Glossary of Terms Commonly Used to Describe IPS Services

Agency intake: Most mental health agencies have an intake process (sometimes referred to as a mental health assessment) that is administered when a person begins receiving mental health services. At some agencies, the intake/assessment is updated on an annual basis.

Assertive Community Treatment (ACT): The IUPUI ACT Center describes Assertive Community Treatment as being “characterized by a team approach with shared caseloads and frequent staff meetings, intensive community-based services, and a focus on assistance with daily living skills. ACT is an effective treatment for people with severe mental illness, particularly in reducing hospitalizations and maintaining stable housing.” For more information, go to www.psych.iupui.edu/ACTCenter.

Benefits planning: Refers to helping a person review all of his or her benefits (e.g. Social Security benefits, medical benefits, food stamps, housing subsidies, VA benefits, etc.) and determine the impact of earned income upon those benefits. Also called work incentives planning.

Career profile: Refers to a document (previously called a vocational profile) in which the employment specialist records work preferences, work history, education history, strengths, justice system involvement and other information pertinent to a person’s employment or education goals.

Co-occurring disorders: Sometimes referred to as dual diagnosis. Refers to coexisting severe mental illnesses and substance use disorders.

Competitive employment: Jobs that anyone can apply for rather than jobs created specifically for people with disabilities. These jobs pay at least minimum wage (or clients receive the same pay as everyone else). Further, the jobs do not have artificial time limits imposed by the social service agency. IPS programs focus on competitive jobs.

Disclosure: Refers to disclosing information about one’s disability in the workplace. Some people choose to share information about their disability in order to ask for accommodations (such as the support of an employment specialist) or because they are proud of having overcome barriers in order to return to work.

Enclaves: Also referred to as “work crews.” Typically refers to a group of people with disabilities who work under the supervision of a person who is employed by a vocational rehabilitation program or has connections to a vocational rehabilitation program. These are not considered to be competitive jobs even when the work is performed in community settings or when the wages are at/above minimum wage.
Evidence-based practice: Evidence-based practices refer to well-defined practices that have been demonstrated to be effective through multiple research studies. Research for IPS supported employment has been conducted in urban and rural settings, as well as national and international programs. Programs with good fidelity to IPS supported employment have better outcomes than programs with poor fidelity to supported employment. For more information, go to http://dms.dartmouth.edu/prc/

Family: In IPS, practitioners are encouraged to ask people if they would like to include family members in their employment plans. Family could refer to parents, siblings, children, good friends, life partners, or others identified by the person served.

Fidelity: A fidelity scale is a tool to measure the level of implementation of an evidence-based practice (EBP). The Supported Employment Fidelity Scale defines the critical ingredients of supported employment (SE) in order to differentiate between programs that follow supported employment and those that do not.

Fidelity action plan: A written plan that outlines the steps a program will take to improve fidelity to the supported employment model. Plans include specific steps to be taken, person(s) responsible, and target dates.

Field mentoring: Support and training to practitioners as they perform their work. For instance, a supervisor might meet with a practitioner and client who are working on the vocational profile to model or observe the practitioner’s interviewing skills. IPS supported employment supervisors are also encouraged to go into the community with employment specialists to demonstrate job development, observe specialists making employer contacts and provide feedback.

Individual Placement and Support (IPS): IPS is a specific type of supported employment service that has been well researched and is carefully defined in a 25-item fidelity scale. IPS was developed to help people who have serious mental illness. The outcome of this service is competitive employment for people who wish to work.

Integrated services: In IPS, mental health practitioners and employment specialists meet weekly to brainstorm ways to support people’s employment and education goals. Another way that IPS uses integrated services is to meet frequently with VR counselors to ensure that services are well coordinated.

Job readiness groups: These groups may vary from one setting to another but typically focus on teaching people about the world of work; the importance of punctuality, proper grooming, managing symptoms in relationship to a job, etc. Groups that precede a job search are not part of IPS supported employment.
Mental health treatment team (or multidisciplinary team): A group of mental health practitioners such as counselors, case managers, nurses, medication prescribers or others. May also include other disciplines such as employment specialists, VR counselors or housing specialists.

Rapid job search: Within 30 days of entering an IPS program, the job seeker and/or employment specialists begins to make in-person contacts with employers. Some people who participate in IPS services may wish to move more slowly, and in these cases, employment specialists follow the preferences of their clients.

Randomized controlled trial: A type of research that is regarded as the gold standard in medical research. People who participate in these research trials are randomly assigned to either the treatment or control group. The purpose of these trials is to study the efficacy of a treatment or intervention.

Sheltered employment: Also known as “sheltered workshops.” These workplaces hire people with disabilities to complete contracts for other businesses. For example, people with disabilities may be paid a piece rate to assemble garden hose spigots for a company that makes garden hoses. Sheltered employment is not consistent with IPS supported employment.

Situational assessments: Short-term work assignments that occur at an agency or in the community. The purpose of the assessment is to evaluate “work behaviors” such as attendance, ability to persist at task, social skills and so forth. These assessments may also evaluate the person’s ability to perform a particular type of work. Situational assessments are not consistent with IPS supported employment.

Steering committees: Sometimes referred to as advisory committees or leadership teams. Agencies are encouraged to gather together groups of stakeholders for IPS supported employment to discuss implementation efforts and to develop goals for better implementation. Advisory committees may include the IPS supervisor, clients, family members, VR representatives, agency administrators, area chamber of commerce representatives, local colleges and GED programs, etc.

Supported employment (SE): Supported employment is a federal term used to describe employment programs that help people with disabilities find and keep jobs. These programs typically provide long-term job supports. IPS supported employment meets this definition, but is more specific in that it is also defined by a 25-item fidelity scale. Further, IPS supported employment is well-researched and is an evidence-based practice.

Supported education: There are many models of supported education, but in general, the purpose of these programs is to help people successfully complete education programs such as college degrees, high school degrees, GED programs, and vocational training programs that are open to the general public. IPS programs may
provide education supports to people who have education goals that are connected to their career goals.

**Transitional employment:** Some social service agencies work with employers to secure positions that the agency will be responsible for staffing. For example, an agency might make an agreement with a local store that the agency will ensure that the store is cleaned each day by a client from the agency. The agencies typically offer these positions to their clients for a limited time period, such as six months. When the person has fulfilled his or her time commitment, the job is offered to another client of the agency. This is not consistent with IPS supported employment.

**Vocational evaluation:** Usually refers to a battery of tests and work samples that measure academic levels, manual dexterity, short and long-term recall, range of motion, vocational interests, ability to sort items, etc. These standardized tests are not consistent with IPS supported employment, which uses a rapid job search instead.

**Vocational Rehabilitation (VR):** Each state, as well as the District of Columbia and US Territories, supports a division of vocational rehabilitation that has offices throughout the state to provide vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities. The focus of VR is to help people find gainful employment related to each person’s “strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capacities, interests, and informed choice.” VR counselors work collaboratively with IPS programs. VR offices provide expertise about disabilities and jobs, and sometimes provide resources such as money to pay for work clothing or education.

**Vocational unit:** The team of employment specialists and supervisor that form the IPS team.

**Work incentives:** Special rules that make it possible for people with disabilities receiving Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to work and still receive monthly payments and Medicare or Medicaid. When people receive information about how their financial benefits may be affected by earned income, this is referred to as work incentives planning or benefits planning. For more information go to [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov)