



Retaining DSPs through Mentorship and Outreach



About Us



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About sasi

Our Mission: Connecting people with creative opportunities that honor their choices and fit their lives.

Our Vision: The people we support are fulfilled in their lives, respected in their community, and secure in their future.

Our Values: Belonging, Integrity, and Growth



The Retention Challenge

Region	Average Statewide Staff Vacancy Rate	Average Statewide Annual Turnover Rate
Region 1 (NYC METRO)	16.90%	29.21%
Region 2 (Hudson Valley)	21.40%	29.21%
Region 3 (Capital District)	19.22%	36.31%
Region 4 (Western, Central & North Country)	16.63%	42.95%
Statewide	17.47%	33.66%

Source: nydisabilityadvocates.org, 2024



What's Driving The Challenge?



Let Us Know:

How significant is employee retention as a challenge for your organization?

- Minor
- Moderate
- Significant
- Critical



Our Retention Challenge

In 2023, 34% of our new hires were leaving within the first 90 days.

After the challenges of COVID and the resulting labor market, our vacancy rates were very high.



Where We Started: Core Values

Belonging

We value people for who they are.

Integrity

We build relationships on trust.

Growth

We learn and evolve together.



Employee Experience: A Values-Driven Approach



Drilling Down

Two replicable, key programs of our values-driven approach to employee experience:

- *Employee Engagement Initiative*
- *DSP Mentorship Program*



Employee Engagement Initiative



What is the Employee Engagement Initiative

Structured conversations at key moments.

When	What	Why	Who
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Launched Nov 2024• Touch points: 30, 60, 90+ Days	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New hire check ins• Change, Stay, Exit Conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support employees• Reinforce core values• Drive improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employee Resources• Consistent questions• Shared tracking

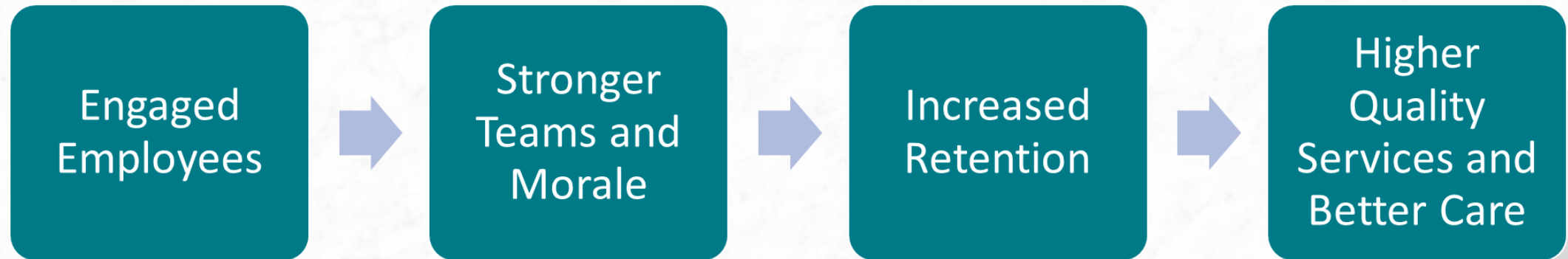


What is Employee Engagement?

The emotional commitment employees have to their work, team, and organization that drives them to go above and beyond.



Why Engagement Matters



Conversations: A Personal Approach

Build trust and connection early

Detect challenges before they become turnover

Encourage open, meaningful dialogue



Program Details

Built into Employee Experience

- New Employee Orientation

Led by Employee Resources

- Neutral, consistent, trained

Simple and Consistent Approach

- Same questions
- Four-point scale for simplicity

Feedback Drives Improvement

- Themes are documented and shared
- Leadership uses feedback to guide improvements



Employee Engagement Conversation Model

Time	Focus	Tips/Examples
Day 30	Welcome, goals, early questions	How are you feeling so far?
Day 60	Address challenges, provide feedback	Identify barriers, offer support
Day 90	Readiness and retention check	Discuss readiness, next steps
Day 90+	Change, Stay, Exit Conversations	Continued Support and Feedback

Closing the Loop

Conversations documented

Key concerns or themes flagged or escalated

Positives always shared



Continuous Improvement

Refine questions and timing

Shorter, more specific questions

Accessibility improvements

Transparency



Mentorship Program



Why Mentorship?

Belonging: A supportive relationship outside of manager and immediate team.

Integrity: Extra time spent with new hires on code of ethics, employee handbook, and key DSP skills.

Growth: An opportunity for experienced DSPs to expand their role and influence within the agency.



Our Goal

Match every new full-time DSP with an experienced, supportive peer who can provide extra guidance, training, and feedback over the course of the new DSP's first six months.



Identifying Mentors

Mentor: complete the following questions if you are interested in becoming a peer mentor (DSPs only)

1. Why are you interested in becoming a peer mentor? Click or tap here to enter text.
2. What qualities or skills do you have that will help you support a new DSP during their first months of the job? Click or tap here to enter text.
3. This program requires you to meet with your mentee at least once per month, outside of normal working hours, and complete brief progress reports. How will you ensure you follow through on these commitments? Click or tap here to enter text.
4. Describe a time you helped someone adjust to a new role or task. What did you do? Click or tap here to enter text.
5. What do you hope to gain or learn from becoming a mentor? Click or tap here to enter text.



Mentoring Activities

Check-Ins

Mini-Lessons

Observations and Feedback



Scheduling, Tracking, and Pay

Activity- Incident Reporting

Start Time- 5:40

Stop Time- 4:30

Notes- Reviewed incident report, when to call 911, MOC, NDC. Showed ability to find form & navigate through a report. Previously wrote her first incident report 2 days prior. Great report was written with all facts & necessary information including notifications made to certain persons involved.
 (I will make sure all of these needs are met)

Activity Type	Start Time	End Time	Notes
Check-In	10:00 AM	10:45 AM	Jamel and I sat down and got and has worked at SASI, the A SASI and all that comes with i job. He suggested phone was process, dates and scheduling a positive rapport with other even though the mentorship p excited to see so many people We did however talk about cl very familiar with SASI and its
Observation and Feedback	1:00PM	2:00PM	Upon arrival I had watched Ja very hesitant. He was very ple hectic with the moving-in pro down the stairs and while doi house. After the boxes were r engaged more in conversatio kind and supportive with the s and happy in his role as a DSP support to the new individual demonstrating thr following c maintaining positive relations having a home.
			Daisey and I sat down and dis first and kind of off-put but ve role as a DSP due to working i staff and individuals in the ho



Continuous Improvement

Extending program beyond new DSPs

Potential for full time Mentor position

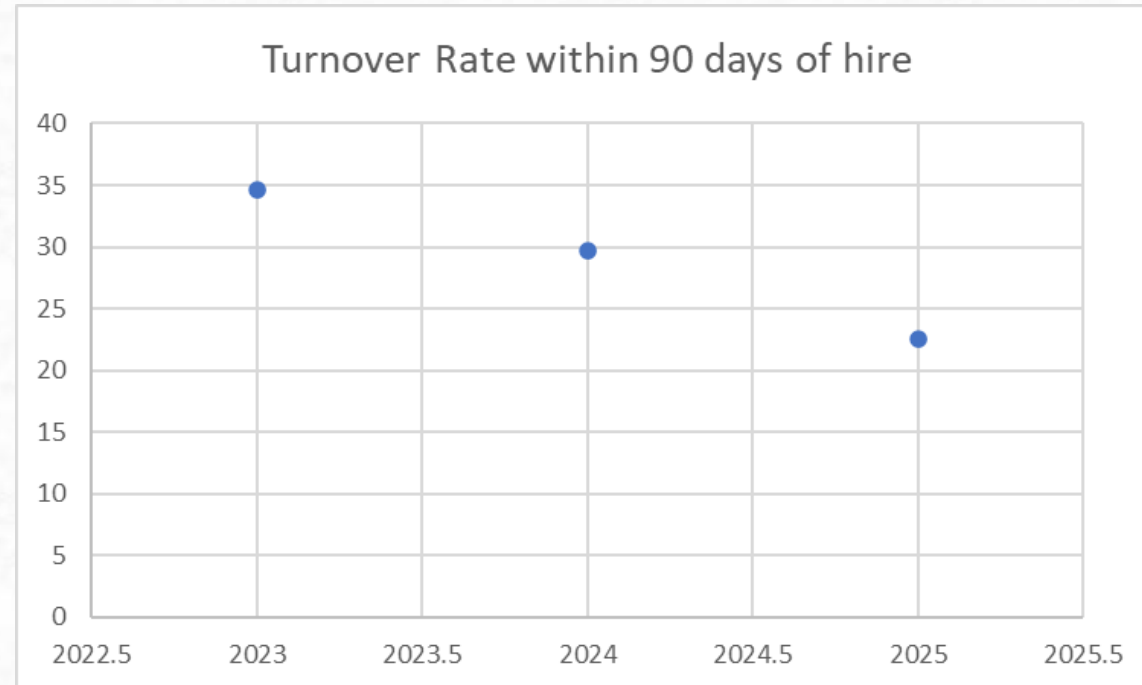


Outcomes

A culture of employee engagement and retention

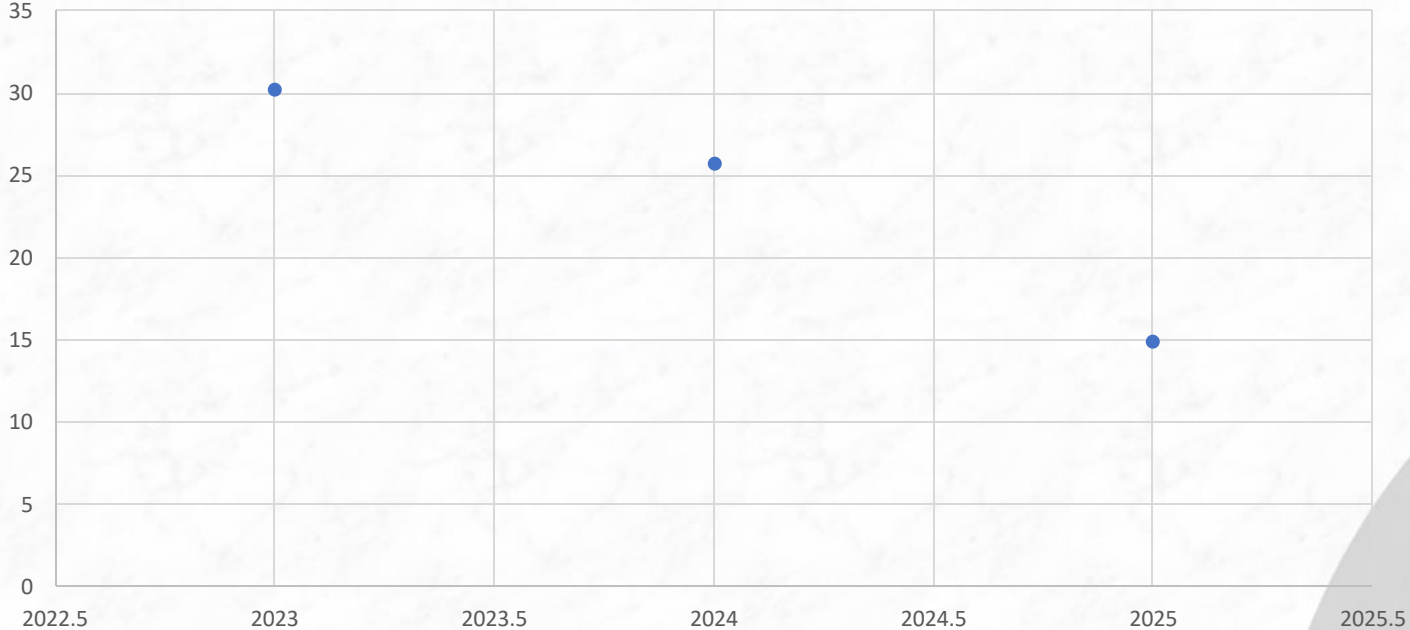


New Employee Turnover



Total Turnover

Overall Turnover Rate



More Points of Contact

J. was not finding his site and shift to be a good fit for him. He thought about quitting, but his mentor talked him through the process of applying for another location. When he successfully switched locations, another mentor at that site helped him to settle in successfully.



A Wider Network of Support

A new hire was struggling greatly and feeling ostracized by the peers on her team. She and her mentor developed a very close relationship, and the mentor advocated for her, worked with her manager, and helped change her experience for the better. “If it wasn’t for the mentorship program and your dedication and hard work, I would have quit the agency.”



A multi-tiered approach to training

N.'s manager noticed that he was struggling with documentation in PrecisionCare. She reached out to N.'s mentor and requested that they review it. N.'s mentor sat down with him to review, spending the time he needed to fix his notes and giving him suggestions for improvement. At the next session, he was much more confident doing documentation.



Development and Recognition

M., an experienced DSP and mentor, says: “I love this program. Being a part of helping the new hires is fantastic and I am so happy to be a part of this.”



Replicating at Your Agency



Making the Investment

True culture change requires an investment of time, money, and personnel.

Know your core values and lead with them!



Small Steps: Where can we start?

Consider starting with surveys – both company-wide and tailored to new hires.

Remember that you can pilot programs at small scale – in a few sites, or among a certain group – and build from there.

Progress, not perfection.



Questions



Thank You!

