

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 410 706

EC 305 756

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TITLE Shared Responsibility: Job Search Practices from the  
Consumer and Staff Perspective.  
INSTITUTION Children's Hospital, Boston, MA.  
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. on Disability and Rehabilitation Research  
(ED/OSERS), Washington, DC.  
PUB DATE 1996-06-00  
NOTE 3p.  
CONTRACT H133B30067-95  
AVAILABLE FROM Institute for Community Inclusion. 300 Longwood Ave.,  
Boston, MA 02115.  
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Reports - Evaluative  
(142)  
JOURNAL CIT Research To Practice; Jun 1996  
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS Adults; Agencies; Career Counseling; Community Services;  
\*Disabilities; \*Job Placement; Job Satisfaction; \*Job Search  
Methods; National Surveys; Networks; Surveys; \*Vocational  
Rehabilitation  
IDENTIFIERS Consumer Participation; Networking

ABSTRACT

Staff (N=369) and consumers (N=191) from a national sample of community vocational rehabilitation providers and independent living centers were surveyed concerning effective job search practices. Consumers were also asked to report on job satisfaction, job search support, and how the obtained job equated with job preferences. The majority of consumers reported being "very satisfied" with assistance received in finding a job. Most consumers reported overall job satisfaction, although dissatisfaction was sometimes expressed about pay, fringe benefits, and opportunities for advancement. Individuals who were more satisfied with assistance received in the job search also reported greater satisfaction with the job itself. Staff reported positively on the use of counseling, resume development, informal discussion of vocational interests and goals, matching the consumer to the job, and making repeated contact with companies. The following five patterns of job search activities were identified through factor analysis of staff responses: (1) generic/not individually focused (such as hosting a job fair); (2) individually focused placement; (3) agency marketing approach; (4) traditional job placement approach; and (5) networking strategy. The networking strategy typically resulted in a higher hourly wage, greater number of hours worked, and shorter job search time than did other strategies. (DB)

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### Shared Responsibility: Job Search Practices from the Consumer and Staff Perspective by David Temelini and Sheila Fesko

#### Introduction

This study was conducted as part of the Center on Promoting Employment: Rehabilitation Research & Training Center. Staff and consumers from a national sample of community rehabilitation providers and independent living centers were surveyed to gain a better understanding of effective job search practices. The correlation between these practices and traditional (e.g., hours worked, wages) and non-traditional employment outcomes such as social relationships at work and satisfaction with work were analyzed.

#### Methodology

A multi-level approach was implemented to obtain the perspective of both staff and individuals with disabilities (consumers). Three hundred and sixty nine staff completed a survey which asked for job search information for the last consumer assisted in obtaining employment. Consumers for whom staff provided information were also asked their perspective regarding the job search. One hundred and ninety one consumers completed this separate survey. Both the staff and consumer surveys requested information on job search practices, job description, and consumer/family involvement. Consumers were also asked to report on job satisfaction, job search support and how the obtained job equated with job preferences.

#### Findings

##### Consumers

The majority of consumers reported being "very satisfied" with assistance received in finding a job. This satisfaction was not impacted by their own level of involvement in the job search. The most frequently cited type of support received from friends and family were ideas about the type of work they could perform, suggestions about where to look for a job and in providing transportation. The majority of consumers rated their own performance as "very good," reported overall job

satisfaction, and would like to stay in their current job for more than five years. Areas reported as less satisfactory included pay, fringe benefits and opportunities for advancement. Consumers with sensory impairments and physical disabilities tended to work more hours and earn higher wages as compared to consumers with mental retardation and mental illness. Individuals who were more satisfied with the assistance they received in the job search reported greater satisfaction with the job itself. Finally, when the obtained job was a closer match to the elements identified as important to the consumer in the job search, greater job satisfaction was reported.

Demographic information reported by staff and consumers is summarized in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

Staff Demographics <sup>(a)</sup>

Variable	%
Highest Level Of Education	
High School	11
Some College	26
Bachelor's Degree	40
Master's Degree	21
Length Of Time On Job	
Less than 1 yr.	18
1-2 yrs.	33
3-5 yrs.	15
More than 5 yrs.	34

Time Spent On Job Search <sup>(1)</sup>	
No. of weeks	
Median	5
Range	1-104
No. of hours	
Median	18
Range	1-350

Table 2

Consumer Demographics

Variable	%
Disability <sup>(a)</sup>	
Mental retardation	48
Mental illness	20
Physical disability	15
Sensory impairment	6
Other	11
Length Of Time On Job <sup>(2)</sup>	
2-4 mos.	18
4-6 mos.	20
6 mos. - 1 yr.	31
More than 1 yr.	24

Job Descriptors	
Wage	
Median	5.00
Range	1.55 - 21.25
Hours worked	
Median	25
Range	1-0

<sup>(a)</sup> as reported by staff (N=369). <sup>(b)</sup> as reported by consumer (N=191)

<sup>(1)</sup> as reported for the last consumer assisted in finding community based employment who remained on the job for at least 60 days

##### Staff

When rating job search practices on use and effectiveness in assisting consumers obtain employment, staff reported positively on the use of counseling, resume development, informal discussion of vocational interests and goals, matching the consumer to the job and making

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repeated contact with companies. Practices that were used infrequently or viewed by the staff as not being effective included public relations events for the agency, hosting a business advisory group, hosting a job fair, or offering to have the consumer on the agency payroll instead of the employer payroll. Staff reported that the majority of consumers were "somewhat" to "very involved" in the job search. Only 25% of consumers' families were viewed as being involved in any aspect of the job search. Staff found it effective to provide job related supports, assess employer satisfaction with staff services and to meet with the consumer outside of the work place.

The following five patterns of job search activities that typically occurred together were identified through factor analysis, along with sample practices that defined the pattern.

### **Generic / Not Individually Focused**

- Review want-ads
- Develop employer list through phone book / business directory
- Cold contact employer
- Research business and labor trends
- Host a job fair

### **Individually Focused Placement**

- Assess job match
- Restructure job for consumer
- Make general presentations to business regarding abilities of people with disabilities
- Discuss job accommodations needs
- Create agency brochure

### **Agency Marketing Approach**

- Host an employer advisory board
- Participate in a business-oriented community group, such as the Chamber of Commerce
- Conduct agency sponsored public relations events
- Maintain job bank and exchange info with other agencies
- Job Club

### **Traditional Job Placement Approach**

- Guarantee employer production needs
- Identify advocate within targeted company
- Offer sub minimum wage
- Offer contract where consumer not on employer's payroll
- Provide general assistance to employer on a broad range of personnel issues

### **Networking Strategy**

- Canvases personal network to obtain job leads
- Use consumer's social and professional network
- Develop resume
- Provide counseling support with job search issues
- Use Employer Account Strategy (frequent contact with companies to develop relationship)
- Talk informally with job seeker regarding interests and abilities

## **Most Effective Strategy**

This national study lends insight into how rehabilitation staff assist individuals with disabilities obtain employment. As compared to other strategies, the networking approach typically resulted in a higher hourly wage and greater number of hours worked, as well as a shorter length of time spent on the job search. The use of a networking approach was an effective tool in bringing about quality employment outcomes. By incorporating this strategy, staff can use their time more efficiently and consumers can take a more active role in the job search. Individuals with disabilities may need assistance in developing networks and using networking strategies since they traditionally have had smaller social and personal networks to draw upon for job leads.

## **Implications**

Rehabilitation providers might develop and implement the following activities to improve services.

- Emphasize a networking approach that includes the consumer's and staff's personal and professional networks
- Use person-centered planning to assist with vocational goal setting, visualize the future, and develop the individual's social network
- Train consumers with the tools to put together, use and maintain networks.
- Build staff's own network by talking with people in the community about their work
- Develop ongoing relationships with employers (i.e. Personal Account Strategy) to highlight connections when job openings occur
- Maintain relationships with previous employers and continually monitor satisfaction with services. Positive relationships can be the building blocks for future job leads

This project is funded by grant #H133B30067-95 from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research.

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