

BUILDING AN IPS TEAM THAT FOCUSES ON CULTURES

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Not only should IPS supervisors try to recruit employment specialists from diverse cultures, they should also ensure that the employment team is comfortable for all employment specialists. The team needs to develop critical consciousness about cultures. They need to think about the daily existence of people who are not of the mainstream culture in their area. For example, as a woman of color in a rural area of Vermont, I face barriers all of the time, even when job developing. It is helpful to have a supervisor (and team) who is aware of that and talks about it with me, especially helping to think about how to navigate racism and sexism.

It's critical to make the workplace welcoming to everyone. Our agency is collaborating with a cultural competency trainer to rewrite our employee policies. An agency can also display art that reflects different cultures to make the workplace comfortable. "There is someone who looks like me—this must be a safe place."

It takes time to develop a team perspective that is mindful about diverse cultures. One or two trainings won't do it. The team needs to talk about culture every day and every week. People need to be aware of current events and what is happening in the world—they need to be global thinkers.

If the team isn't practicing awareness among themselves, then when they try to be culturally competent for the people they serve, it is going to feel superficial. It can have the effect of making people feel even more "other," more separate from practitioners. Another strategy to demonstrate awareness of culture is to provide brochures and forms in different languages.

Occasionally, people in rural areas feel that being aware of diverse cultures doesn't apply to them because the population is fairly homogenous. But we all live in a country with a history of segregation and oppression. We're all affected by being part of this society. Further, if a program rarely serves people of diverse cultures, the team should consider that everyone may not feel comfortable accessing their services. Who isn't being served and could benefit from outreach? Even if it is a small number of people, who might be facing discrimination in a rural area and how can you serve them better?

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ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Starting with this issue, the newsletter is only available online. To continue receiving the newsletter, sign up at <http://www.dartmouthips.org>

ONLINE COURSE FOR IPS SUPERVISORS

An online course for IPS Supported Employment Supervisors begins August 4 and will be offered again in early 2015.

To learn more about the course, go to <http://www.dartmouthips.org>

IPS LEADERSHIP TRAINING

An interactive training on implementing and sustaining IPS supported employment is held twice yearly at the Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center in Lebanon, New Hampshire.

For details visit <http://www.dartmouthips.org>

IMPROVING IPS FOR MINORITY GROUPS

Jeanne Miranda, Center for Health Services and Society, UCLA

Disparities in mental health care exist and persist; minorities are less likely to get mental health care when needed. Because less is known about access to IPS services, IPS program leaders should track who uses IPS services and whether that reflects people within the mental health center and the geographic region.

Factors that can improve minority access to IPS are, 1) locate services in communities where minorities live and work, 2) be aware that many people have difficulty trusting professionals in healthcare, and 3) accommodate people who are non-English speaking. Although mental health centers are not always located in neighborhoods where people of ethnic and racial minorities live, one advantage of IPS is that employment specialists spend their days out of their offices connecting with clients and employers in the community. Employment specialists can ask leaders from churches, community centers, and resettlement centers about meeting people at those sites so that potential IPS clients can go to a place that is already comfortable to them. An additional benefit is that employment specialists may develop relationships with people in those centers so that they have cultural guides to help them learn and connect to other members of the community. IPS practitioners must also bear in mind that

distrust of medical establishments has been well earned by minority groups over the years. Practitioners must make a conscious effort to show that they care. Finally, program leaders need to consider each step a person takes to access the IPS program. Are posters and brochures about IPS available in more than one language? Are phone recordings in more than one language? Consider all of the ways a person would learn about the IPS program and contact program staff.


To help minorities benefit from IPS, employment specialists must place extra emphasis on working with families. Many people who are members of minority cultures report that their families play an important role in making decisions. Employment specialists should always ask about including family members, and ask at different points in the employment process.

For job seekers who do not speak English, employment specialists should attempt to learn about businesses where bilingual people work. IPS practitioners may visit churches with minority congregations, cultural centers, or resettlement centers to ask about businesses where bilingual people work. Another strategy is to investigate non-English newspapers to determine which businesses advertise in those papers.


HIRING A DIVERSE STAFF

Joan Distler, Formerly of Rise, Inc., Minnesota

To hire a diverse staff, we look to the communities in our area. We try to hire people of different cultures who have the right personality and then train the person to be an employment specialist. For example, we might advertise a position in a Hmong newsletter or at a Hispanic community center. We also advertise at the Workforce Center because many immigrants go there to look for work. And on occasion, we've tried to find candidates through religious organizations.



"As a result of my job, I was able to get a loan for a good car and I've actually paid it off which is something I never thought I would be able to do. By next summer I expect to be able to buy a house with my girlfriend. When you're on disability, most of your money goes to food and rent. Now I have options. I can do more for myself."



Not everyone who shares a culture has the same perspective. It is critical to remember that each person has a unique viewpoint.

CONSIDERING CULTURE WHILE INCLUDING FAMILIES IN IPS SERVICES

Annie Kim, Program Director

Family Education and Resource Center, Oakland, CA

An important point for interacting with families is that many families are part of more than one culture. Do not assume that facts about a particular culture will apply to individual families. Instead, focus on the customs of each family, strive to treat families with respect, and listen carefully to what is important to family members.

As you prepare to meet a family, ask your client about their family's customs. "What is the appropriate custom to greet your family?" "How should family members be addressed?" "Whom should I address first?" "Is it acceptable to make direct eye contact?" Families from some cultures would appreciate knowing that you tried to make the meeting welcoming, therefore, ask if you should prepare something to drink for the meeting.

Help the job seeker (or working person) consider what he would like to discuss with his family, and whether there is information he does not want to share with his family. Also, let the person know in advance that you are going to develop a platform for family members to share their ideas. "Even if your family members do not agree with you, I want to hear them out because we are bringing them into this meeting. It will help us to know if they have any concerns and help address the challenges they may see. It is most beneficial to reach a common goal so we can all support you. But I am working with you and we will ultimately do what you are most comfortable with."

Ask the family about their preference for meeting location. Remember that transportation might be an issue for some, especially if elderly people will be involved in the meeting, or if there are young children at home. Some people may choose to meet at your center because they are eager to see where their family member goes. Offer a tour and show them your office. Other families will find it more convenient to meet at their homes. When you go to a home, immediately look to see if other people are wearing shoes—if not, take yours off right away. Allow the family to lead you where they would like to meet in the home rather than sitting down first.

Bring something to the meeting, for example, written information about the IPS program and your business card. Begin the meeting with a welcoming tone, "Thank you for opening your home to me for this meeting. We have until 3:00 to talk and I look forward to hearing your ideas. This is a team process for thinking about how Toby can be successful at work, so your input is appreciated and valued." Ask family members about their expectations for the meetings. It is usually safe to address elders first.

As the family begins to speak, observe the group to determine which person the family looks to for opinions and decision-making. That person may be very talkative, or she may quietly observe the group.

The Dartmouth IPS website has a new look and updated tools and forms. The new address is <http://www.dartmouthips.org>

"Kevin is a wonderful employee. He's always here and he is always pleasant. He is one person that I don't have to worry about. Kevin was a great match for this job and I think that was the most important thing. I would also advise other employers to try a program like this. It's a great way to be a part of the community and to find good employees!"

Culture can be related to race or ethnicity, but it can also be related to socio-economic status, age, sexual orientation, veteran status, disability status, etc.

CONSIDERING CULTURE WHILE INCLUDING FAMILIES IN IPS SERVICES *(continued from page 3)*

Ask if family members would like to know more about IPS supported employment. This is a good time to define the role and responsibilities for employment specialists so that families do not confuse what you do with the work of case managers or counselors. Ideally, include the person's case manager or counselor in this meeting so the family can see how you work together. Offer a resource specific for them, such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness – www.nami.org. Share with them the importance of meeting other families who have a loved one who may share a similar journey, "You are not alone."

Remember that family members may have had difficult times with the social service system in the past and they may still feel frustrated and blamed. Validate their experiences, "That must have been very difficult for you." If family members are not working with mental health practitioners, their need to talk about issues may have built up over time. Those family members may talk a lot and it may be difficult to help everyone focus on employment. Remember that they care about their family member and want to help. "I know that it must have been very disappointing when Toby lost jobs in the past. But this is a new team, a fresh start. That is why I am here—to learn from you and to help Toby with a

new employment plan." If family members are worried about what could go wrong, ask them to tell you about the person's strengths. You might even ask each person to share one or two strengths your client has that are related to working a job. End the meeting by summarizing what was discussed so that each person knows that she was heard, "Before I leave, I want to be sure I understand everything correctly." Explain what the next steps will be and when the family will hear from you again. Build in extra time so that you will not accidentally disappoint the family by neglecting to contact them when promised. Ask about their preferences for communicating—do not assume that all families are comfortable with emails or text messages. Ask who should be the person you contact.

Finally, thank the family for their time. "I commend you for supporting Toby's decision and I commend Toby for making this decision and feeling ready to seek employment. I look forward to meeting with all of you again in four weeks. However, please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions – you have my business card and contact information"

After the meeting, talk to your client about how it went from his perspective. Ask if he was comfortable with what was discussed and if he felt that he had time to share his ideas. And ask if there is anything you can do to improve the way that you interacted with his family. Encourage your client to have open communication with his family regarding your meetings and updates.

JOHNSON & JOHNSON-DARTMOUTH PROGRAM 2014 AWARDS



ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

- Greenville Mental Health Center and Vocational Rehabilitation, Greenville, South Carolina
- Wyandot Center, Kansas City, Kansas

TRANSFORMATION AWARD

- Communicare, Inc. and Vocational Rehabilitation, Elizabethtown, Kentucky

THE DARTMOUTH IPS FAMILY ADVOCACY FOR IPS AWARD

- NAMI Minnesota and Sue Abderholden, St Paul, Minnesota



The Center for Supported Employment Technology at Dartmouth has developed an IPS program locator called IPS Finder. The map can be used by anyone that provides IPS services. The IPS Finder is currently populated with information from states participating in the Dartmouth-Johnson & Johnson IPS Learning Collaborative. The IPS Program Locator can be found at:
<http://www.ipsfinder.com>