

Guidance 48 Supported Employment

Contract Reference:	Sections A-1.1, and C-1.2.3
Authority:	Section 394.453(1)(c), Florida Statutes
Frequency:	On-going
Due Date:	On-going

Purpose: The purpose of this document is to provide written guidelines to Managing Entities for the implementation and administration of Supported Employment services. It establishes expectations for service delivery consistent with the evidence-based Supported Employment model, as established in Florida’s regulatory framework. In accordance with rule s.65E-14.021, F.A.C, Supported Employment refers to individualized, competitive, integrated employment services and does not include services delivered through the mental health Clubhouse model.

1. Overview

Employment status and poverty are two key domains of health and mental health. Meaningful employment is a vital part of recovery for individuals with behavioral health conditions. As the demand for high-quality Supported Employment services grows, it is essential to establish a consistent framework for expanding access across the state. The implementation of evidence-based Supported Employment models, along with strong collaboration among state and local agencies, is critical to ensure that individuals receive the support they need to obtain and maintain competitive, integrated employment.

2. Definitions

- 2.1. Competitive Integrated Employment** Is work in typical community settings where individuals with disabilities earn at least minimum wage and receive the same benefits and opportunities as others in similar roles. It includes full- or part-time jobs, self-employment, and customized employment that meet federal and Florida standards. Supported employment services are available for these employment types but generally do not apply to informal or cash-based work.
- 2.2. Evidence-based** as referred to in Guidance 1 Evidence-Based Guidelines. Refers to practices, interventions, or guidelines that are developed through a systematic review of current research, clinical expertise, and patient values. This approach ensures that decisions are informed by the most reliable evidence available, aiming to optimize outcomes and provide high-quality care.
- 2.3. Fidelity** is the extent to which an evidence-based practice is implemented as intended. An assessment of fidelity provides conclusions about the effectiveness of an intervention's outcomes.
- 2.4. Supported Employment** definition is established in Ch.65E-14.021(4)(II)1., F.A.C. as a covered service that assists individuals with behavioral health conditions in obtaining and maintaining competitive employment. This service includes activities such as job development, job coaching, and follow-along support to ensure sustained employment in integrated settings.

3. Goals

The goals include:

- 3.1.** Advancing resiliency and recovery by supporting individuals with behavioral health conditions in achieving competitive, integrated employment as a key component of recovery and long-term well-being.
- 3.2.** Expand access to high-quality services by promoting the growth of supported employment services across Florida through the implementation of evidence-based practice models.
- 3.3.** Increasing collaboration among state and local agencies, including behavioral health, vocational and workforce development systems, to better support individuals with behavioral health conditions reach their employment goals.

- 3.4. Promote provider and community awareness of Supported Employment, Vocational Rehabilitation, and CareerSource services in supporting employment outcomes.

4. Eligibility

To be eligible for services individuals:

- 4.1.1. Must meet the criteria for substance abuse and mental health services under s. 394.674, Florida Statutes; and
- 4.1.2. Should ideally express interest in career exploration, education supports, or employment. Individuals who do not initially express interest may still receive services to build readiness and support future engagement in employment-related goals.

5. Program Administration

5.1. Managing Entities

The Managing Entity shall:

- 5.1.1. Designate at least one staff as an employment lead to facilitate the guidance established in this document.
- 5.1.2. Ensure that Supported Employment services are adequate to meet the needs of the community, are integrated within Network Service Providers, and remain consistently available to individuals who may benefit from these services.
- 5.1.3. Approve organizations seeking to provide Supported Employment services an evidence-based practice model designed for individuals with behavioral health conditions. The selected model must demonstrate proven effectiveness in assisting individuals with mental health and/or substance use disorders to obtain and sustain competitive, integrated employment. Essential components of the evidence-based practice must include benefits planning, individualized services, job development, rapid job search, integration with clinical teams, time-unlimited support, and collaboration with Vocational Rehabilitation.
- 5.1.4. Develop performance measures to evaluate service outcomes and address evidence-based practice implementation fidelity. Managing Entities must make competitive integrated employment a primary outcome.
- 5.1.5. Ensure Providers delivering Supported Employment services comply with federal, and state regulations, and the requirements established in this Guidance Document.
- 5.1.6. Provide leadership at the local level to advance evidence-based models of supported employment services.
 - 5.1.6.1. Identify and address systems barriers to Supported Employment including services gaps, funding limitations, or conflicting practices (e.g., inadequate funding streams, misaligned Vocational Rehabilitation policies).
 - 5.1.6.2. Work with local and state offices of Vocational Rehabilitation to improve collaboration between providers and Vocational Rehabilitation.
 - 5.1.6.3. Meet with local Vocational Rehabilitation counselors to discuss common goals and practices, their role in supported employment, available resources, and strategies for collaboration with providers.
- 5.1.7. Provide ongoing education, training, and technical assistance to providers, partners, and stakeholders to support effective implementation and continuous improvement of services.
 - 5.1.7.1. Disseminate employment information and resources to agency leadership, Providers, partners, and other stakeholders.
 - 5.1.7.2. Facilitate trainings on topics such as evidence-based employment models, developing relationships with employers, conducting effective job searches, offering strengths-based services, helping individuals with school and training programs, and providing individualized job supports.

- 5.1.7.3. Facilitate quarterly Supported Employment meetings to provide networking opportunities and to discuss outcomes, supported employment fidelity across sites, and training and technical assistance needs.
- 5.1.8. Actively monitor Provider outcomes and assess fidelity to support continuous quality improvement.
 - 5.1.8.1. Develop and maintain procedures for evidence-based practice monitoring. Collect and analyze data on program outcomes at regular intervals and develop goals and strategies for improved outcomes.
 - 5.1.8.2. Conduct reviews of evidence-based practice implementation using a validated fidelity scale at least annually for newly procured Network Service Providers and biennially for Network Service Providers older than 24 months. Provide technical assistance in areas needing improvement. Results of the fidelity assessment must be made available to the Department upon request.
 - 5.1.8.3. Network Service Providers that consistently underperform on fidelity assessments and do not make noticeable improvements after receiving technical assistance may lose their supported employment funding (e.g., Network Service Provider's fidelity score reflects poor fidelity within a consecutive 36-month period).
- 5.1.9. Participate in state and local leadership meetings and committees to develop goals and action steps for the implementation and sustainability of supported employment services.
- 5.1.10. Participate in a Supported Employment learning community when applicable.

5.2.

5.3. Network Service Providers

Network Service Providers must:

- 5.3.1. Implement an evidence-based Supported Employment model that has demonstrated effectiveness in assisting individuals with mental health and/or substance use disorders in obtaining and maintaining competitive, integrated employment. The model must prioritize individualized services, rapid job search, integration with clinical teams, time-unlimited support, and collaboration with Vocational Rehabilitation.
- 5.3.2. Develop a comprehensive implementation plan for the evidence-based practice model. The plan should include foundational training for staff at all levels within the organization, as well as specialized, intensive training for employment staff to ensure fidelity to the model and effective service delivery.
- 5.3.3. Develop and implement policies and procedures that align with the evidence-based practice model of supported employment.
- 5.3.4. Collect data and monitor program outcomes at least every three months.
- 5.3.5. Achieve a fidelity score consistent with fair to high fidelity within the first 18 months of program launch and consistently thereafter.
- 5.3.6. Participate in all Supported Employment conference calls, meetings, learning communities or other relevant events.
- 5.3.7. Participate in Supported Employment meetings, committees, and learning collaboratives.

6. Ineligible Employment or Services

The following includes, but is not limited to, a list of ineligible employment or services:

- 6.1. Activities related to work readiness, or uncompensated internships.
- 6.2. Companies speculative in nature, such as investments in real estate, etc.
- 6.3. Companies organized as hobbies (i.e., activities engaged in not-for-profit (I.R.S. ATG ss.183)).
- 6.4. Companies that may violate community morality or are unlawful.

7. Evidence-Based Practice Considerations: Models of Supported Employment

Best practice considerations and resources are provided to support the provision of Supported Employment services. The following outlines the evidence-based Supported Employment model currently recognized by the Department. New effective approaches to employment for individuals with behavioral health conditions will be included as they are identified.

- 7.1. Individual Placement and Support (IPS)** is an evidence-based practice model of Supported Employment provided to help individuals with mental health conditions find and maintain competitive jobs that align with their personal interests. The model also incorporates mainstream education and technical training as tools to support long-term career growth. For more information, please visit the IPS Employment Center website: <https://ipsworks.org/>.

8. Data Requirements

- 8.1.** Providers must submit data in accordance with the most recent version of the Florida Department of Children and Families Substance Abuse and Mental Health Financial and Services Accountability Management Systems Pamphlet 155-2, and in compliance with Section C-1.4 of the Managing Entity contract.
- 8.2.** Managing Entities must submit to the Department the following supplemental data:
- 8.2.1.** Total number of individuals served broken out by age and diagnosis.
 - 8.2.2.** Number of individuals attending a credit-bearing educational program.
 - 8.2.3.** Number of individuals competitively employed.
 - 8.2.4.** Number of individuals referred to Vocational Rehabilitation.
- 8.3.** The Department reserves the right to require additional standards and reporting requirements.
- 8.4.** Quarterly supplemental data must be submitted in accordance with the following schedule:

Quarter	1 st Quarter	2 nd Quarter	3 rd Quarter	4 th Quarter
Reporting Period	July - September	October - December	January - March	April - June
Submission Date	October 18 th	January 18 th	April 18 th	July 18 th