

Toward Competitive Employment for Persons with Intellectual and Development Disabilities: What Progress Have We Made and Where Do We Need to Go

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Wehman, Paul; Taylor, Joshua; Brooke, Valerie; Avellone, Lauren; Whittenburg, Holly; Ham, Whitney; Brooke, Alissa; & Carr, Staci (in press). Toward Competitive Employment for Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: What Progress Have We Made and Where Do We Need to Go. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*

A quick look:

Recent research has shown that supported employment interventions for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) have a significant positive impact on the employment outcomes of these individuals. However, even with evidence showing this effectiveness, national rates of integrated employment of people with I/DD are

below one-third of the working-age population. With the passage of the 2014 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), advancements and progress have been made in supported and customized employment, internship experiences, and higher education. But what more can be done in regards to policies and future research? How can competitive integrated employment for people with I/DD be boosted higher? This article explores those questions.

Key Findings:

This article discusses four pathways to competitive integrated employment (CIE) for people with I/DD: supported employment (SE), customized employment, internships and higher education. Here are some of their findings:

- ▶ Implementation of supported employment, which is competitive employment in an integrated setting with ongoing support services for individuals with the significant disabilities, includes four phases:
 - ☐ Get to know the job seeker
 - ☐ Job development and matching
 - ☐ Training and support
 - ☐ Job retention services.
- ▶ When using supported employment, keep in mind the following issues:
 - ☐ Use SE for people who have the most significant disabilities
 - ☐ Employment specialists should be well-trained
 - ☐ Have a balanced job seeker/business interest focus
 - ☐ Avoid poor job matches
 - ☐ Factor in funding to support the new employee to keep the job.
- ▶ Customized employment is an important part of supported employment and includes discovery, development, job training and support.
- ▶ Internships and hands on work experience are vital parts of future success and should be supported prior to exiting high school.

Putting It into Practice:

- ▶ Transition-aged youth with I/DD have the lowest rates of post secondary enrollment of any disability group. Schools, state vocational rehabilitation agencies, community rehabilitation providers, and colleges and universities will need to collaborate to create new ways to better integrate students with I/DD.
- ▶ Stronger community rehabilitation programs will be needed with staff that have community employment experience supporting people with I/DD.
- ▶ The following is needed to better promote the importance of CIE for people with I/DD:
 - ☐ Provide training to create more competent employment specialists
 - ☐ Federally funded research that focuses on the issue of CIE
 - ☐ Have better school-community relationships
 - ☐ Provide transition and employment knowledge to family members
 - ☐ Having more inclusive social skills instruction through more integration
 - ☐ Before graduation, create a seamless transition to paid employment

More about this Article (Where to go from here?)

- ▶ Twenty to twenty-five% of the country's persons with I/DD are working competitively; that percentage is above 50% in states including Vermont, Connecticut, Michigan, Oregon, Nebraska, Idaho, and Nevada.
- ▶ Supported employment was first defined in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which was replaced by the WIOA in 2014.
- ▶ Vocational rehabilitation funding can also be used to provide customized employment, yet not all state agencies have taken steps to incorporate it into their processes.

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