

Ask Me Anything with Deborah Becker, September 28, 2017

David Blair: Yes I can. Alright, let me start the recording and we'll get started. Well good afternoon everyone, and welcome to Ask Me Anything About Employment with Deb Becker. My name is David Blair and I'll be your moderator today. This webinar is not a presentation, but an interactive question and answer period. For the next hour, Deborah Becker will take any questions you have related to Individual Placement and Support, or IPS, with a focus on job development questions. Deb is a Research Senior Associate and Director of the International IPS Learning Community at the IPS Employment Center within Rockville Institute at Westat. She has more than thirty-three years of experience developing, researching, training and consulting on Individual Placement and Support. Today's event is part of a national resource center on employment jointly funded by the National Institute on Disability Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research and the Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration within the Department of Health and Human Services. The content of this webinar does not represent the views or policies of the funding agencies, and should not be assumed to be an endorsement by the Federal Government. During registration for this event, you were given the opportunity to submit questions in advance. Over the course of the webinar, we will alternate between questions submitted in advance and the ones that you have today. To ask questions over the phone, please indicate that you would like to in the chat box, and when called upon, you'll press "star star" on your phone to unmute yourself. I've muted everyone for now to make sure that we don't get an echo feedback. You may also type your questions into the chat box and I'll read them to Deb on your behalf. Your participation is critical to the success of this event. As a reminder, if you joined us by telephone, please make sure to mute your computer speakers before asking questions. It will cause an echo that is not pleasing to anyone listening. Welcome to the webinar, and I hope you enjoy the next hour. We will get started now with a question submitted during registration if that's okay with you Deb?

Deb Becker: Sure.

David: So, Theo from Massachusetts asks, Sorry, let me get my place real quick. So, Angela from Arkansas asks; "What help is there for targets of workplace bullying who experience mental health problems as a result?"

Deb: Workplace bullying? Maybe repeat that question again?

David: Yeah, sure. So Angela from Arkansas asks; "What help is there for targets of workplace bullying who experience mental health problems as a result?"

Deb: Okay, before I answer that or say workplace bullying, which should not be tolerated obviously at all. So, read the question one more time, I'm just focusing on those words.

David: Sure, what she's hoping to understand is what kind of help can she get for people who are targeted and bullied in work and that resulted in mental health problems?

Deb: Hmm, okay, and is she, well, I'm guessing she might be an Employment Specialist, so she's had people who've gone to work, had been bullied, and how to handle that situation? Is that what she's?

David: Yeah, I believe that's the idea. Let's assume she's an Employment Specialist, so she's trying to help the client.

Deb: Yeah, so I guess what they have to do with whether the Employment Specialist has been introduced to the Employer as being connected with a person who's working. But it sounds like the person who asked the question is saying that some kind of stress or mental illness, I think was the word she used, resulted from the bullying. So, I think that if I was the Employment Specialist, I'm guessing that they are not connected to the employer because this may be new that it would be a matter of trying to coach the employee on connecting with his or her supervisor as a first step to explain what happened, the bullying, and also the effects of it happened on the person. I mean I don't think anybody should be tolerating bullying, and that we need to let employers know. And that's obviously not an easy situation to handle, it probably would be easier if there was an Employment Specialist who was already connected with the employer and had a relationship and could talk about that. And it may be that the employer or the Human Resources Department or some people at that business are going to need to provide some education about having good working relationships at work, and what is expected of employees and what will not be tolerated by employees. I'd be happy if this person has a follow-up question or comment to me, if I'm addressing what the concern was and how to handle it. It's obviously a very sensitive issue, but we don't want to tolerate bullying.

David: Sure. You know, that's an important point. If she's out there, she could type another question, otherwise I think we'll move onto the next one. I'm gonna go with another one of the questions that's already asked, but if you are in the room right now and have a question, please let me know in the chat box below that you'd like to ask it, and we'll make sure to get to you. So the next question comes from Judy in North Carolina, and she asks specifically, "What are the current statistics regarding our success for IPS consumers becoming self-supporting?"

Deb: Well, that's a very good question. I do not have a statistic on that. I think that people served in IPS programs and evidence based supported employment programs tend to help people get part time jobs. We want them to be more full time if possible, or as much time that works for that individual. And I think we should all as a field and together, be working towards helping people work as much as they can, and for those who are able to be, work full time and self-supporting that's a great goal. I also know in our country that minimum wage is, you know, how can you work on that even if your full-time? There's a book called "Nickel and Dime" you might be familiar with, and it was a woman who actually went out and tried to support herself

and needed to have multiple jobs to do it, and had to live in unsafe places. And so, it's hard, it's hard but that certainly is that we want everyone to be able to live as independently as possible and self-supporting if possible.

David: You know, I'm just following up. Following up on that, in your own experience that you've had, do you have a general idea just anecdotally turning you know conversion to self-supporting?

Deb: So self-supporting, that's a broad term. Does that mean working full time and self-supporting from your income from your work rather than having other sources than income as well? I think that there is not a large group in these supported employment programs, but we're forever trying to see how to make that better, but we don't have that right now. One thing that we are trying to do, we are starting a large project with Social Security and helping the eligibility requirement for the study is for people who've had an initial denial for social security benefits because of an alleged mental health condition. So, we're trying to, we think that it would be helpful to intervene earlier.

[Background noise]

Deb: I'm hearing some background noise, but anyway I think everyone is wanting to figure out how to help people be self-supporting and possibly intervening early and providing supports earlier to help people get to work will we hope, be helpful.

David: Sure. Um, we have a question from someone in the room, Matthew, and I believe if you press "Star star" on your phone you can unmute yourself and go ahead and ask Deborah.

Matthew: Okay, hi Deborah, can you hear me?

Deb: I sure can, thanks.

Matthew: Okay, thank you. Alright, so my question is kind of a two-part question. Um, "Is there a difference in employment outcomes for war veterans that acquire a physical disability as compared to civilians that acquire a physical disability? And then, if or if not, and for either, what is the most dominant barrier? Is it going to be more physical or psychological?"

Deb: Uh, for Veterans?

Matthew: Can you hear me?

Deb: Yeah, I can.

Matthew: Uh hello, can you hear me?

Deb: Can you hear me?

Matthew: Yeah, sorry I muted myself right away. Yeah, so I meant, "Is there a difference in employment outcomes for Veterans that acquire a physical disability compared to civilians that acquire a disability, not born with, both parties acquiring a disability."

Deb: Civilians that are not um, Veterans?

Matthew: "Right, so is there a different employment outcome? Like, so for a veteran that gets out of services that acquires a physical disability due to service as opposed to a civilian that just acquires a physical disability, say due to a car accident?"

Deb: So, I don't have the answer to that question. Um, I think that's a great question for someone in our Veterans Administration. Um, Laurie Davis would be a good person to ask about that. And I don't have Laurie Davis's email address right now, but if you email me I can get you connected with her and I bet she would know.

Matthew: Okay, could you answer my second question perhaps? "If you just take the first part right out, so basically what's the more dominant barrier, is it going to be physical or psychological, when trying to?"

Deb: Yeah, my area has been with people with psychiatric disabilities and so, while I was trained as a Rehabilitation Counselor, I can't give you a good answer on that one. But there's probably somebody out there who has some kind of data on that.

Matthew: Okay

David: Alright, thank you for your question.

Matthew: No problem, thank you.

David: Uh, so James in the chat box asked, "What motivates employers to take on the additional issues that comes with hiring individuals with mental health conditions?"

Deb: Well, I think with a lot of employers, what their focus is on getting the job done. Hiring employees who will work hard, be at work, and get the job done because they have the skills and interest in doing it which is higher actually for people who have mental illness than people who don't. So, it could be extra things that are involved with that. There could be connecting with an Employment Specialist, which actually is a support, or not. But, people who have mental illnesses are going to work, they're good employees, and um, have better attendance actually than people who don't.

David: Alright, thank you for that. I hope that answered your question James. Andrea from California asks, "Have you seen value added with peer employment recovery specialists included into the model." I'm guessing she means IPS.

Deb: Yeah, so that's a great question too. There are no data on that, right, no research data has not been studied, but I would say anecdotally that teams that include peer specialists have great success and in part the peer is, has a special role in being able to engage people around work and be able to share a little bit about what their situation has been and offer the hope and a support that other people can work as well. So, I think that there's a place for that. On our website if you put in "peer IPS Specialist" you will see job descriptions in there. We have as part of our group we have a committee of peers who are developing materials and really looking at that role of a Peer Specialist on IPS teams that it has been really helpful. I think the research hasn't been done yet, and that would be good, but in the meantime you know, I think it's helpful. It's not, the Peer Specialist does not replace what the Employment Specialist does or any part of that, but augments the support for the individual.

David: Sure. Um, and you mentioned a website in your response. What's the name of that website so people can search for it?

Deb: www.IPSworks.org. So IPS W-O-R-K-S .org.

David: Perfect. Samantha asks; "How do we help increase job development effectiveness when local hiring managers are unable to retrieve online applications as they're filtered release by corporate offices?"

Deb: Okay, you know that's a very common question and what we have found is uh, developing the connections with the hiring authority is key and if you know, corporate office isn't letting you in there and you're not getting information about how to get around that, I would then go to the local business and try to connect with department managers who will often have a say in who is hired and try to make the connection there as best you can.

David: You know, one thing that I experienced recently myself was that I heard about how in terms of billing for these services, that unless someone is physical there, you know the client is there with them, they can't bill for it. Do you have suggestions for those people?

Deb: Well, you know that is a state issue usually, what can be billed for what in that state, and so there are some states that have figured out with Medicaid how to bill when the individual, the job seeker, is not with the Employment specialist connecting with employers to find out about jobs. So, um, it's not the same everywhere unfortunately, and that's, you know the big problem that we have in this country is how do you pay for these services in a simple, coordinated way so programs like yours can offer these services and sustain and be able to even expand. So, we're hoping that in our lifetime that will be figured out because work is so

important to recovery for so many people, and the idea that it's not paid for in a simple, easy way doesn't make any sense. I mean really, when you start to think about other things that are paid for.

David: Sure, Justin asks; "How would you go about developing an opportunity for someone with a criminal history?"

Deb: Oh, that's a great question and I think there's a bit of mythology out there that employers will not hire people who have had difficulties with the Criminal Justice System. So, because of that belief, a number of years ago, a number of years ago there were people from our group who connected with other IPS Specialists and Supervisors around the country to go out and interview employers and just find out what their policies are about hiring people with criminal justice backgrounds. And, we have information on our website about that, and actually employers do hire people with criminal justice backgrounds of all kinds. What's important we found during this project, and also with watching lots of people job develop in the field, is getting the, making a good job match for one. But, having the job seeker prepared for how they are going to describe who they are and what they want. And, be up front about it, and it's also best that employers told us that getting a job seeker face to face with them, that's what you want to try to do. And so once they meet someone and see that they're a real person, have a real interest in working, may acknowledge that they've made some mistakes, but here are reasons, things they've done to better themselves and improve their live situations, and may come with a couple reference for people who currently know them and can advocate for them, that employers will hire people with criminal justice backgrounds. I mean all employers will do that, but a lot more do than most people think.

David: Right, and I wanted to share, I heard about recently, there's a job board called 70millionjobs.com that developed specifically for people with criminal backgrounds, so you can go on there to look up employers who are understanding of that sort of situation.

Deb: Thanks for sharing that.

David: Yeah, and I've put that in the chat box for anyone who wants to click on it. Kristen asks; "What strategies do you have for helping adults with schizophrenia overcoming barriers, specifically negative symptoms and engaging in work activity?"

Deb: So, what I think is that we need to get to know people, who they are, what are their strengths, what do they want to do, what are their skills, and focus on that. And then find what kind of job that would be that would be a good job match. It may be, and also the kinds of support that will help individuals. So, it could be somebody that has difficulty with concentration, they would make a list of steps they need to complete to do their job. So, I still focus on who the person is, what their strengths are, and trying to figure out where that job would be, what the job would be. And it may be for some people who have negative symptoms, some may not be the best job interviewers, interviewees, in the world, right? May have a hard

time appearing really enthusiastic about wanting the job, and selling themselves. And so in some cases like that, people decide that they would like to have a support person, such as an Employment Specialist, IPS Specialist, to talk to the employer about what they can do. People with schizophrenia, you know with negative symptoms, work.

David: Fair, Evan asks, and this is from the chat box too; “In your experience, when is education needed for an Employer about.” Oh sorry, someone typed and it moved on me. “When is education needed for an employer about the needs of employees with a mental health condition, for example, reasonable accommodations, and who provides that education?”

Deb: Okay, that’s a great question. I always think it would only be need to know information that would help the employee. So, if they do need an accommodation...So let’s say somebody has, hears voices, right? And headphones might be a good accommodation. So, they would not be distracted or upset by negative voices that their hearing. That’s a really easy accommodation that could be made. Someone who has fearful thoughts and they do best working in a work station by themselves, you know that’s a pretty easy accommodation to be made. Who tells the employer this? I think all these kinds of decisions are really up to the job seeker, and it’s a discussion that they have with the IPS Specialist about the advantages of letting an employer know of some of the challenges they have and simple accommodations that would otherwise help them to be a good employee. And whether the individual wants to try to talk directly to the employer about that or have the IPS Specialist do it. But you know, it should, I think they should do it together if possible. But that decision really is made by the job seeker and the IPS Specialist’s role is to help them understand well what are the disadvantages and advantages of doing it different ways.

David: Sure, moving on to next question, Amy from Alberta Canada asks; “What is your best approach, best way to approach an employer when you have a candidate with mental health issues and/or an addiction issue.” So, how do you begin the conversation about you know, the issues the individual has?

Deb: Yeah, so I guess um, you know, people have a lot of beliefs about both addiction and mental illness. But, the addiction part is, I would not bring up first. And, I would bring up first what the skills and talents are of the person. And if somethings’ going to be obvious over time, that may be related to a mental illness, it may be related to talking to voices, that kind of thing that is, would be apparent, that that would be something that you could explain to the employer. That an individual does have the situation that hears things, and then would talk back to that and muttering, that this is not going to be a problem probably, and this is how the person handles it the best. And then describe that. For addiction I don’t know how much you want to get into that as a problem. And, uh you know, we want people to go to work, we’re not, you know, people aren’t going to get excuses if they have trouble with alcohol and drugs and don’t go to work. It’s a problem, and so people need to understand that and try to figure out how they’re going to be able to be at work, and what they’re going to do about their use.

David: Sure, Ferdinand asked; “How do we best support people interested in a career job, versus an entry level transition job, using the IPS Model. At our workplace we have Recovery Coached, Education Coaches, and Employment Coaches.”

Deb: Okay, so you separate out the roles of Employment and Education, and not sure about the Recovery, how that may overlap with those two positions. But, repeat that question again.

David: Sure, so how do we best support people interested in a career job versus an entry-level of transitional, using IPS?

Deb: Yeah, I think that we all start with where the individual is in terms of their work life and how long they’ve been out of work, how much they’ve worked at all, and start there. And talk with them about what’s the next step for them. It may be an entry level job; it may be wanting to return to a higher level job or something similar that, of course that’s always supported. What the individuals wants is consistent with their skills and talents and preference are right now. I think as a field, we have not, we’ve not focused on careers the way we should, the way everybody should develop careers. And the way everybody goes through more than one or two jobs as they are figuring out what their best at as a worker, and what they want to advance to as a worker. So I think we need to think about education more, especially with younger people, I think we also should be thinking more about certificate programs that are more short term that can give people skills to advance in their work lives and develop careers.

David: Great, thank you. Mary asks; “Hi, does the agency that sponsors the IPS model have the authority to deny an individual IPS services if they do not receive treatment through the agency?” And she’s in the room here now if you need a clarification.

Deb: So, one of the basic features of IPS is that anybody who wants to have support going to work or school, you know, is eligible. We’re not going to screen people out because of criminal justice background, because they’re having mental health symptoms or problems with homelessness. We’re going to help people. That said, these programs are embedded in facilities right, that have their own criteria for being served. But, all people who are in these facilities who want to work should be able to get support from the IPS program.

David: Sure. And if you need clarification Mary feel free to type into the chat box more. I’m going to go to a second question from Matt, he asks; “Is there good evidence that Vocational Rehabilitation counseling is likely to increase successful, gainful employment outcomes for people who develop PTSD?”

Deb: Vocational Rehabilitation in people with PTSD. Well, IPS certainly helps with that, and as you know, there is a strong partnership between the state federal system Voc Rehab and IPS. So, the two systems work together to help people and people with PTSD do go back to work

and I mentioned Laurie Davis from the Veterans Administrant, she's down in Alabama, completed a study that had some very favorable findings.

David: Sure.

Deb: I don't think it's published yet, so that will be upcoming.

David: Certainly, James asks; "Where would I find the research that shows individuals living with mental health conditions have better attendance than the norm?"

Deb: There are, I think you could even just Google it. There are references around all over about that. But if you want to email me too I can get references for you. My email is DeborahBecker@westat.com

David: Sure, and I think we can send that out if there's a demand for it amongst the group. Evan asks; "Is there in relation to career development as opposed to entry level or transitional jobs, do you find that at a certain point in recovery, clients are deemed too "high functioning" to qualify for services. If so, what happens then if they still need some support?"

Deb: Right, you know I have heard that in a state or two that that will happen and then basically if they are not eligible for the IPS Program at agency and state, they would then get support through state vocational rehabilitation.

David: Sure. I hope that got to your question Eva. Vera from California asks; "How does a supervisor know when it might be a good time to suggest an employee take time off for self-care, or what are some signs that an employee needs time for self-care?"

Deb: Okay, so I'm assuming that you're just talking about anybody working anywhere who is having some difficulty. It might be some employers have employee assistance programs, maybe it would be helpful for somebody to go meet with a counselor to see what's going on? Um, I think mostly, our role as workers is to work, and sometimes it's helpful to have some time off and many employers will make accommodations for people because they are valued employees and need that time off or part, maybe reduce their hours at work. But, you know I can't, that's a general question and a general response really.

David: Yeah.

Deb: We want people to get support and it may be through EAP or if the supervisor feels that they're unable to support the individual, maybe they need someone higher up in the business or get consultation around it. But the goal is for people to try to be steady workers.

David: Sure, I have a question from Paul out of North Carolina, and this one's specific to his state so I'm going to try to rephrase it a little. He has a client that's looking for financial counseling related to the impact of Medicaid and SSI benefits. But he can't find anyone in his area, so where does someone go to look for help with that, if you know they don't know where to start?

Deb: Okay, so wants some benefits counseling, right, work incentives counseling? That's the question?

David: Yeah

Deb: So I would just go straight to the state leader, state mental health leader who is responsible for employment services and ask. You could also just go to, often times its through vocational rehabilitation, so you could contact them. How this company gets benefits counseling? Its' an important resource and its' certainly not spread evenly across the country.

David: Sure. Kim just asked in the chat box, they say "I'm from West Virginia, how do I find out if there are any agencies in the state that use the IPS model, and if there are none, how can this be started?"

Deb: Okay, so actually Gary Bond here, one of our researchers did a survey of all the states about whether they implemented IPS or other employment services, so I might be able to ask him around West Virginia, but how we get it started, I think you need to go to your state leaders and talk to them about, you know, that work is an important path to recovery and you wanna support that and you want them to support that. We have developed over the last few decades, a learning community, IPS learning community that now includes twenty three of the states in our country, and we started small with three states. But we connected with state leaders and the state mental health authority and the state vocational rehabilitation to help them plan for how to provide the infrastructure to build these services, how to have training available, how to help programs start implementing, how to fund these services, how to track outcomes, how to monitor implementation and fidelity. And so it's been a really good model for expanding these services within states and across states. And so you might, I think you should go to our website and look at information about the IPS learning community, and you might connect with your state leaders and we certainly would be happy to talk to anyone about these kinds of services that states might consider implementing.

David: And can you, you just mentioned IPS learning community, can you tell us what that's about?

Deb: Okay, so it's actually called the International IPS Learning Community and how this came about was back in 2001, we received a call from corporate contributions Johnson and Johnson, this is a very separate arm from their corporate offices and business offices and

pharmaceuticals and all that. This is just their gift giving, they had never given any money away in the area of mental health, they give money away world-wide, and so they decided they got steered in our direction from NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and National Institute on Mental Health, and the short story of this is that we developed a relationship with them where they wanted to support us connecting with state leaders to develop these services. And so while they no longer give us money anymore, it launched us and it started with three states that just had one site in three states, and now there are over three hundred sites that are from twenty-three states and they all, once they've had a baseline interview, baseline fidelity review, they start reporting simple quarterly outcomes. And so we're all, they're all tied together through that, the reporting. They also can participate in training at reduced rates, we connect with the state leaders at an in person annual meeting. We also have state level conference calls throughout the year. We have a peer committee, a family committee, an employer committee, so it's really this huge network and it continues to grow, and people, the best part about it is people learn from their peers and learn from each other. So, it's been really a wonderful project, there are three European countries in it, and also there are other countries and other states actually that are wanting to participate. We try to spend time with the state leaders to let them know what this means and the support that we can give in terms of training and helping them to think about the infrastructure to build this in their state. But, it's been a, it's been a great mechanism for expanding these services as well as sustaining them over time.

David: Sure.

Deb: There's information on the website about it too, so, um.

David: The IPS Works website?

Deb: Yes.

David: Alright. Ferdinand from British Columbia Canada asks, "Can you speak to the relationship between supported education and employment? More specifically, how do we best support individuals with the goal of a career job vs. a job?"

Deb: Yeah, well I think when we first started this, our focus was more on older people actually, and so it was on employment. And as the field has embraced and encouraged younger people to think about this, it's obvious that education is an important part of this. And so, we need to think about supported education and supported employment all focused on careers, developing careers and having a career path. So, someone may start out in, so let's say for example I do like animals a lot, I used to have five cats and now I have two dogs. And working in a veterinary office would be great for me, and let's say I started that even as an entry level job, I might decide that I want to do more with that, and get more training to be able to be a Vet Tech person, or maybe I even want to go on and see about pursuing a career as a Veterinarian. Those things, those you know, everybody should be able to think about, think big like that and

think about what's it gonna take to do that in steps, and how will, how do I need to access additional education, additional training, in order to have a career path. Most of us did start with entry-level jobs, some launched right into maybe high-level jobs, but a lot of us started with entry-level jobs.

David: Sure. Alright, Santana asks, "What recommendations do you have to encourage IPS Providers to serve clients that are actively participating in treatment with another mental health provider?"

Deb: So, that's tricky because this is really a team approach, and so you want your IPS Specialist to be connecting with the team of providers that are helping the individual. So, you know you're talking about sort of how services are organized and integrated services are always best services and have the best outcomes. So, as much as you can get IPS services within an agency, within a team or teams, that would be good. If you let's say are from Psych Rehab agency that doesn't have mental health treatment, you know, they still can coordinate services with a mental health agency that provides the mental health treatment, but as you can imagine, there's more involved in doing that. So we want all providers to be face-to-face, to be connecting, sharing information, to provide coordinated care and so you know, you can imagine it would be harder to people from two different agencies.

David: Yeah. Um, moving on to the next question, I know this must be hard, it just a machine gun of questions here. Gina asks, "Can you discuss the differences and similarities in the IPS model and the Vocational Rehabilitation model?" It's a three parter; "Do you have any specific suggestions on how they can better work together to assist clients? Do you think that the Voc Rehab programs should be more like the IPS Model?"

Deb: Okay so, Voc Rehab, are we referring to the state federal system, where there are VR offices in all our communities, you know, is that what we mean by Voc Rehab, that system where the counselors typically have very high caseloads, one hundred and fifty to two hundred people sometimes, they provide time limited services. If that's what you mean, that system does....excuse me?

David: I said that is what she means.

Deb: Okay, great. So, in twenty-three states, that's how it's working now. Um, that, you know when we were approached by the Corporate Giving, they said "you know, you know how to do this, figure it out and we'll help to support it." And so what we felt was that we wanted to develop something that would be sustainable. And so, that is systems coordination, and that starts at the top. As you know, or maybe you don't know but, the VR Counselors have a lot of independence and in how they provide services and their decision making on services. And so, it varies a lot in terms of how I think services, oh my computer keeps clicking, um are provided to different people. But we felt that by trying to get the two systems together, you know, the

mental health system knows how to work with people with serious mental illness, right? And that's been in many states, that's the largest VR population and it's also the population that they have most difficulty helping to get jobs, right? But there services are more time limited, but the mental health side can provide the more long-term, ongoing support as needed and wanted, right? So, you know it varies from state to state, you know, some states have figured this out and do a fabulous job. I can remember I got a call from one state mental health leader saying "how do we get involved in this learning community," and so we had this discussion and I said, okay and who is your state, you know VR partner? And she had no idea, she didn't even know what I was talking about and right now, they have very coordinated services, integrated services, and it's in all their communities, and they figured it out. I mean it takes a lot of time and hard work, it doesn't work perfectly every time, but it can work well. It doesn't always work well, I understand that, but I guess our mission is to try to make it work better because we need different funding sources, right? And, we need different services that can help provide the support over time. So, just having this service paid by you know, mental health, it's not going to stay, it's going to be hard to keep it going a long time so we need the financial support of the VR system, figuring out about Medicaid how to do this. So, we need partners and it can work. So, again, I'd be happy to field questions and comments through my email if you're in a state where you'd like to see that happen more.

David: Sure, and Gina has a quick follow-up here, she writes; "We are in North Carolina. If someone needs Assertive Community Treatment services, ACT, they're getting it through their vocational services on the ACT team. State vocational rehabilitation cannot provide any financial assistance, or any services for that matter, to the ACT clients. They make the client leave the ACT team to get access to the Vocational Rehabilitation Funding" and she asks; "have you seen this before?"

Deb: I don't think I have, but I'll tell you, when we work with states, we strongly encourage that they develop a Steering Committee at the top to look at how are we going to pay for these services, what's a barrier right now that you know, having different funding streams that then forces people to leave certain services to get other services is um, you know, are we really thinking of the people that we're serving here?

David: Sure. Kristen has an ACT question, she writes; "ACT teams are unable to utilize Vocational Rehabilitation services for," sorry; "ACT Teams are unable to utilize Vocational Rehabilitation services for vocational purposes, but are able to use vocational rehabilitation to support someone in pursuing education. Do you know if ACT teams can use VR for benefits counseling?"

Deb: So you know, I'm not an expert on that. I would hope so, but you know, I don't know, is this a North Carolina person?

David: I cannot remember, maybe she'll tell us.

Deb: Okay.

David: Yeah, she is.

Deb: She is, okay. Well, then you probably know Stacey Smith at the state, who knows a lot about ACT, she's at the Mental Health Authority, and she is a strong leader of IPS services in North Carolina. So, she and North Carolina is in our learning community, so there is this partnership between the Mental Health Authority and VR, so I would contact her and ask her about it.

David: Alright. I hope that answers her question. Shay writes; "How do I tell my employer about my disability, as I feel it will take around my stress in performance." So, hopefully how to tell about their experience so they can reduce their own stress.

Deb: Okay, so it sounds like you've thought about the pros and cons of letting your employer know that you have some challenges. I think you want to really think about what you would tell your employer, what do they need to know, what do you want them to know, and why? Think really, map that out for yourself before you tell your employer. I guess I would need more information to, you know we have a, there's a worksheet on our website about thinking about disclosure and so, you might go to the website and look for that. We have a library now where you can just search for what you want. Put in self-disclosure, and see if that worksheet doesn't help you try to think it through, why you want to say something to your employer, what you want to say, and what you want to get out of it.

David: Sure. And you know, I think the BU website too, we have an entire section which is a question and answer area, to help people think through the process of disclosing and even choosing getting or going back to work, and maybe if Joan has a second she can put that up there for people. The next question is from Samantha, and she asks; "Is there data being collected on providing IPS Services for consumers who have substance abuse disorder without a SPMI?"

Deb: Yes, there are. Um, that is becoming a great topic of interest now, even at the federal level. But, IPS services are being provided and there are studies, few, but there are studies of people who have a substance use disorder without the mental health piece.

David: Well, we're coming to the end shortly, so we only have time for one or two more questions, so if there's something burning in anyone's mind, now is the time to ask it.

Deb: So I see on the chatroom somebody said; "Can you repeat the website" should I repeat that, or have I already done that enough?

David: You know what, I will go back up and put it back in there for you. Joan originally typed it in, it's IPSWorks.org

Deb: There it is, great thanks.

David: So Evan writes; "Do you know of any services or models out there that can provide counseling to people who are working and not involved with IPS or VR, but who want support in disclosing a mental health condition to their employer?"

Deb: So, I guess I would again think about the Employee Assistance Programs that you might have with your employer, to talk to a counselor about that. If you don't have access to IPS, you're not a VR person, or it sounds like you'd like to talk to somebody to discuss the benefits of that and the advantages, and what may be disadvantages so you can decide.

David: Sure, and you know, Samantha also, if you email the center here, it's as psyrehab@bu.edu, we should be able to put you in touch with someone who can at least talk to you about something, and hopefully at least point you to someone you can talk to. So, I think that that is it for time. I would like to thank you Deb for coming here to answer everyone's questions today, and everyone else for attending. Uh, the next Ask Me Anything About Employment session is with Bob Drake on October 18th. The announcement will go out by email in the coming weeks, and in the next few days, all the attendees will be receiving a survey about your experience. We would love for you to give us feedback about this event. Thank you again and we look forward to having you join us, and thank you very much Deb, I appreciate your time.

Deb: Um, yeah thanks for the great questions. Thanks for all you all do.

David: Yes, and thank you everyone for coming out. This has been fantastic. Alright, have a great day guys.

Deb: Bye.