

## The International IPS Learning Community Program Description

### *Overview*

The IPS Learning Community is designed to promote access to high-quality evidence-based employment services, known as Individual Placement and Support (IPS). The goal is to assist people with behavioral health conditions who are interested in obtaining competitive employment.

The foundation of the learning community is a group of state/regional stakeholders including the state mental health authority, state vocational rehabilitation, IPS trainers, peer and family leaders. The IPS Learning Community emphasizes collection and monitoring of employment/education outcomes and program implementation, regular communication among stakeholders, sharing of ideas and information, provision of training and technical assistance, and commitment to research and innovation. The International IPS Learning Community currently includes 22 states/jurisdictions and three European countries.

In the United States, this program systematically works with individual states to implement IPS supported employment following the evidence-based guidelines, initially in a small number of sites (typically three to five community mental health agencies) and expanding statewide over time. Each participating state/jurisdiction administers the program through

collaboration between the state mental health authority and the state Vocational Rehabilitation administration. The IPS Employment Center oversees the program by providing ongoing technical assistance and consultation, developing training and educational materials, conducting online and in-person courses for stakeholders ([www.IPSworks.org](http://www.IPSworks.org)), offering research opportunities, and convening stakeholders on conference calls and in-person meetings.

### *The Program*

Through a gift from Corporate Contributions Johnson & Johnson, the Program began in 2001 with a three-site pilot in three states for one year to demonstrate the feasibility of implementing evidence-based supported employment with close collaboration between mental health and vocational rehabilitation services. Building upon the success of the pilot, the Program was subsequently instituted and currently includes 20 states, Alameda County in California, and Broward County, Florida.

Historically, program participation was comprised of renewable work agreements for four years with funding from Corporate Contributions Johnson & Johnson that was matched by the state mental health authority and state Vocational Rehabilitation. Activities in the first year included building informed support for implementing IPS supported employment services statewide in a sustainable way, creating a state-level IPS supported employment steering committee, developing in-state technical assistance capacity, and carrying out a site selection process to select three to five sites. Years two through four were devoted to implementing IPS supported employment with good fidelity and developing plans to

expand IPS services in a sustainable way. Start-up matching funds are no longer available from Corporate Contributions Johnson & Johnson. New states/jurisdictions in the Learning Community identify other funding sources and follow similar procedures to implement IPS.

The IPS Employment Center partners with the state IPS champions from the mental health authority and state Vocational Rehabilitation and provides IPS trainer training and technical assistance on implementing high fidelity supported employment. In addition, the IPS Employment Center coordinates a family advocacy project for IPS supported employment across the jurisdictions. In 2013, the program organized a group of peers who advocate for IPS services and employment and education opportunities. The peer group develops materials that are posted on [www.IPSworks.org](http://www.IPSworks.org).

States/jurisdictions have continued to participate in the program beyond the four-year funding period through regular teleconference meetings, annual in-person meetings, sharing outcome data, training and educational materials, participating in research projects, and accessing ongoing technical assistance and consultation from the IPS Employment Center team.

### *The IPS Learning Community*

The Program evolved into a learning community in which the IPS leaders from the jurisdictions continue to meet, and identify and participate in research projects to better understand how to support people living with behavioral health conditions in their recovery through work and school. Examples of studies in this learning community are: the relationship between employment outcomes and IPS fidelity, a survey on supported

education, employment benchmarks, and factors related to IPS sustainability.

### *Program Outcomes*

After the pilot year in 2001, six states and the District of Columbia joined the program. States/jurisdictions are invited to join following orientation to the program and completing a brief application procedure. Currently, there are 20 states (Alabama, Colorado, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin), the and two county-level projects: Alameda County, California and Broward County, Florida. In the participating states/jurisdictions in the United States there are currently over 275 teams from 215 sites that submit quarterly outcome reports in the learning community. Sites in the United States start to submit quarterly outcomes after their baseline fidelity review. A site is defined as an agency, which may have multiple IPS teams with different supervisors and locations. The number of teams and sites increase each quarter as states/jurisdictions expand access.

Each site provides simple program-level employment and education outcome data on a quarterly basis. The IPS Employment Center summarizes the outcomes in graphs and tables that are shared with state liaisons and their sites. In the most recent quarter (January – March, 2017), 17,019 people (from 19 states and Alameda County, California) received IPS supported employment services. Forty-one percent of those people worked in a competitive job during the quarter.

The employment rate for the program has ranged from 38% (first quarter of data collection; 5 states and District of Columbia) to 55%. The average employment rate across 58 quarters is 42%.

### *International IPS Dissemination Network*

In 2012, the IPS Learning Community began including countries and regions outside of the United States. Italy, the Netherlands, and Catalonia, Spain have joined the international IPS dissemination network with the United States. Through the international IPS Learning Community we learn about IPS implementation in different cultures and different labor markets.

The IPS Learning Community hosts a yearly in-person meeting to share information, develop advocacy efforts for expanding and sustaining evidence-based employment and education services, and increase the network of stakeholders committed to the goal of recovery through work and school. People who are interested in the IPS Learning Community are welcome to attend.

The IPS Learning Community invites other states and regions to consider joining the membership.

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