

RPMI PROFESSIONAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

Direct Support Professional Certificate Program

(DSP-CP)

Catalog-Ready Curriculum Document

Aligned with DDS and CMS person-centered, residential, and HCBS workforce expectations

Issuing Institution	Residential Program Management Institute (RPMI)
Credential Awarded	RPMI Certified Direct Support Professional (RCDSP)
Recommended Contact Hours	40 Hours
Delivery Format	Blended learning with LMS-based delivery and optional facilitation

Prepared for institutional catalog, onboarding, and workforce certification use



Formal Course Description

The Direct Support Professional Certificate Program prepares frontline staff to provide safe, person-centered, rights-based, and professionally accountable support to individuals receiving services in residential and home and community-based settings. The curriculum emphasizes the essential competencies required of Direct Support Professionals, including daily support practice, health and safety awareness, documentation, behavior support, abuse prevention, communication, ethics, and person-centered service implementation.

This certificate is designed for newly hired DSPs, incumbent staff requiring structured competency development, and organizations seeking a standardized training framework consistent with DDS-informed service expectations and CMS-aligned home and community-based service principles. The curriculum is practice-oriented and focused on the everyday responsibilities of DSPs who support individuals with activities of daily living, community participation, personal autonomy, wellness, and safety.

The program positions the DSP role as a professional discipline requiring skill, judgment, reliability, compassion, policy adherence, and a strong commitment to dignity, inclusion, and quality of life.

Program Profile

Program	Direct Support Professional Certificate Program (DSP-CP)
Credential	RPMI Certified Direct Support Professional (RCDSP)
Program Type	Foundational workforce certificate for frontline DSP staff
Format	Blended: SCORM-based LMS with optional facilitated instruction
Recommended Length	40 contact hours
Target Audience	New hires, incumbent DSPs, and frontline direct support staff
Primary Use	Onboarding, standardization, foundational certification, compliance readiness

Program Purpose	Prepare frontline Direct Support Professionals to deliver safe, person-centered, rights-based, and professionally accountable support in residential and community-based settings.
Instructional Level	Entry-level to early-career frontline staff
Assessment	Module quizzes, applied exercises, documentation practice, and final examination
Certification Standard	Minimum 75 percent cumulative score and completion of all required components

Program Goals

- Deliver support in a person-centered manner that respects dignity, autonomy, privacy, and informed choice.
- Demonstrate understanding of the DSP role, scope, and professional responsibilities.
- Support health, safety, hygiene, nutrition, and daily living activities in accordance with policy and best practice.
- Recognize, prevent, and report abuse, neglect, exploitation, incidents, and rights concerns.

- Complete documentation accurately, objectively, and in a timely manner.
- Use basic behavioral support and de-escalation strategies safely and appropriately.
- Communicate effectively with individuals, coworkers, families, and supervisors.
- Uphold ethical standards, professional boundaries, and cultural responsiveness in daily service delivery.

Credit and Contact Hour Table		
Module	Title	Hours
1	Foundations of the DSP Role	4
2	Person-Centered Support and Human Rights	8
3	Health, Safety, and Daily Living Support	10
4	Documentation, Reporting, and Confidentiality	6
5	Behavioral Support and Crisis Response	8
6	Professionalism, Communication, and Workplace Practice	4
	Total Program Contact Hours	40

Module 1. Foundations of the DSP Role

Contact Hours: 4

Module Description: Introduces learners to the role of the Direct Support Professional within residential and community-based services and establishes expectations for scope, accountability, and teamwork.

Topics Covered

- Overview of direct support services
- Residential and community-based service settings
- Role and responsibilities of the DSP
- Scope of practice and role limitations
- Working under supervision
- Team-based support environments
- Introduction to person-centered service delivery
- Reliability, accountability, and workplace expectations

Learning Objectives

- Define the role of the Direct Support Professional in human services settings.
- Identify the primary responsibilities of frontline support staff.
- Distinguish between appropriate DSP duties and duties requiring supervisory, clinical, or licensed staff.
- Describe how DSPs contribute to safety, dignity, independence, and quality of life.
- Recognize the importance of attendance, punctuality, follow-through, and role accountability.

Assessment

- Module quiz
- Scenario-based questions

Module 2. Person-Centered Support and Human Rights

Contact Hours: 8

Module Description: Prepares DSPs to support individuals in ways that honor personal choice, dignity, privacy, cultural identity, and community participation while protecting rights and promoting self-determination.

Topics Covered

- Principles of person-centered thinking
- Choice, preference, and self-determination
- Supporting independence without over-assisting
- Privacy, dignity, and respect in daily care
- Community inclusion and meaningful participation
- Individual service planning and DSP implementation responsibilities
- Human and civil rights in support settings
- Recognizing and preventing abuse, neglect, and exploitation
- Mandated reporting fundamentals
- Cultural responsiveness and respectful support

Learning Objectives

- Explain the principles of person-centered support.
- Demonstrate how to respect choice, independence, and dignity in daily interactions.
- Identify the DSP role in carrying out individual support plans.
- Recognize signs of abuse, neglect, mistreatment, and exploitation.
- Describe required actions when rights violations or safety concerns are observed.
- Support community participation in a respectful and individualized manner.
- Provide culturally responsive support that respects the individual's background, preferences, and identity.

Assessment

- Module quiz
- Applied case analysis

Module 3. Health, Safety, and Daily Living Support

Contact Hours: 10

Module Description: Builds practical knowledge required to support health, wellness, safety, and activities of daily living in residential and community settings, with emphasis on observation, prevention, and safe response.

Topics Covered

- Supporting activities of daily living
- Hygiene, grooming, toileting, dressing, and mobility assistance

- Nutrition, hydration, and mealtime support
- Housekeeping and environmental safety
- Infection prevention and control
- Standard precautions and illness awareness
- Basic health observation and reporting
- Emergency preparedness and response
- Fire safety and evacuation procedures
- Fall prevention and home safety awareness
- Medication awareness and role limitations
- Safe supervision practices

Learning Objectives

- Support daily living activities in a respectful and safe manner.
- Identify common health and environmental risks in service settings.
- Apply infection prevention and basic sanitation practices appropriately.
- Observe and report changes in condition, health concerns, or safety issues.
- Explain the DSP role during emergencies and evacuations.
- Maintain a safe, clean, and supportive environment.
- Recognize boundaries regarding medication-related responsibilities.

Assessment

- Module quiz
- Safety-based scenario exercise
- Optional supervisor skills checklist

Module 4. Documentation, Reporting, and Confidentiality

Contact Hours: 6

Module Description: Trains DSPs to create accurate documentation, communicate important information appropriately, and uphold confidentiality requirements as part of continuity of care and compliance.

Topics Covered

- Why documentation matters
- Progress notes and service documentation
- Objective versus subjective writing
- Describing observations clearly and accurately
- Incident reporting basics
- Reporting timelines and escalation expectations
- Confidentiality and privacy in practice
- HIPAA-informed awareness
- Verbal, written, and electronic communication standards
- Common documentation errors and risks

Learning Objectives

- Write objective, factual, and timely documentation.
- Distinguish between observation, opinion, and inappropriate narrative language.
- Describe the purpose of incident reporting and the DSP role in reporting.
- Protect confidential information in daily practice.
- Recognize documentation errors that can affect care quality or compliance.
- Communicate service-related information in a professional and policy-consistent manner.

Assessment

- Module quiz
- Written documentation exercise

Module 5. Behavioral Support and Crisis Response**Contact Hours: 8**

Module Description: Provides DSPs with foundational tools for understanding behavior, supporting individuals with behavioral needs, responding to escalation safely, and following approved crisis response procedures.

Topics Covered

- Understanding the purpose and context of behavior
- ABC model and behavioral observation
- Positive behavior support principles
- Following behavior support plans
- Prevention strategies and supportive routines
- Trauma-informed care concepts
- Communication during distress or escalation
- De-escalation techniques
- Safety awareness during crisis situations
- When and how to seek assistance
- Post-incident reporting and follow-up

Learning Objectives

- Explain basic principles related to behavior and behavioral support.
- Recognize triggers, patterns, and environmental contributors to behavior.
- Implement simple proactive support strategies consistent with approved plans.
- Use respectful de-escalation techniques during periods of distress.
- Respond appropriately and safely during crisis situations.
- Identify when supervisory or emergency support is required.
- Document behavioral incidents in an objective and professional manner.

Assessment

- Module quiz
- Applied behavioral support scenario

Module 6. Professionalism, Communication, and Workplace Practice

Contact Hours: 4

Module Description: Reinforces the professional standards expected of DSPs, including ethical conduct, role boundaries, teamwork, communication, cultural responsiveness, and responsible workplace behavior.

Topics Covered

- Professional conduct in direct support settings
- Ethics and duty of care
- Workplace reliability and accountability
- Professional boundaries
- Respectful communication with individuals and families
- Communication across shifts and with supervisors
- Team collaboration and problem escalation
- Cultural responsiveness and inclusive interaction
- Conflict management and professional behavior under stress

Learning Objectives

- Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior in direct support practice.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries with individuals, families, and coworkers.
- Communicate respectfully and effectively across workplace relationships.
- Participate appropriately in team communication and shift-to-shift continuity.
- Apply culturally responsive and inclusive approaches in service delivery.
- Recognize how professionalism affects safety, trust, and service quality.

Assessment

- Module quiz
- Professional judgment scenario

Assessment and Certification Standards

Formative assessment includes module quizzes, short-answer scenarios, knowledge checks, reflection prompts, and practice documentation assignments. The recommended minimum passing score per module is 70 percent.

Summative assessment includes a comprehensive final examination and a multi-domain applied case or scenario assessment. The recommended program completion threshold is 75 percent overall.

To earn the credential RPMI Certified Direct Support Professional (RCDSP), participants must complete all required modules, complete all assigned learning activities, achieve a passing score on module assessments, pass the final examination, and meet participation expectations for any instructor-led component, where applicable.

Institutional Notes and Quality Alignment

- This curriculum is intended to support onboarding, workforce standardization, foundational certification, and compliance readiness.
- Completion of this curriculum does not replace state-specific mandated certifications, clinical licenses, medication administration authorizations, or agency-specific policy training that may also be required.
- The curriculum should be reviewed periodically and adapted to agency policy, state requirements, payer expectations, and quality assurance findings.
- Organizations may add workplace validation tools such as supervisor observation checklists, documentation quality review, and incident reporting validation to strengthen implementation.