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Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation 10 (1998) 3-4

JOURNAL OF
*Vocational
Rehabilitation*

Introduction

In the past 2 decades, although 100 000 supported employment job placements have been created, there have been insignificant improvements in employment opportunities for individuals with severe disabilities (Wehman and Kregel, 1995). Approaches from the public sector have been responsible for only a slight growth in the quality of service delivery. These approaches include work incentives for SSI welfare recipients (Section 1619 a and b), supported employment and natural supports.

As a necessary alternative to the public sector approach, it has been proposed that employers and corporations be considered critical partners in the major systems change effort required to transition 2.2 million persons with severe disabilities from welfare (SSI), unemployment and poverty into the work force (Mank, 1994). However, to date few corporate efforts have been reported to employ meaningful numbers of persons with disabilities (Zivolich and Weiner, 1997). This issue of *The Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation* focuses on the necessity for further private sector initiatives. Several articles also suggest the challenges posed by public sector barriers and weaknesses in the public sector system in terms of recruitment and referral. Finally, improvements in supported employment are indicated.

The first article, 'Universal Access: A natural support corporate initiative at Universal Studios', details an ongoing successful corporate effort to recruit, train and maintain persons with severe disabilities in the entertainment industry. While the program achieved significant outcomes for the employees, the public sector's lack of referrals

resulted in a failure to respond to abundant employment opportunities within the company.

In the following article, Donovan and Tilson overview the long term and impressive Marriot Foundation 'Bridges' transition effort. Bridges primarily impacts transition age students with learning disabilities in seven urban communities. This private corporate initiative has provided internships for 3000 students with disabilities since 1990. To date the program has involved over 900 local employers and public sector agencies as participants. It would appear from these data that Bridges is one of the most successful transition programs in the nation.

Williams, Petty and Verstegen target outcomes of a 'business approach to job development', another indication of the need for private sector influence. Their sales model and staff development package has been developed and disseminated effectively by Dale Verstegen on a national basis. The job placement outcomes for both the cold call and referral model approaches are impressive for both small and large employers. Considering the expense and primary importance of job development for supported employment, this approach merits every job developers' attention.

Further evidence of the need for a system renovation of the recruitment process is presented by Brooke, Green, Kregel, Barcus, Selvy, Bunting, Wehman and Sedillo. The 'National Disability Business Summit' was a brainstorming meeting primarily including numerous Dallas, Texas based business leaders and national supported employment leaders. One of the critical questions tackled by this impressive group was,

'how to recruit candidates with disabilities'? This query indicates how much more the public sector must develop its sales, marketing and delivery of candidates to employers and available positions.

The Elizabeth Perry-Varner article 'One Stop Career Centers; An Emerging Concept for Delivering Employment Services', accurately identifies major public sector deficits in a popular new job development delivery system. Perry-Varner reveals that the public agencies involved in this new program demonstrate critical deficits in their collaborative suits. Perry-Varner's recommendations for involvement of the private sector may not be sufficient to solve the multiple problems identified.

Similar ubiquitous systemic problems are presented by Cimera, Rusch and Heal who investigated the presence of job coaches at supported work sites in Illinois. They found that job coach hours are not decreased over time, regardless of IQ, or placement approach. These authors suggest this finding is a result of poor job coach training and sheltered workshop provider income needs. A disturbing finding was that Afro-American clients were provided with 'substantially' less job coach hours than others, i.e. Anglos. The authors propose that this result may be due to additional urban ancillary resources that decrease the need for job coach hours. Whatever the cause, this trend needs immediate and aggressive investigative review by the states funding and regulatory rehabilitation agency.

Finally, our friend and colleague Jerry Ford contributes an overview of supported employment from down under. Several similarities exist between the United States and Australia. In 'Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities: The View from Australia', Ford informs us that 18% of the Australian Population has a disability. An appalling but familiar 70% of those

individuals with severe disabilities are unemployed; a 60% higher rate than the Australian national average. Those that are 'employed' are generally in sheltered workshops, work activity centers, or day activity centers where they engage in meaningless, menial tasks awaiting their readiness to enter competitive employment. Australian sheltered workshop programs seem to have the same political ability to retard the process of integrated employment as their American colleagues and mentors.

Public sector employment services for persons with disabilities continue to lack the business expertise and related program capacity to match private sector corporate capability and initiatives. Deficits are apparent in marketing, providing and supporting candidates for available job openings. At the same time we know that the majority of persons with disabilities are still unemployed and want to work. These individuals, who are motivated to work, wish to be more productive taxpayers, rather than welfare recipients. We believe they are deserving of effective job development and supported employment services, whether they are provided by the public or private sector.

They are still waiting....

Jan S. Weiner and Steve Zivolich

References

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