
Mobilizing and Managing Peer Support Workers in IPS

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Objectives

Examine what a peer support worker is and their value on an IPS team

Learn about the peer support worker's role on the IPS team

Discuss how to add peer support workers to IPS, including training and supervision

Identify the challenges of adding peer support workers to IPS and some solutions

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Who is a Peer Support Worker?

- Someone who has been successful in the recovery process from a mental health and/or substance use disorder, and who helps others experiencing similar situations
- Helps people become and stay engaged in the recovery process, which reduces the likelihood of relapse of symptoms and/or return to use
- Extends the reach of treatment beyond the clinical setting into the everyday environment (i.e., the community)
- Offers support before, during, and after treatment to facilitate long-term recovery
- Assists in developing coping and problem-solving strategies for illness self-management
- Draws on lived experiences (e.g., hospitalizations, incarceration, homelessness, mandated treatment, unemployment, loss of natural support, etc.) and empathy to promote hope, insights, and skills
- Helps engage in treatment, access community supports, and establish a satisfying life

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Who is an IPS Peer Support Worker?

- Everything a peer support worker is **AND**
- Someone who is successfully employed
 - Provides hope and inspiration that work and/or education is possible
- Someone who completed a training program
 - Maintains their certification with continuing education courses (i.e., ongoing learning)
- Could be someone who has transitioned off welfare benefits



<https://maternalmentalhealthalliance.org/campaign/projects/perinatal-peer-support-principles/>

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Why Add Peer Support to IPS?



<https://abuhb.nhs.wales/hospitals/a-z-of-services/peer-support-integrated-service/what-is-peer-support/>

- Individuals are told, directly and indirectly, that they cannot work because of their mental illness, benefits, etc.
 - Meaningful to see someone with lived experience doing an appealing job (i.e., a career job, professional, with benefits)
 - Share lived experience of returning to work and/or education
 - Helps individuals overcome internalized stigma and fears about work/education
- Influences agency culture to embrace a recovery vision
 - A reminder to clinicians and individuals receiving services that recovery is possible, and it looks different for everyone
 - Can inform recovery-oriented practices from knowledge of navigating treatment systems
- Keeps services person-centered and strengths-based

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What do IPS Peer Support Workers do?

Share their **personal story** to **model** how to **choose, obtain, and maintain** employment and/or education

Promote **independence, recovery, and self-advocacy**

Assist with **informed decision-making** (e.g., disclosure, therapy, medications)



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IPS Peer Support Workers Also

Link to **resources** and **teach skills** (bus routes, budgeting, time management, etc.) for work

Focus on **wellness-related strategies** – WRAP and/or IMR; physical wellness management (e.g., management of diabetes); anything that focuses on health as it relates to employment

Provide **psychiatric rehabilitation interventions** that support employment and educational goals.



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Additional IPS Peer Support Worker Tasks

- Use **assertive engagement** strategies to continuously engage individuals in IPS services.
- Assist in identifying strengths, wellness goals, setting objectives, and identifying barriers.
- Explore career and educational aspirations.
- Attend **treatment team meetings** to promote the use of self-directed advocacy tools.
- Participate in the development of the **Career Profile** and employment goal planning.
- **Connect to support groups** in the community to learn from other peers, promote hope, problem-solve through work situations, and decrease social isolation.
- **Provide education** to increase the IPS team's understanding of self-advocacy and peer support roles and **promote a culture** in which the **individual's point of view** and preferences are recognized, understood, respected, and integrated into service delivery.



<https://www.anotherwayvt.org/peer-support>

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Comparing IPS Peer Support Workers and Employment Specialists

Similarities

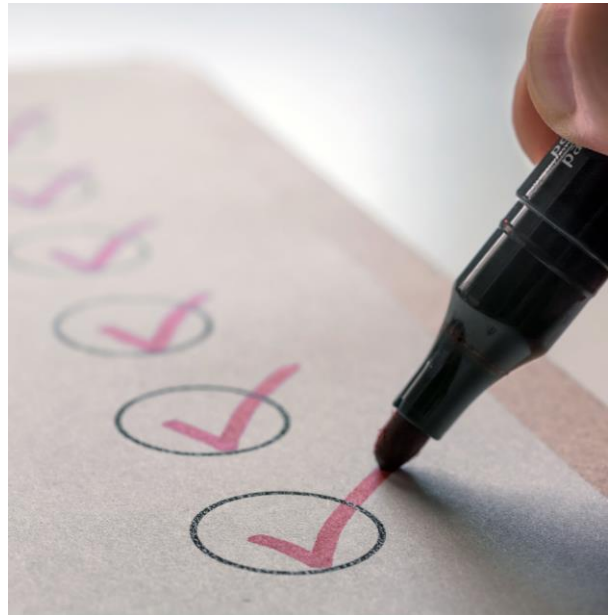
- Spend 65% of time in the community
- Attend treatment team meetings
- Meetings with individuals in person
- Add input to the Career Profile (e.g., disclosure, mental health, substance use, justice involvement)
- Work with natural supports
- Documentation (progress notes in medical record)

Differences

- No job development
- Limited employer/education interactions
- Minimal employment supports (e.g., resume writing, job applications, attending interviews) because the focus is on wellness and recovery
- Voluntary support

How to Add Peer Support to IPS

- Develop a clear job description with expectations and duties
 - Some agencies use neutral job titles that do not disclose peer status (e.g., Recovery Specialist), OR identify the disclosure process for peers
- Educate other staff on the role of peer support
 - Train supervisors on how to supervise peer support workers
- Cover expenses: travel costs, laptop/tablet, cell phone (or stipend), training (internal and external)
- Provide supervision
- Support wellness (e.g., time off for therapy, medication, accommodations)
- Ensure that peers are treated as equal employees, with their contributions valued just as highly as those of clinical and IPS staff
 - Ask for their input in service planning
 - Establish agency policies that are consistent for peer and non-peer workers



Training for IPS Peer Support Workers



- Peer Support
- IPS: overview of the Practice Principles and research, Career Profile, Disclosure, Job Supports
- Wellness and Recovery strategies: Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP), Illness Management & Recovery (IMR), Vocational Illness Management & Recovery (VIMR), Whole Health Action Management (WHAM), etc.
 - Movement in the peer community to use **wellness** rather than illness
- Motivational Interviewing
- Clinical: overview of common mental health symptoms, medications, and therapeutic techniques
- Setting boundaries
- Maintaining confidentiality and mandated reporting (i.e., you don't have to share everything you learned about someone unless required by law/agency)
- Required agency trainings

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Supervising IPS Peer Support Workers

- Meet weekly in the beginning, then at least monthly
 - In-person is recommended
- Provide field mentoring
 - Shadow meetings and provide feedback just like you would for employment specialists
- Know a little about their recovery journey and what they self-disclose (i.e., don't want to disclose for them accidentally)
 - Know the confidentiality laws in your municipality/country
- Support their recovery (i.e., check in on their well-being, encourage time off when needed, connect to supports outside of the job if needed)
 - Have a plan in place when they encounter a mental health or substance use crisis
 - Do they have a WRAP or wellness plan for work?
- Ask what job accommodations or modifications could make them more successful on the job
 - Examples: flexible scheduling, dictation software for notes, productivity/time management apps

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Additional Peer Supervision Strategies

- Review documentation (e.g., progress notes, Career Profiles, etc.)
 - It should not include clinical jargon
- Staff cases for a peer perspective
 - Are our interventions aligned with the recovery model?
 - Provide time and space to reflect on peer practices
- Discuss professional goals, struggles, and successes
 - Focus on knowledge, skills, and attitudes
- Talk about setting and maintaining boundaries
 - This is usually very difficult for peers due to their role with individuals
- Administrative
 - Alignment with agency policies and trainings, time management, follow through with tasks, record keeping, etc.
- Role-play developing advocacy skills for team meetings, both for themselves and the people they support
 - Peers might need to build up their self-efficacy for gently and appropriately challenging licensed clinicians and psychiatric care providers

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Addressing the Challenges of Hiring IPS Peer Support Workers

Challenges

- Systems-level challenges: Agencies, clinicians, and supervisors do not know how to utilize peers
- Agency policies may conflict with peer role
- Peers not feeling supported or welcome in their role
- Being asked to complete tasks outside of the peer role because someone needs to do them
- Funding structure: salary, reimbursement rate
- Peers are not a part of the IPS fidelity scale

Solutions

- Develop a peer supervisor training, a training about peer support for all staff
- Ask for peer input in agency policies
- Initiate support calls for peers (across the agency, region, country)
- Advocate for reimbursement rates that pay peers the same salary as employment specialists
- Technical assistance for IPS teams, agencies, and clinicians
- Giving kudos in the fidelity report about the work peers are doing

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- Contact information
 - Penny Liles:
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- Wellness Recovery Action Plan: <https://www.wellnessrecoveryactionplan.com/>
- Illness Management and Recovery: <https://library.samhsa.gov/product/illness-management-and-recovery-evidence-based-practices-ebp-kit/sma09-4462>
- Vocational Illness Management & Recovery: <https://cpr.bu.edu/store/vocational-illness-management-and-recovery/>
- Whole Health Action Management: <https://www.nationalcouncildocs.net/whole-health-action-management-wham/>
- Intentional Peer Support: <https://intentionalpeersupport.org/>
- Motivational Interviewing: <https://motivationalinterviewing.org/understanding-motivational-interviewing>
- Handbook for IPS Peer Specialists: <https://ipsworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/HANDBOOK-FOR-IPS-PEER-SPECIALISTS-1.10.24.pdf>
- IPS Trainings: <https://ipsworks.org/index.php/training-courses/>
- SAMHSA Peer Support Tools: <https://www.samhsa.gov/technical-assistance/brss-tacs/peer-support-workers>