



Community • Independence • Empowerment

2030 Portage St. | Kalamazoo, MI 49001

iskzoo.org | 269.553.8000

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CONTACT: Jeffrey W. Patton, Chief Executive Officer

Office: 269-553-8000 | Cell: 269-720-7129; jpatton@iskzoo.org

## Integrated Services of Kalamazoo awarded \$4 million federal grant to boost supported employment for people with mental illness in Kalamazoo County

*Kalamazoo, Mich.* – The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration ([SAMHSA](#)) has awarded [Integrated Services of Kalamazoo](#) (ISK) a \$4 million **“Transforming Lives through Supported Employment”** grant. ISK is one of only seven organizations nationwide to receive the funding, which will be used over five years to improve supported employment programs for people living with behavioral health conditions in Kalamazoo County.

Supported employment refers to services that help individuals with serious emotional disturbance (SED), serious mental illness (SMI) and/or co-occurring substance use disorders (COD) to find and keep competitive jobs (i.e., jobs anyone can apply for, that pay at least minimum wage, offer the same pay as coworkers with similar duties and have no artificial time limits imposed by a social service agency).

The grant project will focus on individuals with SED, SMI and/or COD in Kalamazoo County, including youth and young adults aged 16-25 years old. Based on ISK’s 2018 service/ demographic reports, this population faces low employment rates (14%), experiences housing difficulty (17% are homeless) and has high rates of co-occurring substance use disorders (30%). ISK plans to enroll 1,400 individuals in the program over five years.

ISK will use the funding to implement an evidence-based strategy known as [Individual Placement and Support](#) (IPS), which promotes an integrated mental health and supported employment system. IPS benefits include steady competitive employment, increased income, improved self-esteem, improved social networks, increased quality of life, better control of symptoms, reduced hospitalization, reduced substance use and reduced use of mental health services.

“We’re excited about this opportunity to enhance employment success for people living with challenging mental health conditions in Kalamazoo County,” said Dianne Shaffer, ISK’s Director of Systems Development. “Our goals are to increase access to evidence-based supported employment, to integrate it with comprehensive mental health services and to improve competitive employment outcomes for individuals who participate.”

ISK will be partnering with two current IPS providers, [MRC Industries, Inc.](#) and [InterAct of Michigan, Inc.](#), to fulfill the grant requirements. These include training mental health providers and employment specialists who work with the population of focus, providing pre-employment assistance and counseling to participants, coordinating with local labor, vocational and educational organizations and establishing relationships with area employers to provide employment opportunities for program participants.

### **About Integrated Services of Kalamazoo**

ISK provides a welcoming and diverse community partnership to share effective resources that support individuals and families to be successful through all phases of life. For more than 30 years, ISK has served youth, families and adults with mental health challenges, intellectual and developmental disabilities and substance use disorders in Kalamazoo County. From Oct. 1, 2017 through Sept. 30, 2018, ISK served nearly 8,000 individuals, either directly through ISK service programs or through a network of provider agencies that contract with ISK. The agency is one of 46 Community Mental Health Services Programs in Michigan. More information is available at [www.iskzoo.org](http://www.iskzoo.org) or by calling 269-373-6000. ISK is on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/KazooCMH](https://www.facebook.com/KazooCMH).

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