

Partnerships in Employment: A State VR Initiative

At-a-Glance:

Young adults with cognitive disabilities are half as likely to be employed as their peers without disabilities. They also experience lower wages and hours, averaging 12 hours and \$92 per week. To improve employment and quality of employment outcomes for this group, the Partnerships in Employment initiative reviewed eight state vocational rehabilitation agencies to learn how they could improve their policies, infrastructure, and collaborative relationships.

Key Findings

The Partnerships in Employment initiative revealed several areas in which state vocational rehabilitation agencies could improve:

- Collaboration between education and rehabilitation professionals.
- Effective partnerships at state and local levels.
- Coordination of information and service sharing.

They also discovered:

- Inadequate emphasis on community employment.
- Lack of family engagement and information delivery to parents to support their children in transition.
- Many students with severe disabilities lack early vocational experiences, professional development related to transition, long-term follow-ups and transition practices in schools.

Putting It into Practice

Consider these suggestions to improve agency policies, infrastructure, and collaborative relationships that could result in improved outcomes for young people with cognitive disabilities:

- Commit to a long-term approach to create systems change.

- Use data as a communication mechanism: state agencies should harness data to illustrate priorities and progress to develop common definitions and understanding of employment outcomes.
- Use clear, intentional strategies to engage stakeholders.
- Develop policies that support competitive employment in integrated settings.
- Remove systematic barriers to integrated, competitive employment.
- Implement strategies and best practices to improve employment outcomes of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Enhance statewide collaborations to facilitate the transition process from schooling to integrated, competitive employment.

More About this Research

The Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities established the Partnerships in Employment initiative and funded eight states to implement the initiative to create change in policy and procedures. The lessons learned will be used in future state initiatives.

Learn More

Butterworth, John; Christensen, Julie; Flippo, Karen (2017). **Partnerships in Employment: Building strong coalitions to facilitate systems change for youth and young adults.** *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 47 (3), 265-276.

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