

RESEARCH FINDINGS BRIEF

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Overview of RRTC's Purpose

The purpose of the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) is to conduct a strategic program of research, training, technical assistance, and information dissemination focused upon educational supports that increase access and improve outcomes for persons with disabilities in postsecondary education programs and subsequently, in the labor force. Addressing this priority, the primary goals of the RRTC are as follows: 1) To identify the nature and range of educational supports 2) To identify new technologies that improve postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities; 3) To identify effective supports and models of support delivery that contribute to improved outcomes for students with disabilities; 4) To investigate methods by which the supports in postsecondary programs can be extended to the employment environment, including students with severe disabilities; and 5) To provide training, technical assistance and information to educational support personnel, public and private rehabilitation personnel, career placement specialist, and students with disabilities concerning the effectiveness of specific educational supports and models of delivery in improving postsecondary educational and career outcomes of the people with disabilities.

Topical Review – Challenges to and Recommendations for Providing Effective Support for Minority People with Disabilities

AUDIENCE Disability researchers, rehabilitation service providers, and postsecondary education personnel.

ISSUE

This article examined the impact of minority disability status upon researchers, rehabilitation service providers, and postsecondary education instructors and support personnel. Barriers were identified and recommendations proposed to effectively address disability in minority communities.

RESEARCH QUESTION

- ❖ How has the lack of cultural sensitivity and knowledge regarding minority people with disabilities affected services to minority persons with disabilities?
- ❖ How has the failure to account for environmental determinants of disability, including natural, social, cultural, and built environments affected services to minority persons with disabilities?
- ❖ How has the inadequacy of current research methodology and approaches by service systems and post-secondary education as applied to minority populations with disabilities affected outcomes?

METHOD

An extensive literature review was conducted to explore and document the knowledge base associated with minority culture and disability status, as it interacts with the work of disability researchers, rehabilitation service providers, and postsecondary education personnel.

KEY FINDINGS

- ❖ There is a critical need for disability researchers, rehabilitation service providers and post-secondary instructors and support personnel to be cognizant of the cultural variables and environmental determinants that comprise disability across multiple communities and to implement effective and rigorous strategies to address them.
- ❖ There is a critical need for minority persons, including minority persons with disabilities, to be recruited and retained in institutions of higher learning, in rehabilitation counselor training programs, and in leadership positions.
- ❖ Public policies and state/federal vocational rehabilitation programs must address the unique needs of minority persons with disabilities if differential participation in the vocational rehabilitation process which serves to exclude

minorities with disabilities from educational and employment opportunities is to be resolved.

- ❖ Disability researchers need to develop a more accurate definition of disability, develop measures that can be used to analyze contextual variables and the dynamic interplay between person and environment, and utilize more appropriate research methodology in the study of minority communities.
- ❖ Post-secondary settings must address the financial, non-traditional learning styles, and language needs that serve as barriers to minority persons with disabilities.

IMPLICATIONS

Disability Researchers

- ❖ Researchers must develop new methods to focus on how environmental determinants of disability, including natural, social, cultural, and built environments, effect services to minority persons with disabilities. It is not enough to simply shift focus from individual to the environment. Studies that focus on the dynamic interplay between person and environment and adaptive changes that occur during a person's lifespan are needed.
- ❖ Researchers must develop an understanding of the public policy context in which disability is addressed, ignored, or exacerbated resulting in more specific policies on employment, delivery and financing of health care, income support, transportation, social services, telecommunications, institutionalization, education and long-term care.
- ❖ Researchers must be more inclusive and participatory, involving not only consumers but also other stakeholders in understanding and interpreting research, in disseminating and applying research findings, and in planning, conducting and evaluation research.
- ❖ The database on minority persons with disabilities needs to be improved by using sampling techniques that allow analysis of smaller populations in meaningful ways.

- ❖ A large longitudinal study should be planned and conducted to explore the effects of rehabilitation on minority populations with disabilities over time.

Vocational Rehabilitation Service Providers

- ❖ Federal policies should enable the provision of vocational rehabilitation services that are culturally appropriate.
- ❖ Research is needed to determine effective models, services, and resources related to the vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities from minority racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- ❖ Training for vocational rehabilitation personnel must include multicultural emphases and clinical training experiences involving persons with disabilities from minority populations.
- ❖ Pre-service education programs must include specific courses related to multicultural experiences and service delivery.
- ❖ Incentives should be provided for recruitment and education of underrepresented racial/ethnic populations in vocational rehabilitation. The Rehabilitation Services Administration should continue to fund colleges and universities with substantial enrollments of minorities.
- ❖ There is a need for increased numbers of tribally operated vocational rehabilitation programs to meet the growing needs of Native Americans and Native Alaskans.

Post-Secondary Settings – Instructors and Support Personnel

- ❖ There is a critical need for increased recruitment and retention of minority students with disabilities into higher education.
- ❖ The number of faculty in institutions of higher education who are prepared to teach in the disability field must be increased.

- ❖ The number of minority faculty in institutions of higher education must increase in order to better serve minority students with disabilities.

Faculty and support personnel in post-secondary settings must become more cultural sensitivity and knowledgeable about working with minority students with disabilities.

REFERENCE

Stodden, R.A., Stodden, N.J., Kim-Rupnow, W.S., & Ah Sam, A. Challenges to and Recommendations for providing effective support services for minority people with disabilities. (Submitted for publication, April, 2000)

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