



Vocational Rehabilitation: The Untapped Resource for Diversity & Inclusion

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So what is Vocational Rehabilitation?

- ▶ 1917: Smith-Hughes Act established for vocational rehabilitation of disabled WWI Veterans
- ▶ 1918: Smith-Sears Veterans Rehabilitation Act (Soldier's Rehabilitation Act)
- ▶ 1920: Smith-Fess Act (Civilian Rehabilitation Act) Federal/State, 50/50
- ▶ 1935: The Social Security Act gave the VR program permanency
- ▶ Purpose: "To empower individuals with disabilities to maximize employment, achieve economic self-sufficiency and independence, and to realize full inclusion and integration into society."
 - ▶ Full inclusion and integration in American society: economically, politically, socially, culturally, and educationally.
 - ▶ Persons with disabilities have the right to: live independently, enjoy self-determination, make choices, contribute to society, and pursue meaningful careers.

So what is Vocational Rehabilitation?

- ▶ In order to be Eligible for VR services you must be an individual with a disability resulting in a significant barrier to employment and must require VR services to achieve an employment outcome such as:
 - ▶ Competitive full-time/part-time employment
 - ▶ Supported Employment
 - ▶ Self-Employment
- ▶ SSI/SSDI recipients are presumed to be eligible for VR services.
- ▶ Client referral, meet with VR counselor, collect existing and acquire new information, consider results, initiate joint planning, and specify rehabilitation needs through an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)
- ▶ Kentucky has 1 of 8 Comprehensive Vocational Training Centers in the country: Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center (CDPVTC), Thelma, KY

2014 Work Opportunity Innovation Act (WIOA)

- ▶ VR must strategically coordinate with 5 other core partners:
 - ▶ Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs (Title I)
 - ▶ Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (Title II)
 - ▶ Employment Service program (Title III)
- ▶ 15% of VR funding is dedicated to Pre-Employment Transition Services (PreETS) for transitioning youth, per WIOA.
 - ▶ VR works with students starting at 14 years old that have Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and Section 504 plans, as well as students potentially eligible for VR services.

Client Services: Consumers

- ▶ Assessment
- ▶ Counseling & Guidance
- ▶ Referral
- ▶ Restoration
- ▶ College/Vocational Training
- ▶ Maintenance & Transportation
- ▶ Interpreter Services
- ▶ Reader Services
- ▶ Transition Services
- ▶ Personal Assistance
- ▶ Rehabilitation Technology
- ▶ Supported Employment
- ▶ Tools & Equipment
- ▶ Job Placement & Job Readiness

Client Services: Employers

- ▶ Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Training
- ▶ Disability Awareness Training for Staff
- ▶ Obtaining/Maintaining Employment for Individuals with Disabilities
- ▶ Financial Benefits via PACE, OJT, WOTC, etc. and cut costs in recruiting, hiring, and training new employees
- ▶ Provide Reasonable Accommodations Solutions in accordance with the ADA
- ▶ Job Task Analysis and Workplace Analysis
- ▶ Refer pre-screened, qualified applicants while minimizing turnover with a “good fit”

Disability Demographics

- ▶ Individuals with disabilities are the largest minority in the world, the United States, and in Missouri.
- ▶ Approximately 1 out of 10 people in the world has a disability, while approximately 1 out of 5 Americans.
- ▶ Disability crosses all groups and populations regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, sex, religion, creed, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, etc.
- ▶ We are all only a diagnosis away!
- ▶ We aren't getting any younger either!

Disability Demographics

- ▶ Employment rate for American working-age people (16 to 64 years old) with disabilities in 2016 was at 31.2%
- ▶ In comparison, the employment rate for American working-age people without a disability in 2016 was at 76.4%
- ▶ THAT IS A 45.2% GAP BETWEEN THOSE WITH & WITHOUT DISABILITIES!!!
- ▶ The gap has slightly shortened since then; however as the job market gets tighter and unemployment rates decrease, employers will have to tapped into untapped labor pools to meet their growing business needs and fill vacancies with talent that comes from VR!

For Those of Us DisLabled

- ▶ Person-First Language means just that; we put the person first and not the disability.
- ▶ **WORDS MATTER!** The words and language we use matters so much!
 - ▶ Spread the Word to End the Word Campaign
- ▶ Individual or person with a disability
 - ▶ Gentleman with a hearing impairment
 - ▶ Lady that uses a wheelchair
 - ▶ Boy with a developmental disability
 - ▶ Girl with an intellectual disability

Myth Busting Disability

- ▶ Myth #1: Individuals with disabilities have higher absentee rates, are unable to meet performance standards, and are more likely to have accidents on the job than their non-disabled counterparts.
 - ▶ Dupont has been conducting employee studies since the 1970's comparing employees with and without disabilities and have shown that identical safety records, absentee rates, and comparable performance standards were found.
- ▶ Myth #2: It takes a considerable expense to reasonably accommodate an employee with a disability.
 - ▶ Fact: Most workers with disabilities require no reasonable accommodation, while according to the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) 59% of these requests cost nothing and rest \$500 or less.
 - ▶ Visit <https://askjan.org> for more information.

Disability Etiquette

- ▶ Talk directly to the person with the disability, not someone else!
- ▶ Don't lean on a person's wheelchair.
- ▶ Don't interact or touch someone's service dog without permission first; they're working!
- ▶ Use the normal volume of your voice when speaking with a person that is deaf.
- ▶ I know you want to help, but please wait to be asked for it!
- ▶ It's okay to say, "See you later!" to an individual with blindness.

AgrAbility: Cultivating Accessible Agriculture

- ▶ The Missouri AgrAbility Project is about creating success in agriculture, employment, and rural life for people with disabilities and their families.
- ▶ It links the Cooperative Extension Service at a land-grant university with a nonprofit disability organization to provide practical education and assistance that promotes rural independence of Agriculture, administers the AgrAbility Project.
- ▶ The National AgrAbility Project was legislated via the 1990 Farm Bill
- ▶ Partners with the [Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services](#), [Rehabilitation Services for the Blind](#), [USDA Farm Service Agency](#), [Arthritis Foundation Eastern Chapter](#), and the [CDC Missouri Arthritis & Osteoporosis Program](#) in serving agricultural workers and their family members around the state.

Discussion

- ▶ What experiences have you had with Vocational Rehabilitation?
AgrAbility?
- ▶ What efforts are your organizations making to improve inclusion of individuals with disabilities in their workforce and programming?
 - ▶ What steps would like to be seen taken towards these efforts?
- ▶ Are your programs and services fully accessible?
 - ▶ If they're not accessible, then they're not inclusive!
- ▶ What disability related questions do have today?

Contact Information

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The End 😊

Enjoy the rest of the

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