



February 25, 2022

As President of the Board of AAIDD, I am writing to you to highlight a crisis in our field and to ask you to share the kinds of information and insight that you would find particularly valuable right now.

During my tenure, I've had the opportunity to speak with many of you about the workforce challenges you are facing. As we emerge from yet another spike in COVID-19, the sustained impact of shortages in the frontline workforce continues to impact people with IDD and their families. The impact has been profound and far-reaching. Service providers are reporting increased challenges in recruiting and retaining Direct Support Professionals, placing even more strain on those who are providing support. Individuals and families who self-direct are experiencing the same, which often results in stress and disruption in daily activities. Nursing services are also in short supply, potentially impacting those with chronic health care needs. All of these concerns are impacting the existing workforce that has already been under strain for a long time. This shortage is also impacting the fields of research, academia, and policy.

The last two years have required each of us to continually adapt, reassess, and respond. Despite the challenges highlighted above, we have also come together in ways we may not have previously. AAIDD, as a leader in supporting the work of interdisciplinary professionals that enhance the lives of people with IDD, continues to cultivate opportunities for members to inform and advance our vision for the future. AAIDD's webinars, monthly Mentorship in a Minute forums, (30-minute virtual professional development opportunities), and Crucial Conversations; (small group discussions on emerging issues, and responses from the field) have shared best evidence-based practices, emerging research, and useful resources to dismantle barriers and advance opportunities for people with IDD.

Please help us to continue tailoring our resources and services in ways that are maximally supportive of our membership by identifying topics for future AAIDD forums in this short survey: [\[link\]](#)

Finally, as you continue to adapt to the evolving challenges in our field, I urge you to remember to take time to care for yourself and to nurture one another. Our membership is comprised of dedicated interdisciplinary leaders and advocates, and together, we are an amazing community.

Serving you and AAIDD is a great honor. I look forward to seeing many of you in [Jacksonville](#) this June.

Sincerely,

Elisa Velardo, MMHS, FAAIDD  
President, AAIDD Board of Directors

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