



Indiana Recovery Support Professional Workforce Landscape 2023

ICAADA

ICAADA, a Mental Health America of Indiana subsidiary, provides credentialing for behavioral health professionals. ICAADA offers behavioral health professionals' credentials, membership, and advocacy that validate the professionals' competencies to provide person-focused, evidence-based behavioral health services.

Key Contact:

Justin R. Beattey
Vice President
Education & Credentialing
jbeattey@mhai.net

Prepared by:

Elizabeth Oyer
University of Tennessee
eoyer@utk.edu

Nikki Christen
University of Tennessee
rchr13@vols.utk.edu

Study Background

In the summer of 2023, ICAADA disseminated a survey to collect information related to the state of the Indiana recovery support workforce. Survey respondents were participants in recovery support training and those holding recovery support certifications in Indiana. These recovery support professionals reported their experiences related to providing professional recovery support, previous and current education, employment status, compensation, work and life matters, as well as future career goals. As the professional recovery support workforce continues to grow, emerging trends show the uniqueness of this profession. Historically, workforce development policymakers have used professional models, data and methods from other sectors to grow and support this profession. Through a better understanding of the professional recovery support landscape identified in this report, Indiana stakeholders have a more accurate baseline for growth and advancement to better inform decisions. This report may also support informed decisions in other states or countries exploring how to advance the recovery support profession.

The online survey was disseminated in June 2023 utilizing two methods: 1) email, using the contact information for former training and certification participants, currently certified recovery support professionals, and peer association members; and 2) social media posts. Due to the scale of the reach of the social media sources and the overlap with various databases, there is no way to quantify the total survey recipients or response rate.

Who is the Workforce?

Based upon responses, the workforce presented as mostly female, white, with some post-secondary training. In total, 182 recovery support professional workers (workers) completed the survey, most identified as white (80%) and female (64%). These results are consistent with other professional studies (Lapidos et al., 2018). Around 5% identified as Nonbinary, Genderqueer, Genderfluid, Agender, or preferred not to answer.

Figure 1. Workers' Race and Ethnicity

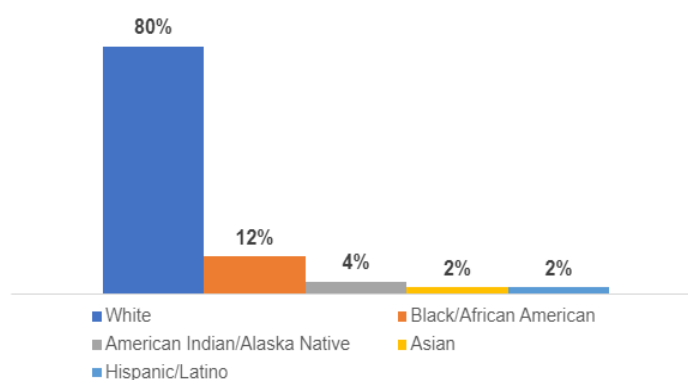
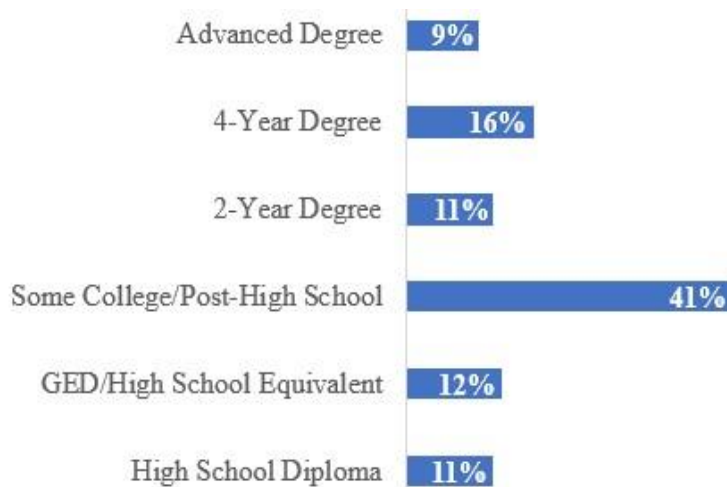


Figure 2. Workers' Educational Backgrounds



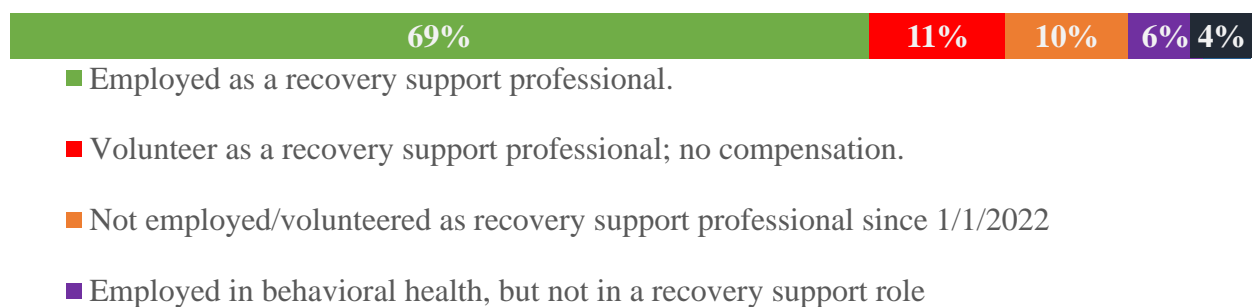
All respondents held a high school diploma/equivalent (a requirement to obtain a recovery support professional credential in Indiana).¹ About one-third (36%) held a 2-year, 4-year, or advanced college degree. A large portion of respondents (41%) reported they had completed some college or post-high school training but did not receive a degree.

All 92 Indiana counties had services delivered by workers, with the most significant number representing Marion (23%), Daviess (11%), Delaware (9%), Lake (9%), Madison (8%), Tippecanoe (8%), and Vanderburgh (8%) counties.

Employment

The majority of respondents (69%) reported being currently employed as a recovery support professional; very few reported being employed in behavioral health (but not as recovery support professionals, 6%) or serving as a volunteer (11%). About 10% of respondents were not currently employed or volunteering as recovery support professionals.

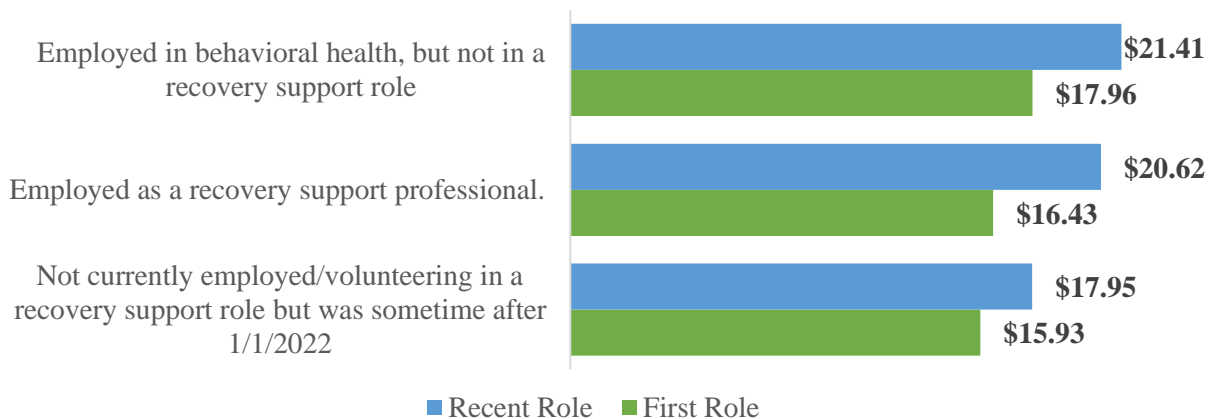
Figure 3. Workers' Employment Status



¹ <https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2017/youre-a-what/peer-support-specialist.htm>

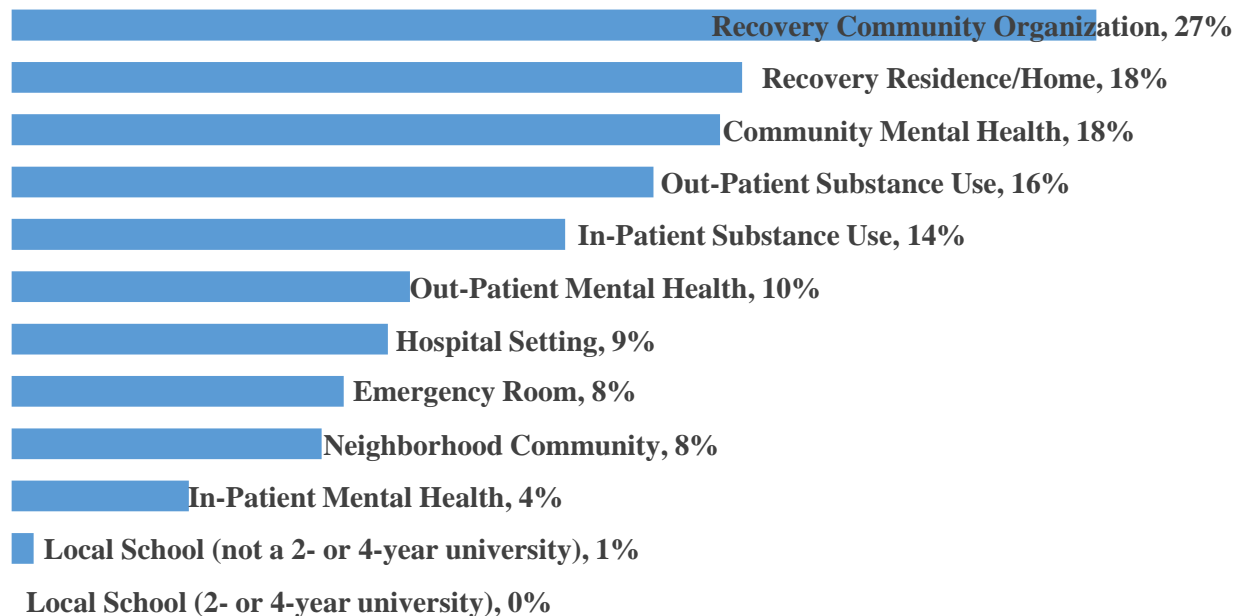
When describing their hourly rates, respondents reported an initial average of \$15.51 and a most recent average hourly rate of \$18.76. The current average rate reported by the survey respondents is consistent with the national average hourly wage² of between \$18 and \$25. Notably, respondents currently employed as recovery support professionals reported an average of \$20.62 in their most recent role, higher than the overall average.

Figure 4. Workers' First and Recent Role's Hourly Rates



Recovery support professionals worked in a variety of organization types, including Recovery Community Organizations (27%), Recovery Residence Homes (18%), Community Mental Health Centers (18%), and Out-Patient (16%)/In-Patient (14%) Substance Use Centers.

Figure 5. Workers' Workplaces



² <https://www.salary.com/research/salary/posting/recovery-support-specialist-hourly-wages>

Work-Life Quality

Respondents were largely satisfied. Specifically, workers generally highly rated their satisfaction with their quality of work, defined as satisfaction with a variety of work elements. Most were satisfied or very satisfied with benefits, pay, schedule, the information and supervision they received from their organization, the organization's respect for their boundaries and mental health, and their involvement with decisions that affect their work. Research suggests that organizational support, empowerment, and training increase job satisfaction among recovery support workers and decrease absence and turnover (Edwards & Solomon, 2023; Gillard et al., 2022). Mentoring by supervisors in a recovery-oriented workplace is also related to job satisfaction (Abraham, 2022). Of the workers who completed this survey, 95% were satisfied with the organization in which they work and 98% were satisfied with their job overall. In other studies, recovery support professionals generally reported satisfaction with most elements of their job; some noted less satisfaction with job advancement opportunities (Lapidos, 2022).

Figure 6. Workers' Satisfaction with Work Elements



About half of the workers (49%) reported “mild or no” levels of stress, a little over one-third (37%) reported “moderate” stress, and a small proportion (12%) reported severe or extreme stress. Workers generally did not have a hard time relaxing (83% said Never, Rarely, or Sometimes) or feel stressed from their job (74% said Never, Rarely, or Sometimes). In other research, recovery support workers report an initial sense of stress when they first enter the role, but overall high levels of wellbeing, empowerment, connection, and self-growth (Gillard et al., 2022). Further, when recovery support professionals have clarity around their role, they report lower levels of emotional exhaustion, possibly decreasing burnout and turnover (Abraham et al., 2022).

Figure 7. Stress Levels



Career Plans of Recovery Professionals

When the responding recovery support professionals described their future, most intended to stay engaged as members of the professional recovery support workforce. Of the professionals who are certified, most (96%) intend to renew their credentials. In fact, many of the 182 workers (65%) reported they wanted to earn more certifications to advance in their recovery support professional careers. A small number (6%) wanted to continue working at their current certification level. Fifteen percent (15%) noted that their role as a recovery support professional was a steppingstone to a treatment/clinical profession, with some reporting goals to transition to another role within behavioral health (5%). The remaining respondents (9%) were unsure, did not plan on working in behavioral health for the remainder of their careers, or had retired.

**The majority of workers
intend to continue in their recovery support professional roles rather than
transition to a treatment/clinical role.**

Key Findings

Based on the recovery support professionals who completed the survey, a profile of the workforce in Indiana has emerged. The workers earn an average of almost \$16 per hour starting out and above

Figure 8. Indiana Recovery Workforce



\$20 per hour in their most recent role as a recovery support professional. The respondents' most recent role average of \$18.76 surpasses the living wage of \$15.78 needed to support a recovery support professional living in Indiana (LivingWage, 2023). When comparing the recovery support professionals' average wages to other fields, their average wages roughly meet or exceed those of healthcare support professionals (\$16.73) and office support professionals (\$20.45) (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022).

The recovery support professional workers that completed the survey described a mainly female, white workforce with some college education who is satisfied with their workplace and the work that they do. Services are offered in many different settings, across 92 Indiana counties. Workers earn, on average, almost \$19.00 per hour. Survey results show that there is high satisfaction with employment as a recovery support professional and that the vast majority's desire is to continue their careers in recovery support versus transitioning to another role such as a clinician. These professionals are interested in earning more certifications to advance in their recovery support professional careers.

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