

IPS WORKS

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE IPS EMPLOYMENT CENTER

IPS Specialist at Large

ANNE THOMAS

In the fall of 2021, Anne Thomas began her IPS practitioner journey at HealthWest, in Muskegon, Michigan. She wanted to learn what IPS is all about. “It gives me goosebump moments to hear recovery stories. I have found that the IPS model aligns with my core values in life.”



In the spirit of community-based services, Anne offers her program participants choice regarding where to meet. She meets individuals at libraries, shelters, parks, outside tents, coffee shops, workplaces, and in other locations. Anne even went with a program participant to the Muskegon Lakeshore Museum. The museum was exhibiting a Native American Exhibit that the young man wanted to see. The exhibit was free, so they went to the museum and walked around talking about a job search plan. Anne says that meeting people where they like to spend time is an effective engagement strategy—especially for young adults.

Community-based services go hand in hand with discovering hidden job markets and learning valuable insights about workplaces that Anne cannot discover from her office. Meeting program participants outside of the office helps with engagement and builds a trusting relationship. According to Anne, the job of an IPS specialist is emotionally demanding. She advises other specialists not to lose hope. She also recommends that they focus on the person rather than the illness. Have fun alongside the people.

“The greatest achievement is being able to witness people recover through employment. It is like helping them find the gift of working. This job chose me.” In addition to being an IPS specialist, Anne is a part of the fidelity review team in Michigan.

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

Announcements

IPS Supervisors

If the VR counselors you work with would like to receive this newsletter, please send us their email addresses. We would also be happy to include your local NAMI staff.

Thanks for helping us spread the word about IPS!

2026 Online IPS Course Schedule

The 2026 schedule has been posted. Remember to visit ipsworks.org for upcoming course dates.

A Back-to-Work Story: The Right Place, for the Right Purpose

Justin Hart
Weber Human Services
Ogden, Utah

Justin Hart is an enthusiastic Peer Support Specialist/Case Manager at Weber Human Services in Ogden, Utah. His journey has not been easy, but it's one he's proud of and that he is building on. Justin says, "You can come from a troubled past...it doesn't mean you can't have a good quality of life." This is the message he shares with those he encounters.



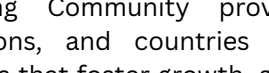
Justin graduated from college, ran his own business, was married and had children before he got involved with substance use and his "life took a turn." It was after he lost his job, his marriage, and incurred a felony charge, that he became determined to pursue recovery and a better life. Justin spent time in treatment and the Men's Group Home at Weber and participated in a mental health court program, thus meeting his goal of having that felony charge dropped from his record. "Cleaning up my record and history made a huge relief and difference." Justin's therapist referred him to the IPS program. His IPS specialist helped him identify his interests and skills that led him to consider being a peer specialist. Meanwhile, his team helped him overcome various challenges, such as the loss of his Medicaid benefits, and housing denials.

Today, Justin has 3 ½ years of sobriety. He has his own place to live, is reconnecting with his adult children and is no longer a client at Weber; instead, he's an employee. As a Peer Support Specialist/Case Manager at the group home where he used to live, Justin teaches Independent Life Skills and Illness Management Recovery Aftercare. He says his IPS specialist helped him "get what I needed...the right place, the right company, and for the right purpose." While Justin values his work, his agency values him. In fact, he was recently given Weber's quarterly Extra Mile Award for those who go above and beyond their duties.

Meanwhile, Justin is spreading his message of hope beyond Weber; he recently sat on the IPS Panel at the Utah's Generations Conference, themed "Working is a Part of Recovery." He spoke about his lived experience and current job, highlighting the key role that employment has in one's quality of life. He finished his presentation by saying, "It can be done." Back at Weber, he refers others to the IPS program. "I enjoy inspiring people. I want to help others find their strength and believe in themselves when they think there is no hope."

Remember to visit the IPS Employment Center's Website for training updates and announcements.

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.



Breaking Barriers: Utilizing Trauma- Informed Care with IPS

Join us on October 28th at 11 am EST to discover how IPS and trauma-informed practices work together to create safer, more empowering pathways to employment and recovery.

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](#).

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IPS Online Courses

The IPS Employment Center

The IPS Employment Center offers online courses for IPS practitioners, supervisors, Vocational Rehabilitation counselors, agency leaders, state leaders, and IPS trainers. The English online courses, including the IPS Practitioner Skills Course and Supervisors Skills Course, are offered three times a year. Students can work on the courses anytime of the day. The course units are didactic and include exercises for practical application of what is learned. Students submit assignments to their instructors for feedback.

Below are quotes from students who have completed the online courses.

“Thank you for all the support along the way as I completed this IPS Supervisory course. I learned a great deal and ***am doing my best to implement right now with the concepts learned.*** In addition, this course is helping me to better prepare for our upcoming IPS Fidelity Review.”

“I am so thankful for (the instructor’s) input. The brainstorming worksheet was shared with my team. My client is really having a difficult time, but your resources are extremely helpful!”

“The approach to (developing relationships with) employers is excellent. It revolutionized my thinking.”

“The self-paced aspect was perfect!”

“I liked how the material was broken down into units instead as just one reading. I also liked the quizzes.”

For more information on different courses and training being offered, please visit <https://ipsworks.org/index.php/training-courses/>.

IPS for Adults with Autism

Robert E. Drake, M.D., Ph.D.

The IPS Employment Center

As IPS extends to new populations, such as people with substance use disorders and early psychosis conditions, one of the most compelling populations is adults with autism. Among 5.5 million working age adults with autism, 75% are unemployed and most of these people want to work. Some European countries and several U.S. states have been offering IPS services to these individuals, but no rigorous research is yet available. The IPS Center’s new research director, Ana Carolina Florence, PhD, has been taking the lead in this area. This article summarizes her recent publications and new grant.

Ana has published two recent articles on IPS and people with autism. The first, entitled “Adapting Individual Placement and Support for Unemployed Adults with Autism,” lays out a stepwise plan to develop and test the intervention. A five-step approach to adapting Individual Placement and Support to adults with ASD includes: 1) Involving stakeholders; 2) Examining available data from different perspectives; 3) Conducting a pilot study to establish acceptance, feasibility, proximal and distal outcomes, and adaptations; 4) Conducting comparative effectiveness research; and 5) Translating research to policy. The second article, entitled “Individual Placement and Support for Adults with Autism: A Qualitative Study of Expert Opinions,” summarizes interviews with 35 individuals in the personal and professional autistic community who have had experience with IPS and employment. The interviewees recommended minor adjustment to IPS, including a hands-on approach to support social skills, involving families if possible, and educating employment specialists and employers about autism. The IPS Center is assembling a course for practitioners. Abstracts and references for Ana’s articles are available on the IPS Center’s website.

Finally, Ana’s new grant, funded by the National Institute of Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research, is beginning this month in Kentucky. Along with Kentucky’s outstanding training leader Lori Norton, Ana is proceeding to implement the stepwise approach to introducing IPS to the autism population, as outlined in her articles. We wish her well and look forward to hearing about progress.

Agencies in Minnesota Save IPS Program Funding

When agencies in Minnesota faced a large cut in IPS funding, they were prepared to advocate for their programs. The state chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) facilitates a group called the Mental Health Legislative Network (MHLN). Leaders of agencies with IPS programs, including Rise (Fridley, MN), knew each other from this group and had experience working together. For example, Minnesota NAMI asked MHLN to propose state legislation for \$2,400,000 to support IPS. The legislation passed but agencies were unable to use the funding to start new IPS programs so they could not spend all of the money. That led legislators to incorrectly believe that the funding was not needed. Mike Harper and Robert Reedy (Senior Directors for Rise) reported that programs were first alerted to a 38% cut in state general funds for IPS and later learned of plans for a 78% cut in general funds for IPS.

Fortunately, Minnesota IPS programs had already been working on strategies to advocate for IPS. Two years ago, Mike Harper and Robert Reedy reached out to agencies through the Minnesota IPS Supervisors Meeting to ask for financial contributions to a lobbyist who would represent all of their programs. Twelve agencies banded together and hired a lobbyist who had done similar work in the past. The annual bill of \$42,000 was shared among the 12 agencies using a sliding scale (based on the amount of state general funds each program received). Rise signed a contract with the lobbyist and became the fiscal agent for the project. During the first year, the lobbyist learned about IPS and how programs are funded. During the second year, the effort was better organized and all agencies with IPS programs got involved. The lobbyist helped group members to prepare testimonials and educational materials for legislators.

When the funding cuts were announced this year, the lobbyist had already been talking about IPS with legislators and had access to some committee meetings. He scheduled time for family members and persons served to talk with legislators. He followed up with the leadership of the funding agency and also organized an email campaign for IPS stakeholders to advocate for IPS funding. A Republican legislator took up the cause and became one of the main supporters for IPS. The lobbyist heard someone at the state capitol remark that legislators heard more about IPS that year than any other program.

Because their campaign was successful in preserving funds for IPS, the Minnesota programs plan to continue working together with their lobbyist. They have learned that it is best to have advocacy in place ahead of financial cuts, and that professional help is effective.



Building History - Minnesota Historical Society

Connect with this landmark building designed by Cass Gilbert through its amazing stories — and learn about its incredible architecture, art and history. The State Capitol Historic Site interprets the history of the Capitol and state government, both historical and current. The Capitol teaches the political process and inspires citizen participation in government.

www.mnhs.org

The History of IPS in Australia

Roshani Shrestha

Western Australia Association for Mental Health (WAAMH)

Western Australia Association for Mental Health (WAAMH) was founded in 1966 and is the peak body for community Mental Health in Western Australia. Our vision is “As a human right, every one of us will have the resources and support needed for mental wellbeing, recovery and citizenship”. We are a well-established provider of evidence-informed mental health training built on person-centered, trauma-informed, recovery-oriented, and culturally informed practice pillars. WAAMH is where the Australian IPS Center for Excellence is based. IPS implementation in Australia started 20 years ago in 2005 with two pilot sites in Victoria. In Western Australia, IPS was formally started in 2012 after the establishment of the IPS Development Unit at WAAMH. Early IPS services were predominantly delivered by partnerships between adult community mental health services and Disability Employment Services (DES) providers.

The IPS programs in Australia focus on supporting adults and youth with mental health conditions. Implementation in youth services has increased in recent years with federal funding from the Department of Social Services at 50 headspace sites across Australia. Adult IPS programs are far and few between and scattered around this very large country. There are a total of 62 IPS sites in the country.

WAAMH is where IPS leadership is based, the team is overseen by the Manager of Operations and Business Development, with direct support provided by the IPS Project Lead. Four full-time IPS trainers are located in Perth, Adelaide, Brisbane and Queensland. These four trainers are responsible for fidelity reviews and providing technical support. The trainers meet virtually every fortnight and in-person twice a year. We make a point of staying in close touch with each other through SharePoint and messaging.

We are thrilled to see the expansion of IPS across Australia. IPS helps to restore dignity, and allows people to be seen for their potential, rather than their mental health challenges or diagnosis. When a person gets a job they enjoy, it has a positive ripple effect that benefits families, communities, and the broader economy.



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



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

ipsworks.org