How VR Services Affect Employment Outcomes for Adults with Cerebral Palsy (CP)

Cerebral Palsy (CP) is considered the most common childhood disability. It can result in lifelong speech and language impairments, sensory deficits, intellectual disabilities, behavioral problems, and seizures. Rates of employment for people with CP in the United States are reported to be lower than for those with other types of disabilities. The purpose of this research was to learn how VR services affected employment outcomes among adults with CP.

Interventions

Five VR services were shown to play a central role in the employment success of people with CP:

- Job Placement Assistance
- On-the-Job Training
- On-the-Job Support – Specifically, work and social skill development tailored specifically to the environment, workplace accommodations, and employee education about disability and consumer advocacy
- Maintenance – For example, food, clothing, shelter, and emergency health care
- Rehabilitation Technology – For example, adaptive tricycle (for therapeutic cycling), adapted vehicles, augmentative communication devices

Other Factors that Affected Employment Outcomes:

Individuals’ gender, age, educational level, and receipt of cash benefits (SSDI/SSI) while receiving VR services also influenced their employment outcomes:

- Gender. Males were more likely to experience positive employment outcomes than females. This may be a reflection of broader gender discrimination in employment in society as a whole.
- Age. Individuals between the ages of 26-54 when they applied for services were more likely to be employed than other age groups. The delayed employment age may be caused by the need for prolonged education and vocational training experienced by people with CP.
- Education Level. Individuals with a college education when they applied for service were more likely to gain employment after receiving VR services. Education beyond high school has been shown to be the most significant predictor of positive employment outcomes of adults with CP.
  - Transition services in high school could be key to positive employment outcomes.
- Cash benefits (SSDI/SSI). Individuals who received cash benefits such as SSI and SSDI had reduced employment outcomes. Lack of information about work incentives programs, fear of losing benefits, or severity of disability may account for this.
**Bottom Line**
VR services can positively impact the employment rates and quality of employment for adults with CP, especially when coordinated with services from special educators and health professionals.

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