



Non-residential Supports and Developmental Disability:

A Review of the Literature

A Plain Language Summary

Prepared by the Community Living Research Project

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This review was prepared by the *Community Living Research Project* based at the School of Social Work and Family Studies, University of British Columbia. This document is part of a larger research project exploring the Community Living supports and services available locally, provincially, nationally, and internationally for adults with developmental disabilities.

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Reading this report

This paper is a plain language report adapted from a full academic/government report called "Non-residential Supports and Developmental Disability: A Review of the Literature on Best Practices, Alternatives, and Economic Impacts" produced by the Community Living Research Project.

To help people read this report some words and phrases have been defined. Definitions are in brackets (example) and follow the word or phrase. Some words and phrases are underlined with a star at the end of the word (for example – definitions*). Words that are underlined can also be found in the "Glossary" at the end of the report.

To make reference to research, footnotes have been used in this report. Footnotes are noted in the report by a small number at the end of a sentence; the number can also be found at the bottom of the page followed by the researcher's name and the date of the research referenced. If you need more help reading this paper, please ask a friend.

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Introduction

This report will go over the main points discussed in books and articles on non-residential supports* (day activities) for people with developmental disabilities. Most of the books and articles in this area focus on work. People with developmental disabilities experience continuing low levels of employment (many people with developmental disabilities do not have a job or do not work on a regular basis).

Work and People with Developmental Disabilities

Supported employment* (competitive employment for people with disabilities in integrated settings with job support) is now a major approach for addressing this issue. This approach is fairly well-known in Canada and other areas. However, in the United States, segregated employment* (work for people with disabilities in segregated settings without competitive pay, for example - workshops) continues to be the main type of employment for people with disabilities.

A range of systemic factors* (problems or challenges in the way a system is organized and operated) discourages the employment of people with developmental disabilities; for example, provincial income programs that only allow people to make a certain amount of money per month without getting the money taken back.

The way the labour market* (a place where work is exchanged for money) has changed over time with regards to the developmental disability sector has led to a 'commodification'* (the process by which a person becomes a product) of disability. Also, agencies have been in competition for clients who are easier rather than harder to serve (i.e. people who are able to do more things and/or with mild disabilities). Researchers have begun to discuss strategies for dealing with such issues.

Strategies for Creating Employment Opportunities

Negative employer attitudes can discourage employers from hiring people with developmental disabilities. However, once contact between employers and individuals is made, such barriers can be overcome. Non-governmental Organizations* (private or non-profit agencies that are not associated with the government) in the developmental disability sector have an important role to play in:

- Making contact with employers,
- Relieving/calming employer concerns,
- Building trust,
- Reducing risks for employers, and
- Providing advice.

Larger companies may have more job opportunities than smaller companies. Also, larger companies may be interested in the advantages of hiring a person with a developmental disability. Such advantages may include positive public image and employee variety (having all kinds of people working in the company, for example – people of different races, people with disabilities, etc) in the workplace.

People with developmental disabilities may need to develop some work-related and social skills (for example, time management, how to communicate with co-workers). Helping employers and coworkers understand why people behave as they do can help in making needed changes to the workplace and to work duties.

Job coaches* (people with employment training skills that help individuals with developmental disabilities be successful in the workplace) can help their clients achieve successful supported employment* by:

- Matching individuals' abilities and interests to jobs,
- Creating/arranging natural supports in the workplace (for example, asking a co-worker to act as a helper when needed),
- Staying in contact with employers, and
- Making sure any job changes are based on the individuals' needs.

Some supported employment* workplaces are better for providing positive experiences for people with disabilities. Such workplaces include the following aspects:

- There are opportunities for co-workers to interact socially (as a friend),
- Management (the people in charge on at the workplace) takes personal interest in their employees,
- Management encourages teamwork, and
- Job designs that depend on people working together.

Finding such workplaces requires ongoing exploration (searching or looking) by employment agencies and support workers. Where workplaces do not have the above listed aspects, employment support workers may have to work with employers to problem solve and provide some education about disability. Also, employment support workers can help people with developmental disabilities find their own 'voice' and confidence in the workplace.

People with developmental disabilities can have jobs other than "entry-level" (jobs at a training or basic level that often require supervision) by participating in career development activities* (classes, workshops, education on topics related to a job that helps people build skills). These activities should build on the career interests of the individual.

For many people, several of the above strategies may be needed.

Researchers have developed core values and performance measures (tools to tell us how well something is working). The purpose of these tools is to help employment agencies make use of helpful and dependable procedures for people working in businesses in the community.

Self-employment and self-directed employment (starting your own business) may be possible options for some people. Usually this involves helping the individual to:

- Develop and use a business plan,
- Make contact with mentors (guides), business incubators (organizations that support people starting up their own businesses) and other contacts in the community, and
- Find the necessary funding.

People are more likely to be successful in self-employment if they believe in their abilities.

One approach to helping people with developmental disabilities get work is to make use of general opportunities presented by community economic development initiatives* (projects that help communities develop ways of supporting people and overcoming challenges). Another similar way to help people get work is to create a

community economic development strategy* (a plan to help communities develop ways of supporting people and overcoming challenges) for people with developmental disabilities.

Some funding is needed for self-employment or community economic development. Several models of microfinancing* (small loans that help people who want to start their small businesses but, are not able to get banks to lend them money) can be used; for example,

- The Urban Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Initiative of Canada's Western Diversification, which is managed by the Mennonite Central Committee, and
- "Peer lending circles"* (a small group of people joining together to share responsibility for repayment of a loan to one member).

People with developmental disabilities are likely to need help accessing these funding examples.

Worker cooperatives are another approach to creating new employment opportunities. Cooperatives involve partnerships among various stakeholders* (people and/or organizations that share an interest in an activity), including disability organizations, and the sharing of risks and responsibilities.

Individuals participating in supported employment* usually experience good financial and social results. Research looking at the benefits of self-employment was not found; however, good results can also be expected.

Employers need to have a clear picture of how participating in supported employment* can benefit their business.

It is not clear that supported employment* provides financial benefits to society in general. It may not be reasonable to expect that supported employment* will produce more money than the amount the government originally spent; especially concerning people with complex and challenging needs who would rely on publicly funded programs.

Policy and Program Implications

Several public policy and program changes could improve the employment opportunities and success of people with developmental disabilities. These include the following:

- A more detailed and constant focus could be placed across Labour Market Development Agreements* (arrangements designed to help unemployed Canadians prepare for, find and keep a job). This focus would help people with disabilities get work in the "typical" labour market*. People with

developmental disabilities should have equal access to the programming. Unfortunately, many people with developmental disabilities are disqualified (not allowed to get) for access to Employment Benefits. It would be best if access to Employment Benefits were not so tied into eligibility for income support under EI. It would be useful if Employment Benefits were available for extended periods of time for people who require this.

- Alternative programming (e.g. Opportunities Fund) could be made stronger financially to serve more people; also, this programming could provide more ongoing employment support for people with challenging and complex needs. Qualified support would ideally be extended beyond 52 weeks for people with ongoing support needs.
- Provincial social assistance programs could be designed so that people with low-income employment and part-time employment could continue to receive extended health and other disability-related benefits indefinitely. Presently, the possibility of losing such important benefits can discourage people from moving off social assistance into paid employment. The advantage of encouraging and helping people make this transition is that provinces and territories will likely save on income support transfers to individuals;

- With federal assistance (help from the Government of Canada), provinces and territories could be encouraged to separate disability-specific support and social assistance programs. This would allow people with higher earned incomes to qualify (be eligible) for ongoing public assistance for disability-related needs. This is an important consideration for employees whose workplace-based insurance plans do not provide enough coverage for disability-related expenses. If employees are not able to get enough coverage, they may quit their job so that they can get the needed supports through social assistance.
- Organizations that help people who need employment support often compete to help people with less challenging needs; this is because these people are more easily and successfully placed in paid employment. This means that people with complex employment-related needs are not receiving support. As a response to this gap in service, organizations could be given financial incentives (money) to work with people with complex employment-related needs. These organizations could also be given incentives (benefits) to adopt the core values discussed in this paper and use performance indicators and measures to ensure effective practice.

- Small and mid-sized companies that need financial assistance (money) in order to make workplace modifications available (e.g., modified equipment or workstations) could have easier and more ample access to such support from governments through an 'accommodation fund'.
- Some organizations provide intensive pre-placement support (help for the employer so that the workplace will be suitable for the new employee) or ongoing support to employers interested in hiring/keeping people with developmental disabilities. To assist these organizations in such activities, additional funding could be provided. Currently, once a person is placed in a job the case is often closed and the person is no longer eligible for ongoing financial support from governments. This is true even in situations where such support is required in order for the individuals to keep their job.
- Post-secondary educational institutions (universities and colleges), adult literacy programs and employment training programs could be encouraged and financially supported to make sure curricula (a set of courses), teaching approaches, and buildings are accessible. Non-governmental organizations* with skills in adapting curriculum and teaching methods could work with universities and colleges to help make programs more inclusive. Funding would be needed in order for this partnership. People with developmental

disabilities could be provided the financing (money) they need to start educational upgrading and training.

- Non-governmental organizations* could be helped to search out and summarize 'success stories' in the employment of people with developmental disabilities. These organizations could also be encouraged to continue identify those 'lessons learned' and outline the benefits and strengths of hiring people with developmental disabilities.

Conclusion

There are no 'quick fix' solutions for the difficulties that people with developmental disabilities face in the Canadian labour market*. However, making use of the strategies suggested in this paper would help people move from looking for jobs to getting and maintaining jobs. People with developmental disabilities and their families would experience substantial (large or important) benefits as would federal and provincial/territorial governments, employers and society at large.¹

¹ (CACL, 2006)

Glossary

Career Development Activities: are classes, workshops, and education on topics related to a job that helps people build skills (mentioned on page 6).

Commodification: is the process by which a person becomes a commodity (product). A commodity is something that has financial value and can be bought and sold. In this paper, the use of the word means that "disability" is valuable and can be bought and sold (mentioned on page 3).

Community Economic Development Initiatives: are projects that help communities develop ways of supporting people and overcoming challenges (mentioned on page 9).

Community Economic Development Strategy: is similar to a "community economic development initiative"; it is a plan to help communities develop ways of supporting people and overcoming challenges (mentioned on page 10).

Job coaches: are people with employment training skills that help individuals with developmental disabilities be successful in the workplace (mentioned on page 7).

Labour market: is a place where work is exchanged for money (mentioned on pages 6, 12, 15).

Labour Market Development Agreements: are arrangements designed to help unemployed Canadians prepare for, find and keep a job (for more information, visit: http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rma/eppi-ibdrp/hrdb-rhbd/lmda-edmt/description_e.asp).

Microfinancing: are small loans that help people who want to start their small businesses but, are not able to get banks to lend them money.

Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs): are private or non-profit agencies that are not associated with the government (mentioned on page 4).

Non-residential Supports: are those day activities/supports for individuals with developmental disabilities; for example, attending a day program, going to work, taking classes at college (mentioned on page 3).

Peer Lending Circles: are small groups of people who join together to share the responsibility for repayment of a loan to one member (also known as Loan Circles).

Segregated Employment: is work for people with disabilities in segregated settings without competitive pay, for example, workshops (mentioned on page 3).

Stakeholders: are people and/or organizations that share an interest in an activity.

Supported Employment: is competitive employment for people with disabilities in integrated settings with job support available. (mentioned on pages 5, 7, 10, 11).

Systemic Factors: are problems or challenges in the way an entire system is organized and operated – in this case the system referred to is the employment system (mentioned on page 3).

References

Canadian Association for Community Living. (September 2006). *The employment and employability of Canadians with intellectual disabilities*. Submission by the Canadian Association for Community Living to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. Researched and written by C. Crawford. Toronto: Canadian Association for Community Living.