

TIP 1: Normal Development

Young adults are at a stage of developing self-identity. Young people want to try different experiences and may fluctuate in their desire to work or go to school. Employment/education specialists help them explore both options and continue to engage young people even during periods of uncertainty. Practitioners do not confuse ambivalence and developing an identity with lack of motivation. Peers with work or school experiences can help engage other young adults who are unsure about their goals.

TIP 2: Strength-based Services

Young adults typically see themselves as healthy and invincible rather than disabled. They are more likely to engage in services that focus on their strengths and opportunities rather than on diagnosis or disability. Employment/education specialists help people to consider short-term and long-term career goals. For some people, the focus is on educational goals that match their career goals. Employment/education specialists help young people explore career opportunities by asking questions such as:

- ◇ What would you like to be doing in two to three years?
- ◇ What is your dream job?
- ◇ Do you know of anyone that has gone to college, attended training programs or taken adult education courses?
- ◇ What are some of your interests and what do you enjoy?
- ◇ What are the things that we are working on now that you find helpful?
- ◇ What else could we be doing in that direction?

TIP 3: Family Involvement

With the young adult's permission, invite family members to some employment/education meetings. Family is defined by the young adult and can include friends, partners or other supporters. Family members contribute information about the individual's strengths, skills, hobbies and past education. Friends often have a strong influence in the person's life and share information from a young person's perspective. Ask the young adult, "Is there anyone else who has given you helpful ideas? Would you like to invite that person to a meeting?" Educate the family about career development. For example, explain that it is normal for young people to try different jobs. Some jobs may be short-term or brief, but are still learning experiences. Educate the family about how to support the young adult in his/her work and school experiences. Talk with the family about whether this approach challenges the family norms and culture.

TIP 4: Community-based Services

Young adults often shun traditional clinical settings. Create an environment that is more conducive to a younger population by displaying posters and materials that are marketed towards youth and equipping the space with computers. Consider creating separate waiting rooms for young people. Remember that community-based services are often more appealing to young adults than meeting in a clinic. Ask each person where she likes to spend time and offer to meet the young person there.

TIP 5: Engagement and Use of Technology

Many young adults prefer to communicate through texts, emails and instant messages rather than by phone. In addition, many job applications require online access. Social media, such as LinkedIn, provides employment connections that aid job searches. Review and revise agency policies about communicating with technology and ensure that computers used by the IPS program have access to job seeking sites.

TIP 6: Benefits Counseling

Securing disability benefits can lead to a path of long-term mental health treatment and poverty. Employment/education specialists help young adults consider jobs and careers as an alternative to disability benefits. Help young people consider the advantages and disadvantages of applying for disability benefits. Offer meetings with peers who can explain why they chose employment. Ultimately, honor each person's choice and continue to offer assistance with school and work.

TIP 7: Work Exploration

Young adults often have little or no employment history. Exploring the world of work through summer jobs, internships, AmeriCorps and additional schooling or certification programs is normal for young people. When young adults prefer help with permanent, competitive jobs, employment/education specialists follow their lead and do not require or encourage non-competitive positions. When a person expresses interest in an internship, the employment/education specialist helps to

explore available positions and focuses on learning whether the internship will help the person gain skills and experience related to her career goals. *Note: Internships are different than volunteer jobs available to any community member.*

TIP 8: Language Matters

Young adults are more likely to avoid programs that use disability-related language. For example, names such as office for student disability services or rehabilitation services are sometimes discouraging. When connecting young people with these services, prepare the young person for the language and

perhaps modify the process. For example, a vocational rehabilitation counselor reports, "I don't require that young adults go through Vocational Rehabilitation's group orientation. Instead, I meet with each person individually to introduce the services that we provide. I attend the mental health treatment team meetings and I spend time getting to know each person so I can learn what their strengths and interests are in order to make a good job match." — *Molly Joubert, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Oregon*

www.DartmouthIPS.org

* IPS is an acronym for Individual Placement and Support, the evidence-based approach to supported employment for people with mental health challenges.

This document was developed by members of the IPS Learning Community, July 2015.