

Individual placement and support (IPS): how to address employment needs of people with mental health problems in Porto

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Introduction: Employment is one of the main concerns of patients with mental illness. Several international guidelines state that Individual Placement and Support (IPS) is the most effective intervention to address these needs. It is based on several principles such as focus on competitive employment, attention to client preferences, rapid job search, individualized job supports and eligibility based on client choice.

Objectives: To develop and implement an IPS program suitable for people with mental illness from Porto.

Materials and Methods: The proposed IPS program targeted 43 ANARP users and was developed based on an exploratory review to understand how the core principles of IPS were adapted for several US states and European countries.

Results and Discussion: Our IPS program proposal has three main cornerstones: Qualification, In-Job Training and Open Market Employment. The first domain was developed as many users needed to complete specialized training before entering the labor market. In-Job Training has been easily articulated with other institutions (n=5) and many users are completing courses which will lead them to in-job training opportunities (n=7). Open market employment vacancies have been far more scarce (n=5) as Portuguese employment policies for people with disabilities are not adjusted for the needs of people with mental illness.

Conclusion: IPS can be an effective alternative to promote employment for people with mental illness in Porto. Service planning must be adjusted to labor market, social security system and socioeconomic conditions. IPS does not address the employment needs of every person with mental illness, as some users clearly need sheltered alternatives such as social businesses adjusted to their features.