

EMPLOYMENT WORKS!

Fall 2016 Twice-Yearly IPS Supported Employment Newsletter



IPS Learning Communities

Learning Communities

Bob Drake | IPS Employment Center, Rockville Institute

A “learning system” is one that seeks to improve its functioning by using data generated within to improve itself. Health care systems become learning systems by combining evidence-based practices, informatics, incentives, culture change, client/family empowerment, and continuous quality improvement (see Institute of Medicine Roundtable on Value and Science-Driven Health Care, 2012). The IPS Learning Community tries to incorporate all of these techniques.

IPS stands for Individual Placement and Support and is a specific type of supported employment service that is evidence based.

First, the IPS Learning Community is built on the only evidence-based intervention for helping people with behavioral health conditions to succeed in competitive employment. According to Gary Bond’s many reviews, 24 randomized controlled trials (the gold standard of clinical research) around the world have shown that IPS helps

participants find jobs of their choice, work substantial hours, escape poverty, and maintain employment over time. IPS epitomizes an evidence-based practice.

Second, the IPS Learning Community uses informatics by collecting, analyzing, and distributing data from all participating sites and states on quarterly employment outcomes. The IPS Center also organizes and analyzes data on site-level fidelity assessments. Deborah Becker and her team at the IPS Center have organized, computerized, and validated this process continuously for over 14 years. Teams, organizations, and systems need data of this type to know how they are performing in relation to standards and to plan improvements.

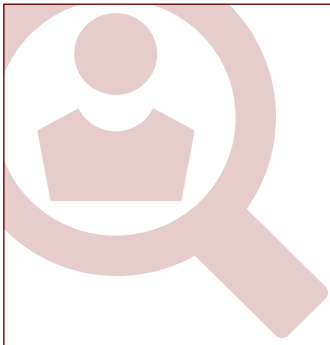
Third, the IPS Learning Community offers various incentives for participation and excellence. These include training materials, technical assistance, updates on research, an annual meeting with peers and international speakers, recognition awards, and opportunities to participate in quality improvement and research projects. More on these topics is discussed on page 3.

THIS ISSUE

- 1 Learning Communities
- 2 IPS Employment Center Notes
- 2 Persistence Pays Off with the Right Job: Hector’s Story
- 3 IPS Learning Community in Oregon
- 4 IPS Learning Community in Wisconsin
- 4 Announcements
- 5 2016 IPS Awards for Programs and Advocates
- 6 IPS Learning Community Map
- 6 New Resources

IPS Employment Center

Rockville Institute



IPS Employment Center Notes

Learning communities are used by health care systems to improve and sustain services. We created the focus and structure for the International IPS Learning Community based on the evidence-based practice of supported employment. The lead article for this issue describes key components of the IPS Learning Community.

Individual states within the IPS Learning Community have replicated aspects for their own IPS Learning Communities. IPS leaders from Oregon and Wisconsin describe their communities.

Congratulations to the agencies and people who were honored at the 2016 IPS annual meeting that was held in West Hartford, Connecticut. These programs and people are representatives of the many people who provide excellent services and support. The article on Hector illustrates the importance of these services and the role of employment for people who are recovering through work.

Research is a valued part of learning communities. In the United States, the participating states and agencies have volunteered for research projects, for example the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR)-funded IPS Sustainability Study. Many of the sites in the IPS Learning Community have expressed interest in being a site for the Social Security Administration's recently awarded Early Intervention Mental Health Demonstration that will include 30 sites.

Persistence Pays Off with the Right Job: Hector's Story

Hector is working again and enjoying his data entry position. He says that after being unemployed for more than a year, he's happy to be working and bringing home a paycheck. But he found that he had to be extra persistent to get the job offer. Hector reports, "Being unemployed was frustrating. I put in a lot of applications." He also took a typing test "four or five times" in order to qualify for his position.

Another benefit of being employed again is that he has fewer mental health symptoms. "When I was unemployed," explains Hector, "I had problems hearing voices. But when I get to work, I don't hear things because I am focused on what I am typing." Hector also feels good about using his skills on the job: "I am comfortable with data entry — I am a really fast typist."

Amanda (Hector's employment specialist) notes that it was worth the wait for the right position: "The employer was willing to make accommodations so that his work shift matched the bus schedule, and he was also allowed to have a job coach for the first month. That was important because the coach was able to help Hector remember different things while he was in training. Hector's vocational rehabilitation counselor thought on-the-job coaching would be important, and Hector agreed with that. Another reason this job is a good fit is that it isn't too social, so Hector isn't distracted from his work. Finally, we know it is a good match because Hector is happy about the job, and his supervisor says that he is excelling in his position."



Continued from P.1

Fourth, the primary goal of the IPS Learning Community is culture change. We are trying to create seismic shifts in the mental health systems of the United States and other countries. Government, industry, insurance companies, institutions, and professional guilds have dominated and controlled traditional mental health systems. The current systems are hierarchical, controlling, stigmatizing, segregating, and coercive — no wonder that most people avoid them! The IPS Learning Community attempts to create a dynamic partnership among all stakeholders to create opportunities for employment and education, which are the services people are most likely to want and least likely to receive.

Fifth, empowerment is a quintessential element of culture change. People who need mental health services and their families have not had a voice in the design, implementation, and evaluation of mental health systems. The IPS Learning Community involves clients and their families as equal and valued partners in all activities, ranging from training materials to local implementations to all research activities. People with mental health challenges want jobs and are the most effective advocates for IPS services.

Sixth, continuous quality improvement entails not just looking at data but planning and evaluating attempts to do better. Countries, states, mental health centers, and teams do this in a variety of ways. The IPS Learning Community supports them by sharing new information, involving them in quality improvement projects (e.g., creating new approaches for people with justice system involvement to explain their past difficulties and current status when interviewing for jobs), and offering opportunities to participate in a variety of research projects.

Finally, help us to do better! We know that we can improve in all of the areas described above. Several projects are underway with the help of many of our partners. But we know that new ideas are likely to come from the field, for example, users of IPS services, family members, IPS specialists, and employers. Please send ideas to the IPS Employment Center (IPSworx.org). We promise to make sure that all stakeholder groups vet the ideas and to try to find funding for some new ideas. **Thank you.**

IPS Learning Community in Oregon

Crystal McMahon and Jeff Krolick | Oregon Supported Employment Center for Excellence

The IPS implementation team in Oregon uses multiple strategies to create a statewide IPS Learning Community that include developing regional groups, helping agencies implement multiple evidence-based practices at once, sharing program outcomes, and facilitating in-person and phone call technical assistance.

One aspect of our IPS Learning Community has been the formation of regional IPS groups. We help the groups define their purpose and develop guidelines for operation, but each group has an identity of its own. For example, in one area three agencies meet to brainstorm ideas to support clients, share

Data about employment and education outcomes are an important part of our IPS Learning Community. We return quarterly data to agencies along with their most recent fidelity scores. Our state department of mental health made the case that since IPS is publicly funded, outcomes should be available for everyone to see. So, data are transparent — anyone can look at outcomes for each IPS program in the state.

Agency staff members are really interested in the data and begin asking us for them even before their release each quarter. Senior managers at agencies review IPS data because employment status is one of the real-world outcomes



job leads, and describe the strategies they have used to improve their programs.

We continue to support new initiatives in the state related to IPS. The first-episode psychosis program model that we use in Oregon is not a perfect fit with IPS, although there is an IPS specialist on each first-episode team. We met with other technical assistance providers to consider how the two fidelity scales can complement each other and to plan how we will avoid giving conflicting messages to practitioners.

Another initiative is including peer specialists in IPS. We have a state billing code for IPS that peer specialists can access so we expect to see more peer specialists on IPS teams in the future. And we are helping IPS programs think about how to provide supported education services.

available in mental health services. People want to know what are the high-performing programs. When IPS supervisors ask which IPS programs to visit, we pull out the outcomes and discuss which agencies to visit.

We also focus on getting people together to learn from each other. Each fall we hold an annual conference with a national speaker and presentations from our IPS programs. Participants include IPS teams, some program administrators, peers, state vocational rehabilitation counselors, and a few mental health practitioners. Plus, we hold three types of technical assistance calls each month. The first is about an IPS topic, such as benefits planning. The second is for IPS practitioners to ask their colleagues for ideas to help people on their caseloads. And the last monthly call is to support the IPS peer specialist community.

IPS Learning Community in Wisconsin

Kathleen Enders | Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Wisconsin

State leaders in Wisconsin provide opportunities for practitioners to meet and learn from each other, share program outcomes openly, and offer opportunities for learning through the fidelity review process.

We organize a two-day meeting each year for IPS Learning Community members. The meeting includes separate breakout groups for stakeholders, including Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) counselors, peer support workers, and IPS specialists and supervisors. We also have topic-specific breakout sessions (we ask in advance what they want to learn more about). Examples of session topics include helping transition-age youth or strategies for VR counselors and IPS teams to collaborate effectively. The morning of the first day we review IPS principles so that new practitioners can better participate in the rest of the conference. We also invite a speaker from the International IPS Learning Community

to the meeting to help everyone feel connected to what is happening outside of our country.

We focus on building IPS supervisor skills by facilitating quarterly supervisor meetings. We meet in person so supervisors can build relationships with each other. The meetings are used to share information and address program issues. During the meetings, we also share transparent outcome data for all of the IPS programs. We want supervisors to know who they can talk to for ideas about increasing referrals to IPS, improving rates of job acquisition, etc., by looking at which programs are successful in those areas. The supervisors want to learn from each other.

Another way we help supervisors learn about IPS is by inviting one to two supervisors to participate in the fidelity review team for each fidelity visit. They are even included in the discussion to score

fidelity items. This activity helps them learn more about fidelity, and they also observe new strategies to try with their own programs.

Wisconsin holds fidelity reviewer training every six months. We need to have a team of trained fidelity reviewers ready because the number of IPS programs in the state is growing. Potential reviewers participate in a two-day training before they observe some IPS fidelity reviews as part of their preparation to be reviewers.

DVR is starting to schedule regular calls with all of the DVR counselors in the state who work with IPS programs. The counselors requested calls to problem solve and talk with each other. We may also review criteria for reporting data or help brainstorm about situations jobseekers and working people encounter. DVR closure data is also transparent—every DVR counselor can review DVR outcomes for IPS twice yearly.

Announcements

The IPS Employment Center Has Moved

The IPS Employment Center has moved from Dartmouth College to the Rockville Institute. Our new home will allow us to continue our work, including support for the International IPS Learning Community, development of IPS resources, and IPS research. Our website is www.ipsworks.org.

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Social Security Early Intervention Mental Health Demonstration Project

Westat was awarded the Social Security Administration's six-year contract to implement and evaluate the Early Intervention Mental Health Demonstration for recently denied applicants who have a mental illness. The goal is to assist denied applicants to return to work and achieve positive employment outcomes. IPS is at the core of the Basic-Service Treatment and the Full-Service Treatment. Thirty sites in the United States will participate in this project.

In-Person Training Offered at the IPS Employment Center, Lebanon, New Hampshire

- The next IPS Leadership training will be held on March 28-30, 2017
- The next IPS Fidelity Review training is scheduled for April 25-27, 2017

Online registration is open for both trainings. For more information, visit our website, www.ipsworks.org

Welcome, Utah!



Earlier this year, Utah became the 20th state in the IPS learning community. (Pictured above, from left to right: Pam Bennett, Virginia Selleck, Sharon Cook, Sandy Reese, Deborah Becker, Bob Drake, and Robert Snarr)

2016 IPS Awards for Programs and Advocates

Eight awards were presented to programs and individuals for helping IPS participants achieve their employment goals. The awardees were presented with engraved glass bowls at the 2016 Annual Meeting of the International IPS Learning Community held in West Hartford, Connecticut, in May.



Fred Finch accepts the Transformation Award

Transformation Award for IPS Programs and Their Vocational Rehabilitation Partners

Recognizes significant organizational or service transformation to implement IPS supported employment (e.g., transforming traditional, long-standing employment programs to IPS services).

- Fred Finch Youth Center and Vocational Rehabilitation, Alameda County, California
- Counseling Services of Addison County and Vocational Rehabilitation, Vermont
- Angelo Fioritti for institutionalizing IPS in Italy

Achievement Award for IPS Programs and Their Vocational Rehabilitation Partners

Indicates significant improvement in either the number of people who have received IPS supported employment services or the number of people working in competitive jobs.

- LifeSkills, Inc., South Central Region-Warren County and Vocational Rehabilitation, Kentucky
- Pee Dee Mental Health Center in Florence, and Vocational Rehabilitation, South Carolina

Family Advocacy Award

Recognizes outstanding advocacy or educational activities regarding IPS supported employment.

- Midwest Asian Health Association and Chinese American Service League, Chicago, Illinois

Peer Advocacy Award

Recognizes peers who have actively advocated, educated, or helped implement IPS supported employment.

- Debbie Homan, Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health, Illinois
- Cindy Raley, Aurora Mental Health Center, Colorado

