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Implementing, evaluating, and sustaining an enhanced IPS program embedded in primary healthcare settings in British Columbia, Canada

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University of British Columbia | Canadian Mental Health Association BC Division

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WFOT
Congress 2026

Agenda

1. Links to Employment: Overview & Implementation
2. Evaluation & Findings
3. Key take aways for sustainment
4. Questions



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Links to Employment Implementation in British Columbia:

IPS in Primary Care

Vancouver

Prince George

Nanaimo

Kelowna



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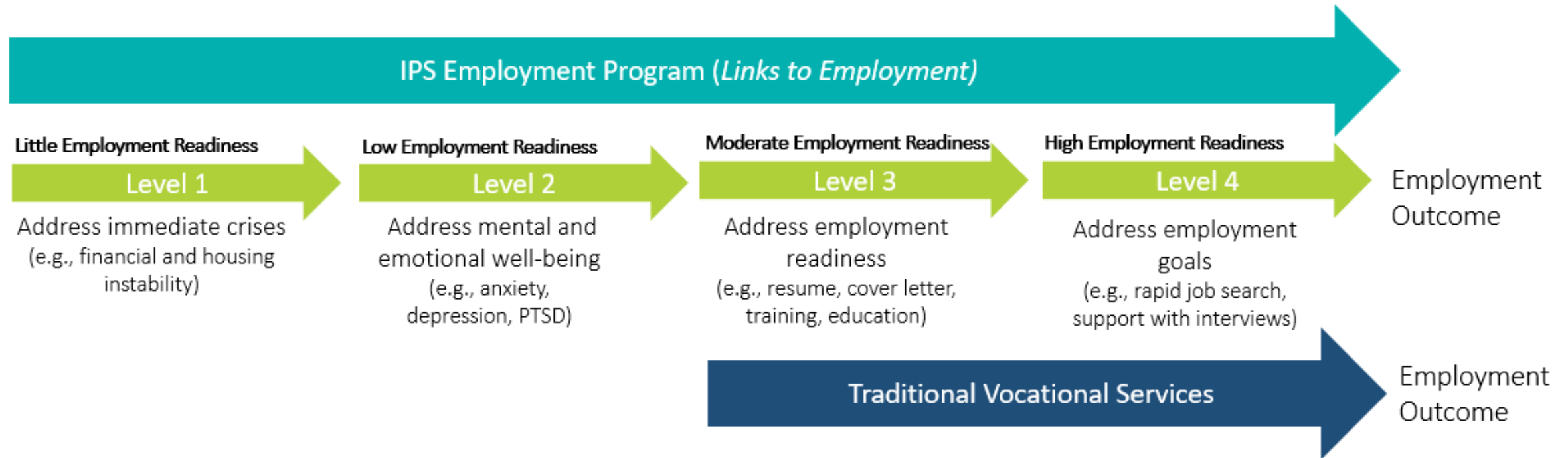
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Addressing Population Needs



Source: Kwan, A., Morris, J., & Barbic, S. P. (2021). Protocol: A mixed methods evaluation of an IPS program to increase employment and well-being for people with long-term experience of complex barriers in Vancouver's downtown and DTES. PLOS ONE, 16(12), e0261415. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0261415>

The Links to Employment (LTE) Model

**Individual Placement
& Support (IPS)**

**Integrated Services
Health & Social
Wrap-around
Supports**

**Psychosocial
Rehabilitation
Framework**

**Research &
Evaluation**

Unique to LTE:

- **Integration with primary healthcare**
- Employment team includes **occupational therapists**
- Flexibility with fluctuating goals
- Draws from trauma-informed care
- Using a Peer Advisory Committee
- Using a hybrid service delivery model
- Tailoring services to the unique needs and strengths of each community

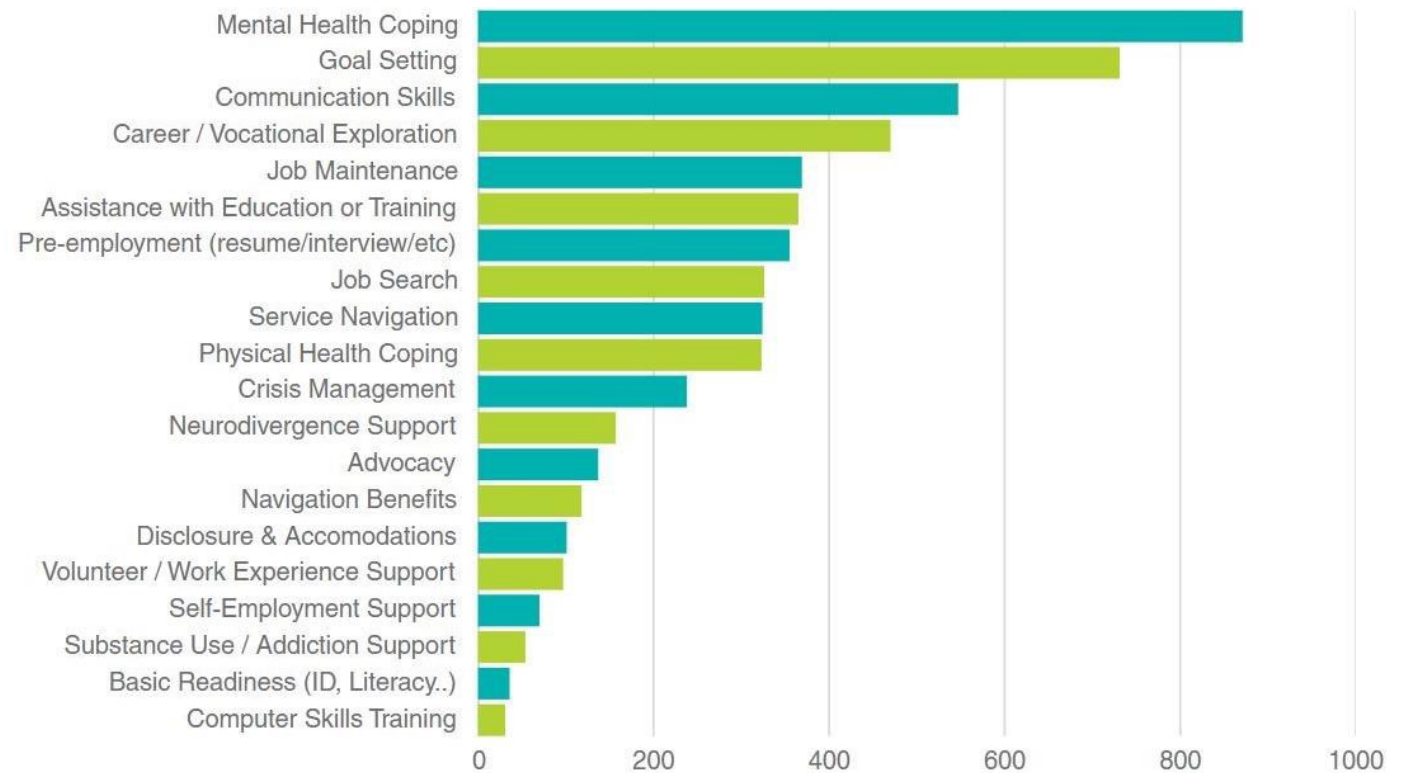
Services provided – What did clients do?

- **2438** sessions offered by **vocational staff**

Most common services offered by Links staff:

- **mental health coping**
- **goal setting**
- **communication skills**
- **career/ vocational exploration**

Services Provided by Vocational Staff



Links to Employment in Primary Care Outcomes

5 sites: Prince George, Vernon, Vancouver, Nanaimo, Kelowna

October 2023 - August 2025 (22 months): **362 Clients Served**

Employment



41% (148 clients)

Education



43% (156 clients)

Volunteer



19% (70 clients)

- **Of the 362 clients served, 152 were discharged**
- **13 weeks** was average length in program **before obtaining employment**
- The average time in the program from intake to discharge is **7.2 months**



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Links to Employment Evaluation:

- Research Objectives
- Research Approach
- Phase 1 Findings
- Expanding Definition of Success



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Overarching Research Objectives

Phase 1: 2020/1 - 2023

Assess the impact of an IPS program embedded within primary health care settings on **health, social, and employment outcomes** for individuals with PPMB status.

Gain an understanding of the **experiential process of the IPS program** from individuals accessing the program, as well as from healthcare professionals and staff involved in its implementation.

Phase 2: 2023 – 2026/7

To deepen the understanding of program impacts on health, social and employment outcomes, with a particular focus on **continued barriers to employment, work sustainability and time required, and differential community contexts.**

To examine the implications of **model scaling** and strengthen **optimal implementation** across varying community contexts.



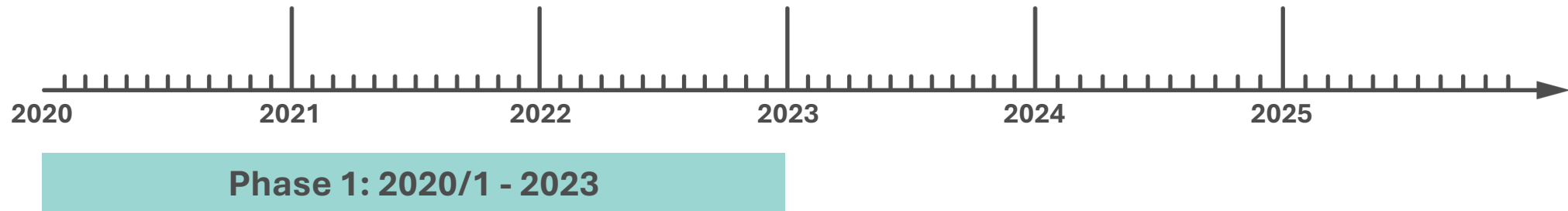
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Our Approach to Research – Phase 1



Cohort 1 Program clients (N = 41): Participants completed 1) a series of employment and health surveys up to 24-months; 2) interviews at 12 and 24-months program enrollment



Service Providers and associated clinical partners (N = 15): participants completed surveys and/or participated in a series of 3 virtual focus groups

Research Findings

Phase 1 Client Data 2021-2023

37% of participants had an employment outcome

52% of participants saw an improvement in their depression

45% of participants saw an improvement in their anxiety



Longer-term Barriers & Impact

Client Interview Data at 12/24 months (themes)

1. Negative work experiences have lasting and cyclical impacts (subtheme) positive work experiences can have a mitigating role;
2. Health remains a significant barrier across the employment journey;
3. Social connection is a foundation for health and employment; and
4. Growth takes time: progress through self-discovery and support

What she brought me, more than anything, is hope. Hope that there is a place out there for me.

– participant #2, age 43, 12-m

I didn't expect that finding employment could change my entire life this much - my mental health, my personality, being engaged [with my] community, being in public more comfortably, and my self-confidence, hope, motivation - all these things combined.

– participant #21, age 52, 24-m



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What does a successful program outcome mean to you?

Engaged a community of experts (n=50): current and former program clients, service providers, clinical and administrative staff

Delphi Study Results: 23 outcomes reached consensus (80% of participants ranking items as important or higher).

PRE-EMPLOYMENT

MENTAL HEALTH

EMPLOYMENT

QUALITY OF LIFE

Expanding How we Define Success

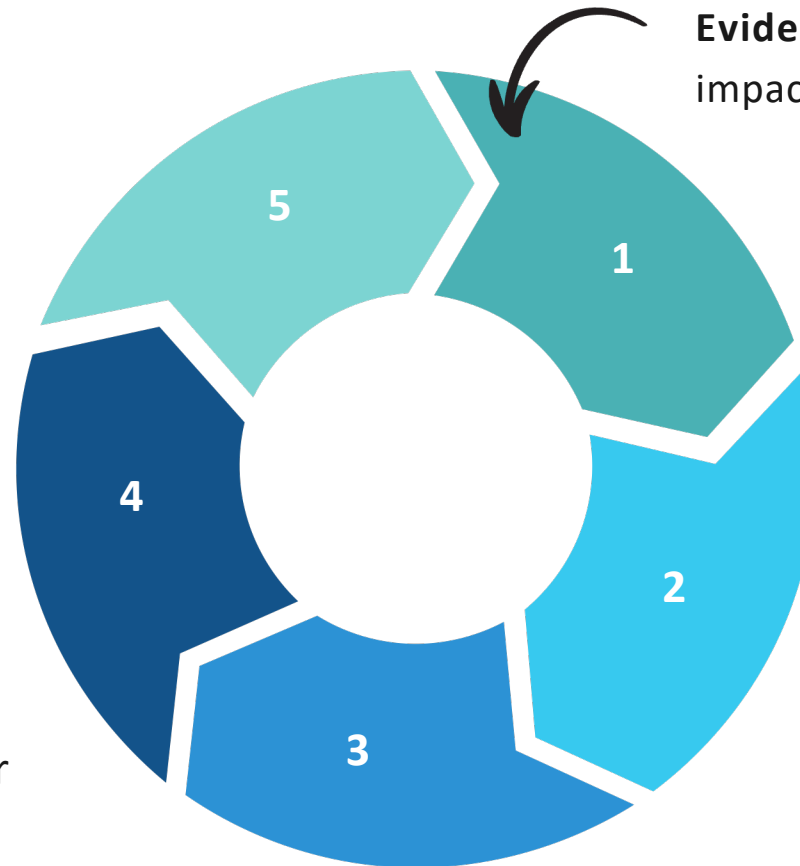
How are we using these learnings?

5. Implementation

Program data collected is revised to include identified **Currently in progress**

4. Data-Driven Decision Making

Program data collection systems are (re)assessed or evaluated



Evidence/Data: Previous data demonstrating IPS impacts extend beyond just employment.

1. Data Collection

Delphi surveys and focus groups

2. Analyze Data & Consolidate Findings

23 consensus outcomes

3. Mobilize Data

e.g., LTE operations meeting, Community presentation, WAPR Conference

Key Take-away: *Why Links to Employment?*



An Evidence-based Program Model

Individual Placement and Support (IPS)
Psychosocial Rehabilitation (PSR) Best Practices

An Evidence-informed Approach to Program Implementation

Informed by those directly involved with service delivery and support



Evidence-backed Program Impact

Qualitative and quantitative findings

Links to Employment Sustainment:

**Integrated and
systems approach**

**Occupational
Therapists- to address
health and employment
barriers**

**Employment
integral to
mental health**

Our Vision

Equitable access to **integrated, IPS** for British Columbians with complex health and social barriers to **improve sustainable employment, recovery and wellbeing**



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Thank you!

Reflections, Questions

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Formal Study Outputs: Publications



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Longer Term Impact Paper: This paper focuses on the longer-term impacts of IPS programs integrated within primary health care.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmmh.2025.100578>



Implementation Learnings Paper: This paper provides community-based perspectives that identify implementation strengths and challenges and highlights potential strategies aimed at addressing emergent barriers within the LTE program.

<https://bmcp psychiatry.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12888-023-05395-3>

Commentary Paper: This paper is a 'call to action' to recognize and sustainably support the use of IPS to improve outcomes for populations with complex health and social challenges in British Columbia. It presents case studies from integrated youth services (Foundry Work and Education Program) and adult primary care settings (LTE).

<https://www-cjcmh-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/doi/10.7870/cjcmh-2025-007>

