

# Evaluating the Effect of Work Incentives Benefits Counseling on Employment Outcomes of Transition-Age Young Adult Supplemental Security Income Recipients with Intellectual Disabilities: A Case Control Study

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## ■ A QUICK LOOK:

Work incentives benefits counseling (WIBC) are services that provide information for job seekers and employees with disabilities and their families about how the salary and benefits they receive for work may affect their eligibility for public benefits such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid. WIBC are an important factor in improving employment outcomes for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID). 44.3% of families of individuals with ID live below the poverty threshold even after counting public benefits. As a result, individuals and families are understandably highly concerned about the potential disruption or reduction of public benefits as a result of increased employment activity or earnings. As a result, WIBC can be highly effective at giving individuals and families important information about how to maximize their employment activity and earnings. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effect of WIBC on employment outcomes including the rate of competitive integrated employment, earnings, and hours worked of transition-age youth and young adults with ID who are SSI recipients, using the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA-911) dataset, which collected by each state vocational rehabilitation agency.

## ■ KEY FINDINGS:

- The study compared those who received WIBC (treatment group) with others with similar characteristics who did not (control group)
- Compared with the control group, the treatment group had:
  - higher rates of employment (58.9% compared to 43.9%)
  - higher hourly wages than the control group (\$10.18 per hour average compared to \$9.50 per hour)
  - less hours per week (18.11 hours per week compared to 19.7 hours per week)

## ■ PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE:

To create more positive employment opportunities for youth with IDD:

- WIBC should be a fundamental component of employment services; Unfortunately, less than one in ten participants in the sample received WIBC
- WIBC should also be provided for youth as they transition from school to employment to plan for achieving their career goals
- Providing WIBC to youth and families before they exit high school can increase expectations for individuals' career potential -- a powerful predictor of achievement
- As employees with ID who receive long-term employment supports could benefit from WIBC to consider changes based on promotions and other job opportunities.

## ■ MORE ABOUT THIS ARTICLE

This study used a research approach called "propensity score matching" that uses statistical calculations based on information about participants to create equal groups. Propensity score matching can reveal powerful causal relationships similar to experiments that randomly assign participants to treatment and control groups with the important advantage of not disrupting services for participants that might otherwise be selected for control groups.

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