IPS Supported Employment for Youth

Helping Transition Age Youth with Serious Mental Health Conditions to Access Education, Jobs, and Careers

Sarah J. Swanson, Deborah R. Becker, Gary R. Bond, & Marsha L. Ellison

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Contents

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Introduction

This manual describes IPS supported employment services for adolescents and young adults. IPS stands for Individual Placement and Support and indicates a type of supported employment program that is evidence-based for people who have mental illnesses. Growing evidence indicates that IPS may be an effective approach for other populations of people as well.

IPS practitioners in Maryland and other states helped us learn more about serving youth as a part of developing this manual. Young workers and students also described what helped them and what may benefit other youth. We appreciate their assistance in developing this manual.

Transition-age youth

Transition-age youth includes young adults experiencing early psychosis, special education students with serious mental health conditions, college students who leave school due to emotional problems and youth aging out of foster care who may, or may not, have mental health problems. In the U.S., the Workforce Investment and Opportunities Act (2014) defines the age range for this group of people as 16 to 24 years of age although some programs define the age range for transition-age youth differently.

(See: http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rsa/wioa-final-rules.html).

Transition-age youth who are served by IPS programs may be in high school, may have dropped out of high school, or may be in a post-secondary education program. They may have current or future employment goals.

Youth who receive mental health treatment may do so from different types of programs including first-episode psychosis programs, housing and support programs for youth aging out of the foster care system, and community support services for adults with mental illnesses located in community mental health agencies.

These programs are described below:

First-episode psychosis teams:

Consist of mental health treatment practitioners, at least one IPS specialist, and in some cases, a peer specialist. The teams identify people who are experiencing psychosis for the first time and provide intensive services. They aim to educate youth and their families about how to manage mental health problems. Increasingly, first episode psychosis teams also focus on school and employment. These teams have also been termed "coordinated specialty care" (Azrin, Goldstein, & Heinssen, 2015).

Transition-age youth programs:

Offer services to people as they age out of the foster care system. These young people may, or may not, have mental health diagnoses. Transition-age youth programs help with housing, education and employment. The programs can be part of a mental health agency, or a city or state program for families and children. Some programs for transition-age youth have housing teams rather than mental health treatment teams.

Community mental health agencies:

Sometimes organize mental health practitioners into teams with specialties, for example, teams devoted to serving older adults (with extra attention on medical issues and aging) or young adults (with extra attention on school and work). These teams usually provide case management and mental health services, along with housing. One or more IPS specialists assigned to the team helps with careers and employment.

Individual Placement and Support (IPS)

IPS is a specific type of supported employment program that has been demonstrated, through research, to be the most effective approach for helping people with serious mental illnesses who want to work in regular jobs (Drake, Bond, Goldman, Hogan, & Karakus, 2016).

IPS is a successful approach that has been used in various types of organizations including community mental health centers, rehabilitation programs, supportive housing programs, in geographically different settings (urban/rural/frontier), and in different labor markets. IPS is an effective approach for people of different cultures and has been implemented in many different countries. Recently, the IPS model has been used to help other populations of people including transition-age youth who do not have mental illnesses, people with spinal cord injuries, people with autism, and those who have developmental disabilities.

IPS services are individualized for each person. Services are related to the person's preferences, interests, strengths, symptoms (if any), substance use (if any), living situation, and other factors. People sometimes learn about their preferences by trying different jobs or educational programs. Each experience is viewed as an opportunity to learn more about the person's strengths and good job matches.

IPS specialists, sometimes referred to as supported employment/education (SEE) specialists or employment specialists, help people find competitive jobs. These are regular jobs that any person can apply for, regardless of disability status. The jobs may be part time or full time and can include self-employment. When youth are interested in school or vocational training, IPS specialists help them learn about mainstream education and training programs related to their career interests and academic aptitudes.

When people engage in IPS services, they are helped with school or employment right away. They are not asked to participate in work readiness activities. Typically, IPS specialists spend a few weeks getting to know people and then begin helping them connect in person with employers (to learn about jobs or discuss a worker's qualifications), working people (to learn about different careers), or educators (to learn about different educational programs).

The IPS model uses a team approach. IPS specialists meet frequently with mental health treatment teams or housing teams to share ideas related to helping people with their employment goals. Peer specialists (people with similar experiences to those served) may also be part of the IPS team. In the U.S., state Vocational Rehabilitation counselors collaborate with IPS programs, mental health teams, and housing teams to assist people in their careers.

IPS specialists provide job supports for as long as the worker feels that the service is helpful, typically for about a year. Eventually, a mental health practitioner or housing specialist may be selected to provide ongoing supports. An exception is that some programs for transition-age youth are time limited. In those situations, IPS specialists help youth connect to adult IPS programs or other local career services when available.

IPS in Other Countries

Countries differ widely in mental health, rehabilitation, and educational systems, so terminology used for a U.S. audience may be unfamiliar to those outside the U.S. For example, we make references in this manual to state Vocational Rehabilitation—a program in the U.S. to help people with disabilities return to work. In the United States, IPS specialists collaborate with Vocational Rehabilitation counselors. Program leaders in other countries should consider whether systems such as the departments of labor or unemployment in their countries impact the working lives of the people they serve. They reach out to administrators in those departments and attempt to develop partnerships to improve services.

> Information in this manual about community colleges, financial aid and other issues related to supported education are specific to the U.S. We encourage people in other counties to visit educational institutions in their countries to learn what is available for students.

About this Manual

- The **first chapter** was written for agency administrators such as clinical directors and executive directors. This chapter provides guidance for effective program implementation.
- **Chapters two through nine** are for IPS specialists, IPS peers, and IPS supervisors and focuses on providing effective services.
- The **last chapter** is intended for IPS supervisors and focuses on how to help IPS practitioners achieve good employment and education outcomes for youth.

Chapter 1: Leadership for IPS Implementation

This chapter is intended for administrators of organizations that will implement IPS programs for youth. Successful implementation of an evidence-based practice requires guidance from agency leaders. This chapter outlines critical steps administrators take to ensure that investments in IPS pay off with good outcomes for youth. There are different starting points for developing IPS services for youth. IPS may be a completely new approach for some agency administrators, while others may have experience implementing IPS services for adults, but not specifically for transition-age youth. IPS programs are typically implemented within community mental health agencies, housing agencies for transition-age youth, or psychosocial rehabilitation agencies that partner with mental health or housing services.

Learn About IPS

Agency leaders, including the agency executive director, must understand the basic principles of this approach so they can organize agency services to support the evidence-based practice. For example, leaders should know that IPS specialists help people search for regular (competitive) jobs as soon as youth express interest, and that any person who wants to pursue a career is eligible for IPS services. Administrators who know about the practice avoid developing work readiness programs because they understand that using a stepwise approach to employment is counter to IPS practice principles.

Agency leaders can learn about IPS by attending IPS training with their staff. Doing so communicates to practitioners that helping people with careers is important.

Another way to learn about IPS is to read this manual or a book titled *Individual Placement and Support: An Evidence-based Approach to Supported Employment* by Drake, Bond, and Becker, published by Oxford Press. Additional information about IPS supported employment is at www.ipsworks.org.

Identify Sources of Revenue for IPS

In the U.S., IPS is typically funded by a combination of sources. State Vocational Rehabilitation, Medicaid, and state departments of mental health are a few examples.

State Vocational Rehabilitation is known by different acronyms depending upon the state. For example, the acronym in your state may be DRS, DORS, BVR, DVR, or something similar. Most IPS programs apply to become vendors (sometimes referred to as community rehabilitation providers) for state Vocational Rehabilitation. Vendors are authorized to provide services on a case-by-case basis and receive milestone payments for employment outcomes. Milestone payments vary by state but may include completion of the career profile and employment plan, a person starting a new job, and a person working for 30, 60, and 90 days. In some states, administrators at Vocational Rehabilitation contract annually with provider agencies to serve people.

To become a vendor, agency leaders should contact the state Vocational Rehabilitation office to learn how to apply to become a community rehabilitation provider (CRP) or vendor. This process can take a year or longer to complete if the state Vocational Rehabilitation office requires the agency to have an accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities or another organization. In addition to possible revenue for the program, partnerships with personnel in local offices of state Vocational Rehabilitation are advantageous because counselors in that system are knowledgeable about disabilities, long-term illnesses, education and training programs, different occupations, and local employers. We encourage IPS programs to partner with Vocational Rehabilitation programs as described at the end of this chapter.

Medicaid is sometimes billed for medically necessary services that occur within the context of employment. In other words, it may not be possible to bill for taking someone to a job interview, but it may be possible to bill for helping someone practice social skills while interviewing for a job. Contact your state department of mental health and addiction services to learn how this works in your state.

Some state departments of mental health set aside funds to support IPS services. For example, a state that shut down long-term hospitals diverted some of the savings to IPS programs. Contact your state department of mental health and addiction services (or county board) to learn if IPS funds are available to your agency.

Recent legislation has earmarked federal funds for transition-age youth. Specifically, in 2015 Congress authorized 10% set-aside in the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant for young adults experiencing early psychosis. The Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act of 2014 directs state Vocational Rehabilitation agencies to prioritize a significant portion of the federal funds to services for transition-age youth.

Making Services Inviting to Youth

Young people often avoid social service settings, especially mental health facilities that they often associate with the stigma of mental illness. But agency administrators can use several strategies to make IPS services more inviting. Encourage IPS practitioners to spend most of their working hours visiting with people at their workplaces, schools, community centers, homes, at Vocational Rehabilitation offices, etc. Ensure adequate funds to pay staff for mileage or supply staff with agency cars. (In large cities, agency leaders may give staff public transit passes instead.) Provide IPS practitioners with mobile phones and create a system for them to share their schedules with their supervisor. If funds permit, supply staff with laptops so they can complete documentation between appointments while in the community.

To help youth feel comfortable when they must visit your agency, create a waiting room that is just for that group. Include materials that are tailored for youth, for example, brochures with pictures of young people and everyday language rather than clinical/social service terms that may feel stigmatizing to youth. Another strategy is to locate services outside of mental health agencies in youth-friendly surroundings.

Many youth prefer to communicate by text messages rather than by phone calls. Develop agency policies that allow IPS practitioners to text with youth on their work-issued mobile phones.

Integrate IPS Services with Mental Health or Housing Services

IPS uses a team approach. IPS practitioners help people directly with school and employment, but other practitioners also assist. For example, at a mental health center, a counselor could encourage a young person to finish high school and help him talk to his psychiatrist if medication affects his concentration. At an agency that provides housing to transitional youth, a housing specialist could help a person obtain identification required for employment.

IPS specialists and other practitioners meet together weekly to discuss how to help young people they are serving achieve their goals. They attend one to two treatment (or housing) team meetings each week. Their role in the meetings is to suggest work or school for people who are not engaged in those activities, to help the team celebrate success related to careers, and to ask for help with the people they are already serving.

When an agency is not organized into team-based services, agency administrators should develop weekly mental health or housing team meetings so the IPS specialists can coordinate services with other practitioners who work with the same people. Some discussions in the meetings may focus on housing or mental health issues, while others will focus on school and employment. IPS specialists attend the entire meeting to learn

about people who may be referred to IPS in the future and to suggest how they can help others who are not involved in IPS services. They ask team members to help them think of possible solutions to assist youth with their career goals.

Although some administrators worry about lowered productivity (i.e. meeting time is typically not billable), team meetings are good forums to train new practitioners. The meetings are a form of group supervision so supervisors can reduce the number of individual sessions they provide. Because IPS specialists cannot effectively collaborate with more than two teams, agency leaders should either hire enough specialists to cover all of the teams or identify a limited number of mental health treatment/housing teams to collaborate with IPS practitioners.

In addition to meetings, IPS specialists develop good working relationships with mental health treatment/housing team members through shared office space. They have offices or cubicles near their assigned teams, rather than with the rest of the IPS unit.

When IPS services are offered by a rehabilitation agency separate from the mental health or housing teams, administrators help practitioners connect to other service providers. For example, administrators may contact the director of a mental health agency to make arrangements for an IPS specialist to participate in weekly team meetings or to have office space at that agency. Administrators discuss strategies to protect confidentiality and may ask practitioners to sign confidentiality agreements.

Offer Careers First

Young people who are eligible for Social Security benefits may be better off pursuing careers. In the U.S., fewer than three percent of people who are awarded disability benefits ever exit that system and are consigned to a life of poverty. And people who are unemployed have more physical and mental health problems along with higher rates of substance abuse disorders. But practitioners can offer help with school or work instead saying, "You can always apply for Social Security benefits later if you need to, but why not try working first?" Encourage all program managers to focus on strengths and independence. Ask them to guide practitioners to offer help with careers rather than disability benefits.

Educate families about reasons that youth may benefit from trying work before applying for disability benefits. For example, ask program supervisors to visit National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) meetings to describe IPS services. Suggest that practitioners include family members (with permission from youth who are age 18 or older) in discussions about careers versus Social Security benefits. Ask practitioners to invite family members to meetings with benefits planners to learn how current entitlements will be affected by working a job.

Provide Training & Technical Assistance for IPS

Mental health practitioners, housing staff, state Vocational Rehabilitation counselors and IPS practitioners should all learn about IPS practice principles. In addition, IPS practitioners must learn the about the following areas: building relationships with employers, connecting with school personnel, using active listening skills, providing job and school supports, assisting with career exploration, integrating family members into the career plan, and using a team approach while delivering IPS services. IPS supervisors should learn how to use outcomes-based supervision to increase the effectiveness of the program, how to teach IPS practitioners the skills they need, and how to implement and sustain IPS along with agency leaders.

As the international IPS Learning Community grows, more states and countries are developing the capacity to provide IPS training.

To learn if your state or country is part of the IPS Learning Community go to www.ipsworks.org and select About IPS. Other resources for training, including online training courses and training for IPS leaders, are described on the same website.

Use the IPS Fidelity Scale for Quality Improvement

Fidelity reviews are a key component of good technical assistance and long-term program sustainment. A fidelity scale is a tool to measure the level of implementation of an evidence-based practice. The Supported Employment Fidelity Scale (2008) defines the critical elements of IPS in order to differentiate between programs that have fully implemented the model and those that have not. The scale includes a description of 25 items that are rated on a scale of one to five. The Supported Employment Fidelity Scale has been validated, meaning that programs with higher fidelity scores generally achieve better employment outcomes. The IPS Supported Employment Fidelity Scale is a guide for program leaders and practitioners to improve their programs so that more people work.

Supported employment fidelity visits are conducted by at least two trained reviewers who visit an agency for two days to learn about services and score the fidelity scale. After the visit, reviewers write a report that identifies areas of strength and growth for the program. They suggest ways that staff can improve fidelity to the IPS approach.

It is not always feasible for agencies to arrange independent fidelity reviews conducted by trained reviewers, even though this is the best option. An alternative is for agency staff to apply the scale using the Supported Employment Fidelity Manual (Becker, Swanson, Reese, Bond, & McLeman, 2015) as a guide. The manual may be downloaded or purchased at www.ipsworks.org>Resources for Programs>Program Implementation and Fidelity. It is important for the ratings to be made objectively, based on hard evidence. Agency leaders choose a review process that fosters objectivity in ratings by identifying two staff members who are not centrally involved in providing the service, such as people in the quality assurance department or compliance department.

The Supported Employment Fidelity Scale and Supported Employment Fidelity Manual can be downloaded from www.ipsworks.org > Resources for Programs > Program Implementation.

Build an Effective IPS Unit

IPS units consist of at least two full-time IPS specialists who report to one supervisor. Ideally, the supervisor position focuses only on IPS so that person can become knowledgeable about how to help people with work and school. At least two IPS specialists are recommended so that they each have a colleague with whom to learn, share job leads, and help out with youth, as needed.

When IPS specialists for youth are part of a large agency that already has an IPS team, we recommend that they report to the IPS supervisor who is knowledgeable about school and work. The team leaders for mental health and housing teams provide guidance about clinical or housing issues and collaborate with the IPS supervisor, as needed.

Good evidence about how to best provide supported education is unavailable at this time. There is debate about the roles of IPS specialists and supported education services. Some people think that IPS specialists should provide supports for both employment and education. Their rationale is that when people are asked to transfer from one practitioner to another, they frequently disengage. Because young people often change their minds about work or school, it is more efficient for staff, and less discouraging for youth, for each specialist to provide both services. Others believe that each specialist should provide either employment or education supports. Their reasoning is that it is too much to ask specialists to learn about both supported education and

employment. They argue that there is high turnover of specialists and that urban areas have many educational institutions to learn about. Our suggestion is for the IPS supervisor to be the team expert on supported education. She can share information about different degrees and certificates, and also coach specialists on effective education supports. The advantages of this approach are that young people do not need to transfer from one specialist to another and IPS specialists have a resource for information about education and training programs. This strategy requires the supervisor to allocate a significant portion of her time to visiting education/training programs, learning about different careers, and developing relationships with staff in school offices for students with disabilities. She may also have a small caseload (two or three people) so that she can continue learning about school and work supports. Therefore, IPS supervisors for programs serving youth cannot be responsible for as many IPS specialists as supervisors for generalist teams. We recommend teams of no more than five IPS specialists.

Help IPS Practitioners Connect with Local Partners

When providing supports to high school students, IPS practitioners participate in Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings at the school. They offer suggestions and extra education supports. Specialists also attend IEP transition meetings to help students plan for work and/or further education after high school. But the ways that schools partner with IPS programs vary because some high school staff members are more welcoming to IPS specialists than others. Agency administrators can help by calling the district director of special education to explain the IPS program and how IPS specialists want to be involved. In some cases, administrators must be persistent in contacting the director. The next step is to meet with the school principal.

Consider bringing the IPS specialists to introduce them to school personnel. To build relationships and demonstrate how your agency can be a resource for the school, ask school officials what would be helpful, for example, offer qualified mental health practitioners to conduct seminars on depression and suicide prevention for the teachers.

If the IPS participants have disabilities, your agency may wish to partner with state Vocational Rehabilitation. Because of the Workforce Investment Opportunities Act, state Vocational Rehabilitation has set-aside resources for transition-age youth who have disabilities. For example, many Vocational Rehabilitation offices have identified specific counselors to work with transition-age youth. To partner with state Vocational Rehabilitation, IPS team members must develop good working relationships with the counselors and supervisors at the local Vocational Rehabilitation office. Start the process by asking to meet with the local supervisor to discuss your new program. Explain that you have chosen an evidence-based practice in order to achieve good employment outcomes. Request monthly meetings for IPS team members and Vocational Rehabilitation counselors to collaborate. Also invite a Vocational Rehabilitation counselor or supervisor to participate in the IPS steering committee (see below).

Help IPS specialists connect with business owners and managers. For example, if your agency is a member of the local chamber of commerce, invite an IPS practitioner to attend monthly meetings. Or, if an agency leader knows a human resource manager at a local business, ask that person to introduce an IPS specialist. Ask agency board members to help educate the team on careers and industries they know about.

Develop a Steering Committee to Guide Implementation

Gather together a diverse group of IPS stakeholders to help with program implementation. Include two or three youth who are participating in IPS, family members, the Vocational Rehabilitation supervisor, representatives from the mental health or housing teams, the IPS team, agency executive team members, representatives from college offices of students with disabilities, high school guidance counselors, and others.

Meet quarterly to devise strategies to build consensus for IPS, advertise the program to possible participants, review fidelity reports, create fidelity action plans to improve implementation, discuss program outcomes and brainstorm strategies for better outcomes.

Conclusion

Active involvement from agency leaders is critical to good evidence-based program implementation. Leaders learn about IPS in order to guide program implementation with good fidelity to the practice. They explore options for funding and developing relationships with community partners.

Chapter 2: IPS Supported Employment

This chapter provides an overview of IPS supported employment.

Topics covered include:

- ⇨ The importance of work and career planning for young people
- ⇨ The evidence for IPS supported employment
- ⇨ How IPS services are organized
- ⇨ IPS practice principles

Why Jobs and Careers are Important

Young adulthood is the time when people begin building their careers. An interruption in this process can affect employment status and earnings for many years. In the U.S. fewer than three percent of people who are awarded Social Security benefits for a disability ever exit the benefits system. Young adults who sign up for disability benefits are in essence committing themselves to a lifetime of disability status and poverty. IPS offers young people an alternative by helping them plan careers and establish their identities as workers.

IPS specialists talk to young people about strategies to earn a living wage. They explain that there are different types of education and training programs—some that last just a few weeks or months, and others that take years to complete. They describe programs that are primarily hands-on training and those that are academic so that people are aware of the range of possible options. Some people only want help with entry-level jobs to quickly begin earning an income. In those cases, IPS specialists help them find work, but they also discuss other options for jobs and training related to each person's interests. They describe how to begin with entry-level work while making long-term plans to build a career. Specialists are flexible about changing the employment plan as young people express interest in different goals.

In many programs serving young adults, peers (people with similar experiences to those served) meet with young adults entering services. They explain why they chose employment rather than signing up for government disability benefits and they encourage others to carefully consider their options.

Below, Peggy Swarbrick, a peer advocate, writes about the importance of careers for young people with mental illnesses.

> *"Work can strengthen a feeling of mastery or competence and provides purpose and meaning to life. Work provides a place to meet people, a feeling of being valued or needed by others, social status and potential friendships, and evidence of personal success. The economic benefits that work provides allow a person to purchase resources, goods, and services, and to enjoy leisure time. Despite these positive benefits, far too many people living with mental and substance use disorders are under- or unemployed.*
>
> *Many well-intentioned service providers, family members, and supporters discourage young people who have been diagnosed from pursuing careers that allow workers to earn a living wage. The*

knee-jerk reaction is to get the person on disability so he can be taken care of. Work is seen as too stressful, based on the belief that it can lead to symptoms and relapse. People are helped to get on, but rarely off, government disability benefits such as Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). This sends a discouraging message: "you are incapable." Unfortunately, many come to accept this belief, despite the lack of empirical studies to support the assertion that work makes people living with mental illness sick. Most studies, in fact, indicate that long-term unemployment (and underemployment) is associated with negative health outcomes. A life on SSDI or SSI is generally a life of poverty, social isolation, and social stigma, and can lead to poor health outcomes (e.g., lower life expectancy and poorer physical and emotional health status). Once on benefits, the person's primary social role is either "patient" or "consumer." The person may become frustrated, angry, and depressed without the opportunity to use and develop his or her inherent strengths, talents, and capabilities.

It is imperative that we help people pursue a career (and/or education) as part of good mental health. If we do not, the young adult will remain dependent on a fragmented system already overburdened. More importantly, the person remains vulnerable to the negative health outcomes associated with long-term unemployment.

Recovery involves developing new meaning and purpose and endorses the notion that people are capable and resilient. The idea that work can cause people to get or remain sick is at odds with a belief in recovery. The belief that recovery is possible leads directly to the need to encourage young adults to complete their education and pursue a career."

Peggy Swarbrick, PhD, Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey and Rutgers University

An Evidence-Based Practice

A practice is evidence-based if multiple research trials demonstrate its effectiveness. Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) are the gold standard for research trials in medical research. Study participants are randomly assigned to a research condition or a control condition, which is typically usual services (which most people receive). Evidence-based practices are also well defined by a manual or fidelity scale that describes the practice.

There have been two dozen randomized controlled trials of IPS starting in the 1990s and continuing today. These experimental studies have typically compared IPS to a control group receiving "standard services," consisting of the type of employment program available locally, which providers often believe to be best practices. Examples include stepwise programs that require lengthy prevocational assessments, work adjustment training, sheltered or protected work settings, or transitional employment prior to competitive employment. *In every one of these research trials*, more people in IPS programs worked competitively than people in the control condition. In fact, people who received IPS services were two to three times more likely to work in competitive jobs than people who participated in other types of employment programs. Research demonstrating the effectiveness of IPS has been conducted in rural and urban environments and throughout the world (Europe, Australia, Asia, and Canada).

IPS is defined by eight practice principles (described later in this chapter) and by the IPS Supported Employment Fidelity Scale (2008). A fidelity scale is a tool to measure the level of implementation of an evidence-based practice. The IPS Supported Employment Fidelity Scale defines the critical elements of IPS in order to differentiate between programs that have fully implemented the model and those that have not. As demonstrated through research, high-fidelity programs generally have better employment outcomes than

low-fidelity programs. The fidelity scale serves as a concise guide (or checklist) for program leaders and practitioners to achieve better employment outcomes.

To learn more about IPS fidelity, go to www.ipsworks.org, select Resources for Programs, then select Program Implementation and Fidelity.

How IPS Services are Organized

The Vocational Unit

The job title that people use to describe IPS practitioners varies and includes IPS specialist, employment specialist, and supported education and employment (SEE) specialist. These titles describe the person who helps with developing an employment/education plan, exploring job and career options, searching for jobs, and providing work and school supports. In this manual, we use the term IPS specialist to describe the person who helps people with education and jobs. IPS specialists maintain caseloads of up to 20 jobseekers, students, and workers. Each IPS specialist also maintains customer relationships with business owners and managers with ongoing contact with about 20 businesses if their focus is mostly on employment, but cultivating fewer businesses if their responsibilities also include education.

The vocational unit consists of two or more IPS specialists who report to a single supervisor, though some IPS programs start with just one IPS specialist. The specialists meet weekly with their supervisor to develop different ideas about how to help people achieve their goals. They share job leads (discuss employers who have positions related to jobseeker's interests), relay information learned about education and training programs, and celebrate successes.

Integration of IPS and Mental Health or Housing Services

The vocational unit is often part of a mental health agency. Mental health practitioners are organized into teams that may include a mental health treatment team supervisor, case managers, service coordinators, counselors, therapists, medication prescribers, peer support specialists, substance abuse counselors, and other practitioners. The teams meet weekly to discuss how to help people manage mental health symptoms, maintain housing, become involved in the community, etc.

An IPS specialist is assigned to each mental health treatment team and joins the weekly meetings. She participates in discussions to suggest work for people who are unemployed and to ask mental health practitioners to share ideas about good job matches, educational programs, and job supports for the people

she is serving. She participates in the entire meeting because she is a full-fledged member of the mental health treatment team and will suggest work for people who are not engaged in IPS. The IPS specialist also has office space with her mental health treatment team, rather than the vocational unit, so that she can discuss situations throughout the week with mental health practitioners.

In some cases, the vocational unit is part of a psychosocial or rehabilitation agency that coordinates services with a local mental health treatment agency. But IPS specialists go to the mental health agency to participate in weekly mental health treatment team meetings and they have designated office space at the mental health agency. Administrators make arrangements to protect the confidentiality of young people so that services can be integrated.

Practitioners working with young adults (such as transition-age youth programs helping people who age out of the foster care system) are not always part of a mental health system. In these situations, the IPS unit members may integrate services with housing teams instead. For example, in an agency that provides housing and employment assistance to youth, the IPS specialists and housing specialists meet weekly to talk about strategies to help young people with work, school, and stable housing.

Collaboration with State Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors

In the U.S., each state has offices of Vocational Rehabilitation that help people with disabilities return to the workforce.

Vocational Rehabilitation counselors are trained to provide vocational guidance and have expertise about the labor market, different disabilities, and education and training programs. They may provide services such as help finding a job, or they may pay an employment program to provide assistance with job searches. Vocational Rehabilitation counselors may already know some young people through involvement in their school Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Vocational Rehabilitation counselors use the IPS approach as much as possible when working with IPS programs, although they are also responsible for following Vocational Rehabilitation policies. For example, IPS specialists help people begin looking for jobs within a few weeks after they express interest in working. But Vocational Rehabilitation counselors must follow their agency policies about documenting a disability before authorizing a job search. One strategy is for IPS specialists to become knowledgeable about the type of documentation needed so they can send that information with the person's referral to Vocational Rehabilitation.

IPS specialists meet with Vocational Rehabilitation counselors at least once each month to coordinate the services. For example, an IPS specialist may share that a young person who is working would like to consider a training program in auto mechanics. The Vocational Rehabilitation counselor, young person, and IPS specialist would then meet to discuss different types of automotive certificates, training programs, earnings potentials, and occupational outlook for different certifications. In some situations, the Vocational Rehabilitation counselor may be able to help buy work uniforms, bus passes or other resources people need for jobs and school. The way that the Vocational Rehabilitation counselor helps varies by person and must relate to his employment plan.

In other countries, IPS program leaders should consider what systems impact the working lives of people they serve, and make plans for collaboration. For example, they may decide that it would be helpful to meet regularly with government unemployment services personnel. Ideally, these decisions are made by a group of national IPS leaders so that there is consistency in how IPS services are provided across each country.

IPS Uses a Strengths-Based Approach

Most of us succeed at work and school by building on our strengths, rather than focusing on our weaknesses. None of us excels in all aspects of our jobs, but we are successful nonetheless because our particular strengths make us valuable in the professions we have chosen.

IPS practitioners recognize that each person has strengths, talents, experiences, and abilities that will be valued in the workplace. Examples of strengths include a strong work ethic, persistence, ability to collaborate, job-specific skills or work experience. A person's interests can also be strengths. For example, a manager of a bicycle store said he only wanted to hire people who enjoy biking. The owner of a bakery said she wants to hire people who have a passion for bread. Education or specialized job training can be strengths. Supports can also be strengths, for example, family members or friends who encourage employment and education. IPS specialists and mental health practitioners ask each person and, with permission, their family members, teachers, or close friends, to identify strengths and how those may apply in different jobs.

IPS practitioners believe in personal choice. Even when they do not fully understand the reasons for a person's preferences, they defend the person's right to receive services based upon her personal values. IPS practitioners are willing to take risks. They know that none of us has a guarantee of success at anything we try but experienced practitioners often have stories about people who were successful at goals that initially appeared to be challenging.

When a person has trouble moving forward on his career plan, stop to list his strengths. Which strengths may help that person succeed as a student? How has he succeeded in different areas of his life in the past? Which of those strengths would an employer appreciate? Are there particular environments in which those strengths would be valued? Ask the young person and his family members about his strengths.

IPS is a Community-Based Service

IPS specialists usually meet with youth away from their offices. They learn where each person likes to spend time and ask about the person's preferences for where to meet.

An example of an appointment is picking someone up from high school at the end of the school day and going with her to two businesses to follow up on job applications. Another example is accompanying a young person on a visit to a GED center (see pp. 45).

IPS specialists also meet with employers each week to learn about their businesses and advocate for job seekers. They spend at least two-thirds of their working hours away from their offices. Providing services in the community makes IPS more accessible to youth who may feel uncomfortable going to a social service agency. And research has demonstrated that time spent in the community is directly related to better employment outcomes.

IPS practice principles

IPS services are based on eight practice principles that describe how IPS is different than other types of employment programs.

The principles are listed below and described in more detail in the sections that follow.

1. Every person who wants to work is eligible for IPS services (also referred to as **Zero Exclusion Criteria**).
2. The focus is on jobs and mainstream educational programs that are available to people based on their qualifications, rather than disability status.
3. Individual preferences are important. When young people are unsure about their preferences, practitioners help them try different jobs and learn about different occupations.
4. IPS uses a team approach including mental health practitioners, housing teams, and state Vocational Rehabilitation counselors or others who help with employment and educational goals.
5. Personalized benefits counseling is provided. IPS specialists also help youth apply for financial aid for school.
6. Rapid job search/educational exploration begins soon after starting IPS services.
7. IPS specialists systematically build relationships with employers. IPS specialists learn about the business needs of employers and introduce employers to qualified jobseekers (with permission from jobseekers). They also meet in person with educators (with student permission) to plan education supports.
8. Job/educational supports are individualized and ongoing as needed and desired.

1. Zero Exclusion Criteria

Every person who wants to work is eligible for IPS services. People are eligible for help with school when education or training is related to a career goal.

Youth are eligible for IPS regardless of the following:

- Homelessness
- Mental health symptoms
- Treatment choices, including decisions not to use psychotropic medications
- Work history
- Changes in preferences for school or work
- Substance use
- Cognitive impairments
- Missed appointments
- Personal presentation
- Pregnancy
- Child care needs
- Legal history and current legal problems
- Other factors

Research demonstrates that desire to work helps many people overcome significant barriers to employment. For example, people who have problems with drugs or mental health symptoms are as likely to find work as others when that is their goal. The truth is that practitioners are unable to predict who will be successful at work. Even if a person misses appointments because she is unsure about employment or school, an IPS specialist who encourages her may help her develop confidence to succeed.

Work provides incentives to make healthy choices. An IPS specialist described a young person who said that he woke up each morning, smoked marijuana, and then went back to sleep. She said she wanted to help him with a career because otherwise he would not have a reason to change his behavior. She expected that having a schedule and hope for a better future would help him reduce the amount of marijuana he used. When his mental health practitioner was reluctant to refer him to IPS, the IPS specialist advocated for his right to try working a job.

The **zero exclusion criteria** principle also applies to people already enrolled in IPS who lose their jobs. If a person quits or is fired from a job, the IPS specialist offers help with another position, regardless of the reason that the job ended. As people work, they learn more about what is expected of employees and which jobs suit them best. When a job ends, the IPS specialist talks with the person about what was learned from the job without being judgmental, and he shares hopeful messages about the next job. He offers to help with another job search right away. Likewise, if someone needs to withdraw from school, the specialist helps her identify what she learned about being successful in school, and offers to help with education or training again.

2. Regular Jobs and Mainstream Educational Programs

IPS specialists focus on competitive jobs, rather those created specifically for people who have disabilities. Many people choose work in order to be part of their communities and to focus on their strengths. Young people, especially, do not want to feel disabled and should be encouraged to use their abilities to work in regular jobs.

Competitive jobs meet the following criteria:

- ✓ Jobs for which anyone may apply and not jobs that are set-aside for people who have disabilities.
- ✓ Positions in which the worker earns the same wages as his co-workers. Wages are almost always minimum wage or more.
- ✓ Jobs that do not have artificial time limits imposed by the employment program. Short-term jobs that are created to give work experience to people with disabilities are not competitive. But, if the owner of an orchard hires seasonal fruit pickers, those jobs are competitive because time limits are based on the needs of the business. The orchard jobs are part of regular employment in that community.

Peer specialist positions are jobs for people with similar experiences to those served by the program. For example, a peer specialist in a transition-age youth program may be a person who was in foster care when she was young. Peers share how they accomplished goals in spite of mental illnesses, substance abuse disorders, legal histories or other problems. Peer positions are competitive jobs.

The IPS specialist and members of the mental health treatment team do not suggest volunteer jobs to help people learn about working a job or to develop work histories. Although it is true that many young people may lack information about different types of jobs, in IPS people are not encouraged to use a step-wise approach to competitive jobs, because young people are discouraged by that approach and is it not effective. Instead, they learn about employment by working in regular jobs.

When a person wants to volunteer, the IPS specialist asks the mental health treatment team or housing team to assist with that goal. IPS resources are usually limited. It is important to save space on the IPS caseload for people who want competitive jobs. An exception is a volunteer job that is directly linked to future paid employment. For example, if most of the ushers at the local nonprofit theater began as volunteers, then an IPS client may choose to volunteer at the theater while letting the manager know that she is hoping to soon be hired as a paid employee.

Likewise, IPS specialists support people in education and training programs that are open to the general public and not set-aside for people in employment programs. For example, if most people are able to obtain food preparation jobs without a certificate or training program, then IPS specialists do not encourage participation in food preparation training programs. But because most medical billers in the U.S. have completed a certified

training program, IPS specialists support people to earn those certificates.

In some situations IPS specialists help people obtain and complete internships. The test for whether an internship is competitive is whether it is a requirement for completing an educational program. For example, most social work programs require students to complete an internship (which is often unpaid) to meet degree requirements. But it is uncommon for clerical workers to complete internships.

When considering whether an internship is competitive, IPS specialists answer the following questions:

1. Is the internship required for future employment in the chosen field?
2. Do most nondisabled people working in the desired occupation complete internships prior to obtaining their positions?
3. Is the internship a requirement of a certificate or degree-bearing education program?

If the answers to all of those questions is no, then the IPS specialist helps the person apply for jobs in her desired field instead of pursuing an internship. When IPS specialists are not sure whether internships are required to enter a profession, they contact workers in those professions to ask how people become qualified for those jobs. They also speak with school career advisors or state Vocational Rehabilitation counselors (in the U.S.) to learn how people become qualified for different types of jobs. Youth in IPS programs go about finding jobs just like everyone else in their communities.

3. Individual Preferences are Important

Preferences may be related to job type, location, work shift (time of day the person will work), schedule (number of hours per day or week), work environment (working alone/interacting with others, quiet/noisy, indoors/outdoors), wages, opportunities for advancement, and other factors. Like IPS participants in general, young people may also have preferences regarding how they receive help, for example, whether family members are involved, whether they would like help with education or training, where they meet with the specialist, how often they get together, whether the specialist advocates for them with educators and employers (which requires some level of disclosure), and how long the IPS specialist provides job or school supports,

IPS specialists learn as much as possible about each person's preferences. Focusing on preferences helps people remain interested and engaged in IPS services. It is a respectful approach because it demonstrates that the IPS specialist believes the person is the best expert about her own needs and goals. IPS specialists learn about active listening skills (see Chapter 3) so they can encourage the person to share what is important to them about school and employment.

As people discuss what is interesting to them, IPS specialists help them to also consider what positions or work environments will highlight their strengths and minimize potential problems. All people have the potential to excel in some areas and struggle in others. This is true whether or not they are participants in IPS programs. For example, a person who heard voices and felt compelled to talk back to his auditory hallucinations said that he wanted to work with animals and would like to work in a pet store. The IPS specialist suggested jobs such as taking care of animals in a boarding facility and working for a dog walking business that did not involve working with the customers.

IPS specialists sometimes worry that people will identify goals that are inconsistent with their skills and experiences. Research shows that most people select job goals that are a good match, but when IPS specialists are unsure, they help the person learn more about his chosen career. For example, they help arrange meetings with people who work in the young person's field of interest to ask what training or experience is required, what they do during a typical workday, what is most challenging about the job, and what they enjoy most about their positions. Some people will decide to pursue their original goals and others will choose to learn about other jobs.

Some young people change their goals frequently because they have limited knowledge about careers and are unsure what they will enjoy. In these situations, IPS specialists are flexible and focus on what the person says he wants. They try to understand what the person enjoys, what motivates him, and what has contributed to his past successes so that they can eventually help him narrow down his choices.

When people do not take steps to pursue education or employment for three months, the IPS specialist consults with the mental health treatment or housing team (and state Vocational Rehabilitation counselor, when available) about the situation. She will ask the person what he would like to change about his IPS services to find out if she can do things differently to engage him. If he does not want to meet regularly, she may suggest that he suspends his involvement in IPS until a later time when he feels ready to work on a career. She will also talk to his mental health practitioner or housing case manager occasionally to ask if he is ready to participate in IPS again.

Some people say that they do not have work preferences. In response, IPS specialists ask about their interests, favorite classes, and how they like to spend their time. With permission, they include family members or close friends in meetings to learn what could be a good job match. And they offer to go with young people to visit people working in different occupations and to observe employment settings.

4. IPS Uses a Team Approach

IPS specialists collaborate with other social service providers and support people, such as family members, friends, employers, school counselors, or teachers. The purpose is for everyone to know the person's education/employment plan and how they can help the person reach her goals. In addition, it is important for the IPS specialist to explain upfront to the young person that people will share information so they can all help together.

When people receive services from a community mental health agency, the IPS specialist attends weekly meetings with mental health practitioners. In addition to an IPS specialist, practitioners attending these meetings may include case managers, counselors, therapists, nurses, housing specialists, peer specialists, the mental health treatment team supervisor, and/or a medication prescriber. One purpose of these meetings is to brainstorm strategies to help people meet their goals. (The mental health agency may also have administrative meetings for staff, but this is not the type of meeting described here.) Parts of the meeting focus on mental health treatment, family interventions, and efforts to help people live independently, and some of the meeting time is about employment and education. An IPS specialist may ask about the best time of day and location to meet with someone who has just been referred to IPS. Or she may ask what the mental health team knows about his education history. If a person has job problems related to mental health symptoms, she talks to the mental health treatment team about that. And when the IPS specialist hears about people who have not been referred to IPS, she asks if they are interested in employment. As people achieve milestones in their career plans, the team celebrates those successes.

> IPS teams for transition-age youth may be attached to housing teams. In these cases, the IPS specialist attends housing meetings for discussions similar to those described above.

In the U.S., IPS specialists meet monthly with state Vocational Rehabilitation counselors to review the progress individual people make and to identify strategies to provide assistance and to discuss upcoming referrals. The IPS supervisor may set up monthly meetings with Vocational Rehabilitation counselors, invite them to a vocational unit meeting once each month, or ask for them to be invited to a mental health treatment team once each month.

IPS specialists include family members or close friends in some appointments, with the young person's permission. The purpose is two-fold – to inform family members about IPS and the role of work in recovery, and, when appropriate, to enlist family members as supports for the person's career goals. Each family is different, so the IPS specialist assesses the best role for the family, as viewed especially through the young person's perspective. IPS specialists provide information about IPS and ask about possible good job matches, how the person learns best, and what supports could help the person with work and school. IPS specialists ask each person about a family member or support person to include in career planning meetings.

Finally, with permission from youth, IPS specialists collaborate with special education teachers (high schools), GED instructors, postsecondary teachers/professors, and college counselors from offices for students with disabilities. The purpose is to discuss how to best supports students. It is common for youth to be present for these meetings.

5. Benefits Counseling

Youth who receive disability benefits, housing subsidies, food aid, or any other type of government assistance, need to learn how earned income will affect their benefits. They should have access to trained benefits counselors who are knowledgeable about all types of entitlements and can provide accurate information about different earnings scenarios.

> In the U.S., the rules for benefits are complicated and change frequently.

Benefits counselors have extensive and ongoing training such as Certified Work Incentives (CWIC) training offered by Virginia Commonwealth University. Another source of training is certified Work Incentives Planning and Utilization training offered online through Cornell University's Institute on Employment and Disability. Youth who receive Social Security Income (SSI) may be concerned about losing those benefits as they approach age 18 and are re-determined for eligibility based upon rules for adults. When youth receive housing assistance, IPS specialists should help them contact those housing programs directly to learn about the rules for continued eligibility because there is local variation in how housing benefits are administered. Family members may be concerned about the potential for a young person to lose benefits by working. In these situations, it is helpful for them to also attend the benefit counseling appointments.

People who have not applied for disability benefits need help considering their options. For example, signing up for benefits may provide some financial security, but people who receive disability benefits usually live in poverty and few ever exit the benefit system once they are awarded entitlements. Practitioners can suggest that one option is to focus on work first and apply for disability benefits later, if needed. When people feel that they must apply for benefits, for example, when people are in urgent need of housing, practitioners help them develop a plan to exit the benefit system in the future. But the truth is that once people receive benefits, they will probably not ever exit the benefit system. Because of this dilemma, some programs for youth offer rent-free housing for a limited time to give young people a chance to start their careers without applying for disability benefits.

6. Rapid Job Search or Education/Training Exploration

IPS specialists focus on what each person wants to do. If someone says that he wants to work, the IPS specialist does not suggest job readiness groups, transitional jobs to learn good work behaviors, volunteer positions, or short-term jobs to determine whether the person is ready to enter the workforce. Instead, they meet with the person a few times to begin learning about her past employment and school experiences, hobbies, interests, and other information that may affect a career plan. The specialist also asks if the person would like to include a family member or good friend in a meeting to help brainstorm the person's strengths, skills, and possible careers. Within 30 days, the specialist and/or the person has in-person contact with an employer or educator. Occasionally, they may meet with different working people instead to learn about careers. What is important is that the IPS specialist and young person get out of the office to learn about careers, or pursue jobs, right away.

Examples are below:

1. An IPS specialist and potential student meet with a community college advisor to learn about a certificate program.
2. An IPS specialist meets with a manager at a factory to schedule an appointment so she can return with the young person to learn about precision machinist positions.
3. A jobseeker applies for a position and speaks to the hiring manager, as she turns in her application, about her job-related strengths.
4. An IPS specialist meets with a manager at a local company to learn more about her business. The specialist selects the business with a specific jobseeker in mind, though he may not bring up the jobseeker during the first or second visits with the manager.
5. A young person who is not sure what career she would like visits with people working in several different occupations to ask about their jobs (informational interviewing).

In IPS, assessments are not used to determine whether youth are ready to work. But educational institutions may require students to take tests to evaluate their strengths, needs, and academic abilities.

For example, high school students who have special needs are required to complete tests as part of their transition planning (see pages 43 - 44). Another example is that community colleges require tests to determine whether students must take remedial courses.

7. Systematic Relationship Building with Employers

Before advocating for employers to hire jobseekers, IPS specialists first learn about the business needs of the employers. They schedule brief, in-person meetings with employers to ask about different positions, required skills, and the hiring preferences of manager's and business owners. They share what is learned with a jobseeker who is a good match for a position and then they return to the business to ask to introduce a qualified candidate. Chapter 4 covers this approach in detail.

Some people may not want an IPS specialist to talk to employers on their behalf because they do not wish to disclose that they work with an employment program. In those situations, the IPS specialist asks if the person would like him to learn about businesses without mentioning the jobseeker to the employer. He can then share the employers hiring preferences with the jobseeker who will pursue the job independently. If the jobseeker does not like this option, the specialist helps the person find work without contacting employers by helping with job applications, coaching the person on job interview questions, finding job openings, etc.

8. Individualized and Ongoing Job/Education Supports

IPS specialists provide supports based on each person's preferences for supports, past experiences with work and school, strengths and issues related to working a job or graduating from school or training programs. They learn about what motivates the person, what the person enjoys, what is challenging to the person, how he learns best, etc. Specialists offer options for supports that help prevent problems the person has had in the past, and maximizes their strengths, skills, and talents.

When possible, specialists provide job and education supports for as long as each person needs and wants assistance. In IPS programs, most people receive job supports for about a year, on average. That may not always be possible in programs for young people because many of those programs have time limits. When this is the case, specialists help young people transition to natural supports (friends, families, co-workers and educators who can assist) or other social service programs for adults.

Conclusion

Help with career planning, jobs, and education is critical to young people. By helping people learn how their interests relate to different jobs and assisting with school and jobs, young people may avoid an interruption in their working lives. IPS is an evidence-based approach to helping people with employment. IPS specialists, supervisors, and mental health/housing practitioners follow IPS practice principles to help people achieve their career goals.

Chapter 3: Active Listening Skills

Effective IPS specialists listen carefully to what is most important to each person. Active listening skills help IPS specialists learn about each person's hopes, interests, and concerns regarding a career. Listening carefully builds relationships and keeps youth engaged because people want services that focus on their priorities. This chapter focuses on skills that practitioners use to learn what matters to the people they are serving.

The active listening skills described include:

- ⇨ Open-ended questions
- ⇨ Avoid giving advice
- ⇨ Affirmations
- ⇨ Reflective listening
- ⇨ Summary statements

Open-ended Questions

There are two types of questions: *close-ended* and *open-ended questions*. **Close-ended questions** are those that can be easily answered with one or two words. For example, "Did you finish high school?" is a close-ended question. **Open-ended questions** encourage the other person to share more of his thoughts.

Examples of open-ended questions are:

> "What did you like most about high school?" or "Tell me about high school." Instead of asking, "Did you get good grades?" an IPS specialist could ask, "What factors helped you get good grades?" The goal is to encourage the young person to carry most of the conversation. Instead of asking, "Do you want to get another grill cook position?" which would likely lead to a simple 'yes' or 'no' response, you could ask, "What types of jobs interest you?" "What careers would you like to know more about?"

Do you want to work full time or part time?	What is your ideal work schedule?
Would you like a family member to join one of our meetings?	Who knows you best? What are the possible advantages to asking that person to join a meeting to talk about job ideas? What are the possible disadvantages to including that person in a meeting?
Would you like to practice interview questions together?	What are your strengths regarding job interviews? What areas would you like to improve? How can I help?
What type of certificate would you like to earn?	What training or educational programs have you considered? Why those programs? What programs or careers would you like to learn more about?
Do you want a job?	How would your life be different if you were employed right now? What would be the advantages of having a job? What concerns do you have about working now? What type of job would you like to have in five years?

See if you can identify which questions in the list below are closed or open. Answers are below the questions.

1. What is your favorite school subject?
2. How do you like to spend your time?
3. Why don't you like your math teacher?
4. What is it about mapmaking that interests you?
5. Did you have many friends in school?
6. Why did you quit your job?
7. Do you like your job?
8. Tell me why you don't like your job.

Open questions: #2, #3, #4, #6, #8. Closed questions: #1, #5, #7.

Avoid Giving Advice

There are several reasons to be cautious about giving advice. Advice can be irritating especially to young people who are frequently told what to do even as they strive to be more independent. Also, when IPS specialists rush to give advice, they may not fully understand what is important to the person or know the reasons he had for doing something his own way. Finally, when people do not agree with advice they may not object out loud, but they may follow through with suggestions because they did not agree with the plan in the first place.

> *"Listening carefully and patiently is critical to truly understanding the person's perspective If I am trying to persuade or convince then I am not really listening. I think listening is also part of basic respect for the people I support."*
>
> Tom Swails, IPS Specialist

Before offering your ideas, strive to fully understand the person's point of view and help her develop her own solutions. This approach increases the likelihood that the plan will succeed, and also helps the person become more autonomous as she learns how to consider different options and choose what is best for her. For example, if someone wants to drop out of school, you could say, "Dropping out of school is an option. What would be the advantages of dropping out? The disadvantages? What other options do you have?" Help her list some options and then ask her about the possible advantages and disadvantages of each option. Try not to interject your own opinions until you learn all that you can from the student.

You may eventually ask to share information. For example, if someone has had job interviews but has not been offered a position, you could say, "Some other people I know have also had legal histories and they were able to find jobs. Would you like to hear about the strategies they used?" Or if someone wants to drop out of school, you could offer to help the person first investigate what jobs related to her interests are available without a diploma and what she could earn. If she is disappointed, help her learn what opportunities she would have if she earned a diploma.

Occasionally, people will select strategies that you think are ineffective. But it is possible that a person will be successful anyhow, and if not, he can learn from his experiences. When someone experiences a setback, ask what he thinks went well and what he would do differently next time. Do not be judgmental, especially if the person is feeling embarrassed. Explain that everyone makes mistakes and what is important is to develop a new plan.

Affirmations

Affirmations are statements that recognize the person's accomplishments, progress, or strengths. IPS specialists point these out to remind people that they already have skills for work and school. Affirmations can highlight small or large accomplishments.

Below are examples:

> "You are a fast worker."
>
> "You get along well with other people."
>
> "You are halfway through your certificate course—you've come a long way."

In order for affirmations to be meaningful, they must be genuine. Every person has strengths and accomplishments. It is important to remember those because strengths are what will contribute to the person's future successes.

Affirmations do not include qualifying statements, such as pointing out what the person could do better. For example, an IPS specialist would not say, "You get along well with other people, but you should try not to share so much personal information," or "Your supervisor likes your work--you just need to focus on being more reliable." When practitioners add suggestions and criticisms to affirmations, people focus on what is negative rather than the strengths they can build upon.

Reflective Statements

One feature of active listening is reflecting back to the person what the listener thinks he has heard. This lets the young person know the IPS specialist has been listening carefully and that he is interested in her views. A simple reflection mirrors back an idea that was shared by the speaker, as in the example below.

> **Student:** I would rather start out with the Automotive Maintenance Certificate. I didn't know that the tech certificate was 30 credits. I just graduated from high school and I don't want to spend a lot of time in school.
>
> **IPS specialist:** You want a shorter certificate program.

Note that the employment specialist did not suggest that the student should visit workers in her field of interest to learn more about the different types of certificates before making a decision. And she did not suggest learning more about the shorter program. Before offering suggestions, she will learn more about student's point of view. Read the example below and select the response that is the best reflection.

> **Young person:** My mom doesn't want me to work because she says that I will lose my Social Security benefits. She thinks that I should hang onto those for a while. But I don't know. I don't really have anything to do.
>
> **Response #1**
>
> **IPS specialist:** We can meet with your mom and tell her about work incentives because you actually can work and also keep your Social Security.
>
> **Response #2:**
>
> **IPS specialist:** You wish you had more to do.

Response #3

IPS specialist: It really isn't up to your mom now that you are 18 years old. You should make your own decisions.

In **response #1,** the IPS specialist provides a suggestion instead of reflecting the young person's concerns. And in **response #3,** the IPS specialist gives her own opinions. But in the second example, the IPS specialist reflects back that the person wants to have more do to. She can follow that up by asking how the person would like to spend his days and what would be the possible advantages and disadvantages of different options for structuring his time. She could also ask what he knows about how earnings would affect his Social Security Income. If the person decides that he would enjoy working, she may ask if he would like her to meet with him and his mother to explain why he wants to work and offer benefits counseling to both of them.

Reflective listening also allows the speaker to correct misunderstandings. If the IPS specialist reflects back something that is inaccurate, the speaker will have an opportunity to clarify her meaning.

Worker: I didn't go to work yesterday. My friends were going to the mall and I feel like I never get to see them anymore because I am so busy with school and this job. So I went to the mall with them.

IPS specialist: Friendships are what matter.

Worker: My job matters, too. I called my supervisor and said I was sick because I don't want to be fired. I just missed my friends.

Worker: My boss complained because he says I spend too much time talking. First he wants us to be friendly with the customers and then he gets mad!

IPS specialist: He's impossible to please.

Worker: Well, he did say that I did a good job with the new display.

IPS specialists can use reflections to learn more about a particular topic. Rather than summarizing many, or all, of the speaker's main points, the IPS specialist can hone in on one idea that she would like to know more about.

Student: I hate going to my IEP (Individual Education Program) meetings. I actually got a B on a math test last week but no one is going to talk about that. I studied really hard but all they will talk about is the argument I had with Mr. Hansen.

IPS specialist: You want to discuss your accomplishments.

Student: Yes, I want to talk about my math test. And I haven't missed any classes so far this month—let's talk about that, too!

Young person: My parents really want me to go to college, but I don't know what I want. I might like doing something in health, working in a hospital, because I want to help people. But I am not sure exactly what I want. And I'm sick of tests and studying. But they think that if I don't go to college now, I never will.

IPS specialist: You want to help people.

Young person: Yes, it would be great to help sick people feel better. And I think that I am friendly and patient so if they were worried about getting treatment, I could help them relax.

Reflective statements can be used to express empathy—to identify how the person feels. The specialist hypothesizes what emotion the person is having and then names it.

> **Young person:** I found out more about the apiary program at the community college. To become an apprentice beekeeper, I would need to keep my own colony for at least a year and then take ten lectures and pass an exam. I think my dad would let me start the colony on his farm, but I would have to figure out how to pay for the equipment. My cousin keeps bees so she might have some old equipment that she can lend me.
>
> **IPS specialist:** You are excited about this career.
>
> **Student:** I think that I need to drop my math class. My last test grade was a D and I barely understand what is going on in class. This first semester has been too much! I didn't realize how much I would need to study and I took too many classes.
>
> **IPS specialist:** You feel overwhelmed.

Another advantage of reflective listening is that it provides the speaker with opportunities to consider what she has said and whether that is truly her view. In the following example, this skill is demonstrated in an interaction between an IPS specialist and an employer.

> **Manager:** I really need workers who can be trained to perform all of the jobs. That way, when I am scheduling and someone needs time off, a person who is usually a grill cook can run the register. That flexibility is important.
>
> **IPS specialist:** What you need most in your workforce are people who can perform all positions.
>
> **Manager:** No. Cross training is important but I guess what is most important is reliability and giving the job 100%. The best worker isn't someone who can do everything, but someone who really cares about the job and gives it his best effort. So that is what matters most. But it also helps if the person can work different positions.

Using reflective statements is an excellent way to learn more about youth. But this active listening technique requires practice. A common mistake is to add advice or suggestions to reflections. Instead, allow the speaker time to consider what you reflected back to him even if that means sitting through a period of silence. Do not rush to find a solution—first learn all that you can about the person's point of view. Practice reflective statements with your colleagues, employers, friends and others.

Summary Statements

Summary statements are a type of reflective statement that includes all of the speaker's main points. Typically, IPS specialists use summary statements when it seems like the right time to move onto a new topic or to begin problem solving. **Two examples are below.**

> **Jobseeker**: I think that if employers know that I have a mental health problem, they won't hire me. Or they may treat me differently if they do hire me.
>
> **IPS specialist:** Anything else?
>
> **Jobseeker:** I would feel better if I could get the job on my own.
>
> **IPS specialist**: What are possible advantages to disclosing that you work with me?
>
> **Jobseeker:** Well, you might be able to help me get job interviews.
>
> **IPS specialist:** So on one hand, you worry that if you disclose a mental health problem employers won't

hire you or will treat you differently, and you also want to know that you can find your own jobs. On the other hand, you think I may be able to help you get job interviews.

IPS specialist: What qualities do you hope to find in the candidates who apply for work here?

Manager: I need to find people who are reliable. I just let someone go because she missed work too often. And people need to have good transportation so they can get here on time.

IPS specialist: Can you describe your best worker? What makes that person so good?

Manager: We have a lot of opportunities for people to move up in the company. The best employees are ones who are thinking about the next promotion and who want to build their careers here.

IPS specialist: So you need reliable people who get to work on time. But it is also important that the person has long-term plans to work for your company.

Conclusion

IPS practitioners use active listening skills to learn about the people they are serving, including employers, before offering advice. They develop these skills over time by practicing with their colleagues and supervisors. IPS supervisors also observe IPS specialists so they can give feedback and suggestions for better listening.

Chapter 4: Engagement in IPS Services

IPS programs should be accessible to those who want to work even when youth are uncomfortable connecting with new service providers, lack confidence about school or work, or have other barriers to engaging in IPS services. This chapter describes ways to help young people connect with IPS specialists.

Help Youth Consider IPS Services

Many young people are interested in pursuing education and employment, although some may lack confidence or may not be aware of IPS services. These youth benefit from hearing about what IPS has to offer and how others like themselves have been successful. Work with your IPS team (and your agency IPS steering committee) to develop a plan for workers and students to share their stories. The most effective strategy to develop interest in IPS is for young people to hear directly from other youth who are engaged in work or school.

Sample Strategies to Help People Consider Jobs and Careers

- ***Ask working people and students to share their experiences in treatment groups (mental health services), community groups (in agency-run housing buildings), or at career celebration events.*** For example, some agencies host an event once or twice a year to highlight the IPS program. They invite working people, students, and sometimes employers to be speakers. Other brief presentations may be from the agency executive director, the IPS supervisor, a benefits planner, or state Vocational Rehabilitation counselor. Youth, family members and friends attend to learn more about available services. Mental health counselors or housing staff may offer to bring youth who are unsure about work or school.

- ***Offer to help workers and students write about their experiences and future goals.*** Include these stories in newsletters, on bulletin boards in public areas of the building, or on waiting room tables.

- ***Visit colleges and career training programs with high school juniors and seniors.*** Arrange for meetings with academic advisors in programs that may interest the young person. Help youth envision what post-secondary education would be like and provide positive messages about careers.

- ***Create a visual display about employment.*** For example, at one agency a bulletin board in the lobby displayed a paper tree with paper leaves. On each leaf was written a job title and hourly pay to indicate jobs obtained by participants in the IPS program.

- ***Place brochures about your IPS program in lobbies and public areas of your agency.***

- ***Ask mental health practitioners and housing staff to share information about IPS.*** Provide them with copies of a one-page summary of IPS practice principles to help them describe the program. *(Download a one-page summary of IPS practice principles at www.ipsworks.org > About IPS.)*

- ***Post instructions about how people can refer themselves to IPS***. For example, "If you are interested in help with a job, school, or career planning, call 555-1234." Respond immediately to all phone messages.

- ***Tell mental health practitioners and housing staff members that you are available to meet with youth who are ambivalent about work or school.*** Explain that you can join one of their appointments with a young person to describe your services and to hear the young person's hopes and concerns about starting a career.

Use a Simple Referral Process

Ensure that mental health practitioners and housing staff members do not put off referring people to the IPS program because the referral process is time consuming. A brief referral form with simple information is best. Ask practitioners for ideas to streamline the referral process.

Coordinate First Appointments

Many people dislike meeting yet another service provider and telling their stories again. Whenever possible, meet people for the first time by joining an appointment with their mental health practitioners or housing staff members so youth will feel more comfortable. For example, make arrangements to join the second half of an appointment with a counselor and young person to discuss the young person's goals and the services you offer. Some young people may wish to have family members present at the first or second appointment so offer that option as well.

Make Services Accessible and Inviting to Youth

Some young people feel uncomfortable going to mental health centers or other type of social service agency. In response, the IPS specialist learns where each person likes to spend time and offers to meet the person there. For example, an IPS specialist may arrange to pick someone up from school, meet with her at a park she likes, or meet in her home. IPS specialists focus on making appointments comfortable and convenient.

Some youth prefer to have a friend or family member attend some appointments. Offer that as an option, but let them know that you are unable to transport friends and family in your car because of agency liability and insurance.

During the first appointments, the IPS specialist focuses on developing a relationship with the person. For young people to feel comfortable sharing what is going on in their lives, they need IPS specialists to know them aside from their employment and education goals. IPS specialists may ask what the person did in school that day, what music does she like, or what she did over the weekend. Some IPS specialists spend a few minutes of each appointment chatting about what interests the young person so that their meetings will be more appealing.

> *"It's hard for some young people to stay on task. If I only want to talk about work, they lose focus. They want time to tell me about the new video game or outfit that they bought. If they can't incorporate something about their personal life into the appointment they lose interest."*
>
> Terry Gantz, IPS specialist

Reach Out to Youths Who Miss Appointments

Some young people miss appointments because they change their minds frequently about school or work. Remember, they may be just starting their working lives and do not know much about different types of jobs. Others may find it overwhelming to attend appointments because they are busy. But IPS specialists are persistent in reaching out to people who have been referred to IPS. They use different strategies to remind people of appointments and to re-engage people in the program. **Outreach may include the following:**

1. Text messages (if agency policies permit texting)
2. Telephone calls
3. Emails
4. Attempts to visit the person in the community (keeping in mind confidentiality issues)

5. Coordinated outreach with other service providers such as mental health practitioners, housing specialists, or special education teachers (if the student has given permission)
6. Contact after young person's appointment with mental health counselor or other practitioner
7. Outreach to family members (if the person has given permission)

Although IPS specialists are persistent in their efforts to re-engage youth, they are careful not to embarrass young people. For example, an IPS specialist would not stop by a community center while a young person was playing basketball with his friends unless this was prearranged. IPS specialists ask each person, "If I am unable to reach you by phone, what is the next best way to reach you? What other ways can I get in touch with you?"

If a young person misses appointments, be sure to greet her in a friendly way when you see her again. Do not point out that she will not find work or get into school if she misses appointments. Refrain from telling her how many other people need your help. If she feels embarrassed or irritated she will be less likely to attend appointments in the future. Instead, ask what she wants to work on with you and stay positive. Schedule appointments based on the person's other commitments. For example, if someone has driving lessons on Mondays and Wednesdays, make plans to meet her another day. If someone misses many appointments, ask about better times or places to meet. Offer to text her a reminder on the day of scheduled appointments. Ask the mental health or housing team if they know what is getting in the person's way of attending appointments and if they have suggestions about how to make appointments more appealing to the person.

Re-engage young people by describing actions you have taken on their behalf or by making plans with them. "I spoke to a manager at the pet store you said you liked. She seemed nice and she said that she hires pretty often. I thought we could fill out an application and take it into the store when she is working." "I heard about a job fair that might interest you." Help youth feel that things are getting done when they work with you.

Eventually, you and the mental health practitioners or housing specialists may determine that a person misses appointments because he is not currently interested in work or school. If you have not been able to meet with someone on your caseload for two or three months and the team believes that the person does not want to work, close the person's IPS case. Explain to the person (if he is available) that you hope to work with him in the future. If the person also has an open case with state Vocational Rehabilitation, consult with the counselor before closing the person's case.

Conclusion

Help transition-age youth consider their options for help with careers and strive to make IPS services inviting to young people. Encourage working youth and students to share their experiences with their peers through written stories, speaking in groups or meetings, and talking at large employment celebrations. Coordinate with mental health and housing practitioners to meet with people who are considering IPS services.

Reach out to young people who stop attending appointments to learn what is getting in their way and to help them (with the integrated team) resolve barriers to participating in IPS services.

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Chapter 5: Career Goal Development

This chapter focuses on the first few weeks that a person participates in the IPS program. IPS specialists spend this time getting to know the person, learning about her education and work history, and discussing possible goals. Specialists also offer to schedule a meeting with the person and a family member or close friend who can help with ideas for job types and career goals

Learning About Interests and Goals

IPS uses an individualized approach. Each person is helped to identify his strengths, skills, talents, and preferences related to working a job. IPS specialists ask people about their previous educational and work experiences to learn what the person liked, what contributed to successes, and what situations were challenging to the person. They ask what jobs and careers the person knows about and discuss positions related to his interests and hobbies. What is his dream job? What job would he like now? Is he interested in education or training?

As specialists learn about each person's experiences and goals, they record information in a document called the career profile. A sample career profile is in the appendix of this manual.

IPS specialists offer to schedule a meeting with the young person and family members or a close friend. They explain that the purpose of the meeting is to ask for help thinking about jobs that the person may enjoy. During the meeting, they ask about how the person likes to spend his time, past hobbies, favorite classes, factors that seemed to contribute to success in school and at work, etc. This information is included in the career profile.

Other sources of information for the employment and career profile include practitioners on the mental health treatment team or housing team. They provide information about mental health diagnosis and treatment (if any), the person's living situation, substance abuse problems (if any), strengths, supports, and goals related to employment. With the person's permission, the IPS specialist may also contact teachers, tutors, and past employers to learn about the person's learning style, how the person collaborates with others, etc. The IPS specialist reviews the completed profile with the young person, collaborates with him on edits, and offers him a paper copy.

Including Families in the IPS Plan

Family members can be parents, grandparents, siblings, partners, spouses, good friends, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) sponsors, foster parents, parole officers, clergy, or others. Many youth have nontraditional families and live with distant relations or unrelated people who are like family to them. IPS specialists ask each person to identify who supports her and whether that person should be included in a meeting to discuss her employment/education plan.

The purpose of including family members is that they often have good ideas for jobs or educational programs that the person will enjoy. They know something about what has worked and not worked for the person in the past. And many family members appreciate knowing what IPS is about and how the specialist will support the person.

Another reason to meet with family members is to hear their concerns. If family members are concerned about the person's disability benefits, the specialist may be able to arrange a meeting with a benefits planner that

family members can also attend. When family members worry about whether work or school is too stressful, the specialist explains the supports he can offer, and also helps the young person describe why work or school is important to her. If family members explain that they have watched the person struggle in the past and want to protect her, the IPS specialist empathizes, but explains that the young person's preferences guide the employment process. With the young person's permission, they invite family members to attend some appointments in the future so that family members can share their perspectives and understand how the person is progressing with her goals. Ongoing meetings with families may help diffuse some of their concerns about the person's work goals.

Some IPS specialists report that family members are not available or that family involvement is not needed. While some families are in fact unavailable, IPS specialists do not assume that this is true. It should be up to each young person to decide whether to include family members. To identify people in the young person's support network, ask questions that lead to discussions about who is important in the person's life and who would support the person's education and work goals.

Examples of questions follow:

- Who is an important person in your life? (This could be a sibling, parent, partner, good friend, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) sponsor...)
- Who would you call first if you were offered a job tomorrow?
- Whose opinions do you trust?
- With whom do you spend the most time? Call most often?

Next, explain why the person may want to include someone he knows well. "The purpose of meeting would be to brainstorm different ideas about jobs or supports for working. Since that person knows you well, she may have ideas about jobs related to what you enjoy and what you are good at doing. And because she cares about you, she may also like to know what types of services I offer." Let the person know that you will not share information that he wants to keep private. Ask, "What topics should I avoid when we meet with your family?"

When a young person is unsure about including a family member, ask if he would like more time to consider the option. Youth who are 18 years or older may want to feel independent and make their own decisions. Do not push to include parents or other family members before the young person is ready or you may damage your relationship. Instead, bring up the topic occasionally and allow the young person to weigh the possible advantages and disadvantages of including family members in meetings to discuss his career goals.

When a person decides to invite a family member or other support person to a meeting, develop an agenda for the meeting together. If family members have not heard about IPS before, offer to provide some brief information about how you help with jobs and school.

Sample Agenda for a Family Meeting

1. Introductions
2. IPS specialist describes how she helps people with school and work and family is given time to ask questions
3. Young person talks about the careers she is considering
4. Family shares their ideas about careers
5. The group discusses how often to keep in touch or other next steps

Collecting Work and Education Histories

The employment and education profile includes work and education histories. Learning what has worked for the person in the past, and what has not been helpful, is critical to the new employment or education plan. Talking about the person's past experiences is an opportunity to learn about his interests, passions, strengths, and coping skills.

Specialists do not only ask about dates of employment and job duties; they also ask questions similar to the ones below:

- How did you get that job?
- What was your favorite part of the job? What did you like least?
- Why did you leave that job?
- Would you want that type of work again? Why or why not?
- How did you get to work?
- What was your supervisor like? Did you get along?
- Did you like your co-workers?
- What did you do if you were having a bad day at work?
- Describe your best day on the job.
- Did anyone help you keep the job (support your efforts to work), including friends or family?
- What did you learn about yourself as a worker from that job?
- What new skills did you learn from the job?

To learn about a person's education, they ask more than the dates of schooling and degrees. Questions can include the following:

- What was your favorite class? Why?
- What class did you dislike? Why?
- Did you go to more than one school? Please tell me about the different schools.
- How do you like to learn best? Listening? Reading? Hands-on experience?
- Who was your favorite teacher? Why?
- What did you do if you were having a bad day at school?
- Did you take vocational training classes? What kind? Did you earn any certifications?
- Did you have friends at school?
- What are your thoughts about completing job training or more education after you finish high school?

Accessing Information about Benefits

People who receive benefits (disability benefits, food assistance, housing subsidies, etc.) need to know how earned income will affect their entitlements. Even students who will not work in the immediate future want to understand their options as they begin planning their careers. The IPS specialist asks about all of the types of benefits a person receives and offers a referral to a trained benefits planner for detailed and current information about benefits. In the U.S., trained benefits planners may be available through Vocational Rehabilitation when people have open cases. Benefits planners may also be available through Social Security Administration's Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program.

To learn where WIPA benefits planners are available, go to www.socialsecurity.gov/WIPA.

When people miss benefits planning appointments, ask if you can help reschedule the appointment. Offer to go with the person. And when family members are concerned about the person losing her benefits, suggest to the young person that she invite family members to attend the appointment.

Ask benefit counselors about Social Security Administration work incentives. Students may be eligible for the Student Earned Income Exclusion and people who want to replace benefits with work income may be interested in developing a Plan to Achieve Self Sufficiency.

Discussing Decisions to Share Personal Information with Employers and Educators

IPS specialists describe different ways that they can help with work and school. For example, during the job search IPS specialists can talk to employers about their businesses and ask to introduce qualified jobseekers. If the person agrees, the IPS specialist will share some personal information—at least she will share that the person receives employment services and the name of her agency. If the person anticipates he will need a disability-related accommodation, the specialist will also share limited information about the person's disability. IPS specialists ask people what they think are the possible advantages and disadvantages of sharing personal information with employers. They strive to learn the person's concerns and hopes related to help with the job search and disclosure of information. They also discuss what the IPS specialist will say and what she should keep private.

Students who have disabilities may be eligible for accommodations that will facilitate their learning. Colleges and technical schools offer services through offices for students with disabilities (the name for this office varies at different institutions). When students are willing to share information about a disability, IPS specialists can help them register for services through this office and may also help them request accommodations (see pp. 52 - 55).

High school students who have special needs may be eligible for an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and usually already have an IEP at the point of referral to IPS. Parents can ask to include the IPS specialist in IEP meetings so the young person's services are coordinated. When high school or college students do not wish to disclose a disability or problems related to learning, the IPS specialist provides education supports without contacting school personnel.

IPS specialists discuss disclosing personal information on more than one occasion because people change their opinions based on their experiences. For example, if a worker begins to have problems with his job, he may want help talking to his employer. Or after a successful semester or two, a student may not want the IPS specialist's help at college any longer.

Scheduling Appointments

IPS specialists who work with youth report that they need to be flexible about schedules. Some youth are not available to meet during business hours because they are busy with high school, social activities or jobs.

> *"I sometimes meet with people on the weekend or in the evening because they are working and in school. Other people don't get up until 4:00 in the afternoon because they stay up all night playing videos or hanging out with friends. One person is working full time, and some people feel unhappy about giving up their free time to meet because they are busy. I try to be flexible and make it work for each person."*
>
> Richard Butler, IPS specialist

Other people want to work, although finding a job may not be their top priority everyday. IPS specialists take advantage of opportunities to meet with people when they can.

> *"Some people on my caseload don't want to have a standing appointment. They say, 'Give me a call at the start of the week and I'll see if I can fit you in.' They sometimes call me to find out if I can meet them that day because they heard about a job opening and want help with an application. Being flexible is the key to keeping people engaged with me."*
>
> Terry Gantz, IPS specialist

Exploring Career Options

As people begin to consider training programs and careers, IPS specialists help them learn about jobs related to their interests. Even if a person is sure about the training or education program she wants, the IPS specialist helps her gather information about the cost of the program, graduation rates, and the occupational outlook for her chosen field. And if the person does not have much knowledge about the field she has selected, the specialist also offers to help her learn more about types of jobs available in her areas of interest.

One way to help people learn about jobs is called informational interviewing. The IPS specialist or jobseeker calls business managers who hire for positions the person would like to learn more about. He asks for an appointment to learn about those jobs. For example, an IPS specialist might call a city homeless shelter to say, "I am an employment counselor and I am working with a young woman who is finishing high school and thinks that she may be interested earning a social work degree. She would like to know more about the different types of jobs in that field and I wondered if we could set up a 30-minute appointment to speak with a social worker or counselor at your shelter." Next, the IPS specialist would help the person prepare for the appointment by developing a list of questions to ask during the interview.

Some common informational interviewing questions are listed below:

- What is a typical workday for you?
- What are the duties/functions/responsibilities of the job?
- What kinds of decisions do you make?
- Are there busy and slow times, or is the work activity fairly constant?
- What do you like most about your job?
- What do you find most challenging?
- What kinds of problems do you solve?

- What education, training or experience qualifies people for this job?
- What skills are most important?
- What type of person would love this job?
- What changes are occurring in this field?
- How easy or difficult is it to find employment?
- What other types of companies hire people with your skills and experience?
- What opportunities for advancement are available?

The young person should prepare to take notes during the informational interview. She should also send a thank-you note. It is possible that people she interviews will be important networking contacts in the future.

The IPS specialist helps the person interview social workers in different settings so that she learns about how the job varies in different nonprofits and healthcare businesses. They learn together about the occupational outlook for social workers (how many jobs will be available in the future) and the pay rate for social workers. They may look for information online and also ask a state Vocational Rehabilitation counselor to share information. Finally, if the person continues to be interested in social work, they will visit community colleges and four-year colleges to learn about the degrees offered.

The IPS specialist or young person will schedule an appointment with a department advisor to ask questions similar to the ones below:

- How long does it take the average student to complete the degree?
- What is the cost of the program?
- What percent of people graduate from the program?
- What classes are most challenging for people in this program?
- How many graduates find jobs in social work?
- Does the college offer assistance with job placement?
- What changes are expected in the field of social work in the coming years?

On occasion, a person may elect to work in a related job to learn more about her interests. For example, someone who thinks she may like to become a veterinarian technician may try working in a pet grooming business. But IPS specialists do not require people to volunteer or complete work experiences even when young people lack work experience. And they would not encourage people to take internships that are not competitive.

To determine whether an internship is competitive, read the criteria for competitive internships on page 48.

Balancing Priorities

Because youth have not had much experience selecting different work and school schedules, some may not know how much they are able to manage at one time. For example, a person who is attending high school may try working 20 hours a week and then find that his grades suffer. Or a new college student may attempt to take a full course load before learning that he needs to begin as a part-time student. Help people make adjustments, as needed. Track deadlines for dropping classes and discuss dropping a class, if needed. Offer to help a young person request a change in her work schedule or practice what she will say if she wants to do that herself.

Talk to young people about all of their priorities including social activities, time with families, school, hobbies, and work. How often does she want to spend time with friends? How many hours does she think she needs to

set aside to study? How long will it take to travel from work to school? Will she feel tired after work and find it difficult to concentrate in class? Map out a schedule together so the young person can imagine what her days would be like with different work and school schedules.

Conclusion

Getting to know a young person who has just enrolled in an IPS program involves listening carefully to his experiences and what is important to him. Unlike with other vocational approaches, IPS practitioners do not recommend vocational assessments, volunteer jobs, or short-term jobs to learn about people's strengths and career interests. Instead, they talk to each person about his work and education history, interests, and goals for the future. They help people learn more about work and careers by assisting with regular jobs and career exploration (meeting people to talk about their jobs and visiting different businesses). Family members, good friends, teachers, and mental health/housing practitioners share information about what the person enjoys and his strengths related to careers.

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Chapter 6: Supported Education

Adolescents and young adults are at a life stage where it is developmentally appropriate for them to pursue education. Moreover, they are often hopeful and interested in school or vocational training. Education is critical for obtaining meaningful jobs. Educational attainment predicts employment rate among people with severe mental illness (Luciano & Meara, 2014). Further, lifetime earnings are strongly associated with educational attainment in the general population.

IPS programs include assistance with education and training programs that are related to a person's career goals. For example, if a person wants to complete training to become a phlebotomist, that person may be a good candidate for IPS. But if someone wants to take classes for personal enrichment, the IPS program would not be selected to provide supports. (A case manager or other support person is more suitable to assist with this kind of educational goal.) The purpose of all IPS services is to help people with jobs and careers.

In this chapter we will review practice principles for supported education, how IPS specialists prepare to provide education supports, and strategies to assist people in different education settings.

Supported Education Principles

IPS practice principles for employment apply to education. **A list of supported education principles is below:**

1. Zero exclusion for eligibility: Any person who is interested in pursuing education or job training related to a career goal is eligible for supported education services, regardless of symptoms, substance abuse, homelessness, or other factors.

2. Focus on mainstream education and job training programs: IPS specialists help people investigate mainstream education and training programs, which are programs that are open to all community members and award degrees or certificates for successful completion of coursework. Requirements for enrolling in these education programs are related to prior educational achievement and knowledge, not disability status. Examples are high schools, General Educational Development (GED) classes, English as Second Language classes, community colleges, joint vocational schools, trade schools, colleges, and universities.

3. Supported education services use a team approach: IPS specialists have frequent contact with mental health practitioners, housing teams, school counselors, or other social service workers including professionals who have an important role in helping youth achieve their personal goals. They meet weekly to share information and discuss how to help youth achieve their education and training goals.

4. Supported education and employment services are integrated into a single program. Many young people are interested in pursuing both work and education at the same time, or switch between work and school goals. One team provides both services to ensure that continuity.

5. IPS specialists help people access information about the financial impact of their career plans: Youth are offered accurate and individualized information about how their benefits will be affected by the

wages they may receive after earning a certificate or degree. Benefits planners also provide information about disability work incentives for students. And IPS specialists help students learn about options for financial aid to pay for school.

6. Rapid engagement and expeditious enrollment in educational programs: In most cases, IPS specialists facilitate participant visits to educational institutions, or assist with career exploration in the community (meeting with working people to learn about careers), within 30 days after program entry.

7. IPS specialists build partnerships with school and training program staff: Specialists visit college offices for students with disabilities (the name varies) to learn about how students can ask for accommodations and to build relationships with the counselors. They also meet with academic advisors to learn about different education and training programs, and with financial aid counselors to learn about different ways that students receive help paying for school.

8. Education supports are continuous: IPS specialists provide support and advocacy in the application, financial planning, and enrollment process. After enrollment, IPS specialists directly provide individualized support (e.g., arranging accommodations, managing time, organizing homework, and so on). This support may involve the treatment team, peer support and natural supports such as family and friends if desired by each student.

9. IPS specialists pay attention to participant preferences and strengths: IPS specialists help young people explore careers and educational programs related to their interests, academic abilities, and educational prerequisites. They ask students about their preferences for supports, for example, whether they want to request accommodations at school, where to meet the IPS specialist, which family members to include in the education plan, and what supports the IPS specialist should provide.

A young man shares his experiences with supported education in the story below. Try to identify the IPS principles illustrated in his story.

David's Story

> *"When I was a teenager I made some mistakes that resulted in incarcerations in different juvenile facilities. It was a tough time. Eventually, the mental health juvenile justice program referred me to IPS. My IPS specialist (Laurie) helped me with school, while my counselor helped me figure out ways to stay out of trouble. But they both talked to me about finishing high school and having a career. Laurie made sure that I went to school and she asked about my grades. She reminded me to study for tests and encouraged me to participate in extracurricular activities so that I would enjoy high school. I am proud of graduating on time. Laurie also helped me find my first job, which I started right after graduation. I'm working full time in a warehouse—it's challenging but I like it.*
>
> *My long-term goal is to become a chef. First I wanted to be an artist, then I wanted to be an actor, but now I think I want to work in culinary arts. Food is very interesting to me. I want to learn how to control spices and how to cook different types of food. Laurie and I are going to take a tour of the culinary school soon. I am hoping to attend school in the fall. I've learned a lot and I know more now. I'm focused on my future."*

High School Programs and General Education Certificates

Encouraging Young People to Graduate from High School

The primary goal for helping high school students is graduation. Young people may not be focused on long-term goals including careers. But IPS specialists help them think about their future. They share how high school degrees relate to having more choices about jobs. They connect future goals to what interests the student. For example, a student who is interested in computers may be motivated to graduate if she knows about different certification programs for network administration and support. Juniors and seniors may benefit from visiting open houses at the local community college so they can learn about careers and envision themselves going to college. IPS specialists talk about how high school graduation relates to lifetime employment status and earning potential. For example, in the U.S. people without a high school degree earn about $10,000 less per year than those with degrees (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Specialists work with the school guidance counselor and families to discuss career possibilities with students early on so that they have a plan in place before they graduate.

Some youth drop out because they are unhappy in school. The student may be bullied or socially isolated. Many young people who have used special education services report that being bullied by other students was extremely distressing. Some people said that it prevented them from concentrating in class and others did not attend school regularly because of bullying. The IPS specialist can listen to the reasons the person is unhappy and talk to her and others about ways to improve the situation. In these situations, the IPS specialist should also talk to the mental health or housing team, as well as teachers or guidance counselors at the school about ways to help the student. Other practitioners may talk with the student about joining social groups and may help them develop better social skills.

High school Individual Education Programs (IEPs)

In the U.S., a common support for high school students with disabilities is the Individualized Education Program (IEP). The purpose of IEPs is to help students access the general curriculum in the least restrictive environment with their same age peers as much as possible. Special education teachers, parents (when students are younger than 18 years), students and others develop IEPs together. Ongoing IEP meetings are to discuss the student's strengths and needs, as well as possible accommodations and other related services to help the student succeed in school. The IEP is revised at least once each year, but IEP meetings may be held more frequently to review the student's progress.

Parents of children younger than 18 years must be invited to the meetings, and the young person is usually invited, as well. In some states, students aged 16 years or older must be invited. Further, parents have the right to invite people who have special knowledge or expertise about the student, for example, the IPS specialist, a mental health practitioner, or a state Vocational Rehabilitation counselor (U.S. Department of Education: A Guide to Individualized Education Program, found at http://www2.ed.gov/parents/needs/speced/iepguide/index.html). Parents should notify the school ahead of time about the person(s) they would like to invite to the meeting. Students can also ask to include someone to help with career and education goals but if the student is not at the age of majority, his parents must agree. Other people who may attend include general education teachers, the special education teacher, and school administrators.

The role of the IPS specialist in IEP meetings is to help generate ideas for the student to graduate and offer education supports. For example, in one IEP meeting, the group (including an IPS specialist) discussed a student's poor performance in one class. The group helped her think about a different class that she could take instead and still be eligible for graduation.

Examples of IPS Supports for High School Students

- **Develop a study schedule with the student.** Help students consider how much study time is needed for different classes and when to study. For example, if a student has a part-time job, you could help ask her supervisor (with plenty of advance notice) if she could have an extra day or two off work prior to final exams.
- **Devise a system to track dates for tests and assignments.** Help the student use a monthly planner so that he will know when to start studying for tests or begin working on assignments. Also prompt the student to start assignments so that he will have enough time to do good work.
- **Help students use good study skills.** The special education teacher may be a good source of ideas for how the student learns best and different strategies for studying, but you can help the student implement those ideas. For example, you can talk with the student and family members about a quiet place for the student to study. See tips for good study habits on page 56.
- **Encourage students to attend school.** Talk to students about long-term goals for careers and how high school graduation relates to those goals. Celebrate good attendance with students and their families.
- **Provide supports for difficult social situations at school** (these supports may include members of the mental health treatment team or housing team): While school counselors intervene directly with social situations at school such as bullying, IPS specialists can provide support by listening to students. Discuss possible social activities or groups that the student may enjoy with the student, family members, and others who know the student well.

  Some young people have not had a mental health diagnosis in the past and are unsure about how much personal information to share with classmates. Discuss that other students, including some friends, may not understand mental health issues. In collaboration with a mental health practitioner or school guidance counselor, help the young person plan what she will share, if anything, with friends at school.
- **Remind meeting members of the student's strengths or positive actions.** Some people have reported that IEP meetings seemed to focus on problems and what they had done wrong rather than their successes and strengths. Speak up for students--share what they have done that is positive and what positive attributes may help them succeed in the future.
- **Assist** with summer jobs or part-time jobs during the school year.

> *"I worked with one 18-year-old person who was in high school when she became homeless. She had not attended school in a month. She was giving up on graduating because the places she found to stay were far from the high school she had attended. I became involved with the school personnel who were trying to help her graduate. During the IEP meetings, the group came up with a plan for her to complete her final two classes through an independent study program. I met with her to encourage her to keep working on her assignments and I met with her teachers to make sure that she was on track to graduate. She ended up graduating early and was so proud of herself. She's been working for five months now in a store and she loves it. But her long-term goal is to be an EMT (emergency medical technician). She is also looking into the local technical school and she is job shadowing in an emergency room to make sure that EMT is the career she really wants."*
>
> Karissa Nelson, IPS specialist

Part of the IEP process for students in special education is transition planning. The purpose is to help the student set goals for employment, education, and independent living after high school. The plan should include steps to reach those goals including courses of study.

Examples of Goals for Transition Planning Meetings

- Provide information about services available and eligibility requirements
- Help other transition team members understand the difference between school program entitlement and adult services eligibility
- **Assist in**
  - ⇨ assessing need for school support between the ages 18-21
  - ⇨ identifying adult and community services that may assist in student achieving post-secondary goals
  - ⇨ the application process for community, agency, and college supports and services as appropriate
- Alert students and families about potential waiting lists for services
- Plan to provide services as appropriate before student exits the school system

Students leave school with a summary of their performance. They can take the summary to post secondary schools to request similar accommodations to the ones that helped during high school. Additional documentation may be required for post secondary education accommodations so the student and the transition IEP team should prepare and collect needed documentation including medical reports. Transition planning must begin by at least age 16 and earlier in some states. Students are invited to the meetings and can ask whichever support people they want to attend. If the student has not reached the age of majority, parents or guardians are automatically included.

IPS specialists attend transition meetings to provide information about what IPS services will be available after high school, whether there will be a waiting list for services, and to learn about the student's long-term goals. IPS specialists may also help with career exploration such as arranging visits to different workplaces or meeting with academic advisors (see Career Exploration pp. 48).

> *"A transition teacher referred a student to our IPS program. I attend transition meetings and IEP meetings every three to four weeks depending on her progress. In the IEP meetings, we discuss her education progress as well as her hopes for employment. In the transition meetings we discuss plans for helping her work after graduation including her preferences for type of work, how much she wants to work, and how she will arrange transportation to her job."*
>
> Megan Powell, IPS specialist

High School Students Who Do Not Have Special Education Services

Some high school students who have mental health problems do not have individual education plans or transition plans. They may receive mental health services from a private practitioner or community mental health agency practitioner who refers them to your IPS program. You can provide many of the same education supports described above, although there will not be IEP or transition meetings to attend. But you can help with study skills, part-time jobs, long-term career counseling, family meetings to talk about education supports, etc. And with the student's permission, you can also meet with the school guidance counselor to discuss how to help the student graduate from high school.

Alternative High Schools

Alternative high schools are sometimes made available by the school district for students who are at risk of not graduating due to poor grades, disruptive behavior, truancy, special needs or other factors. And some alternative schools can help high school students catch up on missed credits. Students may attend alternative schools until they graduate or drop out, while others attend only until they are able to return to mainstream schools. Alternative schools have low student-to-teacher ratios and may teach adult life skills and/or vocational trades, as well as a academic subjects. In situations in which a student is not able to benefit in a traditional high school, a public alternative high school may be selected if one is available.

> *"In our town, students who are a year or two behind can go to the alternative high school to work on credit recovery. There is a lower teacher to student ratio there. The students work at their own pace on computers to catch up. The alternative school is open at unusual hours so some people attend the regular high school during the school day and then go to the alternative high school for credit recovery in the early morning or in the afternoon."*
>
> Gary Burns, IPS supervisor

> *"I am working with someone who is attending an alternative high school that allows people to stay in school until they are 21 years old. Most students in the school have developmental disabilities, but an exception was made for her because she is at a low grade level for math and reading. The purpose of her inclusion in this school is to give her extra time to improve her academic skills. Her classroom size is small so she can receive extra help. In addition to academic skills, she is learning adult daily living skills such as how to write checks, how to use email, how to count money, how to interact with people."*
>
> Megan Powell, IPS specialist

General Educational Development (GED)

Students who do not earn high school diplomas may opt to earn an equivalent certificate by passing four GED tests: language arts, math, science, and social studies. Free classes to prepare for the tests are offered at many career centers and libraries.

Find where classes are offered by going to http://www.gedtestingservice.com/testers/locate-a-prep-center.

In some states, online curricula are available for people who want to study independently. Many people benefit from instructor assistance, but using studying through an online program may meet the needs of some youth.

Students begin by taking a test to determine what they need to study. Then they attend classes that are loosely structured. Students choose how many days each week to attend classes, but are more likely to be successful if they attend at least three days each week. Instructors present material during part of the day, but for the most part, students work independently with an instructor available in the classroom to answer questions. There are often three or four instructors for each GED program and they are scheduled to work on different days. It is possible for students (or IPS specialists) to ask for the instructor schedule so that if a student enjoys working with one instructor over others, he can attend on the days that instructor will be in class.

Encourage or help students to ask GED instructors for accommodations such as extra assignments related to the areas in which they struggle. Another example is that many classes require students to leave their books in the classroom, but one IPS specialist was able to help a student make arrangements to take the materials home at night. Specialists can also help students find methods to study that are comfortable for them such as using flashcards or taking notes from the books. With a student's permission, contact the instructor one or two times

each month to ask what the student is working on and how you can best help the student. Some GED programs have social workers who meet with students to ask if they understand classroom material and whether they need extra help. When social workers are available, IPS specialists should also connect with them on a regular basis.

Suggest that GED students check in weekly with an instructor to ask about their progress. When students need more assistance from the teacher or other accommodations, you may need to call the school district to advocate and to learn what assistance is possible. Examples of possible accommodations for taking GED tests are extended test-taking time, supervised breaks from tests, use of a calculator or a private room to take the test. To begin the process of requesting an accommodation, the GED student should request a form related to his disability from the testing center.

Help students investigate the costs related to the GED. For example, in some states there is a cost to taking the tests and students may need to purchase their own study materials.

In some states, such as Wisconsin and California, students can earn high school equivalency diplomas (HSED or HEP). State laws determine how students can earn this credential. Talk to GED instructors to learn if your state has a high school equivalency program. Doing so may require taking extra coursework and additional tests. The advantages of a high school equivalency diploma is that employers may look more favorably on that qualification and students who complete such a diploma may be able to test out of remedial classes at community colleges.

> *"I am working with a GED student. When I met him he had already dropped out of high school but wanted to earn a GED because he would like to go to college one day. One of the supports I provide is encouragement to go to class. Classes start at 9:30 in the morning and run until 3:00 in the afternoon, but students can decide each day whether or not to go to class. So I encourage him to keep going and help him with his schedule so he can get to class on time. And when he is reluctant to ask questions in class, I work with him on how to communicate with his instructor.*
>
> *I also help him with employment. He works at a restaurant on the weekends (Friday night through Sunday). In his first week of work he told me that he wasn't employed there any longer because he didn't know how to get his schedule so he didn't go into work. I went with him into to talk to his manager and we worked out a system for him to get his schedule weekly."*
>
> Kara Spencer, IPS specialist

Postsecondary Education

Prepare to Provide Secondary Education Supports

Although most IPS specialists have attended college themselves, that experience does not qualify them to provide supported education services for postsecondary education. They must invest time in learning about the training and education programs in their community, as well as the jobs that are related to those degrees and certificates.

To learn about the different certificate programs at your local community college, call the college to find out who has oversight for the entire Workforce Development Department and then call that person to learn about open-house events, career days, or other ways to learn about programs. Alternatively, ask to meet directly with the person who has oversight for the Workforce Development Department. Gather brochures and catalogs about courses and degrees and also read online material about local educational institutions. Meet with contact

people listed for different degrees and certificate programs to ask questions about class schedules, academic versus hands-on learning, graduation rates, and employment rates for graduates.

Learn about short-term training programs in your area that may not be connected to a college such as culinary arts programs, graphic design, dog grooming, and pharmacy technical training programs. Joint vocational schools offer training for different trades such as cosmetology, construction, and welding.

Visit educational institutions to begin building relationships with counselors in the offices for students with disabilities, academic advisors, and financial aid advisors. Visit colleges to help students find out about social groups, computer labs, where to study between classes, and other resources. Visits such as these to college campuses help IPS specialists to become more knowledgeable about educational resources the local community and help to develop contacts. The visits are most impactful when planned for specific IPS participants, consistent with their goals.

Goal Setting

Some people may know what degree or certificate they want to earn. In these situations, the IPS specialist reviews with them the reasons they have chosen to pursue that occupation—how it fits with their strengths, interests, and the type of work environment they may enjoy. If the person only knows about one specific job, the specialist can offer to help set up opportunities for the person to visit people working in their field of interest and interview them about their jobs and how they became qualified for their positions. She may even ask if he would like to try working in a job that is related to the long-term goal just to be sure about his choice.

Young people who have had school problems in the past may not feel confident about being a student. You can encourage them to try one class to try out college or technical school. Or you can help them explore vocational schools to learn about programs that have less classroom-based learning and more hands-on experiences. You can also describe some of the ways that that you have helped other people be successful in training/education programs even if those people had problems with school in the past. Offer to visit a college or career-training center with the young person to help him envision what school is like. Also, talk to him about his interests and how those relate to different degrees.

Finally, help youth obtain objective guidance about the match between their academic aptitudes and their choice of educational program. Postsecondary education is unlike employment—when a person discovers that a job is not a good fit for him, he can leave the position and look for another job without losing much, if anything at all. But when people must drop out of school because of academic problems, they may jeopardize their financial aid or owe money even though they have not earned a degree. Because students invest time and other resources in education, it is important they make a careful selection. Since you are not trained in every type of educational program, rely on people who are knowledgeable about different programs. Accompany young people to meet with academic advisors and guidance counselors. Help youth discuss their education history with advisors, including past grades, academic strengths, and what extra help (if any) they needed while in school. Discuss individual situations and education selection during your IPS team meetings and mental health practitioner/housing meetings to hear from others. When a young person has an open case with state Vocational Rehabilitation counselor, work closely with the counselor to discuss her academic abilities and possible education goals. With the young person's permission, include family members in discussions about educational goals.

Career Exploration

Some employment programs assist with volunteer jobs and unpaid internships to help youth learn about different occupations. But IPS focuses on regular, paid employment and educational opportunities instead. One reason is that many young people feel frustrated with unpaid positions. Further, we do not think that a young person in IPS should be required to complete extra steps to pursue a career, but should take the same path as everyone else. Competitive internships may sometimes be utilized in IPS. To determine whether an internship is competitive, IPS specialists ask the questions below. If the answers to all of the questions below are no, the internship is not competitive.

1. Is the internship required for future employment?
2. Did most workers in the desired occupation complete internships prior to obtaining their positions?
3. Is the internship part of a certificate or degree-bearing education program?

Below, an IPS specialist shares how she helped a young person explore different types of work. Note that she did not steer him towards volunteer jobs or internships.

> *"I'm working with a man who is 20 years old and he changes his mind a lot about what he wants to do. For a while he wanted to be an auto mechanic so I helped him get a job at a car dealership but he didn't like it and he decided that type of work wasn't for him. Next he wanted to be a veterinarian's assistant so we started looking for jobs working with animals. Then he decided he wanted to go to school so we looked for jobs that wouldn't interfere with his school schedule. We met with an academic advisor who suggested that he start with general classes to learn about what subjects he enjoys. Right now he is taking some classes and working part time. I encourage young people to try as many things as possible, especially when they don't know what they want to do. Listen to them. Don't say, 'Well you don't have experience in that.' Just help them have experiences related to what they want because that is how they are going to learn."*
>
> Rebecca Brown, IPS specialist

Family members may have information about what interests the person. Ask young people who is most important in their lives and whose opinions they value. Suggest meeting together with those people to talk about the young person's hobbies, strengths, interests, and possible careers. Then investigate those careers further. Visit people working in related jobs to talk about what they enjoy about their positions, what a typical day is like and how they prepared for their careers (see Exploring career options pp. 39-41). Ask state Vocational Rehabilitation counselors for career ideas related to what the person is good at doing and enjoys. Meet with academic advisors at community colleges and other educational institutions to ask about programs in areas that sound interesting to the student. If the program involves hands-on learning, for example, Computer Numerical Control (CNC) training, ask to visit the lab where students are working on mills and lathes. Prepare questions to ask academic advisors or department representatives in advance. **Sample questions are below:**

- How many semesters or months will it take to complete the program? How many credits are required for graduation? For certificate programs, how many months is the program? What is the course schedule? Is it possible to take a part-time schedule?

- When are courses offered? When does the program begin? Must the courses be taken in order?
- What are the eligibility requirements for this program?
- What types of jobs would this program prepare me to do? What do those people do all day? What types of businesses hire people to perform that type of work?
- What is the job outlook for this type of work? How many graduates find work in this field?
- What are the typical earnings for people in these jobs?
- Which classes do students find most challenging? What percent of students complete the program?
- What other degrees or certificates are similar to this one?
- Is the learning primarily academic or hands on? Is an internship or work experience part of the program? (Some students may also want to learn if background checks are required for work experiences.)
- How many students are in the classes?
- What is the cost of this program? What books, tools, or equipment do I need to purchase to complete the program?

Students can also attend open house events at community colleges. To learn about open house events, watch college websites and also call advisors to learn what is scheduled and whether students must register to attend.

Remember that young people are still learning about who they are and what they enjoy. Some people will not feel ready to make a career decision. They may also be focused on other areas in their lives and not want the pressure of deciding on a specific career. When students are not ready to choose a course of study, they can begin with general classes to have more time to consider their options. IPS specialists can help them work in different types of jobs to learn about careers or assist with the other types of career exploration activities we have already described.

School Selection

After someone has decided upon a career, help her identify which schools have that type of program available. Offer to accompany her to a meeting with an academic advisor at each institution.

Ask about the number of quarters or semesters most people need to complete the program, the percent of students who graduate, the number of graduates who find employment in their field of study, whether jobs related to the degree are projected to be available in the future, what are deadlines for applying to the program, and what equipment or tools are needed (if any) to complete the program. You should also schedule an appointment with a financial aid counselor to learn about tuition costs and possible financial aid.

Be aware of for-profit institutions (different than private, non-profit schools) some of which leave graduates with huge loans. Tuition at for-profit colleges tends to be significantly higher even though graduates are no more likely to find employment. And although students may receive federal financial aid to attend for-profit schools, they are more likely to default on their loans. Advise young people to avoid rushing into decisions about for-profit schools even if an advisor tells them that classes are filling up quickly. Take time to help youth compare all of their options. Because of widespread news stories about predatory practices of some online educational programs, the U.S. Congress has held hearings on this issue, reinforcing the importance of checking out the credentials of faculty, success rates of graduates, and other criteria of legitimacy. One useful resource is a U.S. News and World Reports web site, which maintains a ranking system for the best online degree-bearing programs: http://www.usnews.com/education/online-education/bachelors/rankings.

Visits to colleges and job training programs are best done one person at a time. In other words, rather than

taking a group of young people to visit a vocational school, work individually with students and help them plan visits that are specific to their interests. Doing so will allow them to ask more questions and share personal information about their academic aptitudes with advisors.

When family members would like to help support the young person in her education, meet with them and the young person to discuss the different ways you are available to help. Different families want to have different levels of involvement and some may help the student select a school without assistance from the IPS program.

Steps to Begin Secondary Education

Help students understand the process of starting postsecondary education. The steps vary depending upon the school, for example, not all schools require orientation or placement tests, but the general order of activities to complete before starting class at a public college include the following:

1. Informational visits and college tours
2. Apply to the school
3. Apply for financial aid
4. Meet with a benefits planner (for students who receive Social Security Income)
5. Send transcript(s)
6. Complete placement tests
7. Register for classes and pay
8. Buy books and school supplies

Informational visits and college tours

At most colleges, the admissions office assigns staff to provide applications, catalogues, and information about their institution. Staff (often currently-enrolled students) conduct campus tours. Campus tours are one way to find out about an educational setting. These campus visits sometimes include attending classes, visiting the library, eating in cafeterias, and hanging out in the student commons. Visiting the campus in the middle of a semester can give a sense of college life.

School applications

Most schools have an online application process. Many community colleges do not require a fee to apply, but four-year college applications typically involve an application fee. The applicant must have an email address and should be prepared to select the school term she is planning to attend. Check the school's website for the deadlines to apply for different start dates.

Financial aid

Only complete applications on the free government website: FAFSA.gov.

In the U.S., colleges require applicants seeking financial support to complete a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) application if they seek financial support. The FAFSA application covers federal grants (including Pell grants), loans, and eligibility for work study. Additionally, people who complete the FAFSA automatically apply for other sources of aid including state aid, financial aid from the college, state funds set aside for children who were adopted, and scholarships. Students do not have to accept all the aid for which they qualify. For example, a student can choose not to accept loans or may accept a lower loan amount than offered. The FAFSA must be completed each year.

Helpful information about student loans is available at https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/loans. While in school, students must maintain satisfactory performance, as defined by the college, in order to continuing

receiving federal aid. Therefore, students who struggle in a class should keep track of the date that they can drop the course without receiving a poor grade if they are receiving financial aid.

Prepare to complete the FAFSA by gathering required information including a Social Security number or alien registration number. Financial information required includes tax returns as well as information about bank accounts and investments. If a student is financially dependent (as defined by FAFSA), his parent's financial information is required or else the student will only be eligible for unsubsidized loans. Read the rules for who qualifies as a "family of one" carefully. While completing the application use the "Helps and Hints" boxes to make good choices and to be sure that the correct information is entered.

After the FAFSA is completed, the student will receive a Student Aid Report (SAR) by email. The SAR will identify aid for which the student is eligible, and what she must pay herself. The college(s) the student identifies on the application will automatically receive information about the student's financial situation and will assemble an award package that includes federal aid and other sources of aid for which the student is eligible. All awarded financial aid comes to the student through the college financial aid office. After the student receives the SAR, she should direct her questions to the financial aid office.

Some community colleges also offer tuition waivers to individuals who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) through the Social Security Administration. Often, information about these waivers is listed in the college catalog as a benefit for senior citizens. However, these waivers apply to students of any age receiving SSI. Community colleges offering waivers require students to complete a form available from the bursar's office and have their status verified at a local Social Security office.

To learn about local scholarships and grants (state or community college grants), go online. Search for your state name and "financial aid." Examples are http://www.mhec.state.md.us/financialaid/descriptions.asp and www.ohiohighered.org.

Federal financial aid does not always include money for computers, books, and tools. Other uncovered costs can include background checks and immunizations for healthcare workers who will interact with people during their education. When students have open cases with state Vocational Rehabilitation, counselors may be able to help with some school costs that were not covered by financial aid. Another way to find computers is to ask local companies for donated computers when the companies upgrade to new computers for their employees. Some students manage by using a campus computer lab.

Benefits counseling

Students who receive Social Security Income (SSI) should meet with a benefits planner. Working students may be eligible to write a Plan for Self Sufficiency (PASS) to help them pay for school. Another possible benefit for students is Student Earned Income Exclusion.

Many people are worried about losing their disability benefits if they receive financial aid. But that is not the case—financial aid is not considered a form of income.

Required documentation for colleges

Colleges require official transcripts from high school or other colleges the student has attended. Check with the office of admissions to learn how transcripts should be submitted. Other required documentation may include immunization records or Social Security cards.

Placement tests

Most community colleges require students to take placement tests to determine the level of classes they will take. In most cases, financial aid does not cover the cost of remedial courses so it is advantageous for students to do well on the tests. Some colleges offer help preparing for the tests. Many college libraries have materials to help people study for placement tests and the college website may have information about how to prepare for

the tests.

Class registration

Many students benefit from assistance registering for classes, including considering how many courses to take at once. Some youth want to take a full load of classes, but people who have had difficulty with school in the past may do better if they begin with a part-time schedule. Explain that many people are surprised to learn how many hours of study are required for each course. Help students consider a balanced load of courses. For example, a student might take one math course that he expects will be challenging and a second course that he hopes will be easier. During the first semester or quarter, a person could take one or two classes that he thinks he will enjoy as a way to become acclimated to college. Ask academic advisors for tips on how to begin school successfully. Explain to new college students that college classes do not necessarily meet each day and some may be available in the evening. Discuss how to select courses that allow people to work while going to school.

Help students keep track of deadlines for dropping courses so that they can adjust their course loads, if needed, without lowering their grade point averages. Furthermore, students may withdraw from courses without losing their course costs if they withdraw by the stated deadline.

Also, help students learn, if needed, whether they can drop a course without a bad grade if that was related to a disability. If a person does need to drop a course, explain that is not necessarily an indication that they will not be a good student in the future, but it may be the case that they needed time to gradually adjust to school. And some people succeed by taking the same course a second time with a different instructor.

Prepare for Starting School

Help students prepare for their first classes by becoming familiar with the campus and planning their school days. Different students will need different types of assistance. **Below is a checklist of activities that you can offer to students.**

- ☐ Help the student register for classes. Go over the student's college Internet portal with him.
- ☐ Go with the student to orientation.
- ☐ Walk around campus together. Find the student's classrooms. Consider options for where to spend time between classes. Learn where the student can eat lunch. Locate the library.
- ☐ Plan what the student will need to take to school each day. A computer? Notebook? Textbooks? Lunch? A special calculator or other supplies specific to the student's courses?
- ☐ Go to the bookstore together to purchase books. (The bookstore can be extremely busy and chaotic the week before classes.)
- ☐ Learn how to take the bus/train to campus or investigate the best place to park a car.
- ☐ Obtain school identification.

Most students do not want IPS specialists to attend classes with them because they do not need that support and because they are concerned about stigma. But in a few situations, IPS specialists have reported that people who had trouble being in large groups appreciated having them along during their first classes. If the class size is small, the student and/or IPS specialist should ask the instructor in advance if it is okay for the specialist to attend a class or two.

Supports for the First Week of Classes

Talk to students after their first day of classes. Did she get to each class on time? How did it feel to be in class? Does she have any concerns? Also, ask if she received a course syllabus and make plans to get together, review all course schedules, and make a study plan. Enter dates for assignments and tests into a calendar (see below). Make plans for how students will study for each class (see "Create individualized study plans, pp. 56).

Develop a System to Track Deadlines

Help each student purchase a planner or help students set up calendars on their phones, tablets or laptops. Add dates from course syllabuses including test dates and due dates for projects. Then add time to study and work on projects. Include the person's work schedule (if any) and regular appointments. Review the person's planner with her occasionally to prevent her from falling behind in class.

> *"We go over the person's course schedule at the beginning of the class and talk about how long it takes to get to each class and what they can do between classes. If the person takes the bus to school I suggest planning to leave a half hour early to get to school on time. Some people prefer a very visual calendar and it helps them to color code activities. We make sure to include all their appointments, their classes, their work schedule, or whatever else they have to do."*
>
> Marcus Poster, IPS supervisor

Explain How to Request Accommodations

Disabled student services are available at all secondary educational institutions in the U.S., although the name of the office varies by institution. Eligible students can request accommodations to help them succeed in school. Rules vary about whether students must register with the office prior to the semester, or if they can register when they determine that they need help during the semester. You may suggest enrolling with the office just in case services are needed. Enrolling early, well before the student encounters any difficulties, can help the student build a relationship with his assigned disabled student services counselor. Also, it may take time to find and submit documentation of a disability so the student can be made eligible for disabled student services. If a student is concerned about confidentiality, explain that the office will not contact his instructor unless he asks for an accommodation.

To be eligible, students must have documentation of a disability that substantially limits a major life activity. Documentation can include a psychiatric evaluation, reports from other doctors, information about accommodations from high school, a copy of the person's transition plan from high school, and a high school transcript. Visit the office for students with disabilities at colleges near you to ask about eligibility and what documentation is preferred. After eligibility is determined, someone in the office will set up a meeting for the student and a counselor—the person who will help the student with accommodations while he is at that school. The IPS specialist should ask to attend that meeting with the student.

Each accommodation is evaluated and granted individually. Accommodations requested should relate to a functional impairment, for example, a person who has trouble concentrating might ask for help taking notes during class. Whether an accommodation is provided may depend on what resources the school has available, for example whether there is staff available to proctor exams in a quieter room.

If a request for an accommodation is approved, the student will receive a letter to share with his instructor. The letter will not include information about the person's diagnosis or specific disability. Students should then take the letter to the instructor(s). Explain to students that it is best to visit with the instructor during his office hours or to set up a meeting with the instructor rather than handing him the letter after class when there are other students nearby and the instructor is distracted. The instructor should not ask about the person's diagnosis or specific disability, and if the student becomes uncomfortable answering questions, she can refer

the instructor to her disability support services counselor. Practice what the student will say when she visits her instructor, or offer to go with her to the meeting. If a student does want to share what her disability is, help her prepare to discuss the accommodations she needs in brief, positive, everyday language and to focus on what has helped her learn in the past.

Instructors sometimes forget that the student has been approved for an accommodation. For example, a teacher may forget that the student should have a quiet room for test taking. When a student is reluctant to remind his instructor, IPS specialists help the student prepare what he will say, or go with him to speak with the instructor.

Examples of Possible Accomodations

- Extra time to take tests
- A human reader for tests
- Use of a calculator during a test
- Use of a computer to write test essays
- A quiet room for test taking
- Permission to take long exams over more than one day (to take the test in sections)
- Extra breaks during tests or classes
- Permission to record lectures
- Copies of projected material
- Text books in different formats, such as recorded books
- Note takers for classes
- Use of a computer to take notes during class
- Tutoring
- Preferential seating, such as sitting at the front of the room to minimize distractions
- Auxiliary aids such as text readers or text to voice software
- Priority enrollment so students can get the classes they need
- Use of a smart pen. (Smart pens use a special pad of paper for note taking. The student can take very brief notes and later touch his pen to the notes to hear a recording of that part of the lecture. For example, if an instructor explains photosynthesis, the student can draw a leaf and later touch his pen to the drawing to hear that part of the lecture.)

Students and IPS specialists can also suggest accommodations that the office has not offered in the past. For example, a student with an anxiety disorder may request that the professor does not call on him during class. Previewing a lecture may help students with cognitive issues. Allowing the use of headphones during lab may help a student who hears voices.

> *"I am working with someone who thought he might be interested in welding so we went to the technical college and talked to a career coach in the admissions department. He gave us a tour of the welding lab and answered our questions about the program. His state Vocational Rehabilitation counselor has known him for a long time and she was also helpful in thinking about what would be a good occupational match for him.*
>
> *The welding program only has two academic classes and the rest of the program involves hands-on learning. That's helpful because he is struggling with the general education classes he is taking this*

> *summer. We asked for accommodations through the disability center. He didn't have a transition plan from high school but was able to use records from our agency to prove that he had a disability. They set him up with quite a few accommodations: he has a disc to listen to his textbook, can take small breaks during class if he feels anxious, he is allowed extra time for taking tests, he has a tutor, and he can ask to check out a smart pen. We got that all set up ahead of time including sending in a request to the publishing company to ask for the e-Text (recording of the textbook). This afternoon I am going to go meet with my client and his instructor because his mother died recently so we are going to explain why he fell behind and to ask for help catching up."*

Sallie Daigle, IPS specialist

Strive to develop relationships with the counselors at the offices for students with disabilities. Visit them to learn about the services they offer and tell them about your program. Stay in touch with counselors (with student permission) while students are in school.

> *"I stay in touch with the counselor at disability services office. I talk to Tim (the counselor) when I am concerned about how someone is doing. One person dropped a class late because he did not like his instructor and was also busy with his job. He did that before we could talk about it, but then he was anxious about the repercussions to his financial aid. I called Tim because I knew that he had dealt with similar issues in the past and he helped this student straighten things out with his financial aid. I also sit in on initial appointment between students and the counselor. I want the counselor to know up front that I am helping with education."*

Jurcel Eroba, IPS specialist

> *"I know a few counselors at the disability services office. It absolutely helps to know them in advance. It moves things right along. Every counselor works a little differently with students. For example, one counselor likes to meet with students at the end of every semester and others meet them as needed. When I started this job, I would just go to the office, pick a counselor, and talk about my role. If I had it to do over, I might ask for an orientation to their services. But what is most important is to go there in person and get to know the counselors."*

Kara Spencer, IPS specialist

Plan for Communicating with Instructors

It is advantageous for students to make contact with instructors early in the semester or quarter. They can introduce themselves and explain that they are interested in learning about the subject. Letting the instructor know that they are doing their best can make a big difference later if the student has difficulties. And at this early point, the student does not need to disclose a disability if he is not asking for an accommodation.

Help students plan for how to communicate with their instructors if they miss a class or assignment. Practice what the student will say. Encourage him to explain what happened and to ask for extra time to complete an assignment or extra work to make up for missed classes.

In some situations, students may ask for your help communicating with instructors. For example, when a student had an increase in symptoms but did not want to take a break from school, his IPS specialist (with his permission) called his instructor to explain her role in his life and that he would need to miss a few classes. Another example was a person who was hospitalized for mental health problems and was too overwhelmed to contact her instructor. His IPS specialist explained the situation to the instructor (with the student's permission) and when the student felt better they worked together to complete the school requirements for requesting a course grade of Incomplete so the student would not fail the course.

Create Individualized Study Plans

Many people are surprised at how rigorous and fast paced college can be. Talk to them about their course loads and how much time they will need to study. Review good study habits and the best time of day for each student to concentrate. School libraries often have material about good study skills and sometimes have sessions on improving study habits. Encourage students to access these resources. Then review good study habits with students and help them create their own plan for studying.

Examples of Good Study Habits

- Plan when to study each day.
- Spread out studying rather than trying to learn everything at once (cramming). Study materials and return to them every few days or weeks.
- Use practice tests. Answer questions at the end of a chapter. Use flashcards to test yourself.
- As you study, ask yourself, "Why?" "Why does that make sense?" "Why is this true?" "Why did this historical figure do that?" Passively reading and highlighting text is less effective.
- Have a specific goal for the study session. Examples, "I will read one chapter." "I will learn ten vocabulary words."
- Begin with the most difficult subject or task.
- Minimize distractions. Turn off the television and music. Silence your phone. Find a quiet place to study.
- Review class notes between classes so you can incorporate what was covered and be prepared to learn new concepts. This is especially true for sequential subjects such as math in which one concept builds on the next.

> *"A support I provide often is helping people develop good study skills. An example is of one student who had problems with concentration. Reading a chapter of a textbook was daunting to her. We came up with a plan for her to read for 15 minutes while taking notes on what she read. Next, she would take a 30-minute break and then review her notes before she resumed reading."*
>
> Marian Cooper, IPS specialist

> *"I help students draw up a weekly schedule. We block out their class schedules, work schedules, and personal obligations. Then we add in time for study. I suggest that people add two hours of study time for every class hour—if someone needs less, he can gradually decrease his study time as he sees that he continues to get good grades."*
>
> Jucel Erroba, IPS specialist

Offer to meet with family members or close friends to discuss how the person will study for school. Ask family members what they know about how the person learns best. Some students may ask a member of the family to help them study. Explain when the person will study and that she will need some quiet, uninterrupted time for studying.

Help Students Make Social Connections on Campus

Many young people are social and will enjoy school more if they have friends on campus. Help students investigate available social groups by looking for bulletin boards and flyers in the student union or on the college website (may be listed under "campus life"). The mental health treatment team or housing team can support social goals by working with students to develop good social skills and helping students plan for social events.

Support Students Living on Campus

It is fairly unusual (and impractical) to provide intensive IPS services for a student who lives on campus. We suggest identifying supports that are available at the college for the student to use. The IPS specialist can also offer to stay in touch and offer behind-the-scenes support, especially if the specialist and student have established strong rapport.

Develop Written Education Plans

Education plans provide an opportunity for the IPS specialist and student to consider the student's strengths, past school experiences, and what supports he may need. Planning together also makes it clear to students what supports the IPS specialist will provide and how often. Education plans should include the person's goal in his own words, the steps that will help the person reach his goal, who is responsible for different activities, how often activities will occur, and target dates.

SAMPLE EDUCATION PLAN

Person's goal: "I'm interested in something in the medical field, but I don't want to spend more than a year in school. I am thinking about becoming a dental hygienist but am not sure if there are other options I would like."

Julio will decide upon a program that matches his interests and will apply to a school	Julio and IPS specialist will meet with Vocational Rehabilitation counselor to learn about jobs in the medical field that require no more than a year of training.	Julio Lisa Sabin John Edwards	1-2 times	January 2025
	Julio and IPS specialist will visit the community college to meet with an academic advisor to learn about the short-term medical degrees/ certifications offered.	Julio Lisa Sabin	Once	February 2025
	Julio and IPS specialist will meet with at least two people working in in different jobs that interest Julio.	Julio Lisa Sabin	At least twice	March 2025
	Julio will apply to the Lakeland Community College.	Julio Lisa Sabin	Once	April 2025
	Julio and IPS specialist will complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.	Julio Lisa Sabin	1-2 times	April 2025
	Julio will take placement tests at the community college. IPS specialist will help Julio investigate workshops to prepare for tests and how to register for the tests.	Julio Lisa Sabin	Once	June 2025

IPS specialist signature _____ Date _____ Student Signature _____ Date _____

Be Flexible About School Plans

Supported education is not always linear. Some people find that they need part-time course loads or breaks from school. They may change their minds about their majors or certificates. IPS specialists must be flexible and encouraging as plans change. Help students decide when to drop classes in order to maintain good grade point averages. Whenever possible, encourage students to continue taking at least one class because people who drop out of school completely are less likely to complete their degrees and certificates. When students want to take a break from school, help them investigate the financial implications of dropping out.

Involve Other Team Members in Supporting Education Goals

Mental health treatment teams help students manage stress. They work with students to identify triggers for stress and good coping techniques. They also help students with medication adjustments to reduce symptoms or medication side effects, as needed.

Mental health treatment teams and housing teams help students strategize to feel comfortable on campus. For some students that includes making friends and joining social groups. For others that means managing social interactions while working on group projects or feeling comfortable in crowded classrooms. IPS specialists meet weekly with mental health and housing teams to coordinate their efforts and to share what each is doing to help the student. They brainstorm together ways for students to achieve their goals and share their ideas with the students.

State Vocational Rehabilitation counselors may keep open cases for people while they are in education to share what they know about accommodations for students with different disabilities, as well as information about different careers. In some cases, they may be able to help purchase books and other school supplies. IPS specialists meet monthly with Vocational Rehabilitation counselors to talk about ways to support students.

Some students may be able to identify a family member or friend who can be an education coach—someone to help remind them to study, help them find a quiet place to study, or provide other supports. Meet with this person together with the student to review the students plan for school, the strategies she will use to study, etc.

Meet Regularly

Meet with students on a regular basis (weekly or every other week) to discuss how they are doing with schoolwork and social situations. Remember that many students are especially nervous about school during the first semester and offer to meet frequently with those students. Suggest meeting places and times that are convenient for students such as meeting between classes at a college center, or visiting with someone at his home. During meetings, review the student's study plan and whether he has made adjustments to the plan. Ask about test results and grades on papers. Remind students of dates for tests, assignments, registering with the office for students with disabilities, renewing FAFSA, and other important dates. Ask about any concerns the student has and celebrate successes together.

If a student stops attending appointments, reach out by calling, texting, emailing, contacting family members (with permission), and talking with members of the mental health treatment or housing team. Be proactive in getting in touch with students because some people may not contact you for help until a problem has become unmanageable.

Conclusion

IPS specialists provide individualized supports for secondary and post-secondary education. They collaborate with teachers and counselors at office for students with disabilities to help with accommodations. IPS specialists help people think about long-term employment goals by exploring different careers and jobs related to each person's interests.

Chapter 7: Job Finding

This chapter focuses on helping people become employed. The way that IPS specialists help people find work varies by person. **Topics in this chapter include:**

- ⇨ Disclosure of personal information
- ⇨ Job search plans
- ⇨ Tools for the job search
- ⇨ Job interviews
- ⇨ Follow up for applications and interviews
- ⇨ Relationships with employers
- ⇨ Jobseekers with legal histories

Disclosure of Personal Information

Each jobseeker needs to decide whether he wants the IPS specialist to advocate on his behalf with employers. Many young people do not want to disclose that they work with an IPS program or have a disability. Others do not disclose that they receive employment help until they have problems with a job or lose jobs.

Because decisions about disclosure are central to job-seeking strategies, IPS specialists initiate discussions with IPS participants about the information they will give to employers. They ask jobseekers what the possible advantages and disadvantages are to disclosing personal information and they typically write those down while the person talks, asking the person to review the lists and add more information. IPS specialists also share examples of what they may say to employers to help him decide if he wants to disclose working with a specialist.

IPS specialists initiate discussions about disclosure repeatedly during the job-seeking process, because the plan may evolve with new information or with circumstances regarding specific employers. Jobseekers may become more comfortable with disclosing some information as they become more familiar with working and as the relationship with the IPS specialist grows.

> *I could say something like, 'I help young people who want to work. My role is to learn about jobseeker's interests and what type of jobs they would enjoy. I also provide supports to workers and their employers to make sure that the job is successful.*

> *I tell employers that I work with young people who had some mental health problems, but who have gotten treatment and are ready to work. I would also describe your strengths as a worker. For example, I would say that you are eager to work, reliable and very friendly.*

For help talking about disclosure with jobseekers, use a worksheet with talking points. For a sample worksheet, see "Plan for Sharing Personal Information" in the appendix of this manual.

Some IPS specialists do not disclose the name of the center where they are employed because that would reveal information about jobseekers. For example, an IPS specialist said that everyone in her town knew about her agency and employers could make assumptions about the people she introduced to them (i.e., that they had a mental illness). She offered jobseekers "a level of disclosure" in which she would share that she worked for Opportunities Unlimited Employment Program, but not the name of her mental health agency where the IPS

program was located. But IPS specialists cannot guarantee that employers will not learn where they work. If a jobseeker does not want an employer to know he receives mental health treatment, for example, offer to help him find jobs without you speaking to employers. Do not attempt to hide where you work from employers or you will lose credibility if they later find out that you were not truthful. On the other hand, you do not need to share detailed information about a jobseeker's past problems. If an employer wants to know more information that you have permission to share, offer to introduce the jobseeker so the employer can ask questions directly to the jobseeker. Most employers who agree to meet the person do not follow through with asking personal questions, but help the jobseeker prepare just in case.

When a jobseeker does not want to disclose that he works with an IPS specialist, suggest that you can visit with managers just to learn about their businesses and hiring preferences (see Building relationships with employers later in this chapter). Tell him that you will not share any information about him with the employer, but that you will tell him about job openings and you will share information about what the employer looks for in job candidates. If the jobseeker agrees, you may encounter a manager who is eager to meet a jobseeker. Go back to the person to propose that if the jobseeker wants to use disclosure for just that business, you will introduce him to the manager.

> *"Many of the young people I work with did not want to use disclosure initially, but now that I am meeting with employers every week I tell people about the connections I am building and what I am learning from employers. One person recently said, 'Well that's great. Maybe that can help me get a job.' I think young people are encouraged by understanding exactly how my relationships with employers can help them find work."*
>
> Kelly Ryan, IPS specialist

Job Search Plans

Use information from the Career Profile to think about positions and businesses that may be a good match for the person. Even though young people may still be exploring their likes and dislikes, think about each person's personality, schedule, interests, whether he likes to socialize with others, symptoms (if the person has a mental illness), his options for getting to a job, etc. Remember that people keep jobs longer when the positions meet their preferences. If someone says that they will "take anything," try to learn more about what may be a good job match. Ask which jobs she would not want to do. Offer to go with her to different work sites to observe people working in jobs or to have informational interviews to learn about jobs (see Exploring career options pp. 39-41). Talk to her mental health team, housing team, or with permission, family members for job ideas.

Prepare to be flexible with young people who are not sure what they want to do. They may need opportunities to try new experiences.

> *"One person I work with has had different goals for employment. Some days he says that he definitely doesn't want an entry-level job, but then he will ask to apply for jobs at grocery stores because he wants an income. We helped him apply for college but he changed his mind about that after a week of classes. He is a really political person and is interested in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual (LGBT) community so we helped him get a canvassing position (going house to house to talk about rights for the LGBT community) but he quit that after a few days because he had to go out on his own and didn't have enough opportunities to socialize. My next step is to talk to him more about his long-term goals. Some people need to try different experiences so they can learn what they like. "*
>
> Brady Mossaro, IPS specialist

Collaborate with the job seeker to write a job search plan. Include the person's job preferences and what each of you will do. Also, create a list of the businesses you will approach either on the plan or on another document.

SAMPLE JOB SEARCH PLAN

Date: January 7, 2XXX Jobseeker's Name: Edward

Job Preferences
(e.g., type of work, hours, location, work environment, work shift, duties, wages, or other factors.)

1. Afternoon/evening shifts so can attend high school in the mornings.
2. Would like a cooking job because he may like to become a chef.
3. Would also like to try a job in which he could help people who are homeless, have legal problems, other issues, but does not want to work with kids.
4. Must be on bus or train route, but does not matter which side of town.

What Tools are Needed?

☒ Resume	☒ Mock/draft Application	☒ Cover Letter
☐ Email Account	☐ Interview Outfit	☒ Edit social media accounts
☐ New phone message	☒ References	

Will the IPS specialist gather information about jobs on the jobseeker's behalf and advocate with employers (disclosure)? ☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes, was a release of information signed? ☒ Yes ☐ No
If yes, how many businesses will the IPS specialist visit each month? 3-4

Will the IPS specialist and jobseeker apply for jobs together? ☒ Yes ☐ No
If yes, how often will they meet to do this each month: 3-4 each month. They will apply for jobs at the businesses where Martha meets with managers (see below).

Will the jobseeker work on finding jobs outside of the appointments with the IPS specialist? ☒ Yes ☐ No
If so, what: Edward will either complete an online job application or turn an application into a business manager each week.

Other steps to find employment: Informational interview at the homeless shelter and city mission to learn if they ever hire people who do not have college degrees. (Edward will have his high school degree in a few months.)

Businesses the employment specialist and/or jobseeker will approach first:

1. City Mission –Martha (IPS specialist) to set up informational interview
2. Homeless shelter—Martha to set up informational interview
3. Betty's Big Boy—Martha to meet with employer
4. Al's Diner—Edward to complete application and give directly to the manager
5. Pies and More—Martha to meet with employer
6. Italian Eats—Martha to meet with employer
7. Ruby's—Edward to complete application and give directly to the manager
8. Seven Seas—Martha to meet with the employer

This plan will be updated in ☐ three months ☒ six months

Martha Leeds	Jan 7	Edward	Jan 7
IPS specialist signature	Date	Job Seeker	Date

In this sample job search plan, the jobseeker and IPS specialist have both agreed to complete some job search activities independently of each other. But even if Edward does not submit applications on his own, Martha will continue to follow through on what she agreed to do. That is because some jobseekers do not feel confident that an employer will offer them a job so they feel nervous about job searching and wonder if it is really worth their time. Other young people have competing priorities and vacillate in how much they want to work from day to day. But many jobseekers are re-energized when an IPS specialist says that she spoke with an employer who would like to meet a candidate. What is most important is that the job search keeps moving forward.

Prepare for Each Appointment with Jobseekers

Young people have reported that it is frustrating when IPS specialists start appointments by asking where they want to apply for work that day. What jobseekers appreciate is if the specialist has suggestions for businesses related to their interests, or if the specialist has visited an employer or two and can report on that. To stay hopeful about the job search, jobseekers need to feel that every appointment is constructive, and that they are moving closer to gaining employment. IPS specialists who plan for appointments are more likely to have credibility with the people they serve.

> *"When I schedule appointments, I try to be very specific about what we will do when we get together so they know it isn't just another meeting to talk. For example, I'll say, 'Are you able to meet tomorrow at 4:00 so that we can apply at (name of business)?' I want them to feel that when we meet, they will really get something out of it—that we are taking steps towards their goals."*
>
> Marian Cooper, IPS specialist

Tools for the Job Search

Social Media and Methods to Contact the Jobseeker

Social networking or social media (e.g., Facebook and Twitter) can pose challenges for jobseekers. Even though social media users use their accounts to make friends, inform friends and family about their activities, employers may also review these Internet postings to gain background information on prospective employees. Information that may be appropriate for friends may not be helpful to share when seeking employment.

Help jobseekers review and edit Facebook pages, Instagram accounts, etc. as needed. Explain that they only need to edit public information about themselves until they find employment. Also, talk to jobseekers about how employers may perceive their voicemail messages and suggest that they create messages that include their first and last names without background music. Help jobseekers understand that even if they do not usually

answer calls because they prefer to text, employers will expect to be able to reach them by calling. They will need to answer their phones and check their voicemail messages or they will risk missing job interviews.

Resume Writing Tips

- Resumes should be brief so that employers can scan them easily. Young people are not expected to have impressive work histories so resist the urge to embellish their experiences in order to fill the page. Instead, help them describe what they did in a clear and concise manner.
- If the jobseeker is unsure about dates of employment, ask family members what they remember or access the person's work record through Social Security Administration. But do not delay the job search. Complete the resume as accurately as possible and edit it later.
- Do not include jobs that lasted less than one month, but do include volunteer jobs, work experiences through school employment programs, casual labor such as babysitting, yard work for neighbors, and other relevant experience.
- Target the resume for different positions. Change the employment objective to fit the position.
- Proofread the resume more than once and ask a colleague or supervisor to give you feedback.
- If the jobseeker is still in school, include information about when he will graduate.

SAMPLE RESUME FOR AN INEXPERIENCED JOB SEEKER

Quincy Andrews
1234 Oak Street, #3
Sheboygan, Hawaii, 55555
(216) 555-3948
quincyandrews37@domain.com

Objective:
To use my experience as a pet sitter and pet owner in a part-time position working with animals.

Education:
Obama High School in Sheboygan, Hawaii
Diploma expected June 2025

Experience:
Pet Sitter, 2024 to present

- Pet sitting while owners are out of town.
- Check that the pets are healthy. Feed animals. Walk dogs. Clean litter boxes. Spend time with the animals.
- Have worked for two different families.

Interests/Activities:
Obama High School Tennis Team
Fishing
Going to the movies with my friends

References:

John Doe	Teacher at Obama High School	(216) 555-3399
Harry Wilkins	Pet owner/neighbor	(216) 555-4134
Janice Cooper	Employment specialist	(216) 555-1517

Cover Letters

Employers also skim over cover letters, so keep them brief. Include the reasons that the person wants that particular type of work. Highlight the jobseeker's strengths and/or work-related experiences and proofread carefully

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

Nilda Quiñones
4045 Hoover Street, B-1
Pittsburgh, OH 55555
Cell Phone: (555) 123-4567
myemail@domain.com

RE: Teacher's Assistant (Job ID: 44301)

June 12, 2025

Mary Fuller
Garden Cay Care Center
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Ms. Fuller:

I am responding to your advertisement for a teacher's assistant. I am very eager to speak with you about my classroom experience and passion for working with children.

Prior to completing my Child Development-Short-term Certificate at Able Community College, I was employed as a classroom helper for five years. I assisted teachers in creating a variety of responsive teaching strategies to fifteen children ages three to five years old. I was known as an energetic team member who was skilled in communicating with parents. Last year I returned to school to further my understanding of childhood development and teaching strategies. I now look forward to advancing my career as a teaching assistant.

Please accept my electronic job application, as well as my attached resume, for this position. I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss how I can help teachers at Garden Day Care Center create an inviting learning environment.

Sincerely,

Nilda Quiñones

Nilda Quiñones

Job Applications

Help each jobseeker complete a sample application that she can use as a template when applying for jobs. Double check that the work and education histories on each document match as employers sometimes compare documents to check for honesty. Look up phone numbers and addresses and ask jobseekers if they have notified their references that they are looking for work. Also, save a copy (both a hard copy and an electronic copy) of the completed application in case the person needs more copies in the future.

Some job applications include a section on schedule availability. It is advantageous for applicants to indicate that they are available for any work shifts, but that may not be realistic for every person. Talk with jobseekers about activities that are important to them. For example, if someone is invested in a social group or school activity, write that down. If someone does not wake up until the afternoon, the jobseeker or IPS specialist should discuss that with the employer, "He is at his best in the evening or middle of the night. In fact, one of the reasons that he wants to work here is that we thought you might have those work shifts."

Encourage the jobseeker to apply for a specific position rather than writing, "Will do anything." Employers want to hire people who are excited about their jobs, not those who only care about earning a paycheck. An exception to this rule is that if you know that all employees at a company start out in the same position.

Every blank on the application should be filled in. If there is a section that does not apply to the jobseeker, for example, military experience, he should write "N/A."

The personality tests in online applications can be confusing and difficult to pass. Explain to jobseekers that the tests focus on honesty and the ability to get along with co-workers and supervisors. Share that some applications are considered invalid if the applicant frequently chooses the neutral or middle responses, for example, almost always choosing "sometimes" rather than "frequently or "never." Offer to assist people as they complete the tests and make suggestions about how good candidates would respond to questions. Help the person to keep moving through the application as some are timed and will be discarded if the applicant takes too long to finish.

Job Interviews

Help jobseekers prepare for interviews by asking about their strengths as workers. Then inquire about examples that illustrate those strengths and help jobseekers prepare what they will say to employers, "I am reliable. I didn't miss one day of work during my summer job." "I'm a good team member. My last boss used to say that I was always willing to help out." Write down the person's strengths and examples so he can review those just before an interview. Some people even take notes into job interviews and glance over them before they leave, "I forgot to mention that I am accurate. My cash drawer was always balanced at the end of the day."

Another typical interview question is, "What are your weaknesses as a worker?" Help people identify areas that could be problems on a job and also how they have managed those in the past. For example, "I can feel overwhelmed when I am very busy. I've learned that it helps me to focus on what I need to do next." "At my first job I discovered that I don't enjoy working alone—I need a job in which my outgoing personality is valued."

Remind jobseekers that employers tend to select candidates who are positive. Coach jobseekers to smile as they introduce themselves to employers. They should also describe why that particular company or job is appealing. An owner of a bread bakery told us that she wants to hire people "who have a passion for bread." A manager told us that he takes all applicants on a tour of the business and if they do not appear interested by asking a question or complimenting what they see, he does not continue with the interview.

If someone is very nervous during interviews, suggest that he say so early on. "It's hard to be myself right

now because I am nervous. I would really love to work here." Managers understand that many people are uncomfortable during interviews. And once the interviewee admits to feeling nervous he may feel better.

Practice typical interview questions with people a few times and just before interviews. But accept that most people cannot drastically alter how they interact in interviews. If someone is quiet and shy, he will be quiet in interviews. Refrain from setting up multiple mock interviews with other people or video recording the person being interviewed. It is a poor use of the jobseeker's time and may be frustrating to him. Instead, if you believe that someone is a terrible interviewer, ask to discuss disclosure again. Then, prepare employers, in everyday language, for how the person will interview. "When she is nervous, she sometimes talks about irrelevant topics or walks around the room. But she is a very diligent worker—she really cares about doing the job well. And she does not miss work." Also, offer to accompany the person to the interview. Many employers will allow IPS specialists to participate and you can use that opportunity to talk about the person's strengths. If the jobseeker with poor interview skills does not want to disclose that he is working with you, ask if you can visit the types of workplaces that interest him to learn about the employer's hiring preferences. When you meet an employer who is interested in being introduced to a candidate, ask the jobseeker if he would consider disclosing with just that employer. If the jobseeker does not want to do that, continue helping from behind the scenes, but occasionally ask if the jobseeker would like to try re-visit different ways that you can advocate with employers. And remember that not every person who is hired is a skilled interviewer.

Follow up on applications and interviews

Employers receive many job applications for a single position. One way for jobseekers to stand out is to follow up on applications and interviews. In fact, people who have imperfect work histories or legal problems may not be called for interviews unless they follow up on applications in person.

A few days after submitting a job application, the jobseeker can return in person and ask to speak to a manager. If she is nervous about doing this, offer to go with her. She should bring her resume and prepare an introduction.

> Hi. My name is Cha'relle and I wanted to let you know that I submitted an application for a customer service position. I love fashion and I'm a very outgoing person.

> Hi. I'm Tom. I completed an online application a few days ago for a shipping and receiving position. I like to be active and I am a very reliable worker.

If you go with someone to help her follow up on a job application, introduce yourself as an employment specialist since employers will not be familiar with the term IPS. With the jobseeker's permission, follow up with that employer a day or two later.

> Dennis, I'm Victor and I met you Tuesday when I came in with Emery. I stopped by today because I thought that you might be curious about my role in Emery's life. I am a career counselor and I help young people who are starting their working lives. Typically, I take time to learn about businesses and each employer's hiring preferences before introducing a job candidate. In fact, I hoped we could set up a 20-minute appointment so that I can learn about your business and the types of jobseekers you would like to meet.

When people apply for professional positions they do not usually stop by the business and ask to speak with someone. Instead, help jobseekers think of people they know who can introduce them to someone in their field of interest. Consider your own contacts. For example, if someone wants to be a Human Resources Assistant, ask people in your Human Resources Department who they know at other companies and whether they can help with introductions. Also, ask people on the mental health treatment team or housing team if they have friends or family members who work in Human Resources.

To follow up on job interviews, candidates should send a short thank-you note or email. But it is also advantageous to call the interviewer who may make a hiring decision on the spot.

> Grace, thank you for taking time to interview me on Monday. I've had time to consider our conversation and I am more interested in the job than ever. I loved working with seniors in my last position and would really appreciate a chance to do something similar again. I was impressed by your facility and by the people I met.

Develop Relationships with Business Owners and Managers

IPS specialists use multiple visits to learn about each employer's workplace, her business needs, and hiring preferences. This demonstrates to employers that the specialist is interested in introducing the right candidates because he takes time to learn about what is most important to the employer. His goal is to be a resource for the employer to find good workers.

IPS specialists start these relationships using a four-step process:

1. Visit the business to schedule an appointment (with an owner or hiring manager) to come back and learn more about the business.
2. Use the appointment to gather information about different positions at the business and the manager's preferences for hiring.
3. Reflect on the stage of the relationship with the employer.
4. When managers seem interested in working with the IPS program, return to discuss a jobseeker. When managers appear hesitant to work with the IPS program, return to continue working on the relationship.

To sustain employer relationships, IPS specialists focus on a manageable number of businesses whose hiring managers seem interested in working with the program. They visit those programs on a regular basis.

Schedule Appointments with employers

IPS specialists visit businesses and ask to speak to a manager. They then introduce themselves and ask for an appointment to come back and learn about the business. Employers are more likely to agree to appointments if the IPS specialist makes the request in person. Another reason to go in person to schedule the appointment is that each time the employer sees the specialist it adds to her feeling that she knows the specialist. Building relationships with employers is done in person, just as building relationships with jobseekers must be done face-to-face.

Prepare how you will introduce yourself and explain the reason for your visit. Include your full name, where you work, the purpose of your visit, and how you hope to be a resource to the employer. Write down your introduction and practice it with a coworker before visiting businesses. But do not worry too much about being word perfect. Try to relax and smile—remember that your aim is to build a relationship. An example of an introduction is below:

> Hi. My name is Candace Jones and I work for the Jobs Center right here in town. I help young people who are starting their working lives, but I am not here to ask about a job for anyone. That is because one of my responsibilities is to learn how businesses operate and how I can be a resource to managers. I would like to schedule a 20-minute meeting so that I can learn about the type of job candidates that you would like to meet. For example, I would like to learn which qualities are important for people to be successful workers here. When would be a convenient time to meet?

Ask for a specific day and time rather than settling on "sometime next week," or "Friday afternoon." Bring your appointment book so that you can schedule the appointment.

Prepare for visiting the business so that you appear organized and professional. Take your business card and employer brochure to leave with the manager. And in case the employer wants to meet right away, have a notebook or employer contact log (see appendix) to take notes. Also, dress in a manner that is appropriate for the business. In most cases, business casual (slacks and a nice shirt) is fine. Consider how the manager will be dressed and aim to wear something similar.

> *"Recently, I was talking to a store manager and he said that he appreciated that I looked professional. He said that he remembered me because, unlike staff from other employment programs, I came to his store wearing a shirt and tie. It's helping me build a relationship with him. On our IPS team, no one wears jeans because we want employers to take us seriously."*
>
> Jon Deiches, IPS specialist

Although many managers and business owners will agree to meet with you, it can be difficult to get to a person with hiring authority. Remember that although a receptionist or security guard may share good information, the point of visiting businesses is to develop relationships with people who hire. Many employment specialists report that they are able to meet hiring managers at about half of the businesses they visit, and must return to some businesses several times before they see a hiring manager.

At some businesses, it may be necessary to go through the human resource department. Try visiting and asking to speak to a human resource representative to schedule an appointment, but if that does not work, you may need to call to schedule an appointment. It may even require multiple phone calls to get through to someone who can schedule the appointment. If someone in your agency has connections to the business, ask that person for an introduction. Another strategy is to send a short letter prior to calling.

SAMPLE LETTER TO HUMAN RESOURCE DEPARTMENT

May 2, 2025

Mary Jurcel
Fresh Start
34 Wildwood Way
Town, South Carolina

Al Quiñones
Ready Manufacturing
1755 Anita Street
Town, South Carolina

Dear Mr. Quiñones,

I am an employment counselor at Fresh Start, a nonprofit organization that helps young people begin their working lives. I am not contacting you to ask about job openings, but to ask if I can meet with you for about 20 minutes to learn about the different positions at Ready Manufacturing and the type of people who tend to be successful at those jobs. I want to be sure that if I suggest that young people apply for work at your business, I send the job candidates you would like to meet. My goal is to be a personnel resource for you.

I will call you in a few days to schedule a short meeting. I can be reached at (212) 555-2234.

Sincerely,

Mary Jurcel

Mary Jurcel

After meeting with someone in human resources, you will likely still want to talk to the manager in a specific department. Ask the human resources representative for an introduction so that you can learn more about how that department operates, and then schedule an appointment with that person.

Learn About the Business

The purpose of learning about the business is to:

1. Demonstrate to the employer that you want to be a resource for her by introducing the type of candidates that she wants to meet (your interest in her business and hiring preferences will make that clear),
2. Show the employer that you are willing to put time and effort into the relationship--you want to have a long-term relationship,
3. Ensure better job matching for jobseekers on your caseload,
4. Learn how jobseekers can best position themselves for job offers.

When you learn about how a business operates, what different positions entail, and the type of candidates the employer would like to meet, you have been successful. Your goal during the appointment is to lead the employer to do most of the talking by using active listening skills from Chapter 3.

When you return for the scheduled appointment, that will demonstrate to the employer that you are reliable and professional. Do everything possible to avoid rescheduling appointments. Arrive on time and schedule extra time for the meeting in case the employer wants to talk longer than 20 minutes. Prepare for the appointment by looking up some simple information about the business. You should know the goods or service that the business produces and you may also look up additional information such as the company mission statement. Some company websites also include information about different positions including position requirements. Read about those, not to learn about job openings, but so you do not ask the manager for information that you could have easily found for yourself.

Another way to prepare for the appointment is to think about the questions you will ask. Many managers love talking about their businesses, but it may take a few questions for the conversation to flow. At first they will be wondering what it is you want from them. So think of at least five questions and jot them down. Ask positive questions so that managers enjoy the meeting. For example, avoid questions such as, "Do you anticipate laying off workers?" **Examples of questions to ask of employers are below.**

- What goals do you have for your department/business over the next year or two?
- As the manager for the ____ department, what are you most proud of?
- Why do you like working for____?
- I saw that part of your company's mission statement is to earn customer loyalty by delivering service with high quality, excellent value, and enthusiasm. Can you give me an example of when an employee went out of her way to provide high quality, enthusiastic service?
- Is there a time of year that is busiest?
- How has it been for you to find the right people to hire?
- What type of person tends to be successful in the ____ position?
- What qualities do you look for when you are interviewing candidates?
- How can you tell if a candidate has the personal qualities you need in your workforce—what questions help you learn that information?
- What is a typical day like for a ____ (name of position)?
- What do ____ (name of position) enjoy most about their jobs? And what are typical challenges for people in those positions?
- You said that people should submit an online application. But you also need people who are self-starters with outgoing personalities. If you had a cousin who was a self-starter and outgoing, how would you advise him to apply for work here?

Certain questions will not help you develop relationships with employers. Avoid asking about job openings. That is because you told the employer you wanted to learn about the business, so stick to your word. Also, it will be difficult to continue the conversation if the employer feels that your main purpose was to find jobs and he has none. And do not ask about the employer's policies for hiring people with legal problems. Even if most of the people you work with have legal histories, that is not what the employer should learn first about an applicant. (See Helping people with legal histories, later in this chapter.) Finally, refrain from asking whether applicants must pass a drug test. Employers may assume that all the jobseekers you know have active substance use problems.

Take a few notes as the employer speaks. Remember that you will meet many managers over the months and years that you are an IPS specialist. It will become difficult to remember specific information unless you write it down. Another advantage to taking a few notes is that some employers share more as they see that the IPS specialist is serious about understanding and remembering their business needs.

End the appointment by thanking the manager for her time and summarizing her main points. Let the employer know what will happen next. **Two examples of how to end meetings follow:**

1. You want to meet applicants who love playing video games and talking about games with other people. They should be interested in trying new games. And you need to find people who want to work here for a significant period of time—not people who will quit after a few months. If I knew someone who matched those criteria, could I come back and tell you about that person?

2. You need independent workers who have dog-grooming certificates. They should be willing to help out in a variety of ways including cleaning up. But you said that some people are challenged because it is noisy and chaotic here. Would it be possible for me to visit at a time of day that is busy so I can observe your dog groomers and get a better understanding of their positions?

Send or Take a Thank-you Note

Handwrite a couple sentences on a plain note card to let the employer know that you appreciate her time and that you enjoyed learning about the business. Doing so will demonstrate your professionalism and provide you with another way to contact the manager (to keep building the relationship).

SAMPLE THANK-YOU NOTE

August 1, 2025

Allison,

Thank you for spending time with me on Friday. I enjoyed learning about Ultimate Shoes and I appreciate your offer to introduce me to your sales manager. I look forward to meeting Carl next week.

George

Reflect on the Stage of the Relationship with the Employer

Pause to reflect on the stage of the relationship before choosing your next step. Do not rush to ask about job openings or to discuss a job seeker too soon.

One IPS specialist said that one employer appeared very eager to work with her during the meeting and so she returned to talk about a jobseeker. The IPS specialist did not know whether there were any job openings or not, but she took the person's resume and asked the employer to set up a meeting for the three of them. If the employer had said that he was not hiring, the specialist would have asked to go ahead with the meeting anyhow pointing out that employers cannot always know when a position will open up and also that it would be helpful interview practice for the jobseeker.

Another specialist spoke about an employer who appeared guarded during the meeting. She returned two days later to drop off a thank you note and offer names of two employers who could be references for her, saying, "If you are curious to know more about me or about the jobseekers I know, please feel free to call either of these employers. I have written down their contact information and they know that you may call." A different strategy is to learn more about the business. For example, she could have said, "I hope I didn't catch you at a busy time. I wanted to drop off this thank-you note because I appreciated learning about your business on Monday. It also occurred to me that I forgot to ask about people here who don't work with the public. Do you have time for a couple of questions?" Other ways to learn more about the business are to ask for a tour or ask for an introduction to a manager in another department. Some IPS specialists ask to observe workers for a half hour to gain a better understanding of the workflow and challenges for people in those positions and many employers appreciate that effort. Finally, the IPS specialist can ask the employer to meet a candidate for a mock job interview just to help him hone his interviewing skills. The advantage to that approach is that the employer can see for herself that the IPS specialist knows qualified candidates.

Advocate for Young Jobseekers

Some employers have reservations about hiring youth. They worry that a young person will not take her job seriously or may leave her job after a short time. When employers express those concerns, describe the strengths of the jobseeker you know. Be prepared to talk about why she would be a good employee. You can also briefly describe the supports you offer. But do not make guarantees because you cannot be sure about how the job will go. An example of what you may say to an employer follows:

Esther is a serious minded person. For example, she takes her schoolwork very seriously and studies hard to get the best grades she can. Furthermore, Esther loves cooking—that is why she identified this business as a place she would like to work. And I want to make sure that she is successful. In fact, I would like to keep in touch with you to ask how Esther can improve her work performance, and I will also be meeting regularly with Esther to talk about her job.

Maintain Employer Relationships

Keep a list of 10-15 employers (depending on the number of jobseekers on your caseload) with whom you are building long-term relationships and strive to visit each every six weeks. Next to each employer's name, enter the date of your most recent visit so that you remember when to return. Share your lists with other IPS specialists in your program so that you will not accidentally visit the same employers. If another specialist knows a jobseeker who would like to work for an employer on your list, introduce your colleague to the employer in person.

Even when employers are not hiring, your visits will remind them that you want to have long-term relationships. Regular visits should also help you to hear about hiring plans before jobs are advertised. Do not rely on

employers to call when they have openings. **You can stop by to say hello and ask how business is going, or you can try one of techniques below.**

- Share good news about your program. For example, an article in the paper about your program or a record number of job starts in the last quarter.
- Tell the employer about someone who is interested in a particular type of work. Ask if you and the jobseeker can visit to observe workers and ask questions about the position.
- Congratulate the employer about an article that you read about her business.
- Ask the employer if she would be willing to provide someone with feedback about his interviewing skills or resume.
- Ask the employer if she would be interested in attending your program's steering committee meeting to help members understand the needs of local employers.
- Let the employer know that a job seeker you know has submitted an application. Bring the person's resume and be prepared to discuss his strengths.
- Drop off a holiday card.
- Bring information about the Work Opportunities Tax Credit or other hiring incentive.
- Share materials about your program, such as a brochure designed for employers.
- Ask the employer for his impressions about a jobseeker who interviewed for a position.
- Introduce your supervisor as another person the employer can contact if you are out of the office.
- Drop off thank-you notes for anything the employer has done to help you, for example, spending time to educate you about the business, reviewing a person's resume, or visiting a steering committee meeting.
- Ask the employer to introduce you to some of her suppliers.
- Ask to meet managers in different departments of the business.
- Return to let the employer know that you do know a candidate who would be a good fit for the business. "John, I know it's important to you to find employees who want to work here because they are interested in books, and also people who are friendly and outgoing. I do know someone who fits that description. Would you like to hear a little bit about her?"

Select Which Businesses to Visit

Plan which employers to visit based upon the types of jobs people want. For each jobseeker, develop a list of businesses that you will visit based on her interests and preferences. Carry the lists when you are out of the office so that when you have extra time you can visit nearby businesses. Occasionally, you may visit businesses that are not related to any person's job goal just because you want to learn about the types of jobs there. Sometimes IPS specialists select businesses in an impromptu manner rather than thinking about what business might have the best job matches. Systematically creating a list of possible businesses may uncover an employment opportunity that might otherwise be overlooked.

Manage Nervous Feelings

It is normal to feel nervous when meeting with employers. One IPS specialist told us that when she returned to a business for an appointment with a manager, she was so nervous that she did not want to get out of her car. But when she finally went into the business the employer was positive and asked to meet a job candidate. That experience reinforced for her that she had something valuable to offer. Even when the unemployment rate is

high, employers report that they prefer to hire people who have been recommended by someone they trust—a good employee, a friend, or an IPS specialist who understands the type of person who is a good match for the business.

Have realistic expectations for each visit by reviewing your goals for that meeting. For the first visit the measure of success is a scheduled appointment. For the second visit, the goal is just to learn about the business. Building a relationship takes time so do not expect employers to discuss job openings with you right away.

Practice with a partner as you learn about developing employer relationships. Go to businesses with another IPS specialist or your supervisor. One person can take the lead for each visit while the other person helps out, as needed. After awhile your nervousness will be replaced by curiosity about businesses.

Conclusion

IPS specialists strive to help jobseekers make in-person contact with hiring managers. One way to do that is for the IPS specialist to build relationships with employers and then ask to introduce qualified jobseekers. When young people do not want to share personal information, IPS specialists help them follow up on job applications in person.

Chapter 8: Job Supports

IPS job supports depend on the preferences of the worker, the degree to which the position matches the worker's skills and experience, the person's strengths, work history (if any), the person's natural supports for working a job such as family and friends, the employer's preferences (if the young person has shared personal information with the employer), mental health symptoms (if any), and other factors. Job supports are different for each person.

Topics included in this chapter include:

- ⇨ Job support planning
- ⇨ Supports for employers
- ⇨ Job transitions
- ⇨ Continuous job supports

Job Support Planning

Plan job supports based on the person's strengths, needs, job, and personal situation. Do not take a wait-and-see approach. Be proactive so that people do not lose jobs before you have a chance to intervene. When a person is offered employment, consider what you know about him that could affect his job.

For example, think about how previous jobs (if any) have gone for the person, what supports the person has, how the person learns best, whether the person will be juggling work and school, how the person gets along with other people, whether the person is experiencing any mental health issues or substance use problems, etc. Consider the person's strengths. What factors will help him succeed at work?

Complete the table below for a working person or jobseeker on your caseload.

Personal values. Examples: honesty, conscientiousness, being self-sufficient	Personal Values:
Personality traits. Examples: friendly, funny, creative, resilient, flexible, determined, resilient, organized, flexible, good team member.	Personality traits:
Resources. Examples: transportation, cell phone, work clothing, support from family or friends.	Resources:
Abilities. Examples: good memory, fast learner, physical strength and endurance, math skills.	Abilities:
Specific training, experience or skills related to a job. Examples: certificate training, experience taking care of animals, prior work experience.	Training/experience/skills:
Interest in the product or service produced by the company.	Interests:

Next, anticipate possible job problems so you can plan supports that will help the person avoid those issues. For example, if the person tends to stay up late at night and you worry that he will not be on time for work, you

could plan to give him wake up calls for awhile. If someone has had trouble getting along with others in the past you could explain to the employer that she has excellent concentration and is very conscientious, but does better when she receives instructions directly from her supervisor rather than her coworkers.

Offer in-person job supports in addition to phone calls and texts. Some people worry they will waste the IPS specialist's time by calling about insignificant problems. Other people are not even sure if they are having a job problem. Meeting face-to-face gives people time to share their concerns and what they like about their jobs.

Make job supports convenient to young people who are busy and not necessarily sure that they even need help. For example, offer a ride to work or to the bank once a week. Suggest meeting people at their home or places they like to go and ask what times are most convenient for them. Celebrate successes so the meetings feel positive.

Sometimes IPS participants assume they no longer need any help from the IPS specialist once they start a job. Often the opposite is true, that is when they need the most support and encouragement. During the planning stage and thereafter, IPS specialists should plant the idea that they are there for IPS participants after they start working. Encourage meetings even if things are going well and over time it may work to taper these off while leaving the door open for restarting more frequent contact. A solid support plan is especially critical for employees who have little or no prior work experience.

Include Family Members and Close Friends in Providing Job Supports

Also, talk to the person about his supports for working a job. How can family and friends encourage and help him? How have they helped him with different goals in the past? Suggest a meeting with family members (or close friends) to celebrate the new job and to identify ways to support the worker.

Prior to the meeting, ask the worker to help develop a simple agenda, which can help the young person maintain some control of how the meeting goes. Also be sure to ask what the person does not want to discuss during the meeting (what he wants to keep private).

SAMPLE AGENDA TO DISCUSS JOB SUPPORTS

- Introductions
- Celebration: New job!
- How does the job match Andre's strengths?
- What supports will help Andre succeed and how can the group help?
- Other agenda items?
- When will the group meet again?

It is fine to ask support people to offer simple reminders, but avoid putting family members and friends in the position of nagging the person about his job. Do not let the support plan become a source of conflict for the family.

When IPS specialists do not have much experience facilitating family meetings, they can ask their supervisor to help them prepare for the meetings or to attend the meetings with them. In some situations, a mental health or housing practitioner may attend the meeting with the IPS specialist.

Explain What Employers Expect

People with little or no work experience may not understand what employers expect of them. Explain what are acceptable reasons for missing work and how many absences are generally tolerated. Discuss how to notify a supervisor when it is not possible to attend a scheduled shift--review the importance of calling work before the shift begins and asking for a supervisor, rather than telling a coworker. Help young people understand that the supervisor will need to find another person to cover his work and that is stressful for the supervisor. Talk about why supervisors want people to come to work on time and how supervisors may think that employees who are late to work are not serious about their jobs. Discuss workplace policies about cell phones. Explain that supervisors expect workers to work continuously during their work shifts. If it appears that there is no more work to do, the worker should ask his supervisor for another task rather than reach for his phone. Describe that even when a call is important, such as a friend having a problem, workers should wait until break time to call someone back.

Provide Supports to Overcome Job Problems Related to Cognitive Impairments

Tailor job supports for people who have cognitive impairments. Talk to family members, teachers, and others to ask what strategies have helped the person learn best or what environments help the person focus. Ask the person how he likes to learn and suggest different

Difficulty following directions	• Suggest that the employer ask the person to repeat instructions. "Alice, today I need you to clean the popcorn machine at the end of your shift and restock all of the candy. Can you please repeat that back to me?" • Set up brief meetings with the supervisor and worker so you can help the person understand feedback about her performance. • Ask the employer if you can create a written list of job duties for the person to follow.
Problems with concentration	• Ask if the person can work in a quiet place/away from others. • Ask if the person can wear headphones with white noise or earplugs while working. • Help the person develop natural supports at work such as a coworker who will remind him to stay on task. • If necessary, request that the person eliminate the job duties with which he struggles in exchange for duties that require less concentration. • Request shorter work shifts.

Job problem related to cognitive impairments	Possible Job Supports
Slow movements and work speed	• Observe the person working, as well as coworkers doing the same job, to identify how she can be more efficient. • Provide guidelines, "By 10:30 you should be done watering the flowers." • Set alarms on watches or cell phones to signal when different tasks should be finished (or almost finished). • Help the person practice a small part of his job over and over until his speed increases, and then practice another part of the job. • Ask the employer for an accommodation for speed. For example, ask if the person can work when the business has fewer customers. Or remind the employer of the worker's strengths and ask if she can tolerate a slower work speed.
Problems with memory	• Help the person write down her work schedule. • Make a list of job tasks. • Provide written cues. For example, "To transfer calls: 1) Press transfer button, 2) Listen for a dial tone, 3) Dial the person's extension, 4) Wait for the person's phone to ring, 5) Hang up." • Tutor the person. For example, meet the person after his work to help him learn a menu. Go on the job to help the worker learn a new computer system. • Ask a coworker or supervisor to provide important reminders at the beginning of the workday.
Difficulties with problem solving	• Develop a list of rules. For example, "When a patient comes to the desk, stop and help the patient." "When a customer is angry, begin by saying you are sorry." "When you can't find a part, ask Earl." • Ask the employer to identify which tasks have top priority.

Supports for New Positions

Offer in-person support within a few days before the person starts the job because many people are nervous about new positions or benefit from help planning for the first day of work. Consider how you felt when you started new jobs in the past. If you are like most people, you were anxious to have someone to talk to about your new co-workers and your impressions of the job. So also schedule an appointment with the person within a day or two of his first day of work. The appointments can be brief but should be in person so that the person feels that you are focused on learning her initial likes and dislikes about the job, as well as any concerns she may have.

Meet in person with new workers at least once a week for the first month. Most job loss occurs early on. If the person has never worked before or has had job problems, offer to see her more than weekly, for example, you might give her a ride to work each morning. Or, you could meet a new worker twice during the first week and speak on the phone one time. Ask if the worker had trouble getting to work on time. Who are her co-workers—what are they like? Did her boss give her any feedback? What is she learning? What part of the job does she like best? Least? What did she do during her break? Has she learned how she will get her schedule for the following week? What time did she get home—will she be able to get enough sleep and time for study so that her schoolwork does not suffer?

If the job appears to be going well after the first month, and the person no longer feels that she needs so many supports, discuss altering the follow-along plan. For example, you and the working person might decide to meet every other week for a while, and eventually just once a month. If you had been in contact with the person's supervisor, you can also speak with the supervisor about fewer calls or meetings. But, if the person begins to experience job problems, increase your job supports right away. React with a sense of urgency or the position may be lost before you can help.

Supports for Employers

Stay in touch with employers (with the worker's permission) to learn if help is needed. Call or visit the supervisor within the first couple of days that the person works. Keep in touch frequently at the start of a new job and then taper off supports as the person learns the job and demonstrates good performance. Be brief when you contact supervisors since they are busy and may not want to spend much time talking if the person is doing well. Continue to communicate with employers even if you do not think it is needed because if some young people do not work out, employers may be willing to collaborate with you again if they remember that you remained involved.

> *"Employers know that there is always a chance that someone won't work out. I avoid burning bridges with employers by keeping in touch and maintaining the relationship. If a person is just starting a job, I go in person weekly to talk to the employer and the worker. One of the most striking examples is an employer who hired two people I recommended to work in two separate departments. Both people were terminated (after nine months and after eighteen months). I kept in touch with both managers throughout the time that the workers were there. They must have appreciated my support because last week I got a call from the company asking if I could help fill some positions."*
>
> Joe Rogers, IPS specialist

Another strategy for working with supervisors is to request short (15 minutes) meetings with the supervisor and worker. The advantage to this approach is that the young person is involved and can hear directly from his supervisor. Further, it is a way for the person to learn how to communicate with supervisors.

Provide structure to the meeting:

1. Start the meeting on the right note. Ask what the worker is doing well. This will help the worker feel better if she later hears that she needs to improve in some areas.
2. Ask specific questions. Rather than asking, "How is Ruben doing?" ask questions such as, "How is Ruben's attendance?" "How does Ruben interact with patients? "Is Ruben able to complete his work fast enough?" "How can Ruben improve his performance?"
3. Ask the worker for his opinions. "How has it been for you learning the job?" "Are there areas in which you need help?" "What parts of the jobs do you enjoy?"
4. Begin solving problems during the meeting. If you cannot think of solutions immediately, let the supervisor know when you will contact her to discuss a plan, "I think Ruben and I should talk about this together and come up with some ideas to run past you. Is it okay if we get back to you tomorrow?"

After the meeting, begin by asking the worker how he felt about what was discussed. (It's always a good strategy to invite the youth's perspective before explaining yours.) Did he agree with his supervisor's comments? Did he feel that his opinions were heard? Checking back gives him a chance to tell you about any part of the meeting that was not comfortable for him, and also helps the worker process what the employer said.

> Gradually help the worker assume the role of meeting facilitator. Help him plan a few questions or comments prior to the meeting. Next ask her to direct the meeting while you assist, as needed. When the worker and employer feel ready, stop attending the meetings and provide support and problem-solving afterwards.

When requesting accommodations, use everyday language. In fact, it may not even be necessary to use the word accommodation or to name a symptom. Be prepared for ideas that you think may help the worker instead of expecting the employer to think of accommodations. "Ray has been having trouble concentrating at work and we wondered if he could wear earplugs to block distractions." "I know that Ariana values her job here. She loves filling the prescriptions, bookkeeping and all of her duties, but she has also shared with me that she still feels rattled when customers are angry. Is there someone here who can help her when a customer is frustrated?"

Examples of Job Supports

- Keeping track of a work schedule.
- Asking for time off to study for final exams or to attend an important school event.
- Reminding the employee to answer her phone in case her employer calls when she is not at work.
- Brainstorming ways to chat with coworkers.
- Co-facilitating family meetings to talk about concerns, to highlight accomplishments, to talk about long-term career goals, and to ask for help.
- Reporting earned income to sources of disability benefits, housing programs, food programs, etc.
- Arranging meetings with benefits planners to discuss changes in pay and employment status.
- Investigating options for transportation to work. Helping to learn the route to drive, walk, ride a bike, take a bus/train, etc.
- Offering morning phone calls to provide support and encouragement.
- Providing information about asking for raises and promotions.
- Maintaining motivation to keep working. Celebrating successes. Pointing out accomplishments. Discussing how the job relates to the person's long-term goals.
- Scheduling employer meetings to review the person's performance and, if needed, to solve performance problems. May include asking for accommodations such as changes in job duties, changes in work schedules, developing lists or aids to help the person remember her duties, requesting extra feedback while working, etc.
- Offering tips for how a person could alter his appearance for a job. This could include helping the person understand how she must dress for work, covering up tattoos for some positions, removing facial piercings for some positions, buying grooming supplies, buying uniforms, etc.
- Opening a bank account to deposit paychecks. Developing a savings plan for something the person wants. (Ideally someone on the mental health treatment team or housing team would help with budgeting and paychecks.)
- Discussing medication adjustments to decrease symptoms or medication side effects. (Someone on the mental health treatment team should provide this type of assistance.)
- Sharing information about how to leave a job that the person does not enjoy.
- Asking for scheduling changes for important activities such as softball practice.
- Coaching on the job—although this option is not commonly used because coaching can be stigmatizing.

SAMPLE JOB SUPPORT PLAN

Worker: Chen Employer: YMCA Date: April 18, 2026

1. Plan for getting to work: Bus--#55 stops down the block from Chen's home.

Back-up plan for getting to work: If Chen misses the bus, she will call her boss right away, then call her IPS specialist for a ride. If the IPS specialist is not available, she'll call the IPS Supervisor, Hai, at (555) 237-2398.

2. What strengths will help the worker succeed on the job: Chen has a life saving certification and she has passed a first aid test. She likes working with kids and has done babysitting. Chen has a lot of energy and is a conscientious person.

3. What does the worker want to get out of the job (for example, meet new people, buy a car, be busy, have more income...): "I need to be able to pay at least part of my rent. And I want to have a job that is fun."

4. What does the worker want help with in the new job (for example, getting up on time, dealing with nervous feelings, getting feedback from the boss, having good relationships with co-workers, learning the job, getting tools/clothing for work...)? Help talking to her supervisor and getting feedback about how she is doing on the job. Meetings with Chen to talk about whether she likes her job and how the job is going in general.

5. Will the IPS specialist have contact with the supervisor? ☒ yes; ☐ no.
Signed release of information for specialist to talk with the employer? ☒ yes; ☐ no.

6. Who else can help with job supports?

☒ Family member: Parents, ☐ Friend: _____, ☒ Case manager (or other primary worker): _____,
☐ Other: _____,
Signed release of information for identified support person? ☒ yes; ☐ no.

7. Plan for the first two weeks of work:

IPS specialist to give Chen a ride to work the first day.	On the way to work.	Chen's first day.	IPS specialist
IPS specialist to call Chen after her first day of work to learn how it went.	Phone	Chen's first day.	IPS specialist
IPS specialist to meet Chen to talk about her job.	Dairy Queen next to the YMCA.	Thursdays after Chen finishes work.	IPS specialist
IPS specialist to call Chen's supervisor for feedback.	Phone	After Chen's second workday.	IPS specialist

Type of support	Where	When/how often	Who
IPS specialist to meet with Chen and her supervisor to discuss how the job is going. Chen and specialist to plan the meeting together.	YMCA	At the end of the first two weeks.	IPS specialist and Chen

8. Plan for job supports during the first six months:

Type of Support	Where	When/how often	Who
IPS specialist to meet Chen to talk about her job. IPS specialist to text a reminder to Chen the day before.	Dairy Queen next to the YMCA.	Every other Thursday after Chen finishes work.	IPS specialist
IPS specialist to meet with Chen and her supervisor to discuss how the job is going. Chen and specialist to plan the meeting together.	YMCA	After six weeks employment and then quarterly.	IPS specialist and Chen
IPS specialist, Chen and Chen's parents to meet to talk about her job.	Parent's home	After two months employment.	IPS specialist, Chen, Chen's parents.

Robert Hong	4/18/26	Chen	4/18/26
IPS specialist	Date	Job Seeker	Date

Transitioning from One Job to Another

A strength that many young people have is that they are willing to try new things—to make changes in their lives. That can also mean that if a young person does not like his job, he will want to move quickly to something new. He may not see the benefit of keeping the job until he finds a new position. Talk to youth about giving two weeks notice when he wants to quit a job. Help him think of how to end the relationship with his supervisor on a positive note. Rehearse what he will say about quitting. For example, "I've enjoyed working here—thanks for giving me this opportunity. But I want to pursue a job where I can gain experience working with children because that is my long-term goal." Then begin searching for new positions right away. In other words, do not try to convince a young person to stay at a job he does not enjoy in order to develop a work history.

When someone leaves a job without notice and you have a relationship with the manager, visit that person right away. Thank the employer for giving the person a chance and express your regret that the job did not work out, "I am sorry that Bob left his position suddenly, but I wanted to tell you in person how much I appreciate that you were willing to work with us." Employers will respect that you met them face-to-face even if they still feel angry about losing an employee. These can be difficult visits so ask your supervisor to come with you if you need support.

Remember that trying out different positions is how many young people will learn about themselves as workers. Even when jobs do not last long, the person will learn more about working a job and his preferences. Help

young people review work experiences so they can identify which jobs and job supports they may want in the future. Complete job end forms together to help people consider each job experience. Sample forms are in the appendix of this manual. Attach the forms to the career profile to save a complete work history.

Ongoing Supports

Some young people may not want job supports for long. When this happens, the mental health or housing team should provide job supports. They can also ask for your help if the person begins to have problems on the job.

Ask the young person if you can call occasionally just to ask about the job. But do not keep cases open indefinitely if you are only providing a few short phone calls.

After a few months explain that you will close the person's case in IPS but would be happy to re-open it if the person wants help with another job, school, or career planning. Discuss people in his personal live who are supports for work. Help him plan how he can ask for their assistance if needed and help him identify people at work who can help him on the job.

When people have worked steadily for about a year, discuss whether they still need your supports. Transfer some workers to the mental health and housing teams for supports as people develop skills to manage working a job independently. Review the types of supports the person has used over the past few months and what conditions would prompt re-opening his case in IPS.

Conclusion

IPS specialists offer different job supports to workers based on their preferences, work histories, current living situations, strengths, decisions about sharing personal information on the job, etc. They attempt to make job supports convenient to youth by asking about the best times and places to meet. Housing and mental health treatment team members also provide job supports within the scope of their practices. After a person has been working for about a year, and is satisfied with his employment, a housing or mental health practitioner may be selected to provide ongoing assistance to maintain the job.

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Chapter 9: Strategies to Stay Organized

IPS specialists work independently and manage schedules that change frequently. They also help students and workers remember course schedules and school calendars. To stay on top of their responsibilities IPS specialists find strategies to stay organized, honor their commitments, and plan services.

Stick to Scheduled Appointments

Build credibility with youth, employers, and family members by following through on all appointments and arriving to meetings as scheduled. Build travel time in your schedule and call if you cannot avoid running late.

Stay Organized

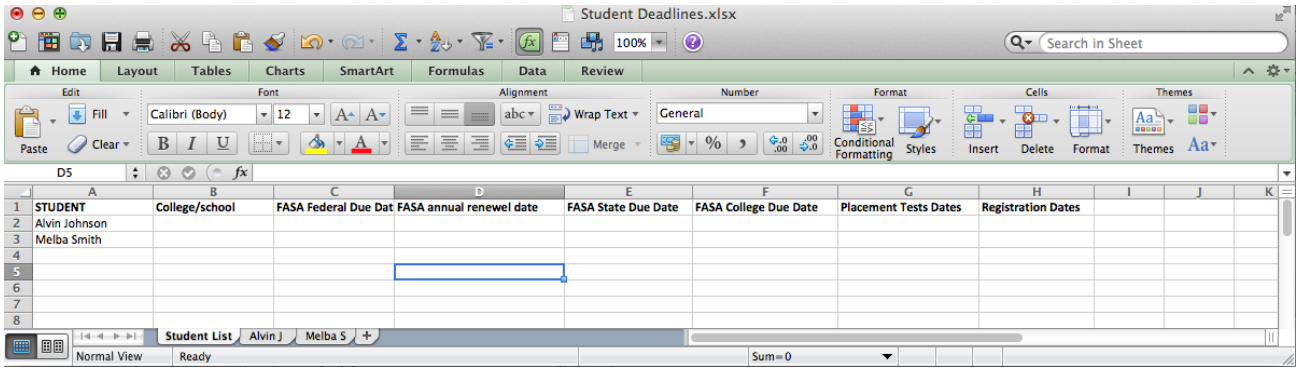
Develop systems to remember school calendars, when financial aid applications are due, dates for student's test and assignments, when to follow up with employers, etc. **Examples of dates to know about for students in college include:**

- Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application deadlines.
- Application dates for colleges.
- FAFSA renewal dates.
- Registration dates for colleges.
- Dates to drop a class without receiving a poor grade or incomplete.
- Dates for dropping classes in time for tuition refunds or to avoid owing money for a grant.
- Dates for placement tests.
- Test and project due dates for individual students.

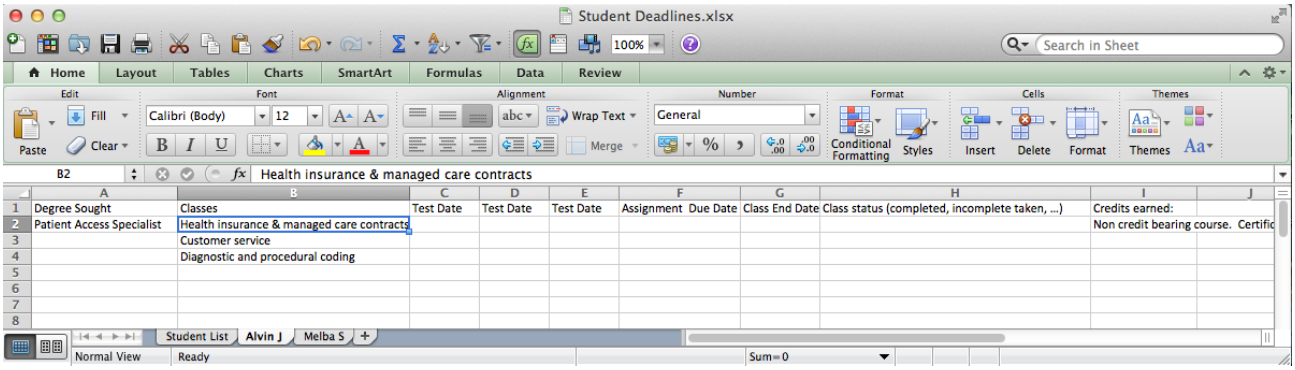
Help workers track important dates as well. **Examples include the following:**

- Dates when workplace time sheets are due.
- Meetings with state Vocational Rehabilitation counselors.
- Appointments with volunteers to complete tax returns.
- Work schedules.
- When trial work periods end (for people who receive Social Security benefits).

Consider using Excel files or entering notes in your calendar. **An example of using Excel to track student information follows.**



The next spreadsheets in the file keep track of dates for individual students (see below).



Map out a schedule for each week. Arrange appointments with people in advance whenever possible. Next, block out time to complete paperwork and visit employers. When someone is not available for a scheduled appointment think about how to use the time productively. For example, review the lists of businesses you intend to visit for each jobseeker—are you near any of those businesses now? Are you nearby the home of someone who has disengaged with you?

Make a to-do list. Include a list of businesses to contact for each jobseeker, appointments to make with financial counselors or advisors, meetings to schedule with family members, phone calls to benefits planners, and so forth. Keep the list with you so you do not forget to add new tasks. Pull the list out when you have a cancellation and assess which task is most important.

Prepare for Each Appointment

Review the education or employment plan that you developed with each young person. What did you say that you would do between appointments? Consider what would help re-engage people who are becoming discouraged.

> For example, would a jobseeker feel excited to know that you met with a business manager? Would another person be interested to learn about different certificate programs in the health field? Show up to appointments ready to talk about what you have done on the person's behalf.

Bring ideas for what you and the young person can work on during the appointment, for example, where you can apply for work or what materials you can review about good study skills. Young people who were interviewed about their IPS services said they felt more confident about their IPS specialist when she came prepared to talk about job ideas or had visited businesses for them. They said it was frustrating when the specialist came to the appointment and asked them what they wanted to do.

Career Services Only

Remember that your role is to help with education and employment only. You may occasionally help team members by dropping off paperwork or giving someone a ride to an appointment, but you should not spend a significant amount of time (more than an hour per week) helping with case management, mental health, or housing services. Your role cannot be diluted because building careers is critical for young people. If needed, ask your supervisor to talk with the mental health treatment or housing teams on your behalf.

Chapter 10: IPS Supervision

This chapter is for IPS supervisors—people who supervise IPS specialists, and possibly IPS peer specialists. Effective supervision is critical to good employment outcomes for youth. There are many aspects to providing good IPS supervision including hiring IPS specialists, training and coaching staff, using program outcomes to develop goals for improvement, and integrating IPS services with other social services. In this chapter we will also review supervision strategies that are especially important when IPS specialists work with youth, including how supervisors are resources for supported education.

Hire the Right IPS Specialists

When supervisors hire, they often advertise for candidates with specific types of training or experience. But effective IPS specialists have a variety of backgrounds including marketing, social work, vocational rehabilitation, or even unrelated fields. What matters most is personal qualities. Minimize the requirements for a specific type of degree or work experience so that you can find people who have the right personalities. **Effective IPS specialists are:**

- Positive. They identify people's strengths. They are hopeful that people will be able to obtain their goals. They believe that employers and educators want to collaborate with them.
- Go-getters. These candidates are ready to take action. They respond to situations with urgency, for example, if an employer has a job opening, the specialist visits within a day to talk about a qualified candidate. They prefer to visit different schools with students rather than look at school websites.
- Good listeners. They are curious and want to learn about others. They ask questions and are open to different perspectives.
- Persistent. They generate more than one solution to solve problems and are open to trying various strategies. They ask team members for suggestions about different situations.

Some supervisors feel that good candidates should have outgoing personalities so they can build relationships with employers. But even shy people can excel at job development when they are shown how to do so by their supervisors. And quiet people are often good listeners.

It is beneficial to hire IPS specialists who reflect the backgrounds and cultures of the people the program serves. For example, if your program serves many Hispanic youth, you could advertise job openings in a Spanish-language newspaper or deliver job descriptions to Hispanic churches. You can also state that preference will be given to candidates who are bilingual. Post job openings in English and Spanish.

Despite many opinions, there is no evidence to indicate that the age of IPS specialists is related to their effectiveness. For example, some people think that youth will connect best with young IPS specialists. But focus groups of young people indicate that youth also liked working with older specialists. We recommend disregarding applicants' age and instead hire people who have the right qualities and enjoy working with young people.

Train and Coach Staff

Train New Staff

Chances are that your IPS team will experience turnover and you may frequently hire new IPS specialists. Because of this, IPS supervisors devote a significant portion of their time to training and coaching staff. They do this by sharing written material about IPS, discussing IPS with new staff, and providing office-based supervision. But unlike in many other practices, IPS supervision also occurs by working side-by-side with specialists. Most people learn best by talking about a new skill, observing someone perform the skill, trying the skill with a coach to help them, and then discussing how they did.

For example, if a supervisor was going to teach good strategies for working on the career profile, she could follow these steps:

1. Talk about conducting the career profile. Discuss why information is gathered into a career profile. Go over a profile with the specialist. Explain that the specialist should focus on building a relationship with the person as she learns about his interests and goals. Review and role-play active listening skills such as open-ended questions and reflective statements.
2. Provide opportunities for the specialist to observe someone working on the career profile. Meet with the IPS specialist and a young person who has just been referred to the IPS program. Take the lead in learning about the person's interests, work and school history, etc. Allow the IPS specialist to observe that the meeting is friendly, relaxed, and that you encourage the young person to do most of the talking. The IPS specialist may also observe another member of the team conducting the career profile.
3. Observe the specialist working on the career profile. The supervisor and IPS specialist meet again with the same person from step #2, but this time the specialist will take the lead in asking questions and learning what is important to the person. The supervisor helps out occasionally by asking a clarifying question. The supervisor takes note of whether the specialist is using active listening skills.

   After the young person leaves, they discuss the specialist's performance. The supervisor begins by asking the specialist what she thinks she did well and what she would do differently next time. Then the supervisor shares her opinions about what went well and different strategies to try in the future.

Typically, IPS specialists are nervous about visiting employers. They worry that they will not know what to say or that employers will not want to meet with them. Supervisors help by discussing good techniques for developing relationships with employers and using the format above to help the specialist gain confidence. Typically, supervisors go with IPS specialists to meet with employers twice a month and then monthly until the specialist demonstrates that she is comfortable developing employer relationships. They observe the specialist meeting with new employers, and meetings with employers who have been visited several times already.

IPS supervisors also provide side-by-side mentoring for supported education. Most people only know about a limited number of jobs. But community colleges and joint vocational schools offer a wide range of technical training programs, certificate programs, and degrees. Go with specialists to school open houses and to meet with advisors to learn about degrees and certificate programs. Being on the campus will allow you and your staff to tour training labs, ask questions, and observe that they can learn different information in person than online. Supervisors work alongside specialists to learn about accommodations for education through meeting with counselors from the office for students with disabilities. They go with IPS specialists to Individual Education Program meetings when invited by parents or school personnel. Visiting schools with team members is a way to demonstrate the importance of providing services in the community.

Coach Experienced Staff

IPS supervisors continue to provide coaching for experienced staff. By doing so, they will learn if staff has implemented what they learned into their daily practice. Further, the IPS supervisor will learn new techniques that he can share with all members of the IPS team. And working alongside staff demonstrates to them that you understand their challenges and work environment.

To coach over time, supervisors meet employers with specialists, help facilitate family meetings, and join in meetings with youth. When specialists report that they are unsure how to help someone, the supervisor should ask to attend the next meeting. After hearing directly from the young person, it is probable that the supervisor will have suggestions for how to get the person's plan back on track.

Example of Side-by-Side Supervision

One supervisor described how an experienced IPS specialist wanted to close a person's case because she had been missing appointments. The supervisor went with the specialist to the next appointment with the young person and learned that this job seeker was frustrated that the IPS specialist wanted to talk with her about social skills rather than helping her apply for jobs. The supervisor suggested that the three of them visit businesses to apply for jobs that day. As the person completed an application at a store she was able to meet with a manager for a few minutes and felt encouraged about that. After the appointment, the supervisor reminded the specialist about the importance of focusing what was important to each person and helping directly with employment. She said that when the person started work, the specialist and the person's counselor could talk about social skills as the person needed help with social situations on the job.

We recommend that supervisors meet most people on the IPS team caseload. When you know people you can provide suggestions that are individualized. Work alongside each team member at least once a month.

The different skills you can coach include:

- Developing relationships with new youth (working on the career profile)
- Facilitating family meetings
- Visiting colleges and job training institutions
- Developing relationships with business owners and managers
- Providing effective job supports
- Meeting with an IPS specialist and a young person when the specialist reports that the young person is not making progress on her goals

Collect and Use Outcome Data

IPS supervisors use data to learn what is going well with the IPS program and what needs to change. They look for changes in outcomes and try to understand why those changes occur. They also use program data to help the team and individual IPS specialists set goals for improvement.

Determine What to Track

Avoid monitoring every possible outcome. Instead, keep it simple so that you can collect data carefully and ensure that it is accurate. Develop clear definitions for each item and share those in writing with staff so they do

not accidently send incorrect information.

Examples of youth outcomes and definitions (in italics) include:

1. Total number of people who were served during the quarter. *(The number of people who had open cases in IPS at any time during the quarter.)*
2. Number of new people in the program. (*The number of people who met with an IPS specialist at least one time and indicated that they want to receive IPS services.)*
3. Number of people who exited the program:
    - Number employed at the time their cases were closed.
    - Number in school/training programs at the time their cases were closed.
    - Number not in school or employment when their cases were closed
4. Number/percent of people who are employed during the quarter. *(Include anyone who worked one day or more in a competitive job. Competitive jobs are those that anyone can apply for regardless of disability status. Youth are paid the same wages as colleagues with similar duties. The length of employment depends on the business needs of the employer, rather than protocols of the employment program. Competitive jobs may be part or full-time positions, and they may be seasonal or temporary depending upon the business needs of the employer.)*
5. Number of job starts during the quarter. *(The number of new jobs. Do not include a job if the person did not work for at least one day.)*
6. Number/percent of people who engaged in school or job training during the quarter. *(Include anyone who attended one class or one day of vocational training. Education and training programs are those that are certificate/degree bearing and open to the general public, not those that are part of a rehabilitation program.)*
7. Number of people who earned a certificate or degree.
    - Number who earned a secondary degree or similar certificate (GED).
    - Number who earned a college degree or post secondary training certificate.

In addition, you may wish to collect a few process outcomes. These reflect how the team is doing their work, rather than how youth are benefitting from the service. Process outcomes provide clues about why youth outcomes change. Monitor fidelity scores and consider tracking the rapid job searches and the number of in-person employer visits by IPS specialists.

Examples of process outcomes to follow include:

1. Fidelity scores. If fidelity reviewers visit your program to apply the IPS Supported Employment fidelity scale, monitor scores for specific fidelity items you wish to improve, or the total fidelity score.

For more information about fidelity, go to www.ipsworks.org, select Resources for Programs, then select Program Implementation.

2. Rapid job/education search. The number of days between the first visit with a young person and the first in-person visit with an employer by either the jobseeker or IPS specialists. For some people, the visit may be with school or training personnel, or with a working person to learn more about his job.
3. Number of employer contacts. The average number of weekly employer visits by each IPS specialist and the team.

Develop a System for Collecting Outcomes

Collect data weekly because even though people assume they will remember what happened during the quarter, it can be difficult to recall events from three months ago. The more frequently that you ask for updates, the more accurate the information will be. Keep an excel database for tracking data and update it weekly. Spend five or ten minutes of each vocational unit meeting to ask the questions below. This system is more effective than asking IPS specialists to maintain their own data tables because they may get busy and forget to update information as changes occur. Copy the list of questions and take them with you to each meeting.

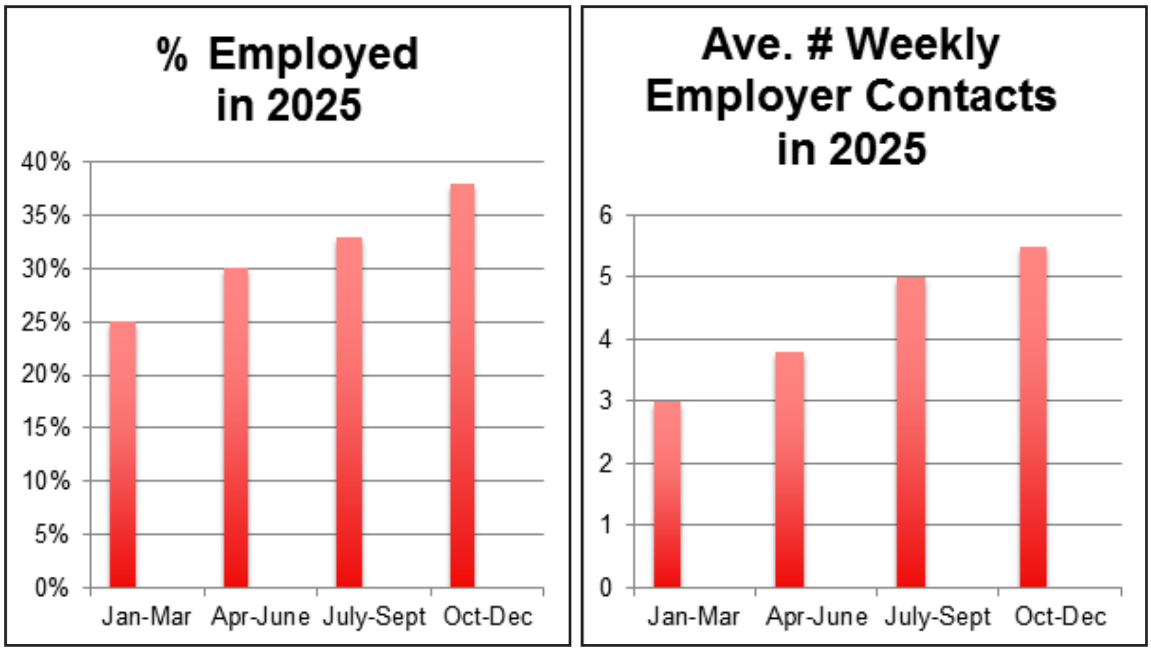
In the vocational unit meeting ask, "During the past week:

- Did anyone meet with a person for the first time? Is he or she working or in school?
- Did a young person or IPS specialist have a first in-person visit with an employer, school personnel or working person?
- Was anybody's case closed? Was the person in school or working?
- Did anyone start a job?
- Did anyone lose a job?
- Did anyone start an education or training program?
- Did anyone discontinue an education or training program? Did the person graduate or earn a certificate?"

Also, ask for copies of job start forms, job end forms, and educational experience forms. These are the forms that are attached to the career profile when a person's work or education status changes. Sample forms are in the appendix of this manual. Compare the forms to information collected in the meeting and ask for clarification as needed. Finally, collect employer contact logs. A sample employer contact log is in the appendix of this manual.

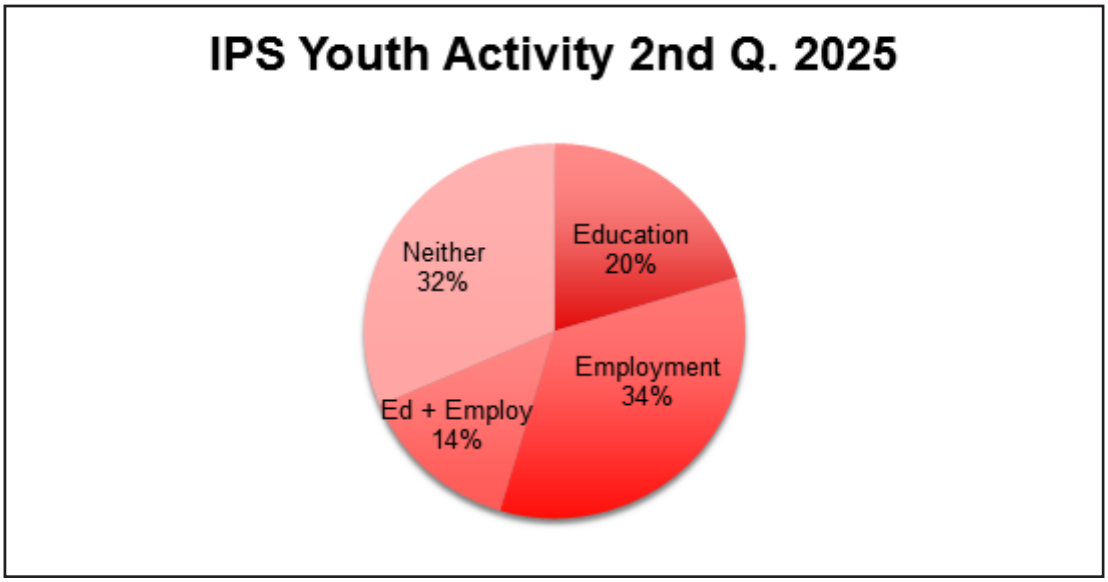
Use Data to Improve the Program

Examine program outcomes quarterly and annually to identify trends and changes. Use graphs and tables so that others can easily understand the information. Discuss outcomes during team meetings and ask team members to hypothesize why changes occur. Then discuss how the team can improve outcomes and set goals. Below are two sample graphs that summarize employment outcomes and employer contacts for one IPS program.



The IPS team can see that employment outcomes are rising as the number of employer contacts increases. They should discuss how they have increased the number of employer contacts they make each week. It is also possible that as they have become more experienced in visiting employers, that their approach to employers has improved, so they will discuss that as well. Do IPS specialists know more about the jobs and businesses in their communities? What other factors may affect the employment rate? The team may also set a goal to increase the employment rate from 38 percent to 42 percent employment in the coming quarter.

The IPS supervisor can put data for employment and education into a single chart for a snapshot of how active people are in the IPS program. After the IPS team discusses the chart below, they should set a goal to decrease the percentage of people who are not engaged in work or school.



In addition to monitoring outcomes for the team, review how each IPS specialist is doing. Help each specialist consider the areas in which he excels and areas for improvement. Look at the status of people on the caseload for one IPS specialist (continued on the following page).

1. Bob	X	X			
2. Sally			X		
3. Abdul		X			
4. James			X		
5. Matthew				X	
6. Fatima	X				
7. LaTeisa	X				
8. Andy		X			
9. Pat			X		
10. Chris			X		
11. Eleanor		X			
12. Irene			X		
13. Terry			X		
14. Cindy	X			X	
15. Aamar				X	
16. Randy		X	X		

Person	Working	School or Training	Job Searching	Career Exploration	Not Engaged
17. Paula		X	X		
TOTALS	**4 people, 24%**	**6 people, 35%**	**8 people, 47%**	**2 people, 12%**	**0**

Everyone on the IPS specialist's caseload is engaged so the supervisor and specialist should celebrate that together. And nine people (53%) are working, going to school, or doing both. But eight people (47%) are job seeking. The IPS supervisor should review cases to see if anyone has been looking for work for more than three months. He will intervene in those cases to help the person find work before giving up. For example, he may ask to meet with the jobseeker and IPS specialist together to talk about what they have been doing to find work and he may also review the person's record (documentation of IPS services). The supervisor's focus is on what the IPS specialist has done and brainstorming ideas about what the specialist could do. In other words, the supervisor is not content to hear that someone has not found work because the jobseeker has not followed through on assignments between appointments. The purpose is not to blame the specialist, but to think about what the specialist can do to augment the job search plan. He will ask what the IPS specialist has done between appointments to help the person find work. He may also ask the IPS specialist to discuss the young person's situation in the next vocational unit meeting so that the team can brainstorm ideas to help him find work. The supervisor will consider how long it has been since he accompanied the IPS specialist while visiting employers. He will make plans to do that again to evaluate whether the specialist is comfortable developing employer relationships and to help him sharpen his skills.

The supervisor and IPS specialist should write plans for improvement together. Otherwise, good intentions are easily forgotten. The plans should include current outcomes, a measurable goal, the steps each person will take to achieve those goals, and when the plan will be reviewed. **Below is a sample plan for helping the specialist (above) help people find jobs.**

John's Plan to Increase Employment

Current outcome: Four people are working and eight others want to find jobs.

A total of six people will be employed by the next quarter.	John and IPS supervisor will review situations and job searches for each job seeker. They will focus first on people who have been job searching for three months or longer (four people).	June 2025
	• John and IPS supervisor will meet with those people together to discuss their job searches and develop additional steps to help jobseekers become employed.	June 2025
	• John and IPS specialist will speak with the housing team for ideas to help jobseekers.	June 2025
	John and IPS supervisor will go together to meet employers and learn about their businesses.	June –twice July – twice August - once

Similar plans are developed for IPS team goals. Below is an example of a plan to increase the number of referred people who engage in IPS services.

Home Again: IPS Plan for Improvement

Current outcome: 62% of people who were referred to IPS in 2025 engaged in IPS services.

80% of people who are referred to IPS in 2026 will engage in IPS services. Our progress will be reviewed quarterly.	When a young person is interested in work or school, the housing specialist will invite an IPS specialist to their next meeting so the young person doesn't have to meet alone with a stranger. Supervisors are responsible for monitoring this practice.	January 2026
	A peer specialist position will be hired. • The IPS specialist and human resource director will develop the job description together. • The peer will meet with all youth within a month of requesting housing services from Home Again. The peer will describe IPS services and talk about the possible benefits of employment. • The peer will meet with people entering the IPS program to provide encouragement	May 2026
	When young people miss more than two appointments in a row, the IPS specialists will discuss the situation in the IPS meeting for ideas about how to re-engage the person.	February 2026

Collaborate with Others

Collaborate with Mental Health Treatment or Housing Teams

Integration of IPS with mental health treatment and/or housing services is an IPS practice principle. IPS specialists meet weekly with mental health or housing practitioners to discuss how they can work together to help people reach their goals. They share what they know and brainstorm ideas for different situations. For example, a mental health practitioner could share information about how a person learns best or a housing specialist may offer to participate in a family meeting about employment if he knows the family best. Practitioners also provide employer contacts of people they know in businesses that match the interests and skills of the people they are serving together.

When practitioners are not trained in employment, they may not feel qualified to share ideas about good job matches or school supports. The IPS supervisor can encourage them to give input by attending some mental health treatment or housing meetings. When the IPS specialist announces that someone is about to start a job, the supervisor can ask, "How does this position match his strengths? What would be good job supports to offer to him?" When the team brings up someone who is exploring different careers, the IPS specialist can ask, "What are his interests and hobbies?" "Does he know about different types of careers?"

When a new IPS specialist is assigned to a mental health or housing team, the supervisor should attend at least the first two meetings with the specialist. When the specialist is comfortable in the meetings, and the mental health teams are enthusiastic about talking about work, the supervisor may attend just once each quarter.

Collaborate with School Personnel

Some high school students who have mental health problems have Individual Education Programs (IEPs) to help them succeed in school. Plans developed during IEP meetings identify how to help the student learn and include plans to transition to school or work when the student graduates. IPS specialists should attend IEP meetings with teachers and parents. The specialist's role in the meeting is to discuss the student's strengths and accomplishments, offer supported education services (such as helping the student learn good study skills), assist with after school or summer jobs, and participate in transition planning. Most high school administrators are unaware of how IPS specialists can help and may feel hesitant about including the specialist. Ask to meet with school administrators (principals or guidance counselors) to describe your program and reasons to include the IPS specialist in IEP meetings. Ask if you can attend the first meeting with the specialist. Invite key personnel from the school to join your IPS steering committee. Identify who can be helpful to your program and is interested in IPS, such as a special education teacher or school guidance counselor.

Read more about IPS steering committees at www.ipsworks.org; select Resources for Programs.

> *"Our team engages with high school guidance counselors and tries to develop their interest in IPS so that they can introduce us to young people who are eligible for our services. We can help youth explore educational possibilities. We want to reach youth sooner and help them consider post secondary education or job training. I hope that if we can talk to some young people before they graduate and are desperate for an income, we will be able to help them build careers. "*
>
> Catherine Hardy, IPS supervisor

Students with disabilities who attend post secondary institutions are eligible for accommodations if they register with the office for students with disabilities. IPS specialists should develop relationships with the counselors in that office by meeting them in person. Call the office and ask to schedule a meeting with your team to describe the ways you can support people in education and to learn about the office for students with disabilities. When students register with the office, they are scheduled to meet with a counselor. Ask your staff to attend those meetings. Go with new IPS specialists to the meetings to help them describe their role in the student's life and to demonstrate how to advocate for the student.

Collaborate with State Vocational Rehabilitation

If your team serves people who have disabilities, you should also collaborate with state Vocational Rehabilitation. Each state in the U.S. has Vocational Rehabilitation offices with counselors who help people with all types of disabilities to return to work. Vocational Rehabilitation counselors help people identify employment goals and the services they need to return to work. In some states, counselors provide vocational counseling and pay for other employment services. In other states, Vocational Rehabilitation counselors also provide services such as job development.

IPS programs collaborate with Vocational Rehabilitation counselors when youth have active cases in both systems. Collaboration ensures that each person has just one employment plan with contributions from both systems. Another advantage of working together is that Vocational Rehabilitation counselors are trained to know about all disabilities and long-term illnesses. They also know about different types of jobs and training programs. On a case-by-case basis, they may be able to purchase textbooks, interview clothing, work uniforms, bus passes or other tools related to a person's employment plan.

If your program is not a "vendor" for Vocational Rehabilitation, ask to meet with the local supervisor to ask about becoming a vendor. (A vendor, or community rehabilitation provider, is an agency to which Vocational Rehabilitation counselors can refer customers for services and which Vocational Rehabilitation can authorize funding for those services.)

To work together effectively, share information about IPS with Vocational Rehabilitation counselors. Not all of Vocational Rehabilitation practices are congruent with IPS. For example, many Vocational Rehabilitation counselors were trained to conduct vocational assessments before authorizing people to start searching for a job. And they may have some concerns about working with people who have substance abuse problems. Find common ground and begin working together with people the Vocational Rehabilitation counselors feel are ready to work. As they develop relationships with your team members and observe young people going back to work, they may feel more comfortable incorporating IPS principles into their practices.

Due to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), state Vocational Rehabilitation has set-aside funds to serve youth who have disabilities. The acronym PETS is sometimes used to refer to the expanded pre-employment transition services for young people. Pre-employment transition services include job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on post-secondary education options, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy. WIOA provides opportunities for more collaboration with Vocational Rehabilitation counselors on behalf of youth. But in some situations, you may need to educate counselors about the evidence-based practice of IPS including rapid job search. Explain that research demonstrates that people are more likely to obtain competitive jobs if they are helped directly with work rather than pre-employment activities.

Request to schedule monthly meetings with Vocational Rehabilitation counselors and IPS specialists. Because counselors often have caseloads of 150 people or more, offer to go to their office for the meeting. Spend a few minutes talking about business matters. Are counselors receiving the information they need in referral packets? Are counselors receiving enough information in monthly reports from IPS specialists? Are any authorizations needed? Then focus on individual youth and what services each practitioner can provide.

Other Supervision Issues for Youth Programs

Knowledge About Careers and Education Programs

Most IPS specialists know only about a limited number of careers and education programs. Over time, IPS specialists become savvy about different options available within a community. Because of this, and because IPS specialist positions have high turnover in some areas, it is challenging for specialists to learn all that they must know about supported education and the other skills they need to be effective IPS specialists. These gaps in knowledge of the community and skills are especially apparent with turnover in IPS specialist positions, which is true in many areas.

Some people think that one position on the IPS team should provide education supports only, while others provide help with employment. But that would mean that young people must transfer back and forth between IPS specialists as their goals change. And when a person wants to pursue both work and school at the same time, he would have two IPS specialists. We think a better strategy is for each specialist to provide both education and employment supports. The IPS supervisor can become the team expert on supported education, in addition to IPS specialists learning all that they can.

To be a resource for your team about education and training programs, set aside half a day a week (in the beginning) to learn. If you carry a small caseload, reduce it slightly so you have time to build your knowledge base. **Ideas for learning about education include the following:**

- Watch online webinars about Free Application for Federal Application for Student Aid (FAFSA). Take notes. Choose trainings presented by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Federal Student Aid. Select the most current webinars offered. Learn about changes in FAFSA by looking for new information

each year.

- Call community colleges to ask who has oversight for the Workforce Development and Continuing Education Department. Call that person to learn about career boot camps or other events for potential students and ask if you can attend. Also, ask to meet with that person to learn about the different types of training programs.
- Meet with contact people for different training and education programs (colleges, joint vocational schools, GED programs, etc.). Usually, one person will have oversight for a number of related programs and her contact information may be listed in a course catalog or on the college website. Ask for tours of training rooms and labs.
- Meet with Vocational Rehabilitation counselors to ask about the training /education programs they know about.
- Schedule appointments with the Office for Students with Disabilities to learn about the services they offer. Invite the IPS specialists to come to the appointments with you. Share the education supports your program offers and ask about different accommodations the office helps with and how students can apply for accommodations.
- Walk around campuses. Visit libraries and ask about seminars on good study skills that you can attend.
- Identify resources for computers for students. For example, talk to your executive director about contacting businesses that may be willing to donate computers when they buy new ones. Consider writing small proposals to foundations to purchase computers for students.

Flexible Work Schedules

Earlier in the manual we described that some young people will not be available for appointments during business hours. They may be busy with school and work, or may have different sleep schedules. And youth who start jobs on weekends also need help outside of normal business hours. Talk to your supervisor about flexible work schedules based on the needs of people served. When interviewing IPS specialist candidates, ask if they are able to work some evenings or weekends.

IPS Peer Specialists

The role of peers in IPS has expanded in recent years. Peer specialists refer to salaried IPS unit members who have similar life experiences to people served. An IPS peer specialist could be a person who has lived experience of mental illness or a person who has lived in the foster care system, depending upon the population of youth served by the IPS team. But supervisors cannot require that IPS peer specialists are young since it is possible that some people may stay in these positions for many years (and no longer be young). And, as we mentioned earlier in the manual, some young people said that they enjoy working with staff close to their age, while others reported that they appreciate staff with more experience. Therefore, IPS supervisors should hire the best qualified candidates regardless of their age.

Peers have a unique ability to inspire hope in others by sharing how they overcame obstacles to achieve their own career goals. Peer specialists help young people engage with the IPS specialists. They assist people who have had negative school experiences in the past and are nervous about trying school again. And some youth may be more comfortable sharing personal information with peers whom they feel are less likely to judge them.

The job duties of peer specialists vary by location. Some peers help youth consider employment. For example, at one mental health agency, a peer meets with every new young person. She shares how she found work that she loves in spite of legal problems and other issues. She also describes the IPS program so that when people feel ready to pursue work or education, they know what services are available. Other peers are members of IPS teams and augment the work of IPS specialists. They help engage people in IPS services, talk to people about their short and long-term career goals, help people stay hopeful about work, help people obtain identification to be hired, help people learn transportation routes to school, and provide additional supports. There are

probably many different job descriptions for peers in the U.S. and other countries.

If you are able to develop peer specialist positions in your agency, focus on how to make them full members of the team. For example, include them in IPS unit meetings and meetings with mental health practitioners and housing teams. Provide them with similar office space as IPS specialists. Also, offer a living wage by paying peers for their life experiences.

A growing number of states offer peer certification training programs. Call your department of mental health to learn about training programs in your state. Also offer peers training about IPS, active listening skills, benefits planning and other subjects related to their positions.

The IPS Specialist's Role

Young people may feel confused about the role of the specialist in their lives. This can be especially true if IPS specialists are near in age to the people they serve. Earlier in this manual we described that many young people want to talk about their friends or interests with IPS specialists and are less engaged with specialists who focus only on careers. But that may lead some young people to think of their IPS specialists as friends. In addition, they spend time together outside of the office setting, which sometimes confuses people about role boundaries. During team meetings, discuss how IPS specialists, and peer specialists, can be clear about their relationships with youth. For example, they can dress professionally and act professionally by planning what they will do for each meeting. They should only share small amounts personal information about themselves and limit the time that is spent discussing issues not related to careers. Remind team members about your agency's policy for sharing cell phone numbers and receiving phone calls when away from work. Ask IPS specialists (and IPS peer specialists, if present) to discuss situations in which a young person may be confused about the role of the specialist in her life.

Flexible Services

IPS specialists are motivated when people achieve milestones in their careers. They like to celebrate job starts and graduations. But when young people frequently change their goals, IPS specialists may not experience those rewards. Help staff recognize small achievements and describe that helping people learn about different careers will help them. Discuss how considering different options feels good to people who are just now able to make important decisions about their lives. Remind specialists that changing goals is a normal for young people. What career did they want when they were in high school? How many times did they change majors in college? Is their current job what they envisioned when they started school? Acknowledge IPS specialists when they attend to changing goals with empathy and patience.

Acknowledge that it is sometimes frustrating to IPS specialists when youth miss appointments or are difficult to engage. Recognize their efforts in team meetings: "Celia, I think it is great that you haven't given up on Lucille. Her interest in working a job wavers but it's important to keep trying to build a relationship with her." Share practical tips to engage youth.

> *"We help youth see the benefit of the IPS program by highlighting the actions we take—this is not just another service for talking about things. I encourage my team to keep showing up and be a presence in the person's life. Even if they ignore us, we keep trying. We focus on the benefits of working and going to school. And I recognize IPS team members for being persistent—I know that they can feel discouraged at times."*
>
> Ross Heise, IPS supervisor

Conclusion

IPS supervisors have three major roles: 1) training IPS specialists (and IPS peer specialists), 2) collecting and using data to improve the program, and 3) helping team members collaborate with others. IPS supervisors spend time out of their offices each week as they meet with school personnel, visit employers with IPS specialists, meet young people in the IPS program, facilitate family meetings with IPS specialists, and conduct other duties.

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Appendix

The program forms included in this appendix are updated periodically. To find the most up-to date versions, **go to** www.ipsworks.org**,** select **Resources for Programs** and then **Program Tools.**

Glossary

Agency intake: As part of the intake process, many agencies use a form to record background information when a person begins receiving services. At some agencies, the intake, or assessment, is updated annually.

Assertive community treatment (ACT): A team approach with shared caseloads, frequent staff meetings, intensive community-based services, and a focus on assistance with daily living skills. ACT teams provide comprehensive, community-based psychiatric treatment, rehabilitation, and support to persons with serious mental illness. Services include case management, initial and ongoing assessments, psychiatric services, employment and housing assistance, family support and education, substance abuse services, and other services and supports critical to an individual's ability to live successfully in the community.

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

Case manager (or care manager): Person who assesses which services people may need and refers them for assistance. This person may also provide help directly with housing, family intervention and other needs.

Career profile: A document (formerly called a vocational profile) in which the employment specialist records work preferences, work history, education history, strengths, legal history and other information pertinent to a person's employment and education goals.

Co-occurring disorders: Sometimes referred to as "dual diagnosis." Most commonly refers to coexisting serious mental illness and substance abuse disorder. This term is also sometimes used for other co-occurring disorders (e.g., mental illness and intellectual disability).

Competitive employment: Part-time and full-time jobs that anyone can apply for rather than jobs set aside for people with disabilities, except when following federal guidelines to take affirmative action to hire a percentage of qualified people with disabilities. Competitive jobs pay at least minimum wage and people receive the same pay as others receive performing the same work. Employees in the work setting do not consist exclusively of people with disabilities. The jobs do not have artificial time limits imposed by the social service agency. Wages are paid directly from the employer to the employee.

Disclosure: Refers to disclosing information about one's disability (or other personal information) in the workplace. Some people choose to share information about a disability in order to ask for accommodations (such as the support from an IPS specialist) or because they are proud of having overcome barriers in order to return to work. Other people do not disclose a disability because they are concerned about stigma or do not believe that their disability is pertinent to working a job.

Evidence-based practice: Refers to a well-defined practice that has been validated by rigorous research conducted by at least two different research groups. The practice has been shown to be effective, safe and (ideally) cost-effective. The practice has guidelines that describe the critical components.

Fidelity scale: A fidelity scale is a tool to measure the level of implementation to the standards for an evidence-based practice. The Supported Employment Fidelity Scale defines the critical elements of IPS supported employment in order to differentiate between programs that follow the approach from those that do not use the evidence-based practice.

Field mentoring: Support and training to practitioners as they perform their work. For instance, a supervisor meets with a practitioner and young person as they complete the career profile to model or observe the practitioner's listening skills. IPS supported employment supervisors also go with employment specialists to demonstrate employer relationship building, observe specialists making employer contacts and provide feedback.

First episode psychosis programs: Teams of mental health and IPS practitioners who provide intensive support to young people who are experiencing psychosis for the first time. Mental health practitioners provide education about psychosis and its treatment as IPS practitioners assist with education and employment. Peer recovery specialists are sometimes part of the teams. In the U.S. these programs are now often called "coordinated specialist care" programs.

General Educational Development (GED): The process of earning the equivalent of a high school diploma. Students who pass four GED tests (language arts, math, science, and social studies) earn a certificate. Free classes are available to prepare for the test.

Individual Education Program (IEP): In the U.S., a federal law (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) requires that all students with special needs have plans to address their specific learning issues. The program includes supports and services to help the student reach his education goals.

IPS specialist: The position also known as employment specialist, job specialist, or supported employment and education specialist (SEE).

Job readiness groups: These groups vary in content 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 and are not correlated with good employment outcomes.

Mental health treatment team (or multidisciplinary team): A group of mental health practitioners such as counselors, case managers, service coordinators, nurses, substance abuse counselors, medication prescribers, peer specialists, or others. May also include employment specialists, state Vocational Rehabilitation counselors, housing specialists or others.

Minimum wage: Laws in the United States regulate the minimum, hourly wage that employers pay workers.

Piece-rate wage: A small number of employers in the United States are exempt from paying minimum wage and pay workers based on units of work performed instead.

Rehabilitation agency: An agency or center that provides employment services and other types of non-treatment services such as social activities or housing assistance.

Service coordinator: Position to assess what services people need or want and refer them for assistance. May also provide help directly with housing, family intervention and other areas. Similar to care coordinator or case manager.

Sheltered employment: Sheltered workshops hire people with disabilities to complete contracts for other businesses. For example, people with disabilities may be paid a piece-rate wage to assemble garden hose spigots for a company that makes garden hoses. In the U.S., sheltered workshops are regulated by the U.S. Department of Labor and typically pay subminimum wage rates. Sheltered workshops are not consistent with IPS supported employment.

Situational assessments: Short-term work assignments to evaluate work behaviors such as attendance, ability to persist at task, social skills and so forth. These assessments may also evaluate a person's ability to perform a particular type of work. Situational assessments are sometimes paid positions (for example, subsidized through the state office of Vocational Rehabilitation), but can also be unpaid positions. Situational assessments are not consistent with IPS supported employment.

Steering committees: Sometimes referred to as advisory committees or leadership teams. A group of stakeholders for IPS supported employment that meets to discuss implementation efforts and develop goals for better implementation and program sustainability. Steering committees typically include a variety of stakeholders, including several of the following: the IPS supervisor, young people, family members, state Vocational Rehabilitation counselors and supervisors, agency executive director, quality assurance director, clinical director or other administrators, area chamber of commerce representatives, and local college and high school equivalency program staff.

Strengths-based approach: Practitioners focus on a person's skills, interests, values, experiences, and abilities working a job as well as their needs. Youth are discussed in a respectful manner. Practitioners focus on what is most important for each young person and conveys hope for reaching goals. The strength-based approach is in contrast with the deficits-based approach used in many community mental health settings, in many cases to document "medical necessity" for Medicaid billing.

Temporary staffing agency: An agency that contracts with businesses to fill positions with qualified people on a short-term basis, and sometimes with an option for the business to hire people permanently.

Transition-age youth: People between the ages of 16 and 24 years who may be at risk of not completing school and may need support to transition to living and working independently. Programs for transition-age youth may include housing, assistance applying for welfare or disability benefits, counseling, and help with education and employment. Some programs serve only transition-age youth who have disabilities and other programs serve a broad group of young people.

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. Using vocational evaluations to determine job readiness is not consistent with IPS supported employment. Sometimes job seekers or IPS specialists ask to complete vocational evaluations to help identify possible career directions, but if used in this fashion, they should be used sparingly and for special cases.

Vocational profile: The document referred to as the career profile. See above.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR): Each state, as well as the District of Columbia and U.S. Territories, supports a division of Vocational Rehabilitation that has offices throughout the state to provide vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities. Vocational Rehabilitation counselors help people find gainful employment related to each person's "strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capacities, interests, and informed choice." Vocational Rehabilitation counselors work collaboratively with IPS programs. They provide expertise about disabilities and jobs, and sometimes help with costs related to work clothing, transportation, or education when those are related to the person's employment goal. The specific name for the state Vocational Rehabilitation agency differs from state to state (e.g., Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR).

Vocational unit: IPS specialists and their supervisor form the IPS team. They participate in group supervision to discuss how to help people on their caseloads with school and work goals, and share employer contacts. They provide back up and support for each other.

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. For more information go to www.socialsecurity.gov and search for Red Book.

Career Profile

FACE SHEET

Date of referral: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone number/s: _____

Best way to reach: _____

Case Manager/therapist: _____

State Vocational Rehabilitation counselor: _____

☑ Referral sent to State Vocational Rehabilitation

Other healthcare/social service providers: _____

What is the person saying about work? Why does s/he want to work now? What type of job?

Is this person interested in gaining more education now to advance his/her career goals?

Please include some information about the person's illness (diagnosis, symptoms, etc.). How might the person's illness (and/or substance use) affect a job or return to school?

What are some of the person's strengths? (Experience, training, personality, supports, etc.)

What job (type of job, hours, etc.) do you think would be a good match?

_____ _____

Person making referral Title

CAREER PROFILE

This form is to be completed by the employment/education specialist during the first few weeks of meeting with someone. Sources of information include: the person, the mental health treatment team, the young person's treatment/service records, and with permission, family members and previous employers. The profile should be updated with each new job and education experience using job start, job end, and education experience forms.

WORK GOAL

What is your dream job? What kind of work have you always wanted to do?

What are your long-term career goals?

What type of job do you think you would like to have now?

What is it that appeals to you about that type of work?

What type of job(s) do you know that you would not want?

Do you know people who are working? What types of jobs? What do you think about those jobs?

Is there anything that worries you about going to work? Why do you want to work?

EDUCATION

Are you interested in going to school or attending vocational training now to advance your work career?

Education/learning history

Did you complete high school? ☑ No ☑ Yes

If no, would you be interested in earning your GED/high school equivalency diploma?

☑ No ☑ Yes ☑ N/A

Did you participate in vocational training classes in high school?

☑ No ☑ Yes

Have you ever completed an apprenticeship (i.e., plumbing, welding, electrician, etc.)?

☑ No ☑ Yes

If so, what year? _____

Did you complete any job related job-related training in the military?

☑ No ☑ Yes ☑ N/A

Please describe the training, including years and any certificates earned.

Other education or training programs ☑ N/A

Name of Educational/ Training Institution: _____

City/State: _____

Years attended: _____

Type of degree or certificate sought: _____

Degrees, certificates, or classes completed:

If program was not completed, why not?

Liked most about the program:

Liked least about the program:

Type of financial aid used, if any: _____

Name of Educational/ Training Institution: _____

City/State: _____

Years attended: _____

Type of degree or certificate sought: _____

Degrees, certificates, or classes completed:

If program was not completed, why not?

Liked most about the program:

Liked least about the program:

Type of financial aid used, if any: _____

Name of Educational/ Training Institution: _____

City/State: _____

Years attended: _____

Type of degree or certificate sought: _____

Degrees, certificates, or classes completed:

If program was not completed, why not?

Liked most about the program:

Liked least about the program:

Type of financial aid used, if any: _____

Do you have copies of the degrees, licenses, certificates that you have earned? ☑ No ☑ Yes

Are you interested in earning a specific certificate, license, or degree for work? ☑ No ☑ Yes

If the individual is not interested in additional schooling or technical training now, skip the next set of questions and ask about work history instead.

What type of job are you interested in obtaining?

Do you know of a specific training/education program you would like to pursue?

What is it about that field that interests you?

Do you know about the availability of those jobs in this area? What is the occupational outlook for those jobs?

When would you like to start an educational or training program?

How long do you want to go to a school or training program? What is your timeframe for completing education or training?

Would you be interested in visiting some local programs (community college, four-year college, adult vocational training) to learn about different options for degrees and certificates?

Are you interested in joining a trade union (e.g., baker's, maintenance)? Do you know the requirements for joining? Would you like to visit the union office to learn more?

Are there any other job training or educational opportunities that you would like to learn more about?

School Experiences

Let's talk about some of your school experiences and how they were for you.

Being called on in class	☑ Okay	☑ Problem	
Social situations	☑ Okay	☑ Problem	
Taking tests	☑ Okay	☑ Problem	
Learning from lecture	☑ Okay	☑ Problem	
Learning by reading	☑ Okay	☑ Problem	
Learning hands on	☑ Okay	☑ Problem	
Concentration	☑ Okay	☑ Problem	
Memory	☑ Okay	☑ Problem	
Using computers	☑ Okay	☑ Problem	

Did you have an IEP (individual education plan) while you were in school? Did that include different strategies to help you learn? What were those?

Were you in any advanced classes? Which ones?

Has anyone ever told you that you had a learning disability? What do you know about that? What accommodations have helped you in the past?

What are your strengths related to being a student?

Plans for School and Training

What do you need in order to start school?

- ☑ Access to a computer
- ☑ Computer literacy
- ☑ Quiet place to study
- ☑ Transit card
- ☑ Financial aid
- ☑ Books/ supplies
- ☑ Mental health support
- ☑ Eldercare
- ☑ Help with transit route
- ☑ Help studying
- ☑ Help with a study calendar
- ☑ Childcare
- ☑ Help navigating campus
- ☑ More support from family/friends
- ☑ Help talking to teachers/instructors

☑ Other: _____

Comments:

What are your resources for paying for school tuition? For books? For other school costs?

Have you ever received financial aid for school? Have you ever had a grant? What type? Have you ever defaulted on a grant or student loan?

Do you need any type of classroom accommodations?

What other types of supports may help you succeed in school or training?

WORK EXPERIENCE

Most recent job ☑ N/A – Person has no work experience

Job title: _____

Employer: _____

Job duties: _____

Start Date: _____

End Date: _____

How many hours per week: _____

How did you find this job? _____

What did you like about job? _____

What did you dislike? _____

What was your supervisor like? Your co-workers?

Reason for leaving job? _____

Other info about job:

Next most recent job ☑ N/A – Person has no work experience

Job title: _____

Employer: _____

Job duties: _____

Start Date: _____

End Date: _____

How many hours per week: _____

How did you find this job? _____

What did you like about job? _____

What did you dislike? _____

What was your supervisor like? Your co-workers?

Reason for leaving job? _____

Other info about job:

Next most recent job ☑ N/A – Person has no work experience

Job title: _____

Employer: _____

Job duties: _____

Start Date: _____

End Date: _____

How many hours per week: _____

How did you find this job? _____

What did you like about job? _____

What did you dislike? _____

What was your supervisor like? Your co-workers?

Reason for leaving job? _____

Other info about job:

Please use additional sheets for other jobs.

MILITARY EXPERIENCE

☑ **Not applicable because person was not in the military**

Branch: _____

Dates: _____

Training or work experience: _____

Certificate or license: _____

CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Use the following script to introduce the next set of questions to the person.
"Our agency aims to work with people from different backgrounds and with diverse experiences. The next set of questions will help me understand your background and culture, which may help us in planning for jobs."

What is important to you in terms of your background and culture? (i.e., race, ethnicity, color, gender, economic status, etc.)

Which different languages do you speak? Which language do you prefer?

What special events or holidays do you celebrate? Are there family traditions that you still practice? How would you like your family involved as we move forward in the process of getting and keeping a job?

Is it important to you whether your work supervisor is male or female?

Have you ever felt discriminated against or treated unfairly when you were looking for work or on the job? Could you tell me about that?

MENTAL HEALTH

Has anyone ever told you that you have a mental illness? If so, what did they say?

How does your mental illness affect you?

What are the first signs that you may be experiencing a symptom flare-up?

How do you cope with your symptoms?

What medicines do you take and when do you take them?

How do the medicines work for you?

PHYSICAL HEALTH

How is your physical health? Do you have any health problems?

Do you have any problems with the following:

Standing for long periods ☑ No ☑ Yes

Can you stand for more than an hour? ☑ No ☑ Yes

Sitting ☑ No ☑ Yes

How long can you sit? _____

Climbing stairs? ☑ No ☑ Yes

How many flights? How often? _____

Lifting ☑ No ☑ Yes

How much can you lift? _____

Endurance ☑ No ☑ Yes

How many hours could you work each day? _____

Each week? _____

What is the best time of day for you? _____

COGNITIVE HEALTH

Do you have problems with memory?

Concentrating?

Doing things fast (psychomotor speed)?

If so, what things have helped with these issues in the past?

GETTING READY FOR A JOB

Do you have the clothes you will need for a job? For interviews?

Do you have an alarm clock or way to wake up for work?

Do you have two forms of identification? Picture ID, social security card...?

How will you get to work?

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Would you like a job that involved working with the public?

Where do you live and with whom do you live?

Who do you spend time with? How often do you see or talk to them?

Who can help us think about jobs you would enjoy?

☑ Appointment made with this person to discuss jobs.

If not, why? _____

Once you are employed, who would be a good person to support you?

Anyone else?

BENEFITS

Do you receive any of the following benefits?

☑ SSI ☑ SSDI ☑ Housing Subsidy ☑ Food Stamps ☑ TANF

☑ Retirement from previous job ☑ VA benefits (combat related? ☑ Yes)

☑ Spouse or dependent child receives benefits

☑ Medicaid ☑ Medicare ☑ Other benefits: _____

☑ Unsure which benefits s/he receives

☑ No benefits

Do you manage your own money?

☑ Referral made to benefits planner.

If no referral, why not: _____

DISCLOSURE
(or use "Plan for Approaching Employers" Worksheet)

Please explain that each person using supported employment services can decide whether or not their specialist will contact employers on their behalf.

What could be some of the advantages of having an employment specialist contact employers on your behalf?

What could be some of the disadvantages?

Are there any things that you would not want your employment specialist to share with an employer?

Do you know whether or not you would like your specialist to go ahead and contact employers on your behalf? (It is okay to change your mind at any time):

If you decided that the specialist should not contact employers, what things would you like him or her to do in order to help you find a job?

☑ Help with job leads ☑ Help filling out applications ☑ Help writing a resume

☑ Rides to job interviews ☑ Practicing job interview questions and answers

☑ Help following up on applications

☑ Other: _____

SUBSTANCE USE

How much alcohol do you drink?

How often?

Is there a particular time of day?

What drugs do you, or have you, used?

How often?

LEGAL HISTORY

Have you ever been arrested?

Have you ever been convicted of a crime?

Conviction 1:	Year: _____ Sentence: _____
Conviction 2:	Year: _____ Sentence: _____
Conviction 3:	Year: _____ Sentence: _____
Conviction 4:	Year: _____ Sentence: _____
Conviction 5:	Year: _____ Sentence: _____

What problems, if any, were you having in your life at the time of the offenses?

Do you have any pending legal charges? If so, what charge?

Parole Officer name: _____

PO phone number: _____

Do you have a copy of your record? ☑ No ☑ Yes

Do you want to get a copy of it? ☑ No ☑ Yes

DAILY ACTIVITY

What is a typical day like for you from the time you get up until you go to bed?

Are there places in your neighborhood that you like to go to?

Do you belong to clubs, groups, a church, etc.?

What hobbies or interests do you have?

What are your typical sleep hours?

Networking Contacts (Family, friends, previous employers, other)

Information from Family, Previous Employers or Others

_____ Date: _____
Staff signature

_____ Date: _____
IPS participant signature

Job Start Report

Worker: _____

IPS specialist: _____

Vocational Rehabilitation counselor: _____

Other support people: _____

First day of work: _____

Job title: _____

Duties: _____

Pay: _____

Benefits: _____

Work schedule:

Union position: _____

Business/employer: _____

Address:

Supervisor: _____

Disclosure: ☑ Signed release of information ☑ Will not disclose at this time

_____
IPS specialist signature

_____
Date

Job End Report

Worker: _____

Business: _____

Job title: _____

Last day of work: _____

Job title: _____

Change in duties, supervision, or work schedule:

Reason(s) for job end:

Worker's perspective on why job ended:

What was learned:

Preferences for disclosure on next job :

_____ _____

IPS specialist signature Date

Education Experience Report

Attach to career profile when a person starts school or a technical training program.
Finish this form when a person exits school or a technical training program

Student: _____

School or training program: _____

Degree or certificate sought: _____

Full or part-time student: _____

Registration with Office for Students with Disabilities? _____

Date person left the program: _____

Reason for leaving the program:

Degree or certificate earned: _____

How student overcame obstacles, if any:

_____ _____

IPS specialist signature Date

Plan for Sharing Personal Information with Employers

Some people ask their IPS specialist to talk to employers on their behalf. For example, if a person wanted to work in a game store, the IPS specialist might meet managers of game stores to learn more about those businesses and advocate for the jobseeker. The reasons that a person might want the IPS specialist to talk to employers could include:

- Extra help with a job search. IPS specialists can describe the jobseeker's strengths as a worker, learn about available jobs, and ask to introduce the jobseeker to the employer.
- Extra feedback about work performance. IPS specialists can keep in touch with employers after a person is hired to ask for feedback about how the person is performing the job and help if there is a problem.
- Help asking for promotions, raises or a change in duties.

Others people do not give IPS specialists permission to talk to employers on their behalf. Instead the IPS specialist helps with finding job leads, filling out applications, practicing interviewing skills, and other job seeking activities. The reasons that some people would not want to disclose that they use IPS services include:

- Concern that employers will not hire a person who uses an employment program.
- Some people do not mind if their supervisor knows they are working with an employment program, but they would not want their co-workers to find out. Your IPS specialist cannot guarantee that co-workers will not find out that you receive help from the IPS program.
- Some people do not feel that this type of help is necessary.

Either option is fine. Pick the strategy that feels most comfortable to you. It is also okay to change your mind during the job search, or after you are hired.

What concerns do you have (if any) about allowing your IPS specialist to talk to employers?

What could be the benefits (if any) about allowing your IPS specialist to talk to employers?

What information would you want your IPS specialist to keep private (not share with employers)?

For now, what is your preference about approaching employers? Should your IPS specialist talk to employers on your behalf?

☑ I want my IPS specialist to talk to employers on my behalf.

☑ I am not sure right now and I would like some more time to think about this.

☑ I do not want my IPS specialist to share information about me with employers. However, if my IPS specialist is talking to an employer who has the type of jobs that I like and s/he hears about a good job lead, I would like to hear about that.

Other information about my preference:

_____	_____	_____	_____
Jobseeker's signature	Date	IPS specialist's signature	Date

Plan for Accommodations in College

Colleges and universities in the U.S. offer accommodations to students who have disabilities. Each institution has an office that provides these services, typically called the Office for Disability Services or something similar. Students who think that they may need an accommodation to help them learn can register at the office and request accommodations. At some colleges, students must register before the semester begins, or early in the term in order to receive help. In those cases, students may choose to register just in case they need the services later.

The type of accommodations students receive depends on their needs and preferences. Students must bring in documentation of a disability, and may be asked for other paperwork as well such as a transition plan from high school. Then a counselor at the office talks to the student about what accommodations she thinks would be helpful. The school may, or may not be able to help with every request. Some common accommodations are listed below:

- An assigned classroom seat away from the door to reduce distraction. Or a seat near the front of the classroom to help the student focus.
- Permission to tape record lectures.
- Permission to take notes on a computer during class.
- Extra time to take tests.
- A quiet room to take tests.

If a disability flares up during the quarter or semester, students can ask to take an incomplete (put the course on hold for a period of time and then finish the coursework or re-take the course). They may be excused for missing some classes or have an opportunity to make up missed work. But there is no guarantee that these requests will be granted.

Information about approved accommodations is sent to instructors in a letter. But the Office for Students with Disabilities will not share a diagnosis with the teacher. If the teacher forgets to give you an accommodation, you may need to remind the teacher.

Students can ask their IPS specialist to help them register for disability services or go with them to attend appointments and request accommodations. Your IPS specialist may be able to help describe how you learn best and what accommodations would be helpful.

Do you want your IPS specialist to help you request accommodations? If so, what should the specialist do to help?

☑ Not applicable because I do not want the services.

It is very important to ask about the policies of the office of disability services at your school. You may not get the services you want if you do not learn about deadlines, how to request accommodations and other rules. Write down questions that you want to ask below:

☑ Not applicable because I do not want the services.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Student's signature	Date	IPS specialist's signature	Date

Employer Contact Log

Date of Contact: _____ Name of Business: _____

Person spoke to: _____ ☑ Person has hiring responsibility

Purpose of the visit: ☑ Schedule an appointment; ☑ Learn about the business;
☑ Advocate for a candidate; ☑ Ongoing relationship maintenance

☑ Other: _____

Information learned about the employer's business and hiring preferences (or notes about the visit):

Next steps:

Sample questions to learn about a business:

- What are your goals for (the business or department)?
- As the manager for (department name) what are you most proud of?
- What type of person tends to be successful here?
- What qualities do you look for when you are interviewing job candidates?
- I see that you have ____positions--what other positions do you have that I may not know about?
- What is a typical day like for a (name of position)? What have people enjoyed about this position? What are some of the challenges that people have had in this position?

IPS specialist signature: _____