

My name is Melissa Blanchard and I have worked for Shangri-La for 13 years as a DSP.

On any day, my job can look like assisting with social skills, job skills, volunteering, life skills, assisting with care, helping with appointments, grocery shopping, emotional supports, documentation, passing medications, following protocols, and the list goes on.

What brought me into this line of work is watching my mom work in this field and meeting the people she worked with and seeing how she loved her job.

I stay at my job because of the individuals and the relationships you build over time. I love my job!

It's frustrating to see other jobs make similar wages when they don't require as much as what we do. We should be making more and being able to be paid for everything we do. We take very good care of our individuals and I know I feel like they are like a second home almost. I care for the people I provide services for and that should speak volumes. I am hoping that writing this testimony being a single mother helps. I hope I was able to give you a little insight into what some of our days look like. That is just one shift. Housing is 24 hours staffed. I have worked in the employment department (LEAP) as well, that was great, but same kind of services, activities, care, etc.

Training new staff, open positions and turnover can all be stressful for the program staff and individuals. Change can be hard for individuals, or losing long term staff that had formed connections.