

Steffan + Seyni

Harnessing the power of brotherhood

Steffan Ley has been receiving direct care services for most of his life. Born with significant developmental disabilities, he is still unable to speak and requires a high level of support with daily activities like bathing, dressing and eating.

Now 31, Steffan has been helped by close to a hundred Direct Care Workers. Low pay, inadequate benefits and the demands of his care seemed to have placed a revolving door in the front of the Leys' home.



And then, a few years ago, Alhousseyini "Seyni" Sako walked through it.

At first it was just a job. "I love helping people," Seyni says. "But with Steffan, it became so much more. I love to sit down with him, talk to him. Just to see a smile from him before I leave for the day, it makes me feel like I've achieved something great."

Steffan's family says Seyni has been the longest-serving, closest Direct Care Worker they've had.

"There's so much turnover in this type of job, and there's not really a way for people to create a career path," says Steffan's sister, Karah.

"Seyni has had to change agencies to keep following our family, but we work hard to ensure both his needs and my brother's are met. Seyni is part of our family now, so we want to make sure he's cared for too."

In fact, Seyni's support has been crucial in allowing Steffan to remain at home with his family.

"Seyni makes sure Steffan can enjoy his life," Karah says. "They go about in the community together, doing things Steffan really enjoys. And even though Steffan is non-verbal, Seyni can pick up on his emotional cues and get them met in ways that are truly extraordinary."

Michigan families need more Direct Care Workers like Seyni—caring, skilled individuals who are able to go the extra mile for the people they serve.

Michigan needs continued state funding to support the Direct Care Workers who are making a difference.

"I think of Steffan as my brother...it's about more than pay to me. But it's true I don't earn enough, so when I get off from the job after my 11-hour day, I sell little things on the side to keep some money coming in. I do it so I can stay with him."

-Seyni