

Individual Placement and Support - Supervisor Guidelines

Introduction

Individual Placement and Support (IPS) is an evidence-based employment support approach for people with a lived experience of mental health and addictions. Like many others, people with lived experience desire to live a meaningful life which includes participating in the workforce. Evidence shows that work provides a means of social inclusion, sense of purpose, financial stability, and health benefits.

As an IPS supervisor, your role is vital in assisting your team to adhere to IPS practice principles which can lead to more and better outcomes. These practices are adopted by both clinical teams and employment consultants:

1. **Zero exclusion** – a person's desire to be employed is the only criterion for access to employment support. Work history, current mental health symptoms, addiction issues, and convictions do not affect access, but are used to tailor the intensity of employment support.
2. **Individually tailored** – employment support is person centred, focusing on what a person would like to do, their choice and preference.
3. **Rapid job search** – job search starts within four weeks of entering the IPS service.
4. **Focus on competitive employment** – ordinary jobs in the open labour market paying minimum wage or above, not reserved for people with disabilities.
5. **Financial guidance/benefits counselling** – people are assisted to understand the financial implication of taking up work. Employment consultants have excellent working relationships with Work and Income staff to understand obligations and entitlements. Employment consultants help people transition from benefits to salary and wages.
6. **Job development** – employment consultants actively establish and maintain relationships with local employers. Consultants help identify and create job openings and opportunities. They do not solely rely on internet searches for securing work.

7. **Ongoing support to the employee and employer** – once placed in employment the person and their employer are offered ongoing support, as needed.
8. **Employment and clinical supports are integrated** – employment consultants are an integral part of the mental health and addictions team. Support is coordinated whereby treatment plans consider employment status and aspirations and health care is recovery and work focused.

Role of the IPS Supervisor

You have the responsibility of recruiting, developing, and managing your employment team. You guide each employment consultant in best practice and manage the IPS programme in collaboration with mental health services – you are a leader, influencer, and decision-maker.

Some of your key responsibilities include:

- Recruiting and training IPS employment consultants
- Settling consultants into mental health treatment teams
- IPS supervision, facilitating team meetings and conducting field mentoring
- Working alongside mental health and addiction team leaders
- Tracking employer contacts and time in the community
- Reviewing client outcomes and setting goals for the team
- Assisting with the coordination of fidelity reviews and IPS development planning

One of the most important aspects of the approach is the quality of the working relationship between employment and mental health services. To ensure good integration you will participate in steering group and or operational meetings and report to senior management. You are required to work closely with the mental health and addiction team leaders to identify, discuss, and resolve any programme issues.

What does employment consultant supervision look like?

Supervision, particularly for new employment consultants needs to be weekly, follow an agenda (see below) and be recorded. It is useful to set a specific day and time for this to occur.

Make supervision a usual practice. Create a positive and encouraging environment to discuss and set actions for the following:

- New referrals
- Overview of client list
- Clients having difficulty engaging with the programme
- Clients having trouble with job search or securing employment
- Matters to take to mental health treatment team meetings

Each subsequent week follow up on any actions.

Employment team meetings

These meetings occur weekly and must follow an agenda and be recorded. A suggested agenda is below:

- Celebrate client success stories
- Review employer contact logs
- Share job leads
- Encourage each consultant to bring a case to the meeting that they are having difficulty with and use the meeting to strategise possible solutions
- Review job outcomes and set team goals or targets

Both individual supervision and weekly team meetings do not have to be lengthy, however they should focus on client supports rather than following up on administrative tasks.

Field mentoring

Field mentoring is a form of coaching and a well-known aspect of IPS practice. Supervisor's schedule monthly field mentoring to go out into the community to model the skill of job development. Job development is a method of finding employment opportunities by meeting with employers at their business to learn about their hiring preferences. It is a strategy of developing relationships with managers to build a network of employers and introducing likely candidates for any job opportunities.

As the supervisor you are required to assist consultants to acquire skills in approaching employers and building relationships, you do this by role modelling, observing the employment consultant engage with employers, and offering feedback.

The role of clinicians

IPS uses a team approach to help people with employment therefore mental health care, treatment and employment support is aligned. It is important clinicians are encouraged to raise the topic of work with people early in their treatment. Clinicians discuss the prospect of employment with people on their caseload and make appropriate referrals to the IPS programme.

Once a person is engaged in the IPS programme clinicians remain involved to support the individual's wellbeing during job search and job placement. Clinicians share ideas for employment planning and provide information in team meetings.

Adhering to fidelity

Individual Placement and Support is best performed with high fidelity to the practice principles. Regular fidelity reviews are an important part of quality improvement. Reviews provide a chance to identify programme strengths and highlight service development areas.

The ANZ Fidelity Scale (IPS-25) is divided into three sections: staffing, organisation, and services. In total there are 25 items, each measuring on a band from 1-5 differentiating between 'Not IPS' to 'Exemplary IPS'.

The IPS Fidelity Scale for Young Adults (IPS-Y) is a 35 item scale. It has two components: IPS EMP (adapted from the IPS-25 scale) and IPS-Ed (10 items mostly focussed on education). This scale is recommended for use with IPS programmes serving people of 15-26 years of age. Copies of both the IPS-25 and IPS-Y are available from info@workcounts.co.nz

As an IPS supervisor you foster alignment to evidence-based practice. As per the IPS Fidelity Scales there is one item dedicated to the role of IPS supervisor. This is item 8. The relevant components of item 8 are listed below:

WORK COUNTS

1. You are responsible for no more than 10 employment consultants and do not have other supervisory responsibilities. If you serve young adults and older adults, then standard for maximum supervised is 8 IPS consultants.
2. If serving young adults, the IPS supervisor meets and interacts with 80% or more of young adults on the caseload by joining IPS consultants in intake interviews or other appointments with young people.
3. You conduct weekly supervision.
4. You communicate with mental health team leaders. You attend mental health treatment team meetings on a quarterly basis.
5. You accompany employment consultants into the community to conduct field mentoring.
6. You review client outcomes and set goals to improve programme performance.

Following all components will result in 'exemplary' fidelity.

Summary

Helping people with a lived experience of mental health and addictions into education, suitable training or employment is an important part of recovery. Following IPS practice principles allows for better outcomes and greater adherence to fidelity.

An important part of creating a successful employment team requires the skill and effort of a dedicated IPS supervisor. Undertaking weekly supervision and team meetings ensures the employment consultants are conversant in the IPS approach. Being integrated into mental health services and having a working relationship with the mental health team leader contributes to the sustainability of your IPS programme.

References

Becker, D., Swanson, S., Reese, S., Bond, G., & McLeman, B. (2019). Supported Employment Fidelity Review Manual – A companion guide to the evidence-based IPS Supported Employment Fidelity Scale (4th Ed.). New Hampshire: Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center.

Swanson, S., Becker, D. (2013) IPS Supported Employment A Practical Guide. New Hampshire: Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center.