



# COLLEGE OF DIRECT SUPPORT EVALUATION BRIEF

October 2009

## DSPs in Wisconsin's CDS Pilot Project Report Positive Experiences with CDS

### Purpose

The College of Direct Support is committed to ongoing evaluation of the quality of its curriculum, its ease of use to learners, the usefulness of its human resource functions and its contributions to the lives of persons with disabilities.

A wide range of quantitative and qualitative evaluation activities are being undertaken to provide this information. The Evaluation Brief provides a sampling of findings from CDS data collection activities occurring at the national, state, agency and individual levels. If you have questions about, suggestions for, or requests of the College of Direct Support in the area of evaluation, please let us know at: [lakin001@umn.edu](mailto:lakin001@umn.edu)

### People are saying that...

"Implicit in our efforts to increase recognition and value the critical work done by direct support professionals is the need for life-long learning and development. The College of Direct Support is an excellent example of how to serve that need in a creative, flexible and cost-effective manner."

--Renee Pietrangelo, Ph.D.,  
Chief Executive Officer,  
American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR)

The College of Direct Support (CDS) Wisconsin Pilot Project began in 2008 with the goal of providing Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) with training that would help people with developmental disabilities have stable, well-trained, competent and confident DSPs. This pilot project is a collaboration of the Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD) (formerly the Wisconsin Council on Developmental Disabilities) in partnership with the University of Wisconsin Madison Waisman Center and the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Center for Career Development and Employability Training (CCDET). This team initiated a Direct Service Workforce Training Initiative using CDS.

The pilot began with 12 agencies; 8 direct-care agencies currently are participating. Agency administrators were trained from March through May 2008. Agency DSPs were trained by agency administrators starting in March 2008 and continuing through today as needed. The learners were surveyed after taking at least one CDS online lesson at one of two time points: from July to August (referred to as the August 2008 survey) or from October to December (referred to as the December 2008 survey).

There are many effective ways to ensure that DSPs complete their training. One way is to provide computer time within the DSPs' work schedules at the agency. This allows DSPs to work

**Table 1. Wisconsin CDS Training Experience Survey Items and Results from Aug. 2008 & Dec. 2008**

<i>Item</i>	<i>Agree/Strongly Agree August 2008</i>	<i>Agree/Strongly Agree December 2008</i>
The CDS prepared me to complete my specific job responsibilities.	60.0%	86.3%
The CDS helped me develop skills in interacting with the people I support.	80.5%	86.4%
The CDS helped me improve the quality of life of the people I support.	82.8%	81.9%
The CDS provided information I need to perform my job.	78.0%	91.0%
The CDS has been worthwhile.	80.3%	90.9%
The CDS sparked my interest.	73.1%	86.4%
The CDS was offered at a time that made it easy for me to attend.	85.2%	81.8%
The CDS offered an opportunity for me to share my experiences.	36.6%	50.0%
The CDS was tailored to meet my learning style (the way I learn best).	61.0%	72.7%
The CDS allowed me to test out of training on skills I already had.	63.4%	68.2%
The CDS was delivered at a comfortable pace so I could understand the content.	83.0%	95.5%
The CDS inspired me to begin or continue my career as a direct support professional.	67.5%	72.8%
The CDS gave me a chance to have my questions answered.	61.0%	59.1%

The College of Direct Support is an internet-delivered multimedia, competency-based training curriculum for direct support professionals and frontline supervisors supporting individuals with disabilities. The College of Direct Support is available for review at <http://collegeofdirectsupport.com>. For more information about the College of Direct Support write Bill Tapp ([bill@collegeofdirectsupport.com](mailto:bill@collegeofdirectsupport.com)) or Donna Kosak ([donna@collegeofdirectsupport.com](mailto:donna@collegeofdirectsupport.com)) or call the College of Direct Support (toll-free) at 877-353-2767. The College of Direct Support is a program of MC Strategies/Elsevier and the University of Minnesota

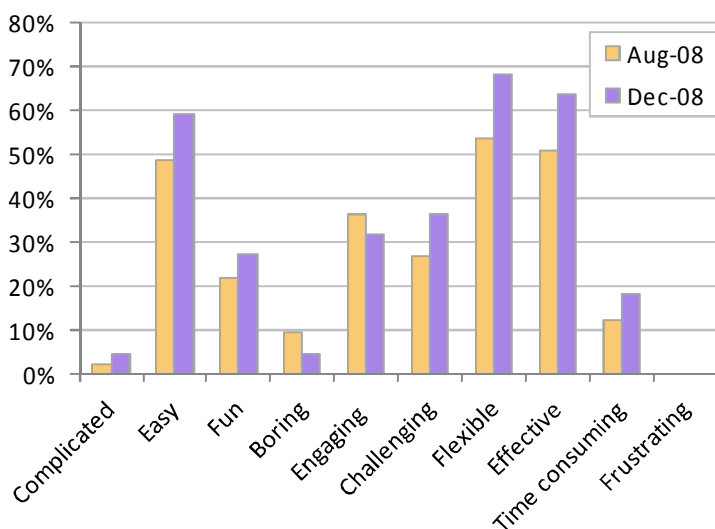
on an agency computer and helps them find the time to complete their assigned lessons. Another way is for DSPs to use their home computers to complete their lessons on their own time, with compensation from the agency (usually 45 to 60 minutes per lesson). Varying these approaches to training (either in-agency or out-of-agency), such as was done in this pilot project, provides flexibility for learners and their different learning styles.

Online surveys were assigned after learners completed at least one lesson in the Direct Support Professionalism course. Forty-one learners completed the August 2008 survey, and 22 learners completed the December 2008 survey. The Agree/Strongly Agree responses were tallied together. The statistics presented on Table 1 highlight the experiences of DSPs with respect to their use of the CDS training curriculum.

Table 1 suggests that CDS training has value and generally is well received by DSPs completing training. It appears that DSPs are adding to their knowledge base at a comfortable pace, while being kept engaged. The CDS training afforded them the opportunity to tailor their training to meet their needs and facilitated an improvement of skills needed to interact and improve the lives of those they support.

The Wisconsin Pilot Project also assessed DSPs' perception of the CDS program by asking them to describe their experiences. As viewed on Chart 1, most DSPs felt that the Internet-based multimedia training was easy, flexible, and effective. A moderate amount of DSPs felt that the training was fun, engaging and challenging. A small percent thought the CDS training was complicated, boring, or time consuming. Finally,

### Multimedia Training



no one surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that the training provided a frustrating experience.

Not only do learners enjoy the lessons, but they also feel there is some or a lot of improvement in their direct support skills (53.6% in August 2008 and 59.1% in December 2008) as a result of taking the CDS online lessons. There is also an overwhelming positive response regarding the learners' satisfaction with their direct support positions. Both the August 2008 and December 2008 Agree/Strongly Agree responses were at 100%. Job satisfaction was rated at 89.7% in August 2008 and at 100% in December 2008.

It also is important to note that most learners are likely or very likely (77.7% in August 2008 and 81.1% in December 2008) to recommend the CDS online trainings to others in their field.

The results of these surveys show that CDS online training is successful in the Wisconsin Pilot Project, resulting in competent and confident DSPs who enjoy their jobs. The project's results reflect a stable and capable workforce that is providing positive outcomes for people with developmental disabilities.

In the next phase of the CDS Wisconsin Pilot Project, there are plans to include additional online topics and courses, develop additional surveys, and conduct regional meetings to gather feedback from consumers and parent/guardians.

*For more information regarding this article or The College of Direct Support (CDS) Wisconsin Pilot Project, please contact Susan Hegedus (hegeduss@uwosh.edu, 920-424-0977) or Debra Hogue (hogue@uwosh.edu, 920-424-2419).*