



Developing a Better Understanding

EMPLOYMENT AND RECOVERY

Across the country, more employers are seeing the benefits of hiring individuals in recovery from substance use disorder (SUD) and/or mental illness. When someone is able to receive appropriate treatment and achieve recovery, they can become excellent employees. Individuals in recovery are grateful for the chance to advance their recovery and are loyal to the employers who see their potential. Employment and recovery are mutually beneficial. Achieving recovery can allow someone to seek and successfully obtain employment and employment helps maintain and further recovery.

Ohio's recovery community consists of individuals with a wide variety of skills and talents who are motivated and ready to work hard. Meanwhile, Ohio employers are struggling to fill open positions. By seeking out individuals in recovery, employers will find a supply of strong candidates who can become indispensable assets for their organization.

“[Individuals in recovery] bring a lot of gratitude and productivity, and the resulting overall attitude in the workplace makes us all feel better.”

~ Larry Keast, founder of Venturetech, on hiring individuals in recovery

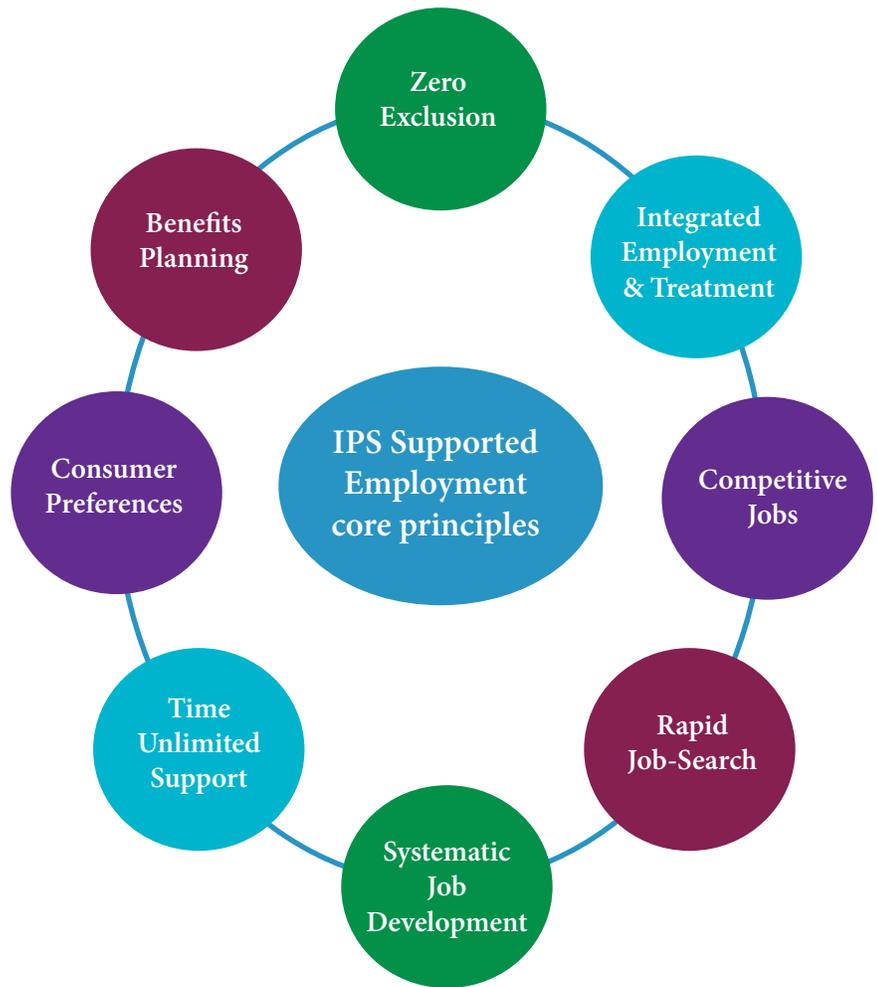
Despite their motivation, people in recovery may struggle to find employment. They might have trouble explaining gaps in their employment history caused by their SUD or mental illness. If an individual in recovery chooses to disclose their SUD and/or mental illness to an employer, they may be met with stigmatization or discrimination. Those with a criminal history related to their condition could be immediately disqualified from some types of work. Approximately 24% of people with a SUD are unemployed. People who are served by public mental health systems have unemployment rates three times higher than the general population. Due to these high rates of unemployment among people with SUD and/or mental illness, employment needs to be addressed as part of recovery. The Substance Use and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) considers employment a key indicator of outcomes for people working toward recovery. Employment has also been shown to be a top priority for people in all stages of recovery.

Hot Chicken Takeover

In Columbus, fast-casual fried chicken restaurant Hot Chicken Takeover intentionally hires people in recovery, many of whom have criminal records. According to owner Joe DeLoss, hiring individuals in recovery “is not a warm fuzzy charitable strategy, but a business strategy. The thing we get out of our candidate pool is a willingness and eagerness to grow and develop.” That willingness and eagerness has translated into dollars saved for the restaurant. Hot Chicken Takeover has a retention rate four times higher than the industry average, meaning they spend four times less on rehiring and training new employees compared to similar restaurants. Employees are expected to work hard and in exchange the company actively supports their recovery. Hot Chicken Takeover provides benefits such as competitive wages, professional development, and access to recovery counseling for those who are struggling. All these efforts have had an impact on the success and growth of the restaurant. After starting out by serving chicken from a pop-up window in 2014, Hot Chicken Takeover now has 3 permanent restaurants. DeLoss credits this growth to their hiring policies. “If an employer is able to suspend judgement, focus on a candidate's future and not their past, they will see results that are pretty tremendous.”

IPS Supported Employment

Many individuals in recovery benefit from supported employment. Individualized Placement & Support (IPS) is an evidence-based supported employment practice that can help individuals in recovery obtain and keep a job in their communities as soon as they express a desire to work. Individuals are not excluded on any basis, such as skill readiness or diagnosis. A multidisciplinary team of qualified IPS providers (certified through OhioMHAS) work with clients to learn about their job preferences and goals and form a plan for finding competitive employment. The IPS team provides individuals with support during their job search (e.g. resume building, interview training, etc.) and will provide individualized on-the-job support for as long as the client wants and needs it. Agencies who use the IPS model of supported employment adhere to eight core principles to ensure the effectiveness of their services.



Why is Employment so Important in Recovery?	Financial Self-sufficiency	Structure
	The financial self-sufficiency that comes from employment allows people in recovery to gain a sense of independence and the ability to take care of their own needs, such as being able to afford housing that is favorable to their recovery and obtaining continued treatment.	The structured routine of regular employment can offer a sense of familiarity and comfort each day. Having defined plans provides daily goals and limits unstructured time and boredom that could potentially lead to a relapse of SUD or mental illness.
	Community & Social Connection	Purpose
	Employment gives people in recovery the chance to have regular social interactions and to become part of a new, healthier community. Daily interactions with co-workers or customers allow people to develop new social skills and can deter feelings of loneliness that could trigger a relapse. SAMHSA lists “community” as one of four major dimensions that support recovery.	The responsibilities of steady employment and knowledge that they are being counted on to make a positive contribution can be a motivating factor for an individual to continue working on his or her recovery from a SUD and/or mental illness. Having purpose can foster pride and self-esteem and is another of SAMHSA’s major dimensions that support recovery.