

The Poverty Disability Model: 4 Risk Factors

At-a-Glance

The Poverty Disability Model proposes four poverty risk factors that could cause or worsen disability:

- Low social standing
- Unsafe living conditions
- High levels of daily survival stress
- Negative group influences

Key Findings

It's important for vocational rehabilitation counselors to provide consumers in poverty with supporting services to reduce the risk of worsening or acquiring disability. The Poverty Disability Model helps counselors understand some of the reasons that people in poverty are more at risk for disability and how these risks can create barriers to employment:

- Lower social standing can result in restricted access to resources that could prevent a disability from developing.
- Dangerous homes and neighborhoods increase the likelihood that a person will be injured and acquire a disability.
- The constant stress of meeting immediate survival needs makes decision-making and attaining long-range goals difficult.
- Limited access to social connections limit ability to find and get jobs.
- Opportunities to learn how to behave in a workplace setting are limited.

Putting It into Practice

To reduce the risk that poverty could cause or worsen disability, counselors can:

- Understand some of the reasons consumers make the decisions they do.
- Better connect consumers with supports that can ease the burdens of poverty.
- Help consumers resolve immediate needs so they can focus goals for becoming self-sufficient in the future.
- Guide consumers through the sometimes-confusing social services system.
- Assist and support consumers who may have difficulty making career decisions.
- Be a professional role model, help consumers make necessary connections, and encourage them to reach their goals.

More about this Research

The Poverty Disability Model provided a simplified view of the complicated relationship between poverty and disability. The research laid a foundation for further investigation into the variables affecting the model and encouraged a bottom-up approach in testing relationships and variables.

Learn More

Access this research by visiting the [Project E3 Research Database](#)

Lustig, D.C., & Strauser, D. R. (2007). Causal relationships between poverty and disability. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 50 (4), 194-202.

Questions? Feedback?

Do you have questions or feedback about putting this research into practice? We're waiting to hear from you! [Send us your questions.](#)

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Have you tried any of these practices? Have you had success working with these populations in your area? Tell us more and [join our conversation.](#)