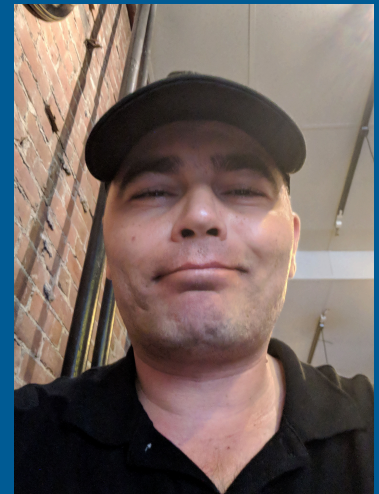


Jonathan (Massachusetts)

Jonathan is an advocate for and example of how employment is such an important part of mental health recovery. In his work, he uses his own lived experience to help others understand the ways in which working in the community helps to manage mental health symptoms. “I really am helped by knowing that once I have my coffee, cigarettes, and toothbrushing, and I am off to work, that my mental health troubles and unhappiness will mostly pass.”



Jonathan currently holds two part-time jobs. In his position with the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health to Mental Health Housing and Homelessness services, Jonathan advocates for the rights for people in mental health recovery. Additionally, he works part time job at a free, peer run, drop in recovery center. Through this work he witnesses firsthand the barriers and facilitators to employment. “Underpaying honest workers is often the major problem, as is having to maintain work while having good health insurance and a good place to stay.”

***“Underpaying honest workers is often the major problem.
Being poor is not fair nor healthy.”***

Having access to peer support and developing advocacy skills are other factors that lead to positive employment outcomes. “I wish everyone could afford to volunteer and help the greater community with peer support,” he says. Additionally, building strong relationships with coworkers contributes to success on the job.

Most importantly, employment provides financial stability, which can be a source of significant stress. “To be honest, some money for good food, clothing, and good tobacco and coffee are a major help. Being poor is not fair nor healthy,” he says. For Jonathan, increasing opportunities for people with disabilities to achieve competitive, integrated employment is a way to help people to live better.