



2025 METRO REGIONAL QUALITY COUNCIL EMPLOYMENT SERVICES SURVEY REPORT

Employment Workgroup project in partnership
with Hennepin and Dakota County.



This product was developed with the support of the Lead Agency Employment First Capacity Building Grant from the Minnesota Department of Human Services Disability Services Division.

Executive Summary

The surveys are a component of a bigger employment project the MRQC is implementing for 2025. The MRQC is part of The Arc Minnesota (The Arc MN) and is one of 4 Regional Quality Councils active throughout the state. We are a disability advocacy organization that implements projects to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities. One of our missions is to ensure people with disabilities continue to receive quality services.

Hennepin County is the recipient of a lead agency capacity building grant from the State of Minnesota – Disability Services Division. They are partnering with the MRQC on these surveys to support their work to increase competitive integrated employment for people with disabilities. They plan to use what they learn from partnerships with providers to address gaps in employment services in Hennepin County. Dakota County has a significant role as some employees sit on the MRQC, they also helped craft the surveys, provide relevant feedback, and distribute the survey to their partners.

The surveys were anonymous, and the data helped the council develop the following recommendations and potential policy steps around retaining employment services professionals and providers of employment services for people with disabilities.

There were 2 surveys created:

Employment Services Survey For Direct Support Professionals – aimed specifically at professionals who directly provide employment services to people with disabilities. The survey asked about barriers to completing their job duties, as well as satisfaction level of compensation and benefits.

Employment Services Survey For Provider Agencies – aimed specifically at leadership of provider agencies that serve individuals with disabilities and provide employment services. The survey asked about agency retention, barriers to maintaining staff, and services that the agency is not able to bill related to waiver services.

Employment Services Survey For Direct Support Professionals Results

Who we heard from?

- 30+ employment professionals surveyed between July–November 2025
- Work across Twin Cities metro and greater Minnesota
- Help people with disabilities explore employment and build careers
- Serve individuals and groups in one on one and community settings.

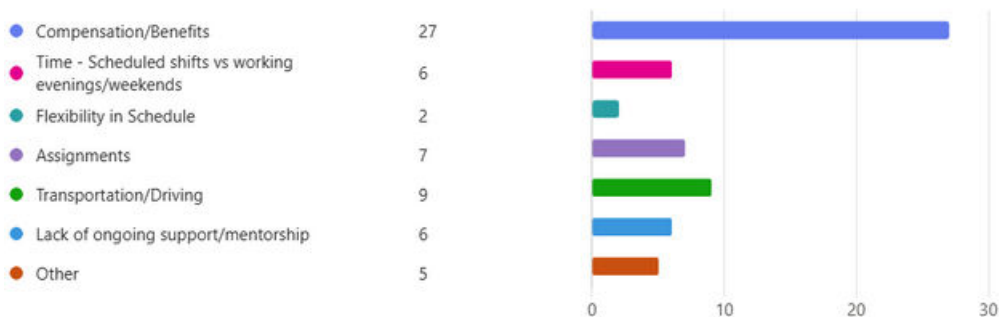
Pay Satisfaction



Staff rated pay satisfaction on a 1–5 scale. While some were satisfied (4–5 rating), many reported concerns:

- Workers after 30+ years still earning \$22–24/hour
- Requests for \$25/hour minimum common across response
- Low to no health, dental, or retirement benefits
- No paid mileage despite frequent driving requirements

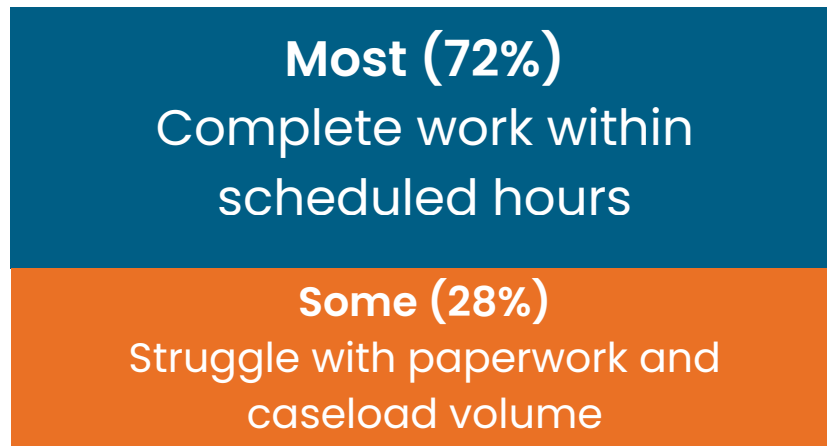
Long Term Barriers



- **(44%) Compensation & Benefits** – most cited barrier across all responses
- **(11%) Assignments & Paperwork** – Heavy documentation demands
- **(15%) Transportation & Driving** – Long distances, traffic, no mileage reimbursement
- **(3%) Schedule & Flexibility** – Evening/weekend work, limited time off
- **(10%) Isolation & Lack of Support** – Working alone in community, limited mentorship

Employment Services Survey For Direct Support Professionals Results (Cont'd)

Can Staff Complete Their Work on Time?



What Would Individuals Change About Their Job?



What Staff Are Saying:

"The majority of my coworkers have second jobs...in can be a very lonely job with not a lot of support."

"We should be getting health and dental insurance, PTO, and paid mileage."

"I love my job and the people, but I had to switch sites this year because of low wages and bad economy."

"Higher salary, more PTO/sick days, paid trainings"

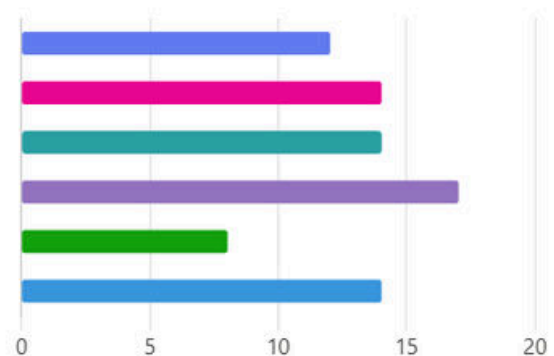
Employment Services Survey for Provider Agencies Results

Who we heard from?

- 28 responded between July–November 2025
- Types of respondents: nonprofit providers, sole-proprietor consultants, DACs/day programs, VRS-dually licensed agencies.
- Most serve multiple metro counties, with some rural regions and St. Croix, WI also represented.

Services Provided

• Employment exploration (helping people who are undecided about work make an...	12
• Employment Development – plan (helping somebody get ready to apply for a job –...	14
• Employment Development – find (apply for, interview for, and find a job)	14
• Employment Support Services (job coaching and job check-ins)	17
• VRS/dually licensed provider	8
• All of the above	14



Non-Billable Work & Funding Gaps

Common non-covered areas: transportation to job sites, travel between clients, intake/authorization work, and planning/documentation time.

Gap between VRS and waivers leads to **unpaid coordination and service interruptions.**

Interpreter costs for some VRS cases make those referrals financially unsustainable for many providers

Employment Services Survey for Provider Agencies Results (Cont'd)

Staff Retention

- Reported two-year retention ranges roughly from about 30% up to 100%, with many agencies around 70–90%.
- Low wages are the most frequently cited retention barrier; staff leave for higher-paying public sector or non-human-services jobs.
- Additional issues: burnout from difficult job development, limited advancement, and evening/weekend schedules.

Recruitment Challenges

Smaller applicant pool, fewer experienced candidates, difficulty competing with state/county pay and benefits.

Some providers report candidates failing background checks or lacking understanding of the job role.

Rural agencies emphasize low applicant volume and geographic isolation as major barriers.

“Our retention rate for Employment Development staff is not great. A big reason for that is that they get so burnt out, not making any movement with job placement. They are constantly hearing “no” and it is frustrating, discouraging, etc.”

“I think there is more education needed for employers on the benefits of hiring disabled people. As well as employers accepting someone who has a job coach.”

“Poor wages. Expensive benefits. Hours of employment – evenings, weekends, holidays required to support clients.

Client changing work schedules requiring changes in their hours worked. Inability to attract and retain talent / quality staff related to poor wages and lack of advancement opportunities.”

Employment Services Surveys Recommendations

- **Streamline waiver paperwork and authorizations;** reduce the VRS–waiver gap so providers are paid for coordination work. Many workers juggle multiple service types and heavy paperwork in the same role.
- **Explore grants or flexible funds** for intake, transportation, and rapid engagement while long-term funding is pending. System pressures (driving distances, caseload size, documentation) need structural solutions.
- **Support provider networking, shared job leads, and more training** in employment development/customized employment and benefits counseling
- **Investment in competitive pay, benefits, mentorship, and team support** could improve retention. Low wages, inadequate benefits, and isolation are driving experienced workers away.

Thank you!!

The Metro Regional Quality Council thanks our partners, Hennepin and Dakota County, for assisting in creating a meaningful survey. We also would like to thank those who took the time to take the survey and provide valuable responses that will help our work in advocating for employment services providers and agencies.

Any additional questions or feedback about the report or survey can be directed to the Metro Regional Quality Council Coordinator JoAnn Leppink (joannleppink@arcminnesota.org) or Associate Sophie Iverson (sophiaiverson@arcminnesota.org).