

IPS Practice and Principles

Overview of Individual Placement and Support Supported Employment (IPS)

IPS helps people with serious mental illness work at regular jobs of their choosing. Although variations of supported employment exist, IPS refers to the evidence-based practice of supported employment.

Characteristics of IPS

- It is an evidence-based practice with twenty years of research proving its effectiveness.
- IPS practitioners focus on consumer strengths and preferences.
- Believes that work can promote recovery and wellness.
- Practitioners work in collaboration with the Department of Rehabilitation.
- IPS uses a multidisciplinary team approach.
- Services are individualized and long-lasting.
- It has a well-validated, 25-item fidelity scale that is used for program evaluation.

Practice Principles of IPS Supported Employment

1. The focus is on competitive jobs: These are jobs in the community that anyone can apply for that pay at least minimum wage. They are not jobs set aside for people with disabilities. Competitive jobs can be full or part time.
2. Eligibility is based on consumer choice: Any person who has serious mental illness and is interested in a job is eligible for IPS services. No one is excluded because of prior work history, substance use, mental health symptoms, criminal history, etc. Every person is encouraged to think about employment and all interested people are referred to IPS services.
3. Consumer preferences are important: Employment specialists help people find jobs based on their preferences for job type, location, schedule, etc. People also decide how the job search will be conducted and how follow-along supports will be provided.
4. IPS and mental health services are integrated: Employment specialists and mental health practitioners meet weekly to think of ways to support a person's goals.
5. Rapid job search: People are not asked to go through vocational evaluation, situational assessment, work readiness groups, or work adjustment programs. Instead, they are assisted directly in the job search. Employment specialists and/or clients have face-to-face employer contact within 30 days of the first IPS meeting.
6. Employment specialists build relationships with employers: Employment specialists develop relationships with employers through multiple visits aimed at learning about the needs and preferences of each employer. Employers are seen as another customer and the employment specialist makes at least six in-person employer contacts with hiring managers weekly.
7. Follow-along supports are continuous: Employment specialists and other treatment team members provide individualized and time-unlimited follow along supports until the consumer is stable and happy in their job.
8. Work incentives planning is offered to all: People are provided accurate information about their benefits (e.g., Social Security) before they start work and over time as they need to make decisions about jobs.

Dartmouth IPS Supported Employment Center: www.dartmouthips.org

Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Vocational Services: www.acbhcs.org/vocational