



# Newsletter

## OCTOBER

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Iowa Workforce  
Development

**Vocational Rehabilitation Services**



## What's Inside?

### September Progress

Updates on IBC Contractor Activities,  
Challenges, and Accomplishments



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# ABOUT THE PROJECT

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If you are reading about Iowa Blueprint for Change (IBC) for the first time—welcome! We're glad you're here. We hope you'll consider joining activities that help improve services for people with disabilities across Iowa. The project works through a group called the Collective, where people meet to share ideas and make change. Everyone is welcome to attend.

The goal of IBC is to help more people with disabilities find and keep jobs in their communities. IBC includes three main programs:

- Customized Employment (CE): CE helps people find jobs that match their strengths, interests, and needs. Staff learn about each person and help create a job that fits them.
- Individual Placement and Support (IPS): IPS helps people with mental health conditions find and keep jobs. Employment specialists work closely with each person and their care team to provide support.
- Registered Apprenticeships (RA): RA gives people paid work experience and training. It helps them build skills for long-term careers helping others with disabilities find jobs in the community.

IBC is 100% federally funded by the federal government through the Disability Innovation Fund (DIF). The project received over \$13.8 million in grant funding, plus an additional \$230,000 for evaluation.



# MEET THE CONTRACTORS

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## Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS)

IVRS leads the IBC project. They help people with disabilities find jobs and support other partners in working together. IVRS also runs the Registered Apprenticeship program, which trains people for careers helping others with disabilities find work.



## Griffin-Hammis Associates (GHA)

GHA supports the CE program. CE helps people find jobs that match their strengths and interests. GHA trains staff, mentors employment specialists, and helps make sure services follow the CE model.



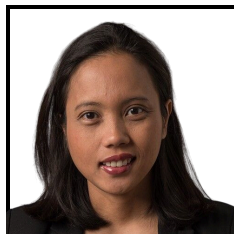
## Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health (CEBH)



CEBH supports the IPS program. IPS helps people with mental health conditions find and keep jobs. CEBH provides training and mentoring to make sure services are high-quality and follow best practices.

## Center for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA)

CEA leads the evaluation for IBC. They collect data, listen to feedback, and study how the project is working. CEA helps show what's going well and what can be improved.







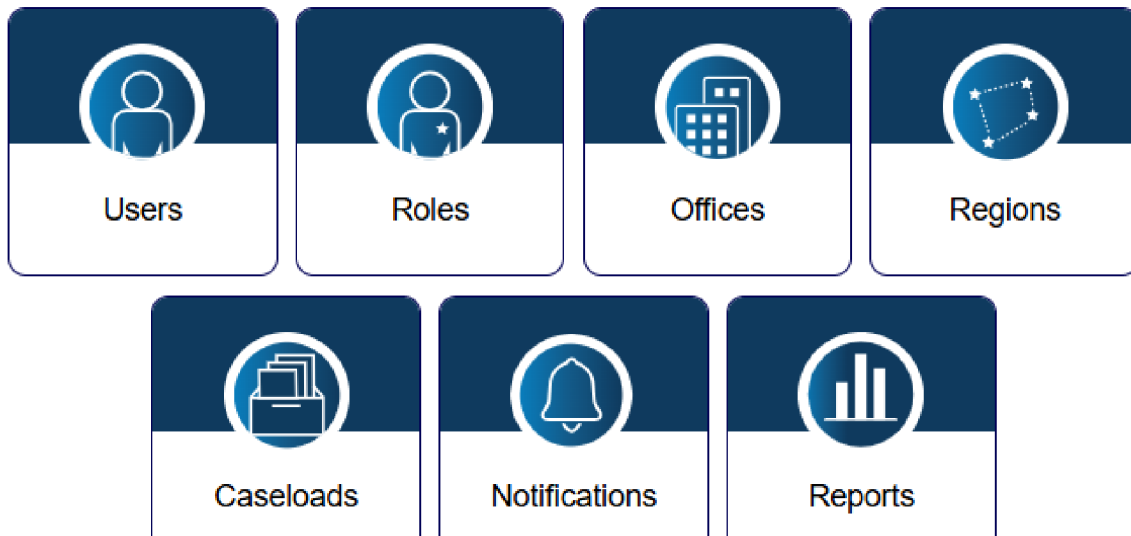
## MODERNIZING CASE MANAGEMENT

The 2024 IBC Stakeholder Survey showed that IVRS counselors and community providers need better ways to share information and stay connected. To help with this, IVRS is using SWTCIE DIF funds to update its case management system with Libera's new cloud-based tool, inFormed CMS. The first step will be a vendor portal that makes authorizations, billing, and paperwork easier. This upgrade will help staff save time, improve communication, and keep information secure.

### Administration

### *A LOOK AT THE NEW CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM!*

#### Administration



## REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIPS (RAs)

IVRS is helping more people join Registered Apprenticeships (RAs). These programs train people to become Direct Support Providers who help individuals with disabilities find meaningful jobs. Participants can also earn stackable credentials that lead to higher-paying roles, like employment specialists or VR counselors.

**To sign up, email Ashley Hazen at [ashley.hazen@iwd.iowa.gov](mailto:ashley.hazen@iwd.iowa.gov).**



### NEON

#### ***NEON PROJECT WRAPS UP!***

The National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network (NEON) project ended in October. HHS was one of 14 states chosen in 2024 to help more people with disabilities find and keep competitive, integrated jobs.

Through NEON, HHS partnered with IVRS and the IBC project to combine funding from Registered Apprenticeships and Medicaid services like Day Habilitation and Supported Employment. This teamwork improved coordination and created more job opportunities for Iowans with disabilities.



### DB101

DB101 will launch in December 2025! DB101 is a free website that helps people with disabilities understand how working may affect their benefits and plan for employment with confidence.

## Any Challenges Coming up?

Under the IBC project, IVRS is helping develop a new transition program for students with disabilities. The goal is to support students as they move from high school into competitive, integrated jobs. Two pilot sites — Waterloo and Linn-Mar — are already offering these services to help students build skills, explore careers, and prepare for meaningful work after graduation. IVRS and its partners plan to expand these programs to more schools in the future so more students can benefit.



## IMPROVING DOCUMENTATION AND COMMUNICATION

CEBH is now using new IPS forms across the state. These forms help teams and partner agencies share information more easily and keep better records. They also help IPS programs follow best practices more closely and support more people in finding jobs.

## IPS SPECILIAST TRAINING COURSE

CEBH is working on a training course for IPS Specialists. This course will help improve job support services across Iowa.

## FIDELITY REVIEW

In October 2025, CEBH did one IPS Fidelity Review and gave training and support to several IPS programs in Iowa. A Fidelity Review checks how closely a program is following the IPS model. When programs follow the model well, they are more likely to help people find and keep jobs.

### Fidelity Score Classifications



	115-125	Exemplary Fidelity	. . . . .
	100-114	Good Fidelity	. . . . .
. . . . .	74-99	Fair Fidelity	. . . . .
. . . . .	73 AND BELOW	Not IPS	. . . . .





### APSE CONFERENCE

Mandy Hatten and Darcey Sebolt gave a talk at the Iowa Association of People Supporting Employment (APSE) conference. They shared helpful tips for finding jobs and supporting people at work. The room was full, and people gave great feedback about their presentation.

## Any Challenges Coming up?

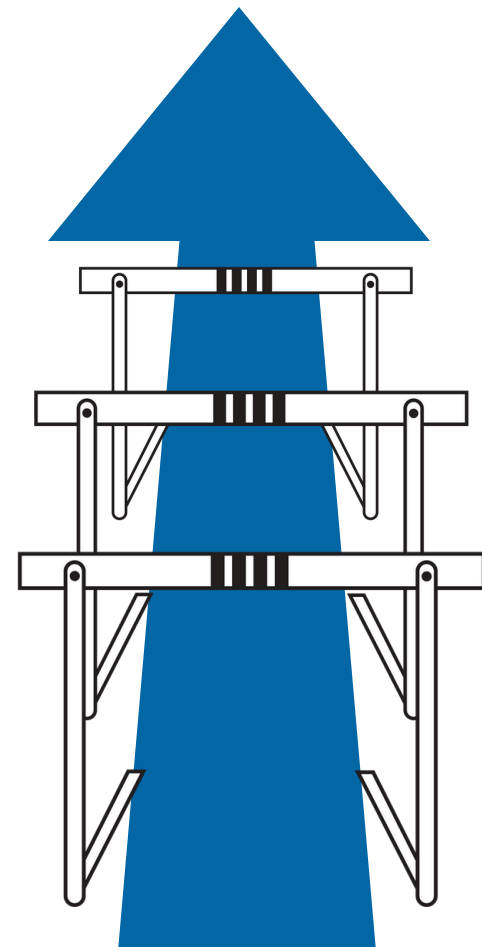
### BEHAVIORAL REDESIGN

Iowa's Behavioral Health system is changing, and the IHH (Iowa Health and Human Services) programs are ending. These changes have made things harder for IPS teams. They are working to rebuild their mental health teams and find new ways to connect job services with mental health support.

## What's Next?

### IPS LEARNING COMMUNITY

CEBH is hosting its final Iowa IPS Learning Community call for 2025 on October 16th. Presenters from Iowa Easter Seals and IVRS will talk about assistive technology



Updates

### NEW TRAININGS

GHA helped launch a new training for counselors who support Customized Employment. The training is self-paced and made just for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors.

### MENTORING FOR CE PROVIDERS

GHA is continuing to help providers who are learning how to provide Customized Employment. GHA mentoring includes giving support and advice, especially on Discovery and how to help people find jobs through CE.

### BUILDING COMMUNITY NETWORKS

CE teams across Iowa are continuing to work hard to build strong community connections—like with churches, families, and friends. These connections are helping create chances for job seekers to do informational interviews and take part in community activities that are part of Discovery. This support has helped people feel more confident, learn more about their strengths, and find new job possibilities through CE. It shows how employment staff help connect personal relationships with job opportunities for CE job seekers.







### HELPING PEOPLE FIND JOBS THAT FIT

In September, two job seekers found jobs through Customized Employment! Their new jobs match their interests and strengths.



Dawson (middle), a person who found work through Customized Employment, smiles for a picture at the State Rehabilitation Council's legislative reception.

### Any challenges coming up?

Reaching out to just one person or a small group doesn't always work well when trying to help someone explore jobs or learn about work. GHA is solving this by working with local organizations, like churches. These groups help create new chances for people to do informational interviews and take part in Discovery activities in their communities.





## MICRO BLUEPRINT IN MOTION

The CEA evaluation team made a new guide called the Day Habilitation Micro Blueprint. It helps Day Habilitation programs work together with job services.

The ideas in the guide came from interviews with staff and supervisors from community rehabilitation programs that the evaluation team led over the summer. It includes simple steps to help Day Habilitation services and job services work together. The guide will keep growing and changing as the project moves forward.

## A NEW DATA DASHBOARD

The CEA updated the IBC data dashboard with new data and features. The dashboard shows how the project is doing using charts and numbers. It helps people see how many are getting services, finding jobs, and reaching goals. To make sure everyone can use it, the team also made an easy-to-read summary. This helps people who prefer simple data or use screen readers. You can find the dashboard on the IBC website (<https://workforce.iowa.gov/vr/about-vr/ibc/data>) or by scanning the QR code on this page.

**SCAN ME WITH  
YOUR CAMERA!**



# TALK TO US

Please reach out with any comments, suggestions, or questions.  
We look forward to hearing from you!

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**Visit our webpage**  
(<https://workforce.iowa.gov/vr/about-vr/ibc>) to keep learning about the Iowa  
Blueprint for Change project, join the  
Collective, leave comments, and more!



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