

DRI *News*

A Newsletter from the Disability Research Institute

Summer 2004 - Volume 4 Number 2



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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Improving the Ticket to Work Program

AOI Group Provides Recommendations to SSA

The Adequacy of Incentives Advisory Group, a DRI-funded high priority project, will conclude its work this year with a final technical report integrating the four interim reports it provided to SSA as its work progressed. By the time the project is completed later this year, the Group, which received funding in the Spring of 2003, will have taken less than 18 months to provide the Social Security Administration with actionable recommendations for improvements in the Ticket to Work program. These recommendations pay particular attention to individuals with disabilities who have a need for ongoing support and services, need for high-cost accommodations, earn a subminimum wage, and work and receive partial cash benefits.

Specific recommendations include:

- changes in the payment system to Employment Networks,
- provisions for beneficiary independence incentives,
- options for cooperative state vocational rehabilitation cost reimbursement and Employment Network payments,
- a shift in documentation of earnings responsibilities from ENs to SSA,
- changes in the limits and penalties for overpayments to beneficiaries,
- an extension of case-by-case determination of payment systems to all ENs,
- provisions for the blending and braiding of resources from funding sources,
- determination of “timely progress” of individuals to the ENs, and
- development of a national network of research, training, and technical assistance centers.

The Group, which met quarterly, includes twelve members, four technical advisors, and two SSA liaisons who are experts on disability policy and the Ticket to Work Program.

All of the AOI reports are available on the DRI’s website or in hard copy or alternative formats by request.

AOI Timeline: From Conception to Implementation in 18 Months

March 2003	AOI Project is funded
June 2003	First meeting of Advisory Group held at University of Illinois
September 2003	Second group meeting in Washington, D.C.
September 2003	First interim report delivered (<i>Recommendations for Improving Implementation of the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program</i>)
December 2003	Third group meeting in Chicago
March 2004	Fourth group meeting during DRI Annual Symposium in Washington, D.C.
April 2004	Second interim report delivered (<i>Partnership Plus—The State Vocational Rehabilitation Cost Reimbursement and Employment Network Outcome Payment Option</i>)
July 2004	Third interim report delivered (<i>Blending of Resources and Braiding of Funds</i>)
July 2004	Fourth interim report delivered (<i>Recommendations for Enhancing Earnings and Income Through Self-Determination for AOI Targeted Groups</i>)
Fall 2004	Final technical report will be delivered

Learning From Others Around the Globe

International Project Explores Benefits Systems in Foreign Countries

Although a few states (California, Hawaii, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island) provide limited partial disability benefits, the federal system in the United States typically provides either permanent total disability support, or no disability support. In fact, the general rule in the United States is “all or nothing” as far as provision of government disability benefits is concerned. However, this is not the case in a number of other countries, and a DRI-funded project led by Monroe Berkowitz of Rutgers University is examining foreign benefits systems to assess their applicability to the United States.

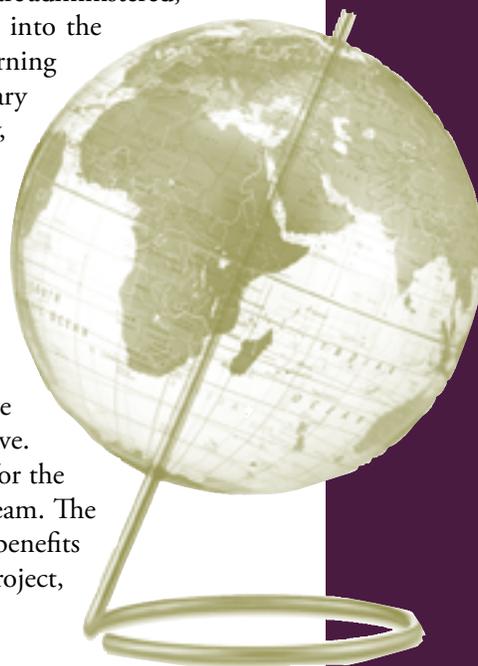
The study, *Learning from Others: Temporary and Partial Disability Benefits*, will enable the researchers to learn more about how a system of temporary benefits as well as a system of partial disability benefits might work in the United States.

“Our objective is to truly learn from each other how disability programs are administered, and to discover the techniques that are used to reintegrate beneficiaries into the labor force,” said Berkowitz. The SSA is particularly interested in learning how these countries handle partial disability cases and cases of temporary disability. Dr. Berkowitz’s team is examining, critically and analytically, the experiences of selected countries that have had experience with partial and/or temporary benefits, including associated allowances for work-related needs in transportation, assistive technology, and personal assistance.

The project is being conducted in cooperation with Rehabilitation International, an organization of more than 120 national organizations in the field of rehabilitation that operates in over 80 different countries. For this project, Rehabilitation International has appointed a representative who works in cooperation with the country’s technical representative. Representatives from each of the participating countries are responsible for the collection of basic data following a template developed by the Rutgers team. The researchers have identified eight countries that provide temporary partial benefits to their citizens with disabling conditions for participation in this project, including:

- Australia
- Germany
- Japan
- The Netherlands
- Norway
- South Africa
- Sweden
- United Kingdom

Researchers at the Program for Disability Research at Rutgers have prepared draft chapters on temporary and/or partial disability programs in each of the countries included in this study. The project team met in Oslo, Norway in June 2004 to discuss the results to date from the various countries. The project team will meet again in Washington in July 2004 to discuss the final results, and the final technical report is scheduled for completion later this year.



Assistive Technology & Employment Outcomes

Human Factors and Employment Issues Related to the Use of Assistive Technologies, a DRI study led by Brad Hedrick, the director of the University of Illinois Division of Rehabilitation-Education Services, found that access to assistive technologies (AT) may be a critical factor in the employment success of persons with spinal cord injury or disease (SCID). However, the relationship between AT ownership and employment appears to be affected by a wide range of variables.



Brad Hedrick

Although employer AT accommodation reports were positive, the high cost of some assistive technologies may still prevent persons with disabilities from joining the labor force, especially those most inclined toward self-employment. The study analyzed data from two groups of working-aged adults with SCID—94 Illinois alumni and 101 adults with mixed educational backgrounds. Hedrick said the research was motivated, in part, by the fact that “little is known about the extent to which AT ownership promotes employment outcomes.”

In this study, the researchers determined that the mean cost of AT devices was 68 to 124 percent greater for persons who were self-employed than for individuals in other areas of employment. “Depending upon the individual’s underwriting resource options, this could be a substantial barrier to individuals for whom entrepreneurial work at home is the most viable employment option,” Hedrick said. That includes individuals with more severe disabilities, those for whom transportation is a major obstacle,

or those whose routine medical appointments require substantial time away from a traditional office setting.

“People who are self-employed don’t have a lot of environmental assets that you’d have in a corporate structure,” Hedrick said. “Some things would have to be procured and would exacerbate start-up costs.”

In the study, “the majority of the devices owned by the respondents were characterized as important to work, and devices identified as important to work were 3.5 times more expensive than other devices,” Hedrick said. The mean cost per AT device owned by the two groups was more than \$2,000. This was

because of the prevalence of such expensive devices as wheelchairs, motorized carts, power lifts and automobile control systems. The study indicates that many employers today recognize the value of making workplace accommodations available to employees with disabilities.

“Access to workplace accommodations appears to have been quite good for both the college-educated group and the mixed-education group, and AT satisfaction levels for all respondents were very high regardless of employment status and employment history,” Hedrick said. Further, most workplace accommodations were reported to have already been at the work site or to have been implemented specifically for the respondent, and only one of 114 respondents who had worked in the previous five years reported having to change jobs as a result of the unavailability of AT.

“This seems to suggest that the unemployment of individuals with SCID is unlikely to be a function of insufficient access to AT in the workplace or the unwillingness of employers to provide necessary AT or other workplace accommodations,” Hedrick said the researchers weren’t surprised to find a positive response from respondents regarding employers’ willingness to provide AT, but “we were surprised that it was so overwhelmingly positive.”

“the potential cost savings realized by the Social Security Administration (SSA) through the successful efforts to facilitate beneficiaries’ return to work through AT use may prove to be considerable”

Hedrick hopes the survey tool the researchers developed for this study will be adapted to investigate the role of AT and employment outcomes for people with different types of disabilities. If barriers to employment could be removed, “the potential cost savings realized by the Social Security Administration (SSA) through the successful efforts to facilitate beneficiaries’ return to work through AT use may prove to be considerable,” Hedrick said.

Disability Success Story: Presenting the “Illinois Model”

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has long been known for its pioneering programs and services for students with disabilities. And judging by results of recent studies of employment outcomes for university graduates with severe disabilities, those programs are continuing to make their mark. Recent survey responses from 94 Illinois alumni with spinal cord injuries or disease (SCID) who graduated between 1978 and 2002 indicate that 79 percent of graduates with paraplegia and 70 percent of those with quadriplegia were employed. In addition:

- 92 percent had worked for pay in the past five years;
- 90 percent had graduate degrees;
- 73 percent had annual personal incomes greater than \$35,000;
- 42.8 percent had annual personal incomes in excess of \$50,000.

Brad Hedrick, the director of the university’s Division of Rehabilitation-Education Services and principal investigator for the study, said those figures contrast with a 2000 National Organization on Disability/Harris poll that indicated only 33 percent of working-age persons with disabilities with college degrees were working full time for pay, and 12 percent were working part time.

These data and others were presented by Hedrick and Tanya Gallagher, the dean of the College of Applied Life Studies and the director of the Disability Research Institute, at the Emerging Workforce Conference in Weston, Florida this past February. The conference included representatives from the National Council on Disability, the Social Security Administration, the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Advisory Panel, the President’s Committee for People With Intellectual Disabilities, the Access Board, and the President’s Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, and representatives from other federal, state and international entities. The presentation by Gallagher and Hedrick focused on the strengths of the “Illinois Model” for educating students with disabilities. The model, Hedrick said, “is born of a holistic philosophy that includes academic, physical, social and psychological supports.”

Among its many components, the Illinois Model includes intensive transitional orientation for students on both ends of the collegiate experience – as they move from high school to the university, and later, from the university into the job market. Illinois is one of only three institutions to offer personal-assistant services, which Hedrick said, serve as a bridge – “between the mom-and-dad service” students with disabilities have typically relied upon and “the self-sufficient approach to the management of personal assistants that they will need to be successful following graduation.”

In addition to the survey results of alumni with SCID, Hedrick said another measure of the success of the Illinois Model is the fact that only one percentage point separates the graduation rate of Illinois students with disabilities from that of the campus at large. “But nationally, according to a 1999 study by the National Center on Education Statistics, students with disabilities are 15 percent less likely to graduate than their peers without disabilities,” he said.

Researcher Q & A

The Disability Research Institute recently asked researchers a series of questions related to their work. In this issue of *DRI News*, Edward H. Yelin and Pamela Loprest discuss projects they have completed for the DRI.

Edward Yelin answered a few questions about his project *The Impact of Changes in the Occupational and Industrial Mix Between 1970 and 2001 on the Employment of Persons With and Without Disabilities*.



Edward Yelin is Professor of Medicine and Health Policy at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF). Dr. Yelin serves on the faculty of the Institute for Health Policy Studies and the Aging Health Policy Center at UCSF. Since 1993 he has directed the Education, Epidemiology and Health Services Research Component of the UCSF Multipurpose Arthritis Center. His research concerns the social and economic consequences of chronic disease and disability, with an emphasis on employment issues.

Q: *How would you describe your DRI-funded project?*

EY: The goal of our project was to determine whether people with disabilities are more affected by the shift in the kinds of occupations and industries than people without disabilities, particularly the shift from manufacturing occupations and industries to services. The hypothesis of the project was that when manufacturing jobs caught a cold, people with disabilities in those sectors of the economy would get pneumonia. However, when the analysis was done, we could find no evidence that people with and without disabilities were affected differently by the shift from manufacturing and the shift to services.

Q: *What is unique about your research? How does it differ from work that has been done before?*

EY: There has been very little research on the impact of the changes in the labor market for persons with and without disabilities. Our work on how persons with disabilities fit into larger trends — the increasing participation of women and the decreasing participation of older men in the labor market — highlights the fact that women with disabilities have not completely shared in the growth among all women, while men with disabilities have had a larger relative decline than men without disabilities. We've also shown that people with disabilities are less likely to have the kinds of jobs that offer benefits and they are more likely to have episodic employment. Nevertheless, in terms of what they are expected to do once on the job, persons with and without disabilities didn't differ.

Q: *Among your findings which were the most unexpected?*

EY: We were surprised that we didn't find that the shift from manufacturing to services did not affect persons with disabilities to a greater extent. We were also surprised by our finding that persons with and without disabilities did not differ in the demands of their jobs once employed, since they are less likely to have security of employment and more likely to have episodic employment. That means, shockingly, that persons with disabilities are asked to do the same things once on the job, but do not get the same rewards in terms of security to buffer those demands. This may partially explain why they leave work in much greater numbers.

Pamela Loprest answered a few questions related to her project *Age of Disability Onset and Employment Outcomes: Results from the NHIS-D*.

Q: *How would you describe your DRI-funded project?*

PL: People can experience the onset of disability at all different ages, from birth through old-age. For those who experience disability onset as a child or youth, the impact on education and employment can differ in important ways from those who experience disability later in life after completing schooling and achieving a degree of work experience. Traditionally, public programs in the US that provide income support for people with disabilities focus on those who have later onset of disabilities. In this work (co-authored with Elaine Maag) we wanted to study the impact of early onset of disability on educational completion and employment and how this differs from those with later onset of disability.

Q: *How would you describe the contribution your project will make? That is, how will it impact the lives of persons with disabilities?*

PL: We found that early onset of disability is associated with a much lower chance of completing high school, which reduces employment possibilities for these individuals. For example, among adults 22 to 35 years old, those with onset of disability before age 22 are less than half as likely to work as those without disabilities. We find that employment levels would be 23 percentage points higher for people with early onset of disabilities if they completed high school. They also have much higher rates of participation in government disability programs when they are older than those who experience later onset. These results can lead policy makers to rethink the structure and focus of income support programs for people with disability who have experienced early onset. Improving rates of high school completion is an important way to improve employment outcomes and reduce lifetime benefit dependency for this group.

Q: *What is unique about your research? How does it differ from work that has been done before?*

PL: Very little research has focused on those with onset of disability in youth as it relates to future employment outcomes. I think it is a beginning for opening up discussion of how SSA income support programs might try to connect with programs serving young people and re-think the role of the child SSI program, in particular. In on-going research for the DRI, we are studying transition issues for adolescents with disabilities who receive SSI benefits.



Pamela Loprest is a labor economist and senior research associate at the Urban Institute. Dr. Loprest's research focuses on low-wage labor markets and barriers to work among disadvantaged populations. She is currently studying issues for transition-age SSI youth and the employment prospects of parents of children with disabilities. Dr. Loprest has a Ph.D. in economics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and has been at the Urban Institute since 1991.

News From the DRI

DRI Relocates to New Space



The Disability Research Institute recently moved to renovated facilities within the College of Applied Life Studies at the University of Illinois. Huff Hall, a historic campus building dedicated in 1924, recently underwent a major renovation to accommodate the continued development of the College's scholarly initiatives. The building has been thoroughly modernized with state-of-the-art laboratory and multimedia equipment, along with updates to the building's infrastructure. Because of the building's historical significance, special care was taken to retain the exterior appearance of the original building—a major feat considering the extent of the renovations. The DRI main administrative offices are now located on the second floor of Huff Hall, and we invite you to stop in and visit us if you are ever in Champaign-Urbana.

The new address for the DRI is:

Disability Research Institute
112 Huff Hall
1206 South Fourth Street
Champaign, Illinois 61820

Completed Research Projects Available

The DRI has completed the following research projects since the beginning of Year 4. As reports are finalized, they become available on the DRI website. Please continue to monitor our website for future postings.

- *Early Intervention*, Monroe Berkowitz, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. (Report available on the DRI website at www.dri.uiuc.edu.)
- *Human Factors and Employment Issues Related to the Use of Assistive Technologies*, Brad Hedrick, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Allen Heinemann, Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, Northwestern University. (Report available on the DRI website at www.dri.uiuc.edu.)
- *Age of Disability Onset and Employment Outcomes: Results from the NHIS-D*, Pamela Loprest and Elaine Maag, The Urban Institute. (Report available on the DRI website at www.dri.uiuc.edu.)
- *The Impact of Changes in the Occupational and Industrial Mix Between 1970 and 2001 on the Employment of Persons with and without Disabilities*, Ed Yelin and Laura Trupin, University of California, San Francisco. (Report available on the DRI website at www.dri.uiuc.edu.)

- *Community Rehabilitation Programs (Phase I)*, Frederick Menz, University of Wisconsin – Stout.
- *Employment Networks: The Supply Side of the Ticket to Work-Work Incentives Improvement Act (PL 106-170)*, Bruce Growick and Judi Drew, The Ohio State University.
- *Determinant of the Adult Achievements of Child SSI Beneficiaries Evidence from Linked Public-Use Data and SSA Records*, Elizabeth Powers, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- *Facilitating the Transition of Employment of Childhood SSI Beneficiaries and Other Children with Disabilities*, Elizabeth Powers, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



Access these and other reports at
www.dri.uiuc.edu

Current Research Projects

Early Intervention Year 4

Monroe Berkowitz, Rutgers University

The Early Intervention (EI) project is designed to offer return to work services to SSDI applicants. In Year One, service delivery models and participant selection processes were designed. In Years Two and Three, process demonstration procedures and evaluation plans were developed for the two different service delivery models that will be implemented in three states (New Mexico, Vermont, and Wisconsin).

In Year Four, the project team continues to refine the procedures and evaluation plans to be implemented in the three pilot states using baseline data collected from each state's provider market. Recommendations for provider-applicant information exchange will be developed, in addition to personal interviews with private disability insurance carriers to understand the factors used to guide case management decisions and to determine if private insurers practices may be applicable to the EI project.

Learning from Others: Temporary and Partial Disability Benefits

Monroe Berkowitz, Rutgers University

This project will examine the overall process as well as the benefits determination activities for persons who are temporarily or partially disabled in select foreign countries. The federal system in the United States provides either permanent total disability support, or no disability support. Some minor federal government exceptions to this status exist. A few states (California, Hawaii, New Jersey, New York and Rhode Island) provide limited partial disability benefits; however, the overall rule in the United States is "all or nothing" as far as provision of government disability benefits is concerned. Foreign temporary or partial disability benefits systems will be studied in order to assess applicability to the United States.

Adequacy of Incentives Advisory Group

Tanya Gallagher, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

The Disability Research Institute proposed the formation of the Adequacy of Incentives (AOI) Advisory Group as a direct response to the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Advisory Panel's 2002 report entitled, Advice Report to the Commissioner of the Social Security Administration: Design Issues Relating to the Adequacy of Incentives Study (June 18, 2002). Congress mandated the Adequacy of Incentives Study to evaluate how the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program can be used to increase employment among "involuntary nonparticipants." These "involuntary nonparticipants" are defined as: (1) individuals with a need for ongoing support and services; (2) individuals with a need for high-cost accommodations; (3) individuals who earn a sub-minimum wage; and (4) individuals who work and receive partial cash benefits. The AOI Advisory Group will provide the Social Security Administration with actionable recommendations regarding the adequacy of incentives in the Ticket to Work Program with particular attention paid to individuals with disabilities who are in the four "involuntary nonparticipant" groups.

Improving Employment Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities: Learning from the Youth Transition Process Demonstration Innovations

Tanya Gallagher, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

This project seeks to ensure that the Youth Transition Process Demonstration (YTPD), operated in six states, will conduct the highest quality evaluation within and across sites. Specifically, the proposed project will provide assistance to sites in the development of their analysis plans and conduct cross-site analyses of the feasibility of random assignment research designs. This will allow the SSA to obtain maximal information from the innovations being conducted.

Disability Claims, Review, Hearings and Appeals Procedures: An Analysis of Administrative Best Practices

Robert F. Rich, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Thomas I. Prudhomme, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

This interdisciplinary project is examining the hearings and appeals process for disability determination. The main objective of the study is to examine the effectiveness of these processes and to identify “best practices” from other areas of administrative law and regulation that might be adopted by SSA. In addition, the project team seeks to examine areas for potential administrative reform in the disability determination process based on this best practices analysis. The results of this project will allow policy-makers and administrators to identify aspects of the disability determination process, which could be made more efficient and cost-effective.

Community-Based Rehabilitation Programs: Phase II Effective Models for SSA Beneficiaries

Fredrick E. Menz, University of Wisconsin at Stout

The Community-based Rehabilitation Programs project is designed to identify the barriers to accessing community-based services by SSA beneficiaries, as well as to propose models that would reduce or eliminate the barriers to services. In Phase II, the project team is: (1) defining community-based rehabilitation program (CRP) models that may increase outcomes for SSA beneficiaries (employment, earnings, benefits); and (2) preparing a methodology to evaluate and demonstrate the utility of selected models.

The Impact of Demographic and Labor Force Participation Changes on the Social Security Disability Insurance and Medicare Programs

William G. Johnson, Arizona State University
Tricia J. Johnson, Rush University
Amy Bartels, Arizona State University

This study explores the effects of the changing demographic characteristics and labor market experiences for women in the labor force on SSDI and Medicare, and examines the extent to which differences exist among men and women in the baby boom generation. A base estimation model will be developed, using labor market conditions and demographic characteristics of individuals age 40 to 64 in 1997, to estimate the absolute growth in participation and total benefit payments for the SSDI and Medicare programs. The Survey of Income and Program Participation for 1997 will be used to estimate the number of individuals meeting DI program requirements and receiving

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benefits. Health care utilization and expenditures for disabled persons receiving Medicare benefits will be estimated using the Cost and Use File of the Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey (1996 to 1999).

Epidemiologic, Sociodemographic, and Economic Influences on Trends in Disability Rates

H. Steven Kaye, University of California, San Francisco

The rapid increases in activity limitation and Social Security disability reciprocity among working-age adults during the early 1990s were accompanied by much more widespread increases in prevalence of the chronic conditions and impairments that have the potential to cause disability, according to prior research using nationally representative data from the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS). Using data from the NHIS, this project covers the six-year period from 1997 to 2002, including a portion of the current economic recession. The analysis will expand by studying changes not only in self-reported activity limitations but also in SSDI/SSI beneficiary status and self-assessed functional limitations, and by embarking on a more extensive and rigorous process of test hypotheses as to the various risk factors believed to have influenced, and continue to influence, disability rates.

Employers and Persons with Disabilities: Economic, Legal, and Psychological Barriers to Increasing Employment of SSA Beneficiaries and Applicants

**Elizabeth Powers, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Nicholas Powers, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**

This project seeks to improve understanding of the employer perspective on hiring people with disabilities. The multidisciplinary approach will apply insights from analyses of the complex legal environment governing employee-employer relations to analyses of specific economic issues. The objectives include identifying: the barriers to hiring workers with disabilities from the employer perspective; perceived employee concerns as they pertain to persons with disabilities; and a range of policy options for reducing employer hiring barriers.

Accessing the World of Work: Concerns of African Americans with Disabilities Actively Seeking Employment

**Fabricio E. Balcazar, University of Illinois at Chicago
Kimberly M. Hall, University of Illinois at Chicago**

The primary goal of this study is to identify the employment concerns of African Americans with disabilities that are engaged in the employment seeking process. This study will also attempt to validate findings from a recent qualitative study conducted by the authors, assess the level of concern among this population regarding barriers cited in the existing literature, and examine differences across disability categories. The Concerns Report Method (Schriner & Fawcett, 1988), which promotes consumer involvement in identifying issues and suggesting policy and practice modifications, will be employed in this study.

Defining Suitable Employment Goals for the SSDI Population

Monroe Berkowitz, Rutgers University
Debra Brucker, Rutgers University

Employment is defined as the pre-eminent goal of many public programs. Disability insurance, workers' compensation, and unemployment insurance programs serve persons who have had substantial experience in the workforce. Other programs (e.g. SSI , welfare) serve persons who have limited or no experience in the workforce. Vocational rehabilitation may serve both types of populations. These programs may serve only persons with disabilities, or a broader constituency. While all of these programs have a common interest in promoting employment as the key to achieving self-sufficiency, each program has developed a different set of employment outcome expectations.

A comparative analysis of these programs' employment outcome definitions will uncover lessons to be applied to the revision of employment outcome definitions for the SSDI population. Programs will be compared with regards to populations served, components of definitions of suitable employment with examples of the particular use, narrowness or breadth of each definition of suitable employment, and where possible, reported rates of return to work, program exits, and/ or job retention. Among the programs that are formulated at the state level, the analysis will be based on three selected states.

Evaluating the Long-Term Employment Outcomes of Vocational Rehabilitation Participants Using Survey and Administrative Data

David H. Dean, University of Richmond
Todd Honeycutt, Rutgers University

This project examines long-term employment earnings using two sets of data: the Longitudinal Study of the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program (LSVRSP), a 3-year longitudinal national survey of VR participants; and VR administrative data from Virginia matched to state unemployment insurance records. Analyses will be performed to compare earnings among those who do and do not complete VR services and to predict earnings using consumer variables, pre-employment earnings, disability measures, and VR interventions. The results will provide information about: 1) the earnings outcomes of VR programs nationally and for Virginia; 2) the ability of VR to promote employment outcomes that meet the requirements of SGA; and 3) the comparison of results obtained from a national survey and state-specific administrative data for VR evaluation.

Determinants of the Adult Achievements of Child SSI Beneficiaries: Evidence from Linked Public-Use Data and SSA Records

Elizabeth Powers, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

This project has two major goals. The first is to assess the self-sufficiency of young adults with disabilities who are former SSI-child beneficiaries. The second is to identify factors in their family environments that may impact their successful transition to adult employment.

This project links public-use household data to administrative records in order to assemble a rich picture of the childhood environment of SSI-child beneficiaries. The final goal is to determine how these factors may impact young adults with disabilities in their ability to obtain self-sufficiency along a variety of dimensions.

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Facilitating the Transition to Employment of Childhood SSI Beneficiaries and Other Children with Disabilities

Elizabeth Powers, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

This project examines the young adult transitions to employment of individuals who are limited in activities of daily living or who experience specific chronic health conditions in childhood. Particular attention will be paid to children who participate in the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. The project will proceed in two phases.

In the first phase, a careful assessment of the patterns of the young adult transition into the labor market will be conducted. The second phase of the project will be concerned with identifying specific factors that may mitigate the adverse consequences of childhood health and activity limitations on the transition to adult employment and economic self-sufficiency.

Transition to Work of Youth with Disabilities: An Analysis of Data from the DRI Longitudinal Study of the VR Services Program Database

John F. Kosciulek, Michigan State University

This project utilizes the Longitudinal Study of the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program (LSVRSP) database to evaluate the transition to work process and outcomes for youth with disabilities. Despite various school-to-work transition initiatives, persistent issues and problems regarding post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities remain. Young people with disabilities are not moving successfully from high school to post secondary education or employment and, at an early age, are becoming dependent on public support for meeting their basic life needs.

Transition Option(s) for Child SSI Recipients

Pamela Loprest, The Urban Institute
David Wittenburg, The Urban Institute

This project examines program participation and employment patterns of child SSI recipients prior to and immediately following their SSI benefit redetermination at age 18 using data from the National Survey of SSI Children and Families (NSCF). These new data provide a unique source of information on child SSI recipients in this transition period and after redetermination.

Employment Networks: The Supply Side of the Ticket to Work/Work Incentives Improvement Act (PL 106-170)

Bruce Growick and Judith Drew, The Ohio State University

The purpose of this project is to explore and describe the opinions and attitudes of prospective Employment Networks as related to the Ticket to Work Program. Specific attention will be paid to the potential relationship between the increasing number of beneficiaries entering but not leaving the Social Security Administration rolls, the current low rate of participation of prospective Employment Networks in the Ticket program, and the resulting reduction in choice of service provider for beneficiaries.

This project uses a web-based survey design to identify the factors most heavily influencing the Employment Networks' participation decision in the Ticket to Work program. Demographic characteristics of Employment Networks as well as the Ticket program components will be analyzed. The project will summarize the insights gained from the Employment Networks about the Ticket program.

Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Program: Predictive Modeling of Return to Work Behavior by SSA Disability and Income Security Program Beneficiaries

Thomas I. Prudhomme, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Michael Welge, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

This project is designed to eventually assist SSDI and SSI beneficiaries as they re-enter or transition into the workforce for the first time. Phase I will examine the behavior of SSA beneficiaries, employers and ENs that have participated in work incentives programs, statistically profile the attributes and activity histories, and study the relationships among the profile models and return to work outcomes. Based on these predictive relationships an initial assessment can be made of the likelihood of success of work incentives across the entire population of SSA beneficiaries eligible for the Ticket to Work program. Further, the predictive models can be used for “what-if” analyses by modifying initial conditions and model constraints.

A Qualitative Methodology for Examining the Ticket to Work Program Among African American Disabled in Chicago, Illinois

Carmelita Grady, University of Chicago, National Opinion Research Center

This project seeks to identify perceived barriers to employment within the African American community, including discrimination (disability, race, age, gender); lack of information and placement services; placement in dead-end jobs and/or poor placement rates; availability of reliable and accessible transportation; fear of losing benefits; and limited financial resources.

This project is constructed as a culturally sensitive research study. Research is made culturally sensitive through a continuing and open-ended series of substantive and methodological insertions and adaptations designed to mesh the process of inquiry with the cultural characteristics of the group being studied. The process spans the entire project, from pretesting and planning, collection of data and translation of instruments, instrumentation of measures, to the analysis and interpretation of the data. The research becomes an incessant, basic and active preoccupation with the culture of the group being studied.

Back to Basics: Understanding the Vocational Rehabilitation and Ticket-To-Work Needs of Latinos with Disabilities

Brigida Hernandez, DePaul University

The purposes of this project include building scientific knowledge regarding the needs of Latinos with disabilities related to VR services and the Ticket to Work Program, and examining the diversity of needs based on type of disability. A needs assessment will be conducted via six focus groups with two participant groups: (1) Latinos with disabilities who are currently employed; and (2) Latinos with disabilities seeking employment. Information gathered from focus group participants will be used to develop a questionnaire. This questionnaire will focus on the needs of Latinos with disabilities and barriers they encounter when utilizing VR and TTW programs. Fielding of this questionnaire will be the focus of a future study.

Disability Research Institute

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