

Clarification 14: Individualized Placement and Support (IPS)

Clarification regarding the implementation of Individualized Placement and Support (IPS) into Personalized Recovery Oriented Services (PROS).

Guidelines

Individual Placement and Support (IPS) is an evidenced-based practice designed to help people attain their individualized employment goals. Although IPS was not designed specifically for implementation in PROS, the PROS structure supports the implementation of IPS with some minor modifications. This guide is designed to provide a synthesis of IPS and the regulatory structure of PROS.

Because IPS and PROS share many of the same principles, IPS is an ideal partner for PROS in assisting individuals to attain their life role goals for employment and financial self-sufficiency. Principles shared by IPS and PROS include:

- Recovery-oriented, strength-based outcome focus
- Individualized and person-centered foundation
- Commitment to integration of services with treatment
- Emphasis on partnerships with community-based resources
- Provision of services to individuals at any point in the recovery process.

IPS is characterized by practices which support and enhance the philosophy of PROS. These features assure that IPS can be incorporated smoothly into a PROS program.

- 1) **Competitive employment becomes an agency goal.** PROS is recovery-oriented and strength-based. Its structure is based on the identification by its participants of adult life roles, particularly attaining and sustaining employment and fiscal self-sufficiency. IPS practices are designed to assist individuals to achieve life role goals of competitive employment. Implementation of IPS in a PROS program requires the development of agency-wide strategies to encourage and engage individuals around competitive employment. IPS is most successful when all levels of agency staff, including the executive team, focus on and support competitive employment as an essential component of recovery.
- 2) **IPS is based on zero-exclusion.** Through its emphasis on zero-exclusion, IPS supports the PROS principle of working with the individual at any point in his or her recovery. In PROS, individuals are encouraged to approach recovery at a pace that they define as appropriate and to set goals for themselves based on their own definitions of what recovery means to them. PROS enrollees who identify employment as a goal may participate in the IPS service regardless of previous employment history or current barriers. Access to IPS is not dependent upon psychiatric history, substance use history, job readiness factors, personal presentation, or other factors. Moreover, if an individual is employed and the job is terminated for any reason at all, the individual retains the option to use IPS as a resource in finding another job.

- 3) **IPS is community-based:** Like PROS, IPS is structured to *optimize services provided within the community* rather than at a place-based program location. IPS Employment Specialists are expected to dedicate 65% or more of their time working on supported employment services in the community where they focus on building relationships with potential employers and providing supports as desired and needed. These standards are identified in *The Adapted IPS Fidelity Scale*, which is attached to this document and further clarified in this document in the section entitled "IPS Fidelity." Through multiple in-person visits, IPS employment specialists become familiar with each employer's needs and assure employers understand what the supported employment program offers.
- 4) **IPS integrates vocational rehabilitation with mental health treatment.** PROS assures optimal treatment by integrating evidence-based practices, clinical treatment, recovery and rehabilitation in a single, person-centered environment. IPS employment specialists, as members of the PROS program staff, take active roles in mental health treatment teams while retaining their autonomy as an employment unit that functions separately from the mental health treatment components of the PROS.
- 5) **Benefits Counseling.** A distinctive feature of IPS is assuring access to benefits counseling as a key element in attaining economic self-sufficiency. Benefits and Financial Management is a service provided through the Community and Rehabilitation Supports (CRS) Component of PROS. PROS practitioners and IPS employment specialists may partner to help participants balance benefits management and competitive employment.
- 6) **Competitive and permanent employment.** IPS provides an essential tool for helping individuals attain their employment goals. In PROS, individuals often identify employment and financial self-sufficiency as essential in the recovery process. IPS employment specialists focus on developing competitive positions that are permanent employment opportunities.
- 7) **Rapid Job Search.** IPS promotes a rapid job search. The required assessments for individuals enrolling in PROS include an initial employment assessment which is designed to identify barriers to employment resulting from an individual's mental illness. It is an expectation that employment specialists will begin working **immediately** with those individuals who have identified employment as a goal and are challenged in achieving that goal as a result of such mental health barriers.
- 8) **Vocational Unit.** Employment specialists provide *only* employment services and are part of a distinct unit within the PROS. Ideally a Vocational Unit is comprised of two employment specialists and a team leader. Depending on the size of the PROS program, the Vocational Unit may be as small as a percentage of one individual's time, while in larger PROS programs, the Vocational Unit would include multiple members. Vocational Unit members are required to meet regularly and at least weekly for client-based group supervision. Employment specialists must function as vocational generalists who are able to carry out all phases of employment services for an individual, including intake, engagement, assessment, job placement and follow-along

supports, before an eventual step down to less intensive employment supports from another PROS practitioner.

9. **Caseload size:** Employment specialists have individual employment caseloads. It is recommended that the maximum caseload for a full-time employment specialist is 20 or fewer clients.

Funding IPS and Vocational Services in PROS

IPS practices include services that are eligible for Medicaid reimbursement as well as services that **are not eligible for Medicaid reimbursement**. Costs for those services that are not paid for directly by Medicaid may be offset by net deficit funding. Vocational services and attaining competitive employment are integral parts of the recovery focus of PROS. It is the expectation that each PROS will offer IPS vocational services as an ongoing part of the PROS program. Whether or not IPS interventions are eligible for Medicaid reimbursement has no bearing on the frequency and consistency of opportunities available to PROS participants to participate in IPS vocational services.

PROS Services may frequently be used to deliver the IPS model within a modality that meets criteria for Medicaid reimbursement. When IPS practices are implemented through a PROS service, the services are focused on helping the individual overcome a mental health barrier that prevents the individual from attaining his or her goal of becoming employed. In such cases, **IPS practices are being delivered within the context of medical necessity and are considered eligible for Medicaid reimbursement**.

IPS services are delivered as individualized, one-to-one services and are not provided through the group modality typical of most PROS services. Because of the individualized (one-to-one) feature of IPS interventions, IPS practices will be most often provided through Intensive Rehabilitation (IR) and Ongoing Rehabilitation and Supports (ORS), although they may also be delivered as part of certain CRS services. **Individuals may receive IPS as both an IR and an ORS service simultaneously, although the add-on may be billed to Medicaid for only IR or ORS in any given month**. Specific examples of how IPS practices are delivered through PROS services are presented in the next section of this document.

Implementing IPS in a PROS

Like PROS, IPS is highly **individualized**. Unlike other PROS services, however, IPS services are offered through *one-on-one meetings with the individual rather than in groups*. IPS practices are based on establishing relationships and collaborating with community-based businesses in order to create opportunities for individuals to attain integrated, competitive employment. As such, IPS job development most often occurs in community locations rather than at the PROS site.

IPS practices are provided to a person over the course of time, throughout the various phases of the person's employment journey: seeking, obtaining and sustaining competitive, integrated employment. Ideally one employment specialist will provide all employment services to a specific individual, as opposed to a series of staff providing employment services to that person. The individualized approach to employment

services enhances the IPS practitioner's opportunities to learn about each person as someone with strengths and goals that are unique to him or to her. Because IPS integrates vocational rehabilitation with mental health treatment, the IPS employment specialist is uniquely positioned to bring important insights and information about the individual to the other PROS practitioners involved with the person's mental health treatment and efforts to obtain employment.

To the extent that it is possible, IPS practices should be supported by other PROS services, and in some cases, IPS practices can be delivered through a PROS Service and be considered eligible for Medicaid reimbursement. When IPS practices are delivered through a PROS service, the service must be provided as an individual modality rather than in a group modality. Because of the individualized service delivery protocol of IPS, PROS Services best suited to providing IPS are IR and ORS, although it is also possible to deliver IPS practices through some of the CRS services as well.

The Employment Plan, which is developed through a partnership between the individual and the IPS employment specialist, becomes **an integrated component of the person's IRP**. Working with the Employment Specialist, the individual pinpoints the specific steps he or she must take to attain and sustain meaningful, satisfying employment. The creation of the Employment Plan is a successful outcome of participation in IPS and represents the completion of a vital objective in a person's goal to attain employment.

An example of an effective and efficient way to assist an individual to create his or her Employment Plan is to provide the IPS practice through the PROS IR Service, Intensive Rehabilitation Goal Acquisition (IRGA). Through individual IRGA sessions, the employment specialist helps the individual to explore the various topics within the context of how mental illness has created barriers to employment. The focus is on teasing out the individual's unique abilities, talents, skills and resources, as well as supporting the individual to consider what he or she believes would be the best possible employment situation. Questions that focus on these areas include:

- What are your values?
- What do you love to do?
- What are you most proud of?
- Who is important in your life?
- What kind of work environment do you prefer?
- What does work mean to you?
- What was your best/worst job experience?
- What are your special talents?

After the individual identifies a potential job match based on his or her strengths, talents, and interests, there are additional areas to examine. What steps must the person take to attain employment in this area? What mental health barriers must he or she overcome in order to take these steps? What supports will he or she need in order to participate in an interview? How will he or she manage the challenges he or she experiences as a result of mental illness and continue to be successful on the job?

Through this process, the Employment Plan is created. Essential features of the Employment Plan include:

- The employment goal is stated in the **person's own words**.
- The employment goal creates a set of **behavioral objectives** that outline how the person will meet his/her goals.
- The employment goal identifies a list of the **specific people, services and supports** the person and Employment Specialist consider necessary to support employment.
- The employment goal defines **time frames** for meeting the identified objectives.

Below are some additional examples of how IPS practices are effectively delivered through PROS services. This list is not meant to be all inclusive but rather offers a framework for considering how IPS practices can be smoothly and effectively implemented into PROS service delivery.

- **IRP Planning (CRS):** As part of IPS *Work Incentives Planning, Zero Exclusion and Rapid Job Search*, the individual and IPS employment specialist work together to identify barriers that are preventing the individual from attaining competitive employment and the steps that can be taken to overcome these challenges. This work must be integrated with the work of the other PROS team members and must be documented in the IRP and monthly progress notes. *Disclosure* may also be a part of this work as the individual and employment specialist evaluate if the individual will choose to disclose his or her mental illness to prospective employers.
- **Assessment (CRS):** As part of IPS *Ongoing-work based assessment*, the individual and IPS employment specialist examine and evaluate the individual's interests, talents and skills to identify how these can function as resources and tools to overcome mental health barriers to employment. The Assessment is also used to help develop the Employment Plan and goal in the IRP.
- **Intensive Rehabilitation Goal Acquisition (IR):** As part of the IPS practice of *Rapid Job Search*, the individual and IPS specialist work intensively to assist the individual to attain his or her employment goal by overcoming/managing mental health barriers; this service may be provided at any time as part of employment services and may include intensive work on developing and implementing the individual's *Employment Plan*.
- **Ongoing Rehabilitation and Support:** As part of the IPS practices of *Individualized follow-along supports* and *Time unlimited follow-along supports*, the individual who is employed at a competitive job at least 10 hours per week receives a minimum of 2 30-minute employment services per month from a vocational specialist.
- **Benefits and Financial Management (CRS):** As part of the IPS practice of *work incentives planning*, the individual explores how to balance benefits with competitive employment and fiscal self-sufficiency.
- **Additional PROS Services (CRS, IR, Clinic Treatment):** The individual may have need to utilize additional services that are available in the PROS program. As such the individual's IRP will reflect other services that may be utilized to help the individual overcome barriers to employment and be successful in obtaining and retaining employment.

IPS Fidelity

The complete IPS Fidelity Scale may be obtained at:

<http://practiceinnovations.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=9HRpcUgaSP8%3d&tabid> 

The IPS Fidelity Scale consists of 25 items clustered into three categories (staffing, organization, and services) rated on Likert scales.

It is the expectation that PROS programs will use *The Adapted Fidelity Scale* as a self-evaluation tool to encourage ongoing quality improvement. PROS providers are strongly encouraged to evaluate employment outcomes frequently and consistently against the IPS standards identified in *The IPS Adapted Fidelity Scale*. Results of each PROS program's self-evaluation will be shared regularly with OMH.

Staff Competencies

It is an expectation that PROS-based employment specialists and leadership/supervisors should participate in the IPS training activities provided through the Center for Practice Innovations (CPI). Regional learning collaboratives are available to PROS programs statewide, as well as to those agencies that are in the process of converting to PROS. Each month, separate learning collaborative activities are offered, which focus on IPS implementation, including the important issue of providing supervision for IPS within the PROS program, and on IPS practitioner skill development. On-site technical assistance is also available to provide additional detailed training and consultation.

Staff competency in IPS will be evaluated based on the ability to demonstrate the following:

- Clear understanding of priority placed on employment outcomes
- Clear understanding of IPS principles and process
- Clear understanding of IPS fidelity and the need for adaptation to PROS environment
- Clear understanding of essential role of leadership and supervision in making and sustaining this change
- Practitioner skill development

IPS and the New York Employment Support System (NYESS)

New York Employment Support System, or NYESS, is a computer-based case management tool that is now being used by PROS programs. NYESS facilitates collaboration between participating New York State agencies to help individuals find and keep jobs and will also enable agencies to participate in the Social Security Administration (SSA)'s Ticket to Work initiative more effectively. Agencies partnering in NYESS include the NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH), NYS Department of Labor (DOL), NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS), NYS Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH), NYS Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) and NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD).

NYESS provides IPS practitioners with a useful tool in providing vocational services to individuals and can be an important resource in job development. Staff providing IPS services can use NYESS to work with people individually to provide job-related supports including benefits management, resume-building, Ticket to Work and accessing tax

credits. NYESS will enhance and expand the individualized services that the Employment Specialist is able to provide to the people on his or her caseload. It is important to recognize, however, that NYESS should serve as an adjunct to IPS and should not be used as an alternative or a substitute for delivering IPS services within the community.

For more information on receiving training and accessing NYESS, visit the website at www.nyess.ny.gov. 

Additional Considerations

Note regarding ACCES-VR, IPS, and PROS: If available, Adult Career and Continuing Education Services - Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) may be helpful. However, ACCES-VR services are not essential for a PROS program to successfully deliver IPS services.

Note regarding definition of competitive employment: A position is considered competitive if it pays at least minimum wage and is a job that anyone can apply for (not designed for or limited to individuals with a disability). Seasonal temporary jobs, jobs through temporary agencies that are open to other community members, and positions through Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) and New York Industries for the Disabled (NYSID) are considered competitive.

Note regarding CAIRS data: Programs are required to enter information about the employment status of each individual into the Children and Adult Integrated Reporting System (CAIRS) database upon the person's discharge from PROS.