



March 20, 2020

Dear NASMHPD and CSAVR members:

We are pleased to share the news of a partnership between Westat, the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD), and the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). This partnership extends the existing collaboration established for the Social Security Administration's Supported Employment Demonstration (SED). The partnership will provide practical information and specific tools to State mental health (MH) and vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs to enhance collaborations at the local and state levels in order to increase competitive, integrated employment outcomes for individuals with mental illness.

Most people with mental illness want to work but need our support. Many existing collaborations between mental health and vocational rehabilitation agencies demonstrate effectiveness and better outcomes. Together, we can create effective collaborations throughout every state.

Over the next three years, NASMHPD and CSAVR, working closely with the Westat IPS Center and our respective members, will identify and disseminate strategies for and examples of successful collaborations between State MH and VR. We also must partner with businesses to meet their hiring needs.

NASMHPD and CSAVR plan to distribute to our members proven strategies and practices through a variety of methods: conference presentations, articles in our newsletters, webinars, the sharing of success stories, joint one-on-one calls with our members, issue briefs, and access to technical assistance. Some pertinent issue briefs are already available from NASMHPD, the IPS Employment Center, and members of the IPS Learning Community.

We want to hear from you about what is working, where the challenges are, and what you need. We are aware that strong collaborations between MH and VR agencies already exist in States that have embraced the Individual and Placement Support (IPS) model and are effectively addressing the mental health, disability, and employment needs of their mutual consumers.

We are excited about this new partnership and confident that, by working with all of you, we can increase positive employment outcomes for individuals with mental illness. What better time to do this than 2020 when we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the public VR program.

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