

# Employment Works!

Twice-yearly IPS Supported Employment Newsletter

Spring 2019



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## Getting Back to Work After Justice System Involvement

*Maddie Habeck, IPS specialist  
Mental Health Association of Oklahoma*

When I first met Alisa, she shared that she had been convicted of two counts of felony check fraud and was uncertain about viable employment opportunities. I kept the focus during our meetings on Alisa's strengths and skills to keep her motivated and hopeful during the job search. I attended a local community networking group that focuses on identifying employers who are willing to look at criminal backgrounds on a case by case basis. While attending one of these networking groups, I learned about an employer that matched what Alisa had been sharing she was looking for in a company. I reached out to this employer, Tulsack, several times in person to develop a relationship and I learned that Alisa's felony charges would not impede her ability to move forward with pursuing a position with the company. Today, Alisa works as a packing inspector at Tulsack, a position she takes pride in and that has helped her to be more self-confident. Alisa has been told by her employer that she is an excellent employee. As a result of Alisa's increased self-esteem, she is now more engaged in her recovery and is working with the care manager on the team to create and follow a budget that will help her work towards financial independence.



Employment Center

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



The  
**Rockville Institute**

## IPS Employment Center Notes

A history of criminal justice involvement can pose a significant barrier for people living with mental illness and wanting to gain competitive employment. Yet people do gain employment and many do so with the support of IPS services.

In this issue of *Employment Works!* we offer strategies and tips to assist people with legal system involvement to successfully gain and keep meaningful employment. An IPS specialist in Oklahoma describes the positive personal changes that occurred for someone she serves as a result of successful employment in the field of her choice. In Wisconsin, a 24-year old man finds a new start by earning his high school diploma in prison. He is upfront with employers about his past legal involvement but is now bettering himself for the future.

Congratulations and welcome to Alaska and Montreal West Island CIUSS, Canada, our newest members in the International IPS Learning Community!



## Tips for Working with People with Justice Involvement

*Regina Rice, Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation*

Tip #1: Believe that people with justice involvement can work. If you believe that people who have been involved in the justice system can't get a job or can only get a job in a particular field (i.e. convenience stores or restaurants) then you are setting yourself up to only look in those places. There are a lot of people out there working who made a mistake sometime in their lives and they work in a variety of different employment settings. They probably have some limitations to where they can work but so does everyone else.

Tip #2: Learn about the person's charges and what kind of work he or she is interested in pursuing. A person with a charge that involves violence is not likely to get a job working in a school just as a person with a charge involving fraud is unlikely to get a job in a bank. Work with the job seeker to make sure that the jobs sought are congruent with the job that he or she can qualify for in terms of justice background and skills and abilities.

Tip #3: Learn about employers in your area. Often, there is discussion of the famous list of employers who hire people with criminal backgrounds. These lists usually include very large companies and do sometimes hire but that is just a starting point. These companies may or may not exist in the area your job seeker lives particularly if it is a rural area. It is more helpful to talk with a company representative of the bigger companies in town to learn about their hiring practices and find out how they identify potential employees. If you're able to join the Chamber of Commerce then you can sometimes learn about smaller companies and their hiring practices at monthly meetings.

Tip #4: The Human Resources office is not the place to go to get a job. The HR office's job is to support the company in hiring people who fit with the company and support employees once they work for the company. They usually have very little control over who gets hired. The goal for an employment specialist and the job seeker is to find the person with the power to make hiring decisions. If the right person wants the employee, the HR team will support the hiring manager in figuring out how to hire the person as long as it's not prohibited by company policy, rules, laws, etc.

Tip #5: Teach job seekers to develop rapport with people before, during, and after job seeking. Employers hire people they know and like or people who are referred by people they know and like. Job seekers should use their network to identify where job openings exist even if they don't know anyone in a position to hire. Most people want to be helpful to others so if someone asks them if they know someone looking for work then the job seeker's name could come up. It's also easier to get a job if you already have a job so they should continue to work on developing rapport even when they have a job because this could lead to other employment opportunities.

Tip #6: Make use of available resources. If the person is on probation, he or she is often required to job seek and probation officers are sometimes aware of places that are likely to hire. The Workforce System (in Florida we call it CareerSource but it's available in every state) provides workshops for people on how to seek employment and they have a list of jobs. They can also help people get bonded if it is required for a position in which they have been offered employment. Reentry programs and programs offered through the faith community can be helpful.





## Work for People with Justice Involvement

*IPS Employment Center*

Surveys indicate that over half of people living with serious mental illness in the U.S. public mental health system have a criminal justice history, ranging from arrests to incarceration for felonies. People with legal system involvement often feel demoralized and experience stigma and rejection. Employment is an important way for people with criminal justice histories to rebuild their lives and have a meaningful place in society. Because criminal justice involvement leads to many barriers to employment, IPS specialists may have low expectations for helping this group gain employment. However, IPS specialists can use a variety of strategies to overcome these barriers.

*Employment is an important way for people with criminal justice histories to rebuild their lives and have a meaningful place in society.*

Historically, vocational programs for this population emphasized prevocational training, time-limited support, and noncompetitive jobs. These stepwise approaches stand in contrast to Individual Placement and Support – IPS, which includes principles of zero exclusion, rapid job search, competitive employment, and job support for as long as the client wants and needs the support. Two controlled trials found significantly better competitive employment rates for IPS than control group services, but the outcomes were lower than for the general IPS study population.

*IPS specialists provide support, encouragement, and guidance for people living with mental illness and legal system involvement to achieve their vocational goals.*

IPS specialists provide support, encouragement, and guidance for people living with mental illness and legal system involvement to achieve their vocational goals. IPS specialists must be flexible to engage people at a pace that is comfortable for the job seeker. People with justice involvement may feel easily discouraged and back off from services. IPS specialists continue to engage them and find out about their interests and meet them at different times of the day or locations that work for them. If job seekers are using drugs or alcohol, the IPS specialist encourages them to seek treatment from the team and continue to pursue their interest in work or school.

The IPS specialist helps the job seeker find out what is on their criminal record. A RAP (Record of Arrests and Prosecutions) sheet provides this information and can be obtained from local, state, and federal authorities, depending on where the activity occurred. After reviewing the information with the job seeker, investigate possible legal processes to expunge, seal, or reduce the severity of the criminal histories, which can make it easier to gain competitive employment.

Concurrently, the IPS specialist builds relationships with employers who have a workforce with similar skills and experiences of the job seeker. After several visits with the hiring manager, the specialist may offer to introduce a qualified candidate. In preparation for the interview, the job seeker should prepare how to explain their criminal history.



Many experienced IPS specialists recommend that the job seeker explain the history in person to the hiring manager. They can briefly state their conviction(s) using everyday language (while using good eye contact), how they have taken responsibility for their actions, and give examples of how they have changed their life positively.

*Continued on page 4.*

## Work for People with Justice Involvement continued

Finally, the job seeker can convey their skills and interest in the job. Job seekers may also bring letters of recommendation that support their recent life advancements, such as a letter from a parole or probation office, a person from the clergy, or other community connection. A worksheet to help people prepare for this conversation is located in our IPS Works online library.

Many employers report that they hire people with a criminal background because the job seekers have the qualifications to do the job and they present well and are honest about their past. An employer survey conducted by experienced employment specialists found that 63% of employers said they hired at least one person with a felony (www.ipsworks.org). People living with mental illness and criminal justice histories gain employment through the support of IPS services. Using strategies described here, IPS will help increase employment opportunities.

## What's New on IPSWorks?



If you haven't visited us on the web lately, you may have missed the newest page on our website: IPS for Employers.

### Employer Perspectives

We appreciate the people that our IPS specialist brings—they are very engaged in their jobs. Some people feel like it's just a job. But the people he introduces to my managers are happy to come to work every day and help our customers with a smile.

Aaron Mayes, Lovers



An employment specialist recommended a person who is one of my best employees. She takes pride in her work; it's more than just a job to her.

Todd Pollard, Wingfield Inn and Suites

I have hired individuals that have the IPS specialist 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.

Asher Emanuel, Help at Home

### Employer Spotlight

"We don't see differences, we see value."



The SPIRE Institute, located in Ohio, embraces diverse and inclusive living practices. With a history rooted in philanthropy and a mission to "unlock the full potential of the human spirit through athletics, academics and service to others," the SPIRE Institute is a recreational sports complex that also serves as a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic training site.

What really sets this employer apart from other employers is a strong corporate commitment to hire a diverse workforce. Jeff Orloff, the Chief Operating Officer at SPIRE Institute, says, "We don't see differences, we see value. The word 'disabled' is not a word we use. Everybody has challenges and so we are all on even ground." This positive, top-down attitude of celebrating diversity has resulted in SPIRE actively seeking a diverse workforce, which they see as hugely responsible for their remarkable community presence, growth, and overall success. When asked about the decision to embrace hiring a diverse workforce, Jeff Orloff stated, "In general, we realize too much time gets spent on looking at the differences between people to evaluate who will fit in, but if we celebrate those differences between people instead, we are able to 'stretch the box' and this allows unique ideas to be introduced that enhance the work being done."

page under the "What Is IPS?" menu on our website. And be sure to explore our website for new resources added to the document library, research updates, and more.

Visit us at

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

## Cole's Career Advancement

### IPS Employment Center

Cole is a 24-year-old man who enjoys football, spending time with his cousins, and watching reality television. He also volunteers for his local community center and his future is looking bright. Cole is going to technical school to earn a certificate in carpentry and he will soon resume his seasonal job for the city's recycling and trash program. But Cole experienced difficult times in his past

*"I told employers that I am here for a reason and I need to accomplish things."*

and was incarcerated for 18 months. "When I was incarcerated, I decided to make the best of the situation. I attended school while I was there and earned my high school diploma." When Cole was released he was determined to find ways to improve his life. He joined the IPS program at Chrysalis, a private

non-profit organization providing vocational services in Madison, Wisconsin, for help with employment. Cole reports that while he was job searching, he was honest with employers about his past. "I told them that I have a record. Some places are iffy about that, but many employers were willing to consider hiring me." Cole's IPS specialist, Ashley, says, "Cole shared his story and took accountability for his past. He tells employers that he made a mistake and wishes he could take that mistake back. But he also tells them that he wants to work for his future—to better himself." Cole agrees adding, "I made a lot of changes in my life and I have a different outlook now. I told employers that I am here for a reason and I need to accomplish things. And I also sold myself as a worker. I told them what I can do for them."





## Employment Helps with Self-Assurance

IPS Employment Center

Yeon Parks is a Vocational Rehabilitation counselor who has been working with Joe and his IPS specialist for about two years. In the beginning, Joe struggled with mental health symptoms, and although he wanted employment, he was unsure that he would be able to work a job. The team encouraged him and tried to give him hope that he could find a job. After six months, he was hired to work in the processing department of a warehouse. Joe enjoys his position reporting, "Me encanta el trabajo. Me gusta trabajar con mis manos. Me gusta la gente. Y me pagan bien."

Employment has improved Joe's life in different ways. Yeon reports, "The income has been helpful so that he can socialize with family members and he seems proud of himself. Work is helping him maintain his mental health. His parents are happy for him that he is getting up and going to work and earning money. Sometimes he even gives his mother a ride to work. Joe seems happier than when he was unemployed." Joe agrees with

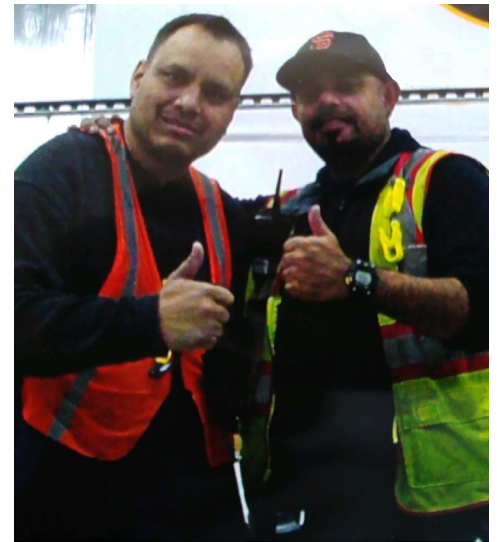
Yeon saying, "Las personas se sienten mejor cuando trabajan porque están más seguras de sí mismas. Me siento bien conmigo mismo cuando contribuyo a la economía."

*"Me encanta el trabajo.  
Me gusta trabajar con  
mis manos. Me gusta la  
gente."*

Two years ago, Joe's psychiatrist did not believe that Joe could work because he was experiencing many mental health symptoms. But after the psychiatrist saw how employment made positive changes in Joe's life, he began to make a lot of referrals to IPS. Yeon explains, "We meet weekly with the psychiatrists and IPS specialists. Psychiatrists can help people consider employment and they can adjust medications to help working people. Collaboration and working together as a team is the key to help people achieve their goals."

## ¿Habla Español?

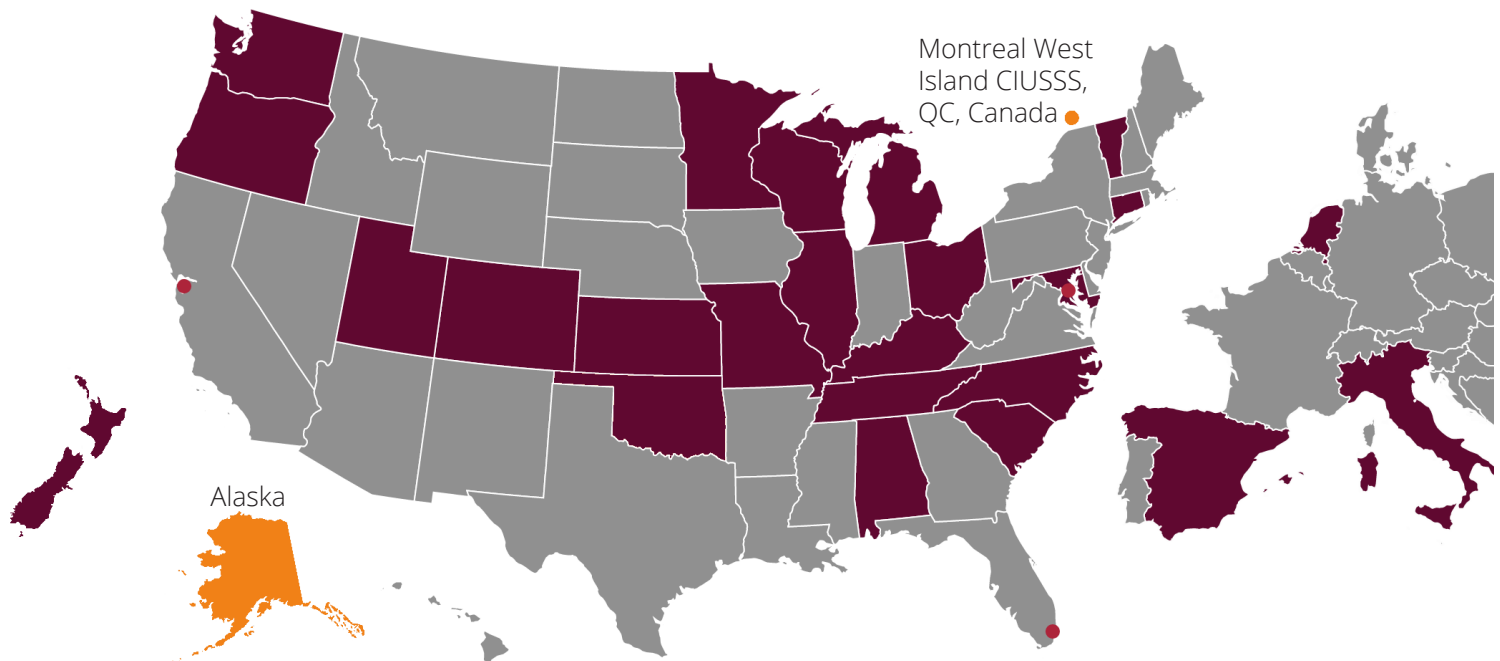
The online IPS Practitioner Course is available in Spanish with an instructor whose first language is Spanish. The next course is September 16 through November 22, 2019 and registration will be available July 29 through August 30. Go to [www.IPSWorks.org](http://www.IPSWorks.org) to find the registration link.



Joe (left) with his supervisor

## New IPS Learning Community Members

Since our Summer 2018 newsletter, Alaska and Montreal West Island CIUSSS in Canada, have joined the International IPS Learning Community. Welcome and bienvenue to our new colleagues! Our community now includes 24 states/regions inside the United States and 5 countries/regions outside the U.S. May we continue to grow!



## Upcoming Online Courses

### Practitioner Skills Course

- ◆ April 29 through July 19  
Registration March 11 through April 12
- ◆ September 2 through November 22  
Registration July 15 through August 16

### Spanish Practitioner Course

- ◆ September 16 through November 22  
Registration July 29 through August 30

### French Practitioner Course

- ◆ September 2 through November 22  
Registration July 15 through August 16

To learn more about any of our courses, visit  
[ipsworks.org/index.php/training-courses/](http://ipsworks.org/index.php/training-courses/)

### Young Adult Course

- ◆ July 15 through August 23  
Registration June 3 through June 28
- ◆ September 23 through November 8  
Registration August 12 through September 6

### IPS Supervisor Course

- ◆ June 10 through August 16  
Registration April 26 through May 24
- ◆ November 4 through December 13  
Registration September 20 through October 21

### VR Counselors Course

- ◆ August 12 through September 13  
Registration July 1 through July 26
- ◆ November 4 through December 6  
Registration September 23 through October 18



## 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.

## Coming Soon to the IPS Store...

We'll soon have a new poster gracing our online store. This IPS Supported Education Poster is designed to encourage IPS consumers think about how supported education could help them achieve their goals.



Find our supported education poster and many other resources in our IPS store.

Shop at

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



Employment Center

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

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