

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Customized Employment

Wehman, P., Brooke, V., Green, H., Hewett, M., & Tipton, M. (2008). Public/private partnerships and employment of people with disabilities: Preliminary evidence from a pilot project. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 28, 53-66.

BOTTOM LINE

Professionals from employment service organizations such as community rehabilitation programs (CRP's) often spend a substantial amount of time establishing a trusting working relationships with local businesses to employ the individuals they support with disabilities. However, supplemental staffing companies are an untapped resource for placing individuals with disabilities in competitive employment careers. This pilot study reports on two public/private collaborations in Virginia between CRP's and local supplemental staffing agencies one in a rural setting and one in an urban setting. The results suggest that successful public/private collaborative relationships may increase the rate and quality of job opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Beach Center on Disability

Making a Sustainable Difference in Quality of Life



ACTION STEPS

- Strong public/private relationships between community rehabilitation programs and agencies (CRP's) and the supplemental staffing companies were created by developing trusting open relationships where both parties could communicate freely about sensitive issues.
- Myths and Fears in regards to both parties have to be dispelled to foster successful collaboration.
- "The rehabilitation professional is the key developer in public-private partnerships. They must acknowledge the employer as a customer and demonstrate how their resources and clients can meet the needs of the business" (p. 63).
- It is important to assist employers in understanding the myths and misconceptions of employing an individual with a disability.
- Some employers may need to receive training on accommodations and the potential costs so that they may support potential employees with disabilities.
- Job-seekers need to allow ESO's to disclose their disability to supplementary staffing agencies to reap the benefits of their employer relationships.
- It may be best to begin the public/private partnership with job-seekers who are underemployed and ready for career advancement rather than those whom have never been employed.
- Supplemental staffing agencies are untapped resources that can provide numerous opportunities for employment for individuals with disabilities.
- These agencies may also assist with building employer relationships to further utilize when developing customized employment.



Manpower Inc. was one of the contributing supplementary staffing agencies used.

<http://www.manpower.com/>

KEY FINDINGS

- Historically, individuals with disabilities have been placed in secure competitive employment positions by employment service organizations (ESO's) and agencies one individual at a time.
- Employer attitudes toward individuals with disabilities are changing. Darlene Unger surveyed 255 supervisors and asked them to rate their employees with disabilities:
 - ◆ “The 255 supervisors indicated that they were satisfied with the work performance of the worker with a disability in the areas of timeliness of arrival and departure, punctuality, attendance and consistency in task” (p. 54)
 - ◆ “Supervisors rated the work performance of employees with disabilities the same or better than coworkers” (p. 54).
- Most employees with disabilities require little or no accommodations.
 - ◆ “The vast majority of employers (73%) have not made any accommodation with \$500 representing the average cost among those who have made accommodations were required” (p. 56).
- Supplementary staffing companies provide a link between employers and job-seekers. “They fill 80% of all information technology positions and 50% of all other positions.
 - ◆ They profit from the strong business relationships they have with employers.
- The purpose of the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Public-Private Partnership Model was to create a strong business relationship between the supplemental staffing organizations, individuals with disabilities and the ESO's.
 - ◆ This was done through the development of a referral process to help individuals with disabilities secure employment.
- A referral form was developed to be used by the CRP's and given to the supplemental staffing agencies
 - ◆ The CRP's ran into problems when dealing with confidentiality in regards to disclosing an individual's disability
 - ◆ This was resolved by asking the individuals to give them permission to disclose their disability.
- In the urban setting, 140 individuals with disabilities were referred to the supplemental staffing agency and 39 individuals secured competitive employment.

- ◆ Occupations included file clerk, production worker, loan operator etc. The average hourly rate was \$9.06 per hour
- ◆ “It is significant to report that MANPOWER [supplemental staffing agency] was able to match 87% of all successful participants with positions that corresponded to their stated career goals” (p. 58).
- In the rural setting, 75 individuals with disabilities were referred to the supplemental staffing agency and 20 individuals secured competitive employment.
 - ◆ Together, two supplemental staffing agencies were able to match 65% of all participants with positions that corresponded to their stated goals.
- Overall, through the public/private partnerships “over half or 54% of the pilot participants achieved fulltime employment” (p. 62).

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

Kiernan W.E. & Schalock, R.L. (Eds.) (1997). *Integrated employment: Current status and future directions*. Washington D.C. : American Association on Mental Retardation.

McGaughey, M.J., Kiernan, W.E., McNally, L.C., Gilmore, D.S. & Keith, G.R. (1994). Beyond the workshop: National trends in integrated and segregated day and employment services. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 29, 270-285.

Unger, D. (2002). Employers’ attitudes toward persons with disabilities in the workforce: Myths or realities? *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 17(1), 2-10.

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