PA Children’s Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities Services

Realistic Job Profile
Direct Support Professional
Residential Treatment Programs
Devereux’s Mission Statement

Devereux changes lives and nurtures human potential. We inspire hope, ensure well-being and promote meaningful life choices.
Our mission is achieved through a wide range of services and supports for individuals and their families.
Core Values

We support a respectful and integrated team approach.
We foster personal and professional growth of our staff.
We develop innovative and effective solutions.
We partner with families and communities.
Role of a Direct Support Professional

The role of a Direct Support Professional is to assist in the planning and implementation of residential program services for assigned clients. The DSP provides supervision of clients in program activities, on and off facility grounds and assists in maintaining a safe and therapeutic treatment environment that meets the physical, emotional, and personal needs of the clients. The DSP directly supports and facilitates individual and group interventions and therapeutic activities, including but not limited to activities of daily living, life skills and social skills, per treatment plans and program expectations. The DSP also provides transportation for clients, families, or others as assigned.
Residential Treatment

Our Residential Treatment programs are a place where children and adolescents experiencing intellectual and developmental delays live, attend school, receive intense psychiatric, behavior management, medical and social services. We have programs for children ranging in age from 8 to 21 years old.

Our main residential program is located in West Chester, PA. We have additional satellite campus programs in the surrounding Chester County area.
What kinds of children are admitted to PA Children’s IDD Programs?

PA Children’s IDD provides services to children that have a wide range of issues. As a Direct Support Professional, you may be working with clients who:

- Experience delays in cognitive development; communication; social or emotional development; or adaptive [behavioral] development.
- Engage in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences.
- Experience speech, language and communication impairments
Down syndrome is a genetic condition that causes delays in physical and intellectual development. Most children with Down syndrome have mild to moderate impairments but it is important to note that they are more like other children than they are different. Early Intervention services include physical, speech and developmental therapies.

Many children with Down syndrome have health complications beyond the usual childhood illnesses. Approximately 40% of the children have congenital heart defects. Children with Down syndrome have a higher incidence of infection, respiratory, vision and hearing problems as well as thyroid and other medical conditions.
Developmental disabilities are usually classified as severe, profound, moderate or mild, as assessed by the individual's need for supports, which may be lifelong.

Generally, persons in the mild category may be able to live independently and participate in life-long employment.

Moderate category persons will, most often, need varying levels of support from their families or from community agencies.

The profound and severe category individuals are more likely to have very high levels of dependence with many requiring intensive supports as their mastery of activities of daily living (ADLs) is generally quite limited or non-existent. Significant medical complications, such as epileptic seizures, swallowing difficulties, speech impairments, ambulation limitations, and a reduced life expectancy are more likely for persons in the profound impairment category.
Pervasive Development Disabilities

The diagnostic category of pervasive developmental disorders (PDD) refers to a group of disorders characterized by delays in the development of socialization and communication skills.

Symptoms may include problems with using and understanding language; difficulty relating to people, objects, and events; unusual play with toys and other objects; difficulty with changes in routine or familiar surroundings, and repetitive body movements or behavior patterns.

Autism is the most characteristic and best studied PDD. Other types of PDD include Asperger's Syndrome, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, and Rett's Syndrome. Children with PDD vary widely in abilities, intelligence, and behaviors. Some children do not speak at all, others speak in limited phrases or conversations, and some have relatively normal language development.
Characteristics of PDD

As a Direct Support Professional, you will be working with children who may experience some of the following:

Unusual social development characterized by:
• Less eye contact
• Approach others spontaneously
• Imitate and respond to emotions
• Respond non-verbally

Rapetitive or restrictive behaviors such as:
• Hand flapping, making sounds, head rolling or body rocking
• Arranging objects
• Resistance to change IE: furniture moved
• Limited interest and focus IE: same TV show or toy
• Self Injury IE: head banging, hand biting, skin picking

Limited development in natural speech to meet an individuals daily communication needs.
• Babbling
• Unusually gestures
• Diminished responsiveness
• Repeat other’s words
Clinical Team

When a child or adolescent is admitted to one of our residential programs, they are assigned a Clinical Team.

The client’s Clinical Team works with the client and their families to deal with clinical, behavioral and psychological issues and the management of their symptoms.

As a Direct Support Professional, you will need to be able to share information about the clients with their therapists. You will follow through with recommendations and tools that the therapist has identified to aid the clients with their clinical issues.
Educational Programs

Our school programs are licensed by the PA Department of Education as Private Academic Schools. The clients attend school during the day and return to their residential programs around 4:00 pm M-F.
Residential Programming

In addition to the psychiatric and educational services provided to our clients, a large part of our programs is practicing socializing, learn how to use “down” time appropriately and structured activities to encourage health and wellness. This is a large piece of what a Direct Support Professional is responsible to do with our clients.
Direct Support Professional work schedules and shifts

Residential Treatment programs are staffed 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. The clients are constantly supervised. As a result, we have three (3) shifts available for an individual to work as a Direct Support Professional.

Those three shifts are:

- ✓ 7am-3pm - 1st shift
- ✓ 3pm-11pm - 2nd shift
- ✓ 11pm-7am - 3rd shift

Most Direct Support position have an every other weekend requirement built into the schedule and a day off during the week.
What exactly does a Direct Support Professional do?

Depending on which shift you work, your role and job functions will differ.

- The 7-3pm shift during weekdays will be in the school programs with the clients.
- The 3-11pm shift is in the residential program and buildings with the clients.
- The 11pm-7am overnight shift is when the clients are asleep.
7am-3pm Direct Support Professional

During school days, your typical day will look something like this:

- 7am-wake clients up and assist them in beginning their morning hygiene routine
- 8:15am-help serve breakfast in the unit’s instructional kitchen
- 9am-walk to school with the clients
- During the school hours, Direct Support Professionals are assigned to a classroom to support the classroom teacher (assists with classroom management & accountability), you are also responsible for completing behavior reports, eat lunch with the clients, etc.
- 3pm-Transition back to the unit and share information with oncoming 3-11pm shift

At sometime during or after your shift is complete, you need to document in each client’s medical chart their daily progress.
7am-3pm
Weekend shifts

On the weekends, your shift will be completely different on 7am-3pm. The clients can sleep later and breakfast is served later on the weekends.

During the weekend day shift, you will be involved in recreational activities with the clients, off campus trips, driving clients home or to bus stations for home visits and encouraging active participation & socialization.
The 3pm-11pm shift is known as the “toughest” shift to work. It is for this reason that we need to ensure the program structure is maintained. Direct Support Professionals must be committed to providing appropriate supervision of our clients.

You would be responsible to actively assist your assigned clients in the participation, involvement and routine of their program. Including:

- Personal hygiene
- Chores & room care
- Meals
- Medication times
- Recreation activities
- Peer interactions & socialization
- Working on their residential goals
3-11pm shift structure

The shifts structure goes something like this:

4pm-Transition (walk with your clients) back to the residence buildings where the clients live.

Once you are back to the building-conduct a community meeting that allows clients to discuss community issues, review the schedule for the evening and air any differences or concerns appropriately.

5pm-Eat dinner with your clients
6pm-Conduct a recreational activities with clients
7pm-Conduct a therapeutic activities with clients-ie: self esteem, anger management, etc.
8pm-Begin evening hygiene routine.
11pm-7am Direct Support Professionals

The 11pm-7am shift (sometimes 10:30pm-8:30am, working 4 ten hour nights), is the shift that is mainly responsible for the supervision of the clients during sleep hours. This shift is responsible for physically checking each client every 15 minutes during the overnight hours-this check includes a facial check of each specific client. In addition to client supervision, overnight staff have other responsibilities as well. These could include:

- Data entry of client’s point sheets into a computer program
- Auditing progress notes of other DSP’s
- Waking clients who have toileting issues to use the bathroom
- Assist with waking the clients and getting them ready for breakfast and school

Devereux
Inspiring hope. Empowering lives.
Morning Routines & Hygiene

A Direct Support Professional assists clients in learning to follow routines including waking in the morning and taking care of personal hygiene tasks.

This means you may have to help clients with tasks such as brushing their teeth, toileting, dressing, eating, etc.
Leading Activities

Direct Support Professionals are responsible to be creative and follow a structure activity schedule with the clients. You will be expected to encourage, praise and model participation in productive and positive recreational activities.

You will also be expected to have discussions with clients that revolve around appropriate social interactions, practicing taking turns and working as a team member.
Meal times

Staff are required to eat with their assigned clients during meal time. As a DSP you may be assisting the clients in helping them eat their meals.

This is a perfect opportunity to become involved in discussions, practice social skills and to develop a influential relationship with them.
Behavior Management

Another primary responsibilities of a Direct Support Professional is to assist our clients in learning alternative behaviors and coping skills.

By using the techniques and methods learned in orientation, you provide clients with tools and skills that will assist them in exhibiting positive behaviors and making good choices.
Communication

The term "communication disorders" encompasses a wide variety of problems in language, speech, and hearing. Speech and language impairments include articulation problems, voice disorders, fluency problems (such as stuttering), aphasia (difficulty in using words, usually as a result of a brain injury), and delays in speech and/or language. Many communication disorders result from other conditions such as learning disabilities, cerebral palsy, intellectual and developmental delays.

As a Direct Support Professional, you may be required to use a variety of tools to assist you in communicating with your assigned clients, for example using a picture board.
A picture exchange communication system (PECS) is a form of alternative communication that uses pictures instead of words to help children communicate. PECS is designed especially for children with autism who have delays in speech development.

When first learning to use PECS, the child is given a set of pictures of favorite foods or toys. When the child wants one of these items, he gives the picture to a communication partner (DSP). The DSP then hands the child the food or toy. This exchange reinforces communication.

PECS can also be used to make comments about things seen or heard in the environment. For example, a child might see an airplane overhead and had a picture of an airplane to his or her DSP. As the child begins to understand the usefulness of the communication, the hope is that he will begin to use natural speech.
Supervision

Supervision means knowing the whereabouts of the clients assigned to you at all times. Many of the clients in our programs will have NO AWARENESS OF DANGER. It is imperative that we provide constant supervision to ensure safety at all times.

Some examples of dangerous behavior you need to be aware of with your assigned clients could include: walking in front of vehicles, eating inedible items, etc.

Some ways to maintain effective supervision of your client will include:

*Following the activity/program schedule.
*Having knowledge of plans & procedures in the event of emergency or disruptions.
*Your assigned clients always being within your eyesight during all transitions.
*Maintain undivided focus on your clients.
Documentation

Reading and writing skills are used a great deal in the position of Direct Support Professional. This position depends on communication and sharing information through e-mail and written documents.

Another essential job function includes writing progress notes in the client’s medical charts after each shift that you work. This progress note includes information about the client’s behavior and what they did throughout the shift that you were assigned to them.

Additionally, you will be required to document on incident reports, legal documents, complete daily data charts and complete tests associated with training requirements.
Driving and Transporting

Direct Support Professionals may be required to drive Devereux vehicles and transport clients to destinations such as:

- Home
- 30th St. Station in Philadelphia
- Train stations
- Off Campus Trips & Parks
- Doctor’s Appointments

There are strict guidelines associated with an individual’s ability to drive Devereux vehicles. You must have a safe driving record. As part of the pre-employment process, your driving record is checked with the Department of Transportation.
Safe & Positive Approaches to Crisis Prevention & Intervention

**Philosophy Statements**

We believe that treatment begins within the confines of a compassionate and caring environment, which protects the rights of the individuals served as well as those of their staff and treatment peer group.

Ensuring that an individual receives the most appropriate and humane treatment services in the least restrictive environment is the first priority of a therapeutic program.
Our Approach to Creating a Culture of Caring

Create a safe, structured, predictable environment by way of activities and routines amidst calm compassionate staff members who are attuned to underlying affect instead of behavior and who increase their use of praise and reinforcement.

*(Bennington-Davis & Bloom, 2007)*
Dealing with aggressive clients

As a Direct Support Professional, you may have to deal with a client who becomes aggressive, both verbally and physically.

We feel strongly that most physical confrontation situations can be avoided through staff’s skillful verbal management along with positive, proactive programming. We recognize, however, that there are times when an individual’s behavior becomes assaultive, self-injurious or destructive to the point where physical intervention is necessary.
Use of Physical Interventions

Our use of physical intervention/restrictive procedures is limited exclusively to situations in which an individual poses a real and significant threat to the safety and welfare of him/herself and/or others.

Such procedures are used only as a last resort, when other less restrictive interventions are not appropriate or effective.

The DSP will be responsible to communicate to supervisors all interventions that occur.
Our Philosophy of Care

The Three Core Principles:

1. Individualized Service Delivery
2. Effective/Accountable Service Delivery
3. Focus on Positive Approaches
Individualized Service Delivery is driven by the unique strengths, needs, potentials, realities and expectations of the individual client and his/her family.
Effective/Accountable Service Delivery

Effective/Accountable Service Delivery is a balanced approach to service delivery that seeks significant and practical treatment gains while taking into account the context in which services are being provided.
Focus on Positive Approaches represents an emphasis on skill building, relationship development, individual strengths, proactive or preventative intervention and the recognition that all individuals can change.
Things that are important to know about this job.

- Residential Treatment is a therapeutic, supportive and encouraging environment, not a punitive one where the clients are punished for negative behavior.
- Devereux expects staff to respect our clients, families and co-workers.
- Working with our clients can be very stressful. It is important that our staff do not personalize behaviors or comments made by our clients.
- We expect staff to maintain very strong professional boundaries with clients and families.
- The focus of your work day will revolve around the clients and their needs, not yours.
Sound like the position for you?

Being a Direct Support Professional at Devereux PA Children’s IDD Services is very rewarding. It is also an excellent entry level position to gain valuable experience and clinical knowledge that will prepare you for advanced positions within the Mental Health field.

To assist you in evaluating whether this would be a position for you, we ask that you answer the questions on the following page for yourself.
Ponder these questions......

1. How would you manage to remain calm and composed during a crisis with a client/clients?
2. Are you willing and able to work overtime and possibly stay at the facility during inclement weather?
3. Would you feel comfortable addressing and ensuring the hygiene needs of a client are met? What if they refuse or are unwilling?
4. Would you be able to address sexually inappropriate behaviors of a client who is under your supervision?
5. Do you like kids? Are you sure?
6. Have you ever been called names and how did you manage to remain composed and focused while being insulted?
7. How do you behave under high stress times and are you able to meet the needs of others while under stress and pressure?
8. Can you maintain professional boundaries and not overstep your professional role with clients and families?
Thank You....

For considering Devereux PA Children’s Behavioral Health Services as an employer. We hope that your experience with us is a positive one.

Please check out all of our employment opportunities by visiting www.Devereux.org