

## **Workforce:** How do we ensure there is a quality workforce available to provide care?

Washington faces a critical shortage of professionals with the experience and training necessary to support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). This shortage affects all systems, including:

Behavioral health, childcare, education, respite, Early Supports for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT), local community programs, mental health, and residential services

### **The Impact of Workforce Shortages**

Without a sufficient workforce, individuals with I/DD face significant challenges in accessing the care they need. A lack of trained providers can lead to crises, forcing individuals into emergency rooms, jails, or other inappropriate settings—resulting in higher costs and inadequate care.

To prevent these crises, Washington must **invest in training, recruitment, and retention strategies** that build a strong, well-compensated workforce capable of supporting individuals with I/DD in their communities.

### **What is Needed**

**Competitive Medicaid Rates:** Individuals with I/DD frequently rely on Medicaid for their services. We need to ensure that Medicaid rates are adequate to keep networks robust, make sure that providers have regular cost-of-living increases, and that we don't have service provider deserts.

**A Strong Specialized Workforce:** We need a plan to invest in an adequate network of well-paid providers and therapists who are specifically trained to work with individuals with I/DD, especially those with challenging support requirements and rates that reflect the needs of individuals with higher support needs.

**Expand Access to Experienced Providers:** It is essential to develop and provide access to experienced providers who understand and can properly treat individuals with I/DD, especially those who have dual diagnoses. We need to ensure that providers' training and experience are adequately compensated. We need to strengthen education and workforce development programs to create a **pipeline of qualified professionals**.

### **The Path Forward**

Addressing Washington's workforce crisis requires **proactive investment** in training, wages, and workforce development. By strengthening provider networks and ensuring competitive compensation, we can build a system that delivers **quality, consistent care**—allowing individuals with I/DD to live and thrive in their communities.

### **What to Watch for This Session**

[Increased rates for Supported Living](#)

[Tiered rates for respite](#)