

2024 International IPS Learning Community Annual Meeting

Breakout Group: IPS in Rural Communities

Facilitators: Missy McGaw and Vicki Redden

ASPIRE grant for IPS in rural communities. What did the ASPIRE grant ID as barriers and strategies to providing IPS in rural communities:

- Small pop base
- Lack of funding
- Professional shortages
- Lack of initiative by local leaders.
- Long distances
- Lack of public transport
- Lack of internet.
- Limits of job opportunities
- Closeness of business ownership
- Limited workforce availability and funding.
- Local culture requires local knowledge and familiarity.

How do you define a rural community?

- Small
- Isolated
- Spread out
- Lack of access to services

How do we overcome the transportation issue

- Some providers buy bicycles for clients or pre-purchase taxi rides for clients to go to interviews or take the back and forth to work. They have a relationship with the company and say – this is the client and this is where they need to go.
- Pair the person with someone at the job where they can get a ride.
- Rural communities can be closely knit so that can work to your advantage in getting a ride.
- The factory created a shuttle that went back and forth and it helped the factory get the labor back and forth to work better – for everyone, not just people with SMI.
- Church vans when they are not being used to go to Sunday service.
- Plan for contingencies.
- Work incentives – PASS program. But their inability to drive has to be shown to be related to their impairment.

- Someone developed a program with the local prison that refurbished bikes and the employment specialist would deliver to individuals who need.
- County paid lyft. County was the IPS provider. County paid lyft for so many rides and they were able to use that for IPS.
- Lyft in MD gave people free rides to interviews.
- In grand rapids there was a pilot with self-driven cars that would go pick people up.
- Michael Dalto knows about PASS plans.
- Bikes: one person had to use a bike but didn't know how to ride. Employment specialist taught him how to ride a bike.

Fighting stigma in rural areas ("my people know your people")

- Talk about the individual's comfort with being vulnerable. They might need to meet people in the middle to avoid people making assumptions about them that are not valid.
- Individuals disclosing on their own their crim background to the employer might be helpful.
- Build relationships with employers. The IPS job developer should use their reputation to build the positive relationship.
- If you can get an employer with a good relationship who gets it to get in front of other employers that is very powerful. The employer who has worked with your agency will be a good spokesperson.
- Frontier: You know that person....I also know who you hired last year too. You have had bad experiences with other people. What is the challenge we are going to have – let's talk through your concerns.
- Embed yourself in local chamber of commerce.
- Networking: social capital. Get in with the VFW.
- We wish there were some kind of incentive for the elderly or retired people to give rides to people who need to get to work.

The job development/relationship piece is very important.

- When you come in the door from an IPS agency they know you are coming with workers.
- When you have an employer call you, you've made it! This means they trust you. I've got an opening – do you have someone?

How does working in a small town impact your fidelity?

- If one employer in town employs 2/3 of the town anyway then it's reasonable for them to also employ most of your people.
- If you have a low fidelity score here you can make it up in other areas.

- If the employment specialist isn't too familiar with the area they need to dig more into the community. Get deeper into the community to see what other businesses are there.
- Few people have been able to get individuals employed in online jobs. People are getting the jobs but they are getting those jobs on their own. The job development for virtual jobs is very difficult.

Has connectivity and internet access gotten better so they could actually do a remote jobs?

- Some areas are better than others.
- Cost may also be so high that they cannot afford to pay for it.

Pandemic impact

- The pandemic has helped us do virtual team building and learn how to work together better.
- One family decided they wanted to start a taxi company to serve people with disabilities and getting them to work and the city partnered with them to fund the startup.
- Other company expanded taxi hours to assist.

Success story:

- Goodwill cars to work.
- National rehab association. Every state has its own chapter. All chapters have a fund and you can apply for the funds that VR or DMH cannot cover. E.g. used it to pay a few months of car insurance. Buy bike or helmet or repair.

Difficulties other than transportation.

- Time and space.
- Size of the employer. Employers really small.
- More job carving activity that has to happen.
- Childcare.
- Stigma is very real.
- Getting diversity of employers.
- Workforce and staffing patterns: High turnover. It's hard to find people who are qualified for the IPS position. Pay is not good enough.
- Reduce the documentation burden.