

Employment First “102”: Supported Employment Models

Aging and Disability
Services Division
January 8, 2026

Lin Nibbelink, LISW



Iowa's Employment Vision

“Employment in the general workforce is the first priority and the expected and preferred outcome in the provision of publicly funded services for all working age Iowans with disabilities.”

Foundations Review

What was covered in “Employment First 101” Webinar



Overview

Iowa's system of LTSS employment supports

Career Exploration aka Career Development



Individual Supported Employment (ISE)
including Job Development



Long-term Job Coaching



Individual Placement and Support (IPS)
EBP Model



Customized Employment
aka Customized Discovery



Self Employment

What is “Community Employment?”

We believe that everyone, even people with significant disabilities, can and should have the opportunity to be fully employed in their community and take part in community life and contribute to community life..

Individual job

Paid by employer

Normal job
setting

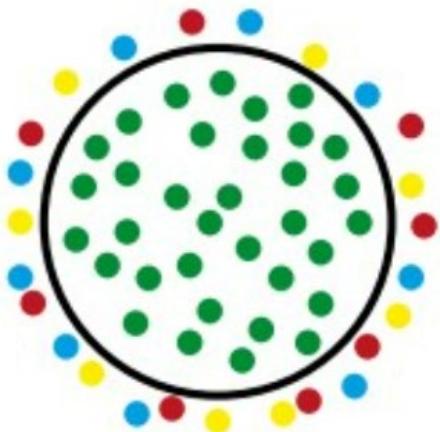
Integrated with
regular workforce

Natural supports
(+ provider if
needed)

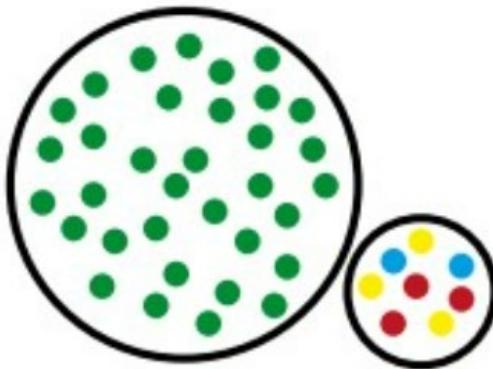
Change the question to change the culture...

from “Do you want to work?”
to “What work do you want to do?”

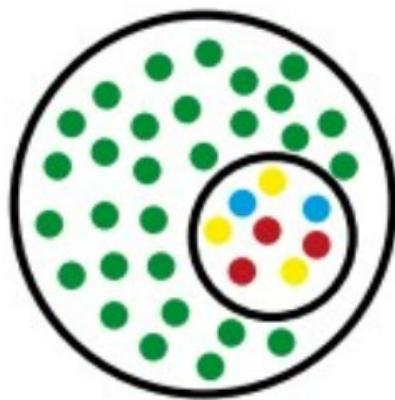




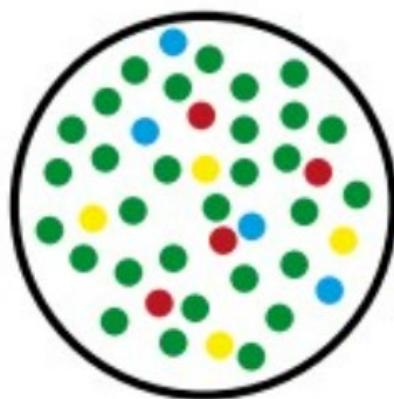
Exclusion



Segregation



Integration



Inclusion

Medicaid funded LTSS

Persons may flow through...

Career Exploration
(34 hours of prescribed activity in 90 days)

Individual Supported Employment
(job development)

Long Term Job Coaching

Career Exploration aka Career Development

- Activity within Medicaid Prevocational Service
- 34 hours within 90 days, prescribed activities
- Who pays?
 - Local education agencies (youth under 21)
 - Vocational Rehabilitation
 - One Stop Career Centers (IWD)
 - Medicaid- 1915(i) or 1515(c) under prevocational, supported employment, or “other” category

- Career exploration (within Prevoc) results in a written individual career plan for community employment from the member's experientially-based informed choice
- Career exploration activities take place in the community:
 - Meeting with the member & significant others, to introduce supported employment & explore their employment goals
 - Business tours, industry events, career fairs
 - Informational interviews
 - Job shadows
 - Benefits education and financial literacy classes
 - Assistive technology assessment
 - Job exploration events

Individual Supported Employment

Individual Supported Employment are services provided to, or on behalf of, the member that enables them to get and keep an individual job in competitive integrated employment, customized employment or self-employment in the general community workforce.

Long-Term Job Coaching

- Medicaid Monthly Tiers
- Based on need, including a 1-contact tier
- Service definitions includes “time on behalf of” members

Long-Term Job Coaching

Long-term job coaching services are provided to or on behalf of members who need support because of their disabilities and who are unlikely to maintain and advance in CIE without the supports.

Long-term job coaching services provide individualized and ongoing support contacts at intervals necessary help people keep and advance in their jobs.

Long-term job coaching services are based on the identified needs of the member as documented in their comprehensive service plan. The member is authorized for a monthly tier of service based on the number of hours of direct support and activities on behalf of the member that they need each month to maintain their employment.

LTJC Tiers

Current rate for...

Tier 1 = 1 contact/month	H2024 U4	1.5 hours/ month
Tier 2 = 2-8 hours/month	H2025 U3	8 hours/month
Tier 3 = 9-16 hours/month	H2025 U5	16 hours/month
Tier 4 = 17-25 hours/month	H2025 U7	25 hours/month
Tier 5 = 26+ hours/month	H2025 UC	\$54.51/Hour

Must be reauthorized every 90 days

Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Model

- Services paid by Medicaid and/or Voc Rehab
- Program start-up costs supported by DAPs, Foundations, Grants
- Researched/normed, currently used primarily with SMI customers
- The only Supported Employment Evidence Based Practice (EBP) to date
- IPS uses a holistic **team** approach & has 8 Basic Tenets
- An IPS teams' effectiveness is measured by a 25-item Fidelity Scale, measured by an annual 2-day on-site review by trained reviewers
- Goes well with CMHC's ACT or FEP programs

What is IPS?

“IPS is a highly successful, evidenced-based model of supported employment that promotes a ‘recovery through work’ philosophy whereby individuals ... achieve competitive, integrated employment when assisted with ongoing support services.”

IPS Practice Principles



Zero Exclusion



Worker Preferences



Rapid Job Search



Benefits Planning



Integrated Services



Systematic Job Development



Competitive Employment



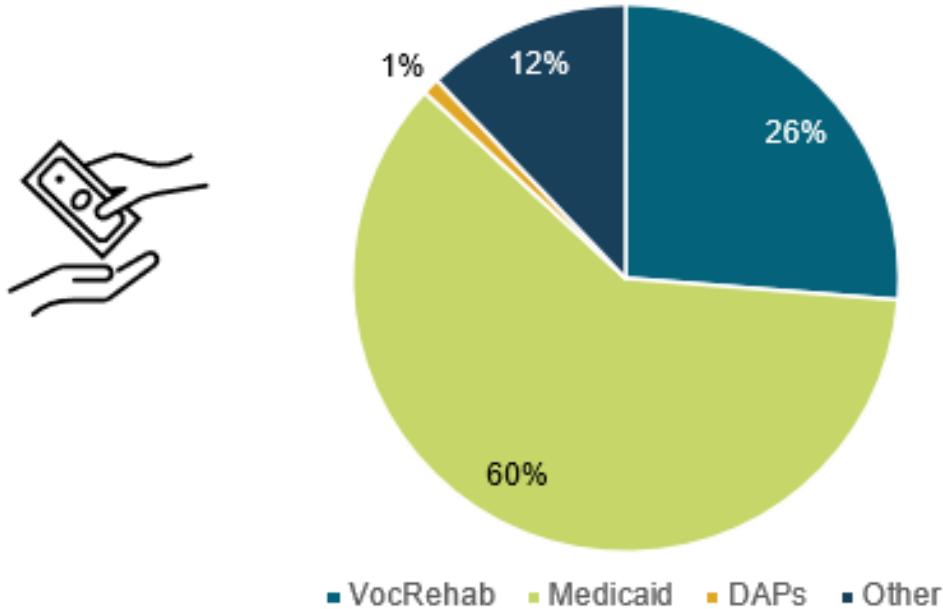
Time-Unlimited Supports

2024 Service Funding Structure for approved IPS Sites via Voc Rehab and Medicaid Habilitation

Outcome Description	Outcome Reimbursement *IVRS ^Medicaid	Providers' Supporting Documentation
#1. Completed Employment Plan	* \$1516.40 ^ \$1570.42	*Career Profile *IA IPS Job Search Plan *IA IPS Milestone Progress Report
#2. 1 st Day Successful Job Placement	* \$2313.60 ^ \$2394.53	*IA IPS Milestone Progress Report *Job Development Log *Job Start Form
#3. 45 Days Successful Job Retention	* \$2313.60 ^ \$2394.53	*IA IPS Milestone Progress Report *Job Support Plan *Employment Training Plan
#4. 90 Days Successful Job Stabilization	* \$842.24 ^ \$871.58	*IA IPS Milestone Progress Report *Employment Training Plan (reviewed & updated)

Iowa IPS Outcomes 3rd Quarter 2025

Funding Sources



Populations Served

Criminal Justice Involvement 39% Homelessness 8% ID/DD 16%
Substance Use Disorders 27% Brain Injury 9% Youth in Transition 0%

Iowa IPS Outcomes 3rd Quarter 2025

Basic demographics

Age 18—63+

36% age 18-30 46% age 31-50 17% age 51+

Gender Male 61% Female 39% Trans/Nonbinary 02%

Ethnicity/ Race Non-Hispanic/Non-LatinX 94%
AI/AN/I 003% A/AA 1% Black 13% NH/PI 0%
White 83% Other 4%

Working Avg 23 hours/week

Avg pay \$13.81/hour

Customized Employment/ Customized Discovery

- Research shows that CE leads to positive employment outcomes for people with disabilities
- Primary customers: ID/D, significant disabilities, multi-occurring conditions
- One person - one business at a time
- Works with those previously seen as “unemployable” or who used 14C settings
- CE/CD is evaluated with an 8-component Fidelity Scale by trained reviewers
- Research is underway to see if it's an EBP
- Currently a “best” or “promising” practice

4 Essential Components of CE/CD

- **Discovery**
 - 24–60 hours over 5–9 weeks; reveals vocational themes
 - Assumes employability with the right job match & supports
- **Job search planning**
 - May use a Visual Resume (a video or slide-show)
- **Job development & negotiation**
 - May include “job carving” and “job analysis”
- **Post-employment support**
 - Natural supports



Self-Employment

- Medicaid provides supported employment for self-employment similarly to what it does for CIE
- Voc Rehab has the Iowa Self-Employment Program (ISE)
- <https://workforce.iowa.gov/vr/career-planning-other-services/self-employment>
- ISE is for VR or IDB customers who choose self-employment
- ISE offers business counseling, technical and financial assistance for people to start, expand, or buy a business which is “for-profit” and Iowa based
- VR assistance is through Microenterprise ISE or Full ISE

VR's ISE two prongs

Microenterprise ISE

Microenterprise ISE is for people who want to start, or have, a business that needs less than \$1,500 in financial assistance and less than \$1,500 in technical assistance. No Dollar-for-Dollar Match is required.

Full ISE

Full ISE is for people who are or want to become entrepreneurs and own their own business. People can be the sole owner or have co-owners in a partnership, Limited Liability Company (LLC), or corporation. Feasibility of the business idea must be investigated with the team.

IVRS Website on Customized Discovery,

<https://workforce.iowa.gov/vr/partners/community-rehabilitation-programs/menu-services>

Griffin-Hammis Associates,

<https://www.griffinhammis.com/what-we-do/customized-employment/>

U of IA Center of Excellence in Behavioral Health, IPS,

<https://www.iowacebh.org/individual-placement-support/>

The IPS Employment Center, Lebanon NH,

www.ipsworks.org

ODEP's Employment 1st initiatives,

<http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/EmploymentFirst.htm>

Iowa APSE on Employment 1st,

<https://iowaapse.org/about-us/what-is-employment-first/>

Includes a nice timeline graphic of events leading up to Employment 1st

The Job Accommodation Network,

<https://askjan.org/index.html>

Local Assistive Technology Act Program,

<https://iowaat.org>

E1st for Iowans with Disabilities

Lin Nibbelink, HHS lin.Nibbelink@hhs.iowa.gov

Vienna Hoang, IWD VocRehab vienna.hoang@iwd.iowa.gov

Mindy Williams, HHS Medicaid mindy.williams@hhs.iowa.gov

Brian Dennis, IWD brian.dennis@iowa.gov

Kyra Preston, HHS Aging & Disability kyra.hawley@hhs.iowa.gov

Benefits Planning for People with Disabilities

Angela Young, IWD VocRehab Angela.Young@iowa.gov

Disability Rights Iowa, contact@driowa.org Toll Free: 800-779-2502

Individual Placement and Support

University of Iowa Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health,
www.iowacebh.org

Customized Employment aka Customized Discovery

Jess Kreho Jkreho@griffinhammis.com

Ashlea Lantz Ashlea.Lantz@gmail.com

Contact Info

Lin Nibbelink, MSW, LISW
Disability Employment Policy Planner
Iowa HHS Aging & Disability Services
lin.nibbelink@hhs.iowa.gov

Thank You!