



## EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A MULTI-COMPONENT DEMAND-SIDE INTERVENTION TOOLKIT FOR VR PROFESSIONALS TO IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES OF PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES: A RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL STUDY

Demand-side employment research can help identify the largest or fastest growth areas of employment opportunities and the skill sets needed for these demand occupations. Helping individuals with physical disabilities develop flexible, versatile, and adaptable work skills as well as social competencies to meet employer expectations and requirements for jobs in the labor economy will improve their odds of obtaining employment. As such, the need to consider demand-side behaviors and how these employer practice factors interact with personal factors to affect job placement of people with physical disabilities and return-to-work success of injured workers is increasingly becoming an important topic in vocational rehabilitation (VR) research. Clearly, there is a legitimate need to develop and validate a comprehensive demand-side employment intervention toolkit that can be used by VR professionals to improve employment outcomes for people with physical disabilities.



### Study Overview ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

The purpose of this project is to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of a multi-component demand-side employment intervention toolkit that can be used by VR professionals to improve employment outcomes for people with physical disabilities. The toolkit will help VR professionals change employer practice with people with physical disabilities and prepare people with physical disabilities to meet the demands of employers. The toolkit will be composed of three components:

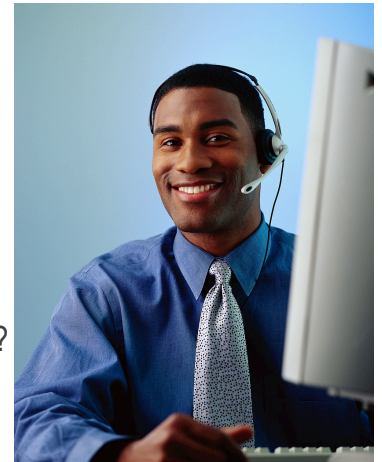
1. SPR/nAblement employer consultation (cultures of disability, ADA/ job accommodation, and financial incentives),
2. the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) workplace socialization skills training for people with physical disabilities, and



3. the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research Small Business Innovation Research (NIDRR SBIR) impression management job interview training for people with physical disabilities. We will conduct a series of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) to evaluate the efficacy of each component of the toolkit as well as the efficacy of the entire toolkit.

This study will consist of three randomized clinical trials that will develop and validate the components of a demand-side intervention toolkit, which will then lead to pilot-testing of the full toolkit by VR Counselors. In this study, “employer” is used as a broad term for human resources (HR) professionals, HR managers, and project managers with hiring authority. The following research questions will guide this study:

1. What is the effect of SPR/nAblement employer consultation (cultures of disability, ADA/job accommodation, and financial incentives) training on employers’ attitudes toward hiring and retaining people with disabilities?
2. What is the effect of ODEP workplace socialization skills training on empathic self-efficacy and social self-efficacy of people with physical disabilities?
3. What is the effect of NIDRR SBIR impression management job interview skills training on job interview outcomes of people with physical disabilities?
4. What would be the usefulness and acceptability of a demand-side toolkit incorporating these three components for VR Counselors and consumers?



### **PHASE ONE: Systematic Scoping Review on Diversity Training and Demand-Side Employment**

During Phase One, a systematic review of the literature will be conducted on diversity training and demand-side employment. In addition, interviews will be completed with employers who have hired people with physical disabilities referred by nAblement as well as nAblement alums who are gainfully employed. Interviews will also be conducted with senior management of the SPR companies and nAblement staff to study business strategies used by SPR and nAblement to connect with employers in the business community to promote employment opportunities for people with physical disabilities. The information gleaned from our comprehensive literature review and interviews will be used to refine the demand-side employment intervention toolkit.

### **PHASE TWO: Randomized Controlled Trial of SPR/nAblement Employer Consultation, Social Skills Training, and Impression Management**

During Phase Two, a RCT will be designed to evaluate the SPR/nAblement employer consultation component (cultures of disability, ADA/job accommodation, and financial incentives) of the toolkit as the foundations and validate this component with a sample of employers. Consenting employers will be randomly assigned to treatment and control groups. Both intervention and control group members will be pre-tested with the



SPR/nAblement Employer Survey. Control group members will be wait-listed for future receipt of the training. Pre and post scores on the survey will be compared.

In addition, a RCT will be used to validate ODEP's "Skills to Pay the Bills" curriculum as the foundation of the toolkit and validate this soft skills training component for use with people with physical disabilities. Participants will be randomly assigned to intervention and control groups. Again, control group members will be wait-listed for future training. Pre and post scores of the Perceived Empathic Self-Efficacy (PESE) and Perceived Social Self-Efficacy (PSSE) will be compared.

Finally, Phase Two will include an RCT to evaluate an impression management job interview training component of the toolkit for use with people with physical disabilities. Participants will be randomly assigned to intervention and control groups. Mock interviews will be scheduled with employer volunteers, with both intervention and control groups interviewing for a specific position and job description. Following the intervention, a second mock interview will be scheduled with each participant having the same interviewer and position description as with the initial interview. The interviewers' pre and post scores will be compared.



### **PHASE THREE: Efficacy, Use, and Acceptability of the Demand-Side Toolkit** ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

During Phase Three, the development of the entire toolkit will be completed and pilot-testing will be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the entire multi-component demand-side intervention toolkit with a sample of 40 VR professionals from state VR agencies. The goals of the pilot are to collect evidence related to:

- a. the efficacy of the toolkit in assisting individuals with physical disabilities to obtain and maintain desired jobs,
- b. ease of use on the part of the Counselor and consumer, and
- c. acceptability of the toolkit to counselors, prospective employers, and consumer.

After training on the use of the toolkit, Counselors will be requested to use the toolkit with clients with physical disabilities and provide employment outcome measures and user feedback at six-, 12-, and 18-months following completion of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Qualitative information will also be collected from Counselors, employers, and consumers on the same schedule.

## Summary

There is little evidence-based practice to guide the implementation of demand-side employment activities for people with disabilities. This project will result in a multi-component demand-side employment intervention toolkit that can be used by VR professionals to improve employment outcomes for people with physical disabilities. The toolkit will potentially guide VR professionals' efforts with employers to change employer practice with people with disabilities and prepare people with physical disabilities to meet the demands of employers.



The VCU-RRTC is interested in obtaining your feedback on this research. If you have questions, you may contact Dr. Fong Chan or Dr. Brian Phillips.

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## Resources

nAblement -- <http://www.nablement.com/>

Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy -- ODEP's Skills to Pay the Bills  
<http://www.dol.gov/dol/media/webcast/20121015-softskills/>

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