

# College of Direct Support: Courses

The College of Direct Support courses are developed by the [University of Minnesota's Research and Training Center on Community Living](#). Each course is reviewed by a group of content experts from the National Board of Editors, who serve as editors and advisors for all courses.

**Every course is designed to give direct support professionals the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need through innovative, engaging and interesting training.**

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## **Civil Rights and Advocacy**

This four-lesson course will help you understand your role in supporting a person with a disability as he or she stands up for his or her rights. You will learn what it takes to be an effective advocate for those you support. You will learn how to work with each person to overcome the challenges faced in exercising his or her civil rights.

- Your Role in Effective Advocacy
- History of the Disability Rights Movement
- Disability Rights and Legislation
- Challenges and Strategies for Exercising Civil Rights

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## **Community Inclusion**

Learn key strategies through this course to help people with disabilities grow into active members of the communities in which they live and work. You'll also learn key strategies for enhancing inclusion.

- The DSP Role in Community Inclusion
- Matching Community Resources with Individual Interests
- Community Bridge Building and Networking
- Natural Supports

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## **Cultural Competence**

Get an overview of cultural competence and its importance in providing quality support to people with disabilities. You will learn about valuing diversity and recognizing your own culture and the culture of others. You will also learn skills that allow you to adjust your behavior based on the needs of a situation or individual.

- What Is Cultural Competence?
- Understanding Your Own Culture
- The Culture of Support Services
- The Cultural Competence Continuum
- Cross-Cultural Communication
- Cultural Competence in Daily Support
- DSP Roles in Culturally Competent Organizations

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## **Direct Support Professionalism**

Over the course of six lessons, you will be introduced to the national movement to professionalize the field of direct support. Following accepted best practices and a standardized ethical code are essential concepts in this course. You will learn how the DSP can become involved in professional organizations. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) is also a key part of this course.

- Becoming a Direct Support Professional
- Contemporary Best Practices
- Applying Ethics in Everyday Work
- Practicing Confidentiality
- Working with Your Strengths and Interests
- ~~Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)~~ *Will be sunset*

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## **Emergency Preparedness**

This course will help you to understand the importance of being prepared for emergencies and the many types of emergencies you could encounter. It will help you to identify actions to take and the important role you play in supporting a person with a disability during these times.

- What Is Emergency Preparedness?
- The Role of the Direct Support Professional in Emergency Preparedness
- Defining Disasters and Emergencies
- Pandemics

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## **Employment Supports: Exploring Individual Preferences and Opportunities for Job**

### **Attainment**

During this four-part course, you will learn to assist people with identifying skills and preferences, exploring job opportunities, completing job applications and making appropriate workplace accommodations.

- Introduction to Employment Supports
- Identifying Individual Employment Preferences, Interests, Strengths and Support Needs
- Job Opportunities and Job Searching
- Applying, Interviewing and Making Accommodations

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## **Everyone Can Communicate**

The goal of this course is to help you learn the importance of communication in relationship building. You will learn key strategies for interpreting verbal and nonverbal communication. You will also learn about using augmentative and alternative communication strategies.

- What Is Communication and Why Is It Important?
- How People Communicate
- The Role of the Direct Support Professional as a Communication Partner
- Strategies to Enhance Communication
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication

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## **Functional Assessment**

This course will help you identify challenging behaviors and discover their underlying causes. You will learn how to support positive behaviors and help each person you support to improve his or her life.

- Comprehensive Assessment and the Role of the Direct Support Professional
- Strategies for Gathering and Organizing Functional Assessment Information
- Understanding Behavior and Participating in the Functional Assessment process
- Using Functional Assessments and Behavior Support Plans

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## ***NEW!* The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)**

This course is an overview of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the most current changes to important rules of HIPAA. The course provides information regarding what is protected health information (PHI) under HIPAA. It also supports direct support professionals in understanding their role in protecting it. They will also learn what to do if there is a breach of PHI.

- Introduction to HIPAA
- The Privacy Rule and Security Rule
- The Breach Notification Rule and Enforcement Rule

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## **Hiring Great Direct Support Professionals**

This course is a toolkit with exercises and activities to help you learn some of the ins and outs of hiring, training, and keeping great direct support professionals (DSPs). These DSPs are often referred to by many different names, including: personal care attendants (PCAs), homemaker aides, home health aides, direct support workers, and care workers. As an employer of DSPs, this course will provide you or your family members with easy to use tips for hiring and keeping great DSPs.

- Introducing the Hiring Process
- Looking for the Right Direct Support Professional
- Where to Find Great Direct Support Professionals
- Creating Your Real Story
- The Art of Interviewing
- Teaching Direct Support Professionals the Job

- Strategies for Keeping Great Direct Support Professionals

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## **Home and Community Living**

This course will help you and the family members of the person you support to provide critical support so that he or she can live at home. Each course includes facts, techniques, and possible methods of support.

- Clothing Care and Laundry
- Comfortable Living
- Home Maintenance and Upkeep
- Maintaining a Clean Home
- Supporting Home Living: The DSP Role

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## **Implementing Participant-Directed Supports**

Most courses in the College of Direct Support provide training based on the roles and responsibilities of direct support professionals. However, this course provides training to individuals who receive supports. It is written in the context of a person who makes decisions about his or her own supports. It also applies to a family member or ally who may be delegated to direct supports for an individual.

- Understanding Participant-Directed Supports
- Steps to Implementing Participant-Directed Supports
- Implementing Step 1: Assessment
- Implementing Step 2: Identify Resources
- Implementing Step 3: Design the Plan
- Implement Step 4: Broker the Agreement
- Implement Step 5: Organize Supports
- Implement Step 6: Implement Supports
- Implement Step 7: Evaluate

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## **Individual Rights and Choice**

This course will give you critical knowledge of the legal rights of individuals with disabilities. You will be equipped to ensure those you support can balance appropriate risk and choice with the right to be protected from harm. This course can be modified to reflect local or state laws that DSPs may need to know.

- Overview of Individual Rights
- Restrictions of Individual Rights
- Overcoming a Past of Barriers, a Future of Risks, Choices, and Solutions
- Your Role in Supporting Expression of Rights and Facilitating Choice

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## **Introduction to Developmental Disabilities**

This recently updated course will give you the background information you need to support a person with an intellectual and other developmental disability. You will learn about appropriate vocabulary and communication strategies that will help you explain the support system to a person you support and his or her family. This course will also give you a historical perspective of people with disabilities and the supports available to them.

- A Brief History of Developmental Disabilities
- The Language and Ideas of Best Practices
- Terminology and Classification in Developmental Disabilities
- The Causes of Developmental Disabilities
- Services for People with Developmental Disabilities

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## **Introduction to Mental Health and Mental Illnesses**

There are millions of Americans living with mental illness today. Mental illness not only affects the person. It also affects their family, friends, and the community. Mental illness is an invisible disease. It can be hard to understand. Some people will be mildly affected. Others may be affected much more severely. This course will assist you to understand more about mental health and mental illness. It will provide an overview of systems issues in mental health support. It will provide you with strategies you can use as a DSP to provide compassionate, empowering, and respectful support to people who struggle with mental health conditions.

- Overview of Mental Health and the Role of the DSP
- Overview of Common Mental Illnesses, Treatment and Service Options

- Psychotropic Medications-Uses and Issues?
- Supporting People with Mental Health Conditions in the Community
- DSP Support Strategies
- System Issues and Solutions in Mental Health

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## **Maltreatment Prevention and Response**

Learn to identify abuse, neglect, and exploitation, and how to protect a person you support. You will learn to document and report suspected abuse. The course will also introduce you to advocacy, ombudsman services, and other agencies that deal with abuse and neglect situations.

- Overview of DSP Roles
- What is Maltreatment?
- What is Abuse?
- What is Neglect?
- What is Exploitation?
- Balancing Rights with Protection
- The Ethical Role of the DSP
- An Overview of Risks for Maltreatment
- Characteristics of Caregivers that Affect Risk
- Characteristics of Situations that Increase Risk
- Characteristics of People Supported that Affect Risk
- Reducing Caregiver Risk of Maltreating
- Engaging and Supporting Protective Factors in Individuals
- The Role of Documentation and Systems in Prevention
- Engaging and Supporting Protective Factors in Organizations and Communities
- Responding to Potential Maltreatment
- Where to Report Potential Maltreatment
- How to Report Potential Maltreatment
- Follow-Up to Potential Maltreatment Reports

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## **Medication Support**

This course will help you learn about medications. You will learn to monitor for problems and document any reactions. It will also help you learn about the basics of storing and administering medications. The



course has been designed to help you understand the difference between regional laws and how these affect your job and those you support.

- An Overview of Direct Support Roles in Medication Support
- Medication Basics
- Working with Medications
- Administration of Medications and Treatments
- Follow-up, Communication and Documentation
- Using Medication References

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## **Person-Centered Planning and Supports**

Get a historical perspective on person-centered planning. This course will introduce you to five different types of person-centered planning and how to bring these plans to life. You will learn how to create solutions that solve the most common challenges to person-centered plans.

- Foundations of Person-Centered Planning
- An Overview of Person-Centered Approaches
- The Person-Centered Planning Process
- Bringing Person-Centered Plans to Life

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## **Positive Behavior Support**

This course is an introduction to methods of supporting people who engage in challenging behaviors. The learner is provided with definitions of challenging behavior and basic behavioral terms and principles. The course teaches learners about regulations in the use of behavioral interventions and provides practical information on how to effectively support people who present behavioral challenges.

- Understanding Behavior
- Functions and Causes of Behavior
- Understanding Positive Approaches
- Preventing Challenging Behavior
- Responding to Challenging Behavior
- Behavior Support Plans
- Rules, Regulations, Policies, and Rights

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## **Personal Care**

This course provides information on why grooming and hygiene is an important part of daily life. Grooming and hygiene can reflect a person's well-being and self-esteem. Poor hygiene can lead to poor health. Many direct support professionals help people with grooming and hygiene activities. These include tasks such as helping with dressing, bathing, shaving, or using the toilet. It may also include teaching these skills to children or adults with special needs. Direct support professionals may feel uncomfortable assisting people with grooming and hygiene. Learning to support people with personal care in a sensitive and respectful manner is discussed. It is also important to respect a person's own grooming habits. These are personal and unique, and can be culturally based. Direct support professionals will learn how to find out about people's personal style and preferences. Learners will review methods for completing many grooming and hygiene tasks. This course will also help learners understand health concerns and risks related to personal care.

- Understanding Personal and Self Care
- Individualized Personal Care Support
- The Basics of Hygiene
- The Basics of Grooming and Dressing
- Oral Care

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## **Professional Documentation Practices**

Documentation is a critical part of direct support work. Good documentation lays the foundation for support services. Documentation helps direct support professionals meet the needs of individuals with disabilities in all setting. In this course you will learn what documentation is. You will learn why it is important. This is especially true in direct support work. You will learn how documentation supports a person to meet her or his needs, goals and preferences. The course covers reasons for and basic rules of documentation. You will learn the difference between subjective and objective documentation. In addition you will learn about confidentiality. You will learn how important it is protect an individual's right to privacy. Finally, you will be introduced to five common areas where documentation is often required.

- The Purpose and Meaning of Documentation in Direct Support Work
- Reasons for Documentation
- The Basic Rules of Documentation
- Documentation and the Direct Support Professional

- Protecting Confidentiality
- Rights to Privacy
- Release of Information Forms
- Individual Support Plans, Progress and Personal Goals
- Medical and Health Related Documentation
- Staff Communication Logs
- Incident and Accident Documentation

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## **Safety**

Balancing risk, choice, and safety is a big responsibility for direct support professionals. You may already know that individuals with disabilities have the right to make choices even if these seem risky or unsafe to others. This course will help you learn to balance the risks with those you support, and to support safety. Each lesson addresses specific safety strategies for various support situations. You will learn how to promote safety in different areas of the home. You will learn about fire prevention and keeping people safe from fire danger. In addition, you will learn about being safe in the community. This includes promoting motor vehicle and community transportation safety. And when accidents or incidents do happen you will learn how to handle these, too.

- What is Risk?
- Balancing Risk with Individual Safety and Choice
- Personal Safety
- Individual Safety Plans
- Safety in the Kitchen
- Safety in the Bathroom
- Safety in the Common Area
- Safety in the Bedroom
- Safely Enjoying Outdoor Spaces at Home
- Fire Prevention
- Fire Emergency Response
- Fire Emergency Plans and Evacuation
- Individualized Fire Safety Plans and Skills
- Community Safety
- Vehicle Safety
- Community Transportation
- Role of the Direct Support Professional: Accident Prevention, Risk Assessment, and Risk Management
- Following Accident & Injury Policies and Procedures
- Reporting Incidents and Accidents

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## **Supporting Healthy Lives**

This course will help you show the people you support how to make healthy choices about eating and exercising. It reviews health-related issues across the life span and gives advice on working with health care providers. This course also includes a lesson on recognizing the signs and symptoms of illnesses and how to take care of someone who may be sick.

- Living a Healthy Life
- Health through the Age Span
- Individual Health Needs
- Care of Common Health Care Conditions
- Recognizing Signs and Symptoms of Illness
- Working with a Health Care Provider

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## **Supporting Jobs and Careers in the Community**

In this important course, you will learn to support a person with a disability as he or she enters the workforce. You will learn how to match a person's specific abilities and desires with a job he or she will enjoy. You will also learn how employment and wages may affect government benefits and how to support a person to move toward independence.

- Successful Community Employment and Retention
- Employment Supports and Volunteering
- Introduction to Government Benefit Programs
- Government Benefit Programs and Their Interactions with Work

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## **Supporting Older Adults**

Adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities are living longer than they once did. It is important for direct support professionals to understand changes related to aging in order to provide quality supports as people grow older.

This course will help you recognize age-related changes. It will help you meet the changing support needs. This knowledge will also help you support a person to maintain their health and connections in the community. It will help you support him or her to live a happy and meaningful life for as long as possible.

- **Lesson 1: The Aging of the U.S. Population.** Over the next 40 years, older adults will make up a much larger part of the U. S. population. This lesson identifies the later life concerns of people with disabilities and their families. This lesson discusses how these issues will affect the disability service systems. You will also read about common myths of aging. Finally, this lesson will cover the role that direct support professionals have in supporting people with disabilities who are aging.
- **Lesson 2: Age-Related Sensory and Physical Changes.** Older adults experience many changes in health. This lesson focuses on physical changes. You will learn about changes related to the five senses. You will learn about changes related to vision and hearing. There is also information about changes in sense of touch, taste, and smell. You will learn how aging affects skin, muscles, and bones. Finally, this lesson focuses on oral health. Direct support professionals have an important responsibility to support older adults through sensory and physical changes. This lesson describes strategies to support a person experiencing these changes. It includes special consideration of older adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- **Lesson 3: Age-Related Physical and Cognitive Changes.** Older adults experience many changes in health. This lesson focuses on physical and cognitive changes. You will learn about changes related to cardiovascular or respiratory systems. You will learn about changes related to urinary or endocrine systems. You will learn about medication changes and how this affects health. There is also information about behavioral and cognitive changes. Finally, this lesson focuses on mental health. Direct support professionals have an important responsibility to support older adults through these changes. This lesson describes strategies to support a person experiencing these changes. It includes special consideration of older adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- **Lesson 4: Later Life Planning and Support.** Many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are living longer. This means they reaching a new stage in life: retirement. This course will give you an overview of how you may be involved in helping with retirement planning. It will alert you to signs people show when they are getting ready for retirement. This course also talks about preparing for the end of life. It will give you an introduction to legal documents that are important for people you support. These documents allow for the people you support to have the most choices on how to live at the end of life.
- **Lesson 5: Grieving and End of Life Support.** Grief is an experience that affects most people at some point in their lives. As the people you support age, it is likely that you may be supporting a person who experiences the death of a friend or family member. This lesson discusses the stages of grief and how to support people through the grieving process. Many factors will affect how a person experiences grieving. These include a person's age, ethnicity, and religion. Direct support involves providing person-centered supports to a person who is grieving. In this lesson you will learn about end of life services. You will learn how to connect and support a person in these services. This lesson will also discuss how direct support professionals may grieve the loss of a person being supported.

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## Teaching People with Developmental Disabilities

This course will help you understand the fundamentals of teaching and learning. You will learn key strategies that help a person with an intellectual or other developmental disability absorb information. You will also learn how to organize teaching and learning for maximum effectiveness.

- Understanding Teaching
- Preparing to Teach
- Teaching Strategies
- Organizing and Applying Teaching Strategies

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## Understanding Transitions Across the Life Span

You will learn about life transitions that affect individuals with disabilities. You will learn about common life transitions. You will learn about working with families. You will also learn about services, supports, and the role of the direct support professional plays in supporting individuals experiencing life transitions.

- **Lesson 1: Understanding Transitions.** This lesson will introduce you to transitions that affect everyone's life. You will learn about the most common transitions we all go through, from taking our first steps to graduating from high school. You will also learn how the transitions that we all experience — from birthdays to education — may be different for a person with disabilities and his or her family.
- **Lesson 2: Understanding Family Transitions.** In this lesson, you will learn about the different transitions families experience together over the course of their life cycle — from birth to walking and birthdays to secondary education — and how a disability can impact those transitions.
- **Lesson 3: The Role of Families & Support Professionals.** The learner will learn how family and support professionals play a key role in helping people with disability make successful life transitions.
- **Lesson 4: Family-Centered and Person-Centered Transition Support.** In this lesson, you will learn about Family-centered Support, a philosophy of care in which the support professionals take their cues from the family. You will also learn about person-centered support and services. You will learn similarities and differences between the two philosophies and how they apply to daily practice.
- **Lesson 5: Holistic Support for Transitions.** In this lesson, you will learn how to take a holistic approach to supporting families and people with disability as they transition.
- **Lesson 6: The Impact of Culture on Life Transitions.** In this lesson, you will learn how culturally defined views of disability impact the services and support a person receives and their ability to achieve life transitions.

- **Lesson 7: Formal Health Services and Supports.** This lesson will briefly introduce you to Formal Services that can be accessed to help individuals with disabilities navigate life stage transitions. In this lesson, you will specifically learn about the many formal health-related services and supports available to people with disabilities.
- **Lesson 8: Formal Education Services – Preschool to Grade School.** In this lesson, you will learn about formal services and supports in education from preschool to grade school, as well as the role you will play in helping a person with disability access them.
- **Lesson 9: Formal Education Services – High School to Post Secondary.** In this lesson, you will learn about the different services and supports available to people with disability as they transition into high school and post-secondary school, as well as the role direct support professionals can play in helping them to achieve their goals.
- **Lesson 10: Types of Formal Housing Services.** In this lesson, we will take a look at the different types of housing services and supports available to people with disability.
- **Lesson 11: Social Services.** In this lesson, you will learn about one of the most commonly used government support programs. This lesson will help you to learn about programs through Social Security. You will also, learn about other formal supports and services that exist for people in the categories of employment and general assistance.
- **Lesson 12: Centers for Independent Living.** This lesson introduces you to informal community supports. In this lesson, you will learn specifically about the Centers for Independent Living (CILs), a long-standing informal, community organization that works to support people with disability by providing a range of services and supports.
- **Lesson 13: Informal Community Supports and Services.** In this lesson, you will learn about a few community organizations that offer informal services and supports to people with disability.
- **Lesson 14: Services and Supports: By Life Stages.** Now that you have learned about the many formal and informal services and supports available, this lesson will talk about those services and supports in the context of a person's life stages.
- **Lesson 15: Services, Supports and Quality of Life.** You have learned a lot about the different formal and informal services and supports. In this lesson you will learn how those services and supports can impact the quality of life for a person with disability.
- **Lesson 16: The Role of the DSP.** You have learned a lot about the different formal and informal services and supports. In this lesson you will learn the role that you, as a direct support professional will play in helping a person with disability access these services and supports.

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## Universal Precautions

This course is about Universal Precautions required by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). It will teach direct support professionals about universal precautions and infection control. It will review OSHA blood borne pathogens requirements. It covers information on preventing and

responding to exposure incidents. It will review information about communicable diseases and what can and should be done to prevent the spread of these diseases.

- Aspects of Infectious Diseases
- Understanding the Infectious Disease Cycle
- Blood Borne Pathogens
- Infections Control and Prevention
- Universal Precautions
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Hand Washing Procedures
- Cleaning and Disinfecting
- Environmental Controls
- Accidental Exposure Procedures
- Exposure Control Plans

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## **Working with Families and Support Networks**

This course will help you learn to develop strong working partnerships with families and other support networks.

- Understanding Support Networks
- Family Networks
- Creating Partnerships with Support Network Members
- Problem Solving within Support Networks

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## **You've Got a Friend: Supporting Family Connections, Friends, Love and the Pursuit of Happiness**

Discover the importance and meaning of human relationships in the lives of all people through this valuable four-part course. You will learn about the value that healthy family and community relationships bring to life. You will also learn how prejudice and stigma can get in the way of these relationships for those you support.

- The Importance of Relationships
- Barriers, Challenges and Opportunities for Friendships



- Strategies for Building and Maintaining Relationships
- Supporting Family Networks

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### **Coming in 2015!**

- HIPAA
- Code of Ethics
- Supporting Individuals with Physical Disabilities at Home