Employment supports and barriers for Vocational Rehabilitation clients in NC

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Employment supports and barriers: The context

The Ticket To Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act 1997

<u>Goals</u>:
o   Remove disincentives to work
o   Provide needed supports to work

Employment supports and barriers: Medicaid Infrastructure Grant

- MIG1: Expanded Medicaid policy
    - Expanded coverage for personal assistance
    - Optional Medicaid buy-in for working adults with disabilities
- MIG2: Builds employment supports
    - Promotes collaboration
    - Builds comprehensive system of employment supports

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Employment supports and barriers: Medicaid Infrastructure Grant

The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services has identified several concerns:

o   Low expectations about work

o   Segregation of individuals with disabilities and the services provided into 'programmatic silos'

o   Complexity of the service system

Employment supports and barriers: Study goal

○ Get baseline information on work and program participation of adults with disabilities

- Is any disability group being left out of work?
- Do 'programmatic silos' route people to different benefits?
- Where do people stand on system complexity?
- What can we learn about supports and barriers to work?

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Employment supports and barriers: Survey on Adults with Disabilities & Work

- Sample frame
  - VR and DSB clients
  - SSI, SSDI, most or significantly disabled
  - Cases open or closed within 2 years
- N = 291
- 67% response rate among people with valid contact information

Employment supports and barriers: Sample representativeness

Variable	VR/DSB Clients	Survey Sample
Age	35(14)	36(14)
Race & ethnicity		
White, not Hispanic	56%	60%
African American	41%	36%
Other	4%	4%
SSDI benefit	$113(272)	$139(309)
SSI benefit	$87(196)	$89(211)

Employment supports and barriers: Any disability group being left out?

Work Status	Whole sample	Physical	Sensory/ communicative	Cognitive	Psychosocial
Working for pay	41%	33%	43%	44%	46%
Earning above poverty	15%	18%	15%	12%	13%

Employment supports and barriers: Any 'programmatic silos?'

Program	Whole sample	Physical	Sensory/ communicative	Cognitive	Psychosocial
Voc Rehab	69%	74%	48%	60%	81%
VR Indep Living	9%	7%	17%	9%	8%
Div Blind	8%	4%	48%	-	4%
Div Deaf	5%	-	28%	-	0%
Div MH/DD	23%	13%	10%	21%	45%
Medicaid	51%	45%	48%	54%	56%
JobLink	24%	23%	14%	23%	31%
Work Support	29%	31%	24%	24%	35%

Employment supports and barriers: Where do people stand on complexity?

Complexity	Whole sample
I know exactly how much I can earn and continue to receive benefits	25%
I am afraid to work more because I might lose my benefits	32%
Different people tell me different things about how to keep my benefits	44%
Social Security rules and regulations are too hard to understand or follow	53%

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Employment supports and barriers: What can we learn about these?

Program use & Personal characteristics	Work for pay	Earn above poverty
Whole sample	41%	15%
Used work supports	50% *	18%
Uses personal assistance	40%	11%
High school degree or above	39%	19% **
Living alone	41%	16%
Unclear about benefits	40%	14%

Chi-square tests, * α=0.05, ** α=0.01

Employment supports and barriers: Summary

- Pattern of work and earnings is different for those with physical disabilities
- Programmatic silos are not associated with use of Medicaid and work supports
- People confirm that the system of benefits is complex
- Work support programs and high school graduation are good investments

•Employment supports and barriers: Implications for the NC MIG

o The needs of individuals with physical disabilities require more attention
  - Implement enhanced Medicaid coverage of personal assistance
  - Develop policy that will facilitate flexible work schedules
o Need to increase awareness and participation in work support programs
  - Hosting statewide educational meetings
  - Give providers and consumers a map of referral and information
  - Emphasize including high school transition planning

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