

# Strengthening the Intersection of Demand-Side and Supply-Side Disability Employment Research: *Toward a Coordinated Federal Research Agenda*

Conference Summary  
June 23 – 25, 2008



Interagency  
Committee on  
Disability  
Research  
[www.icdr.us](http://www.icdr.us)

*Report prepared for:*  
Interagency Committee on Disability Research  
Interagency Subcommittee on Employment

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Supply-Side Disability Employment Research: Toward a  
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Interagency Subcommittee on Employment

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## Foreword

*It's at work that individuals are given the opportunity to prove their competence and demonstrate their value to society. American business is an engine of social change for Americans with disabilities. By tapping into the talent of workers with disabilities, American business is helping all of us realize our hopes and dreams.*

—Juan Williams, in narration of film, “America’s Strength”

On a two-and-a-half year journey across the United States, Neil Romano, producer of “America’s Strength” and Assistant Secretary for Disability Employment Policy for the Office of Disability Employment Policy in the U.S. Department of Labor, talked to people in businesses, employers, employees, and experts about their attitudes toward people with disabilities in the workplace. From this journey, he produced the film, “America’s Strength.” As Romano conducted interviews, he became even more convinced that people with disabilities bring innovation to the workplace and help propel American business forward. He also saw how work helps pave the road to independence for people with disabilities.

Despite these benefits to both workers and employers, working-age people with disabilities are underemployed: only 38% are in the workforce, compared with 80% of people without disabilities, according to the American Community Survey.<sup>1</sup> In fact, disability employment rates have not improved over the past 20 years. Another national survey found that some of the greatest barriers to progress in this area are employer reluctance to hire people with disabilities, discrimination, and prejudice. However, businesses are starting to realize that people with disabilities are an untapped resource, and they can help businesses meet the workforce shortfall anticipated to reach 10 million workers by 2010.

Recognizing the need for employment research that addresses the intersection of the business and disability communities, the Interagency Subcommittee on Employment (ISE) of the Interagency Committee on Disability Research (ICDR) convened a conference called *Strengthening the Intersection of Demand-Side and Supply-Side Disability Employment Research: Toward a Coordinated Federal Research Agenda*. (“Demand-side” refers to demand for labor in the workforce; “supply-side” refers to supply of labor to the workforce.) The conference supported ICDR’s mission of obtaining stakeholder input to inform a federal disability research agenda. Held in Arlington, Virginia, June 23–25, 2008, the conference opened with a viewing of “America’s Strength,” setting the stage for a broadly ranging discussion among people in the business and disability communities on the nexus of demand-side and supply-side employment research. Conference participants identified nexus research activities the ISE can use to inform development of a blueprint for a five-year disability employment research agenda.

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<sup>1</sup> Cornell University. (2007, November 21). Unemployment and Poverty Remain Dramatically High Among Workers with Disabilities. *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved September 2, 2008, from <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/11/071120111550.htm>. Accessed September 2, 2008.

An earlier ISE-sponsored conference preceded this one. *Employer Perspectives on Workers with Disabilities: A National Summit to Develop a Research Agenda*, a two-day event, was held in September 2006 in Washington, D.C. At this gathering, participants proposed an agenda for research on demand-side employment and suggested that a conference be convened on the intersection of the demand and supply sides of disability employment research. At a Research Roundtable the following year, ISE stakeholders discussed the findings of the 2006 Summit and planned the 2008 conference at a Research Roundtable.

*Strengthening the Intersection of Demand-Side and Supply-Side Disability Employment Research: Toward a Coordinated Federal Research Agenda* was a success. Participants made concrete research recommendations for the ISE to consider in advancing the employment of people with disabilities. They also suggested ways to translate this research into action that could be applied in real-life situations. During this forum, the disability, research, and business communities had an opportunity to hear about each others' barriers and opportunities in disability employment. This laid the groundwork for these communities to form partnerships to work on an ISE coordinated research agenda. At the conference, people from the business and disability communities shared their stories—powerful stories of people with disabilities who were successful in the workplace, and distressing stories of people with disabilities who were unable to find and retain jobs.

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# Acknowledgments

The Interagency Subcommittee on Employment wishes to acknowledge the contributions of the Conference Planning Committee in planning the *Strengthening the Intersection of Demand-Side and Supply-Side Disability Employment Research: Toward a Coordinated Federal Research Agenda* and for their assistance in conducting a successful and meaningful event.

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# Introduction

To be sustainable in a global economy, America’s businesses need to create diverse workforces—people from different age groups, backgrounds, skills, and needs, including people with disabilities. “Nexus research” focuses on this intersection of the disability (the supply side) and business (the demand side) communities. It addresses their mutual concerns, such as job quality, worker quality, health and retirement benefits, technology, and economic development. Eventually, this research can lead to innovative practices, policies, and programs that will enhance the viability and competitiveness of American business and increase workforce participation and economic benefits for people with disabilities.

In June 2008, the Interagency Subcommittee on Disability Employment (ISE) convened “Strengthening the Intersection of Demand-Side and Supply-Side Disability Employment Research: Toward a Coordinated Federal Research Agenda,” a conference in Arlington, Virginia, that addressed nexus research. The conference was a collaborative activity of the ISE, the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR)-funded Employment Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers (RRTCs), and the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy.

Participants included policymakers, employers engaged or interested in creating 21st-century jobs and businesses, leading disability and business researchers, individuals with disabilities, leaders from the disability advocacy community, and other individuals and representatives of associations, educational institutions, and governmental entities that are engaged in promoting inclusion of skilled qualified persons with disabilities in America’s workforce. Summit participants discussed topics such as the future workforce and business environment, the social and economic barriers that people with disabilities face, and the effect of escalating health costs on employers and how that affects the employment of people with disabilities.

## Conference Goals

The conference goal was to obtain input from stakeholders, including businesses, researchers, and people in the disability community that could inform a five-year interagency research agenda on disability employment. Specific goals were to:

- Identify gaps and collaboration in disability employment research in the federal and private sector;
- Encourage inclusion of an intersection between demand and supply-side employment research within the federal disability employment research agenda; and
- Improve translation of research and data for employers, federal policymakers, and other stakeholders.

## The Planning Process

In September 2006, the ISE held a summit conference entitled *Employer Perspectives on Workers with Disabilities: A National Summit to Develop a Research Agenda*. During this Summit, it became clear that nexus research is needed to advance the employment of people with disabilities. A year later, participants in an ISE-sponsored Research Roundtable reviewed findings from the 2006 National Summit and planned the 2008 conference on nexus research, *Strengthening the Intersection of Demand-Side and Supply-Side Disability Employment Research: Toward a Coordinated Federal Research Agenda*.

### Highlights of the 2006 Summit

*This Summit was the beginning of a dialogue among researchers, business leaders, policy-makers, and advocates on employer-side research. Business leaders and advocates expressed their concerns about the lack of data on employer-side research and workforce trends, including rising employer health care premiums, the obesity epidemic, and the aging workforce. Researchers heard that they needed to balance science with relevance. Marketing experts suggested that researchers use case studies and success stories to convey research results. And those in the disability management field emphasized the importance of forming partnerships with public and private entities to conduct research on health and disability issues.*

— Excerpt from Summit report

Ten recommendations emerged from the 2006 Summit presentations and discussions that the ISE could use to set a research agenda on employer-side research, including:

1. Link the employment of people with disabilities to the diversity movement.
2. Show how changing demographics and trends will affect the workplace and how people with disabilities will fit in.
3. Study the different elements of the employment process—hiring, retention, advancement, and skill development.
4. Show how disability management and wellness programs affect health and productivity in the workplace.
5. Understand the corporate culture.
6. Balance science with relevance in the research design.
7. Translate research into language and formats employers can understand and use.
8. Facilitate the collaboration of researchers, business leaders, policy-makers, and advocates in addressing employer-side research.
9. Create public/private partnerships to increase employment of people with disabilities.
10. Encourage government to serve as a model for employing people with disabilities.

Following the Research Roundtable, the ISE appointed conference planning committee co-chairs and members. Representatives of the business world, disability researchers, government agencies, and the disability advocacy community comprised the planning committee. Over approximately a year, committee members selected speakers, created a conference agenda, and

secured tabletop exhibit abstracts on the latest disability employment research to display at the conference.

## Conference Format

The planning committee chose four core themes for the conference; each theme had five subtopics. The four core themes were:

1. Business and Employment: A Global and Technology-Driven Environment
2. Disability Workforce Experiences and Needs: Issues and Research
3. Health: A Competitive Disability Workforce
4. Government Policies and Practices: Role and Effect

The committee designed the conference so that the themes would be incorporated into all conference sessions and that each would be followed by a question-and-answer period to ensure that the conference would be interactive. The format of the conference included the following elements:

**Keynote Presentations and Plenary Panels: Days 1–3.** Keynote speakers and panelists addressed one or more conference themes and recommended relevant research.

**Concurrent State-of-the-Science Sessions on the Themes: Day 1.** There were four concurrent sessions on Day 1, each providing an overview of one of the four themes. These sessions laid the groundwork for the concurrent sessions on the themes' subtopics, which were held on days 2 and 3.

**Concurrent State-of-the-Science Sessions on the Subtopics: Days 2 and 3.** These sessions were organized by subtopics within each of the conference's themes. In these sessions, panelists presented research related to one of the subtopics. In the discussions that followed, a moderator steered the group toward recommendations related to research opportunities and barriers, actions to enhance opportunities and/or reduce barriers (from any perspective—federal government, academia, policy-makers, or employers), and suggestions for action by the ISE.

**Plenary Summary Panel on “Perspectives on the State-of-the-Science: Future Directions for a Coordinated Research Agenda:** In the last session of the conference, four conference participants reflected on the conference's presentations, recommendations, and discussion and provided recommendations for future directions.

## Definitions

**Demand-Side Research:** The term “demand side” refers to the demand for labor in the workforce. Demand-side research (or employer) research focuses on decisions to recruit, hire, compensate, retain, and promote people with disabilities and the forces that affect the underlying

practices, policies, attitudes, and culture. In demand-side research, the employer is the unit of analysis. This research often explores the decisions, knowledge, desires, concerns, and objectives of supervisors, managers, human resource personnel, executives, and business leaders.

**Supply-Side Research:** The term “supply side” refers to the supply of labor to the workforce. Supply-side research focuses on the decision to work and the factors that promote and inhibit work. The individual is the unit of analysis, although both individual- and systems-level factors are often included in supply-side analyses with the intent to inform and shape the policies and practices of service providers and support programs.

**Nexus Research:** “Nexus research” focuses on the intersection of the supply and demand sides and issues of mutual concern to the business and disability communities, such as job quality, worker quality, health and retirement benefits, technology, and economic development. The outputs of nexus research can guide development of innovative practices, policies, and programs that will both enhance the viability and competitiveness of American business and increase workforce participation and economic benefits for persons with disabilities.

## Organization of This Report

This report is organized into four sections:

- I. **Setting the Stage:** Through opening keynote presentations and other plenary sessions, this section of the report sets the stage and provides background for the plenary and concurrent sessions on the conference’s four core themes:
  - Business and Employment: A Global and Technology-Driven Environment
  - Disability Workforce Experiences and Needs: Issues and Research
  - Health: A Competitive Disability Workforce
  - Government Policies and Practices: Role and Effect
- II. **Conference Themes:** This section is organized by theme and, within each theme, by five subtopics. Each theme begins with a broad overview given by plenary panels, followed by concurrent panel sessions on the theme’s subtopics.

For each session, summaries of the presentations and presenters’ recommendations are provided. These are followed by summaries of the audience discussion and resulting recommendations.
- III. **Expert Panel: Analysis of the Conference:** Four conference participants were charged with roaming among the different conference sessions and then providing their perspectives of the conference. This section summarizes their observations and recommendations for a coordinated interagency disability research agenda.
- IV. **Key Issues:** This section identifies key issues that emerged from the conference. For each key issue, opportunities, barriers, and examples of action to enhance opportunities and reduce barriers are presented.

The appendices contain the conference agenda (Appendix A), list of participants (Appendix B), and tabletop exhibit abstracts (Appendix C). Appendix D lists the 435 recommendations by major themes and then by sub-theme topics.

# Executive Summary

U.S. businesses today are competing in a rapidly changing economic, social, and technological environment. More businesses are operating overseas, more jobs require workers with technological and critical problem-solving skills, workplaces are becoming increasingly diverse, and businesses are preparing for projected worker shortages in 2012. Employers are concerned about escalating health care and disability costs for them and their workers, as well as a new intergenerational workforce that includes aging workers. Such changes are transforming the workplace.

This is the workforce environment that people with disabilities will face in the coming years. Like all workers, they must adapt to these changes to remain competitive in the workplace. What opportunities and challenges do these changes present for people with disabilities at a time when only 38% of this population is in the workforce, compared with 80% of people without disabilities?<sup>2</sup> What is the role of business, the government, researchers, and the disability community in increasing the workforce representation of people with disabilities?

To address this intersection of the business and disability communities, the Interagency Subcommittee on Disability Employment (ISE) of the Interagency Committee on Disability Research (ICDR) convened “Strengthening the Intersection of Demand-Side and Supply-Side Disability Employment Research: Toward a Coordinated Federal Research Agenda.” (“Demand side” refers to the demand for labor in the workforce; “supply side” refers to the supply of labor to the workforce.) Two other groups—the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research-Funded Employment Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers, and the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy—collaborated with the ISE on the conference.

The event was held June 23–25, 2008, in Arlington, Virginia. Policymakers, employers, disability and business researchers, and individuals with disabilities; leaders from the disability advocacy community; and service providers came together to discuss nexus employment research—the intersection of the supply and demand sides of disability-related workforce issues. The conference, with its broad participation across sectors, supported ICDR’s mission of obtaining stakeholder input to inform a federal interagency research agenda on people with disabilities.

Before the 2008 conference, ISE sponsored a two-day summit, “Employer Perspectives on Workers with Disabilities: A National Summit to Develop a Research Agenda,” held in September 2006 in Washington, D.C. At the summit, participants suggested that a conference be convened on the intersection of the demand and supply sides of disability employment research. The following year, ISE stakeholders discussed the findings of the 2006 Summit and planned the 2008 conference at a Research Roundtable.

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<sup>2</sup> Cornell University. (2007, November 21). Unemployment and Poverty Remain Dramatically High Among Workers with Disabilities. *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved September 2, 2008, from <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/11/071120111550.htm>. Accessed September 2, 2008.

## Conference Goals

The goal of the 2008 conference was to obtain input from businesses, researchers, policymakers, and people in the disability community that could inform a five-year interagency research agenda on disability employment. Specific goals were to:

- Identify gaps and opportunities for collaboration in disability employment research in the federal and private sectors;
- Encourage inclusion of nexus employment research within the federal disability employment research agenda; and
- Improve translation and dissemination of research and data for employers, federal policymakers, and other stakeholders.

## Conference Themes

The conference was structured around four core themes; each theme had five subtopics. The four themes and brief discussions of each follow.

### **Theme 1: Business and Employment: A Global and Technology-Driven Environment**

Businesses are facing a new environment and need to adjust to trends such as the decentralization of business operation and management, an increased reliance on technology, a switch from an industrial to a talent- and service-based economy, and a blurring or disappearance of traditional business hours in a 24/7 kind of world. At the same time, they are facing a projected workforce shortfall as the baby boomers retire.

Another change in the business world is a growing diversity of the workplace: people with different disabilities, people with different ethnicities and from different cultures, and a multigenerational workforce. To address this reality, businesses must build an inclusive organization and corporate culture that works for all.

#### QUOTE

“More companies—39 of the Fortune 100—are including disability as one of the criteria for diverse workforces.” —Douglas L. Kruse

#### QUOTE

“What is good for the employee with the disability is good for all employees.” —Jamie Mitus

## **Theme 2: Disability Workforce Experiences and Needs: Issues and Research**

To compete in the workforce of the future, people with disabilities need to obtain the skills that are essential in the 21st century, which include competence in oral and written communications, teamwork, and critical thinking, along with a professional work ethic. Acquisition of these skills should begin in the early school years and requires that teachers and employers work together to prepare people with disabilities for the workplace. Special attention must be paid to youth who are transitioning from secondary education to work. Fortunately, promising youth-intervention models exist and are being refined. Models that support people with disabilities in finding and retaining employment have also been shown to be successful; however, the unique needs of people with psychiatric disabilities call for different kinds of models.

### **QUOTE**

“To find employment for people with psychiatric disabilities, we go to the ‘Mom-and-Pop’ shops down the street, where the individual is well known. It’s the place where people in the local community have been having a cup of coffee every morning for the last 15 years.” —Sandra Resnick

Businesses need to be informed about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. Learning about the best practices that have been developed and followed by employers will help to allay some of the concerns and misconceptions of other employers about integrating people with disabilities into the workplace. Demographic trends will also push employers to learn how to integrate people from different generations, from the oldest to the youngest generation, into a cohesive corporate culture.

## **Theme 3: Health: A Competitive Disability Workforce**

As the U.S. workforce ages and develops costly health conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, obesity and low back pain, businesses face mounting disability and health care costs that make it more difficult for them to compete in a global economy. These trends have prompted businesses to develop wellness and prevention programs, but more workplace supports are needed that can help people return to work earlier after an injury or illness.

Adding to employers’ expenses is the decision by people with disabilities to leave jobs prematurely or to not enter the workforce at all for fear of losing their health care benefits once they become employed. People with disabilities are less likely than people without disabilities to be in jobs that offer employer-sponsored insurance; many work part time, which often makes them ineligible for the insurance. Research shows that people with disabilities who do not have jobs are more likely to be insured than those with jobs because of current public health care finance systems. Such finance systems discourage people with disabilities from working by reducing or eliminating their public benefits, including health insurance, once they enter the workforce. People in rural communities encounter additional challenges in obtaining employment and health care coverage. Rural areas tend to have high unemployment rates and inadequate public transportation, and they also tend to have more small businesses than larger ones, which often require an employee to be able to perform multiple tasks that people with disabilities may not be able to do.

#### QUOTE

“The most single critical type of intervention we have failed to test and develop is ‘early intervention,’ including support for medical care for people with disabilities who may need to continue working.” —David Stapleton

### **Theme 4: Government Policies and Practices: Role and Effect**

The federal government has the responsibility of creating a coordinated disability policy that encourages entrepreneurship, independent living, pursuit of higher education, and personal liberties for people with disabilities. For this to occur, federal agencies must work together. To begin, the government should serve as a model employer for people with disabilities: the number of federal employees with disabilities has declined every year since 1993.

Other initiatives the government can undertake include providing incentives to businesses to institute programs and activities that would lead to increased employment of people with disabilities, improving the data collection system on the demographics of people with disabilities, and further studying the employment of service members returning from active duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. One innovative government program is the Disability Program Navigator Initiative, which helps coordinate multiple, and often duplicative, employment services for this population.

#### QUOTE

“The ‘pursuit of happiness’ in the Declaration of Independence really means the right to pursue a vocation and employment for everyone, including people with disabilities—a premise the government has not fully embraced.” —John Kemp

#### QUOTE

“A comprehensive government-wide coordination of cross-cutting disability programs is lacking.” —Michael Morris

### **Conference Format**

The four themes were incorporated into all conference sessions, and each session was followed by a question-and-answer period. During the conference, keynote speakers and plenary panelists addressed one or more of the conference themes; plenary panelists gave an overview of each theme; and panelists in concurrent sessions presented research on theme subtopics. In the discussions that followed subtopic sessions, moderators steered participants toward suggesting recommendations for research. At the end of the conference, four participants charged with roaming among the different sessions provided their perspectives of the conference.

### **Key Issues**

Key issues emerged from the conference presentations and discussion, and these issues will help shape an interagency nexus research agenda on disability employment. Following are some of

the key issues that were discussed at the conference and examples of related opportunities and barriers for each.

### **Businesses are competing in an increasingly global, innovation-driven economy and must adapt to major workforce trends.**

**Opportunities.** Globalization and the need for flexible work hours and arrangements to meet demand for 24/7 operations will be advantageous for people with disabilities, who often need flexibility. CEOs are concerned about the future workforce: 57% report that education and workforce preparedness is the most important workforce issue, and 73% report that it is difficult to find qualified workers. People with disabilities can fill this gap.

**Barriers.** People with disabilities are underrepresented in the fastest-growing occupations. Skills needed are ones that require adaptability, information management skills, communication and relationship-building skills, interdisciplinary skills, business skills, and science, math, engineering, and technology skills. People with disabilities are often unprepared for the transition from school to work and lack the skills needed in the current workforce.

### **People with disabilities are an untapped market for talent in a global market where competition is huge.**

**Opportunities.** Including people with disabilities in the workforce can help businesses meet the expected shortfall of workers, help bring them an innovative and diverse workforce and a culture that embraces everyone, lead to adoption of assistive technology and workforce accommodations that benefit all employees, and help businesses market products and services to the disability community.

**Barriers.** Businesses are unaware of the talent that people with disabilities bring to the workplace, and they often mistakenly believe that people with disabilities will require expensive accommodations.

### **Preparing youth with disabilities for smooth transitions to secondary education and work can lead to self-sufficiency.**

**Opportunities.** The Youth Transition Demonstration project uses a consortia of local and state organizations to develop and pilot promising intervention models and, for those who pass the pilot, to rigorously evaluate the models on a much larger scale. Purposeful and meaningful work-based experiences, especially paid employment, are the strongest predictor of post-school employment success for youth.

**Barriers.** As of March 2008, approximately 1,126,322 children under the age of 18 were receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability benefits. Children who begin receiving SSI disability benefits before age 18 continue to receive SSI disability benefits for an average of 27 years. Gaps exist in current transition services and systems. For example, there are inadequate numbers of staff to assist youth in navigating through the transition period and to help them to navigate the multiagency case management system.

## **Addressing the unique needs of people who have psychiatric disabilities in the workplace can help increase the employment rate of this population.**

**Opportunities.** Supported employment programs, including integrated clinical and vocational services and multidisciplinary provider teams from the fields of mental health, vocational rehabilitation, substance abuse treatment, and peer support, can lead to increased employment of people with disabilities.

**Barriers.** Mental health problems are the single leading cause of disability. Researchers have found that 70% of people with psychiatric disabilities want to work, even though less than 15% are currently working. Less than 5% have access to supported employment. People with mental health disabilities are concerned about losing public assistance benefits if they return to work.

## **The employment of people with disabilities can be increased by eliminating disincentives to entering and remaining in the workforce.**

**Opportunities.** Disincentives to entering and remaining in the workforce are reduction or loss of public benefits (SSI and Social Security Disability Insurance [SSDI]), including health insurance, once a person enters the workforce. People who do not fear losing health care benefits and other public supports are more likely to enter and stay in the workforce.

**Barriers.** The numbers of people enrolled in SSDI and SSI have grown significantly in recent years. Employment status as a determinant for coverage for government health benefits encourages people not to enter the workforce or to leave the workforce.

## **The federal government has the potential to improve the employment of people with disabilities through leadership and coordination.**

**Opportunities.** The federal government can hold contractors accountable for employment of people with disabilities and use its regulatory power to create effective incentives among workers, employers, and educational institutions. It also can serve as a model employer of people with disabilities.

**Barriers.** Lack of leadership from the top levels of government and inadequate communication among federal agencies on disability policy and research have led to fragmented federal policies on disabilities.

## **Promising employment models and programs can help people with disabilities find and retain employment.**

**Opportunities.** Research is ongoing on promising models that support the employment of people with disabilities, including Consortia for Employment Success, the Workplace Socialization model, and the Youth Transition Demonstration project. Structured long-term employment supports, customized employment, Youth Guideposts for Success, along with insurance coverage, can help people with disabilities return to employment.

**Barriers.** Determining the types of employment services that people with disabilities need can be a complex process because of the multiple factors that affect a person’s ability to find employment. Factors include race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and social situation.

**By understanding one another’s worlds, disability employment professionals, researchers, and businesses can work together to increase the employment of people with disabilities.**

**Opportunities.** The disability service community can develop local opportunities with businesses for people with disabilities by adapting to changes in the market and developing diverse partners. Models exist of partnerships between the disability community and businesses to employ people with disabilities. One example is the partnership of Manpower with community rehabilitation programs.

**Barriers.** Employers and providers of rehabilitation services sometimes clash. For example, employers expect service providers to return calls promptly and to have one point of contact—this does not always happen.

## **Recommendations**

Conference participants suggested more than 400 recommendations related to disability employment research needs. Overall, these recommendations reference a comprehensive range of entities—individuals, families, service personnel, institutions, organizations, programs, systems, and environments. Participants suggested research on government programs, such as Social Security programs and those that address vocational rehabilitation and workforce development. They called for future research to address all steps in the employment process—the decision to work or return to work; education and training; job search, recruitment, and hiring; and retention and advancement. Finally, they suggested recommendations that address many different types of disability, reflecting the diversity of people with disabilities.

Corresponding to the comprehensive set of issues and topics covered by the recommendations, conference participants suggested a wide range of research tools and approaches, such as the development and fielding of data collection tools (e.g., surveys, administrative data, linked administrative-survey data), experimental designs, case studies, demonstration programs, and program evaluation. Improved data collection was a common theme across many recommendations as a research topic or as a facilitator to study a specific topic.

The most frequently mentioned research topics were youth and young adults, employment strategies, best practices, health issues, training, and accommodations.

**Youth and Young Adults.** Issues related to youth and young adults were the most frequently cited recommendations. These recommendations focused on issues related to transition and support services—calling for research activities that address individuals, service personnel, the services themselves, disability and non-disability programs, transitions between programs, the complexity of programs, and the role of the external environment and systems. For example, the

recommendations ranged from focusing on the empowerment of youth as they navigate services to the coordination and collaboration among agencies that provide services.

**Employment Strategies.** Many recommendations focused on employment strategies, addressing a wide range of workplace and community issues. These recommendations cited the need to investigate the impact of specific barriers and potential solutions, such as limited employment opportunities and the promotion of self-employment opportunities; access to the workplace and telework, and rural transportation systems; leveling the playing field and incorporating universal design into employer policies; the stigma of disability and promoting the benefits of diversity; and adverse attitudes among employers and the development of targeted training opportunities and materials.

**Best Practices.** The investigation of practices of job seekers, services providers, and employers were the subject of a large number of participant recommendations; i.e., identifying and then promoting best practices. Many of these recommendations call for comparing the practices of different groups (e.g., job seekers with disabilities and job seekers without disabilities, public-sector employers and private-sector employers) or investigating the practice of specific groups of highly recognizable employers (household-name companies, multinational corporations). Some recommendations referenced specific employment processes (job placement, recruitment, retention) or specific outcomes (health, earnings, return to work). There also was a set of recommendations that called for research investigating the manner in which best practices are conveyed and promoted to a general audience.

**Health Issues.** There were two distinct lines of health recommendations. One line focused on the employer—the effectiveness of employer wellness and employee assistance programs—and the second focused on the impact of primary and secondary health conditions on productivity and employment.

**Training.** Participants recommended training on self-determination, disability awareness, stereotypes, financial literacy, job search skills, universal design principles, and the social model of disability. The audience for such trainings included individuals with disabilities, business school students, human resources professionals, vocational counselors, and all public school students.

**Accommodations.** These recommendations focused on the cost and effectiveness of specific accommodations on employment opportunities (hiring and retention) and the workers' and employers' knowledge of accommodation issues.

## Conclusion

During the conference, the participants discussed the employment of people with disabilities in the context of current and projected business trends, including the move toward globalization, the changing nature of jobs, and the new intergenerational workforce. They also debated how people with disabilities can be better prepared and supported to work in this environment. The resulting key issues and recommendations reflect the rich and fruitful discussions that took place. The ISE will use the recommendations from stakeholders, including businesses, researchers, and

people in the disability community, to create a blueprint for a five-year interagency research agenda on disability employment.

## Section I: Setting the Stage

Keynote and plenary panel presentations set the stage and provided background for the panel-led sessions on the conference's four themes. This section of the report summarizes these keynote and plenary panel presentations.

### Keynote Presentations

The conference opened with the film, "America's Strength" and a keynote address "Public Policy and Disability Employment Research." Other keynote presentations included "The Case for Business and Workforce Development" and "Effective Practices for People with Psychiatric Disabilities in the Workplace."

#### **America's Strength—Film**

*Neil Romano, Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor*

*As Assistant Secretary for disability employment policy, Neil Romano works with all the Labor Department's agencies to lead a comprehensive and coordinated national policy on employment of people with disabilities. He also served as director of communications for the White House Office of Drug Abuse Policy and developed "Youth Homicide: A Public Health Crisis," a film for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, for which he received an Emmy nomination as best producer.*

Neil Romano, over two-and-a-half years, talked to employers, employees, and experts across the United States about their attitudes toward people with disabilities in the workplace. From this journey, he produced a film narrated by Juan Williams. The film presents real-life examples of opportunities in 2008 for people with disabilities to participate in the nation's workforce. Romano said that as he conducted interviews during the filming, he became even more convinced that people with disabilities bring to the workplace innovation; they help propel American business forward. They also bring in business. One person he interviewed said, "Given the option, the public would rather give their business to a company that employs people with disabilities than one that doesn't, and the reason is because they see that company as socially responsible."

A powerful message conveyed by the film is that work can be a person's road to independence. For example, Casey, who has Down syndrome, says that work has allowed him to live on his own, which includes paying bills and cooking for himself. He said, "Work helps you to be independent."

Another finding from the film is that when a business hires people with disabilities, its corporate culture changes. Employers see things they did not see before. For example, after a bank installed a lower desk for a person in a wheelchair, it began to get more and more customers in wheelchairs.

In closing, the narrator says, “It’s at work that individuals are given the opportunity to prove their competence and demonstrate their value to society. American business is an engine of social change for Americans with disabilities. By tapping into the talent of workers with disabilities, American business is helping all of us realize our hopes and dreams.”

### **Public Policy and Disability Employment Research**

***Katherine O. McCary, SunTrust Banks, Inc., U.S. Business Leadership Network***

*Katherine McCary is responsible for SunTrust’s program to increase its employment of people with disabilities and awareness of marketing opportunities for customers with disabilities. She also manages the Corporate Disability Resource Center, serves as president of the U.S. Business Leadership Network, and speaks nationally on disability issues. Her work at SunTrust has been recognized with awards from groups such as the Society for Human Resource Management and the U.S. Department of Labor.*

**What Business Knows and Wants to Know.** Businesses know that including people with disabilities in the workforce now will help them meet the expected shortfall of 10 million workers in 2010. Including this population will help businesses understand the needs of returning veterans as they reenter the workforce; lead businesses to a talented, innovative, and diverse workforce; create a workforce culture that embraces everyone; and help businesses market products and services to the disability community.

Before fully embracing people with disabilities into their workforce, employers want to see research on how best to recruit them and what effect employees with disabilities will have on their business. For example, businesses are asking: How does disability inclusion affect corporate culture? How can businesses encourage the recruitment of people with disabilities? How can research address the concerns people with disabilities have about disclosing their disability? How can employers engage researchers for marketplace studies? How can employers address retention and promotion rather than just placement?

Once research is complete, businesses want the results translated into business language and widely circulated in the business community, through such venues as the U.S. Business Leadership Network.

**How to Work with Business.** Through partnerships, outreach, and other mechanisms, researchers and policy-makers can better work with business in employment research. Researchers and policy-makers should develop and encourage partnerships with business through organizations such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Society for Human Resource Management, U.S. Business Leadership Network, and the public and private sectors. In addition, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services and the Office of Disability Employment Policy should play key roles in these partnerships.

Involving businesses in employment research helps them become more engaged in the research process, but researchers need to be sensitive to businesses’ preferences and commitments. Researchers should speak business leaders’ language (for example,

business leaders speak in terms of profits and costs) and assure them that they will not have to work with multiple researchers. McCrary recommended that the government conduct research on issues key to the business community and help them market the research. Another way to connect with businesses is to give grants to those with best practices in employing people with disabilities.

**Effective Practices for People with Psychiatric Disabilities in the Workplace**  
**Judith A. Cook, Ph.D., University of Chicago at Illinois**

*Judith Cook, professor of psychiatry at the University of Illinois at Chicago Medical Center, directs the Mental Health Services Research Program and the Coordinating Center for the Employment Intervention Demonstration Program. She has been an expert consultant to the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health and an advisory committee member and reviewer of the Surgeon General's Report on Mental Health. Her published research includes more than 150 books, edited volumes, and journal articles.*

[QUOTE]

“What do people want from employment that promotes recovery? They want employment careers, not just a series of sequential jobs. They want work with dignity that they can feel proud of. They want help returning to work in ways that do not endanger their benefits and entitlements. Finally, they want pathways to economic security.”

—Judith Cook

Recently, the Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), funded the research project, Employment Intervention Demonstration Program. SAMHSA researchers invited unemployed people with psychiatric disabilities in seven states to participate. At the outset, researchers randomly assigned participants to a supported employment program or to services as usual. Researchers then conducted face-to-face interviews with 1,273 research participants every six months for two years, tracked their employment on a weekly basis, and monitored their services on a monthly basis.

The supported employment program included integrated clinical and vocational services; multi-disciplinary provider teams from the fields of mental health, vocational rehabilitation, substance abuse treatment, peer support, and benefits counseling; rapid job search and placement activities; and ongoing supports available with no time limits. A goal of these services was to provide competitive employment and jobs that people preferred. Over a 24-month period, clients held a total of 2,230 jobs with an average of 2.2 jobs per worker, earned \$4.7 million with an average of \$5,786 per worker, and worked a total of 820,293 hours.

Even though most clients worked at jobs that paid the minimum wage or above, they received an average of only \$5.91 per hour. Most jobs were part time, averaging 19.4 hours per week, and only 17% of all jobs were full time, i.e., 35 or more hours per week. Therefore, the researchers asked whether these clients were significantly better off financially. They measured the ratio of income to expenses and studied how the clients'

work status interacted with their disability beneficiary status. They made the determination that working was worthwhile, despite finding that participants' monthly cash income was very low and monthly expenses high relative to their income. Employed participants had significantly better ratios of income to expenses than unemployed participants. Employed participants who were receiving public disability income had the best ratios.

While controlling for personal features such as ethnicity, drug and alcohol abuse, and symptoms, researchers found that in both the experimental and control groups, employment outcomes improved over time. Those in the experimental groups had better outcomes than those in the control groups, and the advantage of the experimental group increased over time relative to the control group. Certain characteristics were associated with success, such as better work histories, fewer symptoms, and diagnoses other than schizophrenia.

The researchers also found that participants in models with high service integration were more than twice as likely to be competitively employed and almost twice as likely to work 40 or more hours per month. Higher amounts of vocational services were associated with better employment outcomes, all other things being equal. Level of service integration was defined as "high" when vocational and mental health services were delivered by the same agency, at the same location, using a single case record, and with regularly scheduled meetings of vocational and clinical providers.

The researchers then studied how the careers of people with psychiatric disabilities were affected by the local economy. They found that such people were subject to general labor market trends but that supported employment helps to ameliorate the effects of high unemployment. The researchers used these findings to create a tool for people with disabilities to use when seeking supportive employment.

Another study, the Employment Intervention Demonstration Program, examined the components of economic security other than employment, including financial literacy, asset accumulation, and long-term financial planning. During focus groups, consumer advocates and disability professionals said that people with psychiatric disabilities did not believe they could save money because they could not even cover their most basic needs, such as medications, rent, and food. No one had told them how to get control of their financial lives and save money. Researchers concluded that people with psychiatric disabilities—and others—needed both short-term and long-term money management skills. They also needed ongoing support in managing money. In response to these findings, NIDRR funded the Individual Development Account (IDA) project. IDAs are saving accounts in which low-income individuals save their earned income to purchase a home, start a microenterprise, or return to school. Through this project, researchers learned that financial security is essential to well being.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- Provide financial education and ongoing support for those returning to work, so they can learn how to handle debt, poor credit, and financial hardships.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## Plenary Panels

Panels presented research on the employment of people with disabilities as it pertains to one or more of the conference themes. The panel members recommended relevant research and then led discussions. The topics discussed by the plenary panels were the need for a coordinated federal research agenda, the activities of research and training centers, developing businesses and workforces that accommodate people with disabilities, and the concerns of consumers.

### Need and Promise for a Coordinated Federal Research Agenda

#### **Disability and Employment: Building a Research Agenda**

*Douglas L. Kruse, Ph.D., M.A., School of Management and Labor Relations, Rutgers University*

*Douglas Kruse, a professor in the Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations and a research associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research, has focused much of his work on the employment and earnings effects of disability. A widely published and prize-winning author, he has testified before Congress, been appointed to New Jersey's State Rehabilitation Council, and served on the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities.*

This presentation reviews key data on employment of people with disabilities and several trends that influence the prospects of increased employment. Only 38% of working-age people with disabilities were employed in 2006, compared with 80% of their non-disabled counterparts. A 2003 survey by the Rutgers Heldrich Center found that 26% of private firms reported employing a person with a disability, and 20% identified employer discrimination, prejudice, or reluctance to hire as the greatest barrier to people with disabilities finding employment. Despite some employer concerns about accommodations, the Rutgers survey found that only 24% of firms that employed people with disabilities needed to make any accommodations for them, and of those that did, the cost was \$500 or less for 71% of them. Data from the Job Accommodations Network also should allay concerns: Surveys of the network's users find that a dollar spent on accommodations leads to an estimated \$35 benefit on average.

What are the prospects for increased employment of people with disabilities? The bad news is that disability employment rates haven't increased over the past 20 years, and the occupational trends are not favorable. People with disabilities are underrepresented in the fastest-growing occupations, resulting in 79,000 fewer jobs by 2016 than if they were proportionately spread across occupations. Another piece of bad news is that even those

workers with disabilities that find employment face disparities in the workplace, including lower pay, job security, access to training, and other outcomes.

There is, however, also good news. The growing importance of computers and information technologies is promising, because these can especially help people with disabilities to be productive in the workplace and enable telecommuting and other flexible arrangements that have particular benefits for people with mobility impairments and medical needs. Analysis of occupational trends shows that the ability requirements in growing occupations can be met by many people with disabilities. More good news is that companies are paying growing attention to workplace diversity and are increasingly using best practices for employing people with disabilities. Finally, recent data show that the majority of non-employed people with disabilities want to work, and their job expectations are well within the mainstream.

See Figure 1, “Top Five Fastest-Growing Occupations.”

[QUOTE]

“More companies—39 of the Fortune 100—are including disability as one of the criteria for diverse workforces.” —Douglas L. Kruse

[PULLOUT]

### **Figure 1. Top Five Fastest-Growing Occupations**

- Network systems analyst
- Personal/home care aides
- Personal financial advisors
- Computer software engineers
- Veterinarians

Source: Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Match the ability requirements of jobs to the ability of people with disabilities. One strategy is to build accommodations on O\*NET (an occupational information network). This system provides comprehensive information on key attributes and characteristics of workers and occupations.
- Examine how employers are responding to projected labor shortages. Are they using best practices in recruiting and hiring qualified employees with disabilities?
- Compare job search intensity, strategies, and preferences of unemployed people with disabilities with data on job opportunities and a successful strategy used by workers in general.

- Determine the number and types of requests for accommodations by all employees, not just those with disabilities.
- Ensure that people with disabilities have skills they can take with them from job to job in this era of globalization, layoffs, downsizing, and portability of skills.
- Learn how the computer skills of people with disabilities match up with requirements in available jobs.
- Help people with disabilities who desire to be self-employed start a business. For example, the New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is helping clients start carefully planned worker cooperatives.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Moving Employment Policy Research Forward**

***David Stapleton, Ph.D., Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.***

*David Stapleton, director of Mathematica's Center for Studying Disability Policy, has studied the impacts of public policy on the employment and income of people with disabilities for 16 years. Current projects include evaluation of the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work program and \$1 for \$2 demonstration. He has written extensively on disability and employment policy issues and is co-editor of two books on disability policy and a forthcoming book on disability statistics.*

We are in a transition toward disability policies that takes better advantage of the technical, medical, and social progress of the last five decades—policies that will fully reflect the paradigm shift from the medical model of disability to the social or medical/environmental model embodied in the Americans with Disabilities Act. But progress is slow. Historically, public supports for working-age people with disabilities have been highly fragmented, replete with incentives that encourage counterproductive behavior, and often not available on a timely basis. They have focused on the individual's inabilities, on fixing people, or on taking care of them. We are gradually moving toward supports that are more integrated, create incentives that encourage productive behavior, and are available in a timely fashion. Such supports give prominence to the individual's ability, fixing the environment, and empowering people to take care of themselves.

The reasons for slow progress reflect the problems with current policies. There are three main problems with disability policies that are rooted in the 20th century—problems that contribute to low employment and high levels of poverty for individuals with disabilities.

First, the public policies and responsibility for supports are highly fragmented across agencies and levels of government. The government provides income support, housing, transportation services, food, energy assistance, tax credits, and other types of assistance, but each is provided by a different federal or state agency. These and other policies specific to veterans complicate the provision of benefits even more.

Second, and related to the first problem, are incentives that favor piecemeal, incremental changes. For example, the work incentive program for Supplemental Social Security Income imposes a 50% earnings tax. These One-Stop Career Centers, coordinated by the U.S. Department of Labor, are designed to provide a full range of assistance to job seekers under one roof.

Third, government programs are not effective in providing public support for those who are attempting to work or continue to work. Even fewer resources are devoted to helping young people with disabilities become self-sufficient through employment.

To accelerate progress, we need to change the infrastructure for disability policy research in ways that support integrated research, provide incentives to cooperate, and make up for lost time. We need legislation, regulations, and funding to support testing of policy innovations that are designed and implemented by consortia of state, local, and private organizations—innovations that integrate supports, improve incentives, and provide supports in a timely manner.

Top priority should be given to policy innovations in two areas:

- Innovations that address supports for older workers who experience the onset of disability. We need to test innovations that (1) make it easier and more attractive for such workers to continue to work, (2) make it more profitable for employers to retain such workers, (3) leverage the capabilities of employers and their vendors, (4) create a different front end for Social Security Disability Insurance, and (5) provide a better and less expensive alternative to that insurance.
- Innovations that provide supports for youth with disabilities during and after the transition to adulthood. We need to test innovations that make it easier for such youth eventually to become much more self-sufficient, have full and meaningful lives, and avoid the lifetime of poverty that often awaits those who come to rely solely on public support.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Test programs that (1) provide a single point of entry and integrate supports for people with disabilities who work or who are attempting to return to work, (2) provide meaningful and informed employment choices, and (3) make hiring and retention profitable for the employer.
- Require agencies and various levels of government to cooperate with one another.
- Provide incentives for private insurers to more vigorously support return to work.
- Encourage people with significant disabilities to be as self-sufficient as possible (substantially, although not necessarily completely, self-sufficient).

- Encourage the testing of many different types of employment programs. Some will fail, but lessons will be learned in the process.
- Create programs for transition of youth and young adults with disabilities into the workplace.

[QUOTE]

“The most single critical type of intervention we have failed to test and develop is “early intervention,” including support for medical care for people with disabilities who may need to continue working.” —David Stapleton

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

**An Advocate’s Perspective**

*Andrew J. Imparato, J.D., American Association of People with Disabilities*

*Andrew J. Imparato is president and CEO of the 100,000-member American Association of People with Disabilities. A former policy director for the National Council on Disability, he also has been special assistant to the head of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and counsel to the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Disability Policy. He has appeared on many news programs, published numerous op-ed pieces, and written a book that analyzes U.S. Supreme Court rulings related to disability rights.*

The power of the federal government must be used to improve the outcomes of people with disabilities and channel federal resources in a direction that will provide better outcomes. For example, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires federal contractors to take affirmative action to identify and recruit people with disabilities. That requirement was never enforced. The Bureau of Labor Statistics gathers monthly employment numbers, but if the numbers on people with disabilities are not reported monthly, it is a missed opportunity to call attention regularly to the failure of public policy around disability employment. The government needs programs that are designed to invest in people and expect a return on investment.

[QUOTE]

“Employment outcomes have not changed for the last 20 years. We need transformative change, not tinkering.” —Andrew J. Imparato

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Make the federal government a laboratory for experimentation and research.
- Use the federal government’s purchasing power to hold federal contractors accountable, and study what the contractors are doing to employ people with disabilities.

- Use federal data on the employment of people with disabilities to determine why this population is leaving the government at 7.5 times the general reduction of the federal workforce.
- Collect better statistics and improve metrics on the employment of people with disabilities.
- Create a better private-sector benchmarking system. The American Association of People with Disabilities is working with WalMart, IBM, and the U.S. Business Leadership Network, among others, on a system that would help companies set goals and measure their performance against those disability-related goals.
- Encourage more leadership from the White House and less leadership at the agency level.
- Encourage researchers to start thinking about studies that can be part of the message in 2010 around the 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the 35th anniversary of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. What research findings should be reported at this time that can capture media attention?

### **Developing a Federal Research Agenda**

***Richard Balkus, M.A., Social Security Administration***

*Richard Balkus is the Social Security Administration's acting associate commissioner for program development and research in the Office of Retirement and Disability and acting associate commissioner for disability and income assistance policy. He has held positions involving research and analysis of disability issues and policies that affect the Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance programs and published papers on these topics.*

The increasing prevalence of disability in the U.S. population and the increasing enrollment in federal and state government disability and related programs create a pressing need to encourage work and reduce barriers to work for individuals with disabilities.

Over the last several decades, the numbers of people enrolled in the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs have grown significantly. Contributing to this burgeoning population are the disincentives for people to return to work once they join these programs. By returning to work, they risk losing benefits such as food stamps, health insurance, and housing, but complex rules make it difficult to determine how much they will lose. As a result, people on SSDI and SSI have low return-to-work rates.

Demonstration projects that address these disincentives are under way. These include evaluation of the Ticket to Work program (an employment program for people with disabilities who are interested in going to work), study of mental health treatment, a

demonstration program of accelerated benefits (provides health care to disability insurance beneficiaries during the 24-month waiting period for Medicare), and a youth transition demonstration project.

The Social Security Administration's (SSA) mental health treatment study is a good example of how partnerships can be formed to address employment issues for people with disabilities. For this study, the researchers formed a technical advisory panel composed of a representative from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and outside experts, received ongoing guidance from the Federal Interagency Committee on Mental Health Transformation, and later partnered with the National Institute on Mental Health and National Health Service, among others. The study's research question was: To what extent does access to high-quality mental health treatment and employment supports lead to better employment outcomes and other benefits?

SSA's disability research focuses on areas that involve multiple government agencies. In light of the interaction of the numerous federal and state programs and policies, the responsible agencies should jointly develop a federal research agenda. Research, policies, and programs also must be examined from the perspectives of both the employer and the person with disabilities who is seeking employment. A broader perspective will identify gaps, opportunities, and sources of collaboration in developing a federal research agenda.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Widely disseminate research findings on disability employment and work toward turning the positive findings into policy.
- Form federal, state, and private partnerships when conducting translational research on disability employment.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Worker Shortfall**

#### ***Martha Artiles, Manpower, Inc.***

*As chief diversity officer for Manpower, Inc., Martha Artiles develops and leads the company's diversity and inclusion initiatives. She has developed and implemented diversity strategies for global manufacturing, information technology, and service corporations and led a minority council at a Fortune 300 corporation. Ms. Artiles also serves as an advisor to the Chicago chapter of the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers and as strategy council chair for the Institute for Diversity Education and Leadership.*

In the near future, there will be a shortage of approximately 10 million workers in the United States, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Contributing to this shortfall are the declining birth rate, the departure from the workforce of the baby boomers (the cohort born from 1946 through 1964), and the smaller numbers of workers represented by

Generation X (born from 1965 through 1976) and Generation Y (born from 1977 through 1998), who will make up less than 50% to 60% of the baby boomer population. This will be a problem in the United States and globally.

Manpower, Inc. investigated this worker shortfall through a survey of about its 42,500 clients in 32 countries. The clients answered two questions: Are you having a tough time employing people? What are the jobs you are having the toughest time filling?

In the survey, 31% of the respondents across the globe and 22% within the United States said they are having a very difficult time finding the employees they need. The top 10

positions that are the most difficult to fill are:

1. Engineers
2. Machinists and machine operators
3. Skilled trades, such as welders, carpenters, and joiners
4. Technicians, production engineering, operations, and maintenance
5. Sales representatives
6. Accounting and finance staff
7. Mechanics, automotive services, small engineering mechanics, and industrial machine operators
8. Laborers (low-skilled positions), freight, stock, and material movers
9. Information technology positions (programmers, software developers, systems engineers, networks analysts, and more)
10. Production operators (those who work in manufacturing facilities, production lines, or operate specialist machinery)

Quarterly information about job needs by geographic region is available on Manpower's Web site: [www.manpower.com](http://www.manpower.com).

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Study how to develop the talent in people with disabilities needed to fill vacant jobs. Consider working with the U.S. Business Leadership Network, a strong advocate for employing people with disabilities.
- Create policies that reward public and private entities for forming partnerships to increase the employment of people with disabilities.
- Determine how to prepare a workforce that has "soft skills," such as the ability to communicate verbally, the ability to work as a team member, and a basic work ethic.
- Find creative ways to make it safe for individuals in the workplace to disclose any disabilities they may have. Unless disabilities are disclosed, an organization cannot determine whether it is being inclusive.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

#### **AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Ticket to Work program encourages the employment networks to screen out people who are harder to place, including those with severe disabilities, because those working with the program are not paid until they place people in the workforce. In addition, once people leave the workforce because of disability problems, the employment networks have no incentive to return those people back to work. The Ticket to Work program is being re-launched with certain changes to avoid these problems. For example,

employment networks will be compensated for placing the “harder to employ,” and the program is investing more in returning people to work after a disability occurs.

The People Empowerment Group, Inc. in South Carolina takes a different approach to the Ticket to Work program. This group’s philosophy is to hire people with disabilities and then train them instead of insisting that they be qualified before they are hired.

Six sites for a youth transition demonstration project are part of ongoing efforts in the school-to-work transition project. One site includes children who are receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, and another includes children who are at risk for receiving SSI benefits. The sites vary in their approach to transitioning children from secondary education or postsecondary education to employment. All programs include employment supports for these children.

Mental illness often presents opportunities for intervention before it progresses. People with mental illness need care before they develop a permanent disability and become eligible for SSI.

## **Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers Employment: An Overview of Research Activities**

### **Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Employment Policy for Persons with Disabilities**

*Susanne M. Bruyère, Ph.D., M.S., M.P.A., Cornell University*

*Susanne M. Bruyère is director of Cornell’s Employment and Disability Institute and associate dean of outreach at its School of Industrial and Labor Relations—Extension Division. A Fellow in the American Psychological Association, she has been president of the National Council on Rehabilitation Education and American Rehabilitation Counseling Association. Currently, she chairs GLADNET and the board of the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities.*

The focus of the Rehabilitative Research and Training Center on Employment Policy for Persons with Disabilities is to (1) improve understanding of employment trends in relation to macroeconomic, legislative, and policy changes; (2) develop strategies for evaluating legislative and policy efforts to improve employment outcomes; and (3) identify policies that contribute to improved employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Over the past four years, the 15 interrelated research projects of the center have generated new knowledge about the effects of past disability policy and other factors on economic self-sufficiency. Based on experience, the center’s staff has suggested two important research questions to answer and strategies for addressing these questions: How can federal agencies minimize the barriers to cross-agency collaboration? How can federal agencies, researchers, and information disseminators work together to create a more

cohesive and consistent message not only for people with disabilities but for the general public?

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase cross-agency collaboration on disability employment research through mechanisms such as developing interagency memoranda of understanding, streamlining the approval processes for research funding requests, requiring multi-organization and federal agency collaboration for funding, creating a common framework for research and outcomes (e.g., the World Health Organization's International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health [ICF]), and requiring that all researchers evaluate the projects and outcomes.
- Disseminate research through peer-reviewed publications, easy-to-understand products for the public, and popular media. Involve the target audiences in the selection and design of the knowledge transfer mechanisms and disseminate the research shortly after it is completed.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Substance Abuse** ***Dennis Moore, Ed.D., Wright State University***

*Dennis Moore, a professor at Wright State University's school of medicine, directs the Substance Abuse Resources and Disability Issues program and the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Substance Abuse, Disability, and Employment. He created the Consumer Advocacy Model program, a substance abuse and mental health services program for persons with disabilities, and has written a number of articles on topics related to behavioral health and/or persons with disabilities.*

The Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Substance Abuse has four projects, each addressing a different goal:

1. To assess the efficacy of widespread adoption of screening for substance use disorder among state and federal vocational rehabilitation programs. This study is important because there is a high rate of substance abuse in vocational rehabilitation, most of these cases are undetected, and there are no methods that adequately screen people with disabilities for alcohol or drug abuse.
2. To investigate the efficacy of individual placement and support programs among persons with traumatic brain injury and other severe disabilities who have co-existing substance use disorders. Substance use disorders occur frequently among persons with disabilities, and substance dependence has been identified as a major causative factor in secondary disability.

3. To determine and elaborate on policy-related factors at state-level vocational rehabilitation programs that promote or inhibit effective service delivery to persons with disabilities who experience substance use disorders. Vocational rehabilitation field staff recommended this study and asked, “If you are going to develop an alcohol and drug screener, are you going to develop a weapon?”
4. To determine factors that contribute to unsuccessful case closure within the state and federal vocational rehabilitation system. More than 50% of vocational rehabilitation cases are closed unsuccessfully.

These projects are supported by extensive training of vocational rehabilitation counselors in six states on issues related to identifying substance abuse and planning for services. A state-of-the-science conference was conducted in October 2007, and several electronic and paper products and training tools are in various stages of development. Doctoral-, master’s-, and bachelor’s-level training in rehabilitation and substance abuse are conducted within this Rehabilitation Research and Training Center.

There were no recommendations.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **The Employment Service System Research and Training Center**

*John O’Neill, Ph.D., Hunter College*

*John O’Neill, co-director of the Employment Service Systems Research and Training Center, has coordinated Hunter College’s Graduate Program in Rehabilitation Counseling for 25 years. He also has been a principal in the Research and Training Center on the Community Integration of People with Traumatic Brain Injury and served on the New York State Rehabilitation Council.*

This Employment Service Systems Research and Training Center is developing, enhancing, and using partnerships to improve the quality of employment services, opportunities, and outcomes for people with disabilities. Five research projects are under way to meet this goal; together, they examine partnerships across public agencies, between non-profit and public agencies, and between rehabilitation agencies and businesses. The entire project partners with stakeholders and systems to better meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Two of the research projects focus on the nexus of demand- and supply-side employment: the Consortia for Employment Success (CES) and the Workplace Socialization Model (WPS).

**Consortia for Employment Success.** Consortia for Employment Success have been created in three local communities. The CES consists of many community rehabilitation agencies and vocational rehabilitation agencies and staff in a specific geographic location that agree to participate. Its purpose is to create a formal consortium of rehabilitation

providers who work in a coordinated fashion with employers to increase the quality of employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Among the benefits are increasing access for people with disabilities to comprehensive placement services and to a well-managed and centralized employer network that is designed to increase employment and career advancement opportunities for persons with disabilities. Consumer benefits include access to higher quality jobs, shorter time to placement, higher starting salaries, more career development opportunities, longer job retention, and better job enhancement. Disability service providers also benefit from the CES. For example, they can access employer networks and technical expertise of all consortium members and receive training on innovative employment.

**Workplace Socialization Model.** The goals of the WPS are (1) to develop a workplace socialization model that improves job retention and career enhancement and (2) to train CES members on the concepts and techniques to enhance workplace culture for individuals with disabilities. Potential consumer benefits include better integration into the workplace, longer job retention, and greater opportunity for career enhancement. The aims of the WPS include other positive work outcomes, such as the employee's job satisfaction, the organization's commitment, and the employer's satisfaction with the employee's job performance. Disability service providers can benefit from training on innovative post-placement strategies and improved job retention and enhanced outcomes.

Training, dissemination, and technical assistance activities are designed to amplify and enhance the impact of the five research projects. The target audiences include people with disabilities, employers, and everyone within the employment service system who serves people with disabilities. The center relies on distance-learning technologies to deliver training and technical assistance and disseminate research results.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Investigate whether staff members trained in the CES model are more successful in developing employers and whether the job development process improves for people with disabilities.
- Determine whether employment outcomes improve for people with disabilities.
- Study whether employers developed by CES professionals increase their hiring of people with disabilities.
- Identify the extent to which CES partners are implementing the WPS model into their daily practice of post-employment services.
- Research the socialization experiences of employees with disabilities who are served by CES partners trained in the WPS model.
- Determine whether consumers served by CES partners that are trained in the WPS model experience better employment outcomes.

- Determine whether employers that hire employees served by CES partners trained in the WPS model experience more positive outcomes.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Virginia Commonwealth University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Workplace Supports and Job Retention**

*Paul Wehman, Ed.D., Virginia Commonwealth University*

*Paul Wehman is a professor of physical medicine at Virginia Commonwealth University, where he helped to develop supported employment in the early 1980s. He has published more than 200 articles, written or edited 39 books, and serves as editor-in-chief of the Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation. He received the Kennedy Foundation Award in Mental Retardation and has been recognized as one of the 50 most influential special educators of the millennium by the journal Remedial and Special Education.*

The Virginia Commonwealth University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) on Workplace Supports and Job Retention collaborates with experts within business, rehabilitation, education, employment, and the disability community on its research activities. The RRTC's areas of focus include:

- Public/private partnerships.
- Business mentors and employment for college students with disabilities.
- Demonstration of successful job retention, organization of supports to job retention, and long-term supports and job retention.
- Social Security work incentives and benefits counseling as workplace support.
- Employment discrimination and job retention—use of data from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

An example of the work of the RRTC on Workplace Supports and Job Retention on public/private partnerships is the randomized clinical trial with six different programs in the United States and six different staffing specialist groups through Manpower, Inc. The trial looked at the efficacy of having community rehabilitation programs and Manpower, Inc. specialists work together to yield better employment outcomes and retention for people with developmental disabilities and mental illness.

[QUOTE]

“The paradigm has shifted. The emphasis is on delivering services at the business site rather than in community rehabilitation programs.” —Paul Wehman

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Study the nature and intensity of workplace supports required for workers with different disabilities.
- Determine how to design and implement workplace supports across different industries.
- Determine the role of workplace supports in enhancing worker productivity and universal design.
- When conducting disability employment research, be cognizant of trends, such as the paradigm shift from delivering services in community rehabilitation programs to delivering the services at business sites, the increasing attention on autism, and the return of military service members with disabilities.
- Engage businesses on the frontlines in employing people with disabilities. For example, how would a disability employment specialist talk to a CVS/pharmacy manager about employing a person with Down syndrome?

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## Business and Workforce Development

### Business Case for Employing People with Disabilities

*Jane Rath, Employer Assistance and Recruiting Network*

*Jane Rath is the project director of the Employer Assistance and Recruiting Network. Her diverse experience, encompassing consulting for multiple federal disability programs and involvement in two successful business start-ups, has given her an understanding of the needs, concerns, and perspectives of not only government agencies but individuals with disabilities and businesses.*

To engage businesses in the employment of people with disabilities, it is important to understand their current perspective and position on people with disabilities in the workplace. The Employer Assistance and Recruiting Network (EARN) is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy to identify effective methods and strategies for educating and engaging new employers in the recruitment, hiring, and advancement of people with disabilities. To engage employers in these processes, EARN offers consultative services and technical assistance, sharing best practices, policies, and other methods for incorporating people with disabilities in the workplace. EARN also provides recruitment services through a network of providers and community-based organizations to help employers find qualified staff.

At the outset of the contract, EARN undertook research to determine what one thing would need to change to improve the hiring climate for people with disabilities. EARN

conducted market research and focus groups to identify key staffing issues facing employers and employers' perceptions of people with disabilities, and to test the effectiveness of the business case message points.

The 26 focus groups consisted of human resource professionals and senior executives from different-size companies and different types of industries in 13 cities. The focus groups addressed three areas: (1) key staffing issues facing employers; (2) perceptions employers have about people with disabilities; and (3) business case messages that may help employers understand how people with disabilities could help meet their employment needs.

**Workforce Issues.** Focus groups identified the following issues related to the workforce:

- Finding and retaining qualified employees is the top staffing and workforce issue..
- Employers are constantly searching for strategies to maintain affordable benefits.
- Employers have difficulty meeting goals and objectives during economic downtimes.
- Human resource department staff are overworked and do not always have the resources to accomplish their work. Hiring and employing people with disabilities adds even more stress to their jobs.
- Employers have difficulty locating workers with the appropriate “soft skills,” including interpersonal skills, leadership skills, and dedication to work.
- Finding the resources, the time, and the right tools for training of employees with disabilities is problematic.

**Concerns About Employing People with Disabilities.** The following findings emerged from the focus groups:

- Having had an encounter with someone who had a disability—whether it was a co-worker, family member, or friend—is the single most influential factor for employers in having a positive perspective of people with disabilities.
- Employers' concerns about employing people with disabilities include fear that they were unable to do the type of work the organization needs, problems with retention and work habits, fear of litigation from those employed, and the costs of accommodations.
- Employers are confused about the definition of “disability.”
- Employers are apprehensive about employing people with mental illness and psychiatric disabilities. Reliability, consistency of behavior, interpersonal skills,

and safety, particularly in the manufacturing and physical-labor industries, are among the concerns.

EARN presented to the focus group participants the business case for hiring people with disabilities: Hiring, retaining, and promoting people with disabilities positively affect the bottom line. These practices allow a company to increase employee retention and to meet or exceed performance standards through a qualified workforce. Furthermore, they give employers a competitive edge by enabling them to tap into a different labor pool in a shrinking workforce. Employers need to be aware that hiring, retaining, and promoting people with disabilities are easier than they might think, technology levels the playing field, and accommodations are easy and cost-effective.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Locate data and best practices on employing people with disabilities and share them with employers. Examples of places to obtain the data are Virginia Commonwealth University, Society for Human Resource Management, and Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- Tie employing people with disabilities to a business's productivity and bottom line.
- Emphasize that employing people with disabilities increases the diversity of an employer's workforce.
- Promote success stories and experiences of other employers (one of the most effective ways of engaging new employers).

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Finding Common Ground Between the Demand and Supply Sides of Disability Employment**

***Beth Butler, J.D., Wachovia Corporation***

*Beth Butler is a vice president of Wachovia and works on its Employee Relations Enterprise team as the disability and accommodations consultant. She serves as vice chair of the U.S. Business Leadership Network's board of directors and of the State Rehabilitation Council for the North Carolina Division of Blind Services. Ms. Butler has testified before Congress, given presentations at conferences across the country, and been featured in magazines such as Diversity Inc., HR Executive Magazine, and PINK Magazine.*

People who are involved in the demand and supply sides of disability employment—researchers, corporate executives, and practitioners—live in different worlds. These different entities need to collaborate with one another and strengthen their relationships.

At the core of this relationship is trust. Sharing information and resources and reaching out are a means to finding common ground.

Attitudinal barriers in society get in the way of changing the employment picture of people with disabilities. Contributing to the slowness of change is fear of change, often emanating from lack of facts (data), trust, education, and awareness. An example of data that may influence employers' attitudes is the projection that 24% of the population will be 55 or older in 2020. According to a recent AARP study, 70% of these individuals will experience some type of disability in their lifetime, and approximately 69% plan to work beyond retirement age. The employment picture may change as businesses compete to see who can be the best in reducing the unemployment rate of people with disabilities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Study how to get messages out to employers about the benefits of employing people with disabilities.
- Determine how researchers, service providers in the disability community, business, and people with disabilities can find some common ground to increase employment of people with disabilities. We are more alike than different.
- Encourage employers to reach out to employer associations and business networking groups, including the Business Leadership Network, to create relationships at the community level to employ people with disabilities.
- Encourage business schools to train students to create an inclusive work environment.
- Create opportunities for ambassadors to spread the word about the benefits of employing people with disabilities and have them challenge the people they do business with to include people with disabilities.

### [QUOTE]

“There are attitudinal barriers to employing people with disabilities. That is where we really need to look at change. As the disability and accommodations consultant for Wachovia, I am committed to joining in that journey and looking for change, and looking for opportunities to make a difference in this dialogue.” —Beth Butler

## Project SEARCH

***J. Erin Riehle, R.N., M.S.N., Project SEARCH, Cincinnati Children's Hospital***

*J. Erin Riehle is founder and senior director of Project SEARCH. She sits on the board of the U.S. Business Leadership Network, is a member of the Association for Persons in Supported Employment and Ohio Governor's Council on People with Disabilities, and has served with national groups such as the Youth to Work Coalition. A frequent*

*conference presenter, she has co-authored numerous publications. In 2004, Project SEARCH received the U.S. Department of Labor's New Freedom Initiative Award.*

Staff members at Cincinnati Children's Hospital created Project SEARCH, a business model for hiring people with disabilities. They brought together five partners representing business, providers, long-term employment support, schools, and vocational rehabilitation to coordinate efforts, pool money, and create a sustainable program. This collaboration avoided the pitfalls of working in silos, duplicating effort, and building programs that would not be sustainable. Program staff taught the partners how to braid funding (i.e., pool resources for a common goal), and they created a single point of entry. The project is business-led, not disability field-led. The Project SEARCH model focuses on retention and promotion, onsite support staff, and creating non-traditional jobs.

Since the beginning of Project SEARCH, Cincinnati Hospital has hired more than 100 people with disabilities, and most have remained there for at least five years.

#### [PULLOUT]

Erica, who is legally blind and has a learning disability, has worked at Cincinnati Hospital for 12 years. When she started working, she did not read well. Through the transition program, we created books and tools to help her get started in our materials management system. Today she is the lead auditor for our computerized system. She is making a living wage and has her own apartment and her own tax-sheltered annuity. However, she needed ongoing support to reach this level of employment stability.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Shift the focus to demonstration and pilot projects rather than surveys or long-term studies.
- Address the gap in service delivery between educational and vocational rehabilitation services.
- Address operational issues, such as financial and insurance disincentives to employment, retention, and promotion.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

#### **From Mission to Margin**

*Joseph M. Carbone, The WorkPlace, Inc.*

*Joseph Carbone leads The WorkPlace, Inc., an innovative workforce development board that helps people prepare for careers and develops the workforce for employers in southwestern Connecticut. He emphasizes broader collaboration, ensuring that the system invests its resources to serve new constituencies, such as low-wage workers,*

*immigrants, youth, and older workers, and to create an enduring impact. The WorkPlace, Inc. serves more than 22,000 people and 200 businesses a year in a 20-town region.*

Although most companies have good intentions, it appears that they sometimes hire people with disabilities to “help” them, as opposed to hiring them because they value their talents and abilities. However, there is anecdotal evidence that some companies are creating more inclusive cultures and reaping the benefits. Such companies include Xerox, Pitney Bowes, and Walgreens. These companies and others need to be encouraged to take diversity to an even higher level.

Trends clearly indicate that there will be a decreased supply of workers when baby boomers retire, an increased demand for workers with talent, and a prolonged worker shortage. The need to remain competitive in the marketplace will drive hiring; the disability community needs to prepare for this workplace shortage. Those in the service provider business need to help people with disabilities develop employment skills and find their niche in the market. There also must be a commitment to life-long learning, because few jobs will remain the same over time.

In Connecticut, “EveryOneWorks” is a disability service center staffed by people with disabilities. Individuals go to the center to use specialized equipment that allows access to information on the entire American workforce system (and other providers of workforce information), regardless of the disability. Connecticut is also a Workforce Innovative Regional Development (WIRED) region. WIRED brings together local, state, and federal entities; academic institutions; investment groups; foundations; and business and industry representatives to address the challenges associated with building a globally competitive and prepared workforce. Grants are provided to regional partnerships.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- Create an innovative workforce system that fosters partnerships with local communities and businesses to employ people with disabilities.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Walgreens: An Inclusive Employer** **Deborah (“Deb”) Russell, Walgreens Company**

*Deb Russell, a corporate manager for Walgreens, oversees the company’s commitment to employ qualified individuals with disabilities as one-third of the workforce in its newest and all future distribution centers. Walgreens employs more than 200,000 people. Ms. Russell also has been a special education teacher, addressed employment-related issues for people with disabilities within the workforce investment and Medicaid systems, and given presentations across the country on these issues.*

Walgreens’ Distribution Division made a systematic effort to become an inclusive employer. In 2005, the senior vice president of Walgreens, Randy Lewis, spoke at the

company's management seminar to explain this initiative. Lewis stated that the company planned to hire 600 people for a new distribution center in South Carolina, 200 of whom would be people with severe disabilities. This center looks and operates differently than other centers, for example, keyboards were replaced with user-friendly touch screens. It is Walgreen's goal to have people with disabilities constituting one-third of its workforce at this distribution center by 2010 and to employ 1,000 people with disabilities employed across the country.

[QUOTE]

"I was talking to one of the distribution center managers, Keith, about how it is to work with disabilities. He said, 'Randy, it is really great, because here is a group of people who come to work every day with a smile on their face. And they go straight to work. They focus on the task to be done; they don't worry about what Bob said to them or how Sammy looked at them. And when they leave, they leave with a smile. Hiring the disabled is a smart thing to do.'

"Walgreens is one of the top companies in the United States. If Walgreens can't do something about hiring people with disabilities, who can? They await us to discover their gifts. They await us to harness their abilities. They await us to value their contribution. As we progress, we will share our tools and our learning across the company. When we are finished, we will open the doors to the world to share our lessons and experiences."—Randy Lewis, senior vice president of Walgreens

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop the tools to evaluate and screen people with disabilities.
- Address ways to reach out to people with disabilities, especially those who have given up employment.

## Consumer Panel

### Employment Is Good for Wellness

***Margaret ("Peggy") Swarbrick, Ph.D., O.T.R., C.P.R.P., Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey***

*Peggy Swarbrick is director of the Institute for Wellness and Recovery Initiatives, Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey. She has worked as an occupational therapist; written and lectured nationally and internationally on employment, wellness, peer-delivered services, and recovery; and been involved in the design, delivery, and evaluation of a manualized Peer Employment Support project.*

The majority of individuals diagnosed with a serious mental illness desire competitive employment as one of their goals, yet as few as 5%–30% of this population participate in the workforce. Services and resources to help individuals return to work or embark on a career are relatively scarce. Nationally, limited supported employment (SE) services

result in only 5% of the individuals who are diagnosed with a psychiatric disability and express interest in employment actually accessing services. The longer an individual languishes in a psychiatric day treatment program, the less likely that person is to seek integrated employment. Despite the recognition of such services as evidence-based practice, the slow rate of adoption of SE services remains a nationwide problem. In addition, research on individual placement and support programs shows that only 50% of the people who receive services benefit from them.

The faculty in the Integrated Employment Institute at the University of Medicine and Dentistry, New Jersey, in collaboration with persons who are living with mental illness, conducted a project on a support group model to help increase opportunities for individuals living with a psychiatric disability to establish, pursue, and achieve employment-related goals. The project is based on research and field experience in both SE and peer support. The resulting model for a peer employment support program mobilizes elements of the consumer self-help movement and applies many of the principles of SE, with the hope of significantly increasing the number of consumers who have access to employment resources, services, and opportunities. The program was compiled in a manual and pilot tested with a cohort of individuals with a psychiatric disability, in collaboration with researchers in psychiatric rehabilitation. The short- and long-term outcomes are now being examined. These pilot data will inform a larger multi-site study.

Questions for further research include:

- What is the impact of the peer support model?
- Why do a large percentage of people enrolled in SE fail to obtain and/or sustain employment?
- Why are so many people choosing not to pursue employment, and what can be done about this in terms of developing readiness for employment?
- If employment is critical to recovery, why don't all service modalities address employment goals?
- How do we educate persons in recovery about the significant health detriments associated with long-term unemployment?

[PULLOUT]

If you think work is bad for people with mental illness, then try poverty, unemployment, and social isolation. Marrone J., Golowka, E. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 2000;23(2):187–193.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Determine how to educate people in recovery about the significant health detriments associated with long-term unemployment and the benefits of employment for physical, social, and mental health.
- Explore the implications of physical health as a barrier to employment and develop better systems integration for physical health issues.
- Determine why so many people are choosing not to pursue employment and explore what can be done to develop readiness for the workforce.
- Determine what is happening with the 40%–50% of people enrolled in supported employment who do not obtain or sustain employment.
- Study the impact of a peer support model to increase the numbers of people with a psychiatric disability who have access to employment resources, services, and opportunities.
- Determine how to support people in recovery who choose to work in the mental health field.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Questions from the Streets: What Do Mental Health Consumers Need to Know as They Enter the Workforce?**

***Kris Flaten, M.Div., Initiatives for Health***

*Kris Flaten is founder and owner of Initiatives for Health, a small business dedicated to health advocacy, particularly mental health. She was a presidential appointee to the Ticket to Work Advisory Panel and has consulted on many federal agency projects. She chaired the Minnesota Advisory Council on Mental Health and served two terms on the Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council. A frequent speaker on mental health issues, she has received awards from several state organizations.*

Mental health disabilities are the single leading cause of disability and account for approximately 35% of those disabled, roughly 35% of Title II and Title XVI beneficiaries. Because these disabilities often develop between the ages of 18 and 25 years, they are not identified during the school years, when services, accommodations, and supports would be more readily available. Often, schooling, training, or a first job is interrupted with the onset of a disability, before social, teamwork, or work skills are fully developed.

Many years might pass before those with mental disabilities are well enough to enter or return to the workforce. Often, they must take entry-level jobs that are not age appropriate. A situation in which a 40-year-old is working with 18-year-olds might create or exacerbate social problems with peers. Adding to these problems are gaps in work and school history that are difficult to explain. However, these individuals want to work.

Understandably, persons with mental disabilities who are contemplating entering the workforce have many concerns. These include:

- What will happen to my benefits for health care, housing, and cash assistance?
- Will I be worse off than I am now?
- What kinds of supports do I need? Mentoring? Onsite or off-site coaching? Classes or trainings?
- Who is most likely to provide those services effectively: An employer, peers, vocational rehabilitation, or Workforce Center staff? Rehabilitation workers with mental health training?
- Some employers are apprehensive about employing people with mental illness. Do I disclose or not? How much do I say? How can it be done with a sense of dignity? Whose advice can I trust about disclosing?
- As a person with a mental health disability and out of the work force for 10–15 years, how do I sell myself as the “most qualified applicant”?
- Will working complicate my life? How much time will it take? People with disabilities often do not have the same amount of time as people without disabilities. For example, they may need more sleep, or it may take them longer to get dressed. Often, employment takes time away from family relationships and activities.
- Are there people who can help with added or new expectations, such as monthly income report forms, changes in medical providers, or taxes?

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Find out from employers that have hired persons with mental health disabilities what factors contributed to their decision to offer employment. Did they consider meeting hiring goals, satisfying diversity expectations, or receiving tax credits?
- Analyze what makes an applicant “most qualified.” Is it someone who desires part-time or flexible employment, or someone who has no need or desire for health benefits?
- Develop research-based guidelines for defining the “level playing field” for employment of persons with disabilities, particularly mental health disabilities.
- Identify factors that would truly make accessing and maintaining employment an equal opportunity for persons with mental health disabilities.

- Study the outcomes for people who receive Social Security benefits when they work and when they do not work. Conduct a pilot project that rewards people for working.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Youth-Led Research Leadership—Self-Determined Priorities** ***Betsy Valnes, National Youth Leadership Network***

*Betsy Valnes is executive director for the National Youth Leadership Network and the National Youth Information Center. She serves on the South Dakota State Independent Living Council and on the Roundtable Consortium for the National Clearinghouse for Disability and Exchange. A former contractor for the National Council on Disability's Youth Advisory Council and Cultural Diversity Advisory Council, she has been a presenter and participant at numerous forums in Canada and Europe.*

The National Youth Leadership Network (NYLN) is led by and for young adults with disabilities who are age 30 or younger. Recently, NYLN surveyed youth with disabilities, asking: What do you think is most important when it comes to succeeding in education and employment goals? The most highly ranked responses included: Having specific goals, receiving academic encouragement from family, obtaining financial aid, advocating for oneself, finding a network of friends, and using reliable transportation.

Of the youth who participated in the services offered by NYLN, 77% said the services increased networking with disability leaders, 76% said the services increased the desire to be employed and seek more education and increased their understanding of the issues facing similar youth, and 70% said the services increased their knowledge of disability-related laws. Mentoring was very important to them: 74% had a mentor, and 63% served as a mentor. These young people defined mentoring in many different ways, although they all believed that successful mentoring was based on personal connections.

The survey also measured involvement in organizations or personal development, with 90% serving in a leadership group, 70% serving in decision-making positions, 33% starting an organization, and 21% working for a political campaign and/or a candidate. These data indicate that young people with disabilities can make significant contributions to the research relevant to their issues, and they can help set priorities for the services they need.

No recommendations were offered.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Affirmations I Choose.** A disability program navigator in Oklahoma and mental health consumer wrote a document called “Affirmations I Choose.” The affirmations included: I

choose to work because I think I can work, I choose to ask for my doctor's opinion about work, I believe my doctor knows what's best for me, I believe my doctor tells me what's best for me, I choose to work based on my doctor's recommendation, I receive employment offers cheerfully and gladly, I choose to work to make myself successful, I receive encouragement and advice about my success, I see my success coming at the right time, and I invest in my future because it is mine.

There were no recommendations from the discussion of affirmations.

**Career Development.** Supports for employment of people with disabilities may be more effective if provided in combination rather than one or another.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Study the effects of providing both supported employment and supported education to enhance career development.

**Training Programs for Workplace Staff.** Training programs on disability awareness should include all staff, including managerial staff and co-workers who have disabilities. In fact, co-workers who have disabilities should help conduct the training.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Develop training programs for workplace staff that include co-workers with disabilities, so that some stereotypes can be broken and awareness of disability pride can be increased.

**Public Assistance.** People who have disabilities may be reluctant to return to work if their families receive public disability benefits. They often rely on these benefits for living expenses and find it difficult to earn more than they receive in benefits.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Disability employment professionals need to recognize that some people with disabilities are reluctant to work because their families depend on the public disability benefits for living expenses.

## Section II: Conference Themes

This section of the report is organized according to the four themes of the conference and the five subtopics within each theme. The themes are:

- Business and Employment: A Global and Technology-Driven Environment
- Disability Workforce Experiences and Needs: Issues and Research
- Health: A Competitive Disability Workforce
- Government Policies and Practices: Role and Effect

Plenary panels gave a broad overview of these themes. After the plenary panels, conference participants attended concurrent sessions that were held on the subtopics of each theme.

This section of the report summarizes the presentations and discussions of the plenary panels by theme and the concurrent sessions for each theme's subtopics.

### **Theme 1. Business and Employment: A Global and Technology-Driven Environment**

Rapid advances in technology are changing the markets for American products and services as well as the resources needed to develop them. These advances also are changing the composition of the workforce as American businesses develop new and competitive products and services. The effects of new technology and globalization are seen increasingly across type, sector, and size of American businesses. In communities across America, these changes affect where and how jobs are defined, how wage schedules are set, and the kinds of benefits that are available for workers with and without disabilities. Labor market surveys project shortages of workers with the skills to meet the demands of businesses in the coming decades, at the same time that social and economic data project that the work lifespan of Americans will mean longer participation in the workforce.

These environmental forces will shape skill sets, hiring and retention strategies, work culture, the relationship between employer and employee, where and how work is done, the societal role and relationship between employer and community, and workforce diversification. Employers, people with disabilities, advocates, and policy-makers will need to deal proactively with these anticipated changes if American business is to include people with disabilities.

#### **Overview—Plenary Panel Presentations**

This section of the report summarizes the plenary panel's overview of Theme 1. Business and Employment: A Global and Technology-Driven Environment. Following are summaries of the panel presentations.

## **Workplace Supports and Job Retention: Current Research Findings and Future Research Needs**

*John Kregel, Ed.D., Virginia Commonwealth University*

*John Kregel chairs the Department of Special Education and Disability Policy at Virginia Commonwealth University and is associate director and research director of its Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Workplace Supports and Employment Retention. In addition, he directs the National Training Center for the Work Incentive Planning and Assistance program, which provides training and support to more than 500 community work incentive coordinators nationwide.*

Effective employer practices, such as public/private partnerships, health and productivity management, and public employment support programs, can help promote the long-term employment retention of people with disabilities, but more research is needed in all these areas. For instance, there are promising approaches to public/private employment training and placement, including public/private partnerships with community rehabilitation programs and public schools. However, rigorous research on the effectiveness of these approaches is just beginning.

**Public/Private Partnerships.** Recent research has revealed a great deal about the positive role of public/private partnerships in the long-term employment success of individuals with disabilities. In addition, business leadership groups have identified a number of new types of public/private partnership approaches that seem to have tremendous potential, although empirical validation of their effectiveness is lacking. These models include programs such as Project SEARCH, business-based retention specialists, and school-to-work transition cooperative programs.

**Health and Productivity Management.** Previous research has chronicled the significant advances in strategies used by progressive companies in the United States to promote retention of their workforce. Employer-based health and productivity management programs have continued to grow into an increasingly sophisticated array of organizational policies and procedures that incorporate individuals with disabilities into overall retention efforts. Progressive employers are incorporating individuals with disabilities into their corporate health and productivity management efforts, but employers do not initiate long-term wellness programs or employee productivity programs, health and wellness programs, or return-to-work programs without understanding the programs' costs or potential benefits. Both researchers and public-sector employment programs can benefit from businesses' practices. Researchers need to work with businesses to find out the processes they use to determine these costs and benefits rather than going into businesses and asking them about their attitudes and willingness to hire individuals with disabilities. Public-sector employment programs should incorporate some of the innovative health and productivity strategies used by employers to retain employees. Future research in this area should consist of collaborative efforts conducted by public and private entities to identify the specific strategies used by proactive companies to support and promote the employment of individuals with health impairments or disabilities.

**Unique Obstacles to Retention Faced by Specific Groups with Disabilities.** Results of recent research on employment retention indicate that factors such as age, type and severity of disability, reliance on public benefits, and educational and employment history all contribute to create unique challenges for particular groups of individuals. Future research activities should focus on identifying the unique employment retention challenges faced by specific groups of individuals with disabilities, and on populations served through the Vocational Rehabilitation, Special Education, U.S., Department of Labor, Social Security, Veterans Affairs, and other employment support systems.

**Employer Perspectives on Public Employment Support Programs.** It is clearly documented that many if not most employers have had contact with a public agency that provides job placement and support services for individuals with disabilities. Business representatives often report that the assistance provided by these public agencies has fallen short of expectations and not met the needs of employers or their workers.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Researchers should examine employer perspectives on the usefulness of public support programs that are designed to deliver workplace supports, such as work incentive provisions in benefit programs, public job placement programs, and effectiveness of school-to-work transition programs.
- Researchers should design future demand-side research to lead to improved understanding of the policies, procedures, and practices inherent in the public employment programs that impede the efforts of employers to support and retain workers with disabilities.
- Researchers should conduct evaluations of promising practices in the private sector and in public/private partnerships in employing people with disabilities, document these practices, and promote these practices.
- Researchers should study the skills employees and employers need to be successful in the global environment and in global workforce trends. Transfer this knowledge to educators at all levels, such as K–12, postsecondary, and graduate programs, so that they prepare their students to be successful in the workplace. Also educate students and parents about the type of skills that are needed in the workplace.
- Federal agencies should promote research leading to new service approaches for individuals with autism spectrum disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other traditionally underserved groups.
- Federal agencies should support research efforts that identify specific strategies used by proactive companies to implement absence management programs, design and deliver accommodations, and promote employee productivity.

- Federal agencies should support research focused on large-scale, methodologically rigorous evaluations of a variety of promising public-partnership models.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## **Removing Barriers to Full Integration: Affirmative Employment for People with Disabilities**

*Jennifer Croft, U.S. Department of Commerce*

*Jennifer Croft leads the U.S. Department of Commerce's Disability Employment Program and develops accessibility standards and promotes accessible design for the U.S. Access Board. For the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, she was an Equal Employment Opportunity manager, Section 508 coordinator, civil rights specialist, diversity trainer, and staff Sign Language interpreter. The daughter of two deaf parents, she proudly considers herself a part of the deaf community.*

Barriers to employment of people with disabilities must and can be overcome. Given that the unemployment rate for people with severe disabilities is twice the national average, reported to be between 44% and 70%, employers must take seriously the requirement for affirmative action for people with disabilities. Even higher is the unemployment rate for minorities with disabilities—80%. Under Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, federal agencies are required to set goals for hiring individuals with targeted disabilities and to monitor and report progress. However, when the Americans with Disabilities Act was signed in 1990, the affirmative action requirement was omitted. Both the public and the private sectors have experienced drastic declines in employment and retention of people with disabilities. We must take steps to move beyond the current state of complacency and take seriously the responsibility to affirmatively employ persons with disabilities.

Certain barriers must be addressed to reverse the declining numbers of employees with disabilities within our workforce, and each barrier has specific issues. The most basic barrier is the lack of a consensus on what constitutes a disability. Different federal agencies define disability in different ways, making it difficult to determine how many people with disabilities are in the federal workforce and the workforce in general. Comparing the employment rate of people with disabilities across federal agencies is difficult as well because of differing methods of sampling the population. For example, "Severe Disability" as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, "Severe Disability" as defined by the Office of Personnel Management, and "Targeted Disability" as defined by Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. A recent article in the magazine of the Society for Human Resource Management summed up the issue nicely in a caption for a chart: "These data vary from U.S. Census Bureau data because of a difference in the populations sampled."

Another issue involves the global and technology-driven environment, which is highlighted in one of the themes of this conference. In what ways are Web site and other technologies facilitating employment of people with disabilities, and in what ways are they acting as barriers to employment? Monster.com and USAjobs.gov are two Web portals for general employment. In what ways have they been made accessible to people with disabilities? Also, how can these technologies be enhanced to help people indicate that they are eligible for special hiring authorities such as Schedule A (a specialized hiring authority that allows federal hiring officials to appoint qualified people with disabilities non-competitively)? Despite the mandate under Section 508 to follow accessibility standards for people with disabilities, job seekers with and without disabilities have difficulty navigating these Web sites.

The disability employment community needs to move beyond the outdated charitable models of employment for people with disabilities. Instead, employers need to hire people who are highly qualified for the job who may happen to have a disability, but too often, discriminatory attitudes of employers toward people with disabilities prevent the hiring. Two ways to break down such attitudinal barriers are to establish a two-year probationary period for new hires and create an internship program for students with disabilities. This probationary period or internship gives the individual with a disability and the organization a chance to know each other and feel comfortable working together.

In light of the impending baby boomer retirement “tsunami,” employers must tap into new pools of talent to fill their hiring needs. Hiring people with disabilities should be among the first strategies used in long-term succession planning, and recruitment and retention plans for people with disabilities must be seriously considered in designing Human Capital Scorecards and other workforce trend reports. Employers need to know about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. Studies show that workers with disabilities stay with employers 50% longer than their non-disabled colleagues and that they meet or exceed supervisor requirements.

In 2006, approximately 15% of federal agencies established a numerical goal for targeting people with disabilities in their workforce and approximately 41% of federal agencies reported that they established non-numerical goals for people with targeted disabilities in their workforce. That means many other agencies have failed to establish any type of goal to improve the employment of people with targeted disabilities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Study the use of innovative technologies, such as Second Life, for people with disabilities. This is a 3-D virtual world created by its residents, which may make it easier for people with disabilities to match their skills against an employer’s needs.
- Implement stronger requirements in the federal government for affirmative action goals and establish full-time federal selective placement coordinators who seek out highly skilled candidates for government.

- Find a fresh perspective to market a business model for hiring people with disabilities.
- Determine the ways in which Web sites and other technologies facilitate and inhibit the employment of people with disabilities. How can these technologies be enhanced to help people indicate that they are eligible for special hiring under Schedule A? Could a federal resume data-banking system be put in place, so that resumes would be housed in a single system? This would allow employers to search resumes, find matching qualifications, then contact potential candidates for the job.
- Conduct research on a consistent definition of disability that can be used in the workforce.

**Workforce Skills and the Global Market: Understanding Emerging Employer Skills Needs in Our Rapidly Changing, Innovation-Driven Economy**

*Kathy Krepcio, M.A., John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development*

*Kathy Krepcio is the executive director of the Heldrich Center and project director of the National Technical Assistance and Research Leadership Center to promote employment and economic independence for adults with disabilities, sponsored by the Office of Disability Employment Policy. During 24 years in public service, she has served as chief of staff in the New Jersey State Office of Information Technology and director for policy and planning at the state's Department of Human Services.*

Powerful economic, social, and technological forces, such as globalization and rapid technological advances, are transforming the American workplace. These overarching forces contribute to a number of developing workplace trends that share a theme of constant change and a drive toward continued innovation. Together, these workplace trends are contributing to net increases in the skills needed to perform most jobs in the national economy. For workers to compete successfully in today's labor market, they must acquire not only job-specific skills but, increasingly, more abstract cognitive skills to help them manage and adapt to these changes.

Research undertaken by the Heldrich Center since 2001 seeks to explore, understand, and document the major trends that are changing the workplace and the specific emerging skills that today's workers need to adapt to these trends. The research is based on interviews and focus groups with more than 70 employers in 11 industries (biotechnology, information technology, advanced manufacturing, advanced materials, environmental technology, professional engineering and research, health care, communication, energy/utilities/infrastructure, retail, and public health), economic forecasters, and other stakeholders, as well as a review of the literature and other skills-related studies.

According to this research, U.S. workplaces are undergoing rapid and continuous changes. Employers are competing in an increasingly global, innovation-driven economy and must adapt to major workforce trends. Six emerging workplace trends have important implications for the skills that workers need to compete in today's marketplace:

- The increasing competitive advantage of firms that harness knowledge and innovation effectively;
- Decentralization of business operations and management;
- Continuing and expanding reliance on technology in the workplace;
- Increasing diversity in the workplace (many firms are creating new positions to address diversity issues, such as chief diversity officer);
- An expanded focus on privacy, security, and ethics; and
- Business process changes in response to shifts in regulatory environments and changing patterns of regulation.

The sidebar, High-Priority Emerging Skills in Today's Global Environment, lists the skills needed as a result of these trends.

[SIDEBAR]

#### **High-Priority Emerging Skills in Today's Global Environment**

- Adaptability skills
- Information management, communication, and relationship-building skills
- Interdisciplinary skills
- Business skills
- Science, math, engineering, and technology skills

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Evaluate existing workforce-preparation programs to understand what works and what does not work for people with disabilities, especially emerging-sector strategies and longer-term tracking of an individual's continuous attachment to one employer, using data on unemployment insurance wages.
- Make evaluation designs informative, to provide administrators, policy-makers, and the public with real-time information without compromising research integrity and rigor and to result in significantly improved program practice, policy, and operations.
- Conduct ongoing research on the changing skill needs of employers.

- Create routine, timely, and more effective mechanisms to quickly translate that information for educators, parents, counselors, and job seekers so supply-side programs can reflect real-time demands.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## **AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Education of Future Workforce.** Employers are not talking to educators enough about the courses they should be providing and the skills they should be imparting. Too often parents and educators believe that everyone needs a four-year degree. At least half of the top 10 positions that are difficult to fill require only a vocational school or community college education, not a four-year degree. Some of these jobs, such as automotive repair, are high-paying jobs but are misperceived by schools, parents, and children as not having much value.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Listen to what employers need and translate that back to educators, who need to develop programs, curricula, or educational techniques to impart skills that employers need. For this to happen, partnerships between industry and schools must be developed.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Consider partnerships between educators in universities and the federal government to feed into programs that can help prepare people with disabilities for the current and future workplace.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Encourage employers to reach out to teachers and bring them to businesses to see what skills are needed for future jobs. Teachers can then impart this knowledge to students. Employers also need to bring students into businesses as interns and through other programs so that the students can see real-life business.

## **Subtopics: Concurrent Session Presentations**

This section summarizes the presentations and recommendations of the concurrent sessions on the five subtopics for Theme 1: global trends, technology, workforce and business changes, a global workforce, and workforce development trends and needs.

### ***Global Trends: The Future Workforce and Business Environment***

Panelists presented and discussed research on the complex globalization trends that are expected to change American businesses, economic policy, the employment landscape, and redefine productivity. Panelists and participants recommended future research that may guide policy makers, corporations, and the public sector to shape the future of American business and include people with disabilities in the global workplace. Following are summaries of the panel presentations.

## **Global Trends: The Future Workforce—What Employers Want and Need** *John Gibbons, M.S., The Conference Board*

*John Gibbons is a senior research advisor at The Conference Board. A former human resources director for Gap, Inc., he has worked in financial services, health care, and international logistics; is a founding member of the Academy of Management's Collaborative on Evidence-Based Management; and sits on the advisory board of the Workforce Productivity Technology Council. His research has been featured in outlets such as CEO Magazine and HR Magazine and as a case study at Harvard Business School.*

### **[QUOTE]**

**“We have to make empirical-based evidence arguments for why hiring people with disabilities actually provides a competitive advantage to businesses.” —John Gibbons**

As a result of global trends, U.S. businesses face new challenges in the new millennium. One such challenge is dealing with a global marketplace. Even small- and mid-sized businesses, those with less than \$500 million in revenue, are facing global competition and working to capitalize on global opportunities and markets outside the United States. Price advantage and productivity pose additional challenges, because goods may be produced at a lower cost and with greater productivity in another part of the world. As more U.S. businesses operate abroad, they also must adjust to cultural differences in the local workforce and customers and develop products that cater to the local economy. Yet more challenges arise from the rapid pace of the switch from an industrial-based economy to a talent- and service-based economy. For example, demand for every manufacturing job except machinist is shrinking while demand for service jobs, particularly in the area of health care, is growing. Finally, businesses must function in a “24/7” kind of world. This requires employing a flexible workforce that spans time zones; customers may be working while U.S. workers are sleeping.

These trends require businesses to rethink the hiring and retention of their workforce to ensure that they fit into this global workplace and forces them to focus on workforce productivity, cost-control measures, and the impact of prices. To deal with these changes, some businesses are turning to evidence-based human resources, which look empirically at how human resources activities, such as staffing, drive business performance. Empirical methods demonstrate causal relationships between talent management and business performance.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- Make business cases for employing people with disabilities. Disability advocates must (1) show that hiring people with disabilities has a beneficial impact on business and is not done just to comply with regulations or internal goals; and (2) make empirical-based arguments for why hiring people with disabilities actually provides a competitive advantage.

**Workplace Factors in Workforce Accommodation and Retention**  
***Rochelle V. Habeck, Ph.D., M.S., C.R.C., Habeck and Associates***

*Rochelle Habeck, an independent research consultant on disability and employment, works with partners such as the Upjohn Institute, Westat, and Virginia Commonwealth University. She has been a professor at Michigan State University; provided technical review or testimony to the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research and National Academy of Sciences; and serves on editorial boards for the Journal of Disability Policy Studies and Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin.*

Is it possible to better align the interests of employers, who are attempting to recruit and retain a productive workforce at a competitive cost in the global marketplace, with the interests of people with disabilities, who are seeking secure careers in an unstable labor market? A coordinated research agenda is needed to integrate workplace practices that affect disability prevention, health and productivity management, and employment retention with supply-side interventions that successfully prepare, place, support, and sustain people with disabilities in employment. From such findings, public policies and programs for intervention might be designed to address more effectively the intersection of factors that affect successful inclusion, accommodation, and retention of people with disabilities.

Findings to date from two projects in the Virginia Commonwealth University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Workplace Supports and Job Retention provide insight into employers' practices for retaining workers who develop disabling conditions and their perspectives about bringing people with disabilities into their workforce. Longitudinal interviews were conducted over a period of 24 months with 20 employees who have disabling conditions. Researchers identified best practices that help businesses retain employees who may develop or who already have disabilities. They found that factors such as providing accommodations as a process, hiring skilled disability management staff, and treating employees equitably and respectfully favorably affected the retention of employees. Employers that were successful in retaining employees viewed providing accommodations as a process rather than a single event. As changes in the health of the employee and in job demands occur, adjustments in accommodations must be made.

Skilled disability management staff, onsite and with management support, greatly influenced retention of employees and prevention of disability. These staff helped businesses form partnerships with government agencies to obtain financial support and collaborate with regional businesses. To help uncover best practices, businesses can review an annual survey on health and productivity by the National Business Group on Health.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Quantify actual impacts of absence and disability management on retention.
- Demonstrate onsite partnership models for disability hiring and retention programs.
- Test ways to achieve adoption of best practices among employers and providers.
- Require fidelity (the degree to which a model can be reproduced) to best-practice models in research, training, and service.
- Determine how and how much of disability that develops in the workplace is preventable.

### Poverty and Disability

***Pia Rockhold, M.D., Ph.D., M.P.H., The World Bank***

*Pia Rockhold is a senior operations officer with The World Bank's Disability and Development Team. A widely recognized expert on international public health, she has extensive experience in the areas of health research and research capacity building. Her publications include "Technology, Health, Impairment and Disability: An Historical Overview," which appeared in the journal Development.*

The World Bank is a multi-lateral international development organization, with headquarters in Washington, D.C., that was established to support the reconstruction of Europe after World War II. Today, the World Bank has more than 184 member countries that together provide more than \$20 billion annually in development aid and loans. Its mission is to reduce poverty through support to economic growth, infrastructure, social development, health education, and other means.

Since 1996, the World Bank has increasingly become aware of the two-way causality between poverty and disability and therefore has worked to increase the degree to which the needs of people living with disabilities are addressed in international development aid. In 2002, the World Bank established the Disability and Development team to develop the evidence base and ensure that disability issues are mainstreamed into the bank's poverty-alleviation efforts. The Design and Development team works in close collaboration with other international and national agencies, such as the World Health Organization, the International Labor Organization, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, International Red Cross and Red Crescent, and Handicap International. The Global Partnership on Disability and Development (GPDD), an international disability network committed to promoting inclusive development as a means to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, was established in 2006 with assistance from the World Bank and support by a multi-donor trust fund. The GPDD brings together organizations, government agencies, multi-national lenders, and research

centers focused on reducing the link between disability and poverty and on promoting inclusive development activities.

Worldwide, an estimated 600 million people are living with a significant disability; about two-thirds are in a developing country. The World Bank provides evidence and technical support to enhance global, regional, and country-based understanding and capacity to implement the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which entered into force on May 3, 2008. Inclusion of disability can be achieved only through a holistic “vulnerability” analysis of the entire society. The aim is to build an equitable society in which all people are included in mainstream development and not targeted as vulnerable. The United States is an important partner in international development aid. The policy of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) supports the inclusion of disability in all USAID-funded projects. It is important to ensure that the Interagency Committee on Disability Research not only supports and facilitates the effective exchange of federal information on disability and rehabilitation research activities within the United States but goes beyond, to support and facilitate the effective exchange of information on disability and rehabilitation globally and locally.

The World Bank works to mainstream disability into its operations, among others, through support to the development of operational tools and guidelines; collection of reliable disability data; support to inclusive education and social protection with expanded opportunities for livelihood, security, and equity; promotion of health and rehabilitation; inclusive risk prevention and management in countries affected by conflict and disaster; accessible infrastructure; and inclusive research.

Around the world, the World Bank’s Disability and Development Team works to integrate people with disabilities into its development activities. Some of the team’s focus is to provide employment for people with disabilities within their own communities, integrate them into community activities, and raise awareness of their rights within and outside of the disability community. One way the World Bank integrates people with disabilities into the community is by giving them disaster response work, such as after the tsunami in Sri Lanka.

Another World Bank initiative on disability is its work on the Global Partnership for Disability and Development, a partnership with non-governmental organizations, international development organizations, the private sector, and other stakeholders. The partnership’s objective is to encourage the governments of developing countries and international cooperation agencies to integrate people with disabilities into their efforts to alleviate poverty. U.S. disability advocates and researchers can take the lessons learned by the World Bank and apply them in the United States.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Promote community-based rehabilitation for people with disabilities, including providing employment and education for people within their own communities.

- Integrate people with disabilities, particularly those with mental health disabilities, in key community efforts, such as helping to work with people after a disaster.
- Inform people with disabilities about their legal and human rights.
- Convey to society that people with disabilities deserve the same rights—economic, social, and others—as those without disabilities.

## **AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Peer Support Specialists.** Since the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services began to cover peer support specialists, these positions have exploded within the mental health field. Data are needed on how best to prepare people for these positions and how to help people obtain and pay for the training.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Study the best ways to train peer support specialists and determine whether the training helps people develop the soft skills that employers desire.

**Experiences of Other Countries.** The United States should consider drawing upon the experiences of the World Bank in integrating people with disabilities into the workforce throughout the world. For example, Ireland has mandated that a certain percentage of people in the workforce must be employees with disabilities.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Review other countries' initiatives for increasing the employment of people with disabilities and draw upon this information in designing employment strategies in the United States.

**Alternative Work Schedules.** The global economy and “24/7” workday are making alternative scheduling of workers more commonplace. These alternative schedules can benefit people with disabilities who need flexible working hours.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Study the effect of alternative work schedules on the productivity of people with disabilities.

**People with Disabilities in Prominent Positions.** People with disabilities need to be in prominent positions, for example, as legislators, researchers, and employers, to bring about change in the way people with disabilities are viewed and treated.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Study the strategies needed to help people with disabilities become employers, researchers, and even politicians.

**Adoption of Best Practices.** Many employers are unaware of effective practices that other employers have used to attract and retain people with disabilities. Employers with best practices have valuable information to share.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Determine how employers can be encouraged to adopt the practices of other employers that have been effective in attracting and retaining people with disabilities. How can employers that use best practices become involved in sharing their practices and in designing research to encourage adoption of those practices?

**Translation of Research.** Research findings often are not disseminated beyond the research community. When they are disseminated, they often are written in complicated language that makes it difficult to apply the findings.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Disseminate research findings beyond the research community—to advocates, employers, and employees—in simple language. Consider preparing a one-page summary of findings from a research study. Funding agencies should mandate that researchers submit dissemination plans when they apply for funding and that those plans be part of the grading of the applications.

### ***Technology: Influence on Business and Workforce Development***

Panelists presented and discussed technology research, anticipated developments in technology, and corporate capabilities for accommodations through technology. Panelists and participants recommended research related to making full use of technology's promise in America's business and workforce development. Following are summaries of the panel presentations.

#### **Assistive Technologies and Job Accommodations: Enhancing the Employability of People with Disabilities**

***Gerald "Jerry" Weisman, M.S.M.E., A.T.P., R.E.T., Rehabilitation Technology Services***

*Jerry Weisman, owner of Rehabilitation Technology Services, directed the Rehabilitation Engineering Technology Program at Vermont Technical College; sat on the board of the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America and chaired specialty groups; chaired a subcommittee of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities; and was named a Switzer Scholar. The author of numerous articles, he testified before Congress for the Tech Act.*

Assistive technology (AT) refers to devices and related services that are intended to reduce the impact of the disabling conditions experienced by millions of Americans. AT and job accommodations enhance the employability of people with disabilities. The Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA) is an interdisciplinary association of people with a common interest in technology and disability. Although RESNA does not conduct research directly, it supports its members who are engaged in research, development, education, advocacy, and provision of AT. Professionals in the rehabilitation fields are expected to combine the best available evidence with their expertise to make decisions that result in optimal

outcomes for the person being served. To do so, they need more research on the efficacy of providing AT for employment.

The Job Accommodations Network has been successful in helping employers hire and retain employees with disabilities, but more probably can be done to help employers retain injured workers and thus prevent them from becoming disabled. Ergonomic solutions have been effective in preventing injuries and in returning injured workers to their previous jobs.

**Job Accommodations.** Vocational rehabilitation specialists sometimes assume that people who became disabled while in blue-collar jobs need to be retrained for white-collar jobs, particularly computer work. However, these workers may want to continue with the job they had before they were injured. Here is an example of how a person who became disabled was accommodated in his blue-collar job:

Joe operated a lathe. After he had a stroke, he developed hemiplegia and had functional use of only one hand. Operation of a lathe requires both hands—one hand for controls, to open and close the chuck, and one hand to hold the object put in the chuck. The lathe was modified so that Joe could control the street controls with his head and use his functional hand to hold the object.

[QUOTE]

“Not every person with a disability is going to be a computer programmer. People with disabilities have different aptitudes, just like everyone else. Just because you have a spinal cord injury doesn’t mean that you’re going to make a good computer programmer.” —Jerry Weisman

**Universal Design.** “Universal design” is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design, as defined by Ron Mace, founder and director of the Center for Universal Design.

Employers need to recognize that workers have a wide range of functional abilities. The aging of the working population makes it even more important for employers to accommodate these different abilities. In many cases, incorporating universal design into the workplace can make that workplace accessible to people with disabilities even before they are hired.

**Standards on Accessibility.** Standards are needed for making consumer technologies accessible. The first steps in this process are to determine what areas of consumer technologies need to be accessible and to define what “accessibility” means. More information about the cost effectiveness of assistive technologies also is needed and will require collaboration among researchers, clinicians, and consumers.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Study creative solutions for returning workers to the jobs they held before they became disabled. Create resources for businesses, particularly small businesses, to provide information about retaining and accommodating injured workers.
- Determine the efficacy of providing assistive technology as job accommodations. Who provides those accommodations—therapists, engineers, employers, or people with disabilities themselves?
- Develop evidence-based outcome measures for accommodations to determine whether they work and use this information in designing future accommodations.
- Convey to employers that their workplace environment and their tasks should be made accessible to a wide range of functional abilities.
- Study how universal design affects the workplace culturally and financially (its productivity). After universal design principles are incorporated into the workplace, document and publicize their effect on business.
- Develop standards on making certain technologies accessible, and include people with disabilities in the standards-setting process. Then develop outcome measures to evaluate the effectiveness of these accessible technologies.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Technology: Does It Make a Difference?**

***D. J. Hendricks, Ed.D., West Virginia University***

*D. J. Hendricks, director of the Disability Policy Research Center at West Virginia University, also teaches graduate-level statistics courses at the university, where she has worked in the disability field for 30 years. She has been project manager of the Job Accommodation Network and written numerous manuals for college statistics courses through Houghton-Mifflin Publishing. Her most recent publications address the costs and benefits associated with making accommodations in the employment setting.*

The Disability Policy Research Center at West Virginia University recently conducted a detailed analysis of the data collected by the Law, Health Policy, and Disability Center at the University of Iowa for the consumer satisfaction survey of the Job Accommodation Network (JAN). JAN provides customized accommodation information to more than 32,000 customers annually. This follow-up study was designed to capture what happened after the JAN consultant provided this information.

[QUOTE]

“Technology-based accommodations are not expensive. I hope that myth just goes right out the window.” —D. J. Hendricks

**Technology-Based Accommodations.** The results of the JAN consumer satisfaction survey showed that 20% of the technology-based accommodations cost the employer nothing, and 39% cost less than \$500. The median cost that was associated with making a technology-based accommodation was \$200. Employers rated technology accommodations as very effective and said the accommodations consistently reduced the level of limitation caused by disability.

**New Technologies.** In almost every type of business, purchasing or modifying technology was the most frequent accommodation. The groups that did not use some sort of technology as the most frequently implemented accommodation were finance, insurance, and real estate businesses. Instead, they usually modified the worksite. Either in addition to or instead of providing assistive technology, many worksites accommodate workers with disabilities through measures such as modifying the job, altering scheduling and leave policies, and adjusting benefits.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Determine how data on the low cost and effectiveness of accommodations can be used to increase the employment of people with disabilities. Use these data to implement programs and policies for instituting workplace technologies that help accommodate people with disabilities.
- Find out what new technologies are needed to further improve the work environment.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Transforming the Workplace Through New Technology** *Dana Marlowe, M.A., TecAccess*

*Dana Marlowe is senior vice president of TecAccess, an award-winning accessibility consulting firm. She has addressed corporations, academic institutions, and agencies around the world, such as the Federal Communications Commission, U.S. Departments of Defense and Labor, IDEAS Advisory Board, and National Organization of Disability. Her articles have appeared in Professional Woman's Magazine, The Chicago Tribune, Sign News, and Deaf Women United, and she has published a book called Teen Ink.*

Several important market factors are driving diversification of the workplace through disability employment. Among these are an increase in the number of people with disabilities who are seeking employment, including people with age-related limitations and veterans with disabilities, and a shrinking workforce that is in need of skilled labor. In 2010, the U.S. economy will support 167 million jobs but have only 158 million workers to fill them. As a result, more companies are looking to secure new talent and keep their current workers longer, especially older workers.

With more than 60 employees who have disabilities, TecAccess has demonstrated that the solution to the unemployment rate of people with disabilities and the shrinking job market is accessible technology. Technology has served as an equalizer for people with disabilities, removing workplace barriers and increasing opportunities for employment. Employers can now look for skilled employees in new and creative ways. The growing need for skilled employees in the workforce—for example, teachers, health care workers, and information technology professionals—can be addressed through new technology that is designed in an accessible and universally friendly fashion.

[QUOTE]

“Make technology accessible for all employees in the workplace. The benefits are really bountiful when providing better overall design for everyone, including people with disabilities.” —Dana Marlowe

**Accessibility of Assistive Technology.** Steps to increase the accessibility of assistive technology include allocating resources appropriately, developing a plan for doing so (includes setting standards and goals), identifying problems areas, implementing guidelines, testing the accessibility, educating employees about the technologies, and integrating accessibility into quality assurance and content delivery processes. Working with technology developers early in the development process helps avoid retrofitting a finished product to meet the needs of people with disabilities. Finally, it is essential to involve the business’s leaders, including those in marketing, development, and public relations.

Organizations are now looking for new ways to reach all potential customers and employees to keep and retain a competitive edge. When assistive and accessible technology is used, employers can attract and retain highly skilled employees by tapping into the population of talented employees with disabilities. At the same time, employees with disabilities can take advantage of assistive technology in the workplace.

**RECOMMENDATION**

- For all people in the workplace, increase the accessibility of assistive technology that addresses a wide range of functional abilities.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

**AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Assistive Technology Software.** Certain types of software for assistive technology cannot be used in some government agencies because of security concerns. Using such software may become even more problematic when the U.S. government implements the federal desktop core configuration, a method designed to increase overall system security and reduce the cost of system and application maintenance for all federal agencies.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Address the existing and potential software barriers in the federal government.

**Workplace Isolation.** People who use some technology accommodations can become isolated from co-workers unintentionally, especially if the person who is using the technology is one of the few people who know how to use it. One way to avoid this isolation is to educate co-workers about the technology. Camaraderie in the workplace needs to be fostered.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Institute measures to avoid workplace isolation that results from technology. Recommend that the Interagency Subcommittee on Employment and Interagency Subcommittee on Technology sponsor a conference around employment and technology.

**Disability Benefits.** The complexity of disability benefit policies makes it difficult for people with disabilities to make informed decisions about the types of benefits that are available and how employment affects these benefits.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Create better technology tools for individuals with disabilities to help them map their federal benefits, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), their options, and how their return to work affects the benefits. As people become eligible for SSI or SSDI, automatically provide or offer them a menu of technology tools free and design a new type of cost-benefit equation that looks at those tools.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Encourage cross-agency collaboration for benefits for people with disabilities.

**Self-Supporting Tools.** The Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS) helps individuals with disabilities return to work; however, many people are unaware of it. SSI eligibility and payment amount are based on income and resources. PASS lets people with disabilities set aside money and things they own to pay for items or services needed to achieve a specific work goal.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Make more people with disabilities aware of the Plan to Achieve Self-Support and its benefits.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Document the potential impact on the future employment and self-sufficiency of people with disabilities of the federal government's paying for a computer or other accommodations.

### ***Workforce and Business Changes: Workplace Technology Innovations***

Panelists presented and discussed the ways in which current innovations in technology affect how work is being redefined and how that affects the composition of the workforce. Panelists and participants recommended directions for future research that

would address new business development and workplace inclusion of people with disabilities. Following are summaries of the panel presentations.

### **Technology Innovations in Workplace Accommodations**

***Jon Sanford, M.Arch., Georgia Institute of Technology***

*Jon Sanford is a senior research scientist in the Center for Assistive Technology and Environmental Access at Georgia Tech, where he also co-directs the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center on Workplace Accommodations. In addition, he is a research architect at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Atlanta. One of the authors of the Principles of Universal Design, he has written more than 200 peer-reviewed presentations, publications, and book chapters and several online courses on environmental modifications.*

Current and anticipated changes in workforce composition (e.g., aging of the workforce and retirement of baby boomers) and business practices (e.g., increased use of group work and information and communication technologies) will have a profound impact on the need for and nature of workplace accommodations for many years to come. As the workforce ages, there will be an increased need for accommodations (20% of people ages 65 and older now work, and 70% are expected to work after age 65).

Anticipated changes in the workforce as well as changes in the business climate affect workplace accommodations. Technology innovations that can address supply-side demands include universal design (UD), tele-technologies for remote assessment of accommodation needs in the physical workspace (interactive teleconferencing), and tangible computing and other computer-supported collaborative work (CSCW) technologies, which can enhance the potential of telework as an accommodation.

**Universal Design.** Research suggests that the majority of accommodations (56%) are basic accessibility modifications to common spaces, adapted workstations, and computer hardware that might have been avoided through universal design. At the same time, many individualized accommodations are never used, or use is discontinued after a short period of time. UD can reduce the need for and cost of accessibility modifications and individualized assistive technology accommodations, provide flexibility to benefit multiple workers with and without disabilities, facilitate group work, and promote social inclusion. Despite these benefits, current policies often do not consider these accommodations.

**Televideo.** Even with universally designed spaces and products, some individualized accommodations will be needed. However, the lack of rehabilitation professionals to provide accommodations and travel the distances required to perform onsite assessments is a major barrier to workers obtaining needed accommodations. Tele-technologies that allow for remote assessment can overcome such barriers in a cost-effective way. Although parallel research efforts in home modifications have demonstrated that

interactive teleconferencing can be used for remote home assessment, these technologies have not been used to perform onsite work assessments.

**CSCW Technologies.** In the business world, more groups are working collaboratively, which means that individual and shared workspaces need to accommodate workers with disabilities. Telework is important to people with disabilities because it enables those who are cannot travel, lack access to transportation, or require work flexibility to work from home. With CSCW, teleworkers can participate in virtual group meetings, share software, and work at the same time as others. CSCW includes technologies such as video conferencing and tangible computing (an interactive, multi-user access to shared displays), but it is unknown whether virtual workstations can replicate physical workplaces.

The problem is that it is not conducive to group work and can be socially and professionally isolating. Both employees and employers acknowledge difficulty in working in and managing groups, increased social and professional isolation, and reduced participation in the workplace. Similarly, CSCW research suggests that traditional computer technology and interactive media, which are often used in telework, also fail to accommodate the dynamics of group work.

For both UD and CSCW technologies, key policy questions revolve around the conflict between a definition of work derived from the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as a set of essential job tasks and activities that occur in a workspace (i.e., the physical context that supports work activities) and definition of work based on the ICF as both activities that occur in the workspace and participation in the workplace (i.e., a social construct associated with roles and functions in the workspace). As a result, we must first address a basic question of metrics: Do we measure the need for and success of accommodations based on function alone (defaulting to the ADA’s assumption that inclusion follows function), or should measurements be based on the ICF’s conceptualization of both function and inclusion?

[QUOTE]

“Can technologies that enable virtual workstations replicate physical workplaces? There is a difference between workspace as a physical context and workspace as a social context.” —Jon Sanford

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Determine the metrics of positive employment outcomes—simply the performance of work tasks or the performance of work tasks and the participation in the work community.
- Study how to provide incentives for universal design as an accommodation.
- Determine the most effective use of tele-technologies to provide remote rehabilitation services.

- Study which computer-supported collaborative work technologies are most effective in enabling remote workers to engage in synchronous collaborative telework.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

**Workforce and Business Changes: Workplace Technology Innovations**  
*Deborah V. Buck, M.S., Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs*

*Deborah Buck is executive director of the Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs. Previously, she was the Information Technology (IT) Technical Assistance and Training Center's director of state IT accessibility; director of the New York State Assistive Technology Program; and accessibility program manager for the state's Office for Technology. Ms. Buck conducted the first comprehensive study to identify policies and laws on IT accessibility adopted by state governments.*

Workplace technologies can support successful employment or serve as an impediment to obtaining or maintaining employment. The last 10 years have brought to the workplace significant changes in information technology. One such change has been the reauthorization and strengthening of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended in 1998. With the exception of two situations, Section 508 applies only to the federal government, including Assistive Technology Act programs and state developmental disability planning councils, which are federally funded but administered at the state level.

**Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.** The purpose of Section 508 is to ensure that electronic and information technology (E&IT) allows people with disabilities to have access to and use of information and data comparable to that of individuals without disabilities. This section of the Act applies to federal employees and members of the public who seek information or services from a federal agency. E&IT includes software applications and operating systems, telecommunications products (telephones and faxes), and desktop and portable computers.

The impact of Section 508 is apparent. Industry and manufacturers have stepped up efforts to develop products that conform to Section 508, and many industries now recognize the market advantage in ensuring that their products are accessible to a wide range of users. This is particularly positive given the aging workforce and an expected increased reliance on the accessibility features of information technology products.

The number of universities, local governments, and states that are adopting Section 508 also continues at a steady pace. Before proposing a bill to adopt Section 508, states asked about the impact on their budget and their workforce but cannot find answers. In states that have adopted Section 508, the laws vary. For example, some state laws apply to the K–12 educational systems, some cover all people with disabilities, and some cover only

those who are blind or have a visual impairment. Most states have policies and laws related to Web access.

At the federal level, the government has made a considerable investment in informing federal agencies of their responsibilities and providing technical assistance and support. According to a recent assessment, however, federal agencies are not adequately incorporating applicable Section 508 standards when they acquire E&IT, and when these standards are incorporated, their impact on employment and advancement opportunities for people with disabilities is unknown. Accessible technology that meets 508 requirements is available to the private sector, but it is unknown whether this sector is taking advantages of these products and what they have to offer.

**Trends in Office Design.** The changing structure of the work environment also has an impact on successful employment of people with disabilities. Current trends in office design and work location, which includes an open-space office environment and remote or offsite drop-in centers with standardized cubicles, can create barriers and compatibility issues for people with disabilities. For example, do remote sites accommodate a tilt-in-space wheelchair? There are anecdotal reports that such trends have a direct impact on access for employees with disabilities, but the specific and documented implications are unknown.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Determine the impact of Section 508 on the employment of people with disabilities on the federal workforce.
- What is the percentage of federal agencies that comply with Section 508? What does “comply” mean? What is the impact of Section 508 on people with disabilities who are seeking entry-level employment and on those seeking promotional opportunities?
- Study the fiscal impact of implementing Section 508 in states. Also research whether more people are getting jobs or the right jobs.
- Investigate whether private and public entities that do not have Section 508 requirements are taking advantage of products built to conform with Section 508. For example, are these sectors aware of products with built-in access or interoperability with assistive technology? Do they know if they have such products? If they have the products, do they know how to activate them?
- Examine how the changes in workplace design affect the accommodation of people with disabilities.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## **Telework as a Viable Employment Option for Persons with Disabilities** *Jane Anderson, M.A., Midwest Institute for Telecommuting Education*

*Jane Anderson specializes in developing and implementing collaborative telework employment models for persons with disabilities. In addition to directing FlexWork, one of the first U.S. programs to offer persons with disabilities telework options, she has led a federally funded telework employer survey and has trained more than 12,000 employers. Ms. Anderson has been featured in publications such as USA Today and in research articles and has testified before Congress on telework.*

“Telework” and “telecommuting” are collective terms for a wide variety of work arrangements conducted away from the office. For example, teleworkers may be employees or independent contractors who work full time or part time. Teleworkers may work from home, at a telecenter or another remote location, and on a full-time or part-time basis. The Office of Disability Employment Policy, in its goal to define telework opportunities in cooperation with federal and state agencies, funded three separate three-year projects conducted by The Workplace, Inc., in Connecticut, Virginia Commonwealth University in Virginia, and Midwest Institute for Telecommuting Education (with the Hubert Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs) in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

In Phase One, employers were surveyed to document job types, employer conditions, and strategies to implement telework more effectively in public, private, and non-profit sectors. Research distinguished data differences for transitioning current employees with disabilities into telework and for those newly hired directly into telework jobs. The projects identified positions that yielded the greatest number of telework opportunities for people with disabilities. Phase Two involved the validation of the national survey findings to identify the impacts of telework on productivity, performance, and costs and benefits through demonstration sites and case studies. In Phase Two, research populations included returning service members and veterans with disabilities, workers’ compensation beneficiaries, and other persons with disabilities.

More than 137 individuals with disabilities were trained and placed into telework jobs. Research subjects included teleworkers with disabilities, their supervisors, and co-worker control groups. Research topics included teleworker productivity, barriers and expectations, job satisfaction, and critical job supports. Telework toolkits were developed for public agencies, employers and potential teleworkers with disabilities. Although telework is not a complete solution to employment barriers encountered by persons with significant disabilities, it can be an effective solution if the job type, employer, and teleworker skills present an advantageous fit.

**Telecommuting Barriers and Facilitators.** In the telecommuting research project, researchers uncovered facilitators and barriers to telecommuting. Of the employers surveyed that did not practice telework, most had not considered telework; 50% said some jobs, such as information and data processing, could be done by telecommuting; and many said their concerns about telecommuting were lack of technical support

resources, employee productivity, difficulty in supervising work, and security and liability risks. These companies cited incentives that would help them participate in telecommuting, including a one-time tax credit, evidence of reduced overhead, increased employee recruitment and retention, a “how-to” telework program manual, and written materials to mitigate liability issues. To further encourage telecommuting, rehabilitation specialists need to talk to employers about how their business can benefit from a telecommuting arrangement for people with disabilities.

Of the “telework-friendly” employers that researchers interviewed, 73% implemented telework for a specific employee’s needs. These employers found that productivity and retention increased with teleworking but emphasized that organizational supports (a telework or flexible work policy, appropriate technology to do the job, and supervisor buy-in) were essential to make telecommuting work.

**Returning Service Members and Telecommuting.** Of the 151 service members surveyed, 80% were positive about telework, but most still were not ready to work. These service members found it difficult to obtain referrals for telework and were uninformed about how their benefits might change if they worked. An important finding in working with veterans is that there is a “vets trust vets” culture: they need to hear the stories and anecdotes about working from other veterans.

Interestingly, during this research project, Vietnam veterans were placed in telecommuting jobs. After returning from Vietnam, these veterans entered the workforce, then became more disabled and did not work for the next 5 to 15 years, but they wished to return to work.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Replicate successful telework models and study what made them successful.
- Determine how employers and rehabilitation specialists can best collaborate on implementing teleworking for people with disabilities.
- Determine the supports, such as job training, placement assistance, and technology start-up funds, necessary for employers and employees to make telecommuting work.
- Bridge the knowledge gap of telework services among the rehabilitation sites that offer telework services, disability benefits offices, and the veterans.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## **Sensory-Based Employment Accommodations**

*David Baquis, U.S. Access Board*

*As a specialist on accessibility of information technology with the U.S. Access Board, David Baquis combines experience in health care, consumer education, disability issues, technology, and public policy. He delivers presentations on accessible electronic and information technology, writes technical assistance materials, and responds to public inquiries on Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and Section 255 of the Telecommunications Act.*

“Sensory stimulation” is a term that refers to interventions designed to stimulate one or more of the five senses. Sensory stimulation interventions have been used primarily in occupational therapy to help the mental process of self-organization. They help consumers proactively self-regulate their emotions and impulses. Such holistic accommodations recognize the connection between people and their environment, including the workplace.

More recently, sensory stimulation has been adopted in psychiatry to promote self-soothing when used by agitated individuals, specifically in “calming rooms,” to reduce the use of restraints and seclusion in mental health settings. Sensory therapy rooms, developed in the Netherlands to help people with learning disabilities, have been widely accepted in Europe since the 1970s. Aromatherapy, weighted blankets, murals, inspirational music, stuffed animals, and a variety of other auditory, tactile, and visual objects provide sensory stimulation. Clients can choose the stimuli they find useful, and that information is recorded on sensory diet cards, where it is readily available in the event of emotional distress. This information also should be included as part of an electronic personal health record.

Sensory regulation is natural. For example, people intuitively rock a baby to sleep and play active games outdoors with children, knowing they will rest better afterward. Adults are stimulated with coffee and the sound of e-mails and calmed with background music, pausing at the desk, and stretching. But what would be the effect of sensory-based input that was planned and available and then used systematically as a workplace accommodation? Examples of such activities include closing the office door every day during lunchtime to do yoga or listen to meditation tapes.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Determine how federal agencies can address an approach of sensory-based accommodations in the workplace.
- Study how a person with a disability can best be matched to an accommodation. What tools are best suited in an employment setting? How can the impact of the tools be measured?

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS

**Workplace Supports and Personal Responsibility.** To be effective teleworkers, people with disabilities need to take personal responsibility for using technology supports available to them, including simple supports such as music to energize or calm them or yoga practice during the day.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Determine how to encourage people with disabilities to take personal responsibility for finding accommodations that work best for them in their employment situation.

**Universal Design and Architectural and Design Communities.** The architectural and design communities have not embraced accessibility and universal design in the workplace wholeheartedly. Measures such as incorporating universal design into university curricula and architectural codes could lead to better design of the workplace. Many people are interested in universal design and accessibility; in fact, some people have expressed an interest in pursuing a degree in accessibility, but thus far none exists.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Determine how to encourage the design community to become more engaged in thinking about universal design, particularly in the workplace. Working with universities on their architectural curricula and the American Institute of Architects on licensing and codes would be a beginning. Survey the state architectural licensing boards, which oversee curriculum, to determine whether there are any mandatory curriculum units on universal design.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Investigate the possibility of setting up university degree programs in accessibility.

**Capacity Building.** Engaging people in the many fields within the disability and rehabilitation field, including architecture, design, and the occupational psychology community, can be challenging.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Determine how to collaborate with people from different professional disciplines, such as architecture, design, and occupational therapy, on universal design and accessibility issues.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Survey Web design certificate programs to determine how many cover accessibility requirements and the extent to which they cover accessibility.

**Human Resources and Work Environment.** The ICF focuses on individuals doing their essential job tasks and on bringing people with disabilities into the workplace community, where they can participate in the social atmosphere of the workplace.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Study how to train human resource departments to use the ICF philosophy in working with their employees to set up their work environments.

### ***A Global Workforce: A Diverse and Inclusive Corporate Culture***

Panelists presented and discussed globalization and how it has affected how corporate America incorporates diversity within its workforce; how cultural, disability, ethnicity, and language differences influence the location of businesses and the development of workforces; and their corporate experiences. Panelists and participants recommended research on corporate cultures that are inclusive of diverse workforce needs. Following are summaries of the panel presentations.

#### **Walgreens Company—Quest for an Inclusive Workplace** ***Deborah “Deb” Russell, Walgreens Company***

*Deb Russell, a corporate manager for Walgreens, oversees the company’s commitment to employ qualified individuals with disabilities as one-third of the workforce in its newest and all future distribution centers. Walgreens employs more than 200,000 people. Ms. Russell also has been a special education teacher, addressed employment-related issues for people with disabilities within the workforce investment and Medicaid systems, and given presentations across the country on these issues.*

At its distribution center in Anderson, South Carolina, Walgreens has surpassed its goal of having people with disabilities constitute one-third of the workforce; 37% of the people in that facility have disabilities. For its second building, which is about to open in Connecticut, the company has the same goal of inclusiveness. To surpass its goal at the South Carolina facility, Walgreens used a complex roadmap that involved the following steps:

**Obtain a partner to provide the workforce.** Russell’s advice is to “find the resources in your community that serve people with disabilities, because they know more than you do, and you do not need to become an expert in disability.” After its partners have identified candidates for employment, Walgreens provides support during the candidates’ employment.

**Start with a “rock star” employee.** Julia, who has Down syndrome, is employed at Walgreens. She’s an ambassador of people with disabilities. She does her job well, has an incredible outgoing personality, and embraces everybody who comes to her workstation. With some employees of Walgreens, she has made a large difference, especially for those who have never worked with a person who has a disability, much less worked with one as a peer, and never even talked to or eaten lunch with a person who has a disability.

**Hold your ground on standards.** Walgreens initially was advised to lower its work standards but chose not to do that. The company found that people with disabilities had the potential and ability to meet its standards.

**Face co-workers' fears with education.** Co-workers and management staff have preconceived notions about people with disabilities. These fears are based on portrayals of people with disabilities in the media, as well as personal experiences that were not always positive.

Lessons that Walgreens learned from its experience in working with people with disabilities include:

- A company does not need an expert to do this, but it does need someone who is coordinating and monitoring the company's efforts, providing resources to staff, and developing relationships with community-based entities that serve people with disabilities.
- Employers need permission to “do the right thing” and make mistakes.
- Obstacles will surface unexpectedly, but they can be addressed as needed.
- “No good deed goes unpunished”: Walgreens has been criticized for various aspects of this effort, but some of the criticism actually helps the company find better ways to do things.
- Employing people with disabilities is the best thing Walgreens has ever done. The company started out wanting to change the workplace, but the workplace changed the company. Every stereotype its employees ever held about co-workers who have disabilities has been destroyed.

[QUOTE]

“If you are a good employer of people, you are a good employer of people with disabilities.” —Deb Russell

No recommendations were presented.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Building Inclusive Organizations for Employees with Disabilities**

***Lisa Schur, Ph.D., J.D., Rutgers University***

*Lisa Schur is an associate professor in the Department of Labor Studies and Employment Relations at Rutgers University, where she teaches employment and labor law. Her research focuses on disability, employment, and political participation, particularly corporate culture and disability, non-standard work arrangements among people with disabilities, and the effects of disability and employment on political participation.*

In a study of 30,000 employees at 131 worksites in 14 companies, researchers found that employees with disabilities on average have lower pay, less job security, less training, and less participation in decisions at work than employees without disabilities. As a result, they have a higher turnover rate and less loyalty to employers. The promising news is that these problems do not exist in all workplaces. Corporate culture and practices make a difference. In fact, researchers found no disability gaps in attitudes and turnover intention in workplaces that had a high rating for fairness and responsiveness.

[QUOTE]

“Corporate culture and practices made a big difference in creating a welcoming environment where employees with disabilities can thrive.” —Lisa Schur

Researchers conducted case studies of 28 companies across a wide range of industries (eight companies won the U.S. Department of Labor’s New Freedom Initiative Award). They divided best practices into three categories: recruitment and training, accommodations, and corporate culture.

**Recruitment and Training.** Hewlett-Packard, an example of a company with best practices, sends out recruiters to universities to meet with faculty and identify potential candidates who have disabilities. This company also works with employment agencies that train people who have disabilities, posts job openings on Web sites that are specifically geared toward people with disabilities, and partners with public and non-profit disability organizations. IBM, another company with best practices, has a Web site that links to disability organizations. Other strategies companies use are developing a pipeline of qualified employees with disabilities, providing internships for students with disabilities, offering online mentoring programs that work with schools for students with specific disabilities, and running camps that focus on developing interest in technology among young people who have disabilities. Some companies also partner with public and non-profit organizations.

**Accommodations.** When initiating an accommodations program, companies should make sure that experts are available who can provide assistance in the implementation. For example, Marriott works with community-based organizations to find inexpensive but effective accommodations. Other strategies include providing a centralized source of funding accommodations, so the cost is not borne by the individual manager or division; setting up a structured company-wide accommodations process that minimizes strain on individual managers; and setting up offices that provide support for people with disabilities.

**Corporate Culture.** Companies should have a corporate culture that provides a welcoming environment for employees with disabilities. Disability networks and affinity groups can influence corporate culture by providing support and opportunities for employees with disabilities to share ideas and information with one another. They also can be a platform for advocacy on disability issues within the organization. Other strategies to improve corporate culture include co-worker education and training,

manager education and training, and community and public outreach. For example, in its public outreach efforts, Nike has a wheelchair race for people without disabilities. Finally, engaging top management greatly influences a company's diversity efforts. Companies as large as Microsoft and IBM and small family-owned businesses have shown that the commitment of senior management to openness and inclusion is key to establishing a supportive culture where employees with disabilities can thrive.

Current research, sponsored by the Office of Disability Employment Policy and led by Syracuse, Rutgers, and Cornell universities, is creating a template for case studies of disability, corporate culture, and practices. One preliminary finding is that one-half of employees with disabilities and about one-third of employees without disabilities request accommodations to meet personal needs.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Determine the best way to study the role of corporate culture and practices.
- Study how to combine research on corporate culture and practice with supply-side factors, such as transportation, personal care and assistance, education, and training that influence employment of people with disabilities.
- Determine how to increase knowledge and adoption of best practices in both large and small firms.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Examining the Experiences of Employees with Disabilities During Workplace Socialization**

***Jamie S. Mitus, Ph.D., C.R.C., L.C.P.C., L.M.H.C., Hofstra University***

*Jamie S. Mitus is a program director and assistant professor at Hofstra's Rehabilitation Counseling Program. She also is a co-principal investigator of the Employment Services Systems Research and Training Center, where her project is examining workplace socialization of employees with disabilities from an organizational perspective. In addition to presentations at local and national conferences, she has written two book chapters and has several publications in review or in progress.*

High unemployment rates remain a significant problem for individuals with disabilities, in part because of job tenure issues. Researchers often investigate potential barriers to employment pertinent to the job placement process. Closer attention should be directed to the post-hiring phase, when workplace socialization occurs. Workplace socialization is the process an individual goes through, as a newcomer, when adapting to the work setting. Several organizational factors may contribute to the experience encountered by new employees with disabilities, which in turn may affect a number of employment outcomes related to workplace adjustment.

The success of this adjustment ultimately may determine whether employees with disabilities stay or leave an organization.

One study is investigating the workplace socialization of employees with disabilities during their initial six months on the job; the 76 participants recruited to date are completing measures grounded in organizational theory that capture their experiences with informal socialization as well as with workplace communication while adjusting into a new job. These experiences are also being investigated to determine the likelihood of predicting employment outcomes, including job satisfaction, job tension, perceptions of workplace supports, and a sense of belonging in the organization.

Workplace socialization is key in helping all employees, including those with disabilities, manage stress, feel supported by co-workers, and feel that they “belong” in the company. However, preliminary findings indicate that employees with disabilities are more likely to receive communications about the job and organization than communications that are socially oriented:

- Although they may participate in group experiences within the organization, they are less likely to participate in externally based social activities, such as going out after work with co-workers, where significant learning about the organization’s culture may occur.
- Both informal socialization and workplace communication appear to influence job satisfaction, job tension, perceptions of workplace supports, and a sense of belonging in the organization, but workplace communication seems to carry greater weight in influencing these outcomes.

The results from this study may be useful to rehabilitation professionals who deal with employers during the job placement and post-employment process. Rehabilitation professionals may be able to consult with employers about incorporating effective practices within the organizational culture that could promote greater integration of employees who have disabilities.

[QUOTE]  
“What is good for the employee with the disability is good for all employees.” —Jamie Mitus

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Educate employers on how to incorporate practices that promote workplace socialization through informal socialization and workplace communication that includes employees with disabilities.
- Highlight to employers the importance of incorporating practices that provide socially oriented experiences and socially based communication.

- Work more closely with employees with disabilities during their initial socialization period on the job.
- Emphasize teaching employees with disabilities how to be proactive in seeking out and participating in socially oriented activities and conversations.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS

**Businesses Involved in Employing People with Disabilities Reaching Out to Other Employers.** Businesses are not seeking out research on the benefits of employing people with disabilities, how to find qualified people, how to supply accommodations, and other information that would help them successfully employ people with disabilities.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Research how to encourage employers that are successfully employing people with disabilities to work with their peers within their industries on implementing strategies to employ this population.

**Workplace Socialization.** Research shows that a friendly workplace, a sensitive supervisor, and helpful co-workers are crucial for the successful performance of any employee, not just employees with disabilities. One means to achieve a friendly workplace is through social networks within businesses, such as friendship networks and information networks, but the effects these networks have on people with disabilities are unclear.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Uncover some effective ways to educate employers about the role of workplace socialization and friendly workplaces.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Study the effects of social networks in drawing in people with disabilities. How do the different types of networks overlap, and what is the consequence of the overlap? What do these networks look like, and how can we make them effective? How can businesses help people with disabilities access these social networks?

**Diversity in Corporate Culture.** U.S. businesses and other countries and cultures can learn from one another how to include people with disabilities in the workplace, and in particular, how to consider cultural differences.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Determine how to begin a dialogue with other countries and cultures on diversity in the workplace and see how inclusion of people with disabilities is handled in different cultures. Study whether U.S. strategies for increasing employment of people with disabilities might translate to other cultural contexts.

**Funding Accommodations.** Some large and medium-sized companies have company-wide funding pools available for accommodations rather than funding pools at the department-level, but most U.S. businesses are small and may not be able to support this type of funding mechanism. As a result, smaller companies may shy away from hiring people with disabilities for fear of the high cost of accommodations.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Study the possibility of government funding with subsidies or tax credits to help small businesses provide accommodations.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Educate companies that the cost of accommodations is often less than \$500 per person and that most people with disabilities do not need any accommodations.

**Partnerships with Rehabilitation Providers.** Walgreens staff members relied on partners in their community that work with people with disabilities to find candidates for employment and obtain ongoing support.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Study the lessons learned from companies like Walgreens, which form partnerships with other companies and the rehabilitation community to make employment of people with disabilities successful.

### ***Workforce Development Trends and Needs: Accelerating Responsiveness to Trends***

Panelists presented and discussed business and labor market research on workforce trends (e.g., needed skill sets, outsourcing, and worker shortages). They also explored the opportunities these trends offer to increase productivity and include people with disabilities. Panelists and participants explored future directions for “research to practice” that may accelerate the training and incorporation of underrepresented groups. Following are summaries of the panel presentations.

### **Toward a Public/Private Partnership in Competitive Employment for Persons with Disabilities: Supplemental Staffing and Community Rehabilitation Programs Working Together**

***Paul Wehman, Ph.D., Virginia Commonwealth University***

*Paul Wehman is a professor of physical medicine at Virginia Commonwealth University, where he helped to develop supported employment in the early 1980s. He has published more than 200 articles, written or edited 39 books, and serves as editor-in-chief of the Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation. He received the Kennedy Foundation Award in Mental Retardation and has been recognized as one of the 50 most influential special educators of the millennium by the journal Remedial and Special Education.*

In a randomized clinical trial with multiple community rehabilitation programs, Wehman and his colleagues assessed the effect of a public/private partnership on employment

outcomes of persons with disabilities. They teamed with Manpower, a human services broker, which helps people find jobs and helps employers find staff.

Before the trial began, the researchers conducted a pilot study during which multiple community rehabilitation programs within the Richmond area sent people to Manpower. The pilot study showed much higher wages earned and hours worked for those with disabilities who were given employment than comparable clients in supported employment programs nationally.

In the larger-scale study, researchers compared two strategies for placing people with disabilities in jobs: (1) community rehabilitation personnel partnering with staffing specialists at Manpower and (2) community rehabilitation personnel only. Preliminary results indicate that the partnership group had higher wages and the community rehabilitation personnel-only group worked more hours per week, but neither finding was statistically significant. There was no difference between the two groups in placement rate or job tenure.

Although the results were not exactly as the researchers had hypothesized, they learned how to negotiate the relationship between a private enterprise like Manpower and a public enterprise like a community rehabilitation program. They developed a better understanding of the perceptions of the job coaches at a supplemental staffing company such as Manpower and of the tremendous pressures placed on Manpower, and presumably other supplemental staffing companies, to meet the needs of the end user—their paying customer.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- Consider working with a supplemental staffing organization, such as Manpower, to place people with disabilities in jobs. When doing so, it is imperative that rehabilitation staff bond with staffing specialists and understand their world of supplemental staffing.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **People with Disabilities and the Low-Skill Labor Market** ***Pamela Loprest, Ph.D., Urban Institute***

*Pamela Loprest is a labor economist and principal research associate at the Urban Institute whose work focuses on low-wage labor markets, barriers to work among disadvantaged populations, and policies to address these issues. Her current research addresses the characteristics and practices of employers in the low-skill labor market. She is the author of numerous journal articles and book chapters, as well as three books.*

Many working-age people with disabilities have low education levels: 25% have less than a high school education, and 35% have a high school education or an equivalent. About 25% of newly out-of-school youth with disabilities are in postsecondary schooling. Many

do not go on to receive a college education; however, many do return to education later in life. What career options are available for those who choose not to continue with higher education? Although part of the strategy to improve economic outcomes for these individuals is to improve education levels, it is also important to understand what supports could best help them work productively and attain better jobs without additional formal schooling. This requires an understanding of trends in the labor market for less-educated individuals. For instance, the vast majority of jobs and job openings are low- and middle-skill jobs—those that do not require college degree but require some post-high school education and training. These jobs increasingly require adaptability to changing circumstances, problem solving, and multiple tasks.

The Urban Institute conducted a survey of employers that recently filled a job that did not require a college degree. The survey did not focus on employing those with disabilities. According to the findings, the median hourly wage for low-skill jobs is \$11. About 70% of these jobs offer health insurance (employees do not necessarily take this insurance because it may be costly and not cover all expenses), and about 70% have some paid leave (50% offer paid sick leave).

The survey also queried employers on the qualifications they expected from their applicants. Most mentioned soft skills, such as interpersonal skills and good attitude, cognitive tasks (reading, writing, math), and computer skills. Willingness to work odd or flexible hours also was important to employers.

About one-third of entry-level positions do not require experience or specific skills, but those that do have these requirements pay more than \$14 per hour. These higher-requirement jobs are more likely to be filled with the aid of public or private intermediaries.

Researchers also discovered that the size of the employer matters to those who are looking for a job and do not have a college education. Almost half of jobs that do not require a college education are in companies with fewer than 100 employees. Unfortunately, employers that have fewer than 50 employees are less likely to offer health insurance and pensions and to pay for health insurance. They also are less likely to offer paid leave and are not required to provide unpaid leave.

What kind of supports might help people with low education levels access better jobs? It is difficult to answer this question, because rigorous evaluations of employment and training programs for persons with disabilities are limited and show mixed results. Low-income people with disabilities have difficulty especially in accessing employment services. Vocational rehabilitation services and One-Stop Career Centers need to work together to address this problem. For these programs to work more effectively, the government must provide employer incentives for offering intensive services, such as training and ongoing support, to people who are looking for jobs and those who have secured jobs. This would require a change in the way the programs' performance is measured.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Survey employers about their employment practices for people with disabilities. For example, compare their hiring attitudes toward people with disabilities with their actual hiring practices, and identify their provision of accommodations, including the type and cost of the accommodations, the flexibility offered or required in jobs, and the specific benefits they offer, such as health insurance.
- Recognizing that there is not just “one” labor market, determine how people with disabilities who do not have college educations can be prepared for and connected to jobs that do not require college but do require special skills or experience.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Workforce Development Strategies: Research to Implementation—Support for Transition Programs Through School and Business Partnerships**

**Jay Engeln, M.Ed., National Association of Secondary School Principals**

*Jay Engeln is the Association of Secondary School Principals' liaison for special education, school reform initiatives, school/business partnerships, and implementation of health/wellness policy and an advisor to the Council for Corporate and School Partnerships. National Secondary School Principal of the Year in 2000, he also has received awards for outstanding teaching and contributions to education, addressed the White House Conference on Teenagers, and testified before Congress on the benefits of school/business partnerships.*

Youth is a resource the nation is wasting. For every 10 students who enter high school, fewer than two will complete a two- to four-year degree within 150% of the required time (see Figure 2). A person with a disability is twice as likely to drop out of school and four times more likely to live in poverty than someone without a disability. People with disabilities who happen to be African American or Hispanic fare much worse. Strategies are needed to bridge the gap between the demand and supply sides of employment, starting the moment a child enters school. Assessment and evaluation can be used to help personalize learning and instruction, so that each person can be ready for the future.

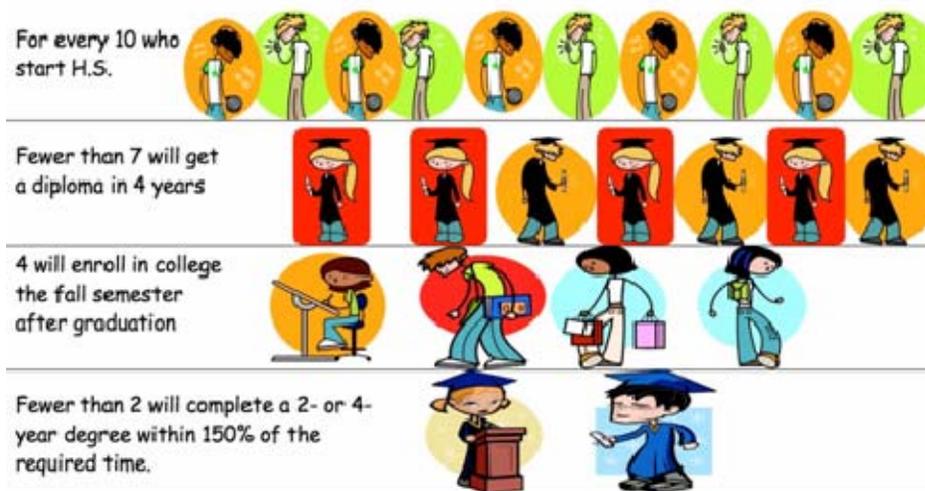
Education reform initiatives such as Breaking Ranks II, Breaking Ranks in the Middle, and Response to Intervention can enhance the total educational experience for all students, thereby improving student achievement and preparation for postsecondary options. Through communication, collaboration, content, and creativity, schools can help their students gain the skills and information necessary to be successful in the workforce and the community:

- Communication is needed for the schools to connect to the students, the staff, the community, and the world.

- Collaboration is needed for schools to enable all students to work with one another, their teachers, their community, and their world.
- Content is the kind of academic rigor, information, resources, and experiences that all students need to be successful.
- Creativity is needed for schools to be the center for exploration and innovation that benefits all students as they learn skills that are relevant to the world of work.

**Figure 2.**

## The education pipeline loses young people at many points along the path.



How can all this be achieved without overwhelming school staff? One way is through school/business partnerships. Workforce development is a critical issue in the business sector. Successful school/business partnerships improve the quality and variety of programs available to all students—programs that can make a difference in academic achievement and student success. An example of a resource to help develop such partnerships is the Council for Corporate and School Partnerships’ “How-To Guide for School and Business Partnerships.”

A few years ago, with a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, researchers identified schools across the country with high poverty and high diversity rates where a high percentage of the students graduated and went on to college. Among the common elements in these schools were staff collaboration, personal learning plans for principals and teachers, small classes units, flexible scheduling, celebration of diversity, and coaching of students.

One school/business partnership that truly made a difference was a Special Olympics ski program. Community businesses provided funding, and students without disabilities

helped students with disabilities learn how to ski. Both the students without disabilities and those with disabilities benefited.

## RECOMMENDATION

- Study how business/school partnerships can be encouraged and implemented to transition youth successfully into the world of work.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS

**Middle-Skill Jobs.** Community colleges should be the focus for providing people with disabilities with the skills they need to succeed in today's workforce, because the middle-skill jobs (between entry level and those that require a degree from a four-year college) call for fewer requirements but provide much better benefits and salaries than low-skill jobs.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Research how to prepare people with disabilities for jobs that are between entry-level and those that require at least a four-year degree—the middle-skill jobs. People in the rehabilitation community need to work with community colleges to provide the supports that people with disabilities may need, such as part-time schedules and financial aid.

**Fidelity in Research.** A major need in disability research is fidelity (the degree to which a program follows a model); without fidelity, there is no replicability.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Conduct studies on disability employment that measure fidelity (the degree to which a program or project follows a model), particularly in research demonstrations that occur over a long period of time in a real-world setting.

## Theme 2. Disability Workforce Experiences and Needs: Issues and Research

People with disabilities remain underemployed—facing limited job opportunities, restricted access to career advancement possibilities, and fewer economic benefits compared with their counterparts without disabilities. Their experiences and issues also include social and economic barriers due to stigma. People with disabilities need access to proven technology and universal design that will increase both retention and equity in earnings and benefits; increased skill levels that will place them in direct competition with other emergent workforce populations with similar skill levels; and training and access to disability services and essential community supports (e.g., housing, transportation, medical care, personal assistance). Comprehensive reviews, federal programs, and related studies consistently call for better research that includes theory

building, cross-disciplinary studies, controlled studies, and replications. Research and demonstration projects emphasize the importance of the employer in producing attitude change, broadening job opportunities, and improving retention rates.

Disability research is accumulating evidence on promising practices and solutions that are pertinent for certain disabilities, systems, and communities. However, current data on the incidence, need, and benefits from disability services and employment are mixed, inconclusive, and often applicable only at the most general level. Demand- and supply-side research evidence supports the benefits of mainstreaming, transitional services, technological advances, expected improvements in medical rehabilitation and health status, application of universal design, implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), retraining of displaced workers, and increased use of alternative work designs. The disability issues clarified through this research, in conjunction with research on globally induced changes on how work is created, take on added meaning for transition-age youth, an aging and shrinking workforce, and other new populations that are entering the workforce.

## **Overview—Plenary Panel Presentations**

This section of the report summarizes the plenary panel’s overview of Theme 2: Disability Workforce Experiences and Needs: Issues and Research. Following are summaries of the panel presentations.

### **Workplace Needs: Are They Really Ready to Work: Employers’ Perspectives on Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21st-Century U.S. Workforce**

*Henry Silvert, Ph.D., The Conference Board*

*Henry Silvert, a research associate and statistician at The Conference Board, contributes to numerous reports and conducts survey research on business and education, corporate response to employees living with chronic and terminal illnesses, the maturing workforce, leadership, and talent development. He has presented research on the social impact of energy consumption in the United States, social and economic development in Latin America, and HIV/AIDS.*

The aging population and the impending retirement of baby boomers suggest that in the coming years, there will be an increasingly rapid turnover rate in the workforce. In addition, American companies are becoming more global, creating the need for a more diverse workforce with new competencies and a greater degree of employee creativity, flexibility, and agility. However, there seems to be a disconnect between the knowledge and skill expectations of employers and the capabilities of new job entrants. The confluence of changing demographics and employer skill requirements presents challenges and opportunities for both employers and employees.

The Conference Board 2007 Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) Challenge Survey indicated that more than three-quarters of company CEOs and chairmen (76%) viewed

finding qualified managerial talent as either their greatest concern (24.5%) or among their greatest concerns (51.5%). In addition, more than half of the members of the CEO Business Council (57%) said that education and workforce preparedness is a very important policy issue. Yet a recent study conducted jointly by The Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and the Society for Human Resource Management found that new job entrants were deficiently prepared in basic and applied skills that employers thought were necessary for job success. For job entrants with a high school diploma or a general educational development (GED) diploma, these deficient skills included written communications, professionalism and work ethic, critical thinking and problem solving, oral communications, and ethics and social responsibility. Deficient skills for entrants with a two-year college (or technical school) diploma included written communications, writing in English, professionalism and work ethic, lifelong learning and self-direction, and creativity and innovation. Employers reported that the only skills that graduates of two-year colleges were proficient in were those associated with information technology. Four-year college entrants fared much better. However, employers viewed their written communications, written English, and leadership skills as deficient. A little less than half of the respondents to this study (48.6%) foresaw an increase in the need to be proficient in a foreign language over the next three years.

This glimpse into the knowledge and skills that employers think are necessary for current and future job entrants provides a unique opportunity for those who design educational programs for people with disabilities, allowing them to tailor programs to meet the skill and knowledge needs of business.

#### [PULLOUT]

“The cohort 35–44 years old that is expected to replace the retired baby boomers is actually shrinking by 10%. By 2015, half of all employees will be replaced with new workers. What does this mean for the transfer of knowledge from one generation to the other?” — Henry Silvert

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Determine how the knowledge of retiring workers can be passed on to the next generation.
- Prepare people with disabilities to function in the future workforce. Address the question of who bears this responsibility (e.g., the educational system, businesses).

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## **Research in Supported Employment for People with Psychiatric Disabilities** *Sandra Resnick, Ph.D., Yale University School of Medicine*

*Sandra Resnick is assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry at Yale University School of Medicine and associate director of the Department of Veterans Affairs Northeast Program Evaluation Center, where she supervises an initiative to disseminate supported employment for veterans with severe mental illness. She has written several widely cited articles on recovery and received the Carol T. Mowbray Early Career Research Award from the U.S. Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association.*

People with psychiatric disabilities have different needs than people with physical disabilities, and they must be addressed individually. For example, universal design and accommodations may need to be redefined for different populations. It is time to incorporate flexible work hours, job sharing, and part-time positions into universal design. Another issue that has not been fully addressed is the stigma associated with having a psychiatric disability and the myths that employers might believe. Finally, employment services, such as sheltered workshops, transitional employment, diversified placement approaches, and supported employment, need to be integrated with services from the mental health treatment team.

Supported employment facilitates competitive work in an integrated work setting for people with disabilities. Assistance may include job coaches, transportation, assistive technology, specialized job training, or individually tailored supervision. Research shows that supported employment is effective.

Peer-provided services place consumers of mental health services in a position to assist other consumers of mental health services in informal and formal ways (e.g., volunteers, employees).

### **[QUOTE]**

“To find employment for people with psychiatric disabilities, we go to the “Mom-and-Pop” shops down the street, where the individual is well known. It’s the place where people in the local community have been having a cup of coffee every morning for the last 15 years.” —Sandra Resnick

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Determine what kinds of services must be provided to help people with psychiatric disabilities work better and longer.
- Create programs that can help this population succeed in work and learn to successfully implement these programs.
- Find better models of supported employment for people with psychiatric disabilities.

- Use successful adjunctive interventions, for example, illness management and recovery, cognitive remediation, peer-provided services, and work-specific skills training.
- Teach rehabilitation professionals to use supported employment models and measure fidelity. Consider who is best equipped to provide this training.
- Encourage people to successfully disseminate research findings.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Focus on Persons with Psychosocial Disabilities**

***Dennis Moore, Ed.D., Wright State University***

*Dennis Moore, a professor at Wright State University's school of medicine, directs the Substance Abuse Resources and Disability Issues program and the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Substance Abuse, Disability, and Employment. He created the Consumer Advocacy Model program, a substance abuse and mental health services program for persons with disabilities, and has written a number of articles on topics related to behavioral health and/or persons with disabilities.*

A specific challenge to vocational rehabilitation and community-based rehabilitation is that an appreciable percentage of consumers experience psychosocial conditions as either a primary or secondary disability. The prevalence of psychosocially related disabilities appears to be increasing over time within systems that serve persons with disabilities. Of particular concern are research findings suggesting that approximately 25% of the 1 million persons with disabilities are served annually by the state and federal vocational rehabilitation system have a substance use disorder. Federal guidelines do not reflect these needs. In the national *Healthy People 2010* report, the chapter on disability includes only one alcohol and drug health indicator: To reduce alcohol use by pregnant women with disabilities. The Treatment Episode Data Set and National Survey on Drug Use and Health do not measure disability. To add to the confusion, there are dozens of overlapping federal definitions of disability.

Substance dependence may be a causative factor for acquiring other disabilities or the consequence of disconnects between persons with disabilities and their communities, behavioral or medical care, or workplaces. Vocational rehabilitation programs must find a way to address these problems, because they are primary brokers of services for millions of people with disabilities who are seeking employment in this country. Some vocational rehabilitation programs have created innovative approaches to deal with the substance abuse issue. One example is the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Business Partnership Network, which created its own Employee Assistance Program. This program has become a One-Stop provider for a number of businesses in the state.

Several factors place persons with disabilities at higher risk for substance dependence, including poverty, stigma, lack of access to appropriate education, poor health care

options, lack of transportation, and low level of family and community integration. State and federal policies, statutes, and guidelines may exacerbate these predisposing factors by creating additional barriers through a lack of shared vision or common goals. For example, persons who have been incarcerated often are prohibited from obtaining subsidized housing or applying for suitable jobs, students with substance abuse infractions cannot obtain educational loans, and consumers of vocational rehabilitation services who attempt recovery often are required to undergo sobriety waiting periods before they receive vocational rehabilitation services at the very time when they are most motivated to effect a recovery and find employment.

The availability and costs of employee transportation are a growing problem for American business. However, this is fortuitous for people with disabilities, because it presents the potential for more and better public transportation systems and partnerships with business. For example, in New Jersey, the TransOptions Transportation Alternatives Partnership program delivers the benefits of mobility services and customized alternative transportation programs directly to companies.

The research undertaken in the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Substance Abuse, Disability, and Employment is illuminating a variety of practices, policies, and approaches for addressing substance dependence among consumers of vocational rehabilitation services.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Determine how vocational rehabilitation programs can meet the challenges of increasing numbers of people with disabilities, including psychiatric and psychosocial disabilities.
- Determine which cohort of people would benefit from Individualized Placement and Support (IPS) implemented by state-based vocational rehabilitation programs. Address whether it could include people who are using alcohol or drugs or people who are not in recovery.
- Determine whether a vocational rehabilitation system that has a sobriety waiting period can implement the IPS model with any fidelity.
- Address whether a vocational rehabilitation program can send people to a job if they are likely to fail, and ask what that would do to the relationship of the employer to vocational rehabilitation.
- Establish clear federal guidelines and incentives that address how business can integrate people with disabilities.
- Explore ways for people with disabilities to obtain transportation to work.
- Define and build on approaches that are considered “best practices.”

- Identify best practices in the coordination of multi-agency services (multi-agency approaches for the delivery of serial rather than concomitant services appear to have special promise).

**Four Years Out: Post-School Experiences of Youth with Disabilities**  
*Renée Cameto, Ph.D., M.A., SRI International*

*Renée Cameto, a senior social science researcher with SRI International, has more than 25 years' experience in quantitative and qualitative research. At SRI, she directs the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2, the National Study on Alternate Assessments, and two state-level grants. She also has held senior research positions on the Special Education Elementary Longitudinal Study and the National Early Intervention Longitudinal Study and published reports and presented findings on all of these studies.*

Postsecondary transition is a topic of primary importance for youth with disabilities. Although a large percentage of youth with disabilities complete high school, experiences after high school vary in a number of factors, including school completion and disability category. *Four Years Out: Postschool Experiences of Youth with Disabilities* presents findings from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2) that describe the career preparation outcomes of youth with disabilities who have been out of high school for up to four years. Data related to high school completion and equivalence, postsecondary education, and employment are specifically highlighted. NLTS2 includes a national sample of students with disabilities (n=11,200) and provides statistical estimates that generalize to the national population of students with disabilities 13–16 years old in the 2000–01 school year, and to each federal disability category individually. NLTS2 is a 10-year study with five waves of data collection that include perspectives from parents, teachers, and students. The third wave of data collection (spring to fall 2005) addresses comparisons made to samples of young adults in the general population. Figure 3 shows responses of youth in this study to questions about themselves and disability.

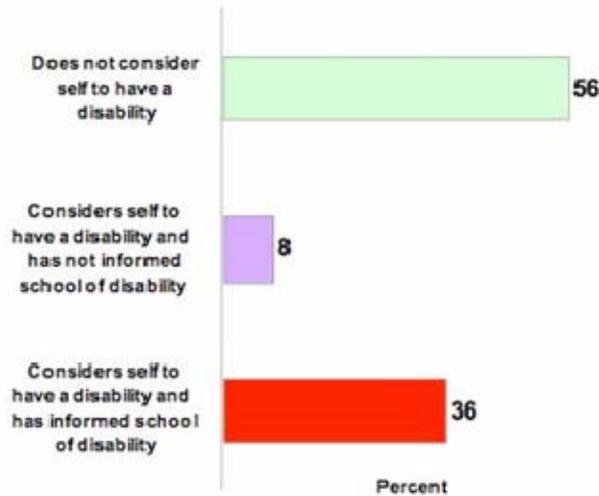
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Study stigma and disclosure issues of college students who have disabilities and how the receipt of accommodations varies by a postsecondary institution.
- Study how the employment of youth with disabilities could be increased. For example, could school and employment programs that help youth secure jobs be made more readily available?
- Study the effects of disclosure of disabilities by youth in the workplace.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

Figure 3.

### Disclosure of Disability by Youth With Disabilities in Postsecondary School



Note: Of youth who have ever enrolled in postsecondary school, refers to current enrollment or for those not currently enrolled, their most recent enrollment.  
Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 3 Parent Interview and Youth Interview/Survey, 2005.

## AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS

**Context of Disability.** Disabilities do not take place in a vacuum, but in a context of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. This context influences research outcomes.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Address the context of the disability, for example, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation, in research.

**Employment Specialists.** Employment specialists are essential to the success of supported employment. They are skilled in working with people with different types of disabilities and with different types of employers.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Study the use of employment specialists in helping people with disabilities find jobs.

**Accommodations.** More research is needed on the type of accommodations that work for people with disabilities and the type of accommodations employers provide for people of all types of disabilities.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Ask consumers for examples of accommodations that have worked for them and relay this information to business.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Design a study to ask employers what kind of accommodations they are providing and encourage them to provide what is needed.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Determine what creative arrangements employers are making, particularly outside of the Americans with Disabilities Act process, to allow individuals with psychiatric disabilities to maintain employment.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Determine what accommodations are provided to this population to help them react appropriately in social situations. Sometimes it is easier to change the environment than the person.

**Identifying People with Disabilities.** To identify people with disabilities, survey questions need to be crafted carefully.

**RECOMMENDATION:** In surveys intended to identify people with disabilities, ask carefully worded questions, for example, “Do you have a physical or mental impairment that affected your childhood and/or youth?” If so, determine whether there is the potential for discrimination or negative stereotypes or a need for accommodations in work or postsecondary education.

**Partnerships Between High Schools and Business.** There are remarkable partnerships that teach a high school student how to succeed at work, but more are needed.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Encourage more partnerships between high schools and business.

**Work Retention of People with Mental Illness or Substance Abuse Disorders.** According to recent studies, many people with severe mental illness or substance abuse disorders leave their jobs within the first three months of employment. In some cases, first jobs are not a good match for the employee and employer. With subsequent employments, people with these disabilities tend to remain at their jobs longer.

**RECOMMENDATION:** When studying employment of people with severe mental illness or substance abuse, be aware that stable employment occurs over time.

**Screening for Substance Abuse.** Substance abuse screening is not a requirement to enter a vocational rehabilitation program, but unless people with substance abuse problems disclose that they have a problem or agree to be screened, they may not receive the services they need to overcome their abuse.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Conduct further research on the process of screening people for substance abuse when they apply for vocational rehabilitation.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Address substance abuse needs early in the vocational rehabilitation process.

## **Subtopics: Concurrent Session Presentations**

This section summarizes the presentations and recommendations of the concurrent sessions on five subtopics for theme 2: the origin and consequences of disabilities, barriers and incentives for employers and people with disabilities, issues and research gaps related to transition, best practices in workforce development, and intergenerational perspectives on workforce needs.

### ***Disabilities: Origin and Consequences***

Panelists presented and discussed research on the needs of and consequences for individuals with disabilities as they access, negotiate, and experience employment in America. Panelists and participants recommended future research to address individuals' needs and increase corporations' responsiveness to individual differences. Following are summaries of the panel presentations.

#### **HIV/AIDS in the Workplace**

***Henry Silvert, Ph.D., Research Associate and Statistician, The Conference Board***

*Henry Silvert, a research associate and statistician at The Conference Board, contributes to numerous reports and conducts survey research on business and education, corporate response to employees living with chronic and terminal illnesses, the maturing workforce, leadership, and talent development. He has presented research on the social impact of energy consumption in the United States, social and economic development in Latin America, and HIV/AIDS.*

Although there is still no cure for HIV/AIDS, medical advances have made it increasingly possible for many with the disease to live longer, achieve a better quality of life, and be more productive, both at home and in the workplace. In response to this new reality and faced with an expected fast-paced growth of new infections (especially in sub-Saharan Africa and other parts of the developing world), numerous companies have stepped up efforts to provide programs that meet the needs of employees who are living with HIV/AIDS or at risk of HIV infection. In 2006, The Conference Board conducted a study of company programs for employees who are living with HIV/AIDS or at risk of HIV infection.

More than four-fifths of respondents (82.8%) reported that their company had an employee HIV/AIDS program, an increase of 9.7% from the findings of the 1997 study. The most common motivating factors cited for implementing these programs included social responsibility and building and sustaining an inclusive work environment. In-depth interviews indicated that HIV/AIDS programs have helped reduce the impact of HIV on corporate revenues. Program initiatives vary depending on company priorities, location of company operations, and type of industry and might include education efforts, counseling, and/or treatment. Common hurdles faced in developing employee-based HIV/AIDS programs include a lack of funds, an obstructive corporate culture that fosters

resistance, and difficulty guaranteeing privacy and freedom from discrimination. Program benefits include increased awareness of the risk factors associated with HIV/AIDS, decreased fears of becoming infected with HIV among those who are not infected, and increased worker commitment and morale. Lessons learned from the regions most besieged by the virus include the importance of communicating both prevention and treatment strategies to employees and helping those who are infected with HIV to receive early testing and treatment.

These research findings are very encouraging. They indicate that HIV/AIDS programs can positively affect corporate operations, increase motivation and morale, decrease absenteeism and turnover, and possibly mitigate loss of company revenues. Findings also indicate that it is becoming increasingly important for corporations to find ways to address issues pertaining to HIV and AIDS, especially as they expand into high-prevalence and at-risk areas of the world.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

- Determine how to help companies become aware of the benefits of and methods for addressing HIV/AIDS issues as they increasingly penetrate high-prevalence or at-risk regions of the world.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

#### **Diversity and Disabilities**

##### ***Kathleen Martinez, World Institute on Disability***

*Blind since birth, Kathleen Martinez is an internationally recognized disability rights leader and executive director of the World Institute on Disability. There she directs Proyecto Visión, its National Technical Assistance Center to increase employment opportunities for U.S.-resident Latinos with disabilities, and led the team that produced the Webzine DisabilityWorld ([www.disabilityworld.org](http://www.disabilityworld.org)). She has been appointed to serve on the U.S. Institute of Peace, the State Department Advisory Committee on Disability and Foreign Policy, and the National Council on Disability.*

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities came into force in May 2008, and 20 countries have ratified it. One of its 30 articles addresses employment. The intersection of a disability with ethnicity identities will be of particular importance in the coming years. For example, over the next 10–20 years, an increasing number of people in the workforce will be people of color, especially Latinos, who are the fastest growing population in the country. Unfortunately, in communities of color, there is a higher incidence of disability because of poor health care, violence, and AIDS. People in these communities are not typically channeled into the disability service delivery system.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Study the point at which mentoring and modeling start to affect someone's dreams of what he or she can be.
- Determine what the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities will mean for diversity in the global workforce. Will it affect the practices of large international companies with offices in other countries that have ratified this convention to increase the employment of people with disabilities?
- Determine the effect in the United States, which has not ratified this convention.
- Consider how someone from a culture where individualism is not valued but the face of the group is valued can ask for an accommodation, even though the request would bring more attention to the disability.

### **Measuring Rehabilitation Outcomes and Effectiveness**

**Allen W. Heinemann, Ph.D., Center for Rehabilitation Outcomes Research,  
*Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago***

*Allen W. Heinemann is director of the Center for Rehabilitation Outcomes Research and associate director of research at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago. He is also a professor at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine and serves on the Coordinating Committee for its Institute for Healthcare Studies. Dr. Heinemann is the author of more than 140 articles in peer-reviewed publications and is the editor of Substance Abuse and Physical Disability, published by Haworth Press.*

The National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) has made important contributions to advancements in conceptualizing and measuring outcomes and informing the research agenda on underemployment of people with disabilities. Key measurement considerations for disability and rehabilitation research include: How well do items from different sources work to define a construct? Do any of these items fit poorly with the construct? Does the addition of items from two or more tests improve the span of the construct? What minimum set of items work efficiently to define the construct in specific settings?

Misunderstandings about measurement can limit the ability to construct measures of patients' impairment, activity, and participation; create opportunities for misunderstanding; make discussions of improvement difficult; limit the ability to compare people with different underlying conditions; and confound estimates of improvement attributable to rehabilitation interventions. The RRTC on Measuring Rehabilitation Outcomes and Effectiveness addresses several critical needs, including the fragmented nature of post-acute care that limits our understanding of rehabilitation outcomes and effectiveness, the fact that participation is a valued outcome with no consumer-designed measure, the substantial costs associated with collecting rehabilitation outcomes data, and the fact that content and presentation of formats that

would best enable stakeholders to make informed rehabilitation service choices remain unclear.

The RRTC is approaching these needs by equating functional status measures, obtaining stakeholder input in developing a participation measure, using item response theory and computer adaptive testing to reduce respondent burden, and working with accrediting organizations to develop and disseminate stakeholder-relevant quality indicators. The anticipated benefits of the RRTC's activities include allowing a comparison of functional status measures across post-acute care settings, developing an innovative measure of community participation that describes the long-term outcomes of rehabilitation, increasing the efficiency of outcome data collection and reducing respondent burden, and examining how format and presentation styles influence patient understanding of outcomes indications of rehabilitation quality, with an emphasis on low literacy.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

- Focus future research directions on three questions: How can we ensure that what is measured is relevant to people with disabilities? How can we ensure that research designs and methods are rigorous and advance our knowledge of facilitators and barriers to full community participation of persons with disabilities? What knowledge-translation activities will promote use of psychometrically sound instruments?

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

#### **AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Descriptions of Interventions.** It is difficult to define strategies for even the simplest of interventions in rehabilitation research and determine how to improve them, whether they work, and how much they cost.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Create a description of interventions.

**Measuring and Defining Interventions and Disability.** Much is unknown about the types of services people with disabilities use and what services are most effective.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Determine how information is gathered about services used by people with disabilities and the effectiveness of these services.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Define “disability” and how it differs from chronic disease.

**Indirect Costs of Interventions.** There is more information on the direct than on the indirect costs of interventions with people with disabilities. Examples of indirect costs are the cost to society of a family member forgoing employment to take care of a relative who has a disability and the physical and emotional costs of caregiver responsibilities.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Create better methods to show the indirect costs of interventions with people with disabilities.

**Stigma and Discrimination.** Stigma is associated with disabilities and contributes to discrimination against people with disabilities in the workplace.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Determine how stigma and discrimination can be mitigated in the workplace. Study programs that have mitigated discrimination for other groups, particularly employees who have HIV/AIDS.

**Dependence on Disability Benefits.** Many people with disabilities need Social Security benefits, but when possible, these benefits should be used as a stepping-stone to self-sufficiency. It would be helpful if more people with disabilities viewed these benefits as temporary.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Study methods for preventing people from becoming dependent on public disability benefits. For example, instead of placing people who are homeless on SSI, help them obtain employment that may enable them to be self-sufficient.

### ***Employers and People with Disabilities: Barriers and Incentives***

Panelists presented and discussed research on the intersection of two sets of barriers: those faced by employers in recruiting and retaining an inclusive workforce and those faced by people with disabilities in sustaining participation in the workforce. Panelists and participants recommended research that could lead to policy and practice resolutions of these barriers. Following are summaries of the panel presentations.

#### **Bridging the Divide Between People with Disabilities and Employers** ***Dennis Gilbride, Ph.D., C.R.C., Syracuse University***

*Dennis Gilbride is a professor and coordinator of the Rehabilitation Counseling Program at Syracuse University. He has published on employment issues for persons with disabilities and led or been co-principal investigator on disability-related grants and projects. A former Mary Switzer Scholar, he now serves on the editorial board for Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin and Rehabilitation Education.*

[QUOTE]

“The key challenge for many people with disabilities is that they often have limited social capital in the labor market.” —Dennis Gilbride

One of the most significant employment barriers for workers with disabilities is a lack of “social capital,” often defined as the connections within and between social networks. In 1973, Granovetter documented the relationship between social capital and employment with an article titled, “The Strength of Weak Ties.” He found that people with more

social capital had broader and deeper access to employment opportunities than those with less social capital.

A significant consequence of limited social capital in the labor market is a “structural hole” between people with disabilities and employers. Burt (1992) stated that a structural hole is a buffer between people, with each side circulating information with one another but not with the other side. The groups on either side of a structural hole may be aware of each other, but they rarely attend to, or have much contact with, those on the other side. The structural hole between consumers and employers seems to be deepening, leaving many consumers looking across a chasm at a labor market that is increasingly out of reach. The fact that this structural hole persists suggests that rehabilitation professionals are not acting effectively as brokers and intermediaries in the labor market.

The service provider and employer cultures sometimes clash. For example, employers expect service providers to return calls promptly and to have one point of contact, whereas some service providers do not call employers back promptly or do not return calls. Employers expect service providers to dress professionally, which does not always occur. Researchers must find a way to connect the supply side (people with disabilities) to the demand side (employers). To meet the needs of employers and providers, the Rehabilitation Counseling Program at Syracuse University developed the Consortium for Employment Success (CES) model. The CES consists of a group of placement and employment service professionals who agreed to enter into a structured consortium through which they would partner with employers to enhance job opportunities and retention of consumers.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Determine how the service provider culture can be changed to better match the employer culture.
- Determine how the rehabilitation field can be presented effectively to employers as a vital disability and employment resource or consultant.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Just Do It: Expanding Integrated Employment One Person and One System at a Time**

***John Butterworth, Ph.D., University of Massachusetts—Boston***

*John Butterworth is the coordinator of employment systems change and evaluation at the Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts—Boston and project director for the State Employment Leadership Network. In addition, he is principal investigator of Access to Employment, a national data-collection project on day and employment services for people with developmental disabilities, and on the staff of the Massachusetts Medicaid Infrastructure and Comprehensive Employment Opportunities initiative.*

The Institute for Community Inclusion found a dramatic growth in the number of people serviced by state developmental disability agencies. There has been steady but slower growth of people in integrated employment (a type of employment whereby people with disabilities work alongside people without disabilities).

States have widely varying success in integrated employment. Some state developmental disability agencies support integrated employment for as many as 55% of people in the service system; others support only about 4% of these people. What is different about these states? To answer this question, the institute asked staff members to track how they spent their time each week. About 1.5% of staff time was spent on job development, and the rest was spent on tasks. This suggests that staff members are not devoting enough time to helping people find jobs.

The institute conducted case studies of three high-performing states. Strategies used by these states included clear goals, a policy that supported the goals, sufficient funding, and training and technical assistance. For instance, Washington's policy reads, "Supports to pursue and maintain gainful employment in integrated settings in the community shall be the primary service option for working age adults." Tennessee has an Employment First! Initiative, which states that "at least every 3 years, individuals that are not in integrated employment will participate in a community-based work assessment." Maine mandates the use of job coaches and employment specialists. These high-performing states are clear in policy, clear on funding priorities, and clear on goals.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Identify the characteristics of state systems that support high levels of employment and high-quality employment outcomes. What policy and strategy elements are necessary?
- Study how and when do we most effectively influence attitudinal change can be influenced most effectively at the provider, direct support, family, and individual levels.
- Study how to change customer demand for effective employment supports.
- Research how human resources can be reallocated effectively to focus on employment as an outcome. What workforce development investments at the direct support level have the greatest impact on individual outcomes?
- Determine the critical elements of a customized approach to engaging employers. What practices and strategies yield the highest quality jobs?
- Examine how federal policy can influence implementation of policy and strategy elements that define successful states.

- Explore how to link the movement toward choice and self-direction with increasing demand for quality employment.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

**The Youth Transition Demonstration Project**  
**Jamie Kendall, M.P.P., Social Security Administration**

*Jamie Kendall is a social insurance specialist at the Social Security Administration's Office of Retirement and Disability Policy. She is involved with creation and management of demonstration projects that focus on return-to-work activities for persons with disabilities, is the project officer for the Youth Transition Demonstration, and works on the Benefit Offset National Demonstration project. Previously, she was a project manager for the Ticket to Work program and a policy analyst for the Administration for Children and Families.*

The Youth Transition Demonstration (YTD) project is being conducted for several reasons. As of March 2008, approximately 1,126,322 children under age 18 currently receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Children who begin to receive SSI before age 18 continue to receive SSI disability benefits for an average of 27 years. At current benefit levels, the net present value of the SSI disability benefits for individuals over age 27 is \$172,044 each, or more than \$200 billion.

The YTD project addresses employer barriers and incentives through knowledge of the youth and knowledge of the business community. To learn about the youth, the project conducts person-centered planning, a discovery process, positive personal profiles, skills inventories, and career and transition assessments. To learn about the business community, the project makes an effort to know local employers and their cultures, develops specific task lists based on observed needs, and solves employers' problems by asking the right questions.

No recommendations were offered.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

**Employers and People with Disabilities: Barriers and Intervention Options for Youth with Disabilities**  
**David Wittenburg, Ph.D., Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.**

*A labor economist, David Wittenburg is a principal investigator for Mathematica Policy Research on the Accelerated Benefits Demonstration and a senior researcher on the Youth Transition Demonstration. He is also studying employment trends among the Social Security Administration's child and adult disability beneficiaries. Previous positions include senior research associate at the Urban Institute and senior associate at The Lewin Group.*

Administrative data on youth are limited. Most information comes from specialized surveys, such as the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 and the National Survey for Children and Families. Information is limited on the following outcomes: cross-program participation, long-term outcomes, and state differences. Research shows that customized supports are important and that people with different impairments need different types of support. Evidence-based practices work for some groups of people, such as those with psychiatric impairments, but supported employment models need to be more rigorously tested for other groups. More intensive supports tend to be successful. The Youth Transition Demonstration project is using local and state consortia to develop strong, promising intervention models, pilot them, and rigorously evaluate the successful models on a much larger scale.

There are a limited number of random-assignment studies on youth in transition. Lack of evidence on “best practices” has led to the implementation of untested approaches. Furthermore, service delivery is complicated by a lack of a coordinated system of supports.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Present statistics using disability definitions that can be applied in different settings, such as vocational rehabilitation, Supplemental Security Income, and special education.
- Develop longitudinal survey, administrative, and linked databases to track cross-program use, long-term outcomes, state differences, programmatic outcomes, and needs of youth with disabilities.
- Design and implement interventions with youth in transition using a consortia of state, local, and private organizations. Test models for different at-risk populations.
- Design policy around rigorous evaluations of best practices, such as the Youth Transition Demonstration project.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS

**Defining Self-Sufficiency for People with Disabilities.** Employment too often is viewed as the end result rather than a means to advancing self-sufficiency. However, there is another aspect of employment that involves contributing to something, getting involved, and developing a social network.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Quantify and qualify what is meant by “self-sufficiency” for people with disabilities and determine how self-sufficiency changes the type of interventions used. Of particular importance is long-term self-sufficiency.

**RECOMMENDATION:** In researching employment, consider additional benefits of participating in the workforce, such as developing social networks and lowering the incidence of depression.

**Job Development Approaches.** Employment demonstration projects for people with disabilities are taking place, and more are needed. It is especially important to look at the details of employment planning and the supports provided.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Study how to approach job development in ways that are more effective, lead to higher quality outcomes, and engage employers more effectively.

### ***Transition: Issues, Research Gaps, and the Future***

Panelists presented and discussed recent research on trends and demonstration projects with youth and adults in transition from secondary and postsecondary schools and service systems. Panelists and participants recommended research that will help to clarify the gaps and needed improvements in transitional services, training, and post-employment supports. Following are summaries of the panel presentations.

#### **Leaders with Disabilities to Improve Transition Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities**

***Rebecca Hare, National Consortium on Leadership and Disability for Youth, Institute for Educational Leadership***

*Rebecca Hare is project coordinator for the National Consortium on Leadership and Disability for Youth at the Institute for Educational Leadership. She has worked with the National Youth Leadership Network and National Council on Disability and consulted or given testimony to the National Council on Independent Living, World Bank, Ticket to Work Advisory panel, and Presidential Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disability. Her publications include Youth Development and Youth Leadership: A Background Paper, articles on civic engagement, and policy agendas.*

Youth development, while including youth leadership competencies, encompasses a broader, more holistic process of development, one that will determine both adolescent and adult behavior. However, youth leadership programs are not sufficiently informed, prepared, or engaged in recruiting and including youth with disabilities in their programs. For example, learning to work with youth with mental health needs and those with autism is an area that needs more attention. In addition, there is lack of agreement about what makes a youth development and leadership program effective. More data on youth with disabilities transition programs are needed to secure sustainable funding.

“Youth Voice” means the ideas, opinions, involvement, and initiatives of people considered young. These voices often go unheard, and involvement of this group has often been marginalized. Mentoring is also crucial; mentoring is a trusting relationship

developed through a series of activities, which brings together young people with caring individuals who can offer guidance, support, and encouragement. Youth mentoring continues to garner praise and expand as a way to assist youth in navigating the sometimes difficult transition to adulthood.

The Forum for Youth Investment identified areas of common competencies of youth development and leadership. They include (1) learning, which involves what takes place at school and takes into consideration programs such as the individualized education program, which connects to services needed to transition; (2) thriving, which involves dealing with insurance and benefits issues and obtaining health care; (3) working, which involves asking for accommodations; and (4) leading, which is involvement in student government and other leadership activities.

Youth with disabilities are affected by many different systems, from pre-K to employment, which means there are significant opportunities for multiple agencies to collaborate with one another. Collaborating agencies need to develop consistent definitions and approaches to youth development and leadership.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Identify effective strategies used to support at-risk youth who participate in youth development and leadership programs and evaluate the impact of applying these strategies. Investigate the value of gender-, ethnicity-, and disability-specific programming.
- Identify effective data-collection systems on programs for youth with disabilities in transition that include qualitative and quantitative outcome measures.
- Identify effective strategies for youth-driven research across multiple systems and examine the process by which the voice of youth with disabilities is effectively included.
- Evaluate the effect of mentoring on the preparation, employment, and career advancement of youth with disabilities.
- Identify the program components and best practices of successful mentoring and youth leadership programs, including the mainstream/inclusion model, as well as disability-specific mentoring and leadership programs.
- Evaluate the inclusion of youth with disabilities in federally funded mentoring programs that target youth and at-risk youth.
- Identify and evaluate core competencies for youth service professionals and the results used to inform professional development policies, funding, and strategies.

- Encourage collaboration among multiple federal agencies, including the U.S. Departments of Labor, Education, Health and Human Services, and Justice, on research to improve outcomes. .

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Transition: Interventions, Outcomes, and Research Gaps**

**Brian Cobb, Ph.D., Colorado State University**

*Brian Cobb is professor emeritus at Colorado State University's School of Education and former co-chair of the Education Coordinating Group for the Campbell Collaboration, an international professional society that analyzes educational interventions. He teaches quantitative research design at the doctoral level and quantitative analysis. Previously, he was principal investigator of a research synthesis grant entitled What Works in Transition for Secondary Youth with Disabilities and a senior researcher for a national assessment of transition policies and practices.*

The U.S. Department of Education funded two recently completed research studies. The first focused on transition-related interventions and outcomes and was funded by the Office of Special Education Projects. The second was a research synthesis project funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). All accessible published and fugitive original research studies that were dated 1984–2003 and that conformed to the following criteria were acquired:

- The research report was written in English.
- The research must have examined the effect(s) of a defined intervention on a transition-related outcome.
- The research sample must have been one or more student(s) with disabilities.
- The research sample population must have been between the ages of 12 and 22 during the time of the intervention.
- The research setting must have been in middle or junior high school or high school.
- The research design must have met minimum standards of methodological adequacy.
- The research analysis must have yielded data that allowed estimates of effect size to be calculated.

The RSA-funded study was a national assessment of transition policies and practices in state agencies across the country and U.S. territories. This assessment used a variety of research techniques, including a national survey, interviews with senior vocational

rehabilitation administrators in selected states, and extensive re-analyses of the 2004 RSA-911 databases. The most viable indicators for measuring the success of transition programs were drawn from these data.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support development of a “map” of existing research and evaluation transition studies that catalogs intervention areas, outcomes, disability groups, and research designs.
- Target a federal research and demonstration evaluation agenda to address gaps in the transition intervention component, outcomes, disability groups, and research design “map.”
- Support the development of a set of analysis standards for single-participant designs on transition, such that some estimate of effect sizes can be created that allows aggregation of studies.
- Support the development of a set of design standards for qualitative research and evaluations in transition to allow confidence in the results of in-depth case studies that address why interventions work.
- Support the development and pilot testing of levels-of-evidence rubrics for multi-group, qualitative, and single-participant designs on transition.
- Support development of a set of cost-analysis standards that can be used relatively easily by demonstration evaluations and researchers to assess costs of transition interventions.
- Support the creation of a prototype and several pilot “Practice Guides” that clarify the quality and expected effects of differing transition interventions that focus on differing highly valued outcomes.
- Support the development of brief “Report Cards” of “branded” interventions that provide local users with essential quality information on transition interventions and where to locate the best information on implementation.

### **Sustaining Seamless School-to-Career Transitions**

***Debra Martin Luecking, Ed.D., M.A., Research and Development, TransGen, Inc.***

*Debra Martin Luecking is director of research and development at TransCen, Inc. and serves on the research faculty of the University of Maryland’s Counseling and Personnel Services. She has been principal investigator for federal projects that focus on disability employment, co-founder and director of the Center on Disability and Employment at the University of Tennessee, and a major contributor to the disability employment literature through 30 years of publications and presentations.*

A “seamless transition” means that each youth’s post-school plan and supports are in place before exit from school. This is the nexus where the employer and job seeker come together. Achieving seamless transition means looking at paid competitive employment outcomes. Essential transition features are youth empowerment and self-determination, family supports, connecting activities, social and health services, benefits management, work-based experiences, and job development. According to the literature, work-based experience, especially paid employment, is the strongest predictor of post-school employment success for youth. Work-based experiences may include career exploration, job shadowing, work sampling, internship, apprenticeship, and paid employment.

The Maryland Seamless Transition Collaborative is working on a seamless transition model. Over a period of five years and with approximately 400 students, the collaborative will examine individualized student-driven transition planning and services, family support and participation, individualized work experiences during school, interagency braided resources and funds, paid competitive employment before school exit, early linkages to community service providers and postsecondary education, and state and local system changes in place to support seamless transition.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

- Conduct more research to validate the seamless transition model. Generate proven interventions, with specific focus on paid competitive employment, youth and family-empowered, early coordination of services and delivery systems, and adult agencies and providers prepared to support youth.

#### **[PULLOUT]**

##### **Work-Based Experiences: The Employer/Job Seeker Nexus**

- Prepared students become capable employees.
- Self-determined students become productive employees who know their support needs.
- Students in the workplace increase workplace diversity and inclusion.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

#### **Research Ingredients Needed to Support the Emerging Transition System to Improve Workplace Participation of Youth with Disabilities**

***Joan L. Willis, M.S.W., Center for Workforce Development, Institute for Educational Leadership***

*Joan Willis launched and is a senior policy fellow at the Center for Workforce Development, Institute for Educational Leadership. She has managed projects for the Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, directed the Center for Policy*

*Research at the National Governor's Association, worked for international development agencies on education and workforce development issues, and been principal investigator for a large study, Overview of Skill Standards Systems in Education and Industry: Systems in the U.S. and Abroad.*

The Institute of Educational Leadership created five guiding principles for research on youth in transition:

- Research should be based on the needs of all youth, with attention to the additional needs of youth with disabilities.
- All research and development projects should be based on collaboration between one or more agencies.
- Universal access and universal designs of learning should be embedded.
- Common outcome measures that meet the needs of all agencies should be identified and tested.
- Common professional development needs and support testing should use the most efficacious approaches.

The Institute also identified gaps in current transition services and systems. For example, effective structural mechanisms to develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate cross-systems-based transition services at all levels of government are lacking. In addition, there are inadequate numbers of staff to assist youth in navigating through the transition period and help them in the navigation process among programs (i.e., a multi-agency case management system).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Determine whether programs that offer universal access and universal designs of learning increase participation of youth with disabilities in general education and workforce development programs and in the labor force.
- Determine whether promoting “Youth Voice” as a core design feature increases success in the labor force. If so, identify which strategies in the continuum of youth empowerment (driven, directed, or guided) work best, and when and where do they work?
- Determine whether mentoring improves post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities. Are mentors with disabilities more effective for youth with disabilities than non-disabled mentors? Can mentoring improve specific social and behavioral problems related to delinquency? Does mentoring increase self-esteem?

- Determine the outcomes in postsecondary education and the labor force for youth with disabilities who have not acquired a standard diploma.
- Determine whether workforce development policy bodies at the state and local levels are best positioned to organize transitional services. Are there structural barriers that prevent this, and if so, what are they?
- Determine how many persons with disabilities are being served in general workforce development programs and what types of disabilities are most likely to be represented (e.g., One-Stops, youth programs, Job Corps, adult education, Welfare-to-Work).
- Determine whether general workforce development programs meet the needs of persons with learning and emotional disabilities.
- Determine which strategies and development practices are most effective in helping youth acquire needed skills. Which strategies are most effective in different settings (e.g., multiple high school settings, adult basic education, vocational rehabilitation service, apprenticeship programs)?
- Determine how accommodation activities support compensatory learning and personal development strategies.
- Determine whether the development of informal self-accommodation works. What are these accommodations?
- Determine whether post-high school disclosure of disabilities affects success in the workplace. What are some effective ways to disclose disabilities, and when is disclosure necessary?
- Determine how many youth with disabilities are involved in the foster care system and in what type of placements, for example, in individual or group homes.
- Determine whether the service plans of youth with disabilities vary from those of the non-disabled. If so, why and how do they vary?
- Determine whether a single-point-of-contact navigator would help youth move through the transition process and across institutional boundaries. What additional supports might be needed for youth with disabilities?
- Determine whether a systems-change initiative between workforce development programs and education/special education would increase labor market success for youth involved in the juvenile justice system.

- Determine whether a demonstration project that includes preparation for the world of work as a core service strategy for transition-age youth would improve mental health and workforce participation outcomes.
- Determine whether youth workers are the secret ingredients of high-quality programs, as suggested by a growing body of evidence. If so, what needs to be done to ensure that all youth workers are prepared to serve all youth?
- Determine what resources exist to support professional development of transition-related occupations. What critical job classifications need to be involved in key transition services in each system (e.g., juvenile justice, foster care)?
- Determine whether there are common competencies across the juvenile justice, foster care, and other systems and whether certification programs for professionals who work in these systems affect the quality of services they deliver to people with disabilities.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS

**Addressing Drug and Alcohol Problems in Youth with Disabilities.** The expulsion and suspension rate in school for children in special education is considerably higher than in the general student population, regardless of the type of disability. Many school disciplinary actions result from drug and alcohol offenses. Eventually, many of these children end up in the prison system. This is an immense public health crisis.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Design research that addresses how to prevent youth with disabilities from developing drug and alcohol problems.

**Tracking Youth with Disabilities to Postsecondary School.** Many research projects propose to track students directly from secondary school to work, but these projects need to look at all outcomes, including educational outcomes. In particular, the transition of youth to and through postsecondary school should be studied.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Track the educational outcomes of students with disabilities, not just work outcomes. Look at how they go through postsecondary education, particularly four-year colleges and professional schools, such as medical school. There must be longitudinal analyses of multiple data points collected over long periods of time to track students.

**Consistency in Disability Indicators for Youth in Transition.** Different studies on the transition of youth sometimes look at different populations, making it difficult to compare study results. For example, many youth with disabilities have not been in special education, so they would not be represented in research that focuses on special education.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Address the lack of consistency in disability indicators across national studies for youth in transition, being aware that not all youth in transition received special education services in school.

**Alternative Education for Youth.** An alarming number of youth with disabilities are being placed in alternative education, even at the elementary school level. Some of these are stopgap programs that do not help these youth.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Investigate the trend of placing an increasing number of youth with disabilities in alternative education, focusing on children in middle school.

**Protective Factors of Youth in Transition.** Many youth with disabilities have protective factors, such as resilience, hope, and a sense of identity, that serve them well during transitions. Researchers should not only look at the risk factors that youth have for substance abuse and other problems but also look at their protective factors.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Study the protective factors that many youth with disabilities have that help them through transitions.

**Relevance of Housing, Transportation, and Other Life Domains to Youth in Transition.** Housing, transportation, community living, accessibility, assistive technology, and other life domains affect youth in transition.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Study the relevance of housing, transportation, and other life domains to youth in transition.

**Self-Advocacy and Youth in Transition.** According to the research, self-advocacy and self-determination interventions have the strongest effect on the success of youth in transition.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Initiate self-advocacy interventions with youth in transition.

**Involve Schools in Youth Transition Research.** Different schools have different needs, so it is essential to involve local schools in youth transition interventions. This can lead to collaboration among researchers, rehabilitation professionals, and schools.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Involve local schools in youth transition research—the way it looks and how it is carried out and reported. Make the research a collaborative effort among researchers, rehabilitation professionals, and schools.

**Collaboration of Researchers on Youth Transition.** Researchers often must compete with one another for research dollars to study the same topic. Researchers should be encouraged to collaborate.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Institute federal policies that would give researchers incentives to collaborate with one another on youth transition and other research.

### ***Workforce Development: Best Practices***

Panelists presented and discussed evidence from best practice research in both the public and private sectors that has had an impact on business design and workforce development. Panelists and participants recommended research that would lead to additional corporate and public-sector models for inclusive business and workforce development. Following are summaries of the presentations and discussions for this topic.

#### **Employment Directions for Persons with Psychiatric Disabilities** ***Michael Halligan, M.S., L.P.C., Texas Mental Health Consumers***

*Michael Halligan is executive director of Texas Mental Health Consumers.*

[QUOTE]

“Poverty is one of the most pervasive, significant, and debilitating barriers that individuals diagnosed with a mental illness face that prevents them from participating fully in the community.” (Swarbrick, M. Financial service model for individuals living with mental illness [feature article]. *Equity*. March 2007. Available from: <http://www.wid.org/programs/access-to-assets/equity/equity-e-newsletter-march-2007/financial-service-model-for-individuals-living-with-mental-illness>. Retrieved September 2, 2008.)

The University of Texas, through the state’s vocational rehabilitation system, is conducting supportive work projects with people with psychiatric disabilities. Many of these people are impoverished and live in temporary shelters, making it difficult to find jobs, because they have no phone and no access to transportation.

Seventy percent of people with psychiatric disabilities want to work, even though fewer than 15% are currently working. Fewer than 5% have access to supported employment. This population has multiple barriers to overcome, including multiple mixed symptoms, cognitive and behavioral symptoms, the episodic nature of many illnesses, lack of housing, and lack of transportation. Other barriers include the stigma of mental illness, limited expectations for people with mental illness, continued paternalism by mental health professionals, and asset limitations in Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, and other benefit programs. It is interesting to note that job counselors at the University of North Texas who help find work for people with psychiatric disabilities do not disclose their clients’ disabilities to potential employers. The disclosure choice is left to the client.

A major concern of people with psychiatric disabilities about returning to work is loss of medical benefits. Some people with disabilities and many Social Security officers and

mental health professionals do not understand that under Medicaid (Section 1619B), a person can earn \$28,000 a year and retain Medicaid benefits.

Supported employment is intended for people with severe disabilities. It is defined as a mainstream job in the community that pays at least the minimum wage in a work setting that includes people who do not have a disability and a service agency that provides ongoing support. Researchers have found that with supported employment, people with disabilities have improved self-esteem, symptom control, and quality of life.

One of the major barriers to employment for people with psychiatric disabilities is limited expectations, especially by mental health professionals. Mental health professionals can undermine clients' efforts to find work in subtle ways, and these professionals actually profit by keeping people in services. Employment is one of the most healing modalities and should be encouraged, not undermined.

Consumers and mental health providers need to be educated about Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), financial literacy training, and other savings strategies. IDAs are matched savings accounts designed to promote asset building and change savings behaviors. As part of IDAs, participants receive at least 10 hours of general financial education, plus additional asset-specific education. The primary uses of IDAs are home ownership (e.g., down payment and acquisition costs) and education (e.g., tuition for postsecondary education for the account holder or dependent).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Integrate the concept of the therapeutic value of work within the mindset of consumers and mental health providers.
- Implement pilot sites to determine the utility of IDAs and microenterprise development (i.e., seed money to start a business) for persons with emotional disturbances and mental illnesses.
- Analyze existing financial literacy curricula and test modifications that would make materials more appropriate for persons with mental illnesses who may have cognitive and attentional challenges.
- Develop models for training mental health staff to work with consumers to develop greater financial literacy.
- Determine whether mental health case workers are more effective in learning financial literacy curriculum and training consumers, or whether consumers should be referred to other resources for training.
- Determine how training materials must be modified to meet the needs of persons with mental illnesses.

- Analyze factors that predict success for mental health consumers who develop microenterprises. Develop training packages based on these factors to allow for maximum success.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Universal Design for the Workforce Development System: Meeting the Needs of Diverse Business and Job Seeker Customers**

*Sheila L. Fesko, Ph.D., C.R.C., University of Massachusetts—Boston*

*Sheila Fesko is program manager at the Institute for Community Inclusion, based at the University of Massachusetts—Boston. She has directed the National Center on Workforce and Disability, provided training and technical assistance to grantees nationwide, worked at the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, and managed a community-based employment program. Areas of research include disclosure of HIV status in the workplace, the aging workforce, and universal strategies to support inclusion of all employees in the workplace.*

[QUOTE]

“A universal design for a workforce development system involves the design of environments, products, and communication practices, as well as the delivery of programs, services, and activities that meet the needs of all its customers.” —Sheila Fesko

Universal design for the workforce development system can meet the needs of diverse business and job seekers. In 2002, researchers conducted a longitudinal qualitative study of the experiences of people with disabilities with One-Stop Career Centers—the public system of workforce development. Findings indicated that they were confusing to navigate (physically and programmatically), and, in a system designed to let people move back and forth among different resources, there were too many handoffs, which resulted in people dropping out of the system.

The purpose of the One-Stop system is to provide universal access, yet the centers are not structured to deal with the diverse populations that access them. Some job seekers in the study were displaced homemakers, ex-offenders, and welfare recipients; others had low-literacy skills, language barriers, and childcare needs. Employers were also diverse in type of industry, size, kind of customers, and organizational culture. The challenge is to design a system that is truly universal, one that can access the skills of people in the community and match them with the specific jobs being offered. Job seekers also need access to a variety of services and resources within the community to prepare for employment.

The reality is that workforce systems cannot respond individually to the needs of “special populations.” An approach is needed that will respond universally to entire groups of people rather than providing special services for each group. To bring universal design to the One-Stop environment, planners must assess the environment, seek diverse input

from customers and partners, build partnerships, create services that meet diverse needs, allocate resources, and assign responsibilities. The workforce development system involves the design of environments, products, and communication practices, as well as the delivery of programs, services, and activities that meet the needs of all its customers.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Document the effect of universal design on access to workforce systems and on employment outcomes.
- Evaluate the relationship of increased collaboration and employment outcomes.
- Assess the impact of a universal approach to business customers. Are needs being met? How can a more universal approach be used to reach out to employers?

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Best Practices in Workforce Development**

*John Gibbons, M.S., The Conference Board*

*John Gibbons is a senior research advisor at The Conference Board. A former human resources director for Gap, Inc., he has worked in financial services, health care, and international logistics; is a founding member of the Academy of Management's Collaborative on Evidence-Based Management; and sits on the advisory board of the Workforce Productivity Technology Council. His research has been featured in outlets such as CEO Magazine and HR Magazine and as a case study at Harvard Business School.*

A number of skills are important in the business world:

- First, employees need general business acumen. Instead of knowledge in a particular area or discipline, employers often need people who are entrepreneurs and understand business goals. Mastery of skill sets is not as important.
- Second, employers and employees need an understanding of the complexity of global markets. Some jobs formerly done in the United States are now done at lower cost in places such as India, Brazil, and Russia.
- Third, employers need a basic understanding of the underpinning metrics of business. For example, how does human talent—not just job functions—affect business?
- Fourth, employers need to engage in a global workforce; they need to help employees develop cognitive and emotional attachments to their work. This will affect the employees' willingness to stay at the same job.

- Fifth, employers must create nimble work processes and policies to take into account the global workforce and telecommuting staff.
- Finally, employers need to encourage innovation and realistic creativity. The demonstration of mastery of business competencies should be evaluated in terms of business success, not behavior change.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Focus training programs (including vocational rehabilitation programs) on achieving business goals, not mastery of skills sets derived from job descriptions.
- Embed technological skills in all job training programs.
- Develop analytical skills during job development programs along with a component on the basics of finance.
- Focus job development programs on maximizing interpersonal and service skills.
- Emphasize building networks and lasting interpersonal relationships during job development.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **How Can Vocational Rehabilitation Influence Business Practices to Support Economic Engagement of People with Disabilities?**

*Joseph Marrone, M.Ed., University of Massachusetts—Boston*

*Joseph Marrone is a senior program manager for Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts Institute for Community Inclusion and director of training and technical assistance at its Vocational Rehabilitation Research and Training Center. He serves on the board of the U.S. Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association and on the editorial board of the Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal, and has lectured and published extensively on policy and program issues related to disability and employment services.*

Research should influence business practices to support engagement of people with disabilities. A number of principles have been demonstrated to be true of employment in general and of employment of persons with disabilities. They include:

- Being unemployed long term is worse for a person than employment is good for that person.
- If people can work, they should work.

- Children and adolescents with disabilities should be prepared for transition from school to work rather than to “adult life.”
- Economic engagement is more important than good employment programs; some of the best employment programs produce terrible results because of low expectations.
- Helping people leave the Social Security and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families systems will provide them with the potential to escape poverty.
- Discrimination is the problem, not stigma. People say stigma leads to discrimination. As with civil rights laws, our society is better at changing behaviors than changing attitudes.
- Program and staff competency deficits are symptoms of low expectations, not the causes. It is important to acknowledge staff members’ incompetencies rather than blaming clients.
- Funding is provided for poor employment programs because society does not care enough to require improvement.
- It is important to evaluate outcomes rather than process. Evidence-based practices produce better results. Studies need to measure outcomes—jobs—not fidelity to a program model.
- The default position should be non-disclosure of a disability, but more research is needed on this topic.
- There are more differences in systems and situations than in people themselves.
- There is more discrimination and fear of violence concerning people with mental illness, and a different kind of discrimination against people with mental retardation.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Research whether education of the general workforce, independent of experience, helps people with disabilities.
- Research whether co-workers provide good natural supports for any specific disability group.
- Study whether disability advocates should focus on stigma or discrimination, both, or neither.

- Examine whether disability agencies should adhere to concerns about cooperation from business or adhere to the competitive capitalist model.
- Determine whether gatekeepers in disability agencies help interest key personnel in business or create barriers.
- Identify what marketing strategies work best for specific types of people or companies.
- Investigate whether generic employment services (e.g., One-Stop Career Center programs) can meet the needs of job seekers who have significant disabilities.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

#### **AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS**

**One-Stop Career Centers.** Throughout the country, there are 525 disability program navigators, as well as integrated resource teams, working with the One-Stop Career Centers. Collaborations and partnerships have increased the number of people with disabilities who are coming to the centers.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Study the accessible models of One-Stop Career Centers already in place.

**Level of Psychiatric Disability.** Much of the research on people with psychiatric disorders has focused on those with severe psychiatric disabilities; however, many have only moderate disabilities.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Study the demographics of people with all levels of psychiatric disabilities, including their needs and how to address those needs in a customized way.

**Federal Security Clearance of People with Mental Illness.** Workshops are available to help people with mental illness learn how to obtain a federal security clearance.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Disseminate information on how people with mental illness can obtain a federal security clearance.

**Universal Design in Higher Learning Settings.** Universal design needs to be incorporated into institutions of higher learning to support students with disabilities.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Institute universal design principles in institutions of higher learning.

#### ***Workforces and Needs: Intergenerational Perspectives***

Panelists presented and discussed research on the changing composition of the American workforce, which increasingly includes youth, adults, and seniors with diverse skills, work ethos, values, and needs. Panelists and participants recommended research that will inform policy-makers and businesses to engage with and benefit from an intergenerational workforce. Following are summaries of the presentations given under this topic.

## **A Changing Workforce**

### ***Diane Thielholdt, The Learning Café***

*Diane Thielholdt, co-founder of The Learning Café, has a corporate career that encompasses leadership roles with McGraw-Hill, TRW, Bausch and Lomb, and Xerox in sales, marketing, communications, and learning design, development, and delivery. She is the co-author of a chapter in Human Resources in the 21st Century, the author of many articles on generational differences in the workplace, and gives a popular “Talks on Talent” presentation at meetings and conferences.*

Today’s workplace has changed dramatically, bringing new problems and opportunities. There is a strong belief that the younger generations of the workforce, Generation X (Gen X) and the Millennials, are different from the generations that preceded them—the baby boomers and the “Silents” (who embody the phrase “work first”). Many reasons exist to assert that there are differences. Gen X and Millennial employees are increasingly the children of working mothers and the downsized generation. Most know first-hand what it is like to have one or two parents in the workplace, which has become increasingly demanding and hectic. Some have known someone who lost a job because of workforce downsizing. They have seen the transition from the expectation of relative job security to “employment at will,” where employers are less loyal to employees and assume that employees are responsible for their own employment. They have lived through turbulence in the labor force in the early 1990s, the rise and fall of the dot.com bubble, and uncertainty in the economy and the workforce over the past few years. They were coming of age when the events of September 11, 2001, occurred, perhaps shaping or at least sharpening their priorities in life and work.

If you are working today, you are part of the dramatic change to four generations working side by side, cubicle to cubicle, network to network (see Figure 4). This generational mix has the potential for conflict and misunderstanding, even resentment, and huge opportunities for productivity, creativity, knowledge transfer, and strategic advantage. You probably notice subtle changes every day—differences in work ethic, communication, career outlook, expectations of bosses, retention factors, and what keeps people engaged in their work.

The demands of this changing workforce and workplace bring new problems. Evidence exists that the roles that made managers successful in the past have not kept pace with reality. Today’s game is about talent, but leaders and employees are often locked in roles, titles, and a hierarchy that made more sense a decade ago. Managers are on the frontlines

of the talent war. The rules of the game have changed around them; they need new knowledge, skills, and support.

All four generations want challenging, stimulating work. Millennials are turned off by jobs that are boring or do not challenge them. Gen Xers steer away from jobs that do not provide an ability to learn, grow, and develop. Baby boomers need appreciation and respect in the job environment. The Silent generation does not tolerate bad bosses.

**Figure 4.**



Although the baby boomers are projected to work past retirement age, there will be a significant shortage of employees, because Gen X will not be able to fill all the jobs left vacant by retiring baby boomers. This fact, coupled with the trend of the younger generation to stay at first jobs for an average of only 16 months, is making the job market very unstable.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Determine what policies, practices, and initiatives should be looked at through a generational lens.
- Examine the skills of hiring, engaging, and retaining tenured employees and new employees.
- Determine what makes an organization a compelling place to work for younger employees and mature employees alike.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## **Obstacles to Employment Opportunities for Older Workers**

***Carol A. Salter, Easter Seals, Inc.***

*Carol Salter is assistant vice president of Workforce Development and national director of the Senior Community Service Employment Program for Easter Seals, Inc. In more than 31 years of providing employment and training services to individuals with significant disabilities, she has worked extensively with One-Stop locations in 22 states; administered numerous federally funded programs; and provided guidance on matters related to the Americans with Disabilities Act and Affirmative Action.*

A number of concerns and recommendations on older workers have been generated by research results and supported by numerous reports from the Government Accountability Office and many Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) service providers.

The number of economically disadvantaged people ages 45–64 increased by about 36% between 1998 and 2008. In 2025, there will be 65 million baby boomers, ranging in age from 61 to 79, who will make up 25% of the population that is 16 and older. As a result of low income levels and the current economy, a significant number of older adults are seeking to enter or return to the workforce. Long-term-unemployed mature job seekers are generally looking for part-time work and often are willing to accept lower wages than they previously had (if they had careers). Many who served under SCSEP are dislocated workers or homemakers with no paid employment history who often need additional income to become self-sufficient after the death of a spouse or partner who supported them.

Current policies and practices create financial disincentives to continued employment for older Americans. For example, many private pension plans penalize work after a certain age (often as low as 55), and some Social Security provisions discourage continued work by imposing earnings limits for beneficiaries. Older Americans also face non-financial obstacles to employment, such as workplace discrimination and limited opportunities for professional development. The real or perceived lack of opportunities for advancement discourages older workers from updating their skills, seeking new employment, or continuing in current jobs.

In a study conducted by the National Council on Aging and the McDonald's Corporation (renowned for its interest in older adults), 97% of employers surveyed said that older workers are thorough and reliable. Employers that welcome mature workers report that the judgment skills of older workers exceed those of younger employees. In general, older workers have low turnover rates, are flexible and open to change, possess up-to-date skills, are interested in learning new tasks, are willing to take on challenging tasks, have low absentee rates, have few on-the-job accidents compared with their younger co-

workers, have a higher level of commitment to the organization, and cost less or the same to train as their younger counterparts.

Many older job seekers who have been out of the marketplace or who have no employment history lack computer skills, but they are willing to learn. Some studies have found that with proper training, older workers are not daunted by technology. Educators and trainers must modify approaches to serve an increasingly older population. SCSEP succeeds by joining community service with work-based experience, and the program sees more success in smaller and more individualized groups, rather than standard classroom instruction.

The U.S. Department of Labor should develop a systematic model for older workers and individuals with disabilities that would allow them to work part-time schedules (at lower wages, if they choose). WIA programs should coordinate with agencies and programs that have proven successful for older workers. Currently, SCSEP is the only source of designated funds for mature and older workers, and the Labor Department has noted the program's limited capacity. In 2006, SCSEP had 92,000 participants—less than 1% of the 9.4 million individuals in the United States ages 55 and older who meet the low-income eligibility criterion.

Policy-makers at the national level might consider expanding funding for SCSEP proportionate to the increase in the older population, and expanding SCSEP to serve workers ages 45–54, because the number of economically disadvantaged individuals in that group has increased by 1.1 million in the past 10 years and continues to grow.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Amend current federal laws to allow greater flexibility in hiring older workers for contingent and part-time work.
- Explore innovative ways to avoid career stagnation for long-tenure employees.
- Consider greater use of “cafeteria-style” benefit packages to facilitate the hiring of older workers in flexible work arrangements.
- Pursue phased retirement as an alternative to standard retirement policies.
- Combat negative stereotypes.
- Offer management-level training and employee workshops to eliminate age-related bias.
- Promote opportunities for older workers to update their skills.
- Ensure that older workers receive the same access to employer-provided training as their younger colleagues.

- Encourage older workers to seek training to stay competitive.
- Urge educational institutions to offer expanded job-training programs for the largely untapped market of older Americans that want to update their skills.
- Create recruitment strategies that target older workers.
- Supplement standard recruiting packages with materials designed for older workers.
- Partner with associations for seniors to advertise positions.
- Offer an extended lunch period in the workplace to allow time for mid-week appointments.
- Increase vacation time for older workers who want to travel; permit vacation to be taken by the hour for those who need more personal time.
- Facilitate short leaves of absence for employees faced with family or personal emergencies or opportunities for self-improvement.
- Offer non-standard job options (see sidebar, **Non-Standard Job Options**).

#### [Sidebar] **Non-Standard Job Options**

- **Flextime.** Employees can begin an eight-hour workday any time between 6 a.m. and 10 a.m. (Short-term projects, special assignments, job rotation, and flexible shifts also offer creative staffing opportunities.)
- **Job sharing.** Two employees split one full-time position and coordinate their schedules so that job needs are always met.
- **Part-time opportunities.** These are usually less than 30 hours per week, with corresponding benefits.
- **Consulting.** Some older workers are happy to work on a contractual or part-time, as-needed basis.
- **Seasonal.** During high sales times, older workers, knowing the company, can pick up where they left off a few months earlier, which is often easier for employers than training someone new for one season.
- **Compressed workweek.** These are 20- to 40-hour weeks worked in two to four days.

- **Telecommuting.** Employees do company work, such as data entry, at home.
- **Mentoring.** Older workers can help organizations preserve their history and values by passing such elements on to newer employees and modeling good work ethics.

[PULLOUT]

### **Job Strategies for Older Workers**

- Encourage seniors to upgrade their skills.
- Ensure equal access to employer-provided training.
- Provide technology training to job seekers and incumbent workers.
- Inform mature job seekers about programs that are available, such as the Senior Community Service Employment Program.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Exploring Gaps, Needs, and Opportunities**

*Linda Barrington, Ph.D., The Conference Board*

*Linda Barrington, a research director at The Conference Board, has written numerous publications, including Looking for Employees in All the Right Places and Perspectives on a Global Economy: Are Poor Nations Closing the Gap in Living Standards? She was a delegate to the 2005 White House Conference on Aging; has appeared on national news programs such as “NBC Nightly News” and “All Things Considered”; and served on the faculty of the Economics Department at Barnard College.*

Employers are asking how they can encourage people with different perspectives and from different generations to work together. This issue has arisen because the workforce is becoming increasingly complex; its diversity in terms of nationality, age, race, and ethnicity is multiplying. For example, by 2015, almost 60% of residents in white households will be over age 50. By 2050, whites are projected to make up only 50% of the U.S. population. Many new employees, including college graduates, are deficient in writing, English, leadership, and written communications, which are key skills for the workplace. In addition, employers expect employees to “fend for themselves” because they have no time to mentor them. Employers expect their employees to understand economic issues and the role of business in the United States and the global economy and to participate in community and government as informed citizens. The impending retirement of the baby boomers will add additional complexity to the workforce. This will allow companies to reorganize, as many of their employees will have no memory of the company’s institutional history. The key is to have adaptable employers. Another force affecting the workplace is the changing relationship between younger employees and older employees; younger employees are often managing older employees.

Employers also are asking about the differences between a 30-year-old Gen X employee and a 60-year-old employee. Researchers have found few differences in learning preferences across the age divide. A major research goal might be to determine how to challenge stereotypes about different generations in the workplace (Figure 5).

### **Figure 5. Diversity Within Life Cycles**

Is managing your 50-year-old white male employee who has newborn twins and a working wife more like managing:

- A. Your 23-year-old Gen Y Latina employee who is the mother of a toddler?
- B. His boomer “peer” who has a stay-at-home wife and two kids in college?

Who would be more engaged by an 18-month overseas rotational assignment?

- A. Your 61-year-old female employee whose son is graduating from college and taking a job in Hong Kong?
- B. Your Gen X male employee who is the only child within driving distance of his homebound mother?

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Determine whether disability trends differ across generations.
- Educate managers about generational differences without stereotyping people.
- Analyze successful practices already demonstrated by household-name companies, such as IBM and Coca Cola.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Feasibility Versus Proof of a Best Practice in Business.** Many companies are more inclined to trust feasibility over the best-documented proof that a business practice works. They are not willing to adopt a model because it works in a research situation, but they are more likely to adopt an idea if they see it working in a company similar to theirs.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Emphasize to business the practices that work in real life.

**International Disability Policies.** Globalization can be used to promote progressive accommodations and hiring strategies for people with disabilities.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Survey multi-national companies about their policies on employment of people with disabilities.

**Educational Preparation for Older Workers.** Some older employees may not have the educational background that employers desire.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Work with community colleges and four-year colleges to help prepare older workers for re-entering or remaining in the workforce.

### **Theme 3. Health: A Competitive Disability Workforce**

A common goal of federal and state legislation is to ensure the health, safety, and economic security of the U.S. workforce, regardless of social or ethnic class, disability status, geographic location, or family origin. Medical science and rehabilitation practices have increased both the longevity and the hopes of people with disabilities for better access to and economic benefits from employment. Accompanying this progress has been an important shift in health care from a primary focus on treating of existing conditions to a focus on promoting health and preventing disability, disease, and illness. Escalating health care costs (insurance, lost productivity) and disability costs (workplace injury, workers' compensation) are the two major concerns that will continue to influence how businesses are conceived and sustained in an increasingly global economy. Paired with this is the specter of change in access to affordable health care, which remains the primary disincentive to full employment for most people with disabilities.

For a large majority of working- and retirement-age adults, employment earnings and benefits provided through private-sector employers are the primary source of support for retirement and for medical, unemployment, and disability insurance. Significant changes are foreseen as health care costs continue to rise and as the shifts continue from defined benefits plans to self-selection and co-funding schemes with state and federal sources. Successful competition in the global business environment will require maintaining a healthy workforce to drive down operating costs and to retain the range of well-paying jobs that are essential for the long-term well being of U.S. communities.

#### **Overview—Plenary Panel Presentations**

This section of the report summarizes the plenary panel's overview of Theme 3. Health: A Competitive Disability Workforce. Following are summaries of the panel presentations.

#### **Highlights of Employment Projections, 2006–2016**

*Chester Levine, Bureau of Labor Statistics*

*Chester Levine manages occupational outlook studies at the Bureau of Labor Statistics, where he supervises a large staff of economists who produce biennial employment projections for hundreds of occupations and industries and career guidance publications*

*such as Occupational Outlook Handbook and Career Guide to Industries. He also oversees the development of materials that appear in Monthly Labor Review, Occupational Projections and Training Data, and Occupational Outlook Quarterly.*

Every two years, the Employment Projections Program within the Bureau of Labor Statistics develops comprehensive 10-year projections of the overall economy, labor force, and employment in occupations and industries. These projections help people make choices about their future careers and equip educators, researchers, and policy-makers with the analysis necessary to understand long-term employment trends. The latest projections cover the 2006–2016 period. Key demographic changes that will affect every aspect of the workforce include the projected slowdown of growth in the labor force, the retirement of the baby boomers, the increasing diversity of the workforce, and a significant increase in immigration levels.

In general, jobs in service-providing industries are increasing in number and those in goods-providing industries such as manufacturing are decreasing, with construction being the only exception. Health care and social assistance and professional and business services are the two major industry sectors that are projected to grow the fastest and add the most new jobs. Among occupations that have the most new jobs are registered nurses, retail salespersons, customer service representatives, food preparation and service workers, office cleaners, personal and home care aides, and home health aides. Replacement needs will account for more job openings than the number of new jobs generated over the projection period.

In conjunction with its biennial projections, the Bureau of Labor Statistics produces several publications, most notably the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, the federal government's premier career guidance publication. The *Career Guide to Industries* discusses job outlook from an industry perspective. *Occupational Projections and Training Data* contains supporting data and analyses. The November 2007 issue of the *Monthly Labor Review* contains detailed articles on each aspect of the 2006–2016 projections.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **A Competitive Disability Workforce: What Employers Want and Need** ***John Gibbons, M.S., The Conference Board***

*John Gibbons is a senior research advisor at The Conference Board. A former human resources director for Gap, Inc., he has worked in financial services, health care, and international logistics; is a founding member of the Academy of Management's Collaborative on Evidence-Based Management; and sits on the advisory board of the Workforce Productivity Technology Council. His research has been featured in outlets such as CEO Magazine and HR Magazine and as a case study at Harvard Business School.*

Global challenges in the new millennium mean that U.S. businesses are no longer relying on the domestic workforce. To compete in the global economy, businesses need to focus on productivity of workers, control of costs, and acquisition of talent. They also must tap into talent in the countries where they do business while being sensitive to cultural differences and practices. With a talent and service economy, it has become more crucial than ever to acquire the best talent. Finally, a “24/7” world requires a flexible workforce that spans time zones.

People with disabilities are an untapped market for talent in a global market where competition for talent is huge, not only in the United States but around the world. The current transition from an industrial to a service and information economy can create opportunities for people with disabilities, but to compete in this economy, the disability community must gain technological competence.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Determine how the disability community can capitalize on some of the global challenges in the workforce to enhance opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Make a business case for employing people with disabilities in this increasingly competitive and challenging global economy.
- Identify how human resources practices can have positive impact on business outcomes.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **The Role of Health Insurance in a Competitive Disability Workforce**

***Gina Livermore, Ph.D., M.P.H., Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.***

*Gina A. Livermore, a senior researcher at Mathematica, directs an evaluation of the Labor Department’s Disability Program Navigator Initiative and is a principal investigator for evaluation of the Social Security Administration’s Ticket to Work program. Previously positions include assistant director of the Cornell Institute for Policy Research. Dr. Livermore has written numerous journal publications on topics related to people with disabilities and poverty, employment issues, and health insurance.*

Employer-sponsored insurance (ESI) is the primary source of health insurance coverage for working Americans and their families, but not all employers offer coverage, and among those that do, eligibility and benefit restrictions can limit access to health care. Lack of access to ESI, employer incentives, and certain features of ESI benefits and service delivery can be especially problematic for people with substantial health care needs, including many workers with disabilities. Health insurance plays an important role for workers with disabilities and chronic health conditions, not only in providing needed services but in affecting decisions about participating in the labor market and programs.

There has been much debate about the general merits, shortcomings, and future viability of ESI as the foundation for health care financing and delivery for non-elderly Americans. Rising costs, lack of access to ESI, and specific features of ESI differentially affect people with high health care needs. In the face of an aging labor force and increasing prevalence of disability among working-age individuals, developing an understanding of how access to health insurance affects workers with disabilities and their employers is an important step toward developing effective means to improve access to health care, expand coverage to address the comprehensive needs of people with disabilities, and improve productivity without creating undue burdens on employers, increasing incentives for employers to avoid hiring or retaining workers with disabilities, or increasing incentives for workers with disabilities to withdraw from the labor force.

Workers experience activity limitations, high-cost utilization, and access problems years before they withdraw from the labor force. These facts present an opportunity to prolong their stay in the labor force and reduce the time they rely on Social Security Disability Insurance through development of health care financing arrangements and benefit structures that:

- Emphasize health maintenance and improvement in functioning. This includes health promotion with care coordination and coverage for disability-related supports, such as assistive technology.
- Place less emphasis on employment status as a determinant for coverage and develop broad eligibility criteria that are not tied to cash assistance programs or a specific employer.
- Coordinate financing so that it benefits both individuals and employers and is politically acceptable.

These alternatives would (1) benefit employers by lowering costs and perceived risks, (2) benefit individuals by providing affordable coverage that is complete and consistent, and (3) encourage efficient use of health care resources.

Research shows that people with disabilities who do not have jobs are more likely to be insured than those who have jobs. The current financing system for public health care, which is tied to disability status and ESI, is responsible for this finding. Tying public health insurance to job status encourages many people not to enter the workforce or to leave it. Government efforts to address the problems of health insurance for people with disabilities are limited. For example, Medicaid buy-in programs allow workers with disabilities to purchase Medicaid, but they require low levels of income.

The type of job is another factor in whether people with disabilities decide to enter the workforce or leave it prematurely. They are less likely to be in jobs that offer ESI than other people, and many work part time, so they often are ineligible for ESI. Consequently, they withdraw from the workforce to become eligible for public health insurance. Compounding the problem is anecdotal evidence that employers have a

perception of people with disabilities as having higher health costs, and that this perception affects hiring and retention decisions.

## RECOMMENDATION

- Study early interventions with people with disabilities in the workforce to promote health, increase access to care, and prevent withdrawal from the workforce.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Research Lessons Learned from the Training and Technical Assistance for Programs Project**

***Grant Revell, M.S., M.Ed., Virginia Commonwealth University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center***

*Grant Revell, a research associate at the university's Rehabilitation Research and Training Center, has extensive experience that includes the use of performance-based funding of employment services. He also serves as a state training liaison for the Region III and a research associate for self-employment. Previously, he was project director for the National Supported Employment Consortium, a four-year national study; a program specialist in supported employment; and a vocational rehabilitation counselor.*

Training and Technical Assistance for Programs (T-TAP) was a five-year project funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability and Employment Policy and completed in September 2007. It was conducted as a cooperative effort of the Virginia Commonwealth University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center and the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts—Boston.

The goal of the T-TAP project was to increase the opportunities for people with disabilities to work in a competitive labor market and to get a competitive wage. To help reach this goal, T-TAP established a community rehabilitation program (CRP) leadership network that included a mentor network, a variety of training initiatives, technical assistance to CRPs, and customized employment strategies. These strategies focused on meeting the needs of the employer and the person with a disability or tailoring the employment relationship between job seekers and employers to meet the needs of both. T-TAP focused on individuals who used special wage certificates under Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, facilitated employment in non-stereotypical jobs that paid at least minimum wage, and emphasized use of customized employment strategies.

T-TAP conducted a variety of training, technical assistance, and research activities. Key organizational and employment strategies included benefits planning, organizational change, diversified funding, and networking with business. In the research area, a key focus was on participation of persons with disabilities in community rehabilitation programs and the programs that CRPs offered. T-TAP conducted a national survey of CRPs that focused on three primary areas: characteristics of CRPs, trends in

organizational change, and type of CRP program used. The survey results indicate that participation in CRP programs by individuals with disabilities is remaining constant in terms of setting, type of program, and employment outcomes. Approximately 80% of CRP participants are in programs that do not involve work or programs where work generates limited income. The remaining approximately 20% of CRP participants are in community integrated employment through supported and competitive employment programming.

Researchers found that organizational change takes time—anywhere from 5 to 10 years—but discovered positive examples of CRPs undergoing organizational restructuring toward an employment focus. They also found that programs really do respond to training and technical assistance.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Study training, technical assistance, and educational strategies that support the organizational restructuring of CRPs toward community integrated employment.
- Study the role of benefits planning in reaching job and wage goals.
- Identify evidence-based employment practices that are linked to increased earnings.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## **Subtopics: Concurrent Session Presentations**

This section summarizes the presentations and recommendations of the concurrent sessions on the five subtopics for theme 3: insurance, call to action, the corporate environment, rural employment, and policy.

### ***Insurance: Private, Disability, Medicaid, Workers' Compensation, and Reforms***

The panel discussed current state and federal policy reforms and research initiatives to increase access to high-quality health care, address rising health care costs, and examine disincentives to employment. Participants' recommendations were sought on research directions for public and private partnerships that promote adequate disability benefits, coordinate private- and public-sector disability management and public benefit programs, and develop policy initiatives that may reduce unnecessary progression of private-sector employees onto public-sector disability benefits. Following are summaries of the panel presentations.

## **Public and Private Insurance Coverage: State Initiatives and Reforms** *Donna Folkemer, M.S., National Conference of State Legislatures*

*As health group director for the National Conference of State Legislatures, Donna Folkemer manages its Forum for State Health Policy Leadership, oversees health information technology and state health policy projects, and provides legislative assistance for state health reform, Medicaid, and aging and disability issues. She also has been chief of policy and planning for the District of Columbia Medicaid Program and a senior researcher at George Washington University's Intergovernmental Health Policy Project.*

The states have diverse and sometimes conflicting goals in health care reform, but they agree on expanding access to coverage, containing costs to make coverage affordable, preventing illness, managing illness, achieving wellness, and achieving quality care. The disagreements are on how to cover more people. Should the government continue to play the same role in health coverage or play a larger or smaller role? Current state initiatives to expand access to health care fall into three categories:

1. **Public-sector initiatives.** At least 18 states have expanded access to health coverage through Medicaid or public programs, such as the Children's Health Insurance Program.
2. **Insurance-based initiatives.** Some states are subsidizing premiums for people in high-risk pools and requiring private insurers to raise the age through which children can stay on private plans.
3. **Employer-based initiatives.** States are offering subsidies or tax credits to small businesses and allowing employers to form purchasing pools.

Florida, Indiana, Massachusetts, and Minnesota have innovative programs for increasing access to health insurance. Massachusetts mandates health insurance for state residents (with some exceptions) and helps make it accessible to and affordable for everyone. The state imposes tax penalties for individuals who do not purchase health insurance and mandates that employers purchase health insurance for their employees. To help contain costs and improve access to high-quality care, Massachusetts will create a comprehensive strategy, which will include eliminating coverage of medical errors and requiring that all prescriptions be sent electronically.

Florida's program has less government involvement than the Massachusetts program. It allows sales of limited benefit insurance policies and is trying to keep premiums at \$150 per month. Like Massachusetts, however, Florida is emphasizing the coverage of basic and preventive health care services.

Across states, the trend is to focus on wellness and prevention programs for state employees, on Medicaid, value-based purchasing through public/private coalitions, and on public disclosure of medical errors and hospital infection rates. Vermont offers a good

example of a state that is focused on wellness and prevention. Through its Blueprint for Health, Vermont is making management of chronic care more accessible, using a system of early and coordinated screening for conditions such as diabetes and asthma, emphasizing patient self-management, waiving co-pays for patients who seek appropriate care, and changing the provider reimbursement system to encourage excellence in management of chronic disease.

In summary, there is innovation across states in health care reform, but there are differences in how they approach it.

No recommendations were offered.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Private Insurance**

***Robert N. Anfield, M.D., J.D., F.A.A.F.P., CIGNA Group Insurance***

*Robert Anfield, a specialist in occupational and environmental medicine, is a lead medical director for CIGNA's Disability Management Solutions Division in the Dallas regional office. Earlier positions include medical director at Unum and Aetna and corporate medical director of GENEX. He has testified on private-sector disability programs and recommendations to improve the Social Security disability claim process before the U.S. House of Representatives and the Social Security Advisory Board.*

Lost productivity related to disability, absence, and “presenteeism,” i.e., the extent to which an employee is not productive at the worksite, represents a large portion of the total cost of injury and illness to an employer; health risks drive costs. Programs that focus on reducing health risks can have a positive impact on an employer’s cost experience. For private disability insurers, predictive modeling tools and the integration of health and disability management programs remain major developing innovations to prevent or mitigate the severity and frequency of health and disability events.

Recent trends in health and disability management include a shift to prevention and integration of health and disability. As a result, disability claims management is trying to leverage the work of the health care side to manage and prevent chronic illness by using coaching techniques with a nurse, either by telephone or online, to deal with specific chronic diseases. Additionally, employers are asking for a single point of contact among those who deal with health and disability claims management.

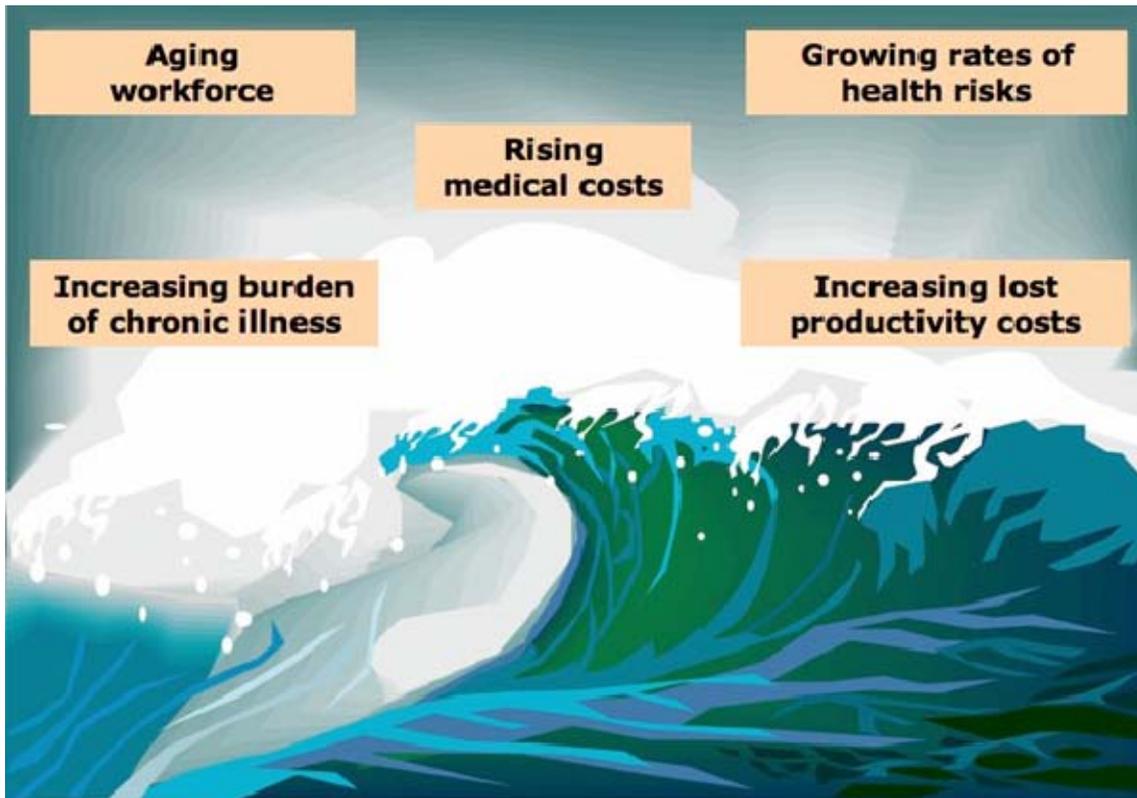
Trends that affect employees and their employers, such as the aging workforce and growing rates of health risk factors, are important drivers of health and disability management (see Figure 6. Employee Benefit Trends: The Perfect Storm). A snapshot of the overall health of the U.S. workforce reveals alarming numbers. In a typical population of 100, 64 are overweight or obese, 44 suffer from stress, 31 use alcohol excessively, 30 have high cholesterol, 26 have high blood pressure, 24 do not exercise, and 21 smoke.

Health and disability insurers are directing their efforts toward preventing or mitigating the effects of those risks.

Health and wellness programs, such as wellness coaching, disease management, and health information lines, are key elements of efforts to manage health and productivity. These programs are especially important in managing the most prevalent and costly conditions, including diabetes, heart disease, asthma, and low back pain, and in managing targeted conditions. According to research findings, proper management of prevalent and identifiable medical conditions demonstrates significant and sustainable opportunity to improve a population's overall health status. Examples of these targeted conditions are hepatitis C, irritable bowel syndrome, and osteoporosis.

Accumulating data demonstrate that the integration of health and disability management results in improved outcomes for both health care expenditures and the return to work of disabled employees. A meta-analysis of 42 studies of worksite health promotion programs showed reduced sick leave and absence and reduced health care, disability, and workers' compensation costs. Companies that had the most effective health and productivity management programs showed a decrease in incidence of short-term disability, long-term disability, and incidental sick pay programs.

**Figure 6. Employee Benefit Trends: The Perfect Storm**



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Determine whether there are private insurance strategies and programs that would materially enhance public programs.
- Look at opportunities to leverage private insurance capabilities in public programs.
- Conduct demonstration projects.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Pursuing an Integrated Demand- and Supply-Side Research Agenda at the State Level: Musings on Potential Opportunities from Wisconsin** *Barry S. Delin, Ph.D., M.P.P., University of Wisconsin—Stout*

*Barry Delin, a senior scientist at the Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute, is involved in design and implementation of evaluations of return-to-work projects. Current evaluations include seven regionally based employment initiatives. From the Office of Independence and Employment within the state's Department of Health and Family Services, he can observe the activities of a public entity whose primary purpose is to develop and test strategies to promote employment for people with significant disabilities.*

States are deeply involved in efforts to design and test means to increase employment rates and outcomes for persons with significant disabilities. These efforts are largely authorized or supported by the federal government. Generally, these efforts, and studies of their results, have concentrated on either workers (supply-side phenomena) or employers (demand-side phenomena).

It has been suggested that there would be enormous value in researchers pursuing a “nexus” agenda, one based on meaningful incorporation of both demand- and supply-side phenomena, in research design and analysis. If so, there also would be great value in having states undertake initiatives that involve both demand- and supply-side components. This would require federal support of the states’ efforts and studies of the effectiveness of those efforts.

At a minimum, a nexus agenda requires that studies of either supply-side or demand-side phenomenon be used to inform the design and interpretation of studies “on the other side.” States are making substantial efforts to test and develop ways of improving employment outcomes for persons with disabilities. In some cases, federal sponsors are interested in targeted innovations and in system change. Federally sponsored state efforts provide a potential setting for nexus research.

The Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, a major effort to support state-level innovation, provides an excellent opportunity for nexus research. Authorized through the Ticket to Work legislation and administrated by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, it

has an explicit focus on system change, especially to increase participation in Medicaid buy-ins and outcomes for those who participate. Of the 12 areas of innovation in Medicaid Infrastructure Grants, 11 are focused fully or primarily on the supply side. Only one is unequivocally on the demand side, but this emphasis is consistent with responsibilities of the Department of Health and Family Services, which serves Medicaid clients.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Federal agencies: Encourage states to develop demand-side innovations by making this area an explicit priority and providing technical assistance as well as money. In these innovations, these supporting agencies must be willing to tolerate some failure, provided there is adequate assessment to determine the reason.
- Federal agencies: Support the development of standardized national and state-level demand-side data comparable to data available on the supply side.
- State agencies: Use available federal supports to develop innovations with strong demand-side elements.
- State agencies: Support evaluations of supply-side and demand-side programs that use variables from both domains, even if such evaluations entail extra costs.
- Inform researchers of the potential effects of demand-side phenomena on supply-side outcomes and visa versa. Include some capacity to examine these possibilities in research designs.
- Involve researchers in helping state agencies recognize potential demand-side opportunities in primarily supply-side interventions when possible.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS

**Subsidizing Short-Term Disability Insurance.** The government implicitly subsidizes long-term disability for private carriers, but the Social Security Disability Insurance program bears part of that cost.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Investigate the possibility of the government subsidizing short-term disability insurance.

### ***Call to Action: Health Disparities, Health, and Wellness***

Panelists presented and discussed research and legislative efforts that focus on the nexus of employment and access to high-quality health care. They highlighted innovative state and federal pilot studies, demonstration projects, and initiatives. Panelists and

participants recommended research to guide policy-makers and businesses in increasing access to health-related services and supports and reducing health care-related disincentives to employment. Following are summaries of the panel presentations.

### **Exploring Gaps, Needs, and Opportunities**

***Linda Barrington, Ph.D., The Conference Board***

*Linda Barrington, a research director at The Conference Board, has written numerous publications, including Looking for Employees in All the Right Places and Perspectives on a Global Economy: Are Poor Nations Closing the Gap in Living Standards? She was a delegate to the 2005 White House Conference on Aging; has appeared on national news programs such as “NBC Nightly News” and “All Things Considered”; and served on the faculty of the Economics Department at Barnard College.*

A recent Conference Board survey unveiled that the top concern of employers about new entrants to the workforce was whether these entrants would make appropriate choices for health and wellness. This finding reflects employers’ concern about the business implications of rising health care costs. In another survey, employers revealed that obesity, smoking, and drug and alcohol abuse were among the major causes of health problems. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, almost 33% of adults in the United States are now obese—more than double the rate in 1980. Children and adolescents also are becoming increasingly overweight, which is leading employers to worry about the health of the future workforce. In fact, some employees are asking their employers whether they can put their children into wellness programs. Another concern of employers is the potential for increased health costs with their aging employees.

To address their concerns about rising health care costs, employers are investing more in incentive-based wellness programs to help their employees stay healthy (see Figure 7. Incentive-Based Wellness Programs).

**Figure 7. Incentive-Based Wellness Programs**

<b>Employer</b>	<b>Incentive Criteria</b>	<b>Incentive</b>
Quaker Oats	Complete health risk appraisal (HRA) and take lifestyle pledge.	Health premium and other benefit credits and cash
Sara Lee Knits Products	Attend exercise classes and seminars and recruit coworkers	Prizes
Cigna Corp.	Complete exercise program.	Prizes and gift certificates
Star Tribune	Complete HRA and 3 health-ed courses, exercise, and forswear risky behaviors.	Health premium credits
Coors Brewing Company	Complete 12-week weight management program.	Cash and prizes
Providence Everett Med Ctr	Complete wellness challenge(s) and limit med. claims and sick leave.	Prizes and cash
VSM Abrasives	Lose weight and keep it off.	Cash and paid vacation

Source: Eric Finkelstein, RTI

No recommendations were offered.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

**Surgeon General’s Call to Action on Disabilities**  
**Eileen Elias, M.Ed., JBS International, Inc.**

*Eileen Elias is a senior policy advisor on mental health and disability at JBS International and an adjunct professor at Boston University. Previous positions include deputy director for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office on Disability, senior policy analyst for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and Massachusetts commissioner of mental health. She has published extensively, serves on numerous boards, and has received awards from several public and private entities.*

The *Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Improve the Health and Wellness of Persons with Disabilities*, published in 2005, is the first Surgeon General document that addresses individuals with all types of disabilities. It was written to bring attention to the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in accessing health care services and maintaining a desirable wellness status and brings attention to this urgent public health concern. This Call to Action (CTA) provides an in-depth scientific analysis and understanding of health disparities among persons with disabilities and reports on the myriad factors that limit access to health care for persons with disabilities compared with other groups. The CTA is supplemented by the *People’s Piece*, which summarizes the CTA’s key messages at a

sixth-grade reading level. (Both documents are available online at [http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/disabilities/.](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/disabilities/))

The CTA's four message points, which direct the supporting strategic plan, are:

1. People nationwide understand that persons with disabilities can lead long, healthy, productive lives.
2. Health care providers have the knowledge and tools to screen, diagnose, and treat the whole person with a disability with dignity.
3. Persons with a disability can promote their own good health by developing and maintaining healthy lifestyles.
4. Accessible health care and support services promote independence for persons with disabilities.

Each of these messages, especially the third and fourth, supports the important connection between employment and access to health care for persons with disabilities. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Disability, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability and Employment Policy, recently held a Health and Employment Forum with human resource representatives from 14 large, medium-sized, and small employers to obtain their effective and innovative best practices, lessons learned (barriers and solutions), and recommendations. The resulting information will be published as a resource to help employers reduce employment barriers and enhance understanding on the importance of accessible health programs for persons with disabilities.

Employer interest stems from the outcomes they can generate—decreased absenteeism and health care costs and increased productivity—by maintaining a healthy workforce. The following recommendations were compiled from the recent forum and employer-based research:

- Use available research and best practices to highlight return on investment and the business case.
- Establish best practices for implementing health promotion programs based on the size of the business.
- Use a business-to-business communication network to share recommendations, lessons learned, and best practices.
- Identify industry-specific marketing techniques.
- Make programs, information, equipment, and services accessible from the outset.

- Include persons with disabilities in planning committees.
- Ensure that program design and implementation reflect changing needs as employees age, meet accessible needs for all types of disabilities, and implement and evaluate programs based on the company's resources and current initiatives.
- Emphasize the importance of all employee participation by presenting a continuum of possible health benefits including low-cost, easy-to-implement opportunities, such as information and referral programs, onsite health evaluations, medical services, and recreational offerings.
- Provide health and wellness information in multiple, accessible formats, including print information made available on a disk that supports employees who have visual impairments, and sign language interpreters to support employees who have hearing disorders.
- Establish executive-level leadership support—a key step to attaining employee buy-in.
- Institute employee health and wellness as a competency and performance measure and include it in the company's mission statement.
- Use health and wellness programs to attract, retain, and maintain employees, regardless of disability status.
- Emphasize the resulting benefit in return on investment and employee sustainability.

In summary, employer provision of health care and wellness services supports an enhanced and stable hiring pool, including persons with disabilities, that helps address today's global business climate where cost-effectiveness and competition are the reality.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Research employers' business interest in providing access to health and wellness services, including comparison of employees with and without a disability.
- Develop a research protocol, supported by private, foundation, and federal funds, that addresses how employers will use best practices and lessons learned to develop and enhance employee access to health care and wellness services.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS

**Environmental Sensitivities.** “Environmental sensitivities” is an umbrella term that includes sensitivities to chemicals. People who have environmental sensitivities tend to have significant health disparities because they are so sick that they do not advocate for themselves effectively.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Convene an ICDR conference on environmental sensitivities and employment.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Address how to determine whether a workplace is accessible to people with environmental sensitivities.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Identify best practices in developing and implementing a fragrance-free policy. Develop a compendium of recommended accommodations, including those specific to electronic and information technologies.

**Psychiatric Disabilities and Weight Gain from Medication.** People with psychiatric illness have two major health issues: obesity and smoking. Some of the medications these people take for their illness cause weight gain and may interfere with obtaining employment. In addition, this population tends to smoke.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Study interventions that address the side effects of medications for psychiatric disabilities, particularly weight gain, and how these side effects become employment barriers. Design interventions to address the high rate of smoking in this population.

**Motivating People with Disabilities to Participate in Wellness Programs.** More evidence-based wellness programs for people with disabilities are needed, particularly, those that deal with co-occurring physical and mental disabilities. Those that exist need better visibility.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Study how to motivate people with disabilities to participate in wellness programs. Contact the National Business Group on Health to examine its research and information on this topic.

**Employer Wellness Programs.** More information is needed about specific wellness programs, how they can be refined, and how they can be tailored to diverse populations.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Determine what kind of wellness programs exist, which ones need to be enhanced, what needs to be tweaked or changed, and what needs to be created.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Determine how employer wellness programs can be tailored to diverse populations.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Have employers work with other employers to identify research questions that need to be asked about employer wellness programs that include people with disabilities.

**Accessibility of Research.** People with cognitive disabilities are often excluded from participating in research because of their inability to comprehend what is being asked. In addition, many people with disabilities are unable to access research findings or understand them. The findings may be written at too high a reading level, or they may not be in an accessible format.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Investigate how to make research study materials more understandable and accessible to people with disabilities. Determine how to present research findings in easy-to-understand language and in accessible formats.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Put a higher priority in federal agencies on including health and wellness under the umbrella of “supported employment research.” In doing so, agencies should require principal investigators to partner with businesses and people with disabilities in conducting research.

### ***The Corporate Environment: Wellness Initiatives***

Panelists presented and discussed corporate wellness programs and practices that maintain and integrate health, disability management, and productivity within the workforce and organizational cultures. Panelists and participants recommended policy and research that may lead to criteria and model practices applicable to the corporate sector. Following are summaries of the panel presentations.

#### **Investigating Corporate Wellness Initiatives**

***Stephanie Creary, M.S., M.B.A., The Conference Board***

*Stephanie Creary’s current research is espoused within the Conference Board, Harvard Business School, and her independent research and consulting practice. Her research focuses on issues, challenges, and best practices for engaging diverse workforces in developing and managing processes and practices that promote innovation and strategy execution. Her latest research report for the Conference Board is Leadership, Governance and Accountability: A Pathway to a Diverse and Inclusive Organization (forthcoming).*

Employees and businesses have competing interests. For health and wellness, employees are most concerned about staying healthy, maintaining a work and life balance, obtaining affordable and high-quality health care, returning to work after illness or injury, managing care-giving responsibilities, and managing stress. Other concerns are finding low-cost, nutritious, and “fast” foods; finding time for physical activity; and educating family about health and wellness.

Businesses are most concerned about improving financial returns to investors and how they do that. Executing a strategy to reach a goal, improving revenue, and decreasing costs are methods businesses use to increase their returns. They also are concerned about being innovative to become more efficient and productive in the workplace and about sustaining successful practices.

As a significant proportion of the workforce has aged and as obesity and cardiovascular disease have become major epidemics in American society, organizations are facing bottom-line profitability pressures from rising costs of health care insurance and decreased employee productivity. Some organizations have responded by passing on more of the costs of health insurance to their employees. This practice has led to many employees struggling to afford rising health care premiums. To decrease health care costs and improve productivity while promoting more healthy living, many companies have instituted company-wide wellness programs that aim to manage health and wellness in a more robust manner.

In the 21st century, many companies have adopted “best practice models” for developing a comprehensive corporate wellness program to better manage employee health and wellness. Areas such as obesity, smoking cessation, maternity management, and stress and mental health management have received primary attention, because companies have found that these conditions substantially affect their employee populations. Many companies have extended these same principles to their consumer-based practices, realizing the need to develop more healthful, nutritious, and ergonomically sound products and marketing messages.

Employers are motivated by their competitors’ activities in the health and wellness arena. Three companies that exemplify best practices are Google, Pitney Bowes, and PepsiCo’s Frito-Lay. For instance, Google offers onsite subsidized massage, physician, dental, haircutting, laundry and dry cleaning, and car wash services, along with 20 weeks of maternity leave at 100% pay, seven weeks of paternity leave at 100% pay, and financial planning classes. To further promote health and wellness, Google has beach volleyball courts, swimming pools, and gymnasium and fitness facilities and offers free gourmet meals.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Determine what measures should be used to assess the impact of corporate wellness initiatives.
- Identify some best practices in corporate wellness programs for addressing mental health.
- Determine how employers can create wellness programs that can be accessed by those with disabilities.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## **Integral Organizational Wellness, Recovery and Disability Stigma: Evidence-Based Prevention for Businesses of All Sizes**

***Joel Bennett, Ph.D., Organizational Wellness and Learning Systems***

*Joel Bennett is president of Organizational Wellness and Learning Systems. He has served on advisory boards for Magellan Behavioral Health Care and the International Conference on Work, Stress, and Health, and he helped develop the first workplace-based SAMHSA model program recognized as effective in preventing employee substance abuse. Dr. Bennett has published articles in many peer-reviewed journals and co-authored the book, Preventing Workplace Substance Abuse: Beyond Drug-Testing to Wellness.*

[QUOTE]

“Current evidence-based mental health and substance abuse prevention programs can be woven into any wellness program. They can enhance the success and integration of employees in recovery or with disabilities.” —John Bennett

Workplaces have used four disparate but overlapping strategies to manage productivity and health among their employees: prevention, health promotion (wellness), employee assistance programming, and disease management. The science and evidence-based support of each of these approaches vary. There is some evidence that strategies within each are effective in enhancing the health and productivity of the workforce and the workplace.

Individual workers with mental health, addiction, or substance abuse disabilities, as well as individuals who have a history or family member’s association with mental health or addictive disabilities, have a crucial role to play as internal champions, program advocates, and peer supporters for any prevention or wellness initiative. This champion role is needed particularly for the small business employer and for returning veterans through which the vast majority of people with disability are employed. There is a tremendous opportunity to tap into the “recovery movement” and use workers “from the inside out” in making wellness a community-wide initiative that links employer leaders to those in need.

According to a National Health Interview Survey Disability Supplement, approximately 50% of people with mental health conditions are less likely to receive accommodations than those with other disabilities. This supplement says, “This difference could be explained by the stigma associated with mental health conditions, by the difficulty in designing accommodations for episodic mental illness, or by underreporting of accommodations for mental impairments.”

Research shows that mental health and alcohol- and drug-related conditions can be prevented as well as treated. An evidence-based program that incorporates this idea is Team Awareness, a workplace training program that addresses behavioral risks associated with substance abuse among employees, their co-workers, and indirectly, their

families. The National Registry of Effective and Evidence-Based Programs ([www.nrepp.samhsa.gov](http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov)) recently reviewed this approach and found that it reduced stigma for substance abuse and seeking help for mental health and substance abuse counseling. Another workplace-based approach delivery of prevention education is the Small Business Wellness Initiative ([www.sbwi.org](http://www.sbwi.org)), which also has been shown to improve workplace health and reduce risks for substance abuse.

Another approach provides professionals with an expert system for designing prevention initiatives within the workplace. These professionals include human resource coordinators, prevention specialists, employee assistance providers, and wellness and safety trainers. The expert system—entitled IntelliPrev (for intelligent prevention; [www.intelliprev.org](http://www.intelliprev.org))—has been shown to increase user knowledge and ability to assess, design, deliver, and evaluate evidence-based prevention programs in the workplace. According to research, a workplace culture that enables socialization and social interaction (after-work drinking) influences adult misuse of alcohol and drugs. Positive teamwork, including peer-to-peer support and positive socialization, protects against these risks.

In summary, wellness programs can be more inclusive. Mental health and alcohol and other drug prevention programs can be woven easily into any wellness initiative. In addition to addressing health risks, these programs reduce stigma and create a climate of inclusiveness. Employees with a history of recovery or disability can play an advocacy role in these initiatives. Finally, existing evidence-based programs take different strategies for destigmatization, including tying into team building and communication; embedding the messages of mental health and alcohol and other drug prevention programs into stress, diet, and exercise programs; providing skills to balance work and life that include cognitive behavioral management of mood and use of incentives for those in recovery (therapeutic workplace).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Integrate prevention, health promotion, employee assistance programming, and disease (disability) management with recovery groups, work groups, and peer-to-peer support mechanisms, and focus systematically on destigmatization.
- Create a program of universal training in stigma reduction.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health Worklife Initiative: Protecting and Promoting Worker Health Through Comprehensive Programs, Practices, and Policies**

***Jane Roemer, J.D., Centers for Disease Control and Prevention***

*Jane Roemer is a special assistant to the director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. Currently, she is involved with developing and*

*promoting the WorkLife Initiative, which encourages integrative approaches to work and health through programs, policies, and practices that result in healthier, more productive workers with reduced illness and injury. She also has worked as an attorney with the Environmental Protection Agency and in the non-profit sector in the field of highway safety.*

The protection, preservation, and improvement of the health and well being of people who work are goals shared by workers, their families, and their employers. Ill health and injury, whether caused by work or resulting from off-work activities, reduce income, quality of life, and opportunity for both the affected workers and those dependent on them. Worksites present an opportunity to implement integrative approaches to work and wellness through programs and policies that prevent disease and injury and promote health. Workplace conditions can promote employee health and foster employee retention and productivity.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, in concert with many partners and stakeholders, has committed to addressing these and related issues through the WorkLife Initiative (WLI). The WLI envisions workplaces that are free of recognized hazards, with health-promoting and -sustaining policies, programs, and practices and employees who have ready access to effective programs and services that protect their health, safety, and well being. To pursue this vision, the WLI seeks to better understand and promote the kinds of work environments, programs, and policies that result in healthier, more productive workers with reduced care needs and costs for disease and injury. The ultimate goal of this initiative is to sustain and improve worker health through better work-based programs, policies, and practices.

The WorkLife Initiative encourages and supports rigorous evaluation of integrative approaches to work and health; identifies proven and promising programs, policies, and practices; and promotes their adoption. It also encourages investigators across disciplines who focus on workers' health to collaborate and strive to overcome the traditional separation of the occupational health and health promotion professional communities.

Three academic Centers of Excellence have been established to test theories about integrative health protection and health promotion. Study findings show that integrative approaches (1) help lead to better work-based programs to improve the workplace and health benefits for all workers and (2) tend to improve the physical work environment in ways that benefit disabled workers and encourage appropriate job accommodation.

During these studies, researchers found health disparities in the workplace. They determined that disease and injury from work-related and non-work-related exposures are unevenly distributed throughout the workforce and recommended more comprehensive approaches to help fight these disparities.

In conclusion, the WorkLife Initiative creates an opportunity for the occupational safety and health community and the health promotion community to work together to develop

and implement workplace programs, policies, and practices that prevent workplace illness and injury and sustain and promote health.

No recommendations were offered.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## **AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Assessment of Business's Best Practices in Health and Wellness.** The disability community needs to be aware of the social and health impact of business's best practices in health and wellness.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Develop an assessment program to measure the impact of business's best practices in health and wellness.

**Application of Health and Wellness Programs in Small Businesses.** Most people with disabilities work in small businesses; however, little research has been done on their health and wellness activities for their employees, including people with disabilities.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Study how to apply best practices from large businesses to health and wellness programs in smaller businesses.

**Return on Investment with Vocational Rehabilitation Activities.** Research has been on the return on investment of workplace wellness programs shows that every dollar invested brings a return of \$3, but little research has been done on the return on investment of vocational rehabilitation programs.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Evaluate the return on investment of vocational rehabilitation activities.

**Flexible Workplace and Benefit to Workers with Disabilities.** Flexible workplaces, ones that allow telecommuting and flexible hours, can influence the health and productivity of workers with disabilities, but little research has been done in this area.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Study the benefit of a flexible workplace, such as the option to telecommute, for workers with disabilities and for business.

**Federal Contractors and Accessible Workplaces.** Federal contractors should be required to meet certain requirements in making their workplaces accessible to all employees.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Require federal contractors to make their workplaces accessible to all employees, including people with disabilities.

## ***Rural Employment: Economic Development Initiatives***

Panelists presented and discussed current research initiatives related to model state programs, practices, and policies that address the intersection between state economic development and employment programs. Panelists and participants offered “research-to-practice” recommendations to expand economic development and access to health care and address employment challenges in rural areas. Following are summaries of the panel presentations.

### **The Rural Context: Employment, Health, and Transportation**

***Nancy L. Arnold, Ph.D., M.A., University of Montana***

*A research professor at the University of Montana, Nancy Arnold serves as associate director of its Research and Training Center on Rehabilitation in Rural Communities. Her current research addresses rural small businesses and health promotion for people preparing for employment. Dr. Arnold has published and presented on self-employment and economic development, and has consulted with vocational rehabilitation agencies on self-employment policies.*

Communities with low employment rates are disproportionately located in most rural areas. According the U.S. Department of Agriculture, only about 5% of rural Americans live on farms. Nearly 70% of those farms are classified as residence or lifestyle farms, so the income for most of the people is derived from other sources.

During interviews on a project with the Research and Training Center (RRTC) on Disability in Rural Communities, employers in very small rural communities said they had not been approached by a vocational rehabilitation or disability employment agency, that they used a job service only if it was located in the same town as they were, and that their businesses were too small to hire a person with a disability. In addition, they said that their profit margin was so low that their employees needed to be able do multiple jobs.

Researchers had a difficult time contacting these employers because there was no central contact to help them gain entry into the business. In some cases, they were state and local government agencies, hospitals, and corporate-owned businesses, but for the most part, they were businesses owned by a sole proprietor. The most successful approach for discussing hiring and local employment issues was through in-person cold calls.

Another project the RRTC conducted was on transportation by rural residents. These residents face many obstacles in getting to their workplace, health care providers, and other sites. For example, about 12 million rural residents (41%) live in counties that have no public transportation, and another 28% live in communities with limited transportation services. They also face longer commutes than their urban or suburban counterparts—another disincentive to finding and maintaining employment. In their study of rural transportation, researchers surveyed agency-driven providers, such as those funded by Section 5310 (a program that provides funding to states to assist private non-profit groups

in meeting the transportation needs of elderly persons and persons with disabilities). Most (95%) said they did not participate in a coordinated system to provide travel services to people outside their agency. They also indicated that very little effort had gone into planning or organizing cooperative systems locally.

The RRTC also studied a voucher model for transportation, designed for communities with no other transportation resources. One of the major findings is that it would take approximately \$15,000 to \$30,000, depending on the size of the community, to start and operate a transportation system. When the RRTC studied the role of faith-based organizations in transportation, researchers found that although 32% would be willing or very willing to provide transportation to people with disabilities, most were neutral. Among the reasons for not providing transportation was lack of money, lack of staff, and liability issues.

Finally, the RRTC studied rural health. In rural residents, researchers found a higher rate of poverty, a lower likelihood of being covered by Medicaid benefits than the urban poor, fewer physician contacts per year, and a lower likelihood of having employer-provided health care coverage or prescription drug coverage. Rural residents also had higher rates of traumatic injuries and worse outcomes from them. The RRTC tested its Living Well with a Disability program, a health promotion program taught by peer facilitators from the Center for Independent Living. Results included reduced days with symptoms; increased health-promoting lifestyle behaviors, particularly in the domain of physical activity; and decreased health costs. The RRTC then developed the Living Well with a Disability program into a Working Well with a Disability program and is currently evaluating it. (An update on the Working Well program is available online at <http://rtc.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/SelEm/factsheets/WorkingWell.htm>.)

No recommendations were offered.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## **Barriers to Employment and Health Care for Rural Kansas Residents with Disabilities**

***Jean Hall, Ph.D., University of Kansas***

*Jean Hall is an assistant research professor at the University of Kansas and the principal investigator on an evaluation of the state's Medicaid buy-in program and Demonstration to Maintain Independence and Employment. In addition to publishing numerous journal articles on topics such as disability culture and school and health care experiences of youth with disabilities, she has testified at the state and federal levels on public programs and barriers to full participation of people with disabilities.*

Rural residents with disabilities encounter numerous barriers to employment and health care, some of which mirror those of their urban counterparts and some of which are unique to their geographic context. The Ticket to Work/Work Incentives Improvement Act established the option for states to create Medicaid buy-in programs that allow people with disabilities to work and maintain their eligibility for Medicaid. These

programs are designed to encourage people who meet the Social Security Administration (SSA) standard for disability to return to work. In Kansas, participants in the state's buy-in program, Working Healthy, report numerous barriers to employment, including limitations imposed by their disabilities, negative employer attitudes, potential loss of various benefits, paternalistic service systems, and lack of community support. Rural participants also are significantly more likely to report lack of transportation and lack of job opportunities as barriers.

In their study of the Kansas Medicaid buy-in program, researchers conducted an annual survey of the enrollees, interviews with some enrollees, and focus groups with more than 150 Kansans with disabilities across the state. Findings indicated that people in rural areas were significantly more likely to cite lack of transportation as a barrier to increased work efforts than people in urban areas; jobs were not available; the lack of meaningful job placement services resulted in low-paying and low-skill jobs despite skills and education of potential workers; and employers feared costs associated with accommodations, health insurance, and workers' compensation.

The federal legislation also authorized the Demonstration to Maintain Independence and Employment (DMIE) project to test the hypothesis that the provision of health care and employment supports could prevent or forestall loss of employment and independence caused by a potentially disabling condition. These programs, currently funded in four states, are designed to intervene before a person meets the SSA criteria for disability and to keep that person in the workforce. In Kansas, the DMIE targeted people with a variety of chronic physical and mental illnesses who are working at least 40 hours per month and are enrolled in the state's high-risk health insurance program. Participants encounter numerous barriers to obtaining adequate insurance and health care to meet their medical needs and prevent progression to full disability, including inability to obtain health insurance because of a pre-existing condition, self-employment or part-time employment, steep out-of-pocket costs, and difficulty accessing specialists. Agricultural workers and rural residents are disproportionately overrepresented in this population.

As part of the DMIE study, enrollees were provided Medicaid-like benefits and subsidized premiums with no co-insurance or deductibles. This program appeared to help participants stay healthy. Many said that they would have been on disability by now without the extra support the project provided. Thus far, the research team does not have data on the application rates for Social Security disability payments with this group.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Identify new and effective strategies to reach employers, service providers, medical professionals, and community members to change their attitudes about disability and work ability.
- Identify ways to improve coordination of work incentives across federal programs to facilitate gradual rather than precipitous loss of benefits.

- Create innovative and cost-effective rural transportation solutions, such as allowing ridership on school buses.
- Create effective supports for alternative work efforts, such as telework and telecommuting.
- Identify strategies to expand coverage for telemedicine and remote biometric monitoring.
- Study the cost-effectiveness of a Medicare buy-in option for the near-elderly population, ages 55 to 64.
- Investigate ways to decouple eligibility for public insurance from income support standards and base eligibility for coverage on assessment of medical need.
- Provide better guidance to self-employed persons about payment of Social Security taxes. Many people do not pay Social Security taxes and therefore will not qualify for benefits if they become disabled.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

#### **AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Transportation in Rural Areas for People with Disabilities.** Transportation is a major barrier to people with disabilities in finding work in rural communities.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Develop and market a model for collaboration on improving transportation issues.

**Telemedicine in Rural Areas.** Many rural areas do not have access to the Internet or to mobile phone service, which makes it especially difficult for people with disabilities to get the medical (and other) services they need.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Work with the business community to provide the same services in rural areas of the United States as in other areas. A private enterprise might be able to set up satellite access in these areas.

#### ***Policy: Federal Health Care Benefits***

Panelists presented and discussed critical issues of health care access and financing. They discussed recent research, demonstration projects, and policy initiatives aimed at removing health care-based disincentives to competitive employment for people with disabilities. Panelists and participants recommended research to facilitate access to care and enhance the integration of state and federal health and employment programs. Following are summaries of the panel presentations.

## Medicaid and Mental Health Services: Research Challenges

*Jeffrey A. Buck, Ph.D., Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration*

*Jeffrey Buck, a clinical psychologist and chief of the Survey, Analysis, and Financing Branch in the Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, also has worked in the Office of Research in the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. He contributed to the President's Mental Health Commission, was a section editor of the Surgeon General's Report on Mental Health, and has published on financing, use, and insurance coverage for mental health services.*

[QUOTE]

“Medicaid is the only provider of care for many adults with serious mental illness.” — Jeffrey Buck

Medicaid is the nation's largest mental health services payer—larger than private insurers, Medicare, and state and local government programs. In fact, Medicaid makes up nearly half of all public spending on mental health services. The users of mental health services constitute 10% of total Medicaid beneficiaries; depression is the most frequent diagnosis for adults, and attention deficient hyperactivity syndrome is the most frequent diagnosis for children. This population uses the emergency room frequently, although notably, most of these visits are not for psychiatric reasons. Users of mental health services account for a major portion of high-cost Medicaid enrollees. Although nearly half of Medicaid beneficiaries receive medical services through managed care, little is known about these services.

Mental health agencies collect much more data on care that people with mental disorders receive from specialty providers, yet this group receives a lot of care from non-specialty providers in emergency rooms, general hospitals that lack specialists in psychiatric care, and nursing homes. These providers usually know little about mental health care. People with mental health disorders too often end up in emergency rooms or nursing homes, which have become dumping grounds for people with these conditions.

According to 1999 data, 19% of all Medicaid beneficiaries have at least one prescription for a psychotropic drug in a year. Of these, nearly two-thirds (63%) have no other evidence of mental health services. A 2004 study found that 74% of people with serious mental illness had at least one chronic health problem; 50% had two or more. Another study found that one-third of Medicaid's high-cost enrollees are users of mental health services; this is due primarily to non-psychiatric care.

Results of a 1999 assessment of each state's Medicaid data revealed imperfect data resulting from managed care, uneven enrollment data, and missing diagnosis codes. More than half of the states had bad data on their Medicaid users, and most did not know what was going on in their programs. Seven states had data with almost no information at all or no information on the mental health population or mental health services. Compounding the problem are issues with data interoperability. For example, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and Medicaid data have limited compatibility.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Study the care that Medicaid beneficiaries receive through managed care.
- Study the characteristics of care that non-specialty medical providers give to people with mental disorders.
- Study the management of psychotropic drugs in the Medicaid population.
- Study issues of treating people with mental health disorders who have co-morbid conditions.
- Improve the collection of mental health and Medicaid data.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Partnering to Serve Health Care Needs in Communities Across the Nation** *Alexander F. Ross, Sc.D., Health Resources and Services Administration*

*Alexander Ross is the senior health policy analyst in the Health Resources and Services Administration's Health Systems and Financing Group and a project officer for several studies. His work focuses on policy and evaluation studies that address the health care concerns of low-income and uninsured populations across the nation. Previous positions within the agency include chief of the Program Development Branch and acting chief of the Legislative Branch in the Bureau of HIV/AIDS.*

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is the primary federal agency for improving access to health care services for people who are uninsured, isolated, or medically vulnerable. HRSA accomplishes its mission in large part by providing leadership and financial support (grants) to community-based, non-profit health care providers in every state and U.S. territory that commit to provide health care to uninsured people, people living with HIV/AIDS, and pregnant women, mothers, and children or who train health professionals and improve systems of care in rural communities. HRSA comprises six bureaus and 12 offices.

To maintain their operations, most HRSA grantees rely on multiple sources of funds, only part of which comes from HRSA grants. HRSA provides technical assistance to its grantees to help them improve their third-party reimbursement so they can diversify their revenue sources, secure their long-term viability, improve access to health care, and maintain or expand their services to vulnerable populations.

Currently, HRSA's federally qualified health centers serve 16 million low-income persons nationally; 5.5 million are Medicaid enrollees, and approximately 6 million do not have any health care coverage. To address the needs this population, HRSA places new health centers in the most underserved areas and poorest counties. These 4,000

community-based centers are HRSA's primary health care programs and form the backbone of the nation's health care safety net. Many of the safety net providers have state-level organizations that the labor and employment community can work with within states. In addition to providing medical homes with comprehensive services for all patients regardless of their health insurance status or their ability to pay, the centers provide services such as transportation that are critical to people with disabilities. Having a primary source of care through these centers enhances the individual's quality of life and overall health care status, which, in turn, enhances the person's ability to seek and maintain employment. By providing this health care to people, including those with disabilities, HRSA gives many people the ability to work.

Examples of HRSA programs are Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant, Family to Family Health Care Information and Education Centers, Healthy Start Initiative, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Title V, which requires State Maternal Child Health programs to coordinate with Medicaid. More information about these programs is available online at [www.hrsa.gov](http://www.hrsa.gov).

No recommendations were made.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

#### **AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Cross-Agency Database.** Several states, such as South Carolina, have integrated their state databases by combining administrative data from areas such as mental health, juvenile justice, and child welfare.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Create a cross-agency database on a small group of people who are receiving services through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, HRSA, and possibly the Rehabilitation Services Administration to test the ability to look across governmental agencies at utilization of services.

#### **Theme 4. Government Policies and Practices: Role and Effect**

Federal agencies, including some Interagency Committee on Disability Research (ICDR) member agencies, administer policies and practices to promote business and economic development, to support a globally competitive workforce, and to provide safety net programs for vulnerable and unconnected populations, including people with disabilities. These agencies implement policies that aid and promote the hiring of people with disabilities through tax credits, federal insurance programs, and funding for:

- Training, retraining, and outplacement of dislocated workers;
- Public vocational education, vocational rehabilitation, One-Stop Career Centers, and vocational training in colleges and technical schools;

- Entitlement and discretionary programs that address many needs relevant to work and community participation of people with disabilities;
- Direct cash grants to individuals;
- Need-based services;
- Enforcement of regulations to ensure non-discriminatory practices in the private and public sectors; and
- Support systems and programs in education, transportation, housing, vocational training, disability services, health care, and medical, and psychological services.

## **Overview—Plenary Panel Presentations**

This section summarizes the plenary panel’s overview of Theme 4. Government Policies and Practices: Role and Effect. Following are summaries of the panel presentations.

### **Looking Forward on National Disability Policy**

***John D. Kemp, J.D., U.S. Business Leadership Network***

*John D. Kemp, a principal at Powers, Pyles, Sutter and Verville, P.C., is also chief executive officer of ACCSES, HalfthePlanet Foundation, and The One Percent Coalition; and executive director and general counsel to the U.S. Business Leadership Network. He served on the Medicaid Commission and now serves on the State Department’s Advisory Committee on Persons with Disabilities. A co-founder of the American Association of People with Disabilities, he has received the New Freedom Initiative Award and Henry B. Betts Award.*

Without a clear, cogent, and coordinated national disability policy, government programs will remain a patchwork of historic sacred cows, disability-inclusive contemporary strategies, and needed funding streams that fail to embrace the depth and breadth of options for citizens with disabilities. Fundamentally, government policies should promote the safety, security, and independence of its citizens.

Reform of disability programs is desperately needed, but the challenge of leadership will not be easily overcome. At this time in history, government reform of services to and for people with disabilities requires a much clearer set of values and purposes than we can, as a society, articulate today. The country is in the midst of a historic transformation from paternalistic programs to those of self-sufficiency and customized supports; change is achievable. The underlying question is, do people with disabilities deserve equality of opportunities and adequate health care, services, and supports as a fundamental part of citizenship? Or should we be grateful for the hard-won morsels of fragmented programming that pit agencies and feds against one another and the states, or even people without disabilities against those of us with disabilities?

Social Security is schizophrenic in its purposes; Medicaid is stretched to fund programs well beyond its intended purposes; Medicare never expected so many Americans to live so long and need so much health care; and the Americans with Disabilities Act has never been adequately enforced to protect disabled citizens from unlawful disability discrimination. Advocating for deep structural change is a two-edged—or multi-edged—sword, and current funding streams compromise many advocates’ abilities to push hard for dramatic and rapid change. Status quo fits many people, organizations, and cultures, but does it help move people with disabilities to lives of economic self-sufficiency or lives of dependency, to lives with dignity or pity, to lives of wellness or illness? It has been said that “Advocates are never satisfied with the status quo,” but who are our advocates, and how much change do they really want, right now?

We are a complex and glorious society, with public policies that fit hundreds, thousands of circumstances and groups of American citizens. Can and should public policy be made simple and streamlined for U.S. citizens with disabilities? Probably, yes, but it also can be used as the mightiest weapon to encourage entrepreneurship, independent living, the pursuit of higher education and higher office, and personal liberties. It requires a newer set of policy value statements that guide us into a better framework, and the surrendering of old, outdated programs that limit our freedoms and our options. This is what good government policies and practices should do for the nation’s disabled citizens and all its citizens simultaneously.

**Political Barriers to a Coordinated Research Agenda.** The current barriers to achieving a coordinated policy must be overcome, starting with the lack of White House leadership and lack of communication among federal agencies on disability policy. With coordination and leadership, the federal government would have an opportunity to become a model employer of people with disabilities; however, in recent years, vast numbers of people with disabilities have left government employment. The federal government also could change the current funding streams that compromise the desire and ability push toward dramatic and rapid change and facilitate the enforcement of civil liberties laws.

The government also should create incentives to businesses, people with disabilities, service providers, educational institutions, and others to institute programs and activities that would lead to increased employment of people with disabilities. Programs for youth in transition and training for people who desire to have their own companies are examples of activities.

[QUOTE]  
“The “pursuit of happiness” in the Declaration of Independence really means that right to pursue a vocation and employment for everyone, including people with disabilities—a premise the government has not fully embraced.” —John Kemp

**Lack of Lobbying Force in the Disability Community.** It is difficult to effectuate changes in government programs in part because people with disabilities are not a solid

lobbying block. People involved in the disability movement have not articulated clearly what they think the government should do for people with disabilities.

**Barriers in Legislative Language.** The Americans with Disabilities Act requires “reasonable accommodation,” but this wording is inconsistent with the need of business, which is “talent.” The legislative term invites argument over where to draw the line on what constitutes reasonable accommodation and too often becomes a legal issue. A better approach is to focus on the “talent” of people with disabilities rather than the need to accommodate them. Once the talent is identified, the human resources specialists will figure out how to maximize employees’ abilities to perform the needed tasks.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop and implement a cogent and coordinated national disability policy that encourages entrepreneurship, independent living, pursuit of higher education, and personal liberties.
- Determine how to develop measures of accountability for disability programs in the private sector.
- Encourage the disability community to band together and become a political force to push a disability agenda.
- Revise the language of government policies that are intended to protect people with disabilities. Instead of focusing on terms such as “reasonable accommodation,” which can be off-putting, focus on a pressing need of business—talent.

## Historical Perspective on Public Policy for Veterans

*Peter Blanck, Ph.D., J.D., Burton Blatt Institute, Syracuse University*

*Peter Blanck chairs the Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University and is a board member of the National Organization on Disability, the Disability Rights Law Center, and Disability Rights Advocates. He has represented clients before the U.S. Supreme Court in Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) cases, testified before Congress, and written widely on ADA matters. Dr. Blanck also serves as co-editor of the Cambridge University Press series Disability Law and Policy.*

A research team is investigating a large cohort of people, known as the “colored troops,” who lived during the Civil War era. After the Civil War, a pension program was put in place to help injured troops. This was the first major federal law to create a social welfare program. To obtain a pension under this program, a soldier had to submit a detailed medical evaluation. The law initially stated that people could qualify only if they could show an incapacity to work as a result of their war service. Later, the law allowed them to receive a pension for a disability even if it was not directly related to their war experience.

During the Civil War, attitudes differed toward different disabilities. The mental disabilities, what we would likely call posttraumatic stress disorder, were compensated at lower rates because of concerns that the claimant might be feigning illness and malingering. There was prejudice even against certain physical disabilities; the “gold standard” was losing an eye or having a limb shot off. There also was prejudice about race. Irish and German immigrants were compensated at lower rates than native-born Caucasian people, and African-American soldiers were compensated at lower rates than any Caucasian soldiers. An interesting finding was that mortality rates were lower for people who were denied a pension.

Like workers’ compensation today, the Civil War pension scheme defined disability through a rating system. This system coincided with the rise of the medical model of disability. Physicians were asked, for the first time, to determine a disability under a legal scheme that defined disability. This pension system continued until 1919, when the first Rehabilitation Act was passed, which eventually led to the creation of the Social Security system. The model of disability in those legal systems continued to focus on an inability to work rather than the social model of disability.

What is most striking about this historical research is that so many of the newspaper articles, legal approaches, and definitions of disability from 150 years ago are consistent with the perspectives and arguments of today. Similarly, the United States still has men and women returning from war—more than 200,000, and many of them with severe disabilities—who can benefit from better public policies.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Explore ways for policy-makers to move beyond policies that were established in Civil War times to address the needs disabled war veterans. These include policies that focus on a medical model of disability (those that imply people with disabilities have less capacity to work) rather than on a social model of disability.
- Consider how lessons learned from the past can be used to help move policy forward for veterans of the service in Iraq and Afghanistan and all people with disabilities.

### [QUOTE]

“What is most striking about this historical research is that so many of the newspaper articles, legal approaches, and definitions of disability from 150 years ago are consistent with the perspectives and arguments of today.” —Peter Blanck

### **A Health and Productivity Point of View**

***Kenneth Mitchell, Ph.D., Unum U.S.***

*Kenneth Mitchell is vice president of health and productivity development for Unum U.S. and principal investigator on its study of the health, productivity, and employability of*

*cancer survivors. He has contributed to Unum's research monographs on lost time management in the health care industry, the older worker, and the progression from family medical leave to short-term disability. Current activities focus on the links and expected return on investment of disease and disability management programs.*

Current priorities for health and productivity research in the private disability insurance sector include “bureaugenic disability,” i.e., policies and practices that prohibit employees from returning to work if they are impaired; chronic disease in the workplace; work motivation and extended disability; management of labor market dynamics; and economic forces in the workplace. These focal points are connected to government policies and practices and their impact.

**Bureaugenic Disability.** Ultimately, company policies control who is off work and who is not. Bureaugenic disability creates premature disability and hurt the company. Studies show that business can reduce lost time by 40% by allowing employees to return to work before they can fully function in their jobs, but transitional work programs need to be in place to help employees do this. In a study of factors that would facilitate the transition back to work, Mitchell and colleagues found that a flexible workplace has more impact than the degree of a person’s impairment. A group of cancer survivors said that transportation to and from work, such as a taxi or concierge service, would help a great deal.

To implement policies that support return to work, organizations need to make one employee accountable for maintaining the productivity of people who have impairments. Such policies should focus on “impairment” rather than “disability”; in the corporate world, “disability” means an employee is not working. Rewarding accountability and administrative effectiveness and providing incentives for coordination of health care and disability-related vendors also can promote successful return to work.

[PULLOUT]

“Corporate policies and practices coupled with public/private benefit programs can keep more people off work than any injury, illness, or chronic disease combined.” — Kenneth Mitchell

“Impairment is objective. Disability is subjective and depends. Benefits and policies often determine the difference.” — Kenneth Mitchell

**Return-to-Work Supports.** People wish to return to work after a disability need support systems that allow them to search for a job without waiting for others to do it for them.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create workplace policies that help employees return to work before they can fully function in their jobs. Establish transitional work programs to accomplish this.

- Develop and support a shared database of proven strategies. Create a readily accessible record of past evidence-based research and demonstration projects via a Web-based employer education network.
- Develop a three-tiered, coordinated research agenda to fund experimental and demonstration projects: a current agenda (funding for 1 year), an intermediate agenda (funding for two to three years), and a long-term agenda (funding for three to five years).
- Create and test supports in government and in the private sector that help more people return to work. For example, develop and test a Web-based, self-service, return-to-work planning site that can help people receive timely support and information about staying on the job or returning to work with existing or emerging impairments.
- Encourage collaborative innovation or shared solutions on return-to-work issues through public and private health care, disability, and employer partnerships.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## **Employment Discrimination Under Title 1 of the Americans with Disabilities Act**

*Michael D. West, Ph.D., Virginia Commonwealth University*

*Michael D. West, an assistant professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, has been affiliated with its Rehabilitation Research and Training Center since 1987. He has conducted evaluations at the local, state, and national levels; participated in evaluation of Social Security Administration programs; and directed research and demonstration projects for postsecondary students with disabilities.*

In 2003, under a cooperative agreement between the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the Virginia Commonwealth University, researchers began studies on a master database used by the EEOC to track the filing, investigation, and resolution of workplace discrimination allegations. These involved charges filed under employment provisions (Title 1) of the Americans with Disabilities Act. There are 367,000 such claims in a database of recently brought allegations of discrimination in employment by people with disabilities. That works out to about 28,000 claims per year since this database was created. Because someone might bring multiple allegations, the unit of analysis is the number of allegations rather than the number of persons making claims.

According to initial findings, only about one in five allegations relates to hiring, only about one in five results in a merit resolution, and the type of resolution varies by claimant and respondent demographics. Alarming, merit resolutions have been decreasing dramatically in recent years. Why is this occurring? Possible explanations include the difficulty of proving discrimination; the skills of employers in defending

themselves; and lack of skill of many people with disabilities in preparing their cases. Another explanation may be simply that the legal definition of discrimination may differ from the perception of employees who believe they have experienced discrimination.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Look at whether job tenure or timing of disclosure influences the likelihood of a merit resolution for workers with disabilities
- Identify the factors that are contributing to declining rates of merit resolutions for individuals who allege discrimination under Title 1.
- Determine what interventions or regulatory modifications can be implemented to reduce the number of allegations of discrimination that are made and the rates of non-meritorious allegations.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS

**Stigma of the Word “Disability.”** Promoters of the rights of people with disabilities have been encouraging them to form a disability movement and buy into the identity of disability. Now, however, some programs are moving toward minimizing disability because of factors such as technology and universal design. It is time to take away the negativity associated with disability and stop measuring it as the incapacity to participate in society.

An audience member suggested that one problem with the term “disability” is that children with disabilities are not gaining disability awareness and may not even know they have a disability, because in school they may be called “special needs” children and “handi-capable.” Another audience member commented that students with disabilities (K–12) are performing much lower than their peers. She wondered if Individuals with Disabilities Education Act has promoted learned helplessness in the students and their families.

**Recommendation:** Study the stigma associated with the work “disability” and how to present disability in a positive light.

**Disability Awareness in School.** Education about disabilities should start in kindergarten, so that children grow up viewing disability as a natural part of life. Policy-makers, educators, and Parent Teacher Associations need to become part of this movement. Children’s textbooks and storybooks also should include people with disabilities.

**Recommendation:** Establish disability awareness programs in all levels of schooling, starting with elementary school.

**Reluctance to Disclose Disabilities.** It is difficult for employers to set a target for employing people with disabilities because some people are reluctant to disclose that they have a disability. Many people are afraid of the stigma of a disability, particularly those with mental health problems.

**Recommendation:** Study how to address people's reluctance to disclose a disability to an employer.

**Building Self-Determination in Children with Disabilities.** Too often, legislation such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act has led to helplessness rather than independence. This state of helplessness also can be learned at home. Whatever its source, one consequence of this helplessness is that when teens graduate from high school, they often are unprepared for the adult world.

**Recommendation:** Study how to prepare children with disabilities in schools and at home for self-determination after they graduate. How can higher expectations for these children be addressed?

**Accessibility of the Built (Physical) Environment in Schools.** Currently, the Americans with Disabilities Act requires schools to meet certain codes, but more attention should be paid to the universal design of the physical parts of the school environment.

**Recommendation:** Study how to incorporate universal design into all educational facilities, from elementary schools to universities.

**Assumptions About Public Policies on Government-Supported Disability Programs.** Some basic assumptions are made about government policies on disabilities and their leading to self-determination, personal choice, and empowerment. For example, a critique of the U.S. Department of Labor's One-Stop Career Centers found that the centers are not accessible, even though they have been covered by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act since 1974.

**Recommendation:** Review and challenge basic assumptions about government policies on disabilities and role in developing self-determination, personal choice, and empowerment.

## **Subtopics: Concurrent Session Presentations**

This section summarizes the presentations and recommendations of the concurrent sessions on the five subtopics for Theme 4: government policy, key issues, federal government, state-level programs, and emergent populations with disability.

### ***Government Policy: Implications for Business Development***

Panelists presented and discussed federal and state policies that affect the inclusion of people with disabilities and that may either positively or negatively influence business

and economic development. Panelists and participants recommended research related to public policies and practices that could expand the inclusiveness and productivity of American business. Following are summaries of the panel presentations.

### **Measuring Postsecondary Access and Outcomes of Recent High School Graduates with Disabilities**

***Paul Harrington, Ed.D., Northeastern University***

*Paul Harrington is the associate director of the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University, where he specializes in the economics of education and career development. A frequent speaker on youth-related labor market issues to a variety of workforce and education-related audiences, he also has written numerous articles and op-ed pieces and is the co-author of College Majors Handbook with Real Career Paths and Payoffs and College Majors Scorecard.*

Harrington and his colleagues conducted a pilot longitudinal study to measure students' access to postsecondary institutions after graduation from high school. The study looked at all students, including special education students. Currently, the researchers are examining initial college enrollment and one-year college retention for these students. Data sources include 14 high schools, which provided information on graduating seniors, including demographic characteristics, low-income measure, school behavior measure, and disability status and characteristics, and the National Student Clearinghouse, a centralized databank on postsecondary enrollment organized for verification of student loans.

Study results show that in the 2004, 2005, and 2006 classes, 24.8% of the 4,597 graduates from seven vocational technical high schools were special education students, most of whom had learning disabilities. Of the total number of graduates, 45.3% (2,083 students) planned to attend college, and 47.5% planned to attend trade school, work, or enlist in the military.

Researchers also analyzed college enrollment rates. Of the 2,083 high school graduates who planned to attend college, 69.5% enrolled in college. The breakdown by special education status was 48.1% without disability and 34.7% with disabilities; 38.5% full inclusion and 29.1% partial inclusion; 39.4% educationally disadvantaged and 50% without disabilities and no education disadvantage. Analysis of these college enrollees by other demographic characteristics showed that 69.3% were black non-Hispanic, 56.3% were female, 45% were native speakers of English. In terms of low-income status, 46% of those who planned to attend college were not eligible for the school lunch program, 41.7% were eligible for free school lunch, and 38.75% were eligible for subsidized school lunch.

Researchers followed these 4,597 graduates from the seven vocational technical high schools into their second year of college. Of those who entered their second year of college, 24.8% had disabilities (40.4% partial inclusion and 59.6% full inclusion) and 75.2% did not have disabilities.

No recommendations were made.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

**Connecting Disability to the Financial Marketplace Through Real Economic Impact**  
***Johnette T. Hartnett, Ed.D., M.A., National Disability Institute, Inc.***

*Johnette Hartnett is director of research and strategic partnership development for the National Disability Institute and a senior researcher with the Law, Health Policy, and Disability Center at the University of Iowa College of Law. She also is national director and co-founder of the Real Economic Impact Tour. Her publications address topics such as financing of special education and welfare reform, and she has written a series of books on coping with loss.*

The roadmap out of poverty for millions of working Americans with disabilities is being paved by a grassroots movement of more than 550 community-based organizations nationwide called the Real Economic Impact Tour (REI Tour). The tour is built on existing work led by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, United Way of America, the National Community Tax Coalition, and more than 17 other national organizations to provide free tax assistance to an underserved population of taxpayers with disabilities.

The REI Tour has been a success. The number of people with disabilities who come to the free sites for tax assistance increased dramatically from 700 in 2004 to 950,000 in 2008, and the number of local partners increased 56% from 2006 to 2008. Since 2004, the REI Tour has provided free tax filing to more than 152,512 taxpayers with disabilities and more than \$213 million in tax refunds.

The REI Tour evolved through research funded by the NIDRR's Disability and Rehabilitation Research Project on Asset Accumulation and Tax Policy Project (AATPP), led by the Law Health Policy and Disability Center at the University of Iowa College of Law, in partnership with the National Disability Institute; Southern New Hampshire University School of Community Economic Development; National Federation of Community Development Credit Unions; World Institute on Disability; Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University; the IRS Stakeholder Partnerships, Education and Communication Division; the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation; and many other partners in the public and private sectors. Additional support for this research has come from the Bank of America, AT&T, Darden Restaurant Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the National Cooperative Bank through efforts of the National Disability Institute.

AATPP researchers and collaborators have conducted primary and secondary research that led to new knowledge about tax provisions and credits, financial services, and education. They have:

- Examined the role of the tax code in asset development;
- Measured the impact of select asset-building treatments on a cohort of workers with disabilities over time;
- Studied the preferences and characteristics of taxpayers with disabilities;
- Expanded financial services, products, and education through a network of 233 Community Development Credit Unions;
- Developed and disseminated an ongoing monthly e-newsletter (clearinghouse) on asset development to more than 35,000 subscribers nationwide; and
- Built trusted partnerships across traditional and non-traditional networks to expand access to the financial mainstream through the REI Tour, asset summits, and benefits training.

AATPP’s research has improved understanding of the economic status of working-age adults with disabilities and of policy and system barriers to asset accumulation and community participation. The researchers defined “assets” as capacity and resources that enable individuals to identify, choose, and implement activities that enhance their quality of life. In the non-disability world, people who own assets live longer and are healthier, happier, and better educated.

In 2006, through a Ford study, the researchers surveyed 3,199 tax filers who used free tax preparation sites in four cities. The average age of the filer with a disability was 42 years, compared with 32 for a person without a disability. Researchers found that the number one fear of filers with a disability was that income and savings limits would cause them to lose public benefits if they saved, filed taxes, or worked. Overall, this population lacked basic financial and tax knowledge and was frustrated by its inability to access tax and financial services (see sidebar, *New Generation Voices*).

In 2007, the AATTP researchers collaborated with the Internal Revenue Service on benchmark studies of taxpayers with disabilities. They found that approximately 1.6 million taxpayers with disabilities are not filing tax returns. They also found that 59% of people with disabilities used a computer at home, compared with 76% of people without disabilities, and that 37% were likely to have savings or investments, compared with 51% of people with no disabilities. The next generation of research will examine individual- and systems-level knowledge that affects asset accumulation, economic self-sufficiency, and community participation of persons with disabilities.

[SIDEBAR]

### **New Generation Voices**

“Those who don’t drive because of our disabilities don’t have a way to get to many of the free tax sites.”

“The American dream for me is to own my home, even if it is a trailer.”

“Why don’t people teach us how to file taxes ourselves so we can do it on our own so we are more independent?”

“I would be willing to travel 25 miles for one-on-one help with my taxes.”

There were no recommendations.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Work Incentive Planning and Advisement: Managing Disability Benefits to Promote Employment Retention**

*John Kregel, Ed.D., Virginia Commonwealth University*

*John Kregel chairs the Department of Special Education and Disability Policy at Virginia Commonwealth University and is associate director and research director of its Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Workplace Supports and Employment Retention. In addition, he directs the National Training Center for the Work Incentive Planning and Assistance program, which provides training and support to more than 500 community work incentive coordinators nationwide.*

The Benefits Planning, Assistance, and Outreach (BPAO) program, funded by the Social Security Administration (SSA) and now referred to as the Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program, was authorized in the Ticket to Work and Work Incentive Improvement Act of 1999. Since its inception, the national network of 100 WIPA projects has served more than 300,000 beneficiaries, with more than 3,500 additional beneficiaries receiving services each month.

The program’s primary purpose is to provide SSA beneficiaries with accurate information about work incentive programs and help them succeed in their efforts to obtain or retain employment. More than 95% of all individuals who contacted a BPAO were employed, actively seeking employment, or inquiring about work incentives and other programs that could assist in the pursuit of their employment goals. Less than 1% of those who contacted a BPAO were in the process of terminating employment or reducing their work hours.

From 2000 through 2006, the BPAO initiative served a wide variety of individuals with disabilities: 29.6% were on Supplemental Security Income, 54.3% were on Social Security Disability Insurance, and 16.1% were on both. Of those, 4.2% were employed full time, 19.8% were employed part time, 63.4% were unemployed and seeking employment, and 12.6% were unemployed and not seeking employment.

When the BPAO program transitioned to the current WIPA program, multiple agencies participated in the delivery of the work incentive planning and advisement services,

efforts were under way to promote the use of technology to assist the activities of agencies and beneficiaries, and a major staff development program was started. The WIPA program began to encourage people with disabilities to seek employment and access employment services, which marked a change in emphasis to long-term support of SSA beneficiaries.

The SSA-funded work incentive planning and assistance projects remain the cornerstone of a larger movement to support the employment efforts of individuals who receive support through public benefit programs. Vocational rehabilitation agencies, One-Stop Career Centers, community rehabilitation programs, and other federal and state programs are actively involved in funding and delivering benefits information and work incentive advisement services.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

- Determine the kinds of services people are providing through the different vocational rehabilitation vendor programs. What are the long-term effects of these services? To what extent do people who use these work incentive programs and work incentives actually go on to employment?

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

#### **The Growth of SSDI Applications: A Spillover Effect from Workers' Compensation** *John Burton, Jr., Ph.D., LL.B., Rutgers University*

*John Burton, professor emeritus and former dean of the Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations, served on an Institute of Medicine committee that recommended "A 21st Century System for Evaluating Veterans for Disability Benefits" and testified before the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors. Current research involves earning losses of veterans who receive disability payments, and he recently co-authored a casebook on employment law.*

Workers' compensation is a program for workers who are injured on the job or contract work-related diseases. It is the second largest source of cash and medical benefits for disabled workers in the United States. In 2005, the program paid \$55 billion in cash and medical benefits and cost employers \$89 billion. About 16% of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries have some connection to workers' compensation or other public disability benefits.

A study was conducted to identify determinants of application rates for SSDI benefits in approximately 45 jurisdictions between 1981 and 1999. Findings were reproduced from previous studies, and the impact of workers' compensation on SSDI applications was tested in addition to factors that were identified in previous studies. The results indicate that higher levels of expected cash benefits provided by workers' compensation programs relative to the states' average wages are associated with lower application rates for SSDI benefits. Because expected workers' compensation benefits

declined during the 1990s, this development helped explain the increase in SSDI applications during that decade. During the same decade, a number of states changed their workers' compensation laws to reduce eligibility for benefits, and this factor also is associated with the increase in SSDI applications.

Researchers have suggested that these changes are likely to have a disproportional effect on older workers, who in turn are the most likely applicants for SSDI benefits. The next step is for researchers to examine the magnitude of the impact of workers' compensation changes on SSDI finances and expand the data period from the original range of 1981–1999 to 1981–2004.

This is the first study that found a spillover effect from workers' compensation to SSDI. This shifting of costs from workers' compensation placed more pressures on the budget of the SSDI program and muted the financial pressures for health and safety in the workplace. The research was supported by NIDRR's Employment Policy Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) Project at the RRTC on Employment Policy for People with Disabilities, School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Through a federal agency, conduct a systematic examination of workers' compensation, including the program's relationship to SSDI.
- Study workers' compensation outside federal agencies.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

#### **AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Government Policy and Business.** Government benefits programs can interfere directly with the relationship between employees and their employer. For example, if an employer would like an employee to work overtime during a particularly busy time, the employee may not be able to do this without losing some government benefits.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Study the possibility of combining federal benefits programs with employer health care programs.
- Engage employers in discussions about employees who lose public benefits when they reach a certain number of hours of work.

## **Key Issues: Federal Data Collection**

Panelists presented and discussed federal data authorities, goals, efforts, and issues of ICDR members in conducting research to inform both public- and private-sector policies and practices. Panelists and participants recommended research that will increase coordination of data-collection efforts of the public and private sectors and improve the relevance of federal data collection for business and policy development. Following are summaries of the panel presentations.

### **Measuring the Employment Status of Adults with Disabilities in the Monthly Current Population Survey**

***Thomas Nardone, Bureau of Labor Statistics***

*As assistant commissioner for current employment analysis at the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Thomas Nardone manages four major statistical programs: the Current Population Survey, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, the Mass Layoff Survey, and the American Time Use Survey. He also oversees the monthly preparation of the Employment Situation news release, which describes current developments that affect the American workforce.*

A timely and accurate measure of the employment status of persons with disabilities is necessary to evaluate the labor market difficulties experienced by this population. Such information can be valuable in guiding public policy designed to help groups that experience labor market difficulties.

To meet this need, a series of questions has been added to the monthly Current Population Survey (CPS), which has not included questions to identify persons with disabilities (see sidebar, Disability Questions of Current Population Survey). The CPS is a monthly survey of approximately 60,000 households, the most important source of information on the U.S. labor force, employment, and unemployment. It produces data on a wide variety of demographic and job characteristics and yields one of the most widely reported U.S. statistics: the national unemployment rate.

After a lengthy research process, the disability questions that had been developed for the American Community Survey (ACS) were selected for placement in the CPS. Although these two surveys will ask the same questions, data from the ACS and CPS will have characteristics and limitations specific to each survey. The disability questions were added to the CPS in June 2008 and will be a regular component of the survey. After an evaluation period, CPS disability data will be published for the first time in February 2009. Among the data collected is information on occupation, full-and part-time status, earnings, and educational attainment.

The development of the disability questions was a long and challenging research effort. Evaluating and understanding the new data also will take time and research.

#### **SIDEBAR**

## Disability Questions of the Current Population Survey

This month we want to learn about people who have physical, mental, or emotional conditions that cause serious difficulty with their daily activities. Please answer for household members who are 15 years old or over.

1. Is anyone deaf or does anyone have serious difficulty hearing?
2. Is anyone blind or does anyone have serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses?
3. Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does anyone have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?
4. Does anyone have serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs?
5. Does anyone have difficulty dressing or bathing?
6. Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does anyone have difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping?

No recommendations were offered.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Counting Working-Age People with Disabilities: What Current Data Tell Us and Options for Improvement**

*Andrew J. Houtenville, Ph.D., New Editions Consulting, Inc.*

*Andrew Houtenville is a senior research associate at New Editions Consulting, Inc. and former principal investigator and project director for the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on disability Demographics and Statistics at Cornell University. He is extensively involved in disability statistics and employment policy research and has published widely in the areas of disability statistics and the economic status of people with disabilities.*

In the past, efforts to provide statistics on the number and status of working-age people with disabilities have been fragmented and sporadic. This population is not usually included in mainstream discussions of the latest statistics on employment, income, poverty, and other measures of the status of the population. In contrast, government agencies routinely compile and report such statistics for groups defined by sex, age, race, ethnicity, and marital status. For example, the Census Bureau's Annual Report on Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage, perhaps the most cited statistical reports on socioeconomic status, completely ignores the population with disabilities.

A forthcoming publication entitled *Counting Working-Age People with Disabilities: What Current Data Tell Us and Options for Improvement*, edited by Upjohn Institute, provides a systematic review of what current statistics and data on the working-age population with disabilities can tell us, what they cannot tell us, and how they can be improved to tell us what we want to know. It describes the findings and limitations of existing data on disability prevalence, demographics, employment, income, poverty, health and functional status, institutionalization, and program participation.

This volume also addresses methodological issues and ways to improve the overall collection of disability-related data. Improvement options include (1) increasing the identification and inclusion of people with disabilities in federal surveys by deploying the new American Community Survey (ACS) questions in all federal surveys, (2) strengthening collection of longitudinal data by increasing efforts to match survey and administrative records, and (3) expanding the disability content of the overall data-collection effort by adding several disability-related questions to selected surveys and fielding periodic disability-related supplements to existing surveys.

The following information is a sample of the content included in the volume, which covers people with disabilities ages 25–61:

**The Disability Data Landscape.** This chapter examines the varying definitions of disability. For example, the prevalence of people with disability was 11.9% with the 2003 ACS survey, 16.7% with the 2002 National Health Information Survey, and 18.7% with the 2002 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

**Demographics.** This chapter examines time-trend and geographic and demographic patterns. For example, in 2006 the prevalence rate of people with disabilities was 9.7% in Minnesota and 21.4% in West Virginia.

**Employment.** This chapter examines long-term trends and state-level estimates. For example, according to the 2003 ACS, 39.3% of people with disabilities worked full time.

**Household Income.** This chapter examines trends in household income and income source. For example, according to the 2003 ACS, the median household income was \$34,600 for people with disabilities.

**Improving Data Collection.** This chapter discusses high-priority options for improving disability data.

It is hoped that this information will draw more attention to disability policy at the national and state level.

No research recommendations were presented.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## **Social Security Administration Data-Collection Efforts**

*Robert R. Weathers, Ph.D., M.A., Social Security Administration*

*Robert Weathers is an economist with the Social Security Administration (SSA). His current research involves SSA-sponsored demonstration projects to improve the health and employment of disability program participants and reduce their reliance on benefits; examination of health insurance coverage during the 24-month Medicare waiting period; and the impact of employment protection laws on an employer's decision to offer accommodations to employees with disabilities.*

The Social Security Administration (SSA) administers two disability programs:

**Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).** SSDI is a social insurance program that covers disabled workers insured through payroll taxes. Disabled adult children and disabled widowers also can qualify for this program based on the insured beneficiary's record. The child of an insured parent can qualify for this program.

**Supplemental Security Income (SSI).** SSI is a needs-based program. It uses the same definition of disability as SSDI; however, SSI also has a program for children under age 18 that uses a slightly different disability definition.

SSA collects administrative data on applicants to both of these programs primarily for program administration purposes. These data also have substantial value for program development and research purposes, but SSA researchers and contractors have had to create their own extracts from the various SSA administrative data sources, a labor-intensive and time-consuming process.

The SSA recently undertook a project to change that with several data-collection efforts. The first involves creating user-friendly files called "Ticket to Work research files." These files have been critical for a number of recent studies. For example, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) uses these files to link to information on participants in the state programs that allow people with disabilities to buy into the Medicaid program. The Government Accounting Office also uses these files to evaluate services provided by vocational rehabilitation agencies.

The second endeavor involves data-sharing agreements. Linking administrative data from other agencies substantially increases research capacity. SSA has two-way data-sharing agreements with CMS and the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and is working to create a three-way agreement to link to CMS and RSA. SSA also is working with several other federal agencies to develop research and development data-sharing agreements

The third effort is to link SSA data to other administrative data sources. In progress is a project to link SSA administrative data with National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) data. NTID is a postsecondary educational institution located on the campus of

the Rochester Institute of Technology. Through an agreement with SSA, the institute is evaluating its impact on lifetime employment and participation in SSA programs. The results were recently published in *Social Security Bulletin*.

The fourth data-collection effort is linking SSA to survey data. For example, SSA has an agreement with the U.S. Census Bureau to link SSA data to the current Population Survey March Supplement and the Survey of Income and Program Participation, a powerful survey that tracks individuals for a 48-month period. Other data-linking efforts involve survey data sponsored by the National Center for Health Statistics, and the National Institute on Aging

Finally, the SSA sponsors surveys. Two recent surveys are the National Beneficiary Survey and the National Survey of SSI Children and Families. These efforts include collecting data from current demonstration projects and linking SSA administrative data to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey for research and development purposes.

No recommendations were offered.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

#### **AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Improving Data on Disabilities.** To find better ways to link various databases that include people with disabilities, it may be helpful to look at model systems on medical records linkage. It also may be useful to consider other databases—such as those at the National Center for Educational Statistics, the University of Michigan, and the National Center on Biotechnology—to link to or to use as examples for ways to link to other databases.

**Recommendation:** Work with the National Center for Health Statistics to field a disabilities supplement to improve disability data.

**Recommendation:** Examine and possibly link with databases, such as the National Center for Educational Statistics, national databases at the University of Michigan, the National Center on Biotechnology, and the National Institute on Aging, to improve disability data. Also look at working with Common Ground, a pioneer in the development of supportive housing and other research, on its database.

**Recommendation:** Include the American Community Survey questions on disability in all federally sponsored and funded surveys, so that surveys on housing, education, transportation, and other areas include the same set of disability questions.

**Disability Identifiers.** Disability identifiers are short sets of questions that can be used in general population surveys. There are wide variations in disability identifiers, but

whatever identifiers are agreed upon should be translatable and be able to be used with ICF domains.

**Recommendation:** Ensure that disability identifiers are translatable and can be used with the ICF domains.

**Recommendation:** Address facilitators and barriers to using the identifiers, particularly with the ICF, so that disability prevalence can be viewed from both the national and the international level.

### ***Federal Government: A Model Employer***

Panelists presented and discussed recent research on the intents, practices, and accomplishments of the federal government to achieve its goal to be an inclusive model employer. Panelists and participants recommended policy and research that will clarify criteria and model practices applicable to both the public and private sectors. Following are summaries of the panel presentations.

#### **Leadership for the Employment of Americans with Disabilities**

***Jo Linda Johnson, J.D., U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission***

*During her tenure with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Jo Linda Johnson has been an appellate attorney with the Office of Federal Operations and acting director of its Special Services Division, attorney advisor for the Affirmative Employment Division of Federal Sector Programs, branch chief for the Affirmative Employment Division, and now special assistant to the commissioner. She also is a trained mediator for private-sector complaints of discrimination.*

The federal government should be a model employer for people with disabilities, especially people with targeted (severe) disabilities. However, the federal government's numbers of employees with disabilities has been on a slight decline every year since 1993. In fiscal year 2006, people with targeted disabilities constituted only 0.94% of the 2.6 million people in the federal workforce. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) collects data only on a limited range of disability, with nine specific categories: blindness, deafness, paralysis, near paralysis, convulsion disorders, distortion on limb, distortion on spine, mental illness, and mental retardation.

For the period 1997–2006, the federal workforce increased by 5.48%, but the number of workers with disabilities decreased by 14.75%. Agencies with the highest population of workers with disabilities include EEOC, Social Security Administration, Defense Finance and Accounting Service, Defense Logistics Agency, and Government Printing Office. Cabinet-level agencies have lower percentages of workers with disabilities. The top agencies are the Treasury Department (1.73% of workforce), U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (1.49%), and U.S. Department of Education (1.36%).

Not only is there a decline in the percentage of people with disabilities in the federal workforce, but those in the workforce face barriers in advancement and pay. For example, fewer than 100 of the 20,000 employees in the Senior Executive Service have disabilities.

Many resources and services are available to identify, recruit, and support people with disabilities for employment in the federal workforce. (See sidebar, Recruitment Sources and Services for People with Disabilities.)

[SIDEBAR]

### **Recruitment Sources and Services for People with Disabilities**

**For postsecondary students and recent graduates:** The Employer Assistance and Recruiting Network and the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP). The WRP is a recruitment and referral program that connects federal-sector employers nationwide with highly motivated postsecondary students and recent graduates with disabilities.

**For veterans with disabilities:** The U.S. Department of Labor's Veterans Employment and Training Service, Hire Heroes, and Wounded Warriors Project.

**For contact advocacy groups:** The American Association of People with Disabilities, National Council on Independent Living, Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Government, and American Council of the Blind.

**For hiring assistance:** Schedule A hiring authority. This authority can be used to hire people with disabilities. No competition and no vacancy announcement are required; traditional process can be bypassed completely.

**For accommodations:** The Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program. This program provides assistive technology and accommodations to ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to the information environment and opportunities in the U.S. Department of Defense and throughout the federal government.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Have each federal agency set a yearly goal for employing people with disabilities. Share the goal with hiring managers and hold them accountable. The lead goal should be 2% by 2010 for all agencies.
- Train all federal agency personnel on how to fulfill their responsibilities under the Rehabilitation Act, how to use special hiring authorities, and how to provide reasonable accommodations.

- Inform federal agency personnel who are responsible for hiring about ways to recruit, hire, and provide accommodations for workers with disabilities. (See sidebar, Recruitment Sources and Services for People with Disabilities.)

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

**Federal Disability Employment Policies and Practices: Human Resources/Equal Employment Opportunity and Supervisor Perspectives**  
*William Erickson, M.S., Cornell University*

*William Erickson, a research specialist with the Employment and Disability Institute at Cornell University, is co-principal investigator and project manager of the Field Initiated Program Development Project on Web accessibility for students with disabilities at community colleges. Previous projects include analysis of the accessibility of Web-based e-recruiting sites for people with disabilities and public- and private-sector employer surveys on implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act and related civil rights legislation.*

The employment of persons with disabilities within the federal sector is an important issue. If the federal government hopes to present itself as a model employer, it is vital to understand the perspectives of human resources, the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) personnel, and supervisors who implement the policies and are intimately involved with the hiring and accommodation processes. Researchers at Cornell University conducted two federal-sector surveys on employees with disabilities. In 1999, the first survey targeted top-level human resources and EEO personnel in all 96 federal agencies. The second, fielded in 2001, was a parallel survey of more than 1,000 federal supervisors in 17 agencies. The response rates were high: 97% for the first survey and 93% for the second. Survey topics included accommodations process; recruitment, pre-employment screening, testing, and new employee orientation; health and other benefits of employment; promotion/training opportunities; disciplinary process and grievance, dismissal, or termination; Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) training; and disability management and return-to-work programs.

Most common disability claims involved failure to provide accommodation (36%), failure to promote (26%), wrongful discharge (22%), and unfair discipline (20%). Nine out of 10 human resources personnel said they had been flexible in the application of human resources policies, had made existing facilities accessible, and had modified the work environment. Supervisors reported having made fewer accommodations, but once they were presented with a list of common accommodations, they realized they had been providing accommodations all along.

To find information about accommodations, approximately one-third of the supervisors used human resources and employee relations staff, one-third used the EEO office, and one-third used safety and ergonomics staff. Less than 1 in 10 used the Job Accommodation Network, the disability services office, or selective placement coordinator.

Supervisors were not fully familiar with ADA interview considerations. For example, 72% knew about framing questions about job tasks, but only 49% knew about accessing sign language interpreters. The interviews also revealed discrepancies between the human resources personnel and supervisors in opinions on barriers to employment or advancement. More human resources personnel than supervisors considered the cost of accommodations, attitudes and barriers, and lack of related experience to be barriers.

The results of these surveys provide a background that can help in understanding the perspective of these two groups in the federal government and their experiences. The findings also suggest potential directions and considerations for future research on the employment of persons with disabilities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Determine whether the federal government is providing accommodations for everyone who requests them.
- Determine what federal human resources personnel and supervisors know about accommodations for specific populations, including people who have mental illness, are visually impaired, or are hearing impaired.
- Engage organizational resources, such as Equal Employment Opportunity offices, unions, and disability management programs, in providing information about accommodations. Make supervisors more aware of the resources available to them.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Leading the Way with Accommodations** *Michael Young, U.S. Department of Defense*

*Michael Young has more than 25 years of experience in assistive technology, accessibility, and educational services. He serves as the manager of the U.S. Department of Defense Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program's Technology Evaluation Center. In this capacity, he conducts needs assessments for individuals with disabilities and wounded service members and provides training sessions and demonstrations for managers and senior leaders.*

In 1990, the Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP) was established as the U.S. Department of Defense's centrally funded program to provide accommodations. Expanding in 2000 to support other federal agencies, it currently has partnerships with 65 federal agencies and has provided more than 66,000 accommodations. CAP's mission is to provide assistive technology (AT) and accommodations to ensure that people with disabilities and wounded service members have equal access to the information environment and opportunities in the U.S. Department of Defense and throughout the

federal government. Examples of AT are computer input and output devices, telecommunication devices, and captioning services.

In addition to providing AT, CAP conducts needs assessment for people with newly acquired disabilities, provides installation and integration of technology, provides training on disability management and creating an accessible environment, supports the compliance of federal regulations, and assists in the recruitment, placement, promotion, and retention of people with disabilities and wounded service members.

In fiscal year 1990, 1,000 accommodations were made, mostly for hearing- and vision-related disabilities. This number increased to 66,800 in fiscal year 2008 for a variety of disabilities. Making this all possible is the CAP Technology Evaluation Center (CAPTEC), located in the Pentagon, which assists individuals and supervisors in choosing appropriate computer and electronic accommodations. CAPTEC personnel understand that one solution does not fit all.

What are the future needs for accommodation of people with disabilities in the workplace? These needs will depend on existing and emerging trends, such as multiple disabilities, evolving disabilities, and evolving environments. Many service members are returning from war with multiple disabilities. Disabilities can evolve as a result of deterioration of a person's medical condition or from aging, injury, or disease. Finally, the work environment is evolving with changes in the use of computers, security concerns, and many other factors.

[PULLOUT]

### **Case Study**

A reservist had lost his eyesight and, because of burn and shrapnel wounds, he couldn't use his arms. When asked what his future would be, he said someone would walk him to the bathroom and take him to the kitchen to feed him. He would be depending on someone for the rest of his life. However, he overheard people working with another service member who was blind and using CAP technology. The reservist wanted to know if he could get the technology, too, and be able to talk to his computer. The last time Michael Young spoke with him, the reservist wanted to go to law school. He was the same person; he just needed tools that he hadn't known existed.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## **AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Survey on Federal Disability Employment Policies and Practices.** The survey on federal disability employment policies and practices was conducted in 2001. Since then, programs like the Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program have worked to decrease accommodation barriers. It would be useful to conduct another survey of federal disability employment policies and practices.

**Recommendation:** When replicating the survey of federal disability employment policies and practices, examine the impact of Section 508 and review whether costs of and barriers to accommodations have decreased.

### ***State-Level Programs: Resources for Business and Workforce Development***

Panelists presented and discussed cutting-edge state research, policy, and model practices that affect, corporate and workforce development. Panelists and participants recommended federal and state research and demonstrations projects, data needs, business and public-sector initiatives that contribute to participation in the workforce of people with disabilities, and technological innovations that influence inclusive workforce and business development. Following are summaries of the panel presentations.

#### **Improving the Workforce System’s Capacity to Serve People with Disabilities *Joseph M. Carbone, The WorkPlace, Inc.***

*Joseph Carbone leads The WorkPlace, Inc., an innovative workforce development board that helps people prepare for careers and develops the workforce for employers in southwestern Connecticut. He emphasizes broader collaboration, ensuring that the system invests its resources to serve new constituencies, such as low-wage workers, immigrants, youth, and older workers, and to create an enduring impact. The WorkPlace, Inc. serves more than 22,000 people and 200 businesses a year in a 20-town region.*

[QUOTE]

“Don’t simply accept the workforce system. Change it. Make it work. If it doesn’t happen on your level, it won’t happen.” —Joseph M. Carbone

The Workplace, Inc. is a private non-profit company launched in 2002 with a work incentive grant, which it used to develop local opportunities for people with disabilities with businesses that were disability friendly. Since then, The Workplace, Inc., located in southwestern Connecticut, has won a number of competitive grants, all with an eye to improving the workforce system for people with disabilities. Experience has shown that an important step is to find one business leader in the community who champions the hiring of people with disabilities. This person will bring other business leaders of quality to join the endeavor.

Profound social change will occur in the next several years. By 2012, the United States will be facing a shortage of workers as the baby boom generation retires. In addition, as the global workplace continues the process of becoming wired, America’s local businesses increasingly will become virtual businesses. These developments will create a wealth of opportunities for people with disabilities and for workplace development. The free market will be on the side of people with disabilities if they are able to develop the right skill sets to match the needs of the business community.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

- Study how the disability service community can adapt faster to market changes and develop more diverse partners to do so.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## **Mental Health Treatment Study**

***Susan T. Azrin, Ph.D., Westat***

*Susan T. Azrin, a senior study director in Westat's Health and Disabilities Research Group, has directed a National Institute of Mental Health feasibility study and the 2006 Medicaid and Mental Health and Substance Abuse Technical Assistance Conference. Dr. Azrin has published on evidence-based practices for people with severe mental illness, parity in health care coverage for mental health and substance abuse treatments, and public-sector financing of health care.*

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries with primary psychiatric impairments constitute the largest, fastest growing, and most costly population in the SSDI program. Employment of SSDI beneficiaries with primary psychiatric impairments is less than 1%.

The Mental Health Treatment Study (MHTS), sponsored by the Social Security Administration, represents the largest study to evaluate policies and services surrounding the return to work of persons with disabling psychiatric conditions on SSDI. The MHTS tests the assumption that providing access to evidence-based supported employment services and behavioral health treatments, along with insurance coverage, over a 24-month intervention period can enable SSDI beneficiaries with psychiatric impairments to return to competitive employment.

Currently in the field in 22 cities across the country, the MHTS is recruiting 2,000 SSDI beneficiaries with primary psychiatric impairments into a randomized controlled trial. The major questions the study attempts to answer are the following:

- What are the major policy barriers to return to work for SSDI beneficiaries with psychiatric disabilities?
- What specific policy changes will reduce these barriers?
- Which SSDI beneficiaries choose to enter the MHTS intervention program?

One reason that people with psychiatric impairments have low employment rates is that they fear losing SSDI benefits if they become employed. Another reason is that the traditional employment services available to them do not work well; these people generally need structured long-term support, which does not fit with what traditional vocational services can offer. Conducting the MHTS now makes sense for two reasons: there are evidence-based supported employment services that work, and there have been advances in behavioral health treatments and medication management for persons with schizophrenia, depression, and bipolar disorder.

The intention of MHTS researchers is to remove as many barriers to employment as possible. For example, they offer supported employment to the research participants. They also pay for participants' health insurance. This is important because, even if Medicare covers a particular therapy, a beneficiary who cannot afford the cost sharing will not be able to get the therapy. The researchers even give participants a debit card to pay for their prescription medicines at the pharmacy.

The research team anticipates reporting on the results of the MHTS in the fall of 2010. Preliminary findings indicate higher rates of competitive employment for SSDI beneficiaries who participate in the MHTS intervention. At 16 months, 33% of the intervention beneficiaries were competitively employed, compared with only 12% of the control population; 41% of the intervention group had recently had a competitive job, compared with only 13% of those in the control group.

No recommendations were offered.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Disability Program Navigator: Creating Innovation and Transformation**

*Michael Morris, J.D., Burton Blatt Institute, Syracuse University*

*Michael Morris, chief executive officer of Burton Blatt Institute, is known for his 25 years of advancing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities at the local, state, and national levels. His proposals to improve technology assistance for persons with disabilities have been implemented by Congress, he has served as legal counsel to the U.S. Senate Small Business Committee, and he was the national executive director of United Cerebral Palsy.*

[QUOTE]

“A comprehensive government-wide coordination of cross-cutting disability programs is lacking.” —Michael Morris

A comprehensive government-wide coordination of disability programs has long been lacking. In 2003, the U.S. Department of Labor and the Social Security Administration created the Disability Program Navigator initiative to respond to the problems of interagency and systems fragmentation and the complexity of benefits at the local level, where it touches the individual. The initiative created a new position—disability program navigator. The navigators' role is to help coordinate the multiple and often duplicative services to individuals with disabilities while working in the One-Stop delivery system. At the core of the navigator program is the notion that a seamless service delivery system could be created at the local level to improve employment status for people with disabilities. This initiative could give people with disabilities an equal platform with everyone else to obtain needed services

There are now more than 500 Disability Program Navigators in 45 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. The number of navigators varies by state. For instance, Vermont has four navigators, and New York has more than 50. Across the states, researchers are seeing successes. Individuals with disabilities are gaining access to training and employment services in the One-Stop system, and as a result, are gaining access to meaningful employment opportunities. Furthermore, workforce system partners that never before communicated are working together to reduce duplication of services and coordinate delivery of seamless services to these individuals.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- Identify and examine the differences in the many models of the Disability Program Navigator initiative, such as differences among the states and between states and local areas. What is the right balance between the roles of the navigators as system and relationship builders and as participants in the Ticket to Work program, where they become more involved with individual job seekers with disabilities? What background and skills are most likely to make navigators effective in their job as problem solvers, agents of systems change, and in multiple other roles?

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## **AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Training for Current and Future Workforce Needs.** Employers continue to report a shortage of workers with the skill sets needed to fill many categories of jobs now and career categories projected to grow. However, the nation's for-profit, non-profit, and public training institutions lack the capacity to provide training in some of the areas that people with disabilities need.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Determine how rehabilitation service providers can help people with disabilities get the training they need to be able to participate in the current and future job markets.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Examine training institutions to identify specific areas of training and specific technology adaptations that can bolster their ability to meet the skill needs of people with disabilities,

**Effective Employment Retention.** Gaining employment and retaining employment have different challenges. An action plan is needed to make job retention programs work better.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Identify actions and policies that have had demonstrated success in keeping people with disabilities in their jobs. Disseminate the findings widely as a first step in developing "best practices" for job retention.

**Variations in the State Disability Navigator Programs.** Disability navigator programs across the states are not standard; they are evolving with considerable variation in several areas. It is not known what effect these differences may have on the intended impact of this program.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Study how the disability navigator programs are being implemented nationwide. Identify differences across the states and determine which approaches have the best outcomes.

**Setting Research Priorities.** Members of the Interagency Committee on Disability Research develop research priorities separately rather than jointly. This approach produces both redundancies and gaps in research. A fundamental systems-level change is needed to allocate research resources more effectively.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Develop a core set of principles to guide the creation of research agendas. An overarching, coordinated policy for research can reduce duplicative waste and stretch resources to cover more research ground.

**Involving People with Disabilities Throughout the Research Process.** Too often, people with disabilities are included in the research process only as study subjects, yet they have an important perspective to contribute throughout the research process.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Incorporate people with disabilities in the design of research studies from start to finish, from framing the research questions to evaluating the data and translating findings into practices and policies.

### ***Emergent Populations with Disability: Veterans and Returning Veterans***

This panel discussed current policy and research trends in the federal government that address the employment-related and recovery needs of service members who have acquired disabilities, including those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Participants were asked to offer recommendations for research that expands the federal impact on the economic recovery, rehabilitation, re-entry, and re-employment of veterans. Following are summaries of the presentations given under this topic.

#### **Recovery and Reintegration of Veterans with Disability** ***Lynda C. Davis, Ph.D., M.A., U.S. Department of Defense***

*Lynda Davis, deputy assistant secretary of the Navy, is organizing the Defense Department's comprehensive casualty care reform effort to address the needs of sailors, marines, and their families. She has been on the faculty of the Departments of Public Administration and Psychiatry at the University of Southern California; worked at the Veterans Affairs hospital in Sepulveda, California; and served in the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, the U.S. Department of Education, and on the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committees.*

Currently, there are 23.8 million living veterans. Of the 32,135 service members who were injured in Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom, 13,951 were seriously or severely injured. In addressing the needs of these service members, the U.S. Department of Defense is creating a holistic and family-centric approach to recovery and reintegration of its veterans. The department is working with a care coordination model to help these veterans thrive in the communities from which they came. The three aspects of this holistic care coordination model are:

**A Recovery Coordinator.** The coordinator organizes injured veterans' lives so they do not have to deal with multiple people and agencies to receive care. This person establishes a long-term relationship with the veterans and follows them even after they leave a medical treatment facility and implements a recovery plan.

**A Recovery Plan.** This Web-based plan is a comprehensive "life map" to identify goals and support the transitions of care across settings and providers with inter-agency, intergovernmental, public and private services and resources.

**A National Resource Directory.** This directory will allow health care providers, family members, service members, and the recovery coordinator to search for a service or resource by a diagnosis, by geographic locations, and by the kind of services needed, such as housing, employment, and financial assistance.

Another initiative is the Department of Defense Center for Excellence, which works with the Veterans Affairs community to help veterans with brain injuries such as traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Identify what medical and non-medical challenges service member veterans face in setting life goals for education, training, and employment.
- Determine what services and resources are most effective in supporting education, training, and employment goals.
- Research what barriers exist to access of existing services and resources.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

### **Paralyzed Veterans of America**

***Susan Prokop, M.P.A., Paralyzed Veterans of America***

*Susan Prokop works with the Advocacy Program at Paralyzed Veterans of America, where she is responsible for issues relating to Social Security, employment, and housing. She co-chairs three task forces; has chaired Virginia's Statewide Independent Living Council; and was a health policy analyst with the American Society of Internal Medicine.*

*She also has been honored by the Arlington, Virginia, Human Rights Commission for her advocacy work in disability rights.*

Paralyzed Veterans of America is a veterans service organization that represents veterans with spinal cord injury or spinal cord dysfunctions. It recognizes that veterans with disabilities are also people with disabilities, but they live in two different policy worlds: in the Veterans Affairs (VA) system with its policies, and in a national system with its programs and policies for all people with disabilities. These two systems have a number of differences. For example, in the VA system, veterans receive compensation benefits; in the national system, they get accessible housing and transportation.

This can create incompatibilities that mean these two systems do not always work together. For example, there is a disconnect between the VA pension program and the Social Security work incentive program. Unlike with Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), which is reduced gradually as earnings rise, the VA pension has a cash cliff, meaning that if veterans go over the criteria amount by as little as a dollar, they lose their VA pension. So if veterans with SSDI want to use the SSDI work incentive, they risk losing both their SSDI and VA pension right away.

Of the 2.6 million veterans with service-connected disabilities, 52% are not in the labor force. Of the 665,000 veterans with severe disabilities, 73% are unemployed. However, younger veterans with severe disabilities are more likely to be in the work force than their non-veteran peers.

What do service-connected veterans have that other people with disabilities do not have that might influence their ability to work? They receive home and vehicle modification grants and guaranteed health care, which are unaffected by earnings.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Determine what changes need to be made in the Social Security Administration's disability process to ensure that all veterans with disabilities get the supports they have earned.
- Identify which federal return-to-work disability policies, like the Veterans Affairs pension cash cliff and Social Security work incentives, hinder or ignore veterans with disabilities.
- Research whether Veterans Affairs benefits for veterans with severe disabilities—both spinal cord and non-spinal cord injuries—have any impact on the veterans' participation in the workforce compared with similar populations of non-veterans with disabilities.

(See <http://www.icdr.us/employment2008/materials.html> for PowerPoint slides.)

## **Disabilities of Veterans and Returning Veterans**

***Sunil K. Sen-Gupta, Ph.D., M.P.H., U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs***

*Sunil Sen-Gupta is a scientific program manager with the Veterans Affairs' Rehabilitation Research and Development Service in the Office of Research and Development. Previously, he worked for the Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General and Veterans Affairs Medical Centers in San Juan, Puerto Rico and Dayton, Ohio. His current research interests are traumatic brain injury and spinal cord injury rehabilitation.*

Traditionally, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Research and Development has conducted research in geriatrics, chronic neurodegenerative diseases, mental health, and substance abuse. More recently, because of the rising number of women veterans, the VA has increased funding for research in women's health. Research on suicide prevention, assessment, and treatment is a high-priority area of research in the VA, and traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have recently become high-priority areas of research as well.

Traumatic brain injury is probably the signature disability of military personnel serving in Iraq and Afghanistan: 20% of these personnel have had some kind of TBI. In the medical literature, TBI is categorized as mild, moderate, or severe and as an open or closed wound. An open wound is a penetrating injury that is easily identifiable, whereas a closed wound is not necessarily noticeable and can be difficult to identify. Furthermore, there are no biological or lab makers or radiology tests to distinguish this injury.

Compounding the problem of diagnosing TBI is its idiosyncratic nature. A single "blast" affects different people differently, depending on their physical location, height, and a multitude of other factors. The following scenario illustrates how soldiers with TBI may go undetected:

Four soldiers come into a hospital carrying a fifth soldier, whose head has an open wound and who is unconscious. The severely injured man receives immediate treatment for a TBI. The other four soldiers were likely in the vicinity of the blast and also may have suffered from a TBI, but they do not receive treatment because they have no obvious signs of a TBI. Their TBI may not show up until several months after discharge. Because many mental and physical changes seen in returning service members are attributed to readjustment, their TBI may go undetected for months.

To diagnose TBI sooner, medical professionals need to talk to friends and relatives about any behavior or physical changes they may notice, rather than relying only on the individual with the injury. It also is important to assess individuals in the environment in which they are functioning.

Currently, there is no information on the long-term effects of TBI; however, research shows that head injuries put a person at risk for Alzheimer's, so it is likely that some of the service members with TBI may develop this condition several decades later.

Post-traumatic stress disorder is another major disability seen in returning service members. Common symptoms include night terrors, stress, and guilt about surviving. To help detect PTSD, health professionals conduct a psychosocial assessment, but the condition is still difficult to diagnose. What usually alerts a health professional to possible PTSD are complaints from family members about a service member's behavior. Some evidence-based treatments are available for PTSD, but better treatments are needed.

Funding has been made available for all aspects of research pertaining to these disorders, including basic research, screening, assessment, clinical treatment, and vocational and social rehabilitation. An important issue related to vocational and social rehabilitation is the use of salient outcome indicators. VA researchers are leading the effort to come up with a set of outcome indicators that can be used to measure the efficacy and effectiveness of all types of rehabilitation research. Currently, VA researchers are engaged in a number of studies that are analyzing different intervention approaches for vocational rehabilitation and community reintegration.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Research the long-term effects of traumatic brain injury.
- Develop better treatments for post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Develop methods of diagnosing traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder earlier.

## **AUDIENCE PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS**

**RECOMMENDATION:** Increase partnerships among government agencies so that veterans have easier access to benefits.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Study the most effective methods to support education training and employment goals for those returning from duty in the armed forces.

## Section III: Expert Panel: Analysis of the Conference

The conference planning committee charged four conference participants, each representing different backgrounds, with roaming the conference sessions and reporting on what they saw and heard. From their observations, they gave their perspectives on the conference and recommended future directions for a federal research agenda.

### ***Stephanie Creary, M.S., M.B.A., The Conference Board***

*Stephanie Creary's current research is espoused within the Conference Board, Harvard Business School, and her independent research and consulting practice. Her research focuses on issues, challenges, and best practices for engaging diverse workforces in developing and managing processes and practices that promote innovation and strategy execution. Her latest research report for the Conference Board is Leadership, Governance and Accountability: A Pathway to a Diverse and Inclusive Organization (forthcoming).*

*If she had given her presentation a title, Creary said it would be "Building a Creative, Innovative, and Flexible Workplace: Getting Beyond Employment." The following action points help achieve the goal embodied in that potential presentation title.*

#### **It's what you know and whom you know.**

1. Engage others, build bridges, step outside your silos.
2. Embrace diversity and develop cross-functional and cross-disciplinary teams.
3. Build networks and alliances.

#### **It's what you say and how you say it.**

1. Create safety spaces for asking questions.
2. Give permission for people to say out loud, "I don't know, I don't understand, and I don't get it."
3. Make it concrete, show people statistics that are accessible, give them pictures, tell them stories, and encourage and show them what best-practice models look like.
4. Learn how to find allies and how to build networks.
5. Acknowledge the process, not just the goal. Understand that to business leaders, it's a journey, not a race.

6. Offer carrots, not sticks. Offer us incentives; don't threaten us. Think about the small wins you can celebrate along the way.
7. Don't forget the "soft skills" that address how to become the most effective person that you can be in an organization. Soft skills include self-awareness, decision-making, communication, understanding power and ways to influence, and understanding how to motivate and lead teams.

**It's what you do and how you do it.**

1. Make it work for everyone; appeal to the notion of competing interests.
2. Think in terms of strategies, not just initiatives.
3. Manage talent—people don't just want jobs, they want to be successful in their careers.
4. Leverage best practices.
5. Become familiar with change-management techniques and implementation practices. Understand that you're trying to go from incremental change to transformational change. Change is about leadership. It's also about having a champion within an organization, often in places where you aren't looking. Offer incentives and awards, and keep in mind continuous improvement and measure of performance.

***Fredrick E. Menz, Ph.D., University of Wisconsin—Stout***

*Fredrick Menz, professor emeritus in the Department of Rehabilitation and Counseling at the University of Wisconsin—Stout, writes, consults, presents, and continues to conduct research. He has directed the university's Research and Training Center on Community-Based Rehabilitation Programs and the Continuing Education Center for Community-Based Rehabilitation Programs, been a fellow with the Disability Research Institute, and had approximately 100 articles, chapters, books, and monographs published from his research.*

"Nexus research"—the connection between the demand side and the supply side—is research that addresses the common social, personal, community, and employer concerns and needs. Those criteria then become the basis for judging whether or not the result of our research make a difference. Four themes are relevant to nexus research:

1. Business development and connecting job seekers with employers in the 21st century;
2. The experiences and needs of the workforce of people with disabilities;

3. The health of the American workforce; and
4. The role and effect of government policies and practices.

If we want to improve the employment of people with disabilities, we first need to recognize what the problems are and what we are going to do about those problems. With that information, we can identify the barriers, opportunities, and strategic actions and a common agenda. Steps to take include (1) identifying the outcome and the related research; (2) testing our assumptions about what we want in a social policy, such as moving people off public benefits and increasing their economic security; and (3) deciding on the size and scope of the research to make it relevant.

For the agenda of the Interagency Committee on Disability Research to work, it must be:

- Endorsed by the White House;
- Defined, targeted, and solutions oriented;
- Piloted and refined;
- Driven by the field; and
- Designed by stakeholders, with collaboration by the government, business, and academia.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Start to look beyond supported employment, such as the Ticket to Work program, and focus more on practices that are driven by employment trends and the needs of employers.
- Conduct research that examines the implementation and effectiveness of current policies.
- Analyze the science, the models, the methods of discovery, and the replication of practices. If the practices don't work, why they don't work? If necessary, create a new set of practices.

***Bonnie O'Day, Ph.D., M.P.A., Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.***

*Bonnie O'Day, a senior researcher at Mathematica, conducts research and evaluation studies on health care, independent living, and employment. She was the principal investigator on several projects that used focus groups to examine the insurance and health care experiences of people with disabilities. She also collaborated on an Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality study that led to several refereed publications and a*

*book, More than Ramps: A Guide to Improving Healthcare Quality and Access for People with Disabilities.*

Thirty years in the employment and disability field have shown Dr. O'Day that incrementalism is not going to promote the transformative policy change that is needed to change the lives of people with disabilities. We do not have a coordinated federal research agenda partly because we lack a unified federal policy that promotes independence, productivity, and integration.

The Americans with Disabilities Act is the law of the land, but there is insufficient funding to implement and enforce this law. Social Security provides income and assistance to millions of people with disabilities, but the funding allotted to vocational rehabilitation is a small percentage of what we spend to maintain people on Social Security. We need a federal research agenda that considers 21st-century jobs and 21st-century employers, one that considers the 21st-century status of persons with disabilities and that leads to 21st-century policy change that truly promotes employment.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following research is needed to move public policy and private-sector practice forward to ensure a rise in employment for people with disabilities:

- Design research that reflects the social rather than the medical view of disability. Federal policy needs to empower people to take care of themselves and foster that expectation. Research needs to ask the right questions that focus on the interaction between the person and the environment.
- Focus on outcomes, not process. Process is important only to understand how an organization got to the outcomes; look at the outcomes and then at the process the organization used to achieve those outcomes.
- Emphasize the importance of randomized controlled demonstration projects that provide enough statistical power for conclusions to be drawn. Conduct a few larger projects rather than multiple, small, independently funded projects. These larger projects are expensive and time-consuming, but they lead to wider implementation and best practices.
- Conduct demonstration projects. These projects test programs that could provide a single point of entry, make work pay, offer meaningful choices, assist in figuring out what kinds of incentives or encouragement people need to go to work, and expect people to be self-sufficient. Such programs cannot be handled by a single agency; they require collaboration.
- Create a federal centralized repository for research. At Mathematica, the U.S. Department of Education is funding the “what works clearinghouse” for primary and secondary education. This project collects all the reports and articles that have

been written about implementing different kinds of curriculum and other educational practices and rates them to determine how effective they were in meeting the particular educational goals.

- Fund projects that have cross-agency implementation and funding. These projects can be implemented at the state and local levels. One possible collaborative project might be between the Rehabilitation Services Administration and Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services. One of the speakers at this conference commented that vocational rehabilitation often does not take into account the health status of individuals with disabilities.
- Create projects that work on early intervention with youth and newly disabled individuals.
- Fund employers to test and implement best practices.
- Find innovative ways to ensure that people with disabilities become the most qualified applicants. Employers say that they want to hire the most qualified person for the job, but how can people with disabilities be the most qualified if they had a poor education, had little opportunity for job training, and have been discriminated against so they have little job experience? Involve employers in addressing these issues.
- Identify training that prepares people for rising occupations in the 21st century. The research agenda should address accommodation needs in rising industries and how to tie labor shortages to recruitment and retention of people with disabilities.
- Identify and study programs where strategies to find employment match up with strategies that employers use to hire people with disabilities.
- Examine why initiatives to hire and retain people with disabilities in the federal government have been unsuccessful, and determine the extent to which federal contractors are complying with Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act in hiring people with disabilities.
- Collect better regularly reported statistics of persons with disabilities. Recommend that the American Community Survey be included in all federal surveys.
- Make sure that randomized controlled demonstration projects include enough people to allow an evaluation of their effectiveness by gender, ethnicity, and to the extent possible, emerging disability.
- Translate research into practice with tools, practitioners, and consumers.

***Michael Morris, J.D., Burton Blatt Institute, Syracuse University***

*Michael Morris, chief executive officer of Burton Blatt Institute, is known for his 25 years of advancing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities at the local, state, and national levels. His proposals to improve technology assistance for persons with disabilities have been implemented by Congress, he has served as legal counsel to the U.S. Senate Small Business Committee, and he was the national executive director of United Cerebral Palsy.*

As of March 2008, 1.1 million children nationwide are receiving Supplemental Security Income benefits, and two-thirds will continue those benefits for life. Over 27 years, that cost to us as taxpayers is \$200 billion. This is a crisis in public policy, caused by fragmentation and complexity of rules, tinkering rather than transforming, infrastructure that focuses on short-term rather than long-term outcomes, low expectations, lack of leadership, and lack of enforcement of the Americans with Disabilities Act and federal contract compliance with Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act. More leadership is needed from the White House and Congress and less at the agency level.

Possible solutions to the problem are raising expectations, changing policy, removing disincentives, promoting self-employment, providing long-term supports, testing early interventions, fostering collaboration among public agencies and between the public and private sectors, and rediscovering the role of government or a larger non-governmental role.

We need to delve deeper into certain issues and topics:

- Generic policy and systems and their impact on people with disabilities, such as tax, economic, and telecom policies and what it means to have universal access and affordable technology;
- Self-directed accounts and self-determination, bringing funds from multiple systems, and understanding what works and what doesn't work;
- Individual plans that frame expectations of a better economic future. Why is this not part of an individualized education program and individualized support plan? The goal is not just employment; it is about economic self-sufficiency. When the market changes, interventions and expectations change;
- The poverty trap of access to public benefits;
- The meaning of “self-sufficiency” and how the extra costs are borne by people with disabilities factored into the equation;
- The role of the government in the 21st century and the level and scope of public responsibility to people with disabilities to help them achieve self-sufficiency and a high quality of life—where policy begins, and where it ends;

- The role of universities, which are often among the biggest employers in their communities, and whether those of us who work at universities have addressed the diversity policies of our institutions;
- Universal design;
- Incentives to employers in the private and public sectors to work together to increase efficiencies in delivering long-term supports to people who need them; and
- Leveraging of the federal government's procurement power.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Adopt disability impact analysis.
- Issue an executive order to create a task force that will focus on advancing self-sufficiency, eliminating disincentives, aligning social and tax policy, and truly defining a new social contract.
- Leverage research dollars to require universities to report on their employment outcomes for people with disabilities.
- Take a real stand as a nation and join the rest of the world, in terms of millennium goals, to adopt the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and set a goal of reducing poverty of people with and without disabilities. We can develop incentives for state and business partnerships, such as tax benefits and publicizing state performances.
- Change performance measures and the Office on Management and Budget's reporting on federal employment disability measures.
- Add disability as a preferred status so that people with disabilities can get the benefit of federal procurement as entrepreneurs.
- Focus on knowledge translation. Where are we in terms of bloggers, podcasts, pundits, and policy forums? Think about the Real Economic Impact Tour across America in 80 cities, a grassroots movement of community-based organizations nationwide that provided outreach to an underserved population of taxpayers with disabilities. This program addressed financial literacy, savings and self-sufficiency, and the importance of income production and how money is managed. This is an example of an initiative that can capture the attention of the media and transform an issue into a public debate.

- Adopt the recommendations of the Ticket to Work Advisory Panel’s final report and the 2007 Social Security Advisory Board’s report.
- Reauthorize the much-maligned Workforce Investment Act, but with the Senate amendments that emphasize cross-system collaboration and include support of Disability Program Navigators and other options for increasing systems integration and collaboration.
- Mandate automatic sharing of outcome payments between employment networks and ticket holders. Establish a savings plan that does not affect the ticket holders’ eligibility for public benefits.

[PULLOUT]

As part of the Real Economic Impact Tour, bloggers were asked: What does it mean to have the American dream? What does it mean to manage money? What are your hopes for the future? One woman, Claire, who is sometimes challenged by a psychiatric disability, wrote:

“An optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty. Optimism and the American dream go hand in hand. For me, the dream is to rent my own apartment, to be able to pay all my utilities, and not to be dependent on family members. I’m a freelance writer and home health aide, and I have a significant disability, but most of all, I’m an optimist that disability does not have me. I am so much more than the label ‘disabled.’ I am an aunt, a sister, a daughter, a writer, a reader, a photographer, a book club member, a poetry writer, among other things. As I said, my American dream seems simple: I want to live on my own, be self-sufficient, to live with dignity. I struggle with my finances now, but I am an optimist. I believe I can make progress with my job, move forward, and become part of the mainstream economy and achieve my goals.”

## Section IV: Key Issues

Key issues emerged from the conference presentations and discussions that will affect an interagency research agenda on demand-side and supply-side disability employment research. For each key issue, opportunities, barriers, and examples of actions to enhance opportunities and reduce barriers are given.

Following are some of the important issues that were presented and discussed at the conference.

### **Businesses are competing in an increasingly global, innovation-driven economy and must adapt to major workforce trends.**

#### **Opportunities**

- Retirement of a large cohort of baby boomers, coupled with much smaller numbers for Generation X and Millennials, will lead to a workforce shortfall.
- Some baby boomers will continue working beyond a conventional retirement age, which will result in an aging workforce. Many service members who are returning from wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have disabilities and are entering the workforce. Both groups will increase the number of people with disabilities in the workforce, resulting in the need for universal design of workplaces, innovation in assistive technology, and more accommodations, such as flexible work hours.
- Globalization and the need for flexible work hours and arrangements to meet demand for “24/7” operations will be advantageous for people with disabilities, who often need flexibility.
- Jobs increasingly require computer skills—jobs that many people with disabilities can perform. But it’s important to remember that not everyone with a disability wants to be a computer programmer.
- Employers report that many workers are lacking in “soft” skills, such as dedication to the job and flexibility.
- Employers are focusing more on health promotion and disease prevention. Health promotion interventions in the workplace can improve the management and reduce the incidence of most prevalent chronic conditions, reduce employers’ health care costs, improve productivity and reduce paid and unpaid time off, and help retain employees.
- Integrative approaches to work and health create an opportunity for the occupational health and health promotion professional communities to work

together to develop and implement workplace programs that prevent workplace illness and injury and sustain and promote health.

- CEOs are concerned about the future workforce: 57% report that education and workforce preparedness is the most important workforce issue, and 73% report that it is difficult to find qualified workers. People with disabilities can fill this gap.

## **Barriers**

- People with disabilities are underrepresented in the fastest-growing occupations. Skills needed are ones that require adaptability, information management and communication and relationship-building skills, interdisciplinary skills, business skills, and science, math, engineering, and technology skills.
- People with disabilities are often unprepared for the transition from school to work and lack the skills needed in the current workforce.

## **Actions to enhance opportunities and reduce barriers—examples**

- Prepare young people with disabilities to compete in the future workforce.
- Make high schools and secondary schools aware of the skills that employers want for success in the global environment, so they can prepare students with disabilities to compete in the future workforce. In doing so, they need to develop partnerships with businesses.
- Study how to help people with disabilities become the most qualified applicants.

## **People with disabilities are an untapped market for talent in a global market where competition is huge.**

### **Opportunities**

- People with disabilities want employment careers, not just a series of jobs. They want work with dignity that they can feel proud of.
- Including people with disabilities in the workforce can:
  - Help businesses meet the expected workforce shortfall;
  - Help bring them an innovative and diverse workforce and a culture that embraces everyone;
  - Lead to adoption of assistive technology and workforce accommodations that benefit all employees; and
  - Help businesses market products and services to the disability community.

## **Barriers**

- Businesses are unaware of the talent that people with disabilities bring to the workplace.
- Businesses believe that people with disabilities will require expensive accommodations.
- Businesses are particularly reluctant to hire people with psychiatric disabilities.
- Because people with disabilities are reluctant to disclose their disabilities, employers may be unaware of which employees have disabilities. Disability experts differ on whether people with disabilities should disclose their disabilities.

## **Actions to enhance opportunities and reduce barriers—examples**

- Collect data that dispel myths about workers with disabilities (e.g., need for accommodations and cost when needed; absenteeism, etc.). Accommodations are not expensive.
- Provide employers with a consistent definition of “disability.”
- Promote employers’ best practices in hiring and retaining workers with disabilities, such as hiring skilled disability management staff, instituting absence management programs, having rehabilitation professionals conduct an accommodation assessment, and developing public/private partnerships.
- Encourage employers to spread the word about their positive experiences with employees who have disabilities.
- Make a business case for hiring people with disabilities—how it affects the bottom line, increases retention, meets or exceeds performance standards through a qualified workforce, and increases diversity. This will help people to move beyond charitable models of employment.
- Help business build an inclusive corporate culture and practice through strategies such as building disability networks and affinity groups, educating co-workers and managers about employing people with disabilities, engaging top management, and conducting community and public outreach. Especially important is finding experts in the community who serve people with disabilities.
- Encourage a corporate culture and practices that embrace diversity.

## **Preparing youth with disabilities for smooth transitions to secondary education and work can lead to self-sufficiency.**

### **Opportunities**

- The Youth Transition Demonstration project uses local and state consortia to develop and pilot promising intervention models and, for those who pass the pilot, to rigorously evaluate them on a much larger scale.
- Work-based experiences (purposeful, meaningful work based on experiences), especially paid employment, are the strongest predictor of post-school employment success for youth.

### **Barriers**

- As of March 2008, approximately 1,126,322 children under age 18 currently receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability benefits. Children who begin receiving SSI before age 18 continue to receive SSI disability benefits for an average of 27 years.
- Gaps exist in current transition services and systems. For example, there are inadequate numbers of staff to assist youth in navigating through the transition period and help them to navigate among programs (i.e., multi-agency case management system).
- The rates of school expulsion and suspension among children in special education are considerably higher than those in the general student population, regardless of the type of disability. Many school disciplinary actions result from drug and alcohol offenses. Eventually, some of these children end up in the prison system.
- Parents and teachers too often have low expectations of students with disabilities. Legislation such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act has fostered helplessness rather than independence for young adults who are making the transition from school to work.

### **Actions to enhance opportunities and reduce barriers—examples**

- Design, implement, and test interventions for youth in transition, including evaluating best practices and testing models for different populations, such as youth with mental health needs and those with autism.
- Develop and promote work-based experiences, including career exploration, job shadowing, work sampling, internship, mentoring, apprenticeship, and paid employment.
- Develop partnerships between schools and business.

- Develop strategies to support children who are at risk for substance abuse and to prevent their entrance into the juvenile justice system.
- Start preparing students who have disabilities in the early years of their education.
- Implement programs that build the self-determination of children with disabilities.

## **Addressing the unique needs of people who have psychiatric disabilities in the workplace can help increase the employment rate of this population.**

### **Opportunities**

- Supported employment programs, including integrated clinical and vocational services and multi-disciplinary provider teams from the fields of mental health, vocational rehabilitation, substance abuse treatment, and peer support, can lead to increased employment of people with disabilities.

### **Barriers**

- Mental health disabilities are the single leading cause of disability. Researchers have found that 70% of people with psychiatric disabilities want to work, even though less than 15% are currently working. Less than 5% have access to supported employment.
- Barriers to employment include multiple mixed symptoms, cognitive and behavioral symptoms, the episodic nature of many illnesses, lack of housing and transportation, the stigma of mental illness, limited expectations for people with mental illness, continued paternalism by mental health professionals, and asset limitations in Medicaid, SSI, and other benefit programs.
- Substance abuse disorders are more common in people with psychiatric disabilities than in people with other disabilities.
- People with mental disabilities are concerned about losing public assistance benefits if they return to work.
- Because schooling, training, and first jobs are often interrupted by psychiatric disability, people with mental health disabilities are often ill prepared for work and have limited social capital. They have not had the time to build work contacts and social connectiveness.
- People with psychiatric disabilities are often reluctant to disclose their disability, fearing discrimination.

## **Actions to enhance opportunities and reduce barriers—examples**

- Integrate models of employment services, such as supported employment and vocational rehabilitation for people with psychiatric disabilities, with the mental health treatment team.
- Implement a peer-employment support model.
- Improve training to deliver supported employment, which includes assistance such as job coaches, transportation, assistive technology, and individually tailored supervision.
- To find employment for people with psychiatric disabilities, look to the “mom-and-pop” shops down the street where the person is known.

## **The employment of people with disabilities can be increased by eliminating disincentives to entering and remaining in the workforce.**

### **Opportunities**

- Disincentives to entering and remaining in the workforce are reduction or loss of public benefits (SSI and Social Security Disability Insurance [SSDI]), including health insurance, once a person enters the workforce. People who do not fear losing health care benefits and other public supports are more likely to enter and stay in the workforce.
- States are attempting to expand access to health coverage, contain costs to make coverage affordable, prevent and manage illness, and achieve wellness and high-quality care.
- Structured long-term employment support, along with insurance coverage, can help people with disabilities return to work after an illness or injury.
- Workplace supports can help people return to work earlier after an injury or illness. Studies show that business can reduce lost time by 40% by allowing employees to return to work before they are fully recovered. A flexible workplace has more impact on employability than the degree of a person’s impairment.
- The federal government is studying innovative ways to transition people with disabilities from reliance on public benefits to self-sufficiency.
- The Real Economic Impact program provides people who have disabilities with basic financial and tax knowledge. Limits on the amount of income and savings

that are allowed make people with disabilities fear losing public benefits if they save money, file taxes, or work.

## **Barriers**

- The numbers of people enrolled in SSDI and SSI have grown significantly in recent years.
- Employment status as a determinant for coverage for government health benefits encourages people not to enter the workforce or to leave the workforce.
- Some company policies prohibit employees who are ill or injured from returning to work before they have fully recovered, creating premature disability and harm to the company.
- Research shows that people with disabilities without jobs are more likely to be insured than those with jobs because the current public health care financing system is tied to disability status and an employer-sponsored insurance system.
- People with disabilities are unaware of the federal rules about how their earnings will affect their government benefits.
- Some people with disabilities who are employed cannot afford health care coverage when their employer does not provide it. This population is more likely to work in part-time jobs or jobs that do not cover health insurance.
- Many people with disabilities bring in more from government disability payments than from the low-wage jobs they often have.

## **Actions to enhance opportunities and reduce barriers—examples**

- Study methods for preventing people from becoming dependent on public disability benefits. For example, instead of placing people who are homeless on SSI, help them to obtain employment that may enable them to be self-sufficient.
- Issue an executive order to create a task force that will focus on advancing self-sufficiency, eliminating disincentives, aligning social and tax policy, and truly defining a new social contract.
- Provide incentives for private insurers to more vigorously support return to work.
- Study creative solutions for returning workers to the jobs they held before they became disabled. Create resources for businesses, particularly small businesses, to provide information about retaining and accommodating injured workers.

## **The federal government has the potential to improve the employment of people with disabilities through leadership and coordination.**

### **Opportunities**

- The federal government can hold contractors accountable for employment of people with disabilities and use its regulatory power to create effective incentives among workers, employers, and educational institutions.
- The federal government can collect data through surveys on employment status, education, earnings, occupation, and other indices of people with disabilities, which can help guide public policy.
- The federal government can serve as a model employer of people with disabilities.
- The federal government can enforce laws and policies that protect the rights of people with disabilities.

### **Barriers**

- Lack of leadership from the top levels of government, including the White House, and inadequate communication among federal agencies on disability policy and research have led to fragmented federal policies on disabilities.
- There is no standard definition of “disability” across federal agencies.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is inadequately enforced.
- In recent years, vast numbers of people with disabilities have left federal employment.
- The language of the ADA, namely, “reasonable accommodation,” is inconsistent with the need of business for talent.
- Military service members live in two different policy worlds: the Veterans Affairs (VA) system and the federal system for all people with disabilities. These systems often do not work well together.

### **Action to enhance opportunities and reduce barriers—examples**

- Serve as a model employer of people with disabilities.
- Enforce federal laws that protect people with disabilities.

- Provide government incentives to businesses, service providers, educational institutions, and others to institute programs and activities that increase the employment of people with disabilities.
- Instead of focusing on terms such as “reasonable accommodation,” which is off-putting, focus on a pressing need of business: talent.
- Add survey questions on disability to all federally sponsored and funded surveys.
- Train all federal agency personnel who are responsible for hiring about ways to recruit, hire, and provide accommodations for workers with disabilities.
- Train all federal agency personnel about responsibilities under the Rehabilitation Act.

## **Promising employment models and programs can help people with disabilities find and retain employment.**

### **Opportunities**

- Research is ongoing on promising models that support the employment of people with disabilities, including Consortia for Employment Success, the Workplace Socialization model, and the Youth Transition Demonstration project.
- Disability Program Navigators can create a seamless service delivery system at the local level to improve employment status for people with disabilities.
- Structured long-term employment supports, along with insurance coverage, can help people with disabilities return to employment.

### **Barriers**

- Determining the types of employment services that people with disabilities need can be complex because of the multiple factors that affect a person’s ability to find employment. Factors include race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and social situation.
- It can be difficult to replicate different models of employment services.
- There is a lack of research on the best ways to teach people to implement supported employment.

### **Actions to enhance opportunities and reduce barriers—examples**

- Quantify and qualify what is meant by “self-sufficiency” for people with disabilities and determine how it changes the type of interventions. Of particular importance is long-term self-sufficiency.
- Create transitional work programs that help employees return to work before they are fully recovered.
- Consider the context of a disability when delivering employment services, including physical, social, and cultural factors.
- Adapt, replicate, and promote models for supporting the employment of people with disabilities, such as Consortia for Employment Success, the Workplace Socialization model, and the Youth Transition Demonstration project.
- Start to look beyond supported employment, such as the Ticket to Work program, and increase focus on practices that are driven by employment trends and the needs of employers.

### **By understanding one another’s worlds, disability employment professionals and researchers and businesses can work together to increase the employment of people with disabilities.**

#### **Opportunities**

- The disability service community can develop local opportunities with businesses for people with disabilities by adapting to market changes and developing diverse partners.
- Partnership models between the disability community and businesses on employing people with disabilities exist. One example is the partnership of Manpower with community rehabilitation programs.

#### **Barriers**

- Rehabilitation service providers and employers sometimes clash. For example, employers expect service providers to return calls promptly and to have one point of contact—this does not always happen.

### **Actions to enhance opportunities and reduce barriers—examples**

- Talk to employers about the kind of employees they are looking for.

- Identify and study programs that have strategies to find employment and match them with strategies that employers use to hire people with disabilities.
- Tap into work opportunities in local businesses for people with disabilities.
- Identify a business leader in the community who can champion the issue of hiring people with disabilities.
- Develop partnerships between the disability and business communities.
- Encourage employers to reach out to employer associations and business networking groups, such as the Business Leadership Network, to create relationships at the community level to employ people with disabilities.

## Conclusion

This conference was timely. The United States is in the midst of profound social change, occasioned heavily by the changing demographics of the workforce, changing technologies and their role in keeping business competitive, and changing requirements of both business and the workforce imposed by globalization. At the same time, disability services are moving from a paternalistic model to one of self-sufficiency and customization in the form of person-specific supports. As these changes unfold and take hold, a wealth of opportunities will be created for people with disabilities and for workplace development. The free market will be on the side of people with disabilities, if they are able to develop the skill sets to match the needs of the business community.

Experts in the business, research, and advocacy communities and representatives of the government sector came together to discuss the rapid advances in this global and technology-driven environment and what it means to the employment of people with disabilities. From their discussions, hundreds of recommendations emerged on nexus research—the intersection of the supply and demand sides—and issues of mutual concern to the business and disability communities. The Interagency Subcommittee on Employment will use these recommendations to formulate a blueprint for a five-year interagency agenda on disability employment research.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Agenda

### Interagency Committee on Disability Research Interagency Subcommittee on Employment

#### Strengthening the Intersection of Demand-Side and Supply-Side Disability Employment Research: Toward a Coordinated Agenda

Monday, June 23, 2008

#### Framing the Need for a Coordinated Federal Research Agenda

- 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.      **Conference Registration and Information**  
*Location: Decatur and Farragut Foyer, Plaza Level*
- 8:30 a.m.–9:00 a.m.      **Welcome Remarks and Opening Introductions**  
*Location: Decatur and Farragut, Plaza Level*
- Edna Johnson, Ph.D., Interagency Subcommittee on  
Employment Conference Planning Co-Chair, National  
Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, U.S.  
Department of Education
- Richard Horne, Ed.D., Interagency Subcommittee on  
Employment Conference Planning Co-Chair, Office of  
Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor
- 9:00 a.m.–9:30 a.m.      **Video Presentation: America’s Strength**  
*Location: Decatur and Farragut, Plaza Level*
- Jennifer Sheehy, M.B.A., Acting Chair, Interagency  
Committee on Disability Research
- Neil Romano, Assistant Secretary, Office of Disability  
Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor
- 9:30 a.m.–10:00 a.m.      **Special Keynote Address: Public Policy and  
Disability Employment Research**  
*Location: Decatur and Farragut, Plaza Level*
- Katherine O. McCary, Vice President, SunTrust Banks, Inc.,  
and Chair, U.S. Business Leadership Network
- Moderator: Paul Wehman, Ph.D., Professor and Director of the  
Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Workplace  
Supports, Virginia Commonwealth University
- 10:00 a.m.–10:15 a.m.      **Mid-Morning Refreshment Break**  
*Location: Decatur and Farragut Foyer, Plaza Level*

10:15 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

**Plenary Panel: Need and Promise for a Coordinated Federal Research Agenda**

***Location: Decatur and Farragut, Plaza Level***

Martha Artiles, Chief Diversity Officer, Manpower, Inc.

Douglas L. Kruse, Ph.D., Professor, School of Management and Labor Relations, Rutgers University

David Stapleton, Ph.D., Director, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Andrew J. Imparato, J.D., President and Chief Executive Officer, American Association of People with Disabilities

Richard Balkus, M.A., Acting Associate Commissioner for Program Development and Research, Office of Retirement and Disability Policy, Social Security Administration

Moderator: Fredrick E. Menz, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, Department of Rehabilitation Counseling, University of Wisconsin—Stout

12:00 p.m.–1:20 p.m.

**Luncheon Presentation: Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers**

**Employment Panel: An Overview of Research Activities**

***Location: Decatur and Farragut, Plaza Level***

Susanne M. Bruyère, Ph.D., M.S., M.P.A., Associate Dean of Outreach, School of Industrial and Labor Relations and Director of Employment and Disability Institute, Cornell University

Dennis Moore, Ed.D., Professor, Department of Community Health, Wright State University

John O'Neill, Ph.D., Co-Director, Employment Service Systems Research and Training Center, Hunter College

Paul Wehman, Ph.D., Professor and Director, Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Workplace Supports, Virginia Commonwealth University

Moderator: Timothy Muzzio, Ph.D., Director, Division of Research Sciences, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, U.S. Department of Education

1:20 p.m.–1:30 p.m.

**Session Break**

1:30 p.m.–3:30 p.m.

## **Concurrent State-of-the-Science Breakout Sessions**

### **Theme 1—Business and Employment: A Global and Technology-Driven Environment**

**Location: Decatur, Plaza Level**

John Kregel, Ed.D., Professor of Special Education, and  
Chairman, Department of Special Education and Disability  
Policy, Virginia Commonwealth University

Jennifer Croft, Primary Advisor, Disability Employment  
Program, U.S. Department of Commerce

Kathy Krepcio, Ph.D., Executive Director, John Jay Heldrich  
Center for Workforce Development, Rutgers University

Moderator: Martha Artiles, Chief Diversity Officer,  
Manpower, Inc.

### **Theme 2—Disability Workforce Experiences and Needs: Issues and Research**

**Location: Farragut, Plaza Level**

Henry Silvert, Ph.D., Research Associate and Statistician,  
The Conference Board

Sandra Resnick, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of  
Psychiatry, Yale University School of Medicine

Dennis Moore, Ed.D., Professor, Department of Community  
Health, Wright State University

Renée Cameto, Ph.D., M.A., Senior Social Science Researcher,  
SRI International

Moderator: Andrew J. Imparato, J.D., President and Chief  
Executive Officer, American Association of People with  
Disabilities

### **Theme 3—Health: A Competitive Disability Workforce**

**Location: Dewey 1 and 2, Plaza Level**

Chester Levine, Manager, Occupational Outlook Studies,  
Bureau of Labor Statistics

John Gibbons, M.S., Senior Research Advisor, The Conference  
Board

Gina A. Livermore, Ph.D., M.P.H., Senior Researcher,  
Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Grant Revell, M.S., M.Ed., Research Associate, Virginia  
Commonwealth University Rehabilitation Research and  
Training Center

Moderator: Leslie Caplan, Ph.D., Program Specialist, National  
Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, U.S.  
Department of Education

**Theme 4—Government Policies and Practices: Role and Effect**

***Location: Rappahannock, Lobby Level***

John D. Kemp, Esq., Executive Director and General Counsel,  
U.S. Business Leadership Network

Peter Blanck, Ph.D., J.D., University Professor, Chairman,  
Burton Blatt Institute, Syracuse University

Kenneth Mitchell, Ph.D., Vice President, Health and  
Productivity Development, Unum U.S.

Michael D. West, Ph.D., Assistant Professor,  
Virginia Commonwealth University

Moderator: Brad Turner-Little, Assistant Vice President,  
Government Relations, Easter Seals

3:30 p.m.–3:45 p.m.

**Afternoon Refreshment Break**

***Location: Decatur and Farragut Foyer, Plaza Level***

3:45 p.m.–4:45 p.m.

**Plenary Review of Day One Input**

***Location: Decatur and Farragut, Plaza Level***

Richard Horne, Ed.D.

4:45 p.m.–5:00 p.m.

**Day One Closing Remarks and Wrap-Up**

***Location: Decatur and Farragut, Plaza Level***

Edna Johnson, Ph.D.

5:30 p.m.–7:00 p.m.

**Tabletop Exhibits and Reception**

***Location: Crystal Room, Plaza Level***

Hosted by the National Institute on Disability and  
Rehabilitation Research's Employment Rehabilitation  
Research and Training Centers

**Tuesday, June 24, 2008**

**Exploring Gaps, Needs, and Opportunities for Disability Employment  
Research**

8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

**Conference Registration and Information**

***Location: Decatur and Farragut, Plaza Level***

9:00 a.m.–9:30 a.m.

**Opening Remarks and Charge of the Day**

***Location: Decatur and Farragut, Plaza Level***

Richard Horne, Ed.D., and Edna Johnson, Ph.D.

9:30 a.m.–10:15 a.m. **Special Plenary Keynote: The Case for Business and Workforce Development**

**Location: Decatur and Farragut, Plaza Level**

Beth Butler, J.D., Vice President, Employee Relations,  
Wachovia Corporation

Jane Rath, Project Director, Employer Assistance and  
Recruiting Network

Moderator: Stephanie Creary, M.B.A., M.S., Researcher and  
Management Consultant, The Conference Board

10:15 a.m.–10:30 a.m. **Mid-Morning Refreshment Break**

**Location: Decatur and Farragut, Plaza Level**

10:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m. **Concurrent State-of-the-Science Breakout Sessions—Business and Employment: A Global and Technology-Driven Environment**

**Topic A—Global Trends: The Future Workforce and Business Environment**

**Location: Decatur Room, Plaza Level**

John Gibbons, M.S., Senior Research Advisor, The Conference  
Board

Rochelle V. Habeck, Ph.D., M.S., C.R.C., Independent  
Consultant, Habeck and Associates

Pia Rockhold, M.D., Ph.D., M.P.H., Public Health Specialist,  
The World Bank

Moderator: Tesserach Ketema, Ph.D., Senior Social Science  
Research Analyst, Office of Disability Employment Policy,  
U.S. Department of Labor

**Topic B—Technology: Influence on Business and Workforce Development**

**Location: Farragut Room, Plaza Level**

Gerald “Jerry” Weisman, M.S.M.E., A.T.P., R.E.T., Owner  
and Principal, Rehabilitation Technology Services

D. J. Hendricks, Ed.D., Director, West Virginia University

Dana Marlowe, M.A., Senior Vice President, TecAccess

Moderator: Randy Cooper, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of  
Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor

**Topic C—Workforce and Business Changes: Workplace Technology Innovations**

**Location: Dewey 1 and 2, Plaza Level**

Jane Anderson, M.A., Director, Midwest Institute for  
Telecommuting Education

David Baquis, IT Accessibility Specialist, U.S. Access Board

Deborah V. Buck, M.S., Executive Director, Association of Assistive Technology Act Program

Jon Sanford, M.Arch., Adjunct Associate Professor of Architecture, Center for Assistive Technology and Environmental Access, Georgia Institute of Technology

Moderator: Shelley Reeves, Program Specialist, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, U.S. Department of Education

**Topic D—A Global Workforce: A Diverse and Inclusive Corporate Culture**

***Location: Rappahannock, Lobby Level***

Deborah “Deb” Russell, Corporate Manager, Walgreens Company

Lisa Schur, Ph.D., J.D., Associate Professor, School of Management and Labor Relations, Rutgers University

Jamie S. Mitus, Ph.D., C.R.C., L.C.P.C., L.M.H.C., Program Director and Assistant Professor, Employment Services Systems Research and Training Center, Hofstra University

Moderator: Lisa Nishii, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Cornell University

**Topic E—Workforce Development Trends and Needs: Accelerating Responsiveness to Trends**

***Location: Roanoke, Lobby Level***

Paul Wehman, Ph.D., Professor and Director of the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Workplace Supports, Virginia Commonwealth University

Pamela Loprest, Ph.D., Principal Research Associate, The Urban Institute

Jay Engeln, M.Ed., Liaison and Advisor, National Association of Secondary School Principals

Moderator: Jennifer Kemp, M.Ed., Senior Policy Advisor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor

12:00 p.m.–12:15 p.m. **Session Break**

12:15 p.m.–1:20 p.m.

**Working Lunch and Luncheon Presentation:  
Consumer Panel**

***Location: Decatur and Farragut, Plaza Level***

Margaret “Peggy” Swarbrick, Ph.D, O.T.R., C.P.R.P., Director,  
Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey

Kris Flaten, M.Div., Founder, Initiatives for Health

Betsy Valnes, Executive Director, National Youth Leadership  
Network

Moderator: Susanne M. Bruyère, Ph.D., M.S., M.P.A, Cornell  
University

1:20 p.m.–1:30 p.m.

**Session Break**

1:30 p.m.–3:00 p.m.

**Concurrent State-of-the-Science Breakout  
Sessions—Disability Workforce Experience and  
Needs: Issues and Research**

**Topic A—Disabilities: Origin and Consequences**

***Location: Decatur, Plaza Level***

Henry Silvert, Ph.D., Research Associate and Statistician,  
The Conference Board

Kathleen Martinez, Executive Director, World Institute on  
Disability

Allen W. Heinemann, Ph.D., Director, Center for  
Rehabilitation Outcomes Research, Rehabilitation Institute  
of Chicago

Moderator: Howard Green, Virginia Commonwealth  
University

**Topic B—Employers and People with Disabilities: Barriers  
and Incentives**

***Location: Farragut, Plaza Level***

Dennis Gilbride, Ph.D., C.R.C., Professor and Coordinator,  
Rehabilitation Counseling Program, Syracuse University

John Butterworth, Ph.D., Project Director, Institute for  
Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts—  
Boston

David Wittenburg, Ph.D., Labor Economist, Mathematica  
Policy Research, Inc.

Jamie Kendall, M.P.P., Social Insurance Specialist, Office of  
Program Development and Research, Office of Retirement  
and Disability Policy, Social Security Administration

Moderator: Terence M. McMnamin, M.A., Bureau of Labor  
Statistics

**Topic C—Transition: Issues, Research Gaps, and the Future**

**Location: Dewey 1 and 2, Plaza Level**

Joan L. Wills, M.S.W., Senior Fellow, Institute for Educational Leadership

Rebecca Hare, Project Coordinator, National Consortium on Leadership and Disability for Youth, Institute for Educational Leadership

Brian Cobb, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, School of Education, Colorado State University

Debra Martin Luecking, Ed.D., M.A., Director, Research and Development, TransCen, Inc.

Moderator: Judy Shanley, Ph.D., Education Program Specialist, Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education

**Topic D—Workforce Development: Best Practices**

**Location: Rappahannock, Lobby Level**

John Gibbons, M.S., Senior Research Advisor, The Conference Board

Joseph Marrone, M.Ed., Senior Program Manager, Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts—Boston

Sheila L. Fesko, Ph.D., C.R.C., Program Manager, Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts—Boston

Michael D. Halligan, M.S., Executive Director, Texas Mental Health Consumers

Moderator: Vicki Brooke, Virginia Commonwealth University

**Topic E—Workforces and Needs: Intergenerational Perspectives**

**Location: Roanoke, Lobby Level**

Linda Barrington, Ph.D., Research Director, The Conference Board

Carol Salter, National Director, Senior Community Service Employment Program, Easter Seals

Diane Thielfoldt, Learning Strategist and Co-Founder, The Learning Café

Moderator: Robert H. Stensrud, Ph.D, Professor, Drake University

3:00 p.m.–3:15 p.m.

**Afternoon Refreshment Break**

**Location: Decatur and Farragut Foyer, Plaza Level**

3:15 p.m.–4:30 p.m.

**Concurrent State-of-the-Science Breakout Sessions—Health: A Competitive Disability Workforce**

**Topic A—Insurance: Private, Disability, Medicaid, Workers Compensation, and Reforms**

**Location: Decatur, Plaza Level**

Donna Folkemer, M.A., Health Group Director, National Conference of State Legislatures

Robert N. Anfield, M.D., J.D., F.A.A.F.P., Lead Medical Director, Disability Management Solutions Division, CIGNA Group Insurance

Barry S. Delin, Ph.D., M.P.P., Senior Scientist, Vocational Rehabilitation Institute, University of Wisconsin—Stout

Moderator: Nathan Ainspan, Ph.D., Manager, Applied Organizational Research, Strategic Enterprise Services, ICF International

**Topic B—Call to Action: Health Disparities, Health and Wellness**

**Location: Farragut, Plaza Level**

Linda Barrington, Ph.D., Labor Economist, Research Director, The Conference Board

Eileen Elias, M.Ed., Senior Policy Advisor on Mental Health and Disability, JBS International, Inc.

Moderator: Margaret Campbell, Ph.D., Senior Research Scientist, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, U.S. Department of Education

**Topic C—The Corporate Environment: Wellness Initiatives**

**Location: Dewey 1 and 2, Plaza Level**

Stephanie Creary, M.B.A., M.S., Researcher and Management Consultant, The Conference Board

Joel Bennett, Ph.D., President, Organizational Wellness and Learning Systems

Jane Roemer, J.D., Special Assistant to the Director, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Moderator: Nadia Ibrahim, M.A., M.S.W., Policy Advisor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor

**Topic D—Rural Employment: Economic Development Initiatives**

**Location: Rappahannock, Lobby Level**

Nancy L. Arnold, Ph.D., M.A., Associate Director, Research and Training Center on Rehabilitation in Rural Communities, The University of Montana

Jean Hall, Ph.D., Research Assistant Professor, School of Education, University of Kansas

Moderator: Kerry M. Lida, M.A., M.Ed., Social Science Research Analyst, Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor

**Topic E—Policy: Federal Healthcare Benefits**

**Location: Roanoke, Lobby Level**

Jeffrey A. Buck, Ph.D., Survey, Analysis, and Financing Branch Chief, Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Alexander F. Ross, Sc.D., Senior Health Policy Analyst, Health Systems and Financing Group, Office of Planning and Evaluation, Health Resources Services Administration

Moderator: Elaine Gilby, Ph.D., Economist, Office of Program Development and Research, Social Security Administration

4:30 p.m.–5:20 p.m.

**Plenary Review of Day Two Input**

**Location: Decatur and Farragut, Plaza Level**

Richard Horne, Ed.D.

5:20 p.m.–5:30 p.m.

**Day Two Closing Remarks and Wrap-Up**

**Location: Decatur and Farragut, Plaza Level**

Edna Johnson, Ph.D.

**Wednesday, June 25, 2008**

**Drawing Input for a Coordinated Federal Research Agenda**

8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

**Conference Registration and Information**

**Location: Decatur and Farragut Foyer, Plaza Level**

9:00 a.m.–9:15 a.m.

**Opening Remarks and Charge of the Day**

**Location: Decatur and Farragut, Plaza Level**

Richard Horne, Ed.D., and Edna Johnson, Ph.D.

9:15 a.m.–10:15 a.m.

**Plenary Panel: “Workforce and Business Development”**

***Location: Decatur and Farragut Rooms, Plaza Level***

Deborah “Deb” Russell, Corporate Manager, Walgreens Company

J. Erin Riehle, M.S.N., R.N., Founder and Senior Director, Project SEARCH, Cincinnati Children’s Hospital

Joseph M. Carbone, President and Chief Executive Officer, The WorkPlace, Inc.

Moderator: Beverlee Stafford, Director, Training and Service Projects Division, Rehabilitation Services Administration, U.S. Department of Education

10:15 a.m.–10:30 a.m.

**Mid-Morning Refreshment Break**

***Location: Decatur and Farragut Foyer, Plaza Level***

10:30 a.m.–11:50 a.m.

**Concurrent State-of-the-Science Breakout Sessions—Government Policies and Practices: Role and Effect**

**Topic A—Government Policy: Implications for Business Development**

***Location: Decatur, Plaza Level***

Paul Harrington, Ed.D., Associate Director, Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University

Johnette T. Hartnett, Ed.D., M.A., Director, Research and Strategic Partnership Development, National Disability Institute, Inc.

John Kregel, Ed.D., Professor and Chairman, Department of Special Education and Disability Policy, Virginia Commonwealth University

John F. Burton, Jr., Ph.D., L.L.B., Professor Emeritus, School of Management and Labor Relations, Rutgers University

Moderator: Janet Voight-Miro, Ph.D., Social Science Research Analyst, Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor

**Topic B—Key Issues: Federal Data Collection**

***Location: Farragut, Plaza Level***

Thomas Nardone, Assistant Commissioner, Current Employment Analysis, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Andrew J. Houtenville, Ph.D., Senior Research Associate, New Editions Consulting, Inc.

Robert R. Weathers, Ph.D., Economist, Office of Research and Policy, Social Security Administration

Moderator: Richard V. Burkhauser, Ph.D., Professor,  
Department of Policy Analysis and Management, Cornell  
University

**Topic C—Federal Government: A Model Employer**  
**Location: Dewey 1 and 2, Plaza Level**

Jo Linda Johnson, Esq., Special Assistant, Office of  
Commissioner, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity  
Commission

William Erickson, M.S., Research Specialist, Employment and  
Disability Institute, Cornell University

Michael Young, Manager, Computer/Electronic  
Accommodations Program Technology Evaluation Center,  
U.S. Department of Defense

Moderator: Kristi Wilson Hill, Ph.D., Director, Office for  
Small Business Programs, Office of the Deputy Secretary,  
U.S. Department of Education

**Topic D—State-Level Programs: Resources for Business  
and Workforce Development**  
**Location: Rappahannock, Lobby Level**

Joseph M. Carbone, President and Chief Executive Officer,  
The WorkPlace, Inc.

Susan T. Azrin, Ph.D., Senior Study Director, Health and  
Disabilities Research Group, Westat

Michael Morris, Esq., Chief Executive Officer, Burton Blatt  
Institute, Syracuse University

Moderator: Thomas Finch, Ph.D., Service Program Unit Chief,  
Rehabilitation Services Administration, U.S. Department of  
Education

**Topic E—Emergent Populations with Disability: Veterans  
and Returning Veterans**  
**Location: Roanoke, Lobby Level**

Lynda C. Davis, Ph.D., M.A., Deputy Assistant Secretary of  
the Navy, U.S. Department of Defense

Sunil K. Sen-Gupta, Ph.D., M.P.H., Scientific Program  
Manager, Rehabilitation Research and Development  
Service, Office of Research and Development, U.S.  
Department of Veterans Affairs

Susan Prokop, M.P.A., Associate Advocacy Director,  
Advocacy Program, Paralyzed Veterans of America

Moderator: Charles Sabatier, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of  
Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor

11:50 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

**Session Break**

- 12:00 p.m.–12:30 p.m. **Plenary Review of Day Three Input**  
*Location: Decatur and Farragut, Plaza Level*  
Richard Horne, Ed.D.
- 12:30 p.m.–2:00 p.m. **Luncheon Presentation:  
Effective Practices for People with Psychiatric  
Disabilities in the Workplace**  
*Location: Decatur and Farragut, Plaza Level*  
Judith A. Cook, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Psychiatry,  
University of Illinois at Chicago  
Moderator: Crystal Blyler, Ph.D., Social Science Analyst,  
Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and  
Mental Health Services Administration
- 2:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m. **Plenary Summary Panel on Input:  
Perspectives on the State-of-the-Science: Future  
Directions for a Coordinated Federal Research  
Agenda**  
*Location: Decatur and Farragut, Plaza Level*  
Michael Morris, Esq., Chief Executive Officer, Burton Blatt  
Institute, Syracuse University  
Fredrick E. Menz, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, Department of  
Rehabilitation Counseling, University of Wisconsin—Stout  
Stephanie Creary, M.B.A., M.S., Researcher and Management  
Consultant, The Conference Board  
Bonnie O’Day, Ph.D., M.P.A., Senior Researcher,  
Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.  
Moderator: Richard Horne, Ed.D.
- 4:00 p.m. **Conference Wrap-Up and Closing**  
*Location: Decatur and Farragut, Plaza Level*  
Edna Johnson, Ph.D.

## Appendix B: List of Participants

Theodore J. Agnew  
Diversity Manager  
Education Activity  
U.S. Department of Defense

Nathan D. Ainspan, Ph.D.  
Manager  
Applied Organizational Research  
Strategic Enterprise Services  
ICF International

Jane Anderson, M.A.  
Director  
Education  
Midwest Institute for Telecommuting

Robert N. Anfield, M.D., J.D., F.A.A.F.P.  
Lead Medical Director  
CIGNA Group Insurance

Nancy L. Arnold, Ph.D.  
Associate Director  
The Research and Training Center on  
Disability in Rural Communities  
The University of Montana

Martha C. Artiles  
Global Chief Diversity Officer  
Manpower, Inc.

RoseAnn Ashby  
Office of Special Education and  
Rehabilitative Services  
U.S. Department of Education

Susan T. Azrin, Ph.D.  
Senior Study Director  
Health and Disabilities Research Group  
Westat

Richard Balkus, M.A.  
Acting Associate Commissioner  
Office of Retirement and Disability Policy  
Social Security Administration

David Baquis  
IT Accessibility Specialist  
U.S. Access Board

Elcio R. Barcelos  
Vice President, Manager of Enterprise  
Talent Acquisition  
Wells Fargo Bank

Richard C. Baron, M.A.  
Research Coordinator  
University of Pennsylvania

Linda Barrington, Ph.D.  
Research Director  
The Conference Board

Rhonda Basha  
Supervisory Policy Advisor  
Office of Disability Employment Policy  
U.S. Department of Labor

Cheryl Bates-Harris  
Senior Disability Advocacy Specialist  
National Disability Rights Network

Phillip W. Beatty, Ph.D.  
Associate Director  
Division of Research Sciences  
U.S. Department of Education

Joel B. Bennett, Ph.D.  
President  
Organizational Wellness and  
Learning Systems

Somer E. Bessire-Briers, M.S.W.  
Diversity Outreach Manager  
U.S. Department of State

Melissa Bjelland, Ph.D.  
Research Associate  
School of Industrial and Labor Relations  
Cornell University

Mary M. Blake, C.R.E.  
Public Health Advisor  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration

Peter Blanck, Ph.D., J.D.  
University Professor, Chairman  
Burton Blatt Institute  
Syracuse University

Crystal R. Blyler, Ph.D.  
Social Science Analyst  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration

Jeff Bogen  
U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity  
Commission

Don J. Brandon  
Director  
Center for Continuing Education in  
Rehabilitation

Matthew Brault  
Statistician  
U.S. Census Bureau

Valerie Brooke, M.Ed.  
Director of Training  
Rehabilitation Research and Training Center  
Virginia Commonwealth University

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Special Assistant  
Office of Disability Employment Policy  
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Dale S. Brown  
LD OnLine

Michael Bruno  
U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity  
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Director of Employment and Disability  
Institute  
Cornell University

Deborah V. Buck, M.S.  
Executive Director  
Association of Assistive Technology Act  
Programs

Jeffrey A. Buck, Ph.D.  
Chief  
Survey, Analysis, and Financing Branch

Richard V. Burkhauser, Ph.D.  
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John F. Burton, Jr., Ph.D., L.L.B.  
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Beth Butler, J.D.  
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Katherine L. Byers, Ph.D., C.R.C., C.V.E.  
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Health Science Center  
Department of Clinic Administration and  
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Renee Cameto, Ph.D., M.A.  
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National Institute on Disability and  
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U.S. Department of Education

Leslie J. Caplan, Ph.D.  
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Joseph M. Carbone  
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Certified Peer Support Specialist  
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Brian Cobb, Ph.D.  
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People Empowerment Group, Inc.

Sheila L. Fesko, Ph.D., C.R.C.  
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Thomas Finch, Ph.D.  
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Rehabilitation Services Administration  
U.S. Department of Education

Janet Fiore  
Chief Executive Officer  
The Sierra Group

Kris E. Flaten, M.Div.  
Founder  
Initiatives for Health

Dora L. Ford  
Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist  
U.S. Department of Defense

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Rutgers University

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Vincent J. Harper  
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Associate Director  
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Northeastern University

Steve Harrington, J.D., M.P.A.  
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National Association of Peer Specialists

Cynthia L. Harrison-Felix, Ph.D.  
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Craig Hospital

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Research and Strategic Partnership  
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National Disability Institute, Inc.

Robert Hartt  
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Committee for Purchase from People Who  
Are Blind or Severely Disabled

Ellen M. Healion, M.A.  
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University of North Carolina

Cindy Hopkins-Gibson  
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Texas Department of State Health Services

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U.S. Department of Labor

Andrew J. Imparato, J.D.  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
American Association of People with  
Disabilities

Katrina Ivatts  
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National Institute on Disability and  
Rehabilitation Research  
U.S. Department of Education

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Rehabilitation Services Administration  
U.S. Department of Education

Gwyn C. Jones, Ph.D., M.S.W., M.Ed.  
Health Scientist  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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Co-Principle Investigator/Director  
Disability and Business Technical  
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Southeast Americans with Disabilities  
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Elaine E. Katz, M.S., C.C.C.-S.P.  
Vice President  
Grants and Special Initiatives  
Henry H. Kessler Foundation

Richard Keeling  
Internal Revenue Service

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Matthew E. Kehn  
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Social Security Administration

Teserach Ketema, Ph.D.  
Senior Social Science Research Analyst  
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U.S. Department of Labor

Anju M. Khubchandani, M.A.  
Director  
American Psychological Association

Alexandra K. Kielty, M.A.  
Senior Program Manager  
U.S. Department of Labor

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## **Appendix C: Tabletop Exhibit Abstracts**

On June 23, 2008, the following federal agencies and organizations displayed their research at the conference:

- Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Employment Policy for Persons with Disabilities, Cornell University
- Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers
- Employer Assistance and Recruiting Network
- Employment Service Systems Research and Training Center, Hunter College
- Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor
- Rehabilitation Research and Training Center, Virginia Commonwealth University
- Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Substance Abuse, Disability, and Employment, Wright State University
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- Vocational Recovery Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation
- Social Security Administration
- Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Workplace Supports and Job Retention, Virginia Commonwealth University

Some presenters did not provide abstracts. Those that are available appear in this appendix.

### **Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Employment Policy for Persons with Disabilities, Cornell University**

The Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Employment Policy for Persons with Disabilities (EPRRTC) is a collaborative project of Cornell University's Employment and Disability Institute, Cornell's Department of Policy Analysis and Management, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., the American Association of People with Disabilities, and Rutgers University. This center works to increase the employment and economic self-sufficiency of people with disabilities and improves the quality of their lives by contributing to the success of the transition from caretaker policies to economic self-sufficiency policies.

Over the past four years, the 15 inter-related research projects of this center have generated new knowledge about the effects of past disability policy and other factors on

economic self-sufficiency and examined the impact of current and future initiatives designed to promote economic self-sufficiency. Our researchers have produced a number of research reports and policy briefs detailing these findings, including articles on long-term poverty and disability among working-age adults and post-secondary outcomes for children with severe hearing impairments, and we have made these available in accessible formats on our Web site. We have also conducted training via webinars for independent living centers and state disability policy advocates.

We have conducted 12 policy forums in Washington, D.C., to inform policy-makers, researchers, educators, advocacy organizations, and persons with disabilities and their families on topics such as workplace flexibility, 21st-century disability policy, new technologies, health care policy, workplace accommodations, and federal disability hiring. These policy forums are accessible to the wider public via webinar broadcasts as well.

The poster table featured sample copies and copies for distribution of various EPRRTC publications, including (but not limited to) *The 2007 Progress Report on the Economic Well-Being of Working Age People with Disabilities*; *Supported Employment: A Best Practice for People with Psychiatric Disabilities*; *The Health Care Financing Maze for Working-age People with Disabilities*; *Health Insurance Coverage Among Youth and Young Adults with Work Limitations*; *Long-term Poverty and Disability Among Working-age Adults*; and *Material Hardship, Poverty, and Disability Among Working-age Adults*.

### **Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center National Network of Americans with Disabilities Act Centers**

The Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center (DBTAC) National Network of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Centers initiated regional research initiatives in a variety of areas beginning in the fall of 2006. The DBTAC network is funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research to provide technical assistance, training, outreach, and dissemination services related to the ADA. The DBTAC ADA centers began their fourth cycle of funding in 2007 with a requirement to include a research agenda. Fourteen of these research initiatives focus on employment issues that relate to people with disabilities.

The DBTAC network has a wide spectrum of employment research initiatives on topics such as attitudinal issues, reasonable accommodation models, evaluation of hiring and retention, and corporate culture. To investigate these issues, the DBTAC network has paired with a diverse array of research partners, among them universities, employers, people with disabilities, educators, and rehabilitation professionals. These initiatives will contribute to and expand the body of knowledge about how people with disabilities become employed and retain employment, barriers to employment, and strategies for success.

A DBTAC research conference will be held in the spring of 2009 to introduce completed research initiatives, review all other initiatives, and request input from the public. Presentations on preliminary findings and process are being presented to regional and national audiences. A final State-of-the-Science DBTAC Research Conference will be held in 2011.

### **Employer Assistance and Recruiting Network**

The Employer Assistance and Recruiting Network (EARN) is the nation's premier provider of cost-free services to help employers recruit and hire qualified workers to meet their workforce needs. In addition, EARN assists employers in understanding the practical business reasons for, as well as the practices that facilitate the recruitment and hiring of people with disabilities.

EARN is an initiative funded by the Office of Disability Employment Policy under the U.S. Department of Labor. Publications available include *EARN Services* brochure and *EARN Market Research Report—Making the Case for Hiring and Retaining People with Disabilities*.

### **Employment Service Systems Research and Training Center, Hunter College**

**The Employment Service Systems Research and Training Center (ESSRTC)** is developing, enhancing, and using partnerships to improve the quality of employment services, opportunities, and outcomes for people with disabilities. Several research projects that are under way to meet this goal are examining partnerships across public agencies, between not-for-profit and public agencies, and between rehabilitation agencies and businesses. The entire project partners with stakeholders and systems to better meet the needs of people with disabilities.

**The Consortia for Employment Success (CES)** have been created in three local communities to fully integrate networks of providers of disability services. The CES consists of many community rehabilitation agencies and vocational rehabilitation agencies and staff in a specific geographic location that agree to participate. The CES increases access for people with disabilities to effective, comprehensive placement services and a well-managed and centralized employer network that is designed to increase employment and career advancement opportunities for persons with disabilities. The following research projects are in progress.

**The Workplace Socialization Model (WPS)** supplements the CES model by focusing on job enhancement and retention. The WPS aims to extend the job tenure of employees with a disability and other positive work outcomes, including the employee's job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and level of work culture competency, as well as the employer's satisfaction with the employee's job performance.

**Identification of “Good Practices” Within Vocational Rehabilitation** is designed to identify a variety of good practices being used in the state and federal vocational rehabilitation to facilitate consumer access to services and enhance employment outcomes. We have adopted a multi-component approach to documenting a variety of “good practices” that are associated with better access and outcomes and that provide a basis for flexibly designing responses within the vocational rehabilitation system to better meet the needs of consumers.

Another project, **Designing and Testing Comprehensive Employment Practice and Policy Initiatives Within a Vocational Rehabilitation State Agency**, is developing and testing a model that leads to enhanced employment outcomes. The model will include the “human capital” characteristics of persons with disabilities, as well as what vocational rehabilitation delivery systems add to these human capital factors to improve outcomes. The larger context surrounding service delivery also will be examined, including factors such as the culture of the organization that provides services and labor markets external to the organization.

The **Study of Disability Navigator Functions in One-Stops** is collecting data on Workforce Investment Act regions in one state and assessing the degree to which navigator functions contribute to customer satisfaction and employment outcomes across the regions. As a result of this research, states should be better positioned to understand the degree to which maintaining disability program navigator-like functions provides sufficient value to initiate efforts to retain these services.

Training, dissemination, and technical assistance activities are designed to amplify and enhance the impact of the five research projects. The target audiences for training, dissemination, and technical assistance include people with disabilities, employers, and everyone within the employment service system who serves people with disabilities. Distance-learning technologies will be heavily relied on to deliver training and technical assistance and disseminate research results.

At the tabletop exhibit, ESSRTC displayed the following resources for conference participants:

The *Employer Openness Survey* (EOS). The EOS provides a reliable and valid means of assessing an employer’s openness to hiring persons with disabilities. It can be used as a screening tool to quickly identify the level of openness of a potential employer, thus increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of placement and employer development activities. The EOS also can be used to help employers evaluate their actual (rather than publicized) level of openness and change organizational practices and procedures that may be limiting employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Additionally, rehabilitation counselors and other professionals can use the questions on the EOS as a way to begin or deepen a relationship with an employer.

The *CES Manual*. This publication provides a step-by-step guide for rehabilitation providers to enhance employer development through implementation of the innovative CES model. The CES model improves employment opportunities for

rehabilitation consumers by increasing the collaboration of local service providers. With the CES, service providers create a more efficient system to develop and manage employer relationships. The CES meets the dual needs of providers (who are often overextended and unable to dedicate adequate time to employer development) and employers (who would like one point of contact in the vocational rehabilitation community).

ESSRTC also conducted demonstrations of its online multimedia courses: *Labor Markets and Gathering Information*; *Creating a Job Search Strategy and Information Gathering*; *Marketing Strategies*; *Creating Job Opportunities*; *Universal Design of Environments and Products*; *Universal Design for Services and Learning*; and *Ethics for Rehabilitation Counselors*.

## **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

The federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) envisions “A Life in the Community for Everyone” based on the premise that people of all ages, with or at risk for mental or substance use disorders, should have the opportunity for a fulfilling life that includes a job and education, a home, and meaningful personal relationships with friends and family. SAMHSA’s Employment Intervention Demonstration Program (EIDP), a multi-site randomized trial of employment support programs for people with serious mental illnesses, firmly established that with the right supports, people with psychiatric disabilities can become valued employees and earn significant income. This presentation describes strategies used and resources developed by the SAMHSA Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) to improve employment outcomes for people with psychiatric disabilities.

Since SAMHSA’s inception in 1992, CMHS has provided national leadership to ensure the application of scientifically established findings and practice-based knowledge in the prevention and treatment of mental disorders; to improve access, reduce barriers, and promote high-quality effective programs and services for people with, or at risk for, these disorders, as well as for their families and communities; and to promote an improved state of mental health within the nation, as well as the rehabilitation of people with mental disorders. In its efforts to improve life in the community for people with psychiatric disabilities, CMHS, and its precursors, have always included employment as a critical aspect of their mission. Although vocational support models for people with serious mental illnesses had long existed, little rigorous research on the effectiveness of such services had been conducted through the early 1990s. Identifying this critical research gap, SAMHSA established the EIDP in 1995 to rigorously assess the best means of helping people with psychiatric disabilities to find and keep competitive jobs.

With more than 2,000 participants, the EIDP was the largest study of employment services for people with psychiatric disabilities ever conducted. In recent years, the study has produced a strong set of research papers published in premier professional journals. With the scientific evidence for the employability of people with mental illnesses firmly established, CMHS has developed myriad strategies and resources to move the research

results into practice. Collaborations necessary to overcome barriers to employment and promote understanding of mental health and the workplace have included work with the Social Security Administration, Center for Medicaid Services, U.S. Departments of Labor and Education, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, employers, researchers, policy-makers, administrators, service providers, and consumers of mental health services and their families. Specific resources have been developed for decreasing stigma in the workplace, providing educational forums for business leaders, and implementing evidence-based supported employment programs specifically designed for people with mental illnesses. Research results, collaborative strategies, and resource materials used by SAMHSA were presented.

### **Vocational Recovery Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation**

Recovery as a vision and guiding mission for the field of mental health is gaining prominence and now permeates programs and systems. Two critical aspects of recovery include recovering valued roles, including that of a worker, and community integration. Employment is critical to both aspects of recovery.

The Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation has been in the forefront of developing models of vocational rehabilitation, demonstrating innovative approaches to vocational interventions, conducting observational and randomized studies of vocational interventions, examining vocational performance among professionals and managers with a psychiatric disability, and investigating the barriers and facilitators to full vocational recovery and the patterns of vocational recovery. The center also has investigated predictors of vocational performance and the role of reasonable accommodations in vocational outcomes.

The center displayed products relevant to the vocational recovery of individuals with psychiatric disabilities, including peer-reviewed articles, curricula, and other related materials.

## Appendix D: Recommendations

Conference participants suggested over 400 recommendations related to disability employment research needs. Overall, these recommendations reference a comprehensive range of entities—individuals, families, service personnel, institutions, organizations, programs, systems, and environments. Participants suggested research on government programs, such as Social Security programs and those that address vocational rehabilitation and workforce development. They called for future research to address all steps in the employment process—the decision to work or return-to-work; education and training; job search, recruitment, and hiring; and retention and advancement. Finally, they suggested recommendations that address many different types of disability, reflecting the diversity of people with disabilities.

Corresponding to the comprehensive set of issues and topics covered by the recommendations, conference participants suggested a wide range of research tools and approaches, such as the development and fielding of data collection tools (e.g., surveys, administrative data, linked administrative-survey data), experimental designs, case studies, demonstration programs, and program evaluation. Improved data collection was a common theme across many recommendations as a research topic or as a facilitator to study a specific topic.

The most frequently mentioned research topics were youth and young adults, employment strategies, best practices, health issues, training, and accommodations.

**Youth and Young Adults.** Issues related to youth and young adults were the most frequently cited recommendations. These recommendations focused on issues related to transition and support services—calling for research activities that address individuals, service personnel, the services themselves, disability and non-disability programs, transitions between programs, the complexity of programs, and the role of the external environment and systems. For example, the recommendations ranged from focusing on the empowerment of youth as they navigate services to the coordination and collaboration among agencies that provide services.

**Employment Strategies.** Many recommendations focused on employment strategies, addressing a wide range of workplace and community issues. These recommendations cited the need to investigate the impact of specific barriers and potential solutions, such as limited employment opportunities and the promotion of self-employment opportunities; access to the workplace and telework, and rural transportation systems; leveling the playing field and incorporating universal design into employer policies; the stigma of disability and promoting the benefits of diversity; and adverse attitudes among employers and the development of targeted training opportunities and materials.

**Best Practices.** The investigation of practices of job seekers, services providers, and employers were the subject of a large number of participant recommendations; i.e., identifying and then promoting best practices. Many of these recommendations call for comparing the practices of different groups (e.g., job seekers with disabilities and job

seekers without disabilities, public sector employers and private sector employers) or investigating the practice of specific groups of highly recognizable employers (household-name companies, multinational corporations). Some recommendations referenced specific employment processes (job placement, recruitment, retention) or specific outcomes (health, earnings, return-to-work). There also was a set of recommendations that call for research investigating the manner in which best practices are conveyed and promoted to a general audience.

**Health Issues.** There were two distinct lines to health recommendations. One line focused on the employer—the effectiveness of employer wellness and employee assistance programs—and the second focused on the impact of primary and secondary health conditions on productivity and employment.

**Training.** Participants recommended training on self-determination, disability awareness, stereotypes, financial literacy, job search skills, universal design principles, and the social model of disability. The audience for such trainings included individuals with disabilities, business school students, human resources professionals, vocational counselors, and all public school students.

**Accommodations.** These recommendations focused on the cost and effectiveness of specific accommodations on employment opportunities (hiring and retention) and the workers' and employers' knowledge of accommodation issues.

## **Analysis of Recommendations**

There were a total of 435 recommendations. A qualitative content analysis was used to categorize recommendations into sub-themes within each conference theme. This type of analysis uses a systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns within the text data.<sup>3</sup> Two researchers independently read and coded each recommendation identifying the sub-themes. The researchers collaborated and came to a consensus on sub-theme topics. The recommendations were then sorted by like sub-theme topics within the major theme areas (Table D-1).

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<sup>3</sup> Hsieh H-F, Shannon SE. Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qual Health Res* 2005;15(9):1277–1288.

**Table D-1. Recommendations by Theme Areas and Sub-Theme Topics**

<b>Recommendations by Theme (Total = 435)</b>			
<b>Theme 1: Business and Employment: A Global and Technology-Driven Environment (Total = 136)</b>	<b>Theme 2: Disability Workforce Experiences and Needs—Issues and Research (Total = 176)</b>	<b>Theme 3: Health—A Competitive Disability Workforce (Total = 68)</b>	<b>Theme 4: Government Policies and Practice—Role and Effect (Total = 55)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identification of best practices (13)</li> <li>2. Outcome measurement (13)</li> <li>3. Cooperation and collaboration (12)</li> <li>4. Technology (12)</li> <li>5. Accommodations (10)</li> <li>6. Employment strategies (9)</li> <li>7. Information dissemination (9)</li> <li>8. Workplace supports (8)</li> <li>9. ADA compliance, advocacy, and rights (6)</li> <li>10. Program evaluation (6)</li> <li>11. Workplace skills (6)</li> <li>12. Alternative work arrangements (5)</li> <li>13. Accessibility (4)</li> <li>14. Job placement (4)</li> <li>15. Training (4)</li> <li>16. Workplace socialization (4)</li> <li>17. Community integration (3)</li> <li>18. Transition from school to work (2)</li> <li>19. Accountability (2)</li> <li>20. Recruitment (2)</li> <li>21. Return to work (2)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Transition from school to work (32)</li> <li>2. Aging workforce (15)</li> <li>3. Employment services (12)</li> <li>4. Accommodations (11)</li> <li>5. Best practices (10)</li> <li>6. Health issues (9)</li> <li>7. Workplace supports (9)</li> <li>8. Education (8)</li> <li>9. Mentoring youth (8)</li> <li>10. Employment strategies (7)</li> <li>11. Training (7)</li> <li>12. Vocational rehabilitation (6)</li> <li>13. Cooperation and collaboration (5)</li> <li>14. Information dissemination (5)</li> <li>15. Outcome measurement (5)</li> <li>16. Workforce development (5)</li> <li>17. Employment barriers (4)</li> <li>18. Interventions (4)</li> <li>19. Hiring decisions (3)</li> <li>20. Program evaluation (3)</li> <li>21. Service delivery (3)</li> <li>22. Workplace skills (3)</li> <li>23. Statistics (2)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Employment strategies (18)</li> <li>2. Health and wellness (17)</li> <li>3. Insurance (9)</li> <li>4. Identification of best practices (8)</li> <li>5. Demand-side emphasis (6)</li> <li>6. Accessibility (4)</li> <li>7. Work benefits (3)</li> <li>8. Program evaluation/outcome measurement (3)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Workplace development (8)</li> <li>2. Veterans' issues (7)</li> <li>3. Statistics (6)</li> <li>4. Education and training (6)</li> <li>5. Disability policy (4)</li> <li>6. Accommodations (4)</li> <li>7. Service delivery (3)</li> <li>8. Program evaluation (3)</li> <li>9. Merit resolution (3)</li> <li>10. Medical care (3)</li> <li>11. Cooperation and collaboration (3)</li> <li>12. Best practices (3)</li> <li>13. Return to work (2)</li> </ol>

The 435 recommendations are listed below by major themes and then by sub-theme topics.

**Theme 1: Business and Employment: A Global and Technology-Driven Environment**

***Accessibility***

- Convey to employers that their workplace environment and their tasks should be made accessible to a wide range of functional abilities.
- For all people in the workplace, increase the accessibility of assistive technology that addresses a wide range of functional abilities.

- Investigate the possibility of setting up university degree programs in accessibility.
- Survey Web design certificate programs to determine how many cover accessibility requirements and the extent to which they cover accessibility.

### ***Accommodations***

- Determine the number and types of requests for accommodations by all employees, not just those with disabilities,
- Determine how data on the low cost and effectiveness of accommodations can be used to increase the employment of people with disabilities. Use these data to implement programs and policies for instituting workplace technologies that help accommodate people with disabilities.
- Document the potential impact on the future employment and self-sufficiency of people with disabilities of the federal government's paying for a computer or other accommodations.
- Study how to provide incentives for universal design as an accommodation.
- Examine how the changes in workplace design affect the accommodation of people with disabilities.
- Determine how federal agencies can address an approach of sensory-based accommodations in the workplace.
- Study how a person with a disability can best be matched to an accommodation. What tools are best suited in an employment setting? How can the impact of the tools be measured?
- Determine how to encourage people with disabilities to take personal responsibility for finding accommodations that work best for them in their employment situation.
- Study the possibility of government funding with subsidies or tax credits to help small businesses provide accommodations.
- Educate companies that the cost of accommodations is often less than \$500 per person and that most people with disabilities do not need any accommodations.

### ***Accountability***

- Use the federal government's purchasing power to hold federal contractors accountable, and study what the contractors are doing to employ people with disabilities.

- Encourage more leadership from the White House and less leadership at the agency level.

### ***ADA Compliance, Advocacy, and Rights***

- Determine the impact of Section 508 on the employment of people with disabilities on the federal workforce.
- What is the percentage of federal agencies that comply with Section 508? What does “comply” mean? What is the impact of Section 508 on people with disabilities who are seeking entry-level employment and on those seeking promotional opportunities?
- Study the fiscal impact of implementing Section 508 in states. Also research whether more people are getting jobs or the right jobs.
- Investigate whether private and public entities that do not have Section 508 requirements are taking advantage of products built to conform with Section 508. For example, are these sectors aware of products with built-in access or interoperability with assistive technology? Do they know if they have such products? If they have the products, do they know how to activate them?
- Inform people with disabilities about their legal and human rights.
- Convey to society that people with disabilities deserve the same rights—economic, social, and others—as those without disabilities.

### ***Alternative Work Arrangements***

- Study the effect of alternative work schedules on the productivity of people with disabilities.
- Replicate successful telework models and study what made them successful.
- Determine how employers and rehabilitation specialists can best collaborate on implementing teleworking for people with disabilities.
- Determine the supports, such as job training, placement assistance, and technology start-up funds, necessary for employers and employees to make telecommuting work.

### ***Best Practices***

- Examine how employers are responding to projected labor shortages. Are they using best practices in recruiting and hiring qualified employees with disabilities?

- Locate data and best practices on employing people with disabilities and share them with employers. Examples of places to obtain the data are Virginia Commonwealth University, Society for Human Resource Management, and Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- Conduct evaluations of promising practices in the private sector and in public/private partnerships in employing people with disabilities, document these practices, and promote these practices.
- Test ways to achieve adoption of best practices among employers and providers.
- Require fidelity (the degree to which a model can be reproduced) to best-practice models in research, training, and service.
- Determine how employers can be encouraged to adopt the practices of other employers that have been effective in attracting and retaining people with disabilities. How can employers that use best practices become involved in sharing their practices and in designing research to encourage adoption of those practices?
- Determine the best way to study the role of corporate culture and practices in disability employment.
- Study how to combine research on corporate culture and practice with supply-side factors, such as transportation, personal care and assistance, education, and training that influence employment of people with disabilities.
- Determine how to increase knowledge and adoption of best practices in both large and small firms.
- Educate employers on how to incorporate practices that promote workplace socialization through informal socialization and workplace communication that includes employees with disabilities.
- Highlight to employers the importance of incorporating practices that provide socially oriented experiences and socially based communication.
- Study the lessons learned from companies like Walgreens, which form partnerships with other companies and the rehabilitation community to make employment of people with disabilities successful.
- Survey employers about their employment practices for people with disabilities. For example, compare their hiring attitudes toward people with disabilities with their actual hiring practices, and identify their provision of accommodations, including the type and cost of the accommodations, the flexibility offered or required in jobs, and the specific benefits they offer, such as health insurance.

### ***Community Integration***

- Promote community-based rehabilitation for people with disabilities, including providing employment and education for people within their own communities.
- Integrate people with disabilities, particularly those with mental health disabilities, in key community efforts, such as helping to work with people after a disaster.
- Encourage people with significant disabilities to be as self-sufficient as possible (substantially, although not necessarily completely, self-sufficient).

### ***Cooperation and Collaboration***

- Require agencies and levels of government to cooperate with one another.
- Form federal, state, and private partnerships when conducting translational research on disability employment.
- Increase cross-agency collaboration on disability employment research through mechanisms such as developing interagency memoranda of understanding, streamlining the approval processes for research funding requests, requiring multi-organization and federal agency collaboration for funding, creating a common framework for research and outcomes (e.g., the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health), and requiring that all researchers evaluate the projects and outcomes.
- Determine how researchers, service providers in the disability community, business, and people with disabilities can find some common ground to increase employment of people with disabilities. We are more alike than different.
- Encourage employers to reach out to employer associations and business networking groups, including the Business Leadership Network, to create relationships at the community level to employ people with disabilities.
- Consider partnerships between educators in universities and the federal government to feed into programs that can help prepare people with disabilities for the current and future workplace.
- Encourage employers to reach out to teachers and bring them to businesses to see what skills are needed for future jobs. Teachers can then impart this knowledge to students. Employers also need to bring students into businesses as interns and through other programs so that the students can see real-life business.
- Demonstrate onsite partnership models for disability hiring and retention programs.

- Encourage cross-agency collaboration for benefits for people with disabilities.
- Determine how to collaborate with people from different professional disciplines, such as architecture, design, and occupational therapy, on universal design and accessibility issues.
- Determine how to begin a dialogue with other countries and cultures on diversity in the workplace and see how inclusion of people with disabilities is handled in different cultures. Study whether U.S. strategies for increasing employment of people with disabilities might translate to other cultural contexts.
- Make the federal government a laboratory for experimentation and research.

### ***Employment Strategies***

- Review other countries' initiatives for increasing the employment of people with disabilities and draw upon this information in designing employment strategies in the United States.
- When conducting disability employment research, be cognizant of trends, such as the paradigm shift from delivering services in community rehabilitation programs to delivering the services at business sites, the increasing attention on autism, and the return of military service members with disabilities.
- Design future demand-side research to lead to improved understanding of the policies, procedures, and practices inherent in the public employment programs that impede the efforts of employers to support and retain workers with disabilities.
- Conduct research on a consistent definition of disability that can be used in the workforce.
- Study the strategies needed to help people with disabilities become employers, researchers, and even politicians.
- Quantify actual impacts of absence and disability management on retention.
- Help people with disabilities who desire to be self-employed start a business. For example, the New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is helping clients start carefully planned worker cooperatives.
- Compare job search intensity, strategies, and preferences of unemployed people with disabilities with data on job opportunities and a successful strategy used by workers in general.

- Collect better statistics and improve metrics on the employment of people with disabilities.

### ***Information Dissemination***

- Encourage researchers to start thinking about studies that can be part of the message in 2010 around the 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the 35th anniversary of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. What research findings should be reported at this time that can capture media attention?
- Widely disseminate research findings on disability employment and work toward turning the positive findings into policy.
- Disseminate research through peer-reviewed publications, easy-to-understand products for the public and popular media. Involve the target audiences in the selection and design of the knowledge transfer mechanisms and disseminate the research shortly after it is completed.
- Engage businesses on the frontlines in employing people with disabilities. For example, how would a disability employment specialist talk to a CVS/pharmacy manager about employing a person with Down syndrome?
- Study how to get messages out to employers about the benefits of employing people with disabilities.
- Create opportunities for ambassadors to spread the word about the benefits of employing people with disabilities and have them challenge the people they do business with to include people with disabilities.
- Make business cases for employing people with disabilities. Disability advocates must (1) show that hiring people with disabilities has a beneficial impact on business and is not done just to comply with regulations or internal goals and (2) make empirical-based arguments for why hiring people with disabilities actually provides a competitive advantage.
- Disseminate research findings beyond the research community—to advocates, employers, and employees—in simple language. Consider preparing a one-page summary of findings from a research study. Funding agencies should mandate that researchers submit dissemination plans when they apply for funding and that those plans be part of the grading of the applications.
- Create routine, timely, and more effective mechanisms to quickly translate that information for educators, parents, counselors, and job seekers so that supply-side programs can reflect real-time demands.

## ***Job Placement***

- Consider working with a supplemental staffing organization, such as Manpower, to place people with disabilities in jobs. When doing so, it is imperative that rehabilitation staff bond with staffing specialists and understand their world of supplemental staffing.
- Recognizing that there is not just “one” labor market, determine how people with disabilities who do not have college educations can be prepared for and connected to jobs that do not require college but do require special skills or experience.
- Research how to prepare people with disabilities for jobs that are between entry-level and those that require at least a four-year degree—the middle-skill jobs. People in the rehabilitation community need to work with community colleges to provide the supports that people with disabilities may need, such as part-time schedules and financial aid.
- Use federal data on the employment of people with disabilities to determine why this population is leaving the government at 7.5 times the general reduction of the federal workforce.

## ***Outcome Measurement***

- Create a better private-sector benchmarking system. The American Association of People with Disabilities is working with WalMart, IBM, and the U.S. Business Leadership Network, among others, on a system that would help companies set goals and measure their performance against those disability-related goals.
- Determine whether employment outcomes improve for people with disabilities.
- Study whether employers developed by Consortia for Employment Success professionals increase their hiring of people with disabilities.
- Identify the extent to which Consortia for Employment Success partners are implementing the Workplace Socialization model into their daily practice of post-employment services.
- Determine whether consumers served by Consortia for Employment Success partners that are trained in the Workplace Socialization model experience better employment outcomes.
- Determine whether employers that hire employees served by Consortia for Employment Success partners trained in the Workplace Socialization model experience more positive outcomes.
- Tie employing people with disabilities to a business’s productivity and bottom line.

- Emphasize that employing people with disabilities increases the diversity of an employer's workforce.
- Promote success stories and experiences of other employers (one of the most effective ways of engaging new employers).
- Develop evidence-based outcome measures for accommodations to determine whether they work and use this information in designing future accommodations.
- Determine the metrics of positive employment outcomes—simply the performance of work tasks or the performance of work tasks and the participation in the work community.
- Federal agencies: Support research efforts that identify specific strategies used by proactive companies to implement absence management programs, design and deliver accommodations, and promote employee productivity.
- Research the socialization experiences of employees with disabilities who are served by Consortia for Employment Success partners trained in the Workplace Socialization model.

### ***Program Evaluation***

- Test programs that (1) provide a single point of entry and integrate supports for people with disabilities who work or who are attempting to return to work, (2) provide meaningful and informed employment choices, and (3) make hiring and retention profitable for the employer.
- Encourage the testing of many different types of employment programs. Some will fail, but lessons will be learned in the process.
- Evaluate existing workforce-preparation programs to understand what works and what does not work for people with disabilities, especially emerging-sector strategies and longer-term tracking of an individual's continuous attachment to one employer, using data on unemployment insurance wages.
- Make evaluation designs informative, to provide administrators, policy-makers, and the public with real-time information without compromising research integrity and rigor and to result in significantly improved program practice, policy, and operations.
- Conduct studies on disability employment that measure fidelity (the degree to which a program or project follows a model), particularly in research demonstrations that occur over a long period of time in a real-world setting.

- Federal agencies: Support research focused on large-scale, methodologically rigorous evaluations of a variety of promising public/partnership models.

### ***Recruitment***

- Implement stronger requirements in the federal government for affirmative action goals and establish full-time federal selective placement coordinators who seek out highly skilled candidates for government.
- Find a fresh perspective to market a business model for hiring people with disabilities.

### ***Return to Work***

- Provide incentives for private insurers to more vigorously support return to work.
- Study creative solutions for returning workers to the jobs they held before they became disabled. Create resources for businesses, particularly small businesses, to provide information about retaining and accommodating injured workers.

### ***Technology***

- Study the use of innovative technologies, such as Second Life, for people with disabilities. This is a 3-D virtual world created by its residents, which may make it easier for people with disabilities to match their skills against an employer's needs.
- Determine the ways in which Web sites and other technologies facilitate and inhibit the employment of people with disabilities. How can these technologies be enhanced to help people indicate that they are eligible for special hiring under Schedule A? Could a federal resume data-banking system be put in place, so that resumes would be housed in a single system? This would allow employers to search resumes, find matching qualifications, then contact potential candidates for the job.
- Determine the efficacy of providing assistive technology as job accommodations. Who provides those accommodations—therapists, engineers, employers, or people with disabilities themselves?
- Develop standards on making certain technologies accessible, and include people with disabilities in the standards-setting process. Then develop outcome measures to evaluate the effectiveness of these accessible technologies.
- Find out what new technologies are needed to further improve the work environment.
- Address the existing and potential software barriers in the federal government.

- Institute measures to avoid workplace isolation that results from technology. Recommend that the Interagency Subcommittee on Employment and Interagency Subcommittee on Technology sponsor a conference around employment and technology.
- Create better technology tools for individuals with disabilities to help them map their federal benefits, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), their options, and how their return to work affects the benefits. As people become eligible for SSI or SSDI, automatically provide or offer them a menu of technology tools free and design a new type of cost-benefit equation that looks at those tools.
- Determine the most effective use of tele-technologies to provide remote rehabilitation services.
- Study which computer-supported collaborative work technologies are most effective in enabling remote workers to engage in synchronous collaborative tele-work.
- Study how universal design affects the workplace culturally and financially (its productivity). After universal design principles are incorporated into the workplace, document and publicize their effect on business.
- Determine how to encourage the design community to become more engaged in thinking about universal design, particularly in the workplace. Working with universities on their architectural curricula and the American Institute of Architects on licensing and codes would be a beginning. Survey the state architectural licensing boards, which oversee curriculum, to determine whether there are any mandatory curriculum units on universal design.

### ***Training***

- Investigate whether staff members trained in the Consortia for Employment Success model is more successful in developing employers and whether the job development process improves for people with disabilities.
- Encourage business schools to train students to create an inclusive work environment.
- Study the best ways to train peer support specialists and determine whether the training helps people develop the soft skills that employer's desire.
- Study how to train human resource departments to use the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health philosophy in working with their employees to set up their work environments.

### ***Workplace Skills***

- Match the ability requirements of jobs to the ability of people with disabilities. One strategy is to build accommodations on O\*NET (an occupational information network). This system provides comprehensive information on key attributes and characteristics of workers and occupations.
- Ensure that people with disabilities have skills they can take with them from job to job in this era of globalization, layoffs, downsizing, and portability of skills.
- Learn how the computer skills of people with disabilities match up with requirements in available jobs.
- Research the skills employees and employers need to be successful in the global environment and in global workforce trends. Transfer this knowledge to educators at all levels, such as K–12, postsecondary, and graduate programs, so that they prepare their students to be successful in the workplace. Also educate students and parents about the type of skills that are needed in the workplace.
- Conduct ongoing research on the changing skill needs of employers.
- Listen to what employers need and translate that back to educators, who need to develop programs, curricula, or educational techniques to impart skills that employers need. For this to happen, partnerships between industry and schools must be developed.

### ***Workplace Socialization***

- Emphasize teaching employees with disabilities how to be proactive in seeking out and participating in socially oriented activities and conversations.
- Research how to encourage employers that are successfully employing people with disabilities to work with their peers within their industries on implementing strategies to employ this population.
- Uncover some effective ways to educate employers about the role of workplace socialization and friendly workplaces.
- Study the effects of social networks in drawing in people with disabilities. How do the different types of networks overlap, and what is the consequence of the overlap? What do these networks look like, and how can we make them effective? How can businesses help people with disabilities access these social networks?

### ***Workplace Supports***

- Study the nature and intensity of workplace supports required for workers with different disabilities.

- Determine how to design and implement workplace supports across different industries.
- Determine the role of workplace supports in enhancing worker productivity and universal design.
- Examine employer perspectives on the usefulness of public support programs that are designed to deliver workplace supports, such as work incentive provisions in benefit programs, public job placement programs, and effectiveness of school-to-work transition programs.
- Make more people with disabilities aware of the Plan to Achieve Self-Support and its benefits.
- Work more closely with employees with disabilities during their initial socialization period on the job.
- Federal agencies: Promote research leading to new service approaches for individuals with autism spectrum disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other traditionally underserved groups.
- Determine how much of disability that develops in the workplace is preventable.

### ***Transition from School to Work***

- Create programs for transition of youth and young adults with disabilities into the workplace.
- Study how business and school partnerships can be encouraged and implemented to transition youth successfully into the world of work.

## **Theme 2: Disability Workforce Experiences and Needs: Issues and Research**

### ***Accommodations***

- Study stigma and disclosure issues of college students who have disabilities and how the receipt of accommodations varies by postsecondary institution.
- Ask consumers for examples of accommodations that have worked for them and relay this information to business.
- Design a study to ask employers what kind of accommodations they are providing and encourage them to provide what is needed.

- Determine what creative arrangements employers are making, particularly outside of the Americans with Disabilities Act process, to allow individuals with psychiatric disabilities to maintain employment.
- Determine what accommodations are provided to this population to help them react appropriately in social situations. Sometimes it is easier to change the environment than the person.
- In surveys intended to identify people with disabilities, ask carefully worded questions, for example, “Do you have a physical or mental impairment that affected your childhood and/or youth?” If so, determine whether there is the potential for discrimination or negative stereotypes or a need for accommodations in work or postsecondary education.
- Consider how someone from a culture where individualism is not valued but the face of the group is valued can ask for an accommodation, even though the request would bring more attention to the disability.
- Determine how accommodation activities support compensatory learning and personal development strategies.
- Determine whether the development of informal self-accommodation works. What are these accommodations?
- Facilitate short leaves of absence for employees faced with family or personal emergencies or opportunities for self-improvement.
- Offer non-standard job options.

### ***Aging Workforce***

- Consider greater use of “cafeteria-style” benefit packages to facilitate the hiring of older workers in flexible work arrangements.
- Pursue phased retirement as an alternative to standard retirement policies.
- Offer management-level training and employee workshops to eliminate age-related bias.
- Promote opportunities for older workers to update their skills.
- Ensure that older workers receive the same access to employer-provided training as their younger colleagues.
- Encourage older workers to seek training to stay competitive.

- Urge educational institutions to offer expanded job-training programs for the largely untapped market of older Americans that want to update their skills.
- Create recruitment strategies that target older workers.
- Supplement standard recruiting packages with materials designed for older workers.
- Partner with associations for seniors to advertise positions.
- Increase vacation time for older workers who want to travel; permit vacation to be taken by the hour for those who need more personal time.
- Work with community colleges and four-year colleges to help prepare older workers for re-entering or remaining in the workforce.
- Determine whether disability trends differ across generations.
- Amend current federal laws to allow greater flexibility in hiring older workers for contingent and part-time work.
- Offer an extended lunch period in the workplace to allow time for mid-week appointments.

### ***Best Practices***

- Define and build on approaches that are considered “best practices.”
- Identify best practices in the coordination of multi-agency services (multi-agency approaches for the delivery of serial rather than concomitant services appear to have special promise).
- Determine how the service provider culture can be changed to better match the employer culture.
- Determine the critical elements of a customized approach to engaging employers. What practices and strategies yield the highest quality jobs?
- Identify what marketing strategies work best for specific types of people or companies.
- Determine what policies, practices, and initiatives should be looked at through a generational lens.
- Analyze successful practices already demonstrated by household-name companies, such as IBM and Coca-Cola.

- Emphasize to business the practices that work in real life.
- Determine what makes an organization a compelling place to work for younger employees and mature employees alike.
- Survey multi-national companies about their policies on employment of people with disabilities.

### ***Cooperation and Collaboration***

- Create an innovative workforce system that fosters partnerships with local communities and businesses to employ people with disabilities.
- Encourage more partnerships between high schools and business.
- Encourage collaboration among multiple federal agencies, including the U.S. Departments of Labor, Education, Health and Human Services, and Justice, on research to improve outcomes.
- Evaluate the relationship of increased collaboration and employment outcomes.
- Examine whether disability agencies should adhere to concerns about cooperation from business or adhere to the competitive capitalist model.

### ***Education***

- Determine how the knowledge of retiring workers can be passed on to the next generation.
- Institute universal design principles in institutions of higher learning.
- Combat negative stereotypes.
- Educate managers about generational differences without stereotyping people.
- Study how and when attitudinal change can be influenced most effectively at the provider, direct support, family, and individual levels.
- Conduct research on whether education of the general workforce, independent of experience, helps people with disabilities.
- Study whether disability advocates should focus on stigma or discrimination, both, or neither.
- Provide financial education and ongoing support for those returning to work, so they can learn how to handle debt, poor credit, and financial hardships.

### ***Employment Barriers***

- Disability employment professionals need to recognize that some people with disabilities are reluctant to work because their families depend on the public disability benefits for living expenses.
- Address operational issues, such as financial and insurance disincentives to employment, retention, and promotion.
- Determine whether post-high school disclosure of disabilities affects success in the workplace. What are some effective ways to disclose disabilities, and when is disclosure necessary?
- Determine how stigma and discrimination can be mitigated in the workplace. Study programs that have mitigated discrimination for other groups, particularly employees who have HIV/AIDS.

### ***Employment Services***

- Study how to approach job development in ways that are more effective, lead to higher quality outcomes, and engage employers more effectively.
- Focus job development programs on maximizing interpersonal and service skills.
- Emphasize building networks and lasting interpersonal relationships during job development.
- Study the use of employment specialists in helping people with disabilities find jobs.
- Investigate whether generic employment services (e.g., One-Stop Career Center programs) can meet the needs of job seekers who have significant disabilities.
- Study the accessible models of One-Stop Training Centers already in place.
- Explore how to link the movement toward choice and self-direction with increasing demand for quality employment.
- Determine whether gatekeepers in disability agencies help interest key personnel in business or create barriers.
- Examine the skills of hiring, engaging, and retaining tenured employees and new employees.
- Explore innovative ways to avoid career stagnation for long-tenure employees.
- Develop the tools to evaluate and screen people with disabilities.

- Study methods for preventing people from becoming dependent on public disability benefits. For example, instead of placing people who are homeless on SSI, help them obtain employment that may enable them to be self-sufficient.

### ***Employment Strategies***

- Identify factors that would truly make accessing and maintaining employment an equal opportunity for persons with mental health disabilities.
- Develop research-based guidelines for defining the “level playing field” for employment of persons with disabilities, particularly mental health disabilities.
- Determine what the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities will mean for diversity in the global workforce. Will it affect the practices of large international companies with offices in other countries that have ratified this convention to increase the employment of people with disabilities?
- Determine the effect in the United States, which has not ratified this convention.
- Explore ways for people with disabilities to obtain transportation to work.
- Document the effect of universal design on access to workforce systems and on employment outcomes.
- Assess the impact of a universal approach to business customers. Are needs being met? How can a more universal approach be used to reach out to employers?

### ***Health Issues***

- Determine how to educate people in recovery about the significant health detriments associated with long-term unemployment and the benefits of employment for physical, social, and mental health.
- Explore the implications of physical health as a barrier to employment and develop better systems integration for physical health issues.
- Determine how to help companies become aware of the benefits of and methods for addressing HIV/AIDS issues as they increasingly penetrate high-prevalence or at-risk regions of the world.
- Integrate the concept of the therapeutic value of work within the mindset of consumers and mental health providers.
- Implement pilot sites to determine the utility of Individual Development Accounts and microenterprise development (i.e., seed money to start a business) for persons with emotional disturbances and mental illnesses.

- Analyze existing financial literacy curricula and test modifications that would make materials more appropriate for persons with mental illnesses who may have cognitive and attention challenges.
- Develop models for training mental health staff to work with consumers to develop greater financial literacy.
- Define “disability” and how it differs from chronic disease.
- Study the demographics of people with all levels of psychiatric disabilities, including their needs and how to address those needs in a customized way.

### ***Hiring Decisions***

- Find out from employers that have hired persons with mental health disabilities what factors contributed to their decision to offer employment. Did they consider meeting hiring goals, satisfying diversity expectations, or receiving tax credits?
- Analyze what makes an applicant “most qualified.” Is it someone who desires part-time or flexible employment, or someone who has no need or desire for health benefits?
- Establish clear federal guidelines and incentives that address how business can integrate people with disabilities.

### ***Information Dissemination***

- Address ways to reach out to people with disabilities, especially those who have given up employment.
- Encourage researchers to disseminate research findings.
- Determine how the rehabilitation field can be presented effectively to employers as a vital disability and employment resource or consultant.
- Disseminate information on how people with mental illness can obtain a federal security clearance.
- Address the context of the disability, for example, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation, in research.

### ***Interventions***

- Use successful adjunctive interventions, for example, illness management and recovery, cognitive remediation, peer-provided services, and work-specific skills training.

- Create a description of interventions in rehabilitation research and determine how to improve them, whether they work, and how much they cost.
- Create better methods to show the indirect costs of interventions with people with disabilities.
- Quantify and qualify what is meant by “self-sufficiency” for people with disabilities and determine how self-sufficiency changes the type of interventions used. Of particular importance is long-term self-sufficiency.

### ***Mentoring Youth***

- Evaluate the effect of mentoring on the preparation, employment, and career advancement of youth with disabilities.
- Identify the program components and best practices of successful mentoring and youth leadership programs, including the mainstream/inclusion model, as well as disability-specific mentoring and leadership programs.
- Evaluate the inclusion of youth with disabilities in federally funded mentoring programs that target youth and at-risk youth.
- Identify and evaluate core competencies for youth service professionals and the results used to inform professional development policies, funding, and strategies.
- Determine whether mentoring improves post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities. Are mentors with disabilities more effective for youth with disabilities than mentors without disabilities? Can mentoring improve specific social and behavioral problems related to delinquency? Does mentoring increase self-esteem?
- Study the point at which mentoring and modeling start to affect someone’s dreams of what he or she can be.
- Identify effective strategies for youth-driven research across multiple systems and examine the process by which the voice of youth with disabilities is effectively included.
- Track the educational outcomes of students with disabilities, not just work outcomes. Look at how they go through postsecondary education, particularly four-year colleges and professional schools, such as medical school. There must be longitudinal analyses of multiple data points collected over long periods of time to track students.

### ***Outcome Measurement***

- Study the outcomes for people who receive Social Security benefits when they work and when they do not work. Conduct a pilot project that rewards people for working.
- Identify the characteristics of state systems that support high levels of employment and high-quality employment outcomes—what policy and strategy elements are necessary?
- Examine how federal policy can influence implementation of policy and strategy elements that define successful states.
- Focus future research directions on three questions: How can we ensure that what is measured is relevant to people with disabilities? How can we ensure that research designs and methods are rigorous and advance our knowledge of facilitators and barriers to full community participation of persons with disabilities? What knowledge-translation activities will promote use of psychometrically sound instruments?
- Research how human resources can be reallocated effectively to focus on employment as an outcome. What workforce development investments at the direct support level have the greatest impact on individual outcomes?

### ***Program Evaluation***

- Determine whether programs that offer universal access and universal designs of learning increase participation of youth with disabilities in general education and workforce development programs and in the labor force.
- Shift the focus to demonstration and pilot projects rather than surveys or long-term studies.
- When studying employment of people with severe mental illness or substance abuse, be aware that stable employment occurs over time.

### ***Service Delivery***

- Address the gap in service delivery between educational and vocational rehabilitation services.
- Determine what kinds of services must be provided to help people with psychiatric disabilities work better and longer.
- Determine how information is gathered about services used by people with disabilities and the effectiveness of these services.

## **Statistics**

- Present statistics using disability definitions that can be applied in different settings, such as vocational rehabilitation and special education.
- Develop longitudinal survey, administrative, and linked databases to track cross-program use, long-term outcomes, state differences, programmatic outcomes, and needs of youth with disabilities.

## **Training**

- Develop training programs for workplace staff that include co-workers with disabilities, so that some stereotypes can be broken and awareness of disability pride can be increased.
- Prepare people with disabilities to function in the future workforce. Address the question of who bears this responsibility (e.g., the educational system, businesses).
- Determine whether mental health case workers are more effective in learning financial literacy curriculum and training consumers, or whether consumers should be referred to other resources for training.
- Determine how training materials must be modified to meet the needs of persons with mental illnesses.
- Analyze factors that predict success for mental health consumers who develop microenterprises. Develop training packages based on these factors to allow for maximum success.
- Focus training programs (including vocational rehabilitation programs) on achieving business goals, not mastery of skills sets derived from job descriptions.
- Embed technological skills in all job training programs.

## **Transition from School to Work**

- Study how the employment of youth with disabilities could be increased. For example, could school and employment programs that help youth secure jobs be made more readily available?
- Study the effects of disclosure of disabilities by youth in the workplace.
- Design and implement interventions with youth in transition using a consortium of state, local, and private organizations. Test models for different at-risk populations.

- Design policy around rigorous evaluations of best practices, such as the Youth Transition Demonstration project.
- Identify effective strategies used to support at-risk youth who participate in youth development and leadership programs and evaluate the impact of applying these strategies. Investigate the value of gender-, ethnicity-, and disability-specific programming.
- Identify effective data-collection systems on programs for youth with disabilities in transition that include qualitative and quantitative outcome measures.
- Determine whether promoting “Youth Voice” as a core design feature increases success in the labor force. If so, identify which strategies in the continuum of youth empowerment (driven, directed, or guided) work best, and when and where do they work?
- Determine the outcomes in postsecondary education and the labor force for youth with disabilities who have not acquired a standard diploma.
- Determine how many youth with disabilities are involved in the foster care system and in what type of placements, for example, in individual or group homes.
- Determine whether the service plans of youth with disabilities vary from those of the non-disabled. If so, why and how do they vary?
- Determine whether a single-point-of-contact navigator would help youth move through the transition process and across institutional boundaries. What additional supports might be needed for youth with disabilities?
- Determine whether a demonstration project that includes preparation for the world of work as a core service strategy for transition-age youth would improve mental health and workforce participation outcomes.
- Determine whether youth workers are the secret ingredients of high-quality programs, as suggested by a growing body of evidence. If so, what needs to be done to ensure that all youth workers are prepared to serve all youth?
- Determine what resources exist to support professional development of transition-related occupations. What critical job classifications need to be involved in key transition services in each system (e.g., juvenile justice, foster care)?
- Determine whether there are common competencies across the juvenile justice, foster care, and other systems and whether certification programs for professionals who work in these systems affect the quality of services they deliver to people with disabilities.

- Address the lack of consistency in disability indicators across national studies for youth in transition, being aware that not all youth in transition received special education services in school.
- Investigate the trend of placing an increasing number of youth with disabilities in alternative education, focusing on children in middle school.
- Study the protective factors that many youth with disabilities have that help them through transitions.
- Study the relevance of housing, transportation, and other life domains to youth in transition.
- Initiate self-advocacy interventions with youth in transition.
- Involve local schools in youth transition research—the way it looks and how it is carried out and reported. Make the research a collaborative effort among researchers, rehabilitation professionals, and schools.
- Institute federal policies that would give researchers incentives to collaborate with one another on youth transition and other research.
- Support development of a “map” of existing research and evaluation transition studies that catalogs intervention areas, outcomes, disability groups, and research designs.
- Target a federal research and demonstration evaluation agenda to address gaps in the transition intervention component, outcomes, disability groups, and research design “map.”
- Support the development of a set of analysis standards for single-participant designs on transition, such that some estimate of effect sizes can be created that allows aggregation of studies.
- Support the development of a set of design standards for qualitative research and evaluations in transition to allow confidence in the results of in-depth case studies that address why interventions work.
- Support the development and pilot testing of levels-of-evidence rubrics for multi-group, qualitative, and single-participant designs on transition.
- Support development of a set of cost-analysis standards that can be used relatively easily by demonstration evaluations and researchers to assess costs of transition interventions.

- Support the creation of a prototype and several pilot “Practice Guides” that clarify the quality and expected effects of differing transition interventions that focus on differing highly valued outcomes.
- Support the development of brief “Report Cards” of “branded” interventions that provide local users with essential quality information on transition interventions and where to locate the best information on implementation.
- Conduct more research to validate the seamless transition model. Generate proven interventions, with specific focus on paid competitive employment, youth and family-empowered, early coordination of services and delivery systems, and adult agencies and providers prepared to support youth.
- Design research that addresses how to prevent youth with disabilities from developing drug and alcohol problems.

### ***Vocational Rehabilitation***

- Determine how vocational rehabilitation programs can meet the challenges of increasing numbers of people with disabilities, including psychiatric and psychosocial disabilities.
- Determine which cohort of people would benefit from Individualized Placement and Support implemented by state-based vocational rehabilitation programs. Address whether it could include people who are using alcohol or drugs or people who are not in recovery.
- Determine whether a vocational rehabilitation system that has a sobriety waiting period can implement the Individualized Placement and Support model with any fidelity.
- Address whether a vocational rehabilitation program can send people to a job if they are likely to fail, and ask what that would do to the relationship of the employer to vocational rehabilitation.
- Address substance abuse needs early in the vocational rehabilitation process.
- Conduct further research on the process of screening people for substance abuse when they apply for vocational rehabilitation.

### ***Workforce Development***

- Determine whether workforce development policy bodies at the state and local levels are best positioned to organize transitional services. Are there structural barriers that prevent this, and if so, what are they?

- Determine how many persons with disabilities are being served in general workforce development programs and what types of disabilities are most likely to be represented (e.g., One-Stops, youth programs, Job Corps, adult education, Welfare-to-Work).
- Determine whether general workforce development programs meet the needs of persons with learning and emotional disabilities.
- Determine whether a systems-change initiative between workforce development programs and education/special education would increase labor market success for youth involved in the juvenile justice system.
- In researching employment, consider additional benefits of participating in the workforce, such as developing social networks and lowering the incidence of depression.

### ***Workplace Skills***

- Determine why so many people are choosing not to pursue employment and explore what can be done to develop readiness for the workforce.
- Develop analytical skills during job development programs along with a component on the basics of finance.
- Determine which strategies and development practices are most effective in helping youth acquire needed skills. Which strategies are most effective in different settings (e.g., multiple high school settings, adult basic education, vocational rehabilitation service, apprenticeship programs)?

### ***Workplace Supports***

- Determine what is happening with the 40 percent to 50 percent of people enrolled in supported employment who do not obtain or sustain employment.
- Study the impact of a peer support model to increase the numbers of people with a psychiatric disability who have access to employment resources, services, and opportunities.
- Determine how to support people in recovery who choose to work in the mental health field.
- Study the effects of providing both supported employment and supported education to enhance career development.
- Create programs that can help this population succeed in work and learn to successfully implement these programs.

- Find better models of supported employment for people with psychiatric disabilities.
- Teach rehabilitation professionals to use supported employment models and measure fidelity. Consider who is best equipped to provide this training.
- Study how to change customer demand for effective employment supports.
- Conduct research on whether co-workers provide good natural supports for any specific disability group.

### **Theme 3: Health: A Competitive Disability Workforce**

#### ***Accessibility***

- Make programs, information, equipment, and services accessible from the outset.
- Require federal contractors to make their workplaces accessible to all employees, including people with disabilities.
- Work with the business community to provide the same services in rural areas of the United States as in other areas. A private enterprise might be able to set up satellite access in these areas.
- Investigate how to make research study materials more understandable and accessible to people with disabilities. Determine how to present research findings in easy-to-understand language and in accessible formats.

#### ***Best Practices***

- Identify evidence-based employment practices that are linked to increased earnings.
- Use available research and best practices to highlight return on investment and the business case.
- Establish best practices for implementing health promotion programs based on the size of the business.
- Use a business-to-business communication network to share recommendations, lessons learned, and best practices.
- Develop a research protocol supported by private, foundation, and federal funds that addresses how employers will use best practices and lessons learned to develop and enhance employee access to health care and wellness services.

- Identify best practices in developing and implementing a fragrance-free policy. Develop a compendium of recommended accommodations, including those specific to electronic and information technologies.
- Identify some best practices in corporate wellness programs for addressing mental health.
- Study how to apply best practices from large businesses to health and wellness programs in smaller businesses.

### ***Demand-Side Emphasis***

- Federal agencies: Encourage states to develop demand-side innovations by making this area an explicit priority and providing technical assistance as well as money. In these innovations, these supporting agencies must be willing to tolerate some failure, provided there is adequate assessment to determine the reason.
- Federal agencies: Support the development of standardized national and state-level demand-side data comparable to data available on the supply side.
- State agencies: Use available federal supports to develop innovations with strong demand-side elements.
- State agencies: Support evaluations of supply-side and demand-side programs that use variables from both domains, even if such evaluations entail extra costs.
- Involve researchers in helping state agencies recognize potential demand-side opportunities in primarily supply-side interventions when possible.
- Inform researchers of the potential effects of demand-side phenomena on supply-side outcomes and visa versa. Include some capacity to examine these possibilities in research designs.

### ***Employment Strategies***

- Study the benefit of a flexible workplace, such as the option to telecommute, for workers with disabilities and for business.
- Create effective supports for alternative work efforts, such as telework and telecommuting.
- Identify new and effective strategies to reach employers, service providers, medical professionals, and community members to change their attitudes about disability and work ability. Emphasize the resulting benefit in return on investment and employee sustainability.
- Include persons with disabilities in planning committees.

- Identify industry-specific marketing techniques.
- Establish executive-level leadership support—a key step to attaining employee buy-in.
- Provide better guidance to self-employed persons about payment of Social Security taxes. Many people do not pay Social Security taxes and therefore will not qualify for benefits if they become disabled.
- Study training, technical assistance, and educational strategies that support the organizational restructuring of community rehabilitation programs toward community integrated employment.
- Create a cross-agency database on a small group of people who are receiving services through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Health Resources and Services Administration, and possibly the Rehabilitation Services Administration to test the ability to look across governmental agencies at utilization of services.
- Determine how the disability community can capitalize on some of the global challenges in the workforce to enhance opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Make a business case for employing people with disabilities in this increasingly competitive and challenging global economy.
- Convene an Interagency Committee on Disability Research conference on environmental sensitivities and employment.
- Address how to determine whether a workplace is accessible to people with environmental sensitivities.
- Create a program of universal training in stigma reduction.
- Create innovative and cost-effective rural transportation solutions, such as allowing ridership on school buses.
- Develop and market a model for collaboration on improving transportation issues.
- Evaluate the return on investment of vocational rehabilitation activities.

### ***Health and Wellness***

- Provide health and wellness information in multiple, accessible formats, including print information made available on a disk that supports employees who have visual impairments, and sign language interpreters to support employees who have hearing disorders.

- Institute employee health and wellness as a competency and performance measure and include it in the company's mission statement.
- Use health and wellness programs to attract, retain, and maintain employees, regardless of disability status.
- Research employers' business interest in providing access to health and wellness services, including comparison of employees with and without a disability.
- Study how to motivate people with disabilities to participate in wellness programs. Contact the National Business Group on Health to examine its research and information on this topic.
- Determine what kind of wellness programs exist, which ones need to be enhanced, what needs to be tweaked or changed, and what needs to be created.
- Determine how employer wellness programs can be tailored to diverse populations.
- Have employers work with other employers to identify research questions that need to be asked about employer wellness programs that include people with disabilities.
- Put a higher priority in federal agencies on including health and wellness under the umbrella of "supported employment research." In doing so, agencies should require principal investigators to partner with businesses and people with disabilities in conducting research.
- Determine what measures should be used to assess the impact of corporate wellness initiatives.
- Determine how employers can create wellness programs that can be accessed by those with disabilities.
- Integrate prevention, health promotion, employee assistance programming, and disease (disability) management with recovery groups, work groups, and peer-to-peer support mechanisms, and focus systematically on de-stigmatization.
- Develop an assessment program to measure the impact of business's best practices in health and wellness.
- Study the characteristics of care that non-specialty medical providers give to people with mental disorders.

- Study issues of treating people with mental health disorders who have co-morbid conditions.
- Study early interventions with people with disabilities in the workforce to promote health, increase access to care, and prevent withdrawal from the workforce.
- Study interventions that address the side effects of medications for psychiatric disabilities, particularly weight gain, and how these side effects become employment barriers. Design interventions to address the high rate of smoking in this population.

### ***Insurance***

- Determine whether there are private insurance strategies and programs that would materially enhance public programs.
- Look at opportunities to leverage private insurance capabilities in public programs.
- Investigate the possibility of the government subsidizing short-term disability insurance.
- Identify strategies to expand coverage for telemedicine and remote biometric monitoring.
- Study the cost-effectiveness of a Medicare buy-in option for the near-elderly population, ages 55 to 64.
- Investigate ways to decouple eligibility for public insurance from income support standards and base eligibility for coverage on assessment of medical need.
- Study the care that Medicaid beneficiaries receive through managed care.
- Study the management of psychotropic drugs in the Medicaid population.
- Improve the collection of mental health and Medicaid data.

### ***Program Evaluation and Outcome Measurement***

- Identify how human resources practices can have positive impact on business outcomes.

- Ensure that program design and implementation reflect changing needs as employees age, meet accessible needs for all types of disabilities, and implement and evaluate programs based on the company's resources and current initiatives.
- Conduct demonstration projects.

### ***Work Benefits***

- Study the role of benefits planning in reaching job and wage goals.
- Emphasize the importance of all employee participation by presenting a continuum of possible health benefits including low-cost, easy-to-implement opportunities, such as information and referral programs, onsite health evaluations, medical services, and recreational offerings.
- Identify ways to improve coordination of work incentives across federal programs to facilitate gradual rather than precipitous loss of benefits.

## **Theme 4: Government Policies and Practice: Role and Effect**

### ***Accommodations***

- Determine whether the federal government is providing accommodations for everyone who requests them.
- Determine what federal human resources personnel and supervisors know about accommodations for specific populations, including people who have mental illness, are visually impaired, or are hearing impaired.
- Engage organizational resources, such as Equal Employment Opportunity offices, unions, and disability management programs, in providing information about accommodations. Make supervisors more aware of the resources available to them.
- When replicating the survey of federal disability employment policies and practices, examine the impact of Section 508 and review whether costs of and barriers to accommodations have decreased.

### ***Best Practices***

- Identify actions and policies that have had demonstrated success in keeping people with disabilities in their jobs. Disseminate the findings widely as a first step in developing "best practices" for job retention.
- Determine what services and resources are most effective in supporting education, training, and employment goals.

- Develop and support a shared database of proven strategies. Create a readily accessible record of past evidence-based research and demonstration projects via a Web-based employer education network.

### ***Cooperation and Collaboration***

- Encourage the disability community to band together and become a political force to push a disability agenda.
- Encourage collaborative innovation or shared solutions on return-to-work issues through public and private health care, disability, and employer partnerships.
- Increase partnerships among government agencies so that veterans have easier access to benefits.

### ***Disability Policy***

- Develop and implement a cogent and coordinated national disability policy that encourages entrepreneurship, independent living, pursuit of higher education, and personal liberties.
- Revise the language of government policies that are intended to protect people with disabilities. Instead of focusing on terms such as “reasonable accommodation,” which can be off-putting, focus on a pressing need of business—talent.
- Review and challenge basic assumptions about government policies on disabilities and role in developing self-determination, personal choice, and empowerment.
- Develop a core set of principles to guide the creation of research agendas. An overarching, coordinated policy for research can reduce duplicative waste and stretch resources to cover more research ground.

### ***Education and Training***

- Inform federal agency personnel who are responsible for hiring about ways to recruit, hire, and provide accommodations for workers with disabilities.
- Study how to prepare children with disabilities in schools and at home for self-determination after they graduate. How can higher expectations for these children be addressed?
- Study the stigma associated with the work “disability” and how to present disability in a positive light.

- Train all federal agency personnel on how to fulfill their responsibilities under the Rehabilitation Act, how to use special hiring authorities, and how to provide reasonable accommodations.
- Determine how rehabilitation service providers can help people with disabilities get the training they need to be able to participate in the current and future job markets. Examine training institutions to identify specific areas of training and specific technology adaptations that can bolster their ability to meet the skill needs of people with disabilities.
- Study how to incorporate universal design into all educational facilities, from elementary schools to universities.

### ***Medical Care***

- Develop better treatments for post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Develop methods of diagnosing traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder earlier.
- Research the long-term effects of traumatic brain injury.

### ***Merit Resolution***

- Look at whether job tenure or timing of disclosure influences the likelihood of a merit resolution for workers with disabilities
- Identify the factors that are contributing to declining rates of merit resolutions for individuals who allege discrimination under Title 1.
- Determine what interventions or regulatory modifications can be implemented to reduce the number of allegations of discrimination that are made and the rates of non-meritorious allegations.

### ***Program Evaluation***

- Study how the disability navigator programs are being implemented nationwide. Identify differences across the states and determine which approaches have the best outcomes.
- Identify and examine the differences in the many models of the Disability Program Navigator initiative, such as differences among the states and between states and local areas. What is the right balance between the roles of the navigators as system and relationship builders and as participants in the Ticket to Work program, where they become more involved with individual job seekers with disabilities? What background and skills are most likely to make navigators

effective in their job as problem solvers, agents of systems change, and in multiple other roles?

- Develop a three-tiered, coordinated research agenda to fund experimental and demonstration projects: a current agenda (funding for 1 year), an intermediate agenda (funding for two to three years), and a long-term agenda (funding for three to five years).

### ***Return to Work***

- Create and test supports in government and in the private sector that help more people return to work. For example, develop and test a Web-based, self-service, return-to-work planning site that can help people receive timely support and information about staying on the job or returning to work with existing or emerging impairments.
- Create workplace policies that help employees return to work before they can fully function in their jobs. Establish transitional work programs to accomplish this.

### ***Service Delivery***

- Study how the disability service community can adapt faster to market changes and develop more diverse partners to do so.
- Research what barriers exist to accessing existing services and resources.
- Determine the kinds of services people are providing through the different vocational rehabilitation vendor programs. What are the long-term effects of these services? To what extent do people who use these work incentive programs and work incentives actually go on to employment?

### ***Statistics***

- Work with the National Center for Health Statistics to field a disabilities supplement to improve disability data.
- Examine and possibly link with databases, such as the National Center for Educational Statistics, national databases at the University of Michigan, the National Center on Biotechnology, and the National Institute on Aging, to improve disability data. Also look at working with Common Ground, a pioneer in the development of supportive housing and other research, on its database.
- Include the American Community Survey questions on disability in all federally sponsored and funded surveys, so that surveys on housing, education, transportation, and other areas include the same set of disability questions.

- Ensure that disability identifiers are translatable and can be used with the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health domains.
- Address facilitators and barriers to using the identifiers, particularly with the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health, so that disability prevalence can be viewed from both the national and the international level.
- Incorporate people with disabilities in the design of research studies from start to finish, from framing the research questions to evaluating the data and translating findings into practices and policies.

### ***Veterans Issues***

- Explore ways for policy-makers to move beyond policies that were established in Civil War times to address the needs of disabled war veterans. These include policies that focus on a medical model of disability (those that imply people with disabilities have less capacity to work) rather than on a social model of disability.
- Consider how lessons learned from the past can be used to help move policy forward for veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan and all people with disabilities.
- Identify what medical and non-medical challenges service member veterans face in setting life goals for education, training, and employment.
- Determine what changes need to be made in the Social Security Administration's disability process to ensure that all veterans with disabilities get the supports they have earned.
- Identify which federal return-to-work disability policies, like the Veterans Affairs pension cash cliff and Social Security work incentives, hinder or ignore veterans with disabilities.
- Research whether Veterans Affairs benefits for veterans with severe disabilities—both spinal cord and non-spinal cord injuries—have any impact on the veterans' participation in the workforce compared with similar populations of non-veterans with disabilities.
- Study the most effective methods to support education training and employment goals for those returning from duty in the armed forces.

### ***Workplace Development***

- Through a federal agency, conduct a systematic examination of workers' compensation, including the program's relationship to Social Security Disability Insurance.

- Study workers' compensation outside federal agencies.
- Determine how to develop measures of accountability for disability programs in the private sector.
- Study the possibility of combining federal benefits programs with employer health care programs.
- Engage employers in discussions about employees who lose public benefits when they reach a certain number of hours of work.
- Establish disability awareness programs in all levels of schooling, starting with elementary school.
- Study how to address people's reluctance to disclose a disability to an employer.
- Have each federal agency set a yearly goal for employing people with disabilities. Share the goal with hiring managers and hold them accountable. The lead goal should be 2% by 2010 for all agencies.

