

Hearing from the people we support

2026 DSPD experience survey report

This document shares the real stories and voices of people who get support from the Division of Services for People with Disabilities (DSPD). By listening to them, we learn how to help everyone live the life they choose.

Why did we do this study?

DSPD has often used forms that asked "yes" or "no" questions about how people liked their services. These forms were quick and simple, but they did not tell the whole story.

In 2026, we tried something new. We sat down and had real conversations with people all across Utah, of different ages and backgrounds, to hear their lived experiences. We focused on three main areas:

- Happiness: Are people living the life they actually want?
- Daily choices: Do people have control over their daily routines?
- Good support: Do helpers listen well and make people feel safe?

Surveys vs. Interviews

- Surveys: Short computer questions with quick "yes" or "no" answers; gathers information quickly but only a snapshot of a person's life without any context.
- Interviews: Creating a meaningful conversation through talking and listening deeply. This helps us hear the full story behind every answer.

Sometimes, a person might say "yes" on a quick survey just because it feels like the right answer, even if they want things to change. By talking with people of all ages and backgrounds, we went beyond "yes" or "no" and learned what it takes to help them live more fulfilling lives.

Four things we learned:

1. Being proud of hobbies and jobs

Learning a new skill or hitting a goal makes people feel amazing. Having a job or a hobby that is "yours" matters a lot. Work is not just earning money; it is about doing a good job and getting better.

One person said: "I just learned to play the guitar. I'm trying to be like my hero, my favorite country music star!"

Another person was proud of their hard work: "I am getting faster and have more responsibility. I am beating my own record at work with sauce cups."

2. Friends and staying connected

Going out into the community is all about the people you are with. Many people told us that their friends are the best part of their day. Being around other people helps everyone feel like they belong and is often more important than the activity.





Our ideas to keep improving the services DSPD provides

Based on the stories we heard, we have some ideas of how to make things better:

- **Opportunities for choice and growth:** DSPD wants people in services to have the opportunity to learn and grow. Activities in the community allow people to choose what they do and try new things. People can find a hobby they enjoy by accessing community and day program activities like art, music, and sports.
- **Help with work:** DSPD wants to help job seekers and coaches focus on the "whole job." This means helping workers with things around the job, such as rides and schedules so they can get to work on time and work their scheduled shifts.
- **Extra support to know who to call:** DSPD recommends support coordinators provide cards or other easy-to-access contact information to the people they serve. It's important to know who to call if they have a problem or want to change their services.

DSPD plans to keep having these conversations every single year. By listening to your voices, we can build a better future together. Thank you for sharing your stories with us!

3. Good support workers make a huge difference

Having a great helper or job coach has a major impact on the experience of the job or activity. Good support makes people feel safe enough to try new things.

- **What helps:** Staff who listen, care about the person, and help them feel safe at work.
- **What hurts:** When staff do not respect personal space, or when a person feels confused about who to call for help.

4. Small choices give big power

We learned that making "small" daily choices makes people feel independent and powerful. Many people are happy to let trusted family members help them make big choices, like where to live. But they still want to choose their own daily routines, such as:

- Picking what to eat (like pizza, tacos, or lasagna).
- Choosing when to wake up or go to bed.
- Picking which store to visit at the mall.

People also want to be involved and practice making "big" choices so they can do it for themselves someday.

