

Factors That Influence Employer Hiring Behavior of People with Blindness or Low Vision (B/LV)

What Were We Trying to Learn?

In 2018, NRTC researchers published a research paper describing factors that influence whether employers hire people with B/LV. This study found that communication with a VR agency was strongly associated with employers' hiring decisions. Employer attitudes were also linked to hiring decisions; employers with more positive attitudes towards B/LV workers were more likely to hire a B/LV worker.

NRTC researchers decided to revisit this study in order to explore some new variables, including opportunity to hire a B/LV applicant (measured by whether the employer had ever received a job application from someone with B/LV) and company policies about hiring people with disabilities. We wanted to know whether these additional factors were associated with employers' hiring behavior. Also, we examined whether early communication with VR was linked to the likelihood of hiring someone with B/LV. By taking into account when the communication with VR happened, we could set aside communication that happened only after hiring someone with B/LV in order to determine whether early communication with VR increased the likelihood of hiring.

Research Takeaway

Factors found to be associated with employers' hiring of a person who is blind or has low vision (B/LV) were: receiving a job application from a B/LV person, positive attitude toward B/LV individuals as employees, having a personal relationship with a B/LV person, prior communication with a vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency, and company policies about hiring workers with disabilities.

What Are the Most Important Things We Learned?

- **Receiving an application from a person with B/LV was the most important predictor of whether an employer had ever hired a B/LV worker.** Not surprisingly, the odds of hiring a B/LV worker increased more than 40 times if an application was received. However, only a small percentage of employers in our study reported ever receiving such an application. The majority of those who had received an application did hire the B/LV applicant.
- Positive attitudes towards people with B/LV as employees and having a personal relationship with a B/LV individual also positively impacted the likelihood an employer had hired a B/LV worker. Results suggest that employers may be hiring people they know who are B/LV.
- Prior communication with VR predicted hiring behavior. This was also found to be a predictor of hiring in our previous study; however, the effect in this version of the study was not as strong, perhaps due to our focus for this study on communication that happened prior to hiring.
- Company size and formal company policies for hiring people with disabilities significantly predicted the hiring of people with B/LV. Employers from large companies and from companies with formal policies were more likely to hire.

How Do These Findings Relate to Me?

- Employers cannot hire a B/LV employee unless they have the opportunity to do so. Many employers simply never receive a job application from a person with B/LV. One of the best ways to provide this opportunity is to **encourage B/LV consumers to submit job applications.**

- Before a consumer submits a job application, contact the employer. If they are open to it, offer to educate them about B/LV workers and how they function on this job. This may help improve employers' attitudes about the employability of B/LV workers.
- Encourage B/LV consumers to continue their job searches in the face of setbacks and rejection. Help your consumers understand that hard work is often required in order to be successful in a job search.
- Encourage B/LV consumers to utilize their personal networks when searching for a job. It appears that some employers in our study hired their personal contacts who are B/LV.
- When possible, have the consumers you work with target their job applications to large companies with formal policies in place for hiring people with disabilities.

How Was This Project Carried Out?

An online survey was completed by 388 hiring managers from across the US. The survey asked questions related to attitudes, knowledge, and hiring experiences with B/LV job applicants.

Learn More

Findings were taken from the following article:

McDonnall, M. C., & Antonelli, K. (2019). A second look at factors associated with employer hiring behavior regarding people who are blind or have low vision. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 113(6), 538-550. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0145482X19887642>

For more information about this project, visit the project overview page.

Contact Us

Email: nrtc@colled.msstate.edu

Webpage: www.blind.msstate.edu or www.ntac.blind.msstate.edu

Facebook: www.facebook.com/msu.nrtc/

Twitter: @MSU_NRTC



The contents of this manuscript were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, NIDILRR grant 90RT5040-01-00. However, these contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Health and Human Services and should not indicate endorsement by the Federal Government.