

What Predicts Job Quality of Vocational Rehabilitation Consumers who are Blind or Have Low Vision?

What Were We Trying to Learn?

We wanted to learn about factors that might impact job quality for people with B/LV. We studied personal factors, like age, gender, race, level of education, level of vision loss, and the vocational rehabilitation (VR) services a person received. We also looked at state and agency factors, like per capita income in a person's state and poverty rates.

How Was This Project Carried Out?

We studied data from 8,723 people who:

- received VR services and had their cases closed in 2015
- were B/LV
- were between the ages of 18-67
- left VR services competitively employed

We studied job quality for these individuals, breaking them into two groups: people who had a job when they applied for VR services and people who did not have a job when they applied. To measure job quality, we considered three factors: whether a job provided health insurance, how weekly earnings from the job compared to a living wage in the state, and how hourly earnings compared to the median hourly earnings in the state.

Research Takeaway

A person's level of education had a big impact on the quality of their job in our study of employment for workers who are blind or have low vision (B/LV). Other personal traits also influenced job quality.

What Are the Most Important Things We Learned?

- A person's individual characteristics had the biggest impact on job quality. Older age, higher education levels, being legally blind, and having a job at the time of applying to VR services were all linked to higher levels of job quality. On the other hand, being a woman, being African American, having an additional disability, and receiving SSDI or SSI benefits were linked to lower job quality.
- Two VR services were linked to higher job quality: disability-related skills training and rehabilitation technology. However, these services only led to higher quality jobs for people who already had a job when they started VR services. This may be because employed people who started VR services ask for technology and training to help them keep their job following vision loss. These jobs are likely to be higher quality than a new job just started by someone without a recent work history.
- On the other hand, receiving job placement assistance from VR was linked to lower job quality. This may be because people who need VR's help to find a job are more likely to find a lower quality job.
- Earning a bachelor's degree or higher had a clear, positive impact on job quality. Higher level of education was one of the strongest predictors of job quality. However, getting an associate's degree or a certificate was only linked to higher job quality for people who started VR services without a job.

How Do These Findings Relate to Me?

- Educational advancement has a big impact on job quality for people with B/LV. The most important thing VR counselors can do to help someone find a high-quality job is to help the person advance their education, especially by getting a bachelor's degree or higher. Associate's degrees or certifications may also lead to an increase in job quality.

- VR counselors should be aware of workforce needs in their local area. While our study found that bachelor's degrees led to higher job quality, getting an associate's degree in a high-demand field may lead to better job quality than getting a bachelor's degree in a low-demand field.
- Benefits counseling is very important for people receiving SSDI or SSI, who our study found are at risk for lower job quality. These people may limit their wage earnings and take lower-quality jobs to avoid losing benefits. They may not be aware of work incentives for SSDI and SSI beneficiaries.
- Teaching people to be proactive as they look for jobs is important for boosting job quality. People who received job-related services from VR had lower job quality in our study. People who can find their own jobs may be more likely to negotiate better pay and benefits or be more selective in which job they choose.

Learn More

Findings were taken from the following article:

McDonnall, M. C., Cmar, J., & Zhen, S. (2021). [What determines job quality of vocational rehabilitation consumers who are blind or have low vision?](#) *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*.

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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.