates full mastery of the knowledge and skill standards in this competency area necessary to be highly effective in building participant trust, competency, and achievement of goals and outcomes in an ethical manner.

*The work sample demonstrates:*

- full mastery of knowledge and skill standards in the competency area resulting in a significant achievement of the desired outcomes of the person he/she supports in an ethical manner;
- work practices that are highly effective in supporting personal choice and self-determination, individualization, community inclusion, and advocacy with the persons he/she supports; and,
- superior abilities in observation, organization of information, assessment, analysis, problem solving, flexibility, creativity, communication, interpersonal competence, and teamwork.