

IPS Trainer’s Guide to “IPS Supported Employment: A Practical Guide.”

This guide is intended to help trainers use the book as a training tool. For example, a trainer could ask the IPS supported employment team to read a chapter and then meet with the team to lead a discussion and engage the group in activities related to the chapter. Trainers may choose the discussion questions and activities that seem most relevant for a particular site.

IPS supervisors may also use this guide to help their team learn more about the evidence-based practice of IPS supported employment.

Chapter 1: Overview of IPS Supported Employment

Key Learning Points:

- Research evidence supports the IPS approach. Research shows that IPS principles and the IPS fidelity scale lead to better employment outcomes.
- Practitioners are hopeful.
- Services are individualized.
- IPS uses eight guiding principles:
 - Zero exclusion criteria
 - Integration of employment and mental health services
 - Competitive employment is the goal
 - Benefits counseling is offered to all
 - Rapid job search
 - Follow-along services are continuous
 - Client preferences are important
 - IPS specialist develop relationships with employers through multiple visits aimed at learning about their business needs

Discussion Questions:

1. What is an evidence-based practice?

Possible answers: Evidence-based practices help practitioners apply scientific evidence to their work. There have been multiple research studies that have consistently demonstrated superior outcomes for IPS. Programs are not designed based on the things that practitioners and administrators hope will result in good outcomes.

Further, the fidelity scale and seven guiding principles define the practice so that a program in Chicago will look like a program in Anchorage. This is important so that both programs will achieve good outcomes.

The outcome that IPS achieves is higher rates of competitive employment for adults with severe mental illness.

2. How is it possible to individualize services while providing the evidence-based practice of IPS supported employment?

Possible answers; Job finding, job retention and career development are all based upon each person's preferences for type of job and type of supports provided. Further, practitioners think about each person's work or education history, current symptoms, strengths and supports while helping the person develop an individualized plan. When looking at job search, job support and career development plans, it should be possible for practitioners to identify their clients even if the names are removed.

3. IPS supported employment is open to any person who wishes to work.

Why is that?

Possible answer: During the research studies, many people were able to work in spite of substance use problems, symptoms of mental illness, irregular attendance at mental health appointments, inconsistent use of medications, poor presentation (physical or social), and other factors. A desire to work appears to help people overcome even significant barriers to employment.

4. Can anyone think of a time when a client achieved a goal that no one on the team thought was possible?

5. How does work fit into recovery?

Possible answer: Many people report that work was a critical component of their recovery because it helped them to feel independent, feel better about themselves, and feel connected to their communities and other people. Some people also said that it was important to have something to do during the day and somewhere to go. Others like feeling productive.

6. Do clients at the agency use any non-competitive work programs (either programs at the agency or in the community)? How do those programs affect the principle about competitive jobs? Or the principle about rapid job search?

Activities: **Activity One:**

Have the group break into pairs. Give the pairs 5 or 7 minutes to talk about their very first job. When the large group gets together again, ask if a few people are willing to share a description of their first job. Would they still want to be doing this job? Why does the group think it is important to focus on client preferences? To help people with career development?

Activity Two:

Break the group up into small teams of 3 or 4 people. Ask them to discuss the ways that mental health and employment services are currently integrated at their agency. Is there room for improvement? Ask the group to design some action steps to improve integration.

Activity Three:

How does the IPS team currently collaborate with VR? Do they have regular, scheduled meetings to discuss people served by both agencies? Could there be any disadvantages to doing that? What would be the advantages be?

Chapter 2: Skills for Engaging People

Chapter Topics:

- Active listening skills:
 - o Open-ended questions
 - o Reflections
 - o Summary statements
 - o Expressing empathy
- Other interviewing skills
 - o Avoiding advice
 - o Emphasizing strengths
 - o Avoiding arguments
- Maintaining focus
- Role of employment specialist versus mental health practitioner

Discussion Questions:

1. How is the role of the employment specialist different from that of a mental health practitioner? For example, should the employment specialist ever talk about a person's substance use?

Possible answer: Employment specialists do talk about substance use. For example, they help people plan for a job so that the person is very likely to go to work sober. However, they would not suggest strategies to reduce or avoid substance use that the mental health team has not already discussed with the person. The same is true for symptoms. If a person is having difficulty managing symptoms at work, the employment specialist might ask a question like, "How have you managed hearing voices in the past?" but would also go to the mental health team to let them know about the hallucinations and to let them make treatment suggestions to the person.

2. "Maintaining focus" means that the employment specialist and client focus appointments on the person's employment goals. A little casual conversation can be okay if it helps develop the relationship, but can you think of examples of "losing focus?"

Possible answer: A general rule of thumb is that appointments are not meant to be helpful to employment specialists. So, an example of losing focus might be asking a client if it is okay to stop in a store at the mall to return a purchase. Another example could be talking about the employment specialist's plans for the weekend (other than a brief answer if asked by the client).

3. What is meant by “avoiding arguments”?

Possible answer: In this context, an “argument” doesn’t necessarily refer to a verbal altercation. It may mean that someone quietly disagrees with the employment specialist. Or, it may mean that a person verbally agrees, but feels ambivalent about the plan. “Arguments” tend to happen when employment specialists push for the strategy that they think is best. Instead, it is better to ask the person about his reasons for wanting to do things a different way. The employment specialist might also ask if s/he could share some information about ways that other people have approached a particular problem. Ultimately, the employment specialist should follow the person’s lead. IPS supported employment tries to empower people by valuing their approaches and individual way of doing things. If time goes by and the person seems to be having trouble reaching his or her goals, the employment specialist can ask again if the person would be interested in talking about a different approach.

4. What is meant by “avoiding advice?” Isn’t that the point of having an employment specialist—to get good advice?

Possible answer: Sharing information about jobs is fine, but too much advice can be overbearing or annoying. For example, instead of telling a person how to solve a problem, an employment specialist could ask the person what various solutions to the problem might be, and what the advantages and disadvantages to each solution might be. This will also help the person feel less dependent on the employment specialist over time.

Activities:

Activity One

Review open-ended questions with the group. Demonstrate open-ended questions by talking to someone in the group for a minute about his or her plans for the day. “What activities do you have planned in the community?” “Which things on your schedule are you looking forward to doing?” “What are your plans for lunch?” Ask the group to split into pairs. One person should be the “interviewer” who tries to learn about the other person’s work history by using only open-ended questions. After 5 minutes, ask the pairs to switch roles. When the large group gets back together, ask if they were able to avoid close-ended questions. Ask for examples of open-ended questions that they used.

Activity Two

Review reflections with the group. Demonstrate a reflection by asking someone in the group to tell you why they enjoy their

current job. Ask the group to split into pairs. One person should be the “interviewer” who will begin by asking the person how his or her day went yesterday. The interviewer will try to respond with as many reflections as possible. After a few minutes, ask the pairs to switch roles. When the large group gets back together, ask if interviewers were able to come up with reflections. Ask for examples of reflections used by the interviewers.

Activity Three

Explain summary statements. For example, after a person speaks for a while; the practitioner can reflect back a short summary of the person’s key points. You can read the following example:

Employer: I need to hire a delivery person who can lift at least 50 pounds and has a valid driver’s license with no more than two points.

Specialist: What else?

Employer: The person has to be able to find his or her way around the area because he probably won’t go to the same address twice. And he needs to be personable—to get along with the customers and try to make them happy.

Specialist: What type of work experience should the person have?

Employer: Delivery experience is not required. If the person has the other requirements, I’m willing to be flexible about specific types of experience.

Specialist: So you need a person who can lift 50 pounds, has fewer than 2 points on his license, can find his way around the area and is focused on good customer service. (*Summary statement*) Is that right?

Now ask the group to break into pairs again. Have one person take the role of employer while the other takes the role of employment specialist. Ask the employer to begin describing the type of person that s/he needs to hire. The task of the specialist is to ask open-ended questions, use reflections, and when s/he believes the employer is done, finish with a summary statement. Ask the pairs to switch roles when they have finished one role-play.

Chapter 3: Developing the Employment Plan

- Chapter Topics:
1. Creating a Career Profile (formerly “Vocational Profile”):
 - o Information from multiple sources
 - o Process of building a relationship versus filling in a form
 - o Conducted in the community
 - Discussing Disclosure
 - Including the Family
 - Maintaining Engagement
 - Work-based Assessment
- Discussion Questions:
1. What are some of the different sources of information that can be used to complete the career profile?
Possible answer: Mental health team, clinical records, family members (with permission), previous employers (with permission), criminal background checks on Internet (with permission), and the person who is receiving services.
 2. Why should an employment specialist ask for permission to obtain information from various sources (see above)?
Possible answer: To gain a deeper understanding of the person’s strengths, experiences and possible problems. Also so that you don’t have to question the person to death in order to finish the profile.
 3. How can you work on the career profile without making it feel like another form to complete?
Possible answer: Don’t bring the form to each appointment. Rather spend time talking to the person about his or her employment, education, military and criminal history...and add to the form back at the office. Focus on giving the person eye contact, asking follow-up questions and using interview skills from Chapter 3. Use a conversational tone. You might ask if you can take a few notes, but try to focus on the person.
 4. What are some possible advantages to involving families in the employment plan?
Possible answer: Families can provide good information about the person and also can encourage the person in his or her employment goals by celebrating successes. Some families may have job leads or may be able to help with things like clothes and transportation. If family members don’t agree with the employment plan, then it is crucial to meet with them so that you can ask for their support, or ask them to avoid doing things that

might obstruct the plan.

5. What things do employment specialists need to be aware of when working with families?

Possible answer; Ultimately the specialist must follow her client's preferences, even when she thinks that the family has helpful suggestions. That's one reason to make sure that the client is involved in all family meetings. Also, the employment plan should not become a source of conflict for the family. So, the specialist should not ask the family to nag the person to go to appointments or follow-through on other activities. Some families may need information about how work will affect the person's benefits.

Activities: **Activity One:**

Ask the group to brainstorm a list of strategies to engage people who are missing appointments. For example, visiting the person in the community. Then ask the group to order the list from most effective to least effective.

Activity Two:

Ask the group to brainstorm a list of the type of information that they need to know about a person before helping that person find a job. For example, the person's job preferences and work history. Then ask the IPS team if there is anything they would like to add to the career profile used by the team.

Activity Three:

Ask the group to break into pairs. Ask one person to be the employment specialist and the other to be the client. Tell the employment specialist that s/he should help the person think through the pros and cons of using disclosure. Stress that the pros and cons should come from the client's perspective. Bring the group back together. Ask the clients if they could tell what their specialist's opinions about disclosure were (not preferable). Ask the specialists what strategies they used to help clients think about the possible pros and cons.

Chapter 4: Job Development

Key Learning Points:

- Build relationships with employers using multiple visits
 - o First visit: ask for an appointment
 - o Second visit: learn about the employer
 - o Third visit: might be to talk about a job seeker who is a good match for the employer or to continue building a relationship with the employer
- Follow up on all applications and interviews
- Helping people with criminal histories
 - o Help people meet face-to-face with employers
 - o Help people practice how to talk about criminal history and efforts to move forward.

Discussion Questions:

1. What type of research do you do, or could you do, to learn about an employer before going into the field? Why do it?

Possible answer: Extensive research is not necessary and you may not do it for each and every employer. However, you should at least know the good or service that the business produces. Further, it helps to know the mission of the business. And if you can quickly find out something about changes in the business from a website, that can help, as well. Doing this shows employers that you are taking the partnership seriously. Just like a job seeker, you are working hard to earn their trust in you.

2. What are some strategies that people can use to follow up on job applications?

Possible answer: Going to the business in person is an excellent strategy. The job seeker (with or without the employment specialist present) can ask to speak to the manager and say something like, "My name is John Smith. I wanted to let you know that I applied online last Monday for a counter position. I've worked for another car rental business in the past and really enjoy dealing with the public." Phone calls are another option, though probably less effective.

3. What are some of the critical steps to helping a person with a criminal history find employment?

Possible answer: It's crucial for the person to make face-to-face contact with the employer. It's also important for the person to practice what s/he will say about his/her criminal history: 1) to be upfront about past convictions or charges, 2) to take responsibility, 3) to explain how his/her life has changed, and 4) to describe the reasons that s/he would be a good employee.

References are also helpful.

Activities:

Activity One:

Talk to the group about the third employer visit. If they have someone who would be a good match for the visit, how would they proceed with the employer? If they didn't have someone who would be a good match, how could they manage to keep making face-to-face contact with the employer? Have them brainstorm a list. For example:

- o introduce another employment specialist who does have a person who would be a good match
- o ask for a tour
- o ask employer to provide mock interview for a person who has been out of workforce for awhile
- o ask to meet next level of management or owner
- o stop by with information about the IPS program, for example, share good news about an increase in the number of people finding jobs
- o ask employer to visit steering committee to share business perspective
- o stop by with thank-you note
- o be a customer (go there for lunch)
- o stop by to say "hello" and ask how things are going

Activity Two:

Prior to the meeting, ask employment specialists to bring their employer contact logs for the past week. Talk to the employment specialists about the employer contacts that they made the previous week. What situations did they run into? How might they follow up on employer visits? Are they following up on employer visits on a routine basis? Ask them to look at their logs for last week—how many visits were return visits?

Activity Three:

Go out together in pairs and practice making first and second employer visits (1.5 to 2 hours). Be sure to include the supervisor in this activity. Meet back again at the agency as a group. Let each pair talk about their experiences. Share ideas for how to follow up with employers. Demonstrate how to fill in logs. Ask which contacts go on the logs (contact with hiring person to make an appointment or learn about the business) and which don't (no contact with person who is involved in hiring).

Chapter 5: Job Supports and Career Development

Key Learning Points:

- Job support plans are based upon information from the person's work history, strengths, supports, symptoms, the job obtained, preferences and other factors.
- Using the information above, employment specialists think about the person's strengths and also try to anticipate problems when designing job supports with their clients.
- Career development (help with job changes, school and technical training) is part of providing job supports.
- When a person loses a job, for whatever reason, this is viewed as a positive learning experience.
- Clients transfer off the IPS caseload after working steadily and reporting satisfaction with their jobs. On average, transfers to not occur before one year of working.
- Supported education is part of IPS supported employment and should be provided by a member of the IPS team.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the purpose of written job support plans?

Possible answer: Writing the plan down helps both the client and employment specialist think about supports that would be helpful in advance of the person needing supports. Further, it helps the client know what to expect and also provides an opportunity for the client to express his preferences about the type of supports he will receive. The written plan also lets the person know that follow-along supports are important—not just a “check-in service” as Nicole stated in her quote.

2. How would you know if a follow-along plan was individualized?

Possible answer: One way would be to look at the person's career profile (or talk to the person) to see if the supports were based upon the person's strengths, needs, preferences and work/education history. If the plan involves getting together with the person to talk about the job, the plan should identify the purpose of the meetings. For example, if a person has had difficulty getting along with co-workers in the past, the meetings could be to talk about co-workers and

brainstorm ways to have good working relationships. If the career profile noted that a person lost his last job because he was often late for work, the follow-along plan might include wake-up calls or other supports to help the person get to work on time. Even if the name of the person was removed from the plan, the employment specialist should be able to identify whose plan it is because each plan should be tailored a little differently.

3. What should an employment specialist do if one of her clients is fired for calling off work too many times?

Possible answer: He should think about the job with the client, mental health team and, with permission, family members. Perhaps the job was too many hours each week or too many days? Perhaps the person was calling off because she didn't really like the job or because it was an early morning job and she wasn't an early morning person? Could different job supports have made the difference? The employment specialist and client look for lessons learned so that they can begin looking for another competitive job that will be a better match for the person. The IPS team and mental health team also try to learn from the experience by trying to think about what they might do differently next time to help the person with a better job match or better job supports. Then the IPS specialist helps the person look for a job right away without placing any conditions on the job search.

4. What is the difference between an education or training program that is designed for people with disabilities or one that is open to the public? Which type do IPS programs utilize?

Possible answer: IPS programs use local community colleges, four-year colleges, GED programs, and technical training programs that are available to people in the community who may, or may not, have a disability. IPS programs don't use vocational training programs such as work adjustment programs or programs that are only available for people with disabilities.

Chapter 6: Helping People Who Have Co-Occurring Disorders

Key Learning Points:

- IPS programs welcome people who want to work, whether or not they have problems with substance use disorders. Clients are not asked to achieve sobriety or engage in treatment before receiving assistance with competitive jobs or school.
- People with substance use disorders can be just as successful at work as those who don't have a co-occurring disorder.
- It is important for specialists to include information about the substance use in the career profile. For example, time of day that the person tends to use, type of substances, things that can lead to increased use, whether or not the person is working on recovery from substance abuse...
- Employment specialists need to find jobs that support recovery. For example, jobs where alcohol is not sold or served. Some people may need to avoid places that sell over-the-counter medication or places where co-workers use substances.
- The mental health team and employment specialist should help the person develop a money management plan.
- It's important for the mental health team and employment specialist to work together closely.
- Practitioners should emphasize strengths and foster hope to help the person with his or her recovery.

Discussion Questions:

1. What should an employment specialist do if one of her clients loses a job due to alcohol use?

In IPS, each job is viewed as a positive learning experience. So, in this situation, the specialist may learn that her client needs a job during a different time of day or may need help budgeting his paycheck. Her client might also decide that when he gets another job he will try to cut back on drinking or to avoid drinking before work. But the employment specialist wouldn't put any conditions on helping the person with the next job. For example, she wouldn't tell the person that she would only help with another job search if he agreed to go to treatment groups or if he signed a contract saying he would not drink before work. Instead, she would try to help the person think about another job and strategies to get to work sober. She might also talk to the mental health team about ideas for helping the person go to work sober. Finally, she would also help the person begin looking for another job right away.

2. What should the team do if a person gets a job and then uses the extra income to increase his substance use?

The IPS team needs to remember that they can't make choices for the person and that some people learn best by experience. For example, if the person comes close to losing her job, she may decide to cut back on using substances. Or if the person loses the job, she may decide to accept help managing her paycheck the next time that she gets a job. One thing the employment specialist can do is talk to the mental health team to see if they know of any ideas to help the person. The employment specialist can also remind the person of the reasons that she wanted to work and the positive changes that work has made in her life. The specialist can provide information that the person might be in danger of losing her job, but must provide this information in a non-judgmental manner.

3. Won't employment specialists burn bridges with employers if they help people get jobs in spite of substance use problems?

Employers hire people who don't work out all of the time, including people who don't work out because of problems with drugs or alcohol. An occasional employer may become angry, but most will understand that it isn't possible to predict with 100% accuracy how a person will perform on the job. What is important to most employers is that the employment specialist is available to provide support and assistance if there is trouble. That means that employment specialists should stay in regular contact with employers once they have permission from their client. The contact might just consist of short monthly phone calls or visits, but employers will appreciate the effort and be more likely to work with the program again even if one worker isn't successful. Finally, if a person is fired for any reason including substance related problems, the employment specialist should make contact with the employer right away to express his regret.

Activities: **Activity One**

Ask the team to share stories about people who have been able to work in spite of substance use problems. For each story, what were the person's strengths? How was the person able to work in spite of ongoing substance abuse problems? Did work have a positive impact on the person's life?

Activity Two

Ask employment specialists to make a list of jobs in the community that do not support recovery. For example, places

that sell alcohol, workplaces that are known to have a lot of substance abuse, areas of town where drugs are commonly sold on street corners...

Activity Three

Share the following vignette with the team and ask them to answer the questions that follow:

An employment specialist (Esteban) brought up one of his clients in a team meeting. Apparently, his client (Beth) had been working as a stocker in a retail store for about a year, when her mother died unexpectedly. Within two months, Beth left work early on three occasions. Beth's supervisor called Esteban and the three of them got together to talk about the problem. During the meeting, Beth admitted that she left work because she was high. The employer regretfully fired Beth because of a drug-free workplace policy.

Esteban asked Beth to agree that she would go to AA groups and refrain from using drugs and alcohol if he helped her look for another job. She agreed. They were able to arrange an interview scheduled on a Monday morning, but over the weekend, Beth was hospitalized for psychiatric symptoms that seemed to have been precipitated by drug use.

- ⇒ How might Esteban (employment specialist) be feeling at this point? *(Possible answers: Frustrated? Angry? Disappointed?)*
- ⇒ How might Beth be feeling? *(Possible answers: Ashamed about her drug use? Worried that she disappointed her employment specialist? Disappointed about missing the interview?)*
- ⇒ What needs to happen for things to begin moving forward again? *(Possible answers: It might help for Esteban to talk to his team or supervisor about his feelings. In order for things to move forward, he needs to realize that relapses are a common part of recovery from drugs and alcohol. It's important for him to help Beth overcome her shame so that she can focus on next steps. For instance, he could remind her that it was great that she got the interview and that she's been a good worker in the past. He should also offer to help her resume her job search right away and he could talk to the mental health team to see if they have any ideas to help her gain some control over her drug use.)*
- ⇒ What could Esteban have done differently after Beth lost her job? *(Possible answers: He should have refrained from*

placing conditions on the job search. Instead, he could have asked the mental health team to help Beth think of a plan to deal with her drug problem since that is really outside the scope of his expertise as an employment specialist. The conditions were also problematic because he was leading Beth to agree to things that might not have been her goals.)

Chapter 7: Collaboration with Other Professionals

Key Learning Points:

- The mental health treatment team refers to a group of practitioners with various training and roles. For example, case managers, counselors, nurses, employment specialists, housing specialists, therapists, substance abuse specialists, medication prescribers, or others.
- These teams ensure that client services are integrated.
- In IPS supported employment, employment specialists attend these team meetings at least once each week to discuss clients. They participate throughout the meeting to talk about people on their caseload, ask for help from the team, and also to suggest work for clients who have not yet been referred to IPS.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it important that employment services and mental health services are integrated?
Possible answer: So that every member of the team is supporting the goals that are most important to that client. For example, if a client wanted to work, it would be important for each team member to share hopeful messages about work and to be talking to the person about his work goals. Further, treatment decisions should be made in accordance with the work goal—for example, the medication prescriber might try to change medications so that the person would feel less drowsy on the job. Another example might be a person who had a goal of seeing her children as much as possible. The employment specialist might help this person find a job that would not conflict with her visiting schedule with her children.
2. What is meant by “shared-decision making”?
Possible answer: Practitioners on the team share observations and opinions when discussing a client situation and attempt to come to an agreement regarding options to discuss with the client. No one on the team has the final decision-making authority other than the client. An exception would be a decision related to a person’s safety or welfare, and in that case the team leader or psychiatrist might make a decision about how to proceed.

3. How do members of the IPS team connect with medication prescribers? Is this sufficient? Could employment specialists share information with medication prescribers in other, more effective, ways?
- How do team members currently participate in mental health treatment team meetings?
 1. Do employment specialists participate in the entire meeting?
 2. Do mental health practitioners help with the employment plan? For example, do they ever help with job supports?
 3. Can employment specialists bring up anyone they wish to discuss?
 4. Does the team celebrate success when a person becomes employed, finishes a quarter of classes, etc.?

Activities: **Activity 1**

Discuss the following scenario with the team: A client (Clara) has been successfully driving a taxi for 9 months, though recently reported to her employment specialist that she has been having visual hallucinations, including seeing houses in the middle of the road. She does not want to talk to her employer about the problem because she is worried that he will fire her if he knows that she has a mental illness. Her employment specialist has not had contact with the employer.

- What should the employment specialist do after hearing about the hallucinations? *(Answer: Immediately alert the mental health team, including the mental health supervisor, because this is a safety issue. The specialist should not wait for the next team meeting.)*
- What is the role of the employment specialist versus other team members, such as a case manager or counselor? *(The employment specialist should work in conjunction with the mental health team. They might meet together with Clara to suggest that she asks for time off work until her symptoms abate. The mental health practitioners could help Clara monitor her symptoms and decide when it is safe to go back to work. The employment specialist can help Clara think of ways to ask for time off work without sharing personal information about hallucinations.)*

Activity 2: Ask the IPS team members to provide some examples of times that mental health and employment services

were well integrated for a person on the caseload.

Also, ask for examples of times when services were not well integrated. What could they do differently next time? Is there something the supervisor could do to help if a similar situation comes up again?

