

Individual Placement and Support IPS/Supported Employment: An Evidence Based Practice

Recorded by Mary Schepler and Darius McKinney

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Mary: Hello everyone. Today's presentation is on Individual Placement and Support IPS/Supported Employment: an evidence-based practice. My name is Mary Schepler and I am an IPS trainer with the Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Mental Health.

Darius: Hi my name is Darius McKinney. I am a project manager for the SAMHSA Mental Health employment transformation grant in Illinois.

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Mary: We have four objectives for today's training. First we are going to discuss what is IPS supported employment and define the 8 principles of IPS. How to implement IPS with job seekers, and we will cover some key points of the IPS fidelity scale.

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Mary: What is IPS Supported Employment?

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Darius: As we have already stated, Individual Placement and Support/IPS is an evidence-based practice. As defined by www.mentalhealthpractices.org, an evidence-based practice is a clinical intervention which has consistently shown in several research studies to assist consumers in achieving their desired goals of health and wellness. The clinical intervention of IPS is supported by 8 key principles that are provided by an employment specialist, who acts as the vocational expert on an integrated mental health treatment team.

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Darius: Evidence-based practices consist of a program model that is validated by rigorous research that has been conducted by several investigators. It also entails guidelines describing critical components and has a defined treatment manual.

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Darius: In addition to being an evidence-based practice, IPS also differs from other employment models in that it holds a simple philosophy. A belief that every person with a disability is capable of working competitively in the community, if the right job and the right work environment can be found.

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Mary: This is a graph that shows us statistics on supported employment and looking at the competitive employment rate at 22 randomized controls trials of the effectiveness of IPS in comparison to two control groups. The black line represents the competitive employment rate in the sites that implemented IPS, with the orange bars representing the controls. There are a number of different states and countries that participated in this research, and throughout all of the participants the IPS group maintained a much higher rate of competitive employment.

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Mary: In fact, all of the 22 studies showed a significant advantage for IPS, with the mean employment rate being 56% for IPS programs in comparison to 23% for the controls.

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Mary: Research has shown that 7 of 10 individuals that have been diagnosed with a severe mental illness have reported employment as a recovery goal, and many studies have shown that individuals with co-occurring disorders do as well as if not better than those with a single diagnosis in IPS vocational programs.

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Darius: There are many benefits of steady competitive employment, which is the goal of IPS supported employment. Increased income and self-esteem. Improved access to expanded social networks within one's community. Employment has been connected to an increase in overall quality of life and better control of symptoms. Substance use is often reduced, and employment is viewed by many as an essential part of recovery. That is one of the most important things: work is recovery. In our society, employment is a typical role for adults and is often a strong source of personal identity. Employment is a cost-effective alternative to day treatment and is connected to a reduced strain on community mental health resources.

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Mary: Now we are going to move to the principles of IPS.

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Mary: The evidence-based practice of IPS is founded upon 8 key principles. The first is that competitive employment is the goal. IPS is a zero-exclusion program. All client preferences are honored. There is

integration of vocational and mental health treatment services and teams. Access to Benefits Counseling is facilitated by IPS. Rapid job search occurs for job seekers. Employment specialists are trained to build relationships with employers in their community, which is also called job development. And time-unlimited follow along supports are given to all individuals in the IPS program.

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Mary: So as mentioned before with IPS, competitive employment is the goal rather than the goal being a volunteer position, a job in an enclave, or a training program. Our focus is to help our clients secure a community job that pays at least minimum wage, which can include part-time or full-time work. We are looking to secure work settings for our job seekers that are inclusive and not positions that are set aside for individuals that have disabilities or, in other words, non-segregated work settings.

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Mary: The next principle is Zero-Exclusion. This means that no one is excluded who wants to participate in IPS to work towards their vocational recovery goals. Abstinence is not a requirement of the program nor is being at “baseline” or not being “symptomatic”. There is no vetting criteria around work history, hospitalization, legal history, or job tenure. Eligibility in the IPS program is solely based on job seeker choice.

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Darius: In IPS, client preferences are honored. Choices and decisions about work and support are individualized to each job seeker. Job search plan and supports are based on an individual’s preferences, strengths, and personal experiences. Even the way that IPS supported employment services are provided should be based upon the job seekers’ preferences in order to assist them in reaching their goals. In IPS, we are not working to fill jobs from a pool of open positions, but rather, we are working with our clients to find opportunities that match their individual preferences.

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Darius: Integration of vocational and treatment services. The goal is to have seamless coordination of services between the mental health treatment team and the vocational team. This can also include therapists, psychiatrists, housing supports, and etcetera. Family and natural supports should also be involved in integration and support planning. The goal is to have an integrated, multidisciplinary approach. Not parallel interventions in separate agencies or systems.

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Darius: As we know, many individuals that are in IPS utilize government subsidies. Because of this, we know that benefit planning is essential to those we serve. Benefit planning is an important part of the decision-making process around employment. Our goal is to provide clear information of how work will affect one’s entitlements. Benefit planning should happen as soon as a job seeker is starting to talk

about work. One-on-one benefit planning sessions between the job seeker and the benefit planner should be facilitated by the IPS employment specialist.

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Mary: In the principle Rapid Job Search, our goal is to begin that job search as quickly as possible after a job seeker expresses interest in working. There is no extensive pre-employment assessment and or training programs. Rather, the goal in IPS is to conduct the initial assessment quickly with a focus on: gathering information, collaboration with treatment teams, development of an employment plan, and the ability to adjust the employment plan as needed, as information is gained through exploration.

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Mary: In IPS, employment specialists build relationships with community employers which is also referred to as job development. These relationships are systematically developed with community employers based on job seekers' interests and are facilitated by face to face meetings that allow the employment specialist to learn more about the employers' business needs and the positions available at their businesses. Each employment specialist is expected to make at least six employer contacts each week with a person who has hiring responsibilities, in order to build these contacts, expand access to professional networks, and learn about employment opportunities for our clients.

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Mary: And the last principle is Follow-Along Supports. In IPS, individualized supports are offered to both obtain and maintain competitive employment in the community. Supports are time-unlimited and will be provided for as long as the job seeker wants the assistance. The types of supports that the employment specialist offers are diverse and specific to our clients' needs and desires.

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Darius: Implementing IPS with Job Seekers. Now that we know the 8 principles of IPS, let's discuss how we implement these principles for those we serve.

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Darius: When implementing IPS, we want to focus on 1) receiving IPS referrals. The goal in the referral process is to get the word out and to keep the process simple. 2) Engagement. When engaging new job seekers, employment specialists will work with clients to identify supports and strengths, involve the treatment team, and begin discussions around benefit planning. 3) Assessment. In this phase, the employment specialist is developing the vocational profile with the job seeker. Information is being gathered and the profile is revised and updated as needed and with the employment events (interviews, educational experiences, job starts, job losses, promotions, and or any other changes in vocational goals). 4) Job Finding. During this process, you begin individualized job search which should happen in 30 days. A discussion around disclosure should happen and you should do job development which will build social networks and social capacity for the client.

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Darius: Different supports are given when planning for success in both starting a job and maintaining a job. When starting a new job, an employment specialist might provide support around first day worries, friends and family, work day schedule, transportation issues, dressing for work and uniform, arriving at work (as well as getting home), and also, revisiting benefit counseling. Once a job is secured, services might revolve around wages and benefit management, disclosure of mental illness, possible work accommodations and support, work tasks, dealing with people at work and co-workers, and again, changes in friends and family support.

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Mary: Additional IPS supported employment supports can include: resume building, preparing for interviews, job shadowing, job exploration, job maintenance, job leaving, identifying natural supports, allocation of community resources, and financial education, literacy, and empowerment.

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Mary: While the overall goal for IPS is to achieve job starts, the IPS employment specialist will also support our clients with job leaving supports. Coaching in this area includes appropriate job leaving, maintaining employer relationships when possible, celebrating success, and the learning process of having a job and using that information moving forward in the goal of working again.

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Now we will review IPS fidelity.

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Mary: As previously mentioned, IPS is an evidence-based practice which is informed by a supported employment fidelity scale. The fidelity scale is an accuracy scale that has been developed to measure “the adequacy of implementation” of IPS supported employment programs. In the fidelity scale there are 25 criteria, each scored on a scale of 1-5. A score of 115-125 equals a ranking of Exemplary Fidelity, 100-114 Good Fidelity, 74-99 Fair Fidelity, and 73 or below not achieving the implementation of IPS.

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Darius: The fidelity scale is broken into three sections, the first being Staffing. In Staffing, the scale is looking for employment specialist to manage caseloads of up to 20 clients. Also that the employment specialist is providing only vocational services, and that they carry out all phases of vocational services: engagement, assessment, job development, job placement, job coaching, and follow-along supports.

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Darius: The second section is around Organization. In this section, the fidelity scale looks at integration with rehabilitation and mental health treatment teams through team assignment and frequent team

contact. Collaboration between employment specialist and Division of Rehabilitation Services supports. The vocational unit and the role of the employment supervisor. Ensuring that zero-exclusion criteria is met by not only the IPS team, but also the agency at large. Also looking at the overall agency focus on competitive employment and measuring the executive team's support for IPS supported employment.

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Darius: The last section of the IPS fidelity scale focuses on Services. Ensuring that there is access to work incentive planning and having disclosure conversations. Making sure that work-based vocational assessments are ongoing and that job search is rapid and individual to the client's preferences. Job development is also measured in regards to frequent employer contact as well as quality of employer contact.

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Mary: And, finally, the Service section of the IPS fidelity scale will review that jobs secured are competitive jobs in the community and that there is a diversity of job types, diversity of employers, individualized follow-along, and time-unlimited supports are being offered to ensure that individual preferences are being honored. The review team will monitor that services are community-based and that assertive engagement and outreach attempts are made to assist our clients in reaching their vocational recovery goals.

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Mary: There are many wise and thoughtful quotes in regards to the power of work in recovery, but we feel strongly that this one by author Ken Steele embodies so much of the work that the supported employment practice of IPS embrace. From his book *The Day the Voices Stopped*, "I feel so strongly about the need to be given meaningful work instead of the make-busy tasks or rote assignments that make up the bulk of what we are offered. If people are treated as capable they often surprise everyone and live up to expectations."

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Darius: And, as a final note, we would like to share some recovery beliefs that we hold in the IPS program. The belief that in order to effectively provide employment using Individual Placement & Support programs, all staff providing mental health services need to believe that people with mental illness can and do recover; learn, achieve, and grow through success and failure experiences; and stagnate when they are sheltered from real-life experiences.

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Again, my name is Darius McKinney. I am the Project Manager for the SAMHSA Mental Health Transformation Grant in Illinois, with the Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health. My office is at Chicago Read Mental Health Center, 4200 N. Oak Park Ave. Chicago IL 60634. My email address is darius.mckinney@illinois.gov.

And, my name is Mary Schepler, IPS trainer with the Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health. My office is also located at Chicago Read Mental Health Center 4200 N. Oak Park Avenue in Chicago, IL 60634, and my email address is mary.schepler@illinois.gov.

Thank you so much for your time and have a lovely day.

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Announcer: Thank you for listening. You can obtain additional recordings, or download a transcript, by visiting the Illinois Supported Employment Transformation Initiative web site.