

## DIRECT SUPPORT Certificate Program

The Direct Support Certificate Program was created to support and enhance the careers of direct support staff in DDS and DDS-funded programs. The certificate program is a project of the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and the Massachusetts Community Colleges. This program includes community college courses in English, Human Services, Psychology, Developmental Disabilities, Special Topics in Intellectual Disabilities and related courses. At several of the colleges, some of these courses may be taken online. Students also complete a Field Placement, usually focusing on a special project at their current place of employment. The program includes 21-22 college credits. Many students complete the program in one year.



## CAREER FOCUSED

All of the courses in the Direct Support Certificate program focus on skills used by direct support workers in their work, such as, effective communication, facilitating community involvement, and supporting individuals in making choices and decisions. In the Special Topics course, students explore issues of health and safety, community inclusion, positive behavioral supports, and supporting individuals in making healthy choices and decisions. In the Field Placement seminar and other courses, faculty and students exchange ideas about issues that arise in their work, learn strategies to prevent burnout, and explore current trends in human services.

The entire program is based on the National Community Support Skill Standards, a set of skills and competencies used by outstanding direct support staff in their work. The National Community Support Skill Standards are woven into the academic courses so that each course provides an appropriate balance between academic and career skills.

## CHALLENGING ACCESSIBLE REWARDING

***The program is challenging:*** All courses are college-level and students are expected to complete outside reading and assignments for each class. Course credit successfully awarded through the Direct Support Certificate Program may be eligible to transfer to many of the community colleges in Massachusetts if students wish to continue beyond the certificate level. Students should work with their community college advisor to map out transfer options.

*“This program has allowed me to discover myself as a human service professional. I have gained confidence in my approach and abilities.”*

Middlesex Community College Student

***The program is accessible:*** Courses are scheduled at times most likely to meet the needs of working students, making it possible for direct support staff to fit the program into a busy week. This program is affordable because of support from DDS and its partnership with the community colleges. Many employers are able to manage the flexibility in scheduling that may be needed in order for the student to participate in the program.

*“The program gives employees self-confidence and renews their commitment to the people they serve. It provides an opportunity to network and share ideas with people from other agencies and instills within the students a sense of validation in their chosen profession.”*

Western Massachusetts Employer

***The program is very rewarding:*** Direct support workers enrolled in this program gain skills, knowledge, and inspiration that enhance and energize their careers in human services.

## WHAT STUDENTS SAY

### ABOUT THE PROGRAM

*The program has validated the work I do. It has been a personal uplift to my abilities as a human service worker.*

*The program has taken students upon a journey through all aspects of our lives and work. This program is one of the best things I've seen!*

*The teachers are very supportive and the students are very friendly.*

### ABOUT THE PROFESSION

*The most significant thing I have learned about my profession is that this is not just a job. I realize how important I am in the lives of the people I support.*

*This program has helped me understand how the field of human services has changed and how I fit in.*

### ABOUT MYSELF

*I have learned that I am smart and determined and capable of getting A's in college. I have more self-confidence now.*

*I've adjusted to fitting college into my life, my family is very supportive, and my children are helping out more.*

*I have gained self-confidence both professionally and personally in the areas I need to grow. It has been a great learning experience.*

The Direct Support Certificate Program is available at the following Community Colleges:

#### **BRISTOL COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Paul Correia (508) 678-2811 x 3765  
[paul.correia@bristolcc.edu](mailto:paul.correia@bristolcc.edu)

#### **HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Allison Hrovat (413) 552-2333  
[ahrovat@hcc.edu](mailto:ahrovat@hcc.edu)

#### **MASSASOIT COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Paul Chiano (508) 588-9100 x 1782  
[pchiano@massasoit.mass.edu](mailto:pchiano@massasoit.mass.edu)

#### **MASSBAY COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Elizabeth Hannigan (508) 270-4027  
[ehannigan@massbay.edu](mailto:ehannigan@massbay.edu)

#### **MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Julia Mirras (978) 656-3189  
[mirrasj@middlesex.mass.edu](mailto:mirrasj@middlesex.mass.edu)

#### **NORTH SHORE COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Erinn Gilmore (978) 762-4000 x6671  
[egilmore@northshore.edu](mailto:egilmore@northshore.edu)

#### **NORTHERN ESSEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Donna Johnson (978) 556-3873  
[djohnson1@necc.mass.edu](mailto:djohnson1@necc.mass.edu)

#### **QUINSIGAMOND COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Sue Moriarty (508) 854-7585  
[smoriarty@qcc.mass.edu](mailto:smoriarty@qcc.mass.edu)

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## DIRECT SUPPORT CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

### 2017-2018

## BUILD YOUR FUTURE



A project of the  
Massachusetts Community Colleges  
and the  
Massachusetts  
Department of Developmental Services