

Department of Mental Health

Direct Care Series Realignment

Who are Direct Care Workers?

Direct Care Staff are the front line staff who assist and support the people served by the Department of Mental Health with all of their daily life activities. Direct Care Staff participate in extensive training to develop their behavior management and crisis intervention skills. These skills are necessary to safely assist individuals with de-escalation of agitated and aggressive behaviors that are sometimes associated with mental illnesses and intellectual disabilities.

Why is a realignment for these positions needed?

Direct Care Staff play an integral part in the safe provision of quality care. Other mental health clinicians would not be able to adequately perform their duties without the unique skill set, knowledge base, and contribution of direct care workers.

Currently, an entry level Direct Care Trainee earns \$7.64 a hour, and while often times they find great personal and professional satisfaction in the work they do assisting others, they are not paid enough to support themselves and their families.

A vast majority of Direct Care Staff must work two or even three jobs, often working 60-70 hours per week, just to piece together a living wage.

What is the turnover rate?

Direct Care Staff are the employees with the highest rate of turnover in state government. According to the Mississippi State Personnel Board, in FY15 turnover in Direct Care Trainee and Worker positions was approximately 48%. The training required for these positions is much greater than for similarly paid positions in the private sector, making turnover costs that much more expensive.

This turnover rate results in increased costs for DMH. Turnover costs for Direct Care Staff training are \$2,300 - \$2,600 for each Certified Nurse Assistant or DCW.

Direct Care Staff bear a significant level of responsibility for maintaining a safe and therapeutic environment that facilitates recovery and enhances independence in living, learning, and working. Their service and dedication is exemplary and they make a difference in the lives of those they serve every day.

Position	Current Start Salary	Current Hourly	Realignment	Proposed New Start Salary	Proposed New Hourly
Direct Care Worker Trainee	\$15,898.24	\$7.64	\$2,384.74	\$18,282.98	\$8.79
Direct Care Worker	\$17,408.94	\$8.37	\$2,611.34	\$20,020.28	\$9.63