# Summary of A Controlled Trial of Supported Employment for People With Severe Mental Illness and Justice Involvement.pdf

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| Filename | A Controlled Trial of Supported Employment for People With Severe Mental Illness and Justice Involvement.pdf |
| Processing Date | 2025-03-17 11:05:39 |

## Background

### Background Information  
  
#### Research Problem  
The research problem addressed in this study is the effectiveness of supported employment interventions for people with severe mental illness who have been involved in the criminal justice system. Specifically, the study aims to determine whether the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model of supported employment is as effective for individuals with a history of arrest or incarceration as it is for those without such histories.  
  
#### Previous Research and Existing Knowledge Gaps  
Previous research has established that the IPS model is an evidence-based practice for helping people with severe mental illness attain competitive employment. Numerous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of IPS, showing that about two-thirds of participants obtain competitive employment, which is significantly higher than other vocational programs (Bond et al., 1998; Drake et al., 2014). However, there are gaps in knowledge regarding the efficacy of IPS for individuals with severe mental illness who have a history of justice involvement. While some studies suggest that IPS clients with criminal records can achieve similar employment outcomes (Frounfelker et al., 2011), there is limited empirical evidence supporting this claim, especially given the increasing rates of justice involvement among clients in public mental health systems.  
  
#### Theoretical Framework or Model  
The study uses the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model as its theoretical framework. IPS incorporates eight key principles: eligibility based on consumer choice, focus on competitive employment, integration of mental health and employment services, attention to client preferences, work incentives planning, rapid job search, systematic job development, and individualized job supports.  
  
#### Significance and Rationale for the Study  
The significance of this study lies in its potential to address a critical gap in knowledge about effective employment interventions for justice-involved individuals with severe mental illness. Given the increasing rates of criminal justice involvement among people with severe mental illness, there is a pressing need to identify effective strategies that promote community integration and reduce recidivism. The rationale for the study is to evaluate whether the IPS model can be effectively adapted to support this population, thereby enhancing their chances of achieving competitive employment and integrating into mainstream society.  
  
This background information sets the stage for understanding the importance of the study in addressing a significant public health issue and highlights the need for effective interventions that can improve outcomes for justice-involved individuals with severe mental illness.

## Methods

### Methodology Summary  
  
#### Study Design  
The study employed a randomized controlled trial (RCT) design to compare the effectiveness of two employment interventions for people with severe mental illness who have been involved in the criminal justice system. Participants were randomly assigned to either the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model or a comparison group that offered a job club approach called Work Choice.  
  
#### Population and Sampling  
The study included 87 participants with severe mental illness and a history of justice involvement. Eligibility criteria included:  
- Diagnosis of schizophrenia spectrum disorder, bipolar disorder, or other psychotic disorder.  
- No competitive employment in the past three months.  
- Severe mental illness as defined by state criteria.  
- Age 18 years or older.  
- Expressed interest in competitive employment.  
- Self-disclosed criminal justice history.  
  
Participants were recruited from a psychiatric rehabilitation agency in Chicago. The final sample consisted of 43 participants in the IPS group and 44 in the Work Choice group, after administrative drops.  
  
#### Intervention Description  
\*\*IPS Group:\*\*  
- \*\*Type:\*\* Supported employment model based on eight principles.  
- \*\*Duration:\*\* One year.  
- \*\*Components:\*\* Eligibility based on consumer choice, focus on competitive employment, integration of mental health and employment services, attention to client preferences, work incentives planning, rapid job search, systematic job development, and individualized job supports.  
- \*\*Implementation:\*\* Employment specialists received a day-long training on criminal justice issues and ongoing consultation.  
  
\*\*Work Choice Group:\*\*  
- \*\*Type:\*\* Job club approach tailored for persons with psychiatric disabilities.  
- \*\*Duration:\*\* One year.  
- \*\*Components:\*\* Self-directed job search, résumé preparation, interview skills, and job leads. Classes were held weekly at two sites.  
- \*\*Implementation:\*\* Staffed by a program coordinator and a peer support specialist.  
  
#### Control or Comparison Groups  
The comparison group received the Work Choice intervention, which involved job club activities and peer support.  
  
#### Outcome Measures  
\*\*Primary:\*\*  
- Competitive employment outcomes (jobs in integrated work settings at prevailing wages).  
  
\*\*Secondary:\*\*  
- Rates of hospitalization.  
- Justice involvement (arrests and incarceration).  
- Self-reported recovery levels.  
  
#### Data Collection Procedures  
Data were collected through:  
- Baseline, six-month, and 12-month interviews.  
- Brief telephone contacts at two, four, eight, and ten months.  
- Medical records and agency staff queries for background measures.  
- Dartmouth Employment and Income Review for employment history and income status.  
  
#### Statistical Analysis Methods  
Statistical analyses included:  
- Randomization techniques to ensure balanced groups.  
- Urn randomization with block size equal to four.  
- Assessments of program fidelity using the Revised Individual Placement and Support Fidelity Scale (IPS-25) and a 14-item Work Choice fidelity scale.  
  
The study findings indicated that the IPS model was effective in helping justice-involved clients with severe mental illness achieve employment, but outcomes were modest compared to prior IPS studies.

## Results

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## Discussion

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## Conclusions

### Summary of Authors' Conclusions  
  
\*\*Main Takeaway Messages:\*\*  
The study found that the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model of supported employment is effective for individuals with severe mental illness who have a history of justice involvement. At one-year follow-up, 31% of participants in the IPS group obtained competitive employment compared to only 7% in the comparison group. However, the outcomes were modest when compared to prior IPS studies.  
  
\*\*Recommendations for Implementation:\*\*  
The authors recommend that while the IPS model is effective, augmentations may be needed to better serve justice-involved individuals with severe mental illness. This suggests a need for tailored interventions that address specific challenges faced by this population, such as stigma and barriers to employment.  
  
\*\*Significance of the Findings for the Field:\*\*  
The findings highlight the importance of supported employment models like IPS in helping justice-involved individuals with severe mental illness achieve competitive employment. However, they also underscore the need for further research and development to enhance the effectiveness of these interventions for this specific population. The study contributes to the broader understanding that while IPS is a valuable framework, it may require adaptations to fully address the unique needs of justice-involved clients.  
  
Overall, the study emphasizes the potential benefits of supported employment for justice-involved individuals with severe mental illness but also points out the need for more targeted and comprehensive interventions.

## Critical Synthesis

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