



Research Article:

A Scoping Review of the Competencies and Training of Employment Specialists Supporting Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

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A Quick Look

In this article, a scoping review was conducted to examine the research on what essential employment specialist competencies are necessary for promoting competitive integrated employment outcomes.

Supported employment gained momentum in the 1980s as a model to help individuals with high support needs access competitive integrated employment. A person with high support needs might experience challenges with communication, display disruptive behaviors, or have difficulty completing job tasks. An employment specialist can help a job seeker with various needs through the entire employment process. For example, an employment specialist might provide help with exploring jobs, learning about job interests, finding and applying for jobs, training at the site after being hired, and by continuing to stay in contact long-term to ensure job retention. An employment specialist can also help an individual with a disability seek new job opportunities in the business in which they are already employed or assist with a move to a new business. Therefore, an employment specialist needs to have many different skillsets to effectively support a job seeker. However, little is known about the best way to train employment specialists or determine what skills are essential when supporting job seekers.

Findings from the scoping review in this article revealed that 39 competencies for employment specialists have been identified. These competencies have been suggested by a national, governing organization, the Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE). While these competencies are covered in different training courses available to employment specialists, little is known about how these courses impact the actual practice and activities of employment specialists in applied settings or if training in these competencies directly improves employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Key Findings

- Quality training for employment specialists is an important factor in improving employment outcomes.
- To date, there is a lack of research on the type of training that employment specialists need in order to provide the best support possible to individuals with disabilities on-the-job.
- Employment specialists enter the field with a wide variety of educational backgrounds, educational attainment, and personal experience. Therefore, there is a wide range of abilities across employment specialists.
- Overall, there is a need to professionalize the role of the employment specialist by identifying essential competencies and training requirements necessary for improving employment outcomes.

Putting it Into Practice

The employment specialist is a crucial stakeholder involved in the competitive integrated employment process. No other stakeholder, with the exception of the job seeker, is involved in all phases of employment support activities. This article has important implications for researchers, policy makers, and practioners by highlighting the need to identify key competencies for future training. To date, there are no uniform requirements regarding certification or minimum credentialing to perform the role of employment specialist.

More About This Topic

To learn more about the existing competencies identified for employment specialists, please visit the ACRE website at the following address:

- acreducators.org

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