Identifying Vocational Rehabilitation Service Patterns and Employment Outcomes for Hispanics with Spinal Cord Injury

Demographics in the United States are changing rapidly; it’s estimated that minorities may constitute up to 45% of the country’s total population by 2050. Research suggests that ethnic minorities may potentially be more vulnerable to acquiring spinal cord injuries (SCI) than European-Americans. In addition, research shows that employment has a significant impact on improving the quality of life of individuals with SCI.

Supports
This study identified the following services as significant in improving successful employment outcomes for both Hispanic and European American with spinal cord injuries (SCI) who received vocational rehabilitation (VR) services from state agencies:

- On-the-Job Training and Support
- Job Search and Placement Assistance
- Maintenance Services
- Assistive Technology Services
- Other Services (e.g., occupational licenses, tools and equipment, initial stock and supplies, and medical care)

Risk Factors
Also identified were the following risk factors that significantly lowered the odds of successful employment outcomes:

- Work Disincentives
- Personal Attendant Services
- Miscellaneous Training Services

Important Note:
Co-occurring depression and AODA were significantly under-diagnosed for both European Americans and Hispanics by counselors in state VR agencies. To address this, VR counselors should work closely with SCI rehabilitation professionals to better evaluate and treat co-occurring depression and AODA problems, and VR administrators should consider providing counselors with relevant training in these areas.
Bottom Line
This study found only minor disparities in services between European-Americans and Hispanics, and found no major disparities in employment outcomes. It identified specific services provided by state VR agencies that significantly improve successful employment outcomes for individuals with SCI, and also identified factors that significantly lower the odds of successful employment outcomes for individuals with SCI.

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- Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) on Secondary Conditions in the Rehabilitation of Individual with Spinal Cord Injury

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