

## **IPS Steering Committees**

Steering committees, also referred to as stakeholder or leaderships groups, help plan and monitor IPS supported employment implementation and sustainment.

### **Purpose:**

Steering committees keep agency staff members focused on IPS implementation. Supervisors and administrators are busy and it is possible that good intentions are forgotten in the rush of daily work. Knowing that a group of stakeholders will soon convene to discuss program implementation incentivizes people to follow through with activities that help the IPS program. Another function of steering committees is to keep stakeholder groups, such as clients, Vocational Rehabilitation counselors, and family members, informed about the new practice. Finally, stakeholders provide valuable ideas and feedback to help the agency provide services in an effective manner.

### **Members:**

Steering committees strive to include a diverse range of stakeholders that may change over time depending upon the needs of the program. Participants may include:

- Agency administrators
- Family members and/or family advocacy groups
- Clients and/or peer advocacy groups
- IPS supervisor
- Vocational Rehabilitation supervisor and/or counselors
- Clinical director or a mental health supervisor
- Local chamber of commerce or economic development group
- Others (transportation providers, local college representative, ...)

Many steering committees also include employers, though employers are busy and need to know that their time is used well. One solution is to invite an employer who would not attend every meeting, but only those meetings in which her expertise was required. Another solution is to include a family member who is also a business owner or manager and can contribute from both perspectives. Each steering committee member should understand his/her role on the committee. People who do not feel useful on the committee will likely lose interest and stop participating.

### **Frequency of Meetings:**

Initially steering committee meetings should meet at least once each quarter. After the program achieves good fidelity, the group may decide to meet just twice each year. Steering committees continue to meet even after the program is well established because steering committees can help sustain the program.

Internal workgroups (usually a few people from the agency) should also meet on a monthly basis while the program is in start-up phase. These workgroups are usually comprised of three or four people who know the agency well and have the authority to make changes, for example, the quality assurance director, the clinical director and the IPS supervisor.

### **Educating Committee Members:**

The first task for each committee is to ensure that all members understand basic information about IPS, including the eight practice principles. Resources to educate steering committees can be downloaded from <http://www.IPSworks.org> . A video entitled “Introduction to Supported Employment” provides information about IPS principles along with the stories of people who have returned to work (see About IPS).

### **Activities:**

During implementation steering committees:

- Learn about IPS supported employment
- Examine the agency and system of care for policies or practices that conflict with IPS
- Review current employment outcomes, if available
- Build consensus for IPS by asking working people to share their stories and by talking about the relationship between work and recovery
- Discuss plans for IPS implementation, for example, begin reviewing the IPS supported employment fidelity scale to determine areas where change is needed

After the first IPS supported employment fidelity review, steering committees review the fidelity report and discuss which items to focus on first. For example, to improve fidelity to Zero Exclusion Criteria, committee members would brainstorm ideas to help people access IPS. They might discuss training so that mental health practitioners would understand that people can work successfully in spite of psychiatric symptoms, housing problems, substance abuse disorders, etc. If the group wants to improve Collaboration with Vocational Rehabilitation they might brainstorm ideas for the IPS team to meet with Vocational Rehabilitation counselors on a monthly, or more frequent, basis.

Over time the committee would continue to work on improving and sustaining good fidelity. They would monitor employment outcomes and discuss strategies to increase the number of working people in the IPS program or in the entire agency. Group members also talk about issues related to sustaining the program, such as funding, or issues related to expanding the program so that more people can go to work.