

Employment & Inclusion Conference 2026: The Power of Expectations

March 24, 2026

1:30 PM

Breakout Session C-2

Empowered Employment: My Journey from Services to Self-Advocacy

As a self-advocate who has received disability employment services, I've experienced both the challenges and opportunities that come with navigating today's workforce as a person with a disability. My journey from job seeker to confident employee has taught me that true workplace inclusion goes far beyond compliance. It's about empowerment, understanding, and collaboration. In this presentation, I share my lived experience to highlight what authentic inclusion looks like from the inside. Through personal stories and practical examples, I will explore how effective communication, individualized support, and a strengths-based approach can transform both employees and organizations. Participants will learn strategies that help people with disabilities not only secure employment but also thrive and grow once they're hired. This session is designed for employers, service providers, and advocates who want to move beyond accommodations and toward genuine belonging. By listening to the perspective of someone who has benefited from and now champions inclusive employment, attendees will gain insight into how small changes in attitude and practice can make a lasting impact. Together, we can build workplaces that see ability first and create opportunities for everyone to succeed.

Learning Objectives:

At the end of this session, you will understand the lived experience of a person who has received disability employment services and identify common barriers and supports that impact workplace inclusion. You will be able to apply practical strategies for fostering empowerment and self-advocacy among employees with disabilities through strengths-based approaches and effective communication. Recognize the role of collaboration between employers, job coaches, and self-advocates in creating sustainable, inclusive employment outcomes.



Taylor Walters
taylor.walters@usu.edu
Training & Development Specialist
IDRPP Utah State University



Emma Eccles Jones College of Education & Human Services
Institute for Disability Research, Policy & Practice
UtahStateUniversity.