



SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration

Individual Placement and
Support (IPS): An Evidence-Based
Supported Employment Model

TOOLKIT

- Information for People with MH
Conditions and their Families

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Center for Mental Health Services

Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration



As the Director of the Center for Mental Health Services at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), I am pleased to present Individual Placement and Support (IPS) – An Evidence-Based Supported Employment Model Toolkit. This Evidence-Based toolkit is designed to assist a variety of stakeholder groups with implementation. Following new research findings and advances in implementation the toolkit is a significant update to the Supported Employment toolkit that we published in 2009. It consists of 20 documents, including an in-depth training guide, a fidelity scale for maintaining service standards, a guide for data monitoring, an annotated bibliography, and implementation support for diverse stakeholders.

In recent years there has been a concerted effort at the SAMHSA Center for Mental Health Services to understand how to best treat persons with serious mental illness and how to best help them live meaningful inclusive lives. We define recovery as a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential. We know that employment promotes better health and provides many other benefits, such as earning money, structured daily activity, a way to contribute to society, a place to have friends, and more. The qualities that come from having a job or going to school often is what separates a life of illness and dependence from a life of health and productivity.

I encourage all stakeholders to utilize this toolkit to implement IPS effectively and maximize employment outcomes for individuals with serious mental illness. The Individual Placement and Support (IPS): An Evidence-Based Supported Employment Model Toolkit reflects our commitment to advancing comprehensive, person-centered recovery support for individuals experiencing mental health and substance use challenges.

Anita Everett, M.D., DFAPA

Director of the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS)
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

INFORMATION FOR PEOPLE WITH MH CONDITIONS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Individual Placement and Support (IPS), an evidence-based supported employment model, assists people with mental health conditions gain employment and develop careers. IPS is defined by 8 principles, including eligibility based on consumer choice, focus on competitive jobs, service integration of employment services with mental health treatment, attention to consumer preferences, personalized benefits planning, job search starts after consumer expresses interest in working, IPS specialists build relationships with employers, and individualized long-term job support.

In this document, “family members” refers to the people who support job seekers and workers with their employment goals. Each person defines family for themselves. For one person, “family” may refer to his parents, while to another, “family” may refer to her good friend. For others, their partners, siblings, foster parents, adult children, AA sponsors, or others may be their family.

Employment has many benefits.

For most people, work is part of their identity, especially when workers hold jobs that they enjoy. Some people want to work so they can pursue an interest, while others want the social benefits of a job. And most individuals, even those who receive disability benefits, enjoy a higher income from working a job.



MARGARITE'S STORY

Margarite had worked as a hostess in a restaurant for a year when she was given a one week, paid vacation. After a few days, she noticed that her symptoms of depression were returning, and by the end of the week she was glad to return to her job. She said, “When I am at work, wearing my uniform, I smile at the customers and chat with them. Eventually, I feel good. Work is my treatment.”

Supported employment is based on eight principles:



1) Eligibility based on consumer choice

Everyone is eligible for IPS services because everyone has strengths related to employment. Regardless of legal histories, mental health challenges, or problems with drugs or alcohol, the right job is out there for those who wish to work.



ELLEN'S STORY

Ellen had felony convictions for possessing and selling drugs. She was able to find jobs on her own but did not share information about her legal history with employers because she thought that would prevent her from obtaining employment. However, on two occasions she was fired after a brief period of working a job because employers finally received her background information and said that she was not truthful on her job application. Ellen decided to try IPS services. Her IPS specialist explained that many employers do hire people with legal histories, but that they want candidates to be upfront about their past and explain how they have changed. She helped Ellen plan how she would talk about her convictions and offered to advocate for Ellen with employers. These strategies worked and Ellen found a job that she loves decorating cakes.



2) Focus on competitive jobs.

IPS specialists help people look for regular jobs in the community. One person may work in a dog grooming business while someone else works in an accounting business. These workers earn the same wages as their colleagues who do similar work.



CHRIS' STORY

Chris had worked as a volunteer for eight years. One day, they saw an IPS specialist in the lobby of the mental health agency and told her that they wanted a paid job. The specialist spoke to the mental health treatment team who expressed concerns because Chris' mental health symptoms were stable, and they thought that a paid job would be too stressful. The specialist met with Chris' counselor to explain that Chris wanted to pursue some of the career ideas they had in high school and that volunteer jobs can also be stressful. The counselor agreed that people have the right to take risks and said he would support Chris with their employment goal.



3) Service integration of employment services with mental health treatment.

IPS specialists speak regularly with care managers, therapists, nurses, etc. Everyone works together to consider how to help with jobs and career goals.



TED'S STORY

When Ted started working a job, he experienced drowsiness in the morning that made it hard for him to concentrate at work. His IPS specialist shared that information with the mental health team, and the psychiatrist suggested that Ted take his medicine earlier in the evening so that he could be alert in the morning.



4) Attention to consumer preferences.

Preferences may be related to the type of job a person would enjoy, how far the workplace is from the person's home, whether family members provide job supports, whether the IPS specialist has contact with employers or helps from behind the scenes, where the IPS specialist and worker meet, and other matters that are important to the person.



TAYLOR'S STORY

Taylor did not want to work around people, and she also did not want to take the bus to work. Taylor and her IPS specialist took a walk around Taylor's neighborhood to look at the different businesses and talk about possible positions. By the end of the walk, Taylor identified a few places she thought she would like to work, and they developed a plan for the IPS specialist to visit those managers while also helping Taylor complete job applications. The IPS specialist also shared Taylor's preferences with the other IPS specialists at the agency in case anyone knew of a good job match for Taylor.



5) Individualized benefits planning.

People who receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), housing subsidies, food aid, or other benefits are offered appointments with trained benefits counselors. The benefits counselors let people know how their entitlements would be affected by wages from a job. People meet with benefits planners to help them decide if they want to work, how much they want to work, or if they want to make plans to exit the benefits system.



HARLAN'S STORY

Harlan wanted to work, but his sister was nervous that he would lose his SSI benefits, including Medicaid and a housing subsidy. They met with a benefits counselor and learned that he could keep his SSI if he worked part time. And they learned that because he was disabled at age 22, he was eligible for an Achieving a Better Life Experience, ABLE, account (see Resource Guide) so that he could save earnings that would not be counted against his housing subsidy.



6) Job search starts after consumer expresses interest in working.

Typically, IPS specialists meet with new job seekers a few times to get to know them, learn about their goals, and help with a résumé. But within a month or so, the IPS specialist and/or the job seeker begins making in-person contacts with business managers to talk about employment.



DESTINY'S STORY

Destiny had a degree in computer science and was eager to start her career. After she and an IPS specialist met a few times to talk about Destiny's goals, education and work history, they begin completing online job applications. At the same time, the IPS specialist visited companies that hired positions related to computer science to learn what jobs could be available to Destiny and what those positions entailed. She shared information with Destiny about what she was learning so that Destiny could tailor her applications for those jobs that sounded appealing to her.



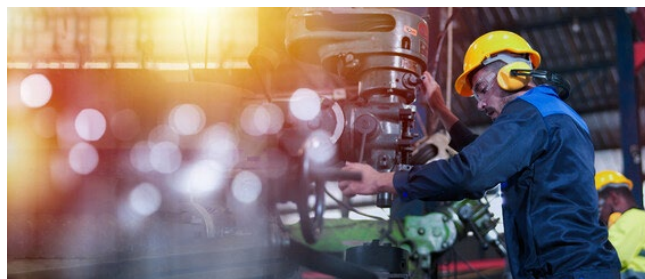
7) IPS specialists build relationships with employers.

Based on a job seeker's preferences, an IPS specialist can visit businesses to learn about the types of positions they have and what types of workers they need. IPS specialists share information they learn with job seekers and ask if they would like assistance submitting an application to that business. If yes, then the specialist will also return to the business to describe the job seeker's strengths related to the job, and to ask if he can introduce the job seeker to the employer.



ANDY'S STORY

Andy grew up with his grandmother who taught him to cook. He developed a strong interest in cooking and wanted to find a job in a commercial kitchen as he attended a culinary program at the community college. He and his IPS specialist talked about what information he was comfortable sharing with employers, and she explained how she could get to know managers at restaurant and other businesses in order to advocate for him to be hired. Andy agreed with that approach. His IPS specialist said she would visit at least six commercial kitchens each month and report what she learned to Andy. In a few months, one of the managers she spoke to said that he would like to meet a job seeker who was interested in cooking, so the IPS specialist and Andy went together to talk to the manager about Andy's cooking skills and abilities. When Andy was ready to begin school, the IPS specialist helped him apply for financial aid, ask for accommodations for learning, and provided other supports to help him earn his certificate.



DAVID'S STORY

David was quite nervous about starting his new job as an assembler (factory worker). In the past he had trouble going to work when he was very nervous, so for the first two days that he worked, his IPS specialist gave him a ride to work. The next few days she called him in the morning before he went to work. And his counselor helped him practice some techniques for managing nervousness on the job. During the following week, the IPS specialist took David to work on Monday, and met him during his lunch hour on Thursday. She continued seeing him twice a week for a few more weeks until he told her that one meeting a week would be enough because he was settling into the job and feeling better.



8) Individualized, long-term support.

The IPS specialist stays in touch with the worker to help with issues such as transportation, obtaining clothing for work, assistance asking for adjustments to the job such as a change in work schedule or job duties, family meetings, help asking the supervisor for feedback, or just meeting to talk about the job and celebrate successes along the way.

Community-Based Services

Another way that IPS is different from many employment programs is that it is community-based. For example, IPS specialists go to business to meet employers in person. And they meet with consumers at libraries to submit online applications, coffee shops to talk about jobs, family homes with consumers to talk about possible good job matches, businesses to follow up on job applications, their workplaces, schools and other locations that are convenient for consumers.

IPS Starts with You

Think about those whose opinions you trust and start talking to them about how you feel about working a job. What would be the good things about working? The not so good things? If you did decide to work, what type of job would you like to have? Ask your counselor or case manager to help you connect with a benefits planner so you can learn how your overall income would change if you worked part time or full time.

When you think it is the right time to work, let people know you are ready. Remember that you are the best person to make that judgement. Ask to meet with an IPS specialist to learn more about how they help people with employment or ask to start IPS services right away. Sometimes people want to take a class or classes at a local school to gain skills. IPS specialists can support you with this too.

For More Information

IPS services are provided by many agencies across the country. If you are interested in knowing more about IPS, or want to receive these services, contact staff at your local mental health or vocational agency.



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Photos are for illustrative purposes only.
Any person depicted in a photo is a model.



SAMHSA's mission is to lead public health and service delivery efforts promote mental health, prevent substance misuse, and provide treatments and supports to foster recovery while ensuring equitable access and better outcomes.

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