

Program Snapshot: Individual Placement and Support for Adults with Justice Involvement

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Individual Placement and Support (IPS) is an evidence-based model that aims to help people with severe mental illness find and work at jobs of their choosing. IPS is typically implemented by IPS specialists (sometimes called employment specialists), who have caseloads of up to 20 people, in community mental health centers. Extensive rigorous evidence from randomized controlled trials demonstrates the efficacy of IPS for improving employment outcomes of individuals with severe mental illness (Frederick and VanerWeele 2019).¹

Under the Next Generation of Enhanced Employment Strategies (NextGen) Project (see box), five mental health centers in the Midwest and South will use IPS to serve adults who have recently reentered the community after having served time in a jail or prison or who have recently been ordered to probation or to serve an alternative sentence by a homeless, mental health, or drug court. The mental health centers include (1) Case Management Incorporated in Memphis, Tennessee; (2) Central Oklahoma Community Mental Health Center in Norman, Oklahoma; (3) Grand Lake Mental Health Center in Claremore, Oklahoma; (4) Pee Dee Mental Health in Florence, South Carolina; and (5) Transitions Mental Health Services in Moline, Illinois, and Davenport, Iowa.



Next Generation of Enhanced Employment Strategies (NextGen) Project

The goal of the NextGen Project is to identify and study innovative employment programs for people facing complex employment challenges. The study explores how the programs are designed and operated, their cost, and how effective they are at improving participants' employment, health, and other outcomes related to economic self-sufficiency and well-being. The NextGen Project is part of the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation's [Innovative Strategies for Addressing Employment Barriers Portfolio](#), which seeks to rigorously evaluate the "next generation" of employment strategies for individuals with low income, and is partnering with the Social Security Administration on select evaluations.

The NextGen project will evaluate the effectiveness of those services. This will be the first large-scale evaluation of IPS offered to adults with justice involvement. Only people who qualify for mental health services from a participating center will be included in the study. Unlike the typical population served by IPS, some participants may not suffer from "severe" mental illness that results in serious functional impairment. Study participants will be recruited from jails and other justice institutions.

Key features of IPS for Adults with Justice Involvement

IPS is based on eight principles, see [IPS model](#), all of which will be implemented in the participating mental health centers.²

- 1. IPS is open to anyone who wants to work.** People are not excluded from participation because of their mental health diagnosis, history of justice involvement, or readiness for work.
- 2. The goal of IPS is for participants to obtain jobs in the competitive labor market.** Participants are not steered into jobs that are set aside for people with disabilities but work with others who do not have disabilities in full- or part-time jobs that pay at least minimum wage.

- 3. Participants engage in job search immediately.** During the first few meetings, the IPS specialist learns about the participant's goals, interests, strengths, and previous experiences with work and school. Many participants know what type of work they want, and in those situations the IPS specialist helps them begin a job search within a few weeks of joining the IPS program (on average, participants remain in IPS for about a year). Others may be unsure of the type of work they want; in these situations, the IPS specialist helps them learn about different types of jobs or investigate short-term vocational technical programs to develop skills and knowledge for jobs that they desire.
- 4. IPS specialists build relationships with employers.** IPS specialists learn about the employers' needs so they can identify qualified job candidates.
- 5. Participant preferences guide their job search and job choice.** IPS specialists do not simply place participants in jobs sourced from an existing pool of available jobs; rather, job seekers indicate preferences for job type, work hours, and types of job supports, and IPS specialists develop jobs that align with those preferences.
- 6. IPS provides integrated services through a team-based approach.** Staff collaborate with the participant and with one another to coordinate employment, mental health, and other services. IPS specialists meet at least weekly with a team of practitioners (for example, care coordinators, therapists, or housing specialists) at the mental health center.
- 7. IPS staff refer participants for comprehensive, individualized benefits planning by a trained benefits specialist.** The goal is to inform IPS participants, as needed, about how starting or changing jobs will affect their eligibility for public assistance, highlighting the advantages of working.
- 8. IPS provides individualized long-term supports to help participants succeed on the job and with job changes and career advancement.** IPS specialists provide support for as long as the participant needs and desires, without time limits.

The NextGen Project will release findings about IPS for adults with justice involvement over the next few years.

The project team will collect and analyze information about how IPS for adults with justice involvement operates, its successes and challenges, its cost, and its effectiveness compared with other employment services available at the mental health centers and elsewhere in participants' communities. The IPS Employment Center will provide technical assistance, program manuals, and fidelity reviews to support implementation. For more information, visit the NextGen Project's web page [<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/next-generation-of-enhanced-employment-strategies-project>] or email [NextGenProject@mathematica-mpr.com] us about receiving regular updates on the project.

¹ Frederick DE, VanderWeele TJ. Supported employment: meta-analysis and review of randomized controlled trials of individual placement and support. PLoS ONE. (2019) 14:e0212208. 10.1371/journal.pone.0212208 - [DOI](#) - [PMC](#) - [PubMed](#)

² See [What is IPS? – The IPS Employment Center \(ipsworks.org\)](#)

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