

# IPS WORKS

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE IPS EMPLOYMENT CENTER

## *A Peer Mentor's Perspective*

PATRICK WILLIAMS

In June 2025, Patrick Williams celebrated his 3<sup>rd</sup> year anniversary as an Employment Peer Mentor working at Easter Seals in North Carolina. "To be able to share my journey is freeing and I feel proud that I overcame my past and it feels like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders."

Patrick finds his job exciting because it is never the same. He explains that he uses "the darkest part" of his life to help people. Patrick works alongside IPS employment specialists in helping people navigate their employment journey. He takes them to food banks or to get clothes so they can be ready for job interviews or for work. He helps with mock interviews. Patrick assists in developing wellness plans that include strategies such as using a person's coping skills, meeting with medication providers, engaging with job seekers or workers to maintain motivation and to provide encouragement. Patrick also emphasizes the value of involving family members because they go through what the person goes through. Patrick is aware of this because his wife was along for his journey.



The job of a peer support specialist is not for everyone because peers should be in the "right place" when they take on this type of work. For example, Patrick was sober a year before he pursued the job. The job can be either re-traumatizing or therapeutic. Setting boundaries, turning off the cell phone at the end of the day, and focusing on other life responsibilities like being a spouse helps Patrick manage the stress of the job. His message to clients and job seekers is to "Trust the IPS process, be patient, and remind yourself that many people have become successfully employed." He says, "IPS specialists can provide hope and be directly involved and responsible."

Patrick received the 2025 IPS Advocate with Lived Experience Award at the International IPS Learning Community Annual Meeting and he spoke before 250 people at that gathering. He hopes to grow within the organization he works for and become a team leader some day.

## THIS ISSUE

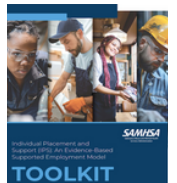
- 1 A Peer Mentor's Perspective
- 2 Upcoming Courses & Events
- 3 Strong Leadership for Excellent IPS Services & SUD Learning Community
- 4 Highlights from the Annual Meeting
- 5 The Value of VR Partnerships with IPS

***IPS Stands for Individual Placement and Support and is an evidence-based practice.***

## Announcements

### SAMHSA Toolkit

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has released an up-to-date toolkit about IPS. It is a collection of educational tools and resources that are designed to assist a variety of stakeholder groups with IPS implementation and sustainment. For more information, visit the [SAMHSA website](https://www.samhsa.gov/ips/toolkit).



### Highlights from the Annual Meeting

Pictures, breakout session notes, and speaker presentations are available. Please visit the [2025 Annual Meeting page](#).



Employment Center  
at Research Foundation for Mental Hygiene, Inc.

# Upcoming Courses & Events

Remember to visit [the IPS Employment Center's Website](#) for training updates and announcements.

Event	Dates
<p>IPS Practice Principles Webinar (no cost)</p> <p>For new IPS specialists and mental health practitioners. These 90-minute, virtual trainings cover the 8 principles of IPS Supported Employment. Each training covers the same material.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">July 22, 2025 - 3:30 PM EST</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">August 5, 2025 - 9:00 AM EST</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">August 19, 2025 - 3:30 PM EST</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">September 2, 2025 - 9:00 AM EST</a></li> </ul>
Community Based Services Webinar	<p>July 23, 2025 from 12 PM - 1:30 PM EST</p> <p><a href="#">Click here</a> for more information.</p>
Online Practitioner Course	<p>Starts on September 15, 2025</p> <p>Registration for this course will open on August 4<sup>th</sup></p>
Online Supervisor Course - English and French	<p>Starts on September 8, 2025</p> <p>Registration for this course opens on August 4<sup>th</sup></p>
Mental Illness and Recovery Course	<p>Starts on September 29, 2025</p> <p>Registration opens on August 11<sup>th</sup></p>
Leadership Training	<p>September 3 - 4, 2025 &amp; September 9, 10, 11, 2025</p> <p>11:00 AM - 2:00 PM EST</p> <p>Contact <a href="#">Sarah Swanson</a> for more information and registration.</p>
Quarterly Data is due (for Learning Community programs)	<p>We appreciate everyone's efforts in helping us continue to learn about IPS by sharing your data. The system is open now for entry of the Q2 2025 (Apr 1 - Jun 30) outcomes. <b>Deadline for data entry is <a href="#">September 26</a>.</b></p>

Being a member of the International IPS Learning Community provides states, regions, and countries with opportunities that foster growth, guide successful implementation, and support sustainment of their IPS program.



## Welcome Australia!

### Australia joins the IPS Learning Community!

#### Did you know?

You can use the IPS Reporting System "Reports" feature to generate visual data that may be useful in supervising teams, setting quarterly goals, or raising awareness among leadership and funders about the accomplishments of your program at no cost. For assistance with any report generation or support, please reach out to [Jennie Keleher](#).

## Strong Leadership for Excellent IPS Services

Jennifer Harris, M.S.  
IPS Director, Carastar Health  
Montgomery, AL

Jennifer Harris became the IPS supervisor at Carastar during the COVID-19 pandemic. She feels that an IPS team that shares responsibilities provides better services to consumers. For example, Jennifer explained that a worker needed help taking the bus to work on a Saturday, so she volunteered to go with him. She stated, "I will not ask my staff to do anything that I'm unwilling to do." Jennifer also meets every person who is referred to the IPS program. If she does not meet the consumer when they engage in IPS services, she joins the specialist while they meet with the person to develop the career profile or while having a family meeting.

Jennifer loves being out in the community with the IPS specialists. She believes that consistent field mentoring demonstrates that she wants to understand their jobs and support them in their work. And Jennifer says that working side-by-side with the specialists frequently helps them feel less nervous about having her along because it builds trust between herself and team members.

Jennifer reports that the weekly vocational unit meeting is a cornerstone of building team cohesion. The meeting consists of celebrating successes, sharing job leads and brainstorming solutions to help individuals to accomplish their goals. But she also plans time for the team to socialize, for example, the team sometimes has lunch at restaurants that has hired individuals from the IPS program.

The Carastar Executive Director (ED) shows support by joining every technical assistance call with IPS subject matter experts. Early on Jennifer shared her concern with the ED about the small number of referrals being made by the mental health team, and she requested two days annually to highlight IPS in the agency. The ED responded, "Why not a week?" This event has turned into a popular agency tradition. Everyone looks forward to hearing success stories and learning about IPS through fun activities.

## Learning Community on IPS for People with Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

Robert E. Drake, M.D., Ph.D.  
The IPS Employment Center

The IPS-SUD learning community started in 2024 because IPS for this population was spreading rapidly. Little supporting research, only small pilot studies, existed, but three randomized controlled trials were nearing completion. One was a multisite trial conducted in the U.S. A second multisite trial occurred across the U.K. And a third smaller trial took place in Oslo, Norway. The IPS Center brought the three groups conducting these trials together to share and compare insights garnered from these trials, initially regarding implementation and subsequently regarding outcomes. The trials in the U.K. and Norway have now been published with both showing positive outcomes for IPS. The U.S. group is currently analyzing trial data.

The IPS-SUD learning community group has been meeting informally every two months for about one year. Along the way, several other interested parties, including people with lived experience, researchers, clinical leaders, and state leaders, from the U.S. and other countries, have joined our journey. Thus far, participants have shared implementation experiences, papers, and ideas. In the future, we hope to prepare materials that may help new IPS-SUD programs with training, implementation, fidelity, technical assistance, and data collection. As always, members of the learning community have enjoyed sharing and learning from colleagues.

Join the IPS Learning Community discussion on Community-based Services on Wednesday, **July 23, 2025 from 12 PM – 1:30 PM EST**. What makes IPS unique and effective when services are brought outside of the mental health agencies? Click on the picture for more information, including Zoom link.



## Highlights from the 2025 International IPS Learning Community Annual Meeting

The International IPS Learning Community met on May 14-15, 2025 in Nashville, TN to learn from speakers and discuss strategies to improve IPS service delivery. Attendees included Learning Community members and guests from Australia, Canada, England, Iceland, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, South Korea, and the U.S. (including Alabama, Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin).

Discussions and presentations focused on assisting new populations of people (for example, those with Autism, people who are unhoused, and individuals who have been impacted by the legal system). Other topics included efforts to improve Equity Diversity and Inclusion in IPS services, assist young adults with jobs and education/job training, highlight the role of families in supporting workers, update our knowledge about recent IPS research studies, learn from colleagues in different countries, and improve collaboration between Vocational Rehabilitation and IPS programs.

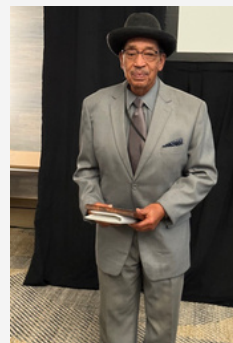
Individuals were nominated for awards in six categories and the winners were announced at a dinner.

### Advocate with Lived Experience

- Marlaina Tucci
- Patrick Williams
- Charles Haslerig



Marlaina Tucci



Charles Haslerig



Patrick Williams

### Facilitator Award

- Stephanie Cooper



Stephanie Cooper



Regina Crockett



Jessica Hales

### Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Award (EDI)

- Regina Crockett

### Vocational Rehabilitation Award

- Marcia Gibson
- Laura Spencer

### Excellence in IPS Training Award

- Meka McNeal
- Deirdre Sage

### Rick Martinez Leadership for IPS Award

- Jessica Hales
- Rachel Perkins
- Kim Hammack

Don't forget to visit the [2025 Annual Meeting page](#) for more pictures!



## The Value of VR Partnerships with IPS

Andrzej Walz-Chojnacki  
Department of Workforce Development  
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)  
Wisconsin

---



Andrzej Walz-Chojnacki is a Supported Employment Policy Analyst for the Department of Workforce Development (DWD), Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) in Wisconsin. He first learned about Individual Placement and Support (IPS) in 2009, when he was a supported employment provider and Wisconsin became one of the first states to pilot the evidence-based model. Andrzej was intrigued and pleased to learn that there was an approach to supported employment that was grounded in research.

Since taking his position, Andrzej has become a champion of IPS, putting significant effort into aligning DVR processes with those of IPS. He's overseen the opening of new sites and supported existing sites to improve their performance. In Wisconsin, funding for mental health services, including vocational services, flows through the counties. Andrzej has had many conversations with county leaders and providers, helping identify who should be involved, how DVR might increase their flexibility when it comes to reporting requirements, where communication tends to break down between programs and DVR, and developing a process for rolling out a site to ensure greatest success.

Andrzej recognizes that IPS teams and DVR can help one another with their respective missions. For example, IPS teams and their mental health partners have expertise in addressing serious mental health and related barriers to employment, which can be helpful to DVR counselors who do not typically serve that population. Andrzej champions the interdisciplinary approach of IPS as a plus for DVR, offering, "counselors don't have to do it alone. A lot of other people are at the table." For IPS teams, DVR is a resource for employment expertise, employer contacts and funding for critical employment services. Andrzej has advocated for flexibility in the process of partnering, to streamline paperwork and reporting requirements in an effort to encourage increased collaboration.

At this point, Andrzej hopes to be a part of improving data collection in Wisconsin to accurately learn how IPS compares to regular DVR services for individuals with mental health concerns. He is working with colleagues to ensure that data analyzed is representative of the two different groups in accurate ways. He is confident about the effectiveness of IPS and continues work to increase its implementation across Wisconsin.

### Make a suggestion

---

What would you like to see in the next edition of this newsletter? If you have suggestions, please contact Jennie Keleher at [jennie.keleher@nyspi.columbia.edu](mailto:jennie.keleher@nyspi.columbia.edu)



The IPS Employment Center  
at Research Foundation for Mental Hygiene, Inc.

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