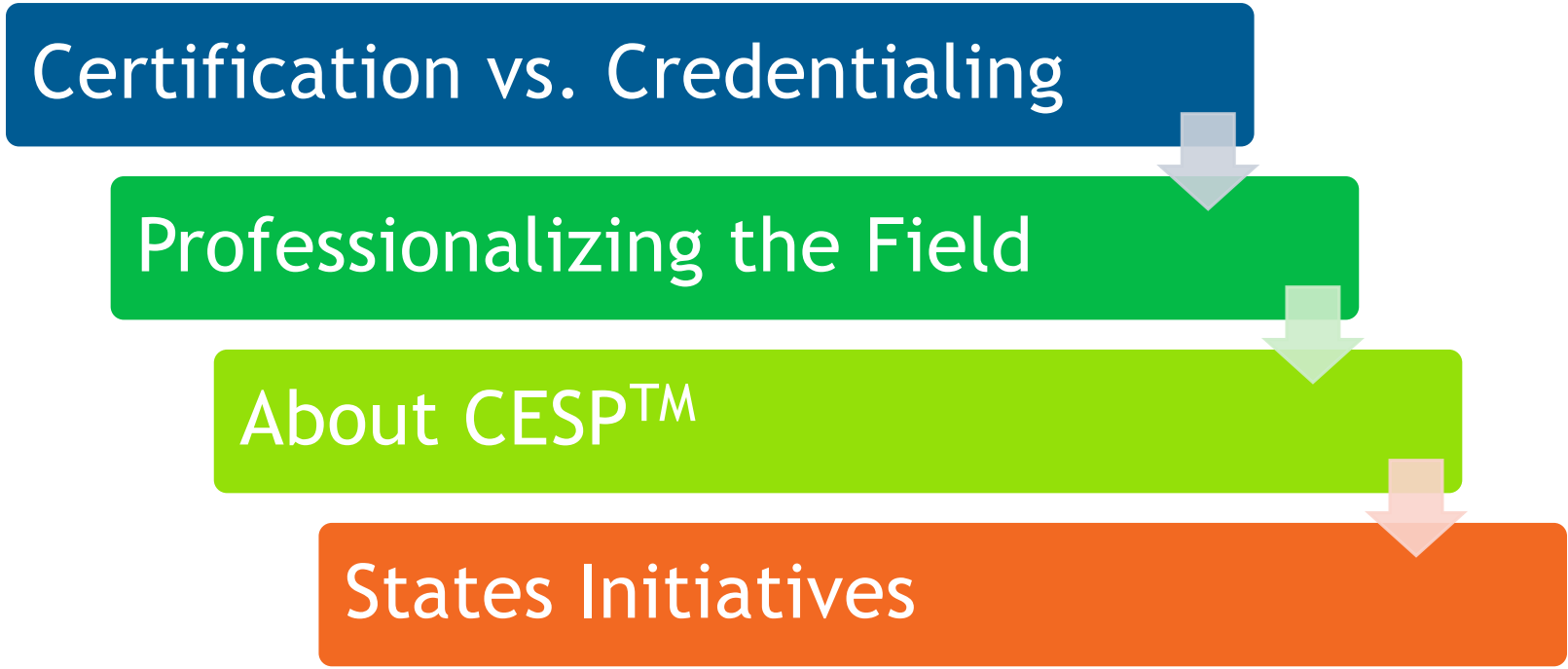




ESP Certification and Credentialing

Topics to Be Addressed

Certification vs. Credentialing



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graph TD; A[Certification vs. Credentialing] --> B[Professionalizing the Field]; B --> C[About CESP™]; C --> D[States Initiatives];
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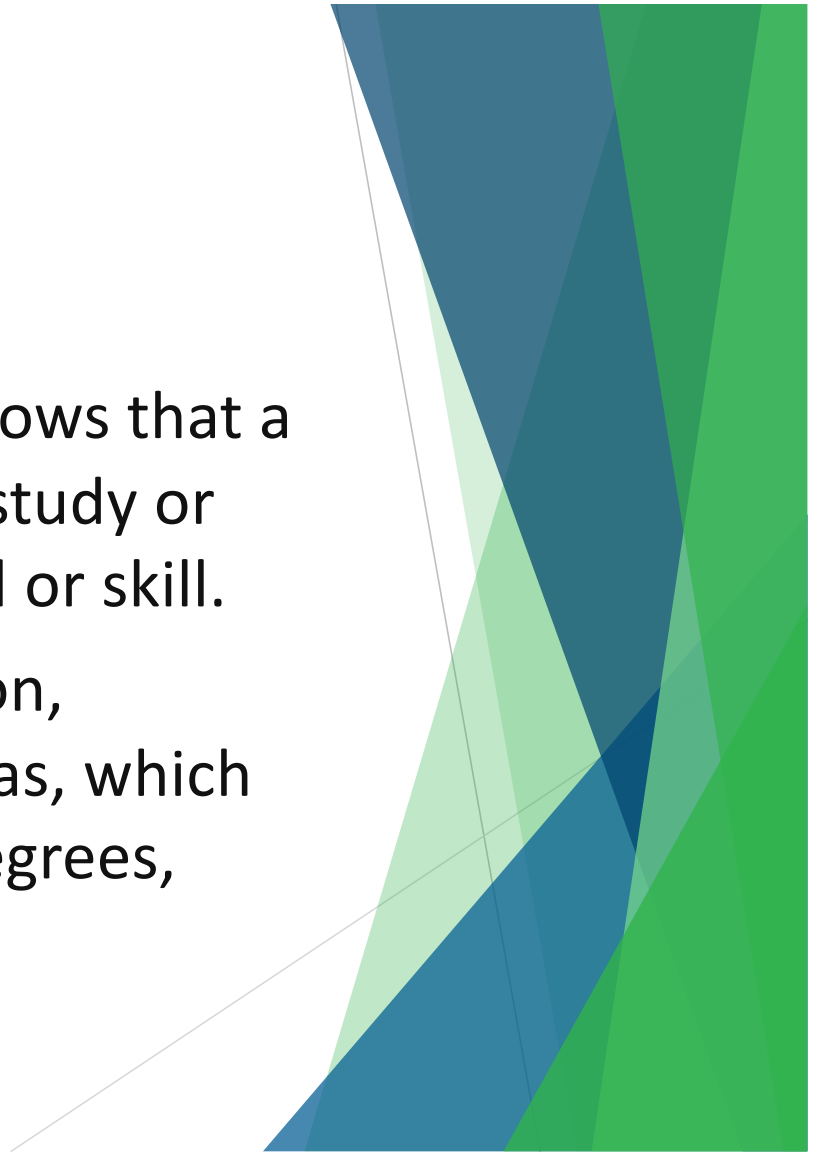
Professionalizing the Field

About CESP™

States Initiatives

Certificate vs. Credential

- ▶ A **CERTIFICATE** is a document that shows that a person has completed a program of study or has passed an exam in a specific field or skill.
- ▶ A **CREDENTIAL** is proof of qualification, identity, or authority that a person has, which can include certificates, diplomas, degrees, licenses, badges, etc.



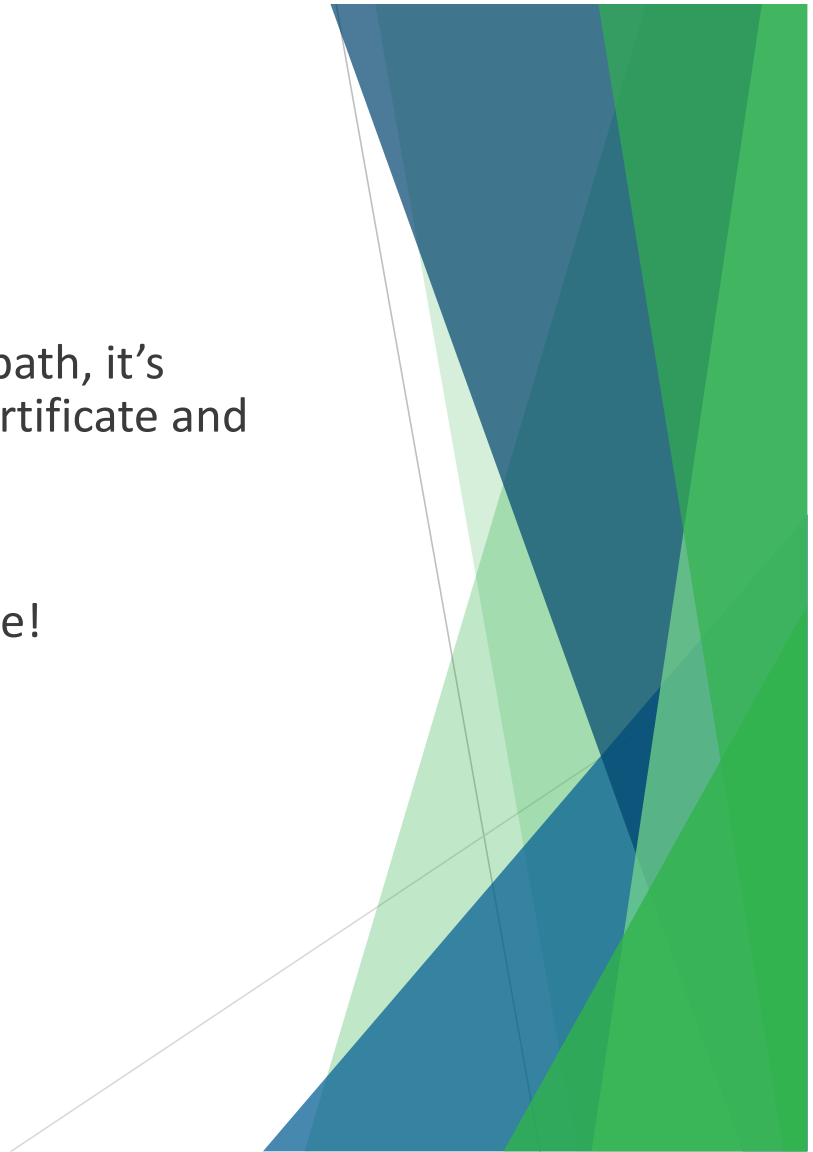
Why Does it Matter?

When it comes to choosing a professional education path, it's important to understand the difference between a certificate and certification, and what each may offer you.

Professional education sets you apart in the workplace!

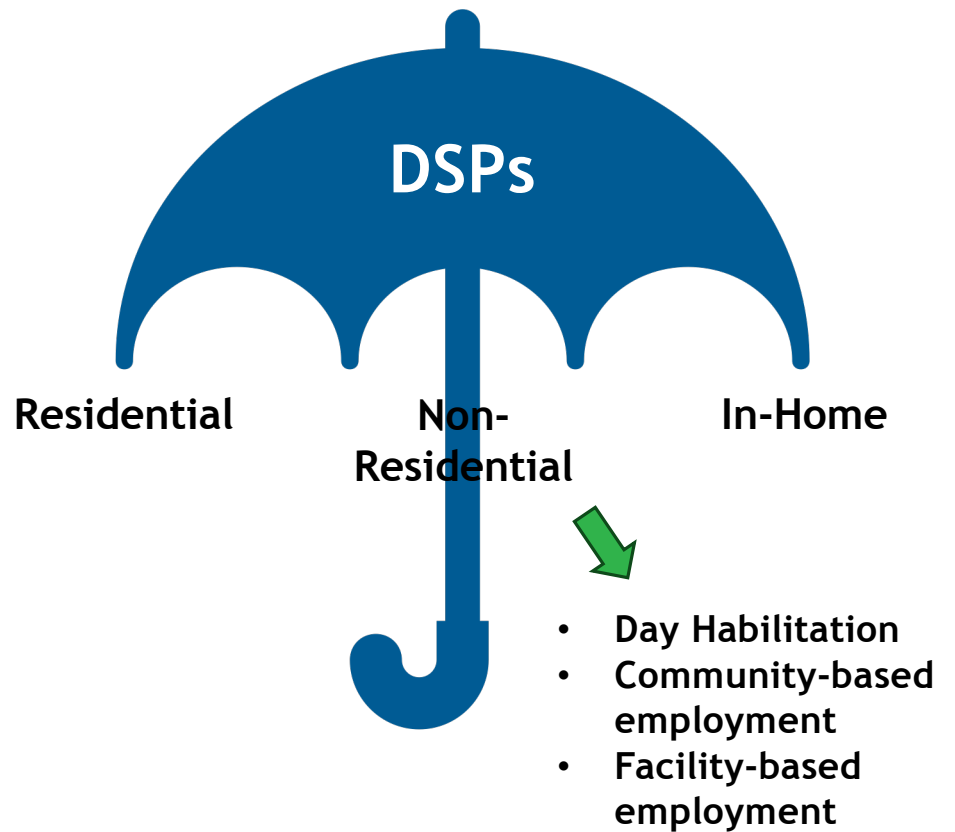
- ▶ Expand your knowledge and skills
- ▶ Obtain a promotion
- ▶ Make a career move

(Source: Stanford University)



ESPs are DSPs

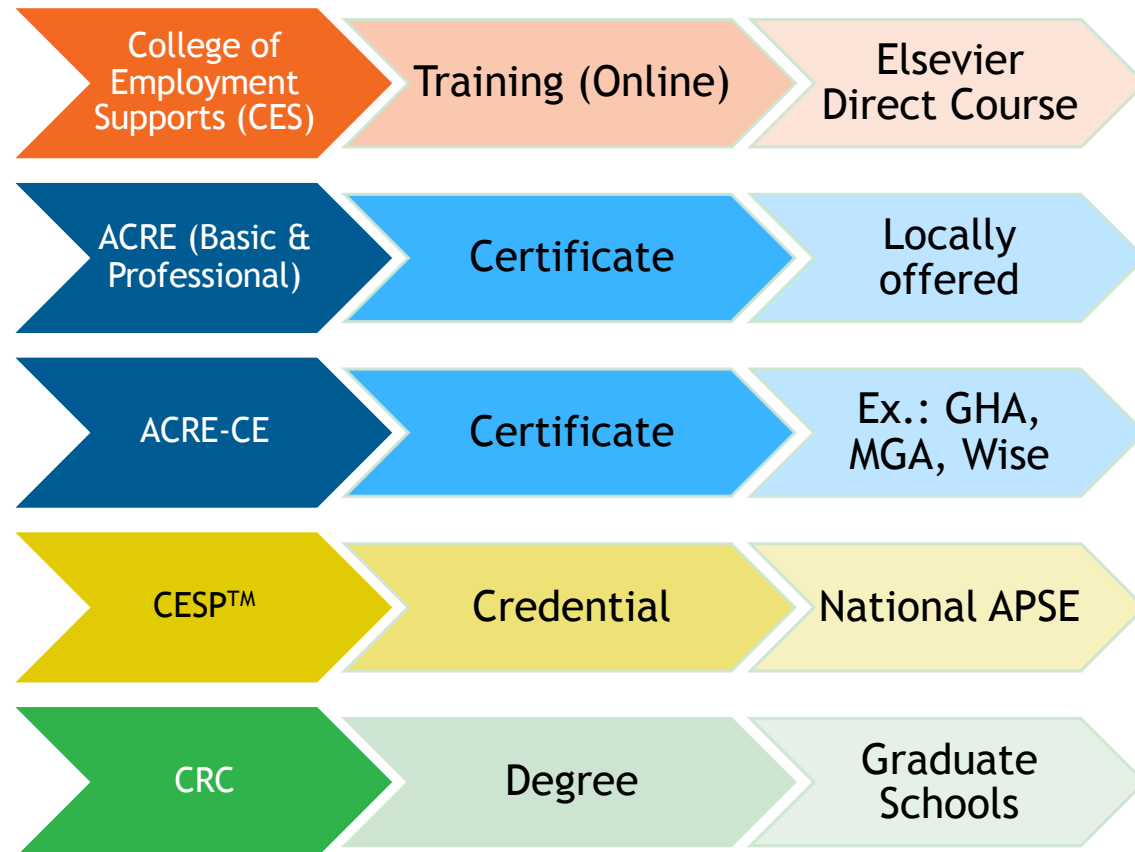
- ▶ Employment support professionals (ESPs) are a subset of the broader direct support professional workforce
 - ▶ Unique skill sets required
 - ▶ Job development
 - ▶ Job coaching
 - ▶ Long-term supports
- ▶ Minimum qualifications are driven by funding and policy
 - ▶ There is no singular set of qualifications



Professionalizing the ESP field

- ▶ APSE: Universal Employment Competencies (2001)
 - ▶ APSE assembled nationally recognized experts in the field to establish the first set of competencies for employment providers. These competencies covered the knowledge and skills needed to work effectively in the field of employment for people with disabilities.
- ▶ ACRE (2005) and ACRE-CE (2018):
 - ▶ Based on the APSE Universal Employment competencies.
 - ▶ Certifying competency-based training designed for professionals working in employment services and is intended to raise the national service delivery standard.
 - ▶ ACRE as own accrediting body.
- ▶ CESP™: Credentialed Employment Support Professional (2012)
 - ▶ First in the nation national guidelines to validate and support the training currently provided in the field of Employment Support Professionals.
 - ▶ The CESP™ is accredited through the [National Commission for Certifying Agencies \(NCCA\)](#).

Pathways to Training, Certificates, Credential & Degree



About the Credentialed Employment Support Professional™

- ▶ The CESP™ program is the **first in the nation to** create national guidelines to validate and support the training currently provided in the field of Employment Support Professionals.
 - ▶ The program falls under the oversight of the Employment Support Professional Credentialing Council (ESPCC), established by the APSE Board of Directors.
- ▶ The ESPCC developed the CESP™ for employment support professionals (ESPs) who provide employment services to individuals with significant disabilities by assisting individuals to obtain and maintain competitive employment in integrated community workplaces.



CESP™ Minimum Requirements - Experience Required

- ▶ Accredited by NCCA

- ▶ CESP™:

- ▶ High school diploma, GED or equivalent

- ▶ Experience in the field

- ▶ One year of paid employment support professional (ESP) work experience that meets the Work Experience Definition below (up to 3 months internship time)

OR

- ▶ Nine months of paid ESP work experience with additional relevant training/internship



Accreditation

- ▶ The CESP™ is accredited through the **National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA)**. Accreditation for professional or personnel certification programs provides impartial, third-party validation that the program has met recognized national and international credentialing industry standards for the development, implementation, and maintenance of certification programs. The CESP's content validity is demonstrated through a **comprehensive job analysis** conducted and analyzed by experts, with data gathered from stakeholders in the occupation or industry.

About Credentialling

- Process by which individuals demonstrate **required knowledge and skill**
- Tool for identifying **minimally competent individuals**
- Usually **voluntary**, non-governmental (vs. licensure)
- **Time-limited**
- **Independent** of a specific class, course, or other education/training program (vs. certificate programs)
- Primary focus on **assessment**

NOTE: All professional credential programs have the same basic key components, regardless of the profession/industry

Benefits of the CESP™

► For professionals:

- Certifies competency in the full array of skills needed to assist individuals with disabilities to succeed in employment
- Opens the door for increase income opportunities
- Recognized across all states

► For service providers:

- Communicates to funders that staff are competent in best practices
- Can serve as a tool for leadership and succession planning

► For employers:

- Have help hiring talented employees who are a fit with the company culture and meet business needed
- Receive specialized support for retention of diverse employees



Who is Eligible for the CESP™

- ▶ The certification was developed for **employment support professionals (ESPs)** who assist individuals with significant disabilities to **obtain and maintain competitive employment in integrated workplaces.**
- ▶ These professionals can include but are not limited to:
 - ▶ job coaches,
 - ▶ job developers,
 - ▶ transition employment specialists, and
 - ▶ school-to-work personnel.

Credentialling Process at-a-Glance

- ▶ Meet minimum qualifications
- ▶ Pass exam
 - ▶ 3-hour exam
 - ▶ 135 multiple choice questions covering the following domains
 1. Application of Core Values and Principles to Practice & Legislation and Funding
 2. Individualized Assessment and Employment / Career Planning
 3. Community Research and Job Development
 4. Workplace and Related Supports
- ▶ Renewal required every 3 years (by exam or 36 hours of approved CEUs)

Active credential holders (REV. 7/31/26)

- ▶ Total # of CESP's: 1,811

- ▶ Northeast: 137
- ▶ Mid-Atlantic: 403
- ▶ Southeast: 189
- ▶ Midwest: 674
- ▶ Rocky Mountain: 154
- ▶ Pacific Northwest: 253
- ▶ International: 1

- ▶ For the most updated list: <https://cesp.helpscoutdocs.com/article/608-current-cesps>

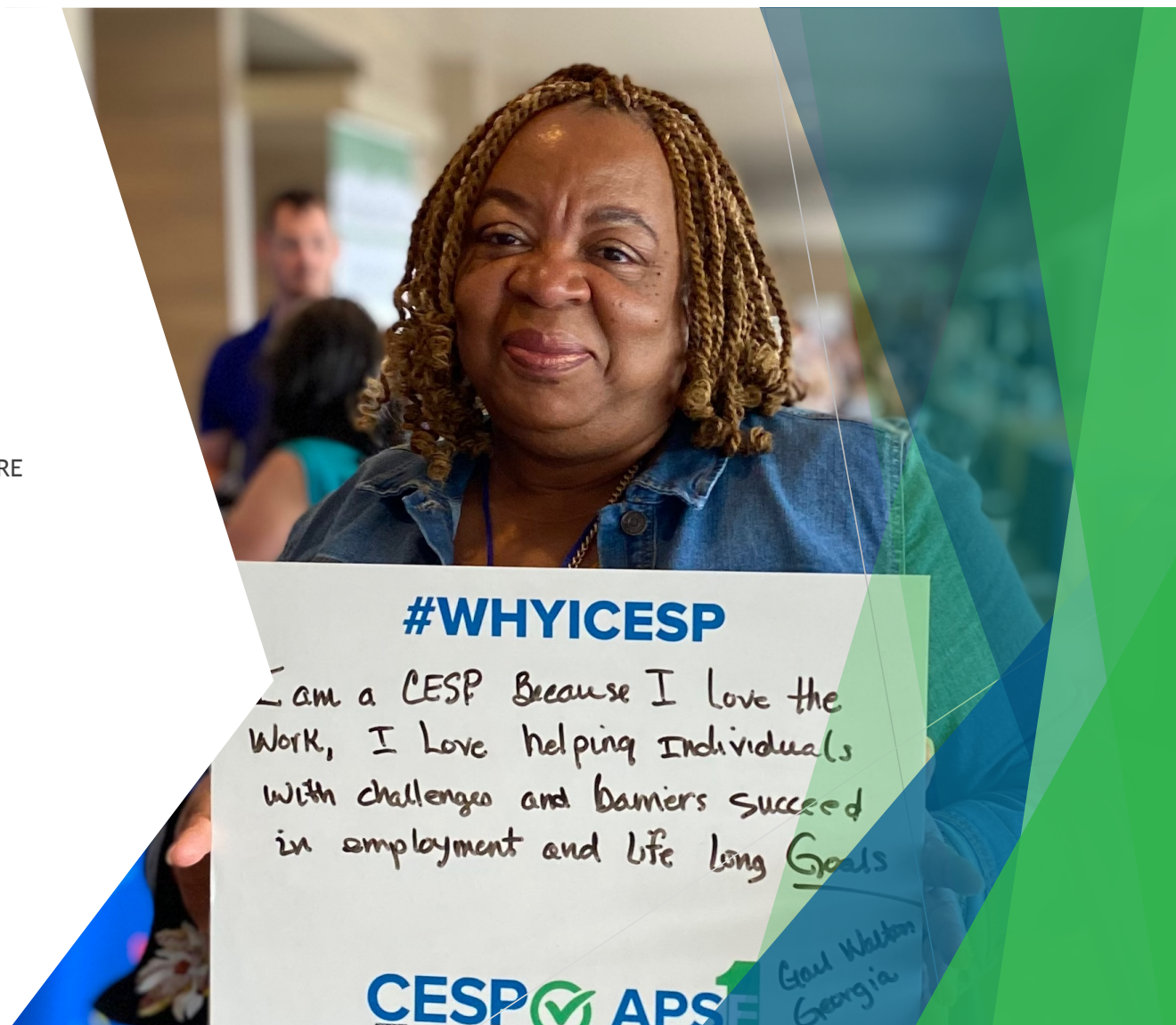
Examples of State Approaches

- ▶ State-mandated minimum training requirements and ongoing continuing education
 - ▶ Topics
 - ▶ # hours
- ▶ Incentive payments
- ▶ Other
 - ▶ Covering the cost of the exam and/or recertification



California (DDS): Quality Incentive Program

1. An incentive payment of \$3,000 for the service provider for each employee who becomes certified in Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) Basic Employment Services or ACRE Basic Customized Employment Services.
2. An incentive payment of \$3,000 for the service provider for each employee who becomes recertified in ACRE Basic Employment Services or ACRE Basic Customized Employment Services.
3. An incentive payment of \$625 for the service provider for each employee who becomes certified as a Certified Employment Support Professionals (CESP™).
4. An incentive payment of \$425 for the service provider for each employee who becomes recertified as a CESP™.



Connecticut (DDS): Training Related Incentives

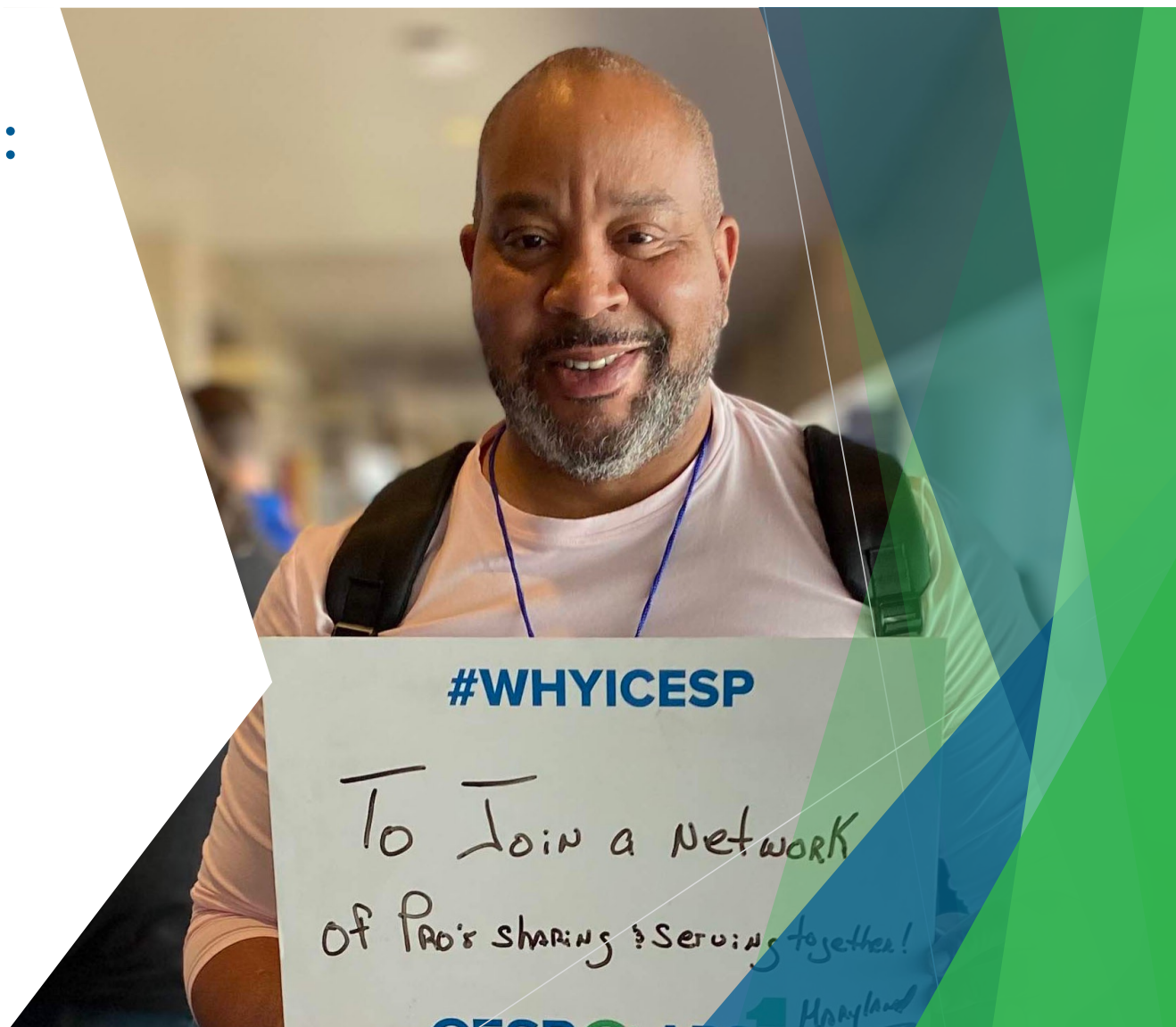
- ▶ An incentive payment for any DDS qualified provider for each job coach or job developer that completes training expectations consistent with professional standards from accepted accreditation or certification entities such as the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)*, Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE), or other similarly recognized organizations.
- ▶ Payment for completion will be a flat outcome payment of \$3,000 per employee trained, up to a total of \$30,000 per qualified provider agency.

*Includes APSE's Emerging Leaders and CESP™ programs



West Virginia (DRS): Supported Employment Tiers for CRP Services

- ▶ Tier I - current qualifications
 - ▶ \$2,000
- ▶ Tier II: ACRE (Basic or CE)
 - ▶ \$2,200
- ▶ Tier III: CESP™
 - ▶ \$2,400
- ▶ Additional incentive payments also tiered
 - ▶ 20+ hours/week
 - ▶ Receiving benefits
 - ▶ \$1+ above minimum wage
 - ▶ Natural supports



Contact information and resources

cesp@apse.org

301-279-0060

CESP Central (for more information on eligibility, application, test results and recertification):

<https://apse.org/cesp-central/>