



Arkansas Support Network

Supporting Choices and Opportunities for
Individuals with Disabilities and their Families

SINCE 1988

Announcement: Agency-Wide Initiative to Reduce Overtime at Arkansas Support Network

Dear ASN Community,

As we reflect on the challenges faced during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to acknowledge how Arkansas Support Network (ASN) depended on overtime to safeguard the health of our employees and the individuals we support. Extending shifts and increasing overtime allowed us to reduce the number of Direct Support Professionals going in and out of the homes of the people we support every day and removing additional points of virus exposure and spread. It was an important step at a critical time, and we're proud to have supported so many people through it. During this critical time, ASN was able to access federal relief dollars through the Arkansas CARES Act Steering Committee, which provided essential financial resources to cover the increased costs associated with necessary overtime payments. These relief dollars were essential in providing the funding necessary because the reimbursement rates provided by Arkansas PASSEs do not cover the cost of overtime reimbursements.

Since the onset of the pandemic, neither the State of Arkansas nor the PASSEs have made meaningful adjustments to Supported Living rates. PASSEs are still paying the same rates for services that they were paying prior to the pandemic, leaving ASN and other disability providers with no ability to pay more to Direct Support Professionals, despite drastic increases in all competing industries. Consequently, we continue to experience escalating workforce challenges, leading to a steady increase in overtime hours at ASN, even as the peak of the pandemic has passed. With the federal relief funding now exhausted, our organization no longer has the financial resources to sustain current levels of overtime spending.

In response to these ongoing issues, ASN has established an Overtime (OT) Taskforce. This taskforce brings together a diverse group of stakeholders from across the organization to collaborate on identifying and implementing tailored solutions aimed at alleviating excessive overtime costs. These efforts are essential to the sustainability of ASN and will have a significant impact on all aspects of our agency's operations.

ASN is committed to continuing to offer individualized, community-based supports that allow people with disabilities to live meaningful and empowered lives in their communities. We will continue to resist the drive toward segregated, congregate services that require people with disabilities to give up the opportunity to be active and included members of their communities. We reject the provider business model that forces restricted lives and mandates group living. However, for the agency to continue to provide supports in line with our mission, vision, and values, we must find solutions to reduce our reliance on overtime. We invite all stakeholders to actively participate in the critical work of developing innovations and finding solutions. Together, we can ensure that ASN continues to fulfill its mission supporting over 500 individuals across the state, empowering them to live their chosen lives in their preferred homes and communities.

If you have questions or comments regarding our initiative to reduce overtime, please reach out at sevans@supports.org.

Thank you,

Dr. Syard Evans

CEO, Arkansas Support Network