

# Research in Review

June, 2008

A review of the newly published research monograph:

## **Workplace Supports and Job Retention:** Promoting an Employer Driven Approach to Employment of People with Disabilities

Edited by:

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## Introduction

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by: Paul Wehman

The purpose of this research monograph is to describe the research that the VCU-RRTC on Workplace Supports and Job Retention has developed and implemented over the past 4 years. We look at workplace supports and job retention broadly, we do not limit our study to only one disability or one illness or type of injury; furthermore, we do not only look at workplace supports in the context of job retention but also access to the work force and job procurement. We know, in fact, that if workplace supports are not available, or not going to be available, that many jobs, if not most, are going to be not likely for persons with disabilities.

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## Public/Private Partnerships and Employment of People with Disabilities: Preliminary Evidence from a Pilot Project

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by: Paul Wehman, Valerie Brooke, Howard Green, Millie Hewett, and Maggie Tipton

While many people with disabilities and employment service organizations struggle to find jobs and develop strong relationships with businesses, supplemental staffing companies are becoming an important resource for linking qualified applicants with disabilities to competitive employment careers. Yet, there exists a huge disconnect between supplemental staffing companies recruiting qualified applicants to fill client-employer work orders, people with disabilities who are seeking employment, professionals with state rehabilitation agencies and community rehabilitation programs (CRP's) who assist them with their job searches. This article reports on two public/private demonstration projects in Virginia, primarily serving individuals with developmental disabilities. One demonstration project was conducted in an urban setting working exclusively with MANPOWER with the second demonstration site occurring in a rural area with Kelly Services and MANPOWER. The two demonstrations give promise for a public/private collaboration that could increase the employment of people with disabilities.

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## Addressing Employer Personnel Needs and Improving Employment Training, Job Placement and Retention for Youth with Disabilities Through Public-Private Partnerships

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by: Darlene Unger

As social and economic forces impact business practices, the significance of delivering effective employer-driven, employment services (i.e., demand-side model) to facilitate employment and retention for individuals who have not traditionally benefited from labor force participation is of increased importance. The purpose of this paper is to provide descriptions of two public-private partnerships (Manpower, Incorporated and Community Rehabilitation Programs; Project Search), that currently operate a market-driven or demand-side model in an effort to increase the labor force participation and job retention of persons with disabilities. Factors that increase employers' interest in collaborating with rehabilitation providers and critical components of effective partnerships are discussed.

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## **Toward a Public-Private Partnership in Competitive Employment for Persons with Disabilities: Supplemental Staffing and Community Rehabilitation Programs Working Together**

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by: Paul Wehman, Darlene Unger,  
Howard Green, Leanne  
Campbell, and John Kregel

Increasingly, businesses are engaging with employment support providers to support people with disabilities in the competitive workforce. Many of these partnerships have evolved beyond philanthropic corporate initiatives to reflect increasingly integrated services between businesses and rehabilitation providers. Yet, beyond case examples and descriptive data, there is little evidence as to the effectiveness of public-private partnerships in demonstrating enhanced employment outcomes for people with disabilities. The present investigation attempts to address this limitation through a multi-site, clinical trial study designed to estimate the effects of a business - rehabilitation partnership on employment outcomes for adults with significant disabilities when contrasted to community rehabilitation provider employment services. Findings and implications for future research are presented.

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## **Organizational Factors that Facilitate Successful Job Retention of Employees with Health Impairments and Disabilities**

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by: Rochelle Habeck, Satoko  
Yasuda Crockett, Colleen  
Head Rachel, and John Kregel

This report is based on the premise that retention-oriented employment policies and practices can facilitate the prevention of unnecessary exits from the workforce due to health conditions and disability. An extensive literature review was conducted on the major factors and organizational practices associated with successful general employee retention. A series of constructs was developed from this review and organized into organizational, operational, and case level factors. These constructs are discussed in terms of their policy implications for improving the overall employment level of people with disabilities.

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## **The Role of Disability Management Practices in the Long-Term Employment Retention of Individuals with Disabilities**

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by: Rochelle Habeck, Colleen  
Head Rachel, Leanne Campbell,  
and John Kregel

The goal of this research study was to examine the strategies and supports that are most effective for assisting persons with disabilities to maintain employment and advance their careers. To that end, the present study was designed to better understand the current status of demand-side activities used by progressive employers to promote the general retention of their workforce, and how these practices and strategies can be optimized to include people with disabilities. This paper presents the preliminary, descriptive findings from a survey designed to assess these practices that was conducted with employer members of the Disability Management Employer Coalition (DMEC) by the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center of Virginia Commonwealth University in collaboration with DMEC.

The paper presents employer ratings of important practices currently used by employer organizations to promote the general retention of their workforce, as well as those used specifically to prevent health risk and injury, manage health conditions, restore function and accommodate limitations to sustain productive employment for absence and disability management efforts. Results are also presented regarding employer ratings about the

perceived status of program efforts and their effectiveness and the factors motivating absence and disability management efforts. Results are also presented for the current practices reported by these employers regarding diversity, the inclusion of disability in their diversity efforts, and their levels of hiring and views regarding the value of hiring new employees who have disabilities.

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## **Evaluation of the Benefits Planning, Assistance, and Outreach Program: Employment Supports for Social Security Beneficiaries with Disabilities**

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by: Colleen Head Rachel

Individuals with disabilities remain underemployed, despite the fact that many are willing and able to work. Perceived likelihood of losing Social Security disability benefits often persuades beneficiaries to severely limit their employment participation and earnings, or more commonly, to not enter the labor force at all. Although the Social Security Administration (SSA) has instituted a number of program changes and new initiatives to reduce the barriers to employment, such efforts have had little impact. Very few beneficiaries have an accurate understanding of the effects that SSA work incentives can have on their employment status and benefits eligibility.

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## **Supporting SSA Beneficiaries to Pursue Their Employment Goals: A Retrospective Analysis of the Benefits Planning, Assistance, and Outreach (BPAO) Program**

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by: John Kregel, Colleen Head Rachel, and Leanne Campbell

This report contains a summary of SSA's Benefits Planning, Assistance, and Outreach (BPAO) Program, using archival data reports based on the complete set of data collected by the VCU BPAO Data Management System during the Program's five-year implementation. The report documents the program's activities and accomplishments in serving a diverse population of recipients with disabilities, while examining trends in Program implementation across different subsets of beneficiaries. Results help to provide a greater understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the BPAO Program, forming the basis for ensuring that effective practices are replicated and appropriate improvements are made to future initiatives.

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## **Benefits Planning for Individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury: First Step on the Road to Employment**

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by: Leanne Campbell, Satoko Yasuda, Karen Wiley, Lucy Miller, and Sandy Hardy

Advancements in modern medicine have improved survival rates of individuals with traumatic brain injury (TBI). Young working age individuals, age 22-39, comprise 44% of the TBI sample. Integration into competitive employment is necessary to improve their self-esteem, self-sufficiency, and quality of life. The most daunting impediment to gaining successful employment is the potential loss of government-supplied benefits. Programs have been enacted to offset the risk of losing benefits. With the proper advisement of federal work incentives and provisions, individuals with TBI who are motivated to seek self-sufficiency by gaining and retaining competitive employment can do so with less

perceived financial and health risk. We examine the demographics of individuals with TBI and discuss the plethora of benefits counseling conducted under the Benefits Assistance Resource Center using the National Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach database compiled by Virginia Commonwealth University. The authors examine trends in employment status at intake of individuals with TBI and discuss how they compare to individuals with other disabilities. Persons with TBI receive a lower percentage of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and a higher percentage of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) than persons with other disabilities. Social Security disability status is one of the primary determinants of which incentives and provisions a client receives.

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## **Service Intensity and Job Tenure in Supported Employment**

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by: Gary R. Bond and  
Marina Kukla

The principle of ongoing support for individuals with psychiatric disabilities remains underspecified. Specifically, what supports are needed, for how long, and at what intensity, for which kinds of clients, has not been empirically established. The current study aims to provide descriptive and correlational information on a variety of questions. One, what is the typical intensity of services for clients with psychiatric disabilities enrolled in evidence-based supported employment after they obtain a competitive job? Where and how is this support given? Two, what is the time course of this support? Does the intensity decline over time? and three, what is the relationship between intensity of support and job retention?

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## **Experiences of College Students with Disabilities and the Importance of a Business Mentoring Program**

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by: Elizabeth Evans Getzel and  
Lori W. Briel

College students with disabilities often lack a clear understanding of what knowledge and skills are required by specific careers on a day-to-day basis. These students often graduate from college without the chance for on-the-job experiences, and have a difficult time selecting a job that matches their preferences and abilities. This article will describe a study conducted with juniors and seniors with disabilities attending Virginia Commonwealth University who participated in a work based mentoring program. The results of a qualitative analysis of the participants' mentoring experiences in four primary areas, specifically career counseling, job shadowing, job placement assistance, and conflict resolution/problem solving are discussed.

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## **Return to Work of Individuals with Arthritis: A Review of Job Performance and Retention**

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by: Satoko Yasuda, Pam Targett,  
David Cifu, and Paul Wehman

With so many people affected by arthritis and the significant impact it has on themselves and on their families, employers as well as on society, employment of individuals with arthritis is an important topic to consider. A review of literature was conducted to examine the issues that arise from arthritis, factors that influence work disability and employment retention, and interventions and services that are available to promote and retain employment for individuals with arthritis. In recent years, employers have begun to proactively intervene in terms of both prevention activities as well as provision of ac-

commodation. Work disability is a common occurrence for individuals with arthritis and factors that influence work disability for those with arthritis include employment factors, employee factors, disease factors, and other factors such as access to health care and vocational rehabilitation. It is critical to consider the complex interaction of these factors in order for individuals with arthritis to remain productive and future research must consider all of these aspects when developing and implementing interventions.

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## **Quality Indicators for Competitive Employment Outcomes in School and Work Programs**

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by: Valerie Brooke, Grant Revell,  
and Paul Wehman

The quality of employment outcomes achieved by people with significant disabilities varies widely across the country. This paper describes a set of research-referenced quality indicators for measuring the effectiveness of employment services. A Program Review Format containing seven quality indicators for competitive employment services is presented. Probe questions for assessing each indicator are described, along with program improvement strategies. The program review format can be used by CRP staff in reviewing the quality of the process followed and the employment outcome achieved for an individual program participant. It can be used as an overall CRP self-assessment in reviewing the consistency of its employment services and supports with a core set of quality indicators. Where practices are not representative of higher quality services and competitive employment outcomes, priorities for follow-up attention can be set. The quality indicators could also be used as an interview guide for use by persons with disabilities and their families in selecting a community rehabilitation program as a source of employment services. Finally, the quality indicators and review format are of value to Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and other representatives of case management and funding agencies in working with employment service providers to assess, monitor, and strengthen the quality of employment services.

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## **Allegations of Employment Discrimination Under the ADA and Resolutions: Populations Characteristics and Trends**

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by: Amy N. Davis, Michael D. West,  
and Brian T. McMahan

This study investigates allegations of workplace discrimination made by job-seekers and workers across three main impairment groups including general disability, chemical dependence and psychiatric disability. Specifically, the types of allegations and resolutions were compared across disability classifications and demographic characteristics. Demographic characteristics of individuals making allegations were consistent with those of individuals with disabilities in the general population. A number of statistically significant relations were found with respect to both allegations and resolutions; however, some of these differences may not be socially significant. Approximately 79% of allegations were related to post-hire issues, such as discrimination in promotion and termination, disciplinary actions, and harassment. While initial allegations reflect the individuals' perception that they have been discriminated against, the majority of allegations investigated by the EEOC are decided in favor of employers.

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## Post Hire Employment Discrimination Toward Workers with Disabilities: Development of a Prediction Model for Merit Claims

by: Michael D. West, Leanne Campbell, Brian T. McMahon, and Amy Davis

A significant portion of workers with disabilities perceive themselves to be the victims of discriminatory policies and practices, yet only a small minority of allegations filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) are resolved in favor of the worker. This study investigates allegations of employment discrimination under Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act that occur following the point of hire. Specifically, a JMP Partition Model analysis was conducted to determine factors that predict allegations that are determined to be with merit by EEOC investigators. The findings show that only two variables were significantly related to the criterion variable: Time period in which the case was resolved and geographic region of the Respondent against whom the allegation was charged. Implications of the findings are presented.

## The Role of Veteran's Disability Benefits in Community Reintegration and Employment for Service Members with TBI

by: John Kregel and Lucy Miller

Any successful return-to-work or community reintegration initiative focused on veterans with TBI must include an analysis of the impact that paid employment may have on the disability benefits provided by the various branches of the Armed Forces within the US Department of Defense (DoD) and the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). If veterans with disabilities perceive employment as risky, in terms of its adverse impact on essential disability benefits, they may elect to protect their benefits instead of pursuing employment. Four major policy and practice areas within the DoD and VA disability benefit programs are identified and analyzed in terms of how they affect civilian return to work efforts of veterans. These areas are: the manner in which the military determines that service members are unfit for duty and subsequently separated or retired from the service; the manner in which disability ratings are determined and how disability ratings affect benefits; the designation of total disability ratings for veterans who are deemed to be "Individually Unemployable"; and the manner in which earned income is treated by the VA Disability Pension program.

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