

# Employment Works!

Twice-yearly IPS Supported Employment Newsletter

Summer 2018



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## An IPS Work Story

*Christoffer Hairston, IPS Supervisor  
Easter Seals UCP North Carolina and Virginia*

Jay works at the Cinemark Movie Theatre where his job responsibilities consist of greeting customers, taking ticket stubs, and directing customers to features of the theater. Jay enjoys being able to make a positive impression on the customer as soon as they enter the theater to add to their experience.

The hiring manager at Cinemark speaks highly of the way that the IPS specialist introduced herself in person initially and he expresses appreciation for the follow up meetings where real rapport was built. He said it made the hiring process go smoothly because he was able to interview a motivated candidate for the position based on the recommendation the IPS specialist provided.

*"Jay has grown as a person from working his job and having support."*

Jay's parents have said that his employment status has allowed him to manage his symptoms of anxiety and depression effectively and he has become more social and confident in all settings. "I believe Jay has grown as a person from working his job and having support."



Employment Center

[www.ipsworks.org](http://www.ipsworks.org)

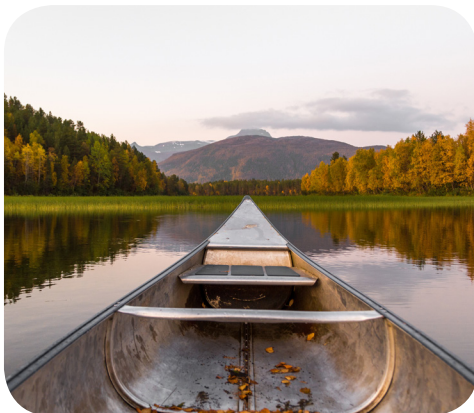


The  
**Rockville Institute**

## IPS Employment Center Notes

Employers are a key stakeholder group for IPS. IPS specialists learn how to effectively build relationships with employers to support good job matches that are consistent with the skills, experiences, and knowledge of job seekers and the hiring needs of employers. IPS trainers conduct side-by-side job development training to IPS specialists and IPS supervisors who provide ongoing mentoring. To increase the number of job leads, IPS specialists coordinate job development efforts with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) business specialists and VR counselors. The employees and their employers benefit from the support from IPS staff, VR staff, and family member support. In this issue, we highlight employer relationships from the perspective of the employee, IPS trainer, family member, IPS specialist, Vocational Rehabilitation business specialist, and employer. Engaging the business community was a topic of discussion at a one-day meeting of state mental health and Vocational Rehabilitation directors as part of the Social Security Administration's Supported Employment Demonstration (SED).

Congratulations to the outstanding awardees honored at the 2018 International IPS Learning Community meeting that was held in Franklin, Tennessee, on May 22-23. The meeting included participants from 27 states, six countries outside the US, and the Veterans Administration.



## Strategies for Helping IPS Specialists Learn to Grow Employer Relationships

*Lori Norton, Kentucky IPS Trainer*

You have to get out there with people. The more you're with people, the more you'll learn about them. Hands-on training in job development is one of my favorite things to do as a trainer. I know it makes people nervous, but it's so important. And IPS specialists really want to do a good job, but they need support and help learning their jobs. Helping people to understand the importance of going out and talking to people, really partnering with people, is a big part of the training process. I'll go into a business and model how to talk to a hiring manager, then at the next business I observe while the IPS specialist takes the lead, and then we give each other feedback. The best part is when you come out from meeting with an employer together and you see the IPS specialist has learned that it works. It's important that the IPS specialist feels good about what they do because I know in the end that's going to trickle down to the clients and helping them to get jobs.

I have found it is important to make sure people are prepared before we go out. I don't think that happens as much as it should. To help them prepare I ask them questions. "How are you going to capture the information?" "Where should we go together?" "Will you take notes?" "What should you bring?" "Will you ask the employer if it's ok to take notes?" Also, it's a good idea to practice the introductory statement together before you go out. I tell people to make sure it's in your own words, so that you feel comfortable saying it when meeting with hiring managers. Inexperienced IPS specialists want to wing it a lot, I've noticed, so I'll ask them to say their introductory statement out loud and practice with me before we go out together. It's good to also talk about making a plan to go back in for follow up. IPS supported employment is all about relationships. I tell the IPS specialist to really listen and hear what people are saying during second cups of tea (second meeting with an employer), rather than treating the meeting like a survey. When IPS specialists express worry that employers are bothered by their visit, I say, "People are people, just like you and me, and you have something to offer that may improve their business." Help people see it in a different way. You plant the seeds, then go back and follow up – every now and then you'll get a few weeds, but most of the time you're going to get flowers!

### Get certified in IPS!

By popular demand, the IPS Employment Center now offers IPS Certification!

Individuals who are certified in Individual Placement and Support have demonstrated knowledge about IPS. To become certified in IPS, you must meet certain work experience and education requirements and pass an online certification exam.

For more information visit

[www.ipsworks.org](http://www.ipsworks.org)

and look for IPS Certification under the Training Menu.





## Helping Employers See the Benefits of Hiring Immigrants with Mental Illness

*Nana Ahmed, IPS Specialist*

I am an Individual Placement and Support (IPS) specialist in Chicago at Asian Human Services (AHS), an agency that specializes in helping refugees, immigrants, and those with mental health conditions to find and keep competitive employment.

As an immigrant from Yemen, I relate to the challenges that affect the refugee and migrant populations that I am working with to find employment. When I describe to employers the unique experiences of job seekers, it opens up the opportunity to address concerns the employer may have about hiring someone from different backgrounds. A common worry that employers mention is the language barrier. I talk with employers about how language is not an indicator of capabilities because many of the people I assist were educated and employed in their home countries prior

to being forced to flee to the U.S. for safety and survival. Because I speak several languages fluently, I also offer to translate during interviews and on the job initially.

*“When you hire people from diverse backgrounds you set a good example for others in your company and in the community.”*

Another common concern that employers bring up is if people are well enough to do the job, particularly since most people I am working with have endured a lot of trauma. I provide ongoing education about mental health to employers as a means to break down stigma. I highlight the ongoing job supports that I provide to both the worker and the employer for as

long as they are needed. I facilitate a performance review meeting with each worker, who has agreed to disclosure, and the employer every three months that includes discussion about the strengths of the worker as well as areas for improvement on the job.

To further relieve employer concerns around the health and stability of the work candidates, I offer names of employers in the area who have hired individuals and have agreed to speak with other employers regarding my work. I tell employers, “When you hire people from diverse backgrounds you set a good example for others in your company and in the community. You will have greater satisfaction at work because you are using your position of power to help those who are simply seeking an opportunity to contribute, and that just feels good.”

## An Employer Describes Her Hiring Practices

*Athor Emanuel, Manager  
Help at Home*

I am a site manager for one of the Help at Home offices located in Lincolnwood, a neighborhood on the Northside of Chicago. Help at Home provides a range of in-home services that allow people to remain in their homes, rather than having to relocate to a nursing home. I met Nana, an IPS specialist in Chicago, in 2015 when she dropped by the Help at Home office to inquire about the business. I remember the day vividly because the office in Lincolnwood had just opened and I was bombarded with inquiries from people who were either wanting services or jobs at Help at Home. I recall that the way Nana approached me was different; instead of asking about a position, she asked to learn from me and even scheduled a time to come back when I would be less busy.

The next time we met, I offered information about the kinds of positions that people worked in at Help at Home, described what good candidates looked like, and clarified the best way to apply and follow up for job openings.

Nana shared a bit of information about the individuals she helps. I remember the way Nana presented the stories of the people she was assisting to get jobs and how it made me want to help. I understand first-hand how it feels to be in a new country where the language and culture are different because I had emigrated from Iraq to the U.S. with little to nothing. And Help at Home was in need of individuals from different cultural backgrounds who could speak the same language and understand the cultural customs of the clients that requested in-home caregiving services. Since then, I have hired individuals that Nana has recommended and I have seen them not only sustain those positions, but also grow into managers at Help at Home. It makes me proud to be an employer who gives back and helps others to succeed. All of us have something we are dealing with, and I find that the people we have employed are busy now and that seems to lessen the time they spend focusing on their problems.

# Working Feels Good and Helps Me See All the Possibilities for My Future

Lemuel Robinson, Administrative Assistant

Center for Recovery Education and Wellness at Magnolia House – Family Preservation Services of North Carolina, Inc.

I like that I have a variety of tasks and don't just do one thing all day long. I answer phones, track paperwork, assist with payroll, submit expenses to accounting, data entry, track staff training requirements, order supplies, provide reports, submit requests to our authorization department, and research billing issues. I enjoy interacting with my co-workers and the people we serve. I'm glad I am doing something in a field that helps others less fortunate. I like being able to help solve problems and assist my

***“I became more self-confident in my abilities and ideas.”***

co-workers. I like the laid-back office atmosphere and that my supervisor gives me discretion in how to get certain jobs done and does not micro manage me. One thing I am also able

to do here that I could not in many other jobs is share my experiences and thoughts with mental health professionals to help them better understand the populations they serve and how many interventions might be perceived from a client's perspective.

I started working part-time (20 hours per week) in December 2015 after not working for nine years. I had very little motivation to do anything in my life at that time, and I thought the hardest thing when I got the job would be getting myself up every morning and getting there. I surprised myself by usually waking up before my alarm and always being on time and never missing any unscheduled time (and I just looked back and have only used one day of sick leave since I started). After a few months, I was offered the job on a full-time basis, which made me feel like a normal adult for the first time in a decade, earning my own money to

support myself and having a job with benefits. I became much more sociable when at work, and people commented that my mood had changed. I became more self-confident in my abilities and ideas.

I was proud when I was able to help my daughter pay her student loan debt, especially since she was in college when I completely disintegrated and I felt guilty for not being there for her. But it is still a work in progress, and I do not consider myself “cured” or without issues. I think I am more self-aware than I used to be but still struggle with certain behaviors and thoughts. Lately I have even thought about things to do in the future, which is a huge change from just being in a waiting-to-physically-die mode because I had considered myself already emotionally dead. The future looks more hopeful now.

## Vocational Rehabilitation Business Specialists Engage Employers

Leslie Fuentes, Business Specialist

I am a Business Specialist at the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) in Alameda County, California. I work with community partners and businesses to help people with disabilities to become competitively employed. When it comes to engaging employers, I use a similar approach as an IPS specialist. I attend job fairs to meet employers in person to learn about their businesses. I share information about federal work incentives that are available to businesses that hire diverse employees, and I help job seekers talk about their strengths and skills with employers.

I also coordinate a monthly job placement circle where job seekers have an opportunity to share their “elevator speech” directly with hiring managers and employers can give a brief presentation about their businesses. I give job seekers a list of the employers who will attend two months prior so that they have plenty of time to prepare for the event. I alert community partners, including IPS specialists, by email about these events so that they can attend as well. I appreciate collaboration with community job developers and IPS specialists because each brings specialized knowledge, resources, and job leads to share. I recommend that IPS specialists talk with their Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselor liaisons about the Business Specialists at their local office so that they can be added to email communications about upcoming job openings and hiring events.





## State Leaders Discuss Addressing Implementation Challenges

Bob Drake, IPS Employment Center

In July, the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD), the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), and Westat convened state mental health directors and state vocational rehabilitation directors to discuss Social Security Administration's Supported Employment Demonstration.

In addition to discussion of the Supported Employment Demonstration, the group addressed several issues relevant to the IPS Learning Community. In relation to enhancing collaborations between mental health and vocational rehabilitation in their states, they recommended identifying champions in each organization and addressing differences between milestones, process, and timing to assess eligibility.

They discussed braided funding extensively. Having multiple sources

of funding for IPS is too complicated for local agencies to navigate. A solution must balance the work mandate and work incentives, and use technology. They wondered if the state agencies could arrange braided funding in a fashion that would be invisible to providers.

They also discussed the need to partner with the business community. We need to put ourselves in employers' shoes to understand their perspectives and meet their needs. Because of full employment, businesses currently need and want partners in finding employees, and we should take advantage of workforce system trainings, community colleges, and commercial-public alliances. The message to the business community should always emphasize that we have qualified, job-ready candidates.

State leaders were enthusiastic about meeting again next year to continue to work on improving collaborations.

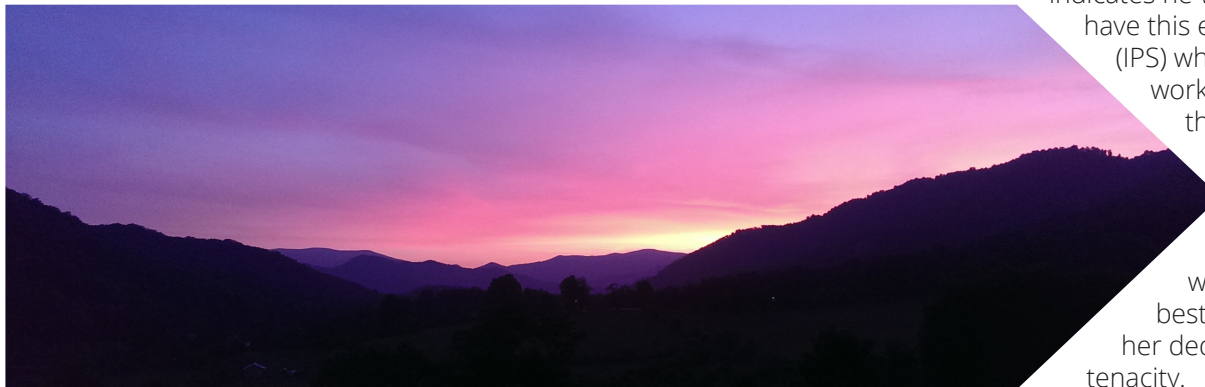
## Increasing Confidence and Social Capabilities through Work

Emily Russell, IPS specialist  
Family Preservation Services of North Carolina

Natalie is working part-time at a retail store in the Asheville Mall and she says that working has helped her to increase her social skills and confidence. She says "I never thought I would be able to work alone in a store in a busy mall. Now I am opening the store about 3 days per week, and closing by myself on Sundays. Before I got this job, I would never have just walked up to someone and talked to them. Now, I help customers find things that they are looking for and can't find. My store has all sorts of neat things and I like helping people find certain items."

*Before I got this job, I would never have just walked up to someone and talked to them.*

The manager of As Seen on TV indicates he would have loved to have this employment service (IPS) when he reentered the workforce after an injury that left him unable to work at his previous construction job. He states Natalie is doing exceptionally well and is one of his best employees due to her dedication, reliability, and tenacity.



### Try our Fidelity Report Writing Tool!

Many IPS fidelity reviewers find the IPS fidelity report online template helpful. Over 1,000 IPS fidelity reports have been written with the software. More information about accessing this tool is posted at [www.ipsworks.org](http://www.ipsworks.org)



Natalie's family is involved and highly supportive. The family attends regular meetings with the IPS specialist and Natalie. Seeing how much Natalie has improved with her social skills because of her job (she now has what she considers a "work family") has inspired Natalie's brother to begin seeking employment, also with the help of his own IPS specialist.

# 2018 IPS Learning Community Awards

The IPS Employment Center presented engraved plaques to awardees at the 2018 annual meeting of the International IPS Learning Community.

**Achievement Award** – This award is for significant improvement in either the number of people who have received IPS supported employment services or the number of people working in competitive jobs.

- Hispanic Health Council and Vocational Rehabilitation, CT
- Transitions and Vocational Rehabilitation, KY
- Incorpora Program of the “la Caixa” Banking Foundation, Catalonia, Spain

**Transformation Award** – This award honors an agency that has made a significant transformation to implement IPS.

- Abacus and Vocational Rehabilitation, OR

**Family Advocacy for IPS Award** – This award recognizes outstanding advocacy/educational activities regarding IPS by a family advocate.

- Kate Mattias, NAMI Connecticut

**Peer Advocacy Award** – This award recognizes a peer who has actively advocated, educated, or helped to implement IPS.

- Sarah Wagner, Firelands Counseling and Recovery

**Employer Award** – This award recognizes an employer who has hired an IPS job seeker and maintains high standards for a supportive, inclusive work environment.

- Tasha Boyd, General Manager, IHOP in Oak Ridge, TN



From left to right: Nichole Garrett (IPS Supported Employment Coordinator, Ridgeview), Tasha Boyd, Matt Yancey (Deputy Commissioner for Behavioral Health Community Programs, Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services), and Mandy Johnson (Assistant Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services)

## Upcoming Courses

### Practitioner Skills Course

- ♦ January 7 through March 29  
Registration November 25 through December 28

### Spanish Practitioner Course

- ♦ September 17 through December 7  
Registration August 6 through September 12
- ♦ January 7 through March 29  
Registration November 25 through December 28

### French Practitioner Course

- ♦ January 7 through March 29  
Registration November 25 through December 28

### IPS Supervisor Course

- ♦ October 8 through December 14  
Registration August 20 through September 21

### VR Counselors Course

- ♦ November 12 through December 14  
Registration October 1 through October 26

### IPS Leadership Training

April 23 - 25

This highly interactive training allows participants to discuss issues related to implementation and sustainability of IPS in their areas. The 2.5-day training takes place in person at our office in Lebanon, New Hampshire.



## New Online Course: IPS for Young People

Our newest online course begins January 21, 2019. This course is for practitioners who are already trained in the IPS approach, but who want to know more about serving young people (ages 15 to 26). The course is three units long and covers engaging youth, including family members in the employment plan, career exploration, supported education, and other topics. Each unit includes an assignment and interaction with an instructor. Registration will be available at [www.ipsworks.org](http://www.ipsworks.org) from December 17 through January 11.



Employment Center

[www.ipsworks.org](http://www.ipsworks.org)

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Westat is under contract to The Rockville Institute for the operation of The IPS Employment Center.