

Words to Deeds Conference 2026

Executive Summary: Implementing IPS within Supported Housing

Core Imperative: Local data highlights employment as one of the central mechanisms to end and prevent homelessness. In Alameda County, 54% of unhoused residents are either currently employed (18%) or actively looking for work (36%), dispelling the myth of workplace disinterest.

Furthermore, economic shocks—specifically job loss, evictions/rent increases, and financial strain—represent the primary causes of homelessness in the region. Transitioning individuals out of the ensuing survival mode requires integrating evidence-based Individual Placement and Support (IPS) supported employment directly into Housing First and multidisciplinary healthcare teams.

1. Local Data Context: Alameda County 2022 Point-In-Time Report

- **Desire to Work:** As noted above, 54% of homeless individuals surveyed are engaged in or seeking competitive employment.
- **Primary Cause:** Job loss, evictions/foreclosures/rent increases, and money challenges rank as the top reasons individuals become homeless.
- **Prevention Supports:** Employment assistance, rent assistance, and income/benefits were cited as three of the top four interventions that could have prevented their homelessness.

2. The Triad Integration Model

Rather than addressing social determinants sequentially (housing, then treatment, then work readiness), evidence supports a simultaneous Systems-Integrated Triad:

- **Housing First:** Immediate, low-barrier access to permanent housing.
- **Multidisciplinary Health & Harm Reduction:** Integrated mental health treatment, primary care, substance use disorder (SUD) care (including Medication-Assisted Treatment) and harm reduction support.
- **IPS Supported Employment:** Rapid competitive job placement aligned strictly with participant choice and preferences.

3. Overcoming Ecosystem & Structural Barriers

- **Mitigating the Benefit Cliff:** Structure transitional income policies so earned wages do not cause abrupt loss of Medicaid, treatment access, or housing subsidies.
- **Justice-Involved Support:** Integrate legal advocacy, record expungement, and fair-chance employer relationships to overcome background check barriers.
- **Proactive Employer Relationships:** Build business and employer relationships focused on reducing stigma, educating workplace managers, and establishing direct hiring pipelines.

4. Priority Implementation Steps

- **Braided Funding:** Align IPS funding across housing, social services, state workforce development, primary care and behavioral health.
- **Co-Location & Huddles:** Establish and embed IPS Employment Specialists into daily multidisciplinary housing and clinical huddles.

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- Holistic Metrics: Evaluate outcomes using combined indicators: job placement, job retention, housing stability, earned income, and reduced system contact (Emergency Medical Services, Hospital Emergency Department, Psychiatric Emergency Services, Law Enforcement, Jails/Courts, etc.)

5. ACBHD Vocational Program and Lifelong Partnership Outcomes:

- Cohort snapshot: Enrolled 35 unique individuals in FY 25/26
- Competitive Placements: Successfully placed 14 of these individuals into competitive employment (i.e. a 40% placement rate, in line with “Good” IPS Fidelity; 60%+ is achievable with “Exemplary” IPS Fidelity)
- Average Hourly Wage: \$20.90/hr. (ranging from \$17.50 to \$27.00/hr. across diverse industries, including retail, education, security, food service, and transportation)
- Placement Speed: Achieved a median time to job placement of 2.4 months

6. Key Concepts to Integrating Employment and Housing Supports:

- All service providers collaborate and commit to an employment service model (IPS).
- Supported Employment services are universally accessible to eligible participants.
- Focus is on competitive employment paying at least minimum wage.
- Employment support workers must build direct, one-to-one relationships with their participants and potential employers.
- Multi-Disciplinary staff members must have solid clinical skills to effectively support homeless participants facing mental health, substance use and health care challenges.
- Securing a job alone is not enough to guarantee economic stability for participants.
- Explicitly include financial planning alongside education and support regarding disability benefits, entitlements, subsidies.

References

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For further discussion, contact:

Sanford Pearlman, LMFT, ACBHD Vocational Services, Sanford.Pearlman@acgov.org
Kawal Ulanday, LCSW, ACH Housing & Homeless Services, Kawal.Ulanday@acgov.org