EMPLOYMENT OF THE DISABLED**

1. Background Information and Proposals for Action


The authors review the prevalence of disability in this country, the general characteristics of the disabled, and the nature and function of 85 specific programs designed to assist the handicapped. The authors assess the relative significance of several factors leading to disability. They examine and criticize the operation of the disability program resulting from new laws, administrative regulations and judicial decisions. The demand for disability services and the source of these demands are explored. They argue that public policies must consider the fact that disability is not simply a medical condition, but is also the result of interaction between injury or illness and the economic and social environment in which it occurs.


Dr. Bowd is director of the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities. In addition to exploring the architectural, transportation, educational and legal problems which create barriers to meaningful vocational and personal development for the disabled, he focuses on the attitudinal obstacles confronting the disabled which diminish their rights and damage their self-esteem. He stresses the positive impact of self-help efforts and cites examples of organized movements led by the disabled to alter public sentiment and achieve sympathetic legislation.


Levitan and Taggart explore the problem from an economic perspective. They begin with a consideration of: the characteristics of the physically and mentally handicapped; types of work limitations; extent of labor force participation; and the impact of a changing labor market on employment opportunities for this special group. Increased public support of vocational rehabilitation programs during the past decade has resulted in the expansion of counseling, medical services, and job placement efforts for the disabled. However, the authors assert that the recession, high overall unemployment rates, growing costs, and augmented demand for demonstrated efficiency by such programs may necessitate a change of emphasis. More attention must be paid to labor

*Prepared by Kevin Barry, Librarian, Industrial Relations Library.
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market conditions. Implementation of job creation projects must be accelerated, and employment and training services given more consideration. The authors conclude that vocational rehabilitation should follow more closely the problem-solving strategies of other manpower efforts.


The authors analyze data from the 1967 Survey of Economic Opportunity to assess the impact of several types of disability—in addition to differences in standard variables like age, race, income, and education—on the incidence and degree of labor force participation. They find that disability is a major factor in determining labor supply and that labor supply models which omit measures of health are apt to overstate the effects of educational attainment and family status. (A Comment by William G. Johnson and a Reply by the authors appear in the April 1977 issue of ILR.)


This chartbook summarizes highlights of findings from the Social Security Administration's latest comprehensive national survey conducted in 1972. Data on the socioeconomic and medical status of the disabled is presented, including findings concerning: the income situation of the disabled; the effect of disability on employment; and incidence of disability by race.


These three volumes report the recommendations, resolutions, and work of the 3700 people who gathered in Washington, D.C. on May 23-27, 1977 to represent and state the interests of the over 35 million mentally and physically disabled Americans. A special section covering the economic concerns and objectives of the affected constituency addresses means of modifying current Federal and State statutes and regulations so as to expand employment opportunities for the disabled.

2. Affirmative Action Efforts


The Department of Labor has clarified its regulations on affirmative action requirements for companies required to hire and promote the handicapped under Section 503 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973. New rules provide for job-related standards in hiring and for the preparation of a written affirmative action plan subject to inspection. Decker and Peed discuss how 503 operates; the kinds of affirmative action activities businesses should undertake; and concrete ways to ensure compliance with the rules.

Using data from the 1967 Survey of Economic Opportunity, the authors attempt to identify areas of labor market discrimination against the disabled. "Gross differences in labor market variables by handicap status of worker are adjusted for between-group differences in worker characteristics. The net differences are treated as estimates of labor market discrimination against the handicapped." Earnings differentials between disabled and non-disabled workers are considered.


Northrup examines the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. He analyzes the operation and administration of this protective legislation in practice, as well as court interpretations of it and its ramifications for management. The cases discussed suggest several emerging problem areas, including an indistinct definition of the handicapped; confusion by employers over the costs and implications of accommodation; contradictory civil rights requirements; the use of the statute as a grievance procedure; and the potential of the law to modify the use of physical examinations and employee promotion systems.

3. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION—ITS IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTIVENESS


Nine experts in vocational rehabilitation and related fields contribute their opinions of current rehabilitation programs, practices and administrative styles. Among the issues addressed are: the effective assessment of vocational potential and work adjustment; career development problems and rehabilitation approaches with different types of handicaps; and the job placement process. Future developments in the field and the outlook for agencies providing these services are examined.


After conducting a survey of over 300 vocational and rehabilitation programs worthy of special consideration, the Management Analysis Center reports on 30 outstanding programs which were able to overcome the shortcomings of many others. By preparing the work environment for the student as well as the student for the workplace, by ensuring the relevance of program content to the reality of the labor market, and by successfully soliciting the assistance of outside service agencies, these 30 groups achieved a well-coordinated balance of occupa-
tional training and counseling in their education curricula at reasonable costs. The manual developed, using these groups as examples, is a guide to implementing an effective rehabilitation system. Areas covered include: program design; self-evaluation methods; pre-vocational and vocational rehabilitation techniques; employer outreach strategies; and job placement and follow-up.


This study measures the relative effectiveness of employment and training efforts of the nation's sheltered workshops for the disabled. Evidence based on a 1973 survey conducted by the Employment Standards Administration indicated that severely handicapped people can achieve at least partial self-support in non-profit sheltered workshops. The report showed that in 1973, 32,000 handicapped persons (12% of those served by sheltered workshops) were able to move into competitive employment and increase their earnings. Although the earnings increase was not significantly higher than the rate measured in 1968, most of the handicapped persons in workshops in 1973 were more severely disabled than the earlier group.


This report contains a review of state programs for the vocational rehabilitation of the handicapped. Principal findings show that, as of 1970, the number of persons given assistance was still less than the annual increment in the number of people needing assistance and was small (267,000 in 1970) relative to the total number in need (over 7 million). 820 cases reported closed in 1970 were reviewed, and questionnaires were sent to those whose cases had been closed more than a year before the fieldwork. It was found that while less than 30% of these people were employed at acceptance into the programs, almost 50% were employed at the time of review, although their incomes were generally low.


Using Social Security Administration and the Rehabilitation Services Administration data on disabled persons receiving rehabilitation services, this paper seeks to determine whether the earnings differences between rehabilitants and other clients can be explained by factors other than those relating to the rehabilitation experience. A large number of such factors were examined in a variety of ways, and none could account for the relationship between rehabilitation experience and earnings. The evidence supports the belief that rehabilitation services have a favorable effect on the earnings of disabled persons.