

FAMILY MEMBER/CAREGIVER ADVOCACY FOR IPS SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

The International IPS Learning Community includes family members as a core stakeholder group that provides education and advocacy to their communities in several ways:

- (1) Family leaders educate IPS teams and partners regarding the important roles that family can have in supporting their family member through the process of job seeking, working a job, and advancing in a career, sometimes with further education.
- (2) Family members help educate other families and community members about the benefits of IPS supported employment and the role of work in the recovery from behavioral health conditions.

Family members help promote expansion of IPS services into other communities in their state and help sustain services by advocating with the state legislature for policy and budgetary supports for IPS programs. Family members and caregivers have personal experience caring for a person with mental health challenges and services, this can include siblings, close relatives, friends, partners, etc.

Many of advocates are connected with the [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#), [Mental Health America \(MHA\) affiliates](#), [National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health \(FOF\)](#) chapters who work with youth and young adults, [National Disability Rights member agencies](#), Vocational Rehabilitation or State Mental Health Consumer Family Advocacy Councils, Employment First initiatives, or similar state/local groups.

The IPS Employment Center facilitates monthly calls with family leaders to share updates on family activities among Learning Community sites, discuss successes and challenges, and plan advocacy efforts at the state or national level. Family leaders are invited to attend the annual meeting of the International IPS learning community to connect with their peers and learn about advances in IPS research, implementation, and sustainment. Some of the family activities have included:

- Making presentations about IPS at conferences and to the community including school/university counseling departments, wellness centers, law enforcement groups, state agencies, etc.
- Working with IPS staff to improve the quality of IPS supported employment by participating in steering committees and fidelity reviews.
- Serving as presenters at NAMI events to encourage family involvement in employment and education activities to improve care coordination and help loved ones attain employment goals.
- Testifying at public hearings and events about the importance of employment and education contributing to an individual's recovery and the successful outcomes attributed to the IPS model.
- Developing televised public service announcements (PSAs) about IPS and return to work stories.

The families participating in the International IPS Learning Community are dedicated to making a difference at the local, state and national levels by influencing public policy regarding employment services for people with behavioral health conditions. On a local level, families are a resource for advocating for high quality services. Effective strategies include partnering with leaders from mental health services, state Vocational Rehabilitation, NAMI, and local family chapters and affiliates.

Family members who are interested in more information about advocacy opportunities or in the monthly IPS Family group, please contact us: Emery Cowan: IPSfamilygroup@gmail.com or Sarah Swanson: SarahSwanson@westat.com