

IPS and Education

Education is developmentally appropriate for adolescents and young adults. And some middle aged and older adults are also interested in school or vocational training. Educational attainment predicts employment rate among people with serious mental illnesses. And lifetime earnings are strongly associated with educational attainment in the general population.

Some people assume that supported education is not part of IPS, but that is not the case. IPS specialists have always helped some people with career development, including education and training programs. When education is related to a career goal, and a person needs a significant level of assistance getting started in school, or throughout an educational program, then an IPS specialist may be selected as the best person to provide support.

IPS specialists focus on mainstream programs for which eligibility is based on academic performance, age, or previous educational attainment. They do not promote programs that are developed for people who have disabilities. Examples of the types of institutions that have mainstream education programs include the following:

- High schools
- GED (General Educational Development) classes
- Community colleges
- Joint vocational schools
- Other schools with certificate bearing programs. Examples include dog grooming, cosmetology, culinary, and truck driving schools.
- Four-year colleges and universities

Practice principles for education, are similar to IPS practice principles for employment. 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.

3. Supported education services use a team approach: IPS specialists have frequent contact with mental health treatment practitioners, housing specialists, school counselors, and others who have a role in helping youth achieve their education goals. They meet weekly to discuss strategies to support students. IPS specialists also meet at least monthly with state vocational rehabilitation counselors who may provide information about careers, certification and degree programs, and possible accommodations. IPS specialists also ask each student which family members or other support people they would like to involve in their education plan.
4. Supported education and employment services are integrated in the IPS vocational unit. Many young people are interested in pursuing both work and education at the same time, or switch between work and school goals. Therefore, one team provides both services to ensure 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 projected wages they will receive after earning a certificate or degree. Benefits planners also provide information about 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, for example, 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: IPS specialists and the supervisor visit college offices for students with disabilities (the name of the office varies) to learn 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 supported education is individualized: 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, where to meet the IPS specialist, which family members to include in the education plan, and what supports the IPS specialist should provide.