

Individual Placement and Support (IPS)

Wisconsin Community Mental Health Services and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Process

The IPS project emphasizes best practice implementation strategies in collaboration and modifying existing practices and organizational barriers. There is long term technical assistance for statewide implementation. Outcomes are tracked closely. On the local level the work is done in a team with all members contributing expertise towards employment and other goals. DVR would be expected to be a member of that team and provide expertise and case service based funding for related vocational services. The day to day work is done by an Employment Specialist with a small caseload (20) of participants. Strict guidelines and fidelity scales are used to insure that evidence based best practice is used and not services based on anecdotal, casual or existing practice.

This document is intended to provide an outline of process elements needed for Individual Placement and Support (IPS) in Mental Health for WI DVR Counselors and others. Before agreeing to participate as a DVR Counselor in any IPS project there should be consultation with the WDA Director and statewide DVR IPS Representative.

The following information (listed in blue) are the standard requirements of IPS. Each of the standard eight elements is reviewed and objectively scored to determine close fidelity to the IPS model. Just below each is a narrative of how DVR plans to work within these perimeters in Wisconsin:

1.) Competitive employment is the goal

Employment specialists help clients obtain competitive jobs. Competitive employment is defined: paying at least minimum wage and the wage that others receive performing the same work, based in community settings alongside others without disabilities, and not reserved for people with disabilities. Clients prefer competitive jobs over sheltered work. Working alongside others without psychiatric disabilities helps to reduce stigma and discrimination.

In Wisconsin this definition of employment is consistent with WI DVR policy and regulation.

2.) IPS supported employment is integrated with treatment

IPS supported employment services are closely integrated with mental health treatment. Employment specialists are members of multidisciplinary teams that meet regularly to review client progress. Discussions include clinical and rehabilitation information that is relevant to work, such as medication side effects, persistent symptoms, cognitive difficulties, or other rehabilitation needs. They share information and develop ideas to help clients improve their functional recovery.

In Wisconsin, prior to formal application to DVR, a Supported Employment consumer has been involved in ongoing therapeutic intervention and may perhaps had some involvement with employment. The designated DVR Counselor participates at a minimum of one time per month in attending an update meeting held weekly with a team of MH support staff that may include: Case Manager, Employment Specialist, Peer Support, Psychologist, Social Worker, AODA Counselor, Psychiatrist, and Family Care Provider. It is believed that involvement of DVR in regular meetings will help to provide information to all team members about employment in general, possible local business connections, career path information, training and labor market information.

During these meetings, treatment team members discuss employment and the progress of each participant. The team decides based on the consumer stated goals for employment when a consumer should apply for DVR services. It is understood that upon a statement of interest by the consumer employment related services begin and become an integrated aspect of the treatment plan regardless of DVR application status. It is believed that involvement of DVR in regular meetings will help to provide information to all team members about employment in general, timing of a DVR application to meet each consumers needs, progress measures, or other specific knowledge. In turn, DVR staff will learn about potential consumers, intervention strategies, and needs of consumers with mental illness outside of the scope of employment. DVR will proceed with the application using typical methodology.

When an IPS project begins to be more established and referrals increase, additional DVR staff can be identified and should be connected to a treatment team. For example, a DVR counselor will remain and accept referrals and cases from the CSP team and another DVR counselor can take referrals and cases from the CCS team. Due to the number of model components and in depth knowledge required and collaboration needed, it is important that the fewest number of DVR Counselors become involved accepting referrals and cases in IPS. Counselors that are newly assigned to IPS should be provided with training and technical assistance on the model and expectations.

3.) Zero Exclusion: Eligibility is based on client choice

Every person with severe mental illness who wants to work is eligible for IPS supported employment, regardless of psychiatric diagnosis, symptoms, work history, or other problems, including substance abuse and cognitive impairment. The core philosophy of IPS supported employment is that all persons with a disability can work at competitive jobs in the community without prior training, and that no one should be excluded from this opportunity. Mental health agencies develop a culture of work so all practitioners encourage clients to consider working.

In Wisconsin DVR does not have a requirement for a period of substance abuse recovery or absence of symptomology and has adopted the federal regulation as state policy. WI DVR will work with IPS participants and mental health treatment teams to establish recovery plans.

4.) Attention to client preferences

Services are based on clients' preferences and choices, rather than providers' judgments. Client preferences help determine the type of job that is sought, the nature of support provided by the employment specialist and team, and whether to disclose the aspects of a person's psychiatric disability to the employer.

In Wisconsin this belief is consistent with WI DVR philosophy, policy and regulation.

5.) Benefits counseling is important

Employment specialists help clients to access ongoing guidance regarding Social Security, Medicaid, and other government entitlements. Fear of losing benefits is a major reason that clients may not want to seek employment. It is vital that clients obtain accurate information to inform and guide the plan for starting work and over time for making decisions about changes in wages and work hours.

In Wisconsin, the treatment team as well as DVR will provide access to all types of work incentive benefits analysis/counseling as needed on a case by case basis. This may be done prior to a DVR referral as part of regular mental health services. WI DVR has a full complement of statewide service providers that provide work incentive benefits analysis services. DVR will track wages for consumers

seeking to work at the Ticket-to-Work or Substantial gainful Employment level. MH providers are encouraged to become Employment Networks to secure additional funding and sustainability of IPS.

6.) Rapid job search

Employment specialists help clients seek jobs directly, rather than providing extensive pre-employment assessment and training, or intermediate work experiences. Beginning the job search process early (i.e., within 30 days) demonstrates to clients that their desire to work is taken seriously, and conveys optimism that there are multiple opportunities available in the community for clients to achieve their vocational goals.

In Wisconsin, regardless of DVR status, participants will begin services with an employment specialist. The typical DVR process is followed including eligibility. DVR services will begin once an IPE is in place. Local understanding and communication will be needed in concert with the MH Team Employment Specialists to determine exactly when DVR can begin services. Assessments to determine a level of readiness for employment are not used in IPS. Other assessments can be utilized after consultation with the statewide DVR IPS Representative. IPS technical specifications and fees have been created.

7.) Systematic job development

Employment specialists develop relationships with employers, based upon their clients' work preferences, by meeting face-to-face over multiple visits. Employment specialists learn about the work environment and the employers' work needs and find out about jobs that they may not be aware of at employment sites. They gather information about the nature of job opportunities and assess whether they may be a good job fit. Employment specialists continue to make periodic visits because networking is how people find jobs.

In Wisconsin, this approach is supported and encouraged as a high quality approach to job development.

8.) Time-unlimited support

Follow-along supports are individualized and continued for as long as the client wants and needs the support. IPS specialists and other members of the treatment team provide work support. In addition they look for natural supports (e.g., family member, co-worker) that would be available over time. The goal is to help the client become as independent as possible in his or her vocational role, while providing support and assistance as needed. Once a person has worked steadily (e.g., one year), they discuss transitioning from IPS.

In Wisconsin, this belief is consistent with WI DVR philosophy, policy and regulation. DVR will work with the MH team to secure longer term support and provide appropriate resources. These resources can include funding for initial support through one on one vocational support provided by the MH team while a consumer is working. Supports can include on-site or off-site job coaching or other supports and can be provided by any member of the MH treatment team including certified peer specialists. There is no stated timeframe for transition and closure from DVR. Transition cannot occur prior to 90 days on the job by federal regulation but can occur after that time as each case is individualized. Transitioning to longer term support is part of the WI DVR supported employment process and in IPS identifies the MH agency or county as the source of long term support in supported employment.

(Updated: 02/05/13)