

## **SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT: Evidence-Based Practice**

Sarah Swanson, LSW, CRC  
Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center

February 5, 2009

## **Presentation Outline**

- Evidence for effective employment services
- Components of IPS/Evidence-Based Supported Employment
- Implementation lessons from the National EBP Study and Johnson & Johnson-Dartmouth Community Mental Health Program

## **Competitive Employment for People with Serious Mental Illness**

- **Say they want to work: 70%**
- **Are currently working: <15%**
- **Current access to supported employment: <5%**
- **Preference for type of work: competitive jobs**

## **Definition of Competitive Employment**

- Jobs that pay at least minimum wage
- Integrated in community settings
- “Owned” by the worker
- Not jobs specially created for people with disabilities.

“Supported Employment? Oh, we do that!”

- Many programs use the term “supported employment”
- Federal definition of “supported employment”
- Evidence-based supported employment (IPS) is defined by a 25 item fidelity scale. Has been rigorously researched for effectiveness in helping people with serious mental illness with competitive jobs.

## **Evidence Based Supported Employment (IPS) Principles**

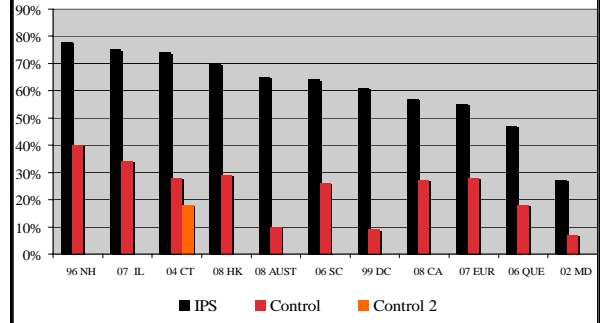
1. Competitive employment
2. Team approach (VR, MH, SE)
3. All interested clients are eligible
4. Benefits planning (work incentives)
5. Rapid job search
6. Job matching → preferences & strengths
7. Ongoing supports

## Evidence for Supported Employment

- 11 completed randomized controlled trials of high fidelity SE/IPS
- 6 day treatment conversion studies
- 7 correlational studies of fidelity and supported employment

(Bond, 2008)

**Competitive Employment Rates in 11 Randomized Controlled Trials of Individual Placement and Support**

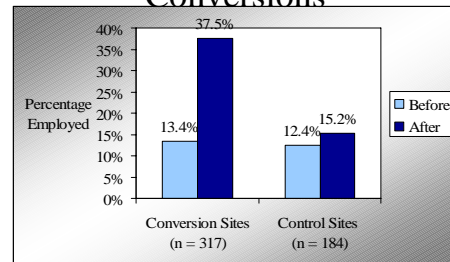


## Summary: RCTs of Supported Employment/IPS

- In 11 of 11 studies, SE had significantly better competitive employment outcomes than controls
- Mean across studies of consumers working competitive at some time:
  - 61% for supported employment
  - 23% for controls

(Bond, 2008)

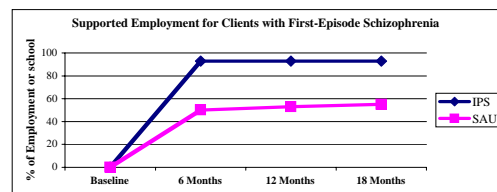
**Mean Competitive Employment Rates in 6 Day Treatment Conversions**



## Correlation Between SE Fidelity and Competitive Employment Rates

Location	# sites	Finding	Reference
Vermont	10	$r = .76$	Becker (2001)
Indiana	20	$r = .42$	McGrew (2005)
Indiana	17	$r = .37$	McGrew (2007)
J&J states	26	$r = .51$	Becker (2006)
Maryland	VR Status 26 closures	EBP SE = 60% Non-EBP = 36%	Hayward (2007)
Kansas	11	High employment rates in high fidelity sites	Gowdy (2003)
Europe	6	High employment rates in high fidelity sites	Burns (2007)

## Nuechterlein Study of First-Episode Schizophrenia



## 2 Long-Term IPS Follow-up Studies

- 10 years: Salyers (2004) found 47% still working. 92% worked during follow-up (of those, 33% worked more than half the follow-up period).
- 8-12 years: Becker (2007), found 71% still working. 82% worked during follow-up (of those, 71% worked more than half the follow-up period).

## Other Outcomes

- Work outcomes improve over time.
- Costs decrease dramatically for consistent workers (Bush, in prep)

## Positive Outcomes from Competitive Work

- No increase in psychiatric hospitalizations or any other negative outcomes.
- Significantly greater reduction of hospitalization for IPS participants in two studies.

(Burns, 2007; Henry, 2004)

## Evidence-Based Practice

- Program model validated by rigorous research (different investigators)
- Has guidelines describing critical components
- Has standardized training material

## Evidence-based Supported Employment Principles

1. All interested clients are eligible
2. Team approach
3. Competitive Employment
4. Personalized benefits planning
5. Rapid job search
6. Continuous follow along supports
7. Client preferences are important

## Eligibility is Based on Consumer Choice

Consumers are not excluded because they are not “ready” or because of prior work history, hospitalization history, substance use, “treatment compliance”, symptoms or other characteristics.

## We Can't Predict Who Will Work



## We Can Help People Consider Work

- “I believe you can work.”
- “It’s up to you to decide when it is the right time to work. It’s your choice.”
- “Many people who go back to work report that work has been an important component of their recovery.”

## 2. Supported Employment is Integrated with Mental Health Treatment

Employment specialists communicate frequently with mental health practitioners to celebrate successes, suggest employment for clients and to generate solutions for clients.

## VR Collaboration

- Some evidence to suggest that when people have access to both systems → better outcomes. (J&J project in 11 states)
- Monthly meetings, shared office space, VR liaisons...

## 3. Competitive Employment Is the Goal

- **Nobody had the goal of working in a janitorial enclave when they were in high school.**
- **Consumers interested in employment are not steered into volunteer jobs, enclaves, or sheltered work.**

## 3. Competitive employment is the Goal

Programs that treat supported employment as an add-on while retaining other vocational options have poorer employment outcomes (Drake, 1998; Gowdy, 2000)

#### 4. Personalized Benefits Planning is Provided

- Benefits planning (work incentives planning) and guidance help clients make informed decisions about job starts and changes.
- Help reporting income as needed.

#### 5. Job Search Starts Soon After A Consumer Expresses Interest in Working

Typically face-to-face contact with employers begins within a few weeks of meeting with an employment specialist.

#### 6. Follow-Along Supports are Continuous

- Employment specialists provide supports for as long as desired by clients until the job is stable.
- Typically, SE supports are provided for at least a year.
- Mental health practitioners may help with longer term supports.

#### 7. Consumer Preferences are Important

Job finding is based on consumers preferences, strengths and anticipated needs, rather than jobs that are easy to find.

#### **Job Preferences Are Important**

Copyrighted image removed.

#### Supported Employment Fidelity

- Fidelity refers to providing the service in a manner consistent with the model that has been shown to be effective.
- Can be used as a quality improvement tool.
- Scale was revised in January 2008.

## Supported Employment Fidelity

- External fidelity reviewers are highly recommended.
- Written action plans to improve fidelity will help agency move forward.
- Fidelity kit is available from:  
<http://dms.dartmouth.edu/prc/employment>

## Summary

- People with serious mental illness can work in competitive jobs.
- Programs that follow evidence-based principles (and use fidelity) have better outcomes.
- Programs should plan implementation strategies.

## Resources Available from Dartmouth PRC

- Supported Employment: A Practical Guide for Practitioners and Supervisors (2008)
- SE Fidelity Toolkit (includes revised SE fidelity scale, DVD...)
- Posters, demonstration DVDs, brochures, SE newsletter:  
<http://dms.dartmouth.edu/prc/employment>

## More Resources for Supported Employment

- A Working Life for People with Severe Mental Illness, Becker and Drake.  
(Oxford Press)
- Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal,  
Spring 2008 Issue. Special issue on supported employment.