



CSA1 – Launching the AMSI Initiative

A Common-Sense Approach to Support Services Standards

Success requires clear guidelines—and support services are no exception.

Effective support services must be built on a foundation of **voluntary consensus standards** based on practical, field-based experience. This is especially important for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), who depend on consistent, high-quality support to live and work in inclusive environments.

This is the driving purpose of the **American Support Standards Institute (AMSI)**—a pro bono initiative, not a registered legal entity.

All AMSI standards and materials are created independently by volunteers to improve practices across the support services field—ensuring that every standard and material reflects real needs and everyday realities.

Why the SOC Framework Matters

All legally recognized occupations and services in the United States are classified under the **Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system**.

For individuals with IDD, real inclusion requires access to both:

- ◆ **All legally recognized services** —as recipients, entitled to the same quality, protections, and accountability as anyone else
- ◆ **All legally recognized occupations** —as employed workers, supported to succeed in meaningful jobs

In both cases, **support must be clearly defined and guaranteed through standards**—whether a person with IDD is receiving a service or contributing as a worker.

The Dual Role of Individuals with IDD

and the Central Role of Direct Support Workers

Individuals with IDD often require support in two equally important roles:

- **As recipients of services**, they rely on direct support workers to help them access and benefit from services **provided by others** (such as healthcare, transportation, or retail) and **in providing for themselves** (through in-home or daily living assistance).
- **As payable workers who are employed**, they need support to succeed in **competitive integrated workplaces**. In these roles, they are supported by **rehabilitation counselors, vocational rehabilitation job coaches, and employment specialists** (as defined in the SOC) to obtain and maintain employment.

In both cases, **direct support workers** provide tailored, person-centered assistance that makes real inclusion possible—ensuring individuals with IDD fully participate in their communities, both as recipients of services and as skilled members of the workforce.

Why Quality Expectations Must Be Defined

To provide meaningful support—whether a person with IDD is receiving a service or working in a paid job—**support staff and employers must understand the quality expectations** of the specific activity.

This includes three common situations:

- **Receiving services from others** (e.g., healthcare, retail, transportation): Both the person and support worker must recognize what respectful, appropriate service looks like.
- **Providing for themselves** (e.g., in-home support or personal tasks): Support must ensure these are done safely and independently, with dignity.
- **Working in competitive integrated employment** (e.g., janitorial work, food service, clerical roles): Support must clarify what high-quality performance means in that occupation.

Across all three, quality includes not only technical proficiency but also:

- Communication and teamwork
- Professional behavior
- Use of accommodations

- Workplace safety
- Ongoing learning and development

Clear, **inclusive quality standards** help define what “good work” looks like—so individuals with IDD and their supporters can succeed together.

Without such standards, systems stay fragmented, training remains inconsistent, and funding models struggle to support long-term quality and inclusion.

Defining Inclusive Quality Across All Roles

Through collaboration with all interested parties, AMSI works to define **what inclusive quality looks like** in every role individuals with IDD may occupy—whether as:

- Recipients of services
- Individuals providing for themselves
- Employees in competitive workplaces

We refer to this as an **inclusive quality approach**—a guiding principle that integrates service quality with inclusion. Instead of treating inclusion as a separate issue, this approach ensures it is embedded in each standard, tailored to the specific service or role being supported.

Inclusive quality standards provide a practical foundation for ensuring that expectations are clear, dignity is upheld, and outcomes are meaningful in all areas of life and work.

AMSI's Mission

The **American Support Standards Institute (AMSI)** is committed to creating voluntary consensus support standards that:

- ✓ Ensure the quality and consistency of support for individuals with IDD
 - ✓ Promote the well-being and retention of direct support and employment support professionals
 - ✓ Reflect the dual role of individuals with IDD—as service recipients and as workers
 - ✓ Define quality expectations in real-world roles—so inclusion becomes **real, measurable, and sustainable**
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A Practical Path to Inclusion

Through this approach and its standards, AMSI aims to strengthen the support services field and foster inclusive environments where individuals with IDD can thrive—as both valued recipients and contributing members of the workforce.