

An Aging Workforce: Preparing Job Seekers and Employers

At-a-Glance:

As life expectancy increases and medical technology advances, older people are working long past the customary retirement age. Disabilities related to aging can cause challenges to employment, but many seasoned workers have a lot to contribute to a thinning workforce. Rehabilitation counselors must be aware of commonly occurring age-related disabilities and understand the wide variety of concerns of both employers and people with age-related disabilities.

Key Findings

- Employability is a factor in the long-term health and well-being of baby boomers.
- Rehabilitation professionals will collaborate with multi-disciplinary health and illness recovery teams when creating vocational rehabilitation plans.
- Employer buy-in, positive work environment, co-worker support, and transportation help are some of the main issues that older workers will need help with.
- Peer and social support groups are equally important in supporting individuals with age-related disabilities.
- Vocational rehabilitation counselors will be vital in helping keep older workers employed and establishing appropriate workplace accommodations.

Putting It into Practice

- Identify, acknowledge, and overcome any personal biases about older workers.
- Team up with health care and other professionals who can support and guide older workers to ensure that their needs are being met.
- Create a collaborative rehabilitation plan that considers the job seeker's medical history, support networks, housing, transportation, financial situation, and holistic needs.

- Think outside the box when considering issues like identifying signs of dementia, being alert to red flags that could signal normal reactions turning into psychiatric issues, and crisis preparedness.
- Teach consumers self-advocacy skills, employment protections, and how to recognize work barriers and use reasonable accommodations.
- Facilitate collaborative problem solving and reasonable accommodations between employer and employee.

More About this Research

This research used rheumatoid arthritis and stroke as disability examples since they are two of the main age-emergent disabilities that can affect a person's ability to work.

Learn More

Cichy, K. E., Leslie, M., Rumrill, P. D., & Koch, L. C. (2017). Population aging and disability: Implications for vocational rehabilitation practice. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 47*(2), 185-196. doi:10.3233/jvr-170894

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