

DRI News

A newsletter from the Disability Research Institute



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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Return-to-Work and Ticket-to-Work Activities

Adequacy of Incentives Advisory Group Holds First Meeting

The Disability Research Institute held a highly successful first meeting of the Adequacy of Incentives Advisory Group at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign on June 16-17, 2003. Funded in early Spring, this high priority Ticket-to-Work project will provide

the Social Security Administration with actionable recommendations regarding the Ticket-to-Work Program. These recommendations will pay particular attention to individuals with disabilities who have a need for ongoing support and services, need high-cost accommodations, earn a sub-minimum wage, and work and receive partial cash benefits.

Dr. Tanya Gallagher, Director of the Institute, is the Principal Investigator. Dr. David Mank, Director of the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community

at Indiana University is the Advisory Group's chairman. The Advisory Group also includes twelve members, four technical advisors, and two SSA liaisons, who are experts on disability policy, employment of individuals with disabilities, and the Ticket-to-Work Program.

Martin Gerry, Deputy Commissioner, Office of Disability Income Security Programs, Pam Mazerski, Associate Commissioner, Office of Program Development and Research, and Ken McGill, Associate Commissioner, Office of Employment Support Programs, attended the Group's first meeting. Their involvement reinforced the SSA's commitment to the Ticket-to-Work Program and their interest in action-oriented recommendations from the Advisory Group.

The Adequacy of Incentives Advisory Group will meet quarterly next year.



Members of the Adequacy of Incentives Advisory Group met recently at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. Clockwise around the table: Robert Silverstein, Martin Gerry, David Mank (chair), Tanya Gallagher, and Ken McGill.

ON THE COVER



The Adequacy of Incentives Advisory Group held its first meeting on the University of Illinois campus in Urbana-Champaign June 16-17, 2003.

Advisory Group members

Michael Callahan
Diane Dalmasse
Laurie Ford

Thomas Golden
Bruce Growick
William Kiernan
Celane McWhorter
Patricia Rogan
Robert Silverstein
James Smith
Stephen Start
Dorothy Watson

Technical Advisors

David Autor
Kris Flaten
Dan O'Brien
Paul Seifert

Ongoing Projects...

Age of Disability Onset and Employment Outcomes Analysis

(Pamela Loprest and Elaine Maag, The Urban Institute)

The Age of Disability Onset and Employment Outcomes project is examining the impact of early-life disability onset on later employment outcomes by conducting secondary analyses on the NHIS-D data. The early onset of disability is defined as birth through young adulthood and can affect a person's employment outcomes in many ways, including the acquisition of education and job skills (human capital). This reduced "investment" in human capital may reduce the individual's employment and earnings prospects throughout his or her lifetime. Historically, Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) served persons with disabilities who had significant work histories and accumulated human capital before experiencing a disability. Persons with earlier onset of disability may require different types of support. Therefore, policies and programs that intervene at the time schooling and early human capital investment decisions are being made may be essential to increasing employment outcomes across an entire lifetime.

The project research team is completing sensitivity analyses on age of onset data. These analyses examine the characteristics, educational outcomes, and work behavior of a young cohort of individuals with early disability onset who are being compared to individuals without disabilities. Attention is being paid to the impact of early onset on employment outcomes, specifically as related to the acquisition of education and job skills.

Community Rehabilitation Programs Project Prepares for Next Phase

(Fred Menz, University of Wisconsin Stout)

The Community Rehabilitation Programs Project examines a comprehensive database at the University of Wisconsin-Stout (UWS). This database includes information on all Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) such as services, staffing, outcomes, needs, resources, and types of programs supplied by CRPs. Since the database is not specific to SSDI beneficiaries and SSI recipients, this project compares how CRPs currently serve beneficiaries and recipients as compared to those who are not on the federal rolls. Specific attention is being given to the overall effectiveness of these programs to return beneficiaries and recipients to sustainable work.

The Community Rehabilitation Programs project team recently mailed a questionnaire to more than 10,000 community rehabilitation programs nationally. The information gathered will increase the overall understanding of how Community Rehabilitation Programs currently serve SSDI beneficiaries and SSI recipients, their effectiveness in enabling beneficiaries to return to sustainable work, and recommendations these providers have for improving their effectiveness in serving these populations. The second phase of this project has recently begun and is aimed at defining models to improve outcomes for SSA beneficiaries and recipients, and to increase the effectiveness of the Community Rehabilitation Programs in serving these populations.

Recently Completed Projects

The following Return to Work projects were recently completed by the Disability Research Institute. The associated project reports will soon be available on the DRI website.

Employment Outcomes for Persons with Disabilities in a Mature Economic Environment (Edward Yelin and Laura Trupin, University of California San Francisco)

Paths to the Disability Insurance Program (Monroe Berkowitz and Todd Honeycutt, Rutgers University)

(continued)

(Ongoing Projects, continued)

Early Intervention Progress Continues

(Monroe Berkowitz, Rutgers University)

The Early Intervention Project is designed to examine the impact of interventions with Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) applicants before they join the federal rolls. These interventions will be implemented with the goal of returning individuals with disabilities to work and thereby reducing their dependency on benefits. Three alternate models will be pilot tested in three states. The three models offer the same incentives but vary in the treatment methods used to encourage participants to return to work. Applicants will be offered incentives such as cash stipends and immediate medical benefits. The Early Intervention Project team is finalizing work to begin the pilot program. The team is continuing to work closely with the demonstration states of Vermont, New Mexico, and Wisconsin. Discussions with these states surround ways to guide the utilization of employment services, including identifying expenses involved with the removal of employment barriers.

Facilitating the Transition to Employment of Childhood SSI Beneficiaries

(Elizabeth Powers, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)

The Facilitating the Transition to Employment of Childhood SSI Beneficiaries and Other Children with Disabilities project examines the transition to employment of young adult individuals who are limited in activities or who experience specific chronic health conditions in childhood. Particular attention is being paid to children who participate in the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. The project is being conducted in two phases. The first phase is a careful assessment of the patterns of the young adult transition into the labor market. The second phase is identifying specific factors that may mitigate the adverse consequences of childhood health and activity limitations on the transition to adult employment and economic self-sufficiency. This project has linked public-use household data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) with administrative records on Social Security covered earnings and SSI reciprocity. The project team is continuing to analyze the rich information gathered from merging these data resources.

Employment Networks Project Completes Pilot Test

(Bruce Growick and Judith Drew, The Ohio State University)

The Employment Networks: The Supply Side of the Ticket-to-Work/Work Incentives Improvement Act (PL 106-170) project is exploring the experiences and attitudes of Employment Networks as they affect the successful implementation of PL 106-170. This new and groundbreaking legislation, which allows beneficiaries to choose a vocational rehabilitation provider, can be conceptualized in terms of supply and demand. The "demand" side of the law is simply the number of beneficiaries who will be interested in receiving services so that they can return to work. The "supply" side is the number of rehabilitation providers who will be equally interested in becoming Employment Networks and assisting beneficiaries in obtaining employment. The overall success of PL 106-170 will be measured not only by the number of beneficiaries who take advantage of these new incentives, but also by the number and quality of the rehabilitation providers who become and remain an Employment Network. The project team recently began collecting data from potential Employment Networks to learn about their experiences with and attitudes about the implementation of PL 106-170.

DRI Recognized on SSA Website

Social Security Online, the official website of the SSA, recognizes the creation of the DRI as one of the agency's major accomplishments for the period 1997-2001, and it also cites the Institute as an important component of the agency's future plans.

DRI Cited as Key Component of SSA Strategic Plan

The Disability Research Institute's efforts have been identified as assisting the SSA's long-range planning strategy according to the agency's recently released Strategic Plan, 2003-2008. The agency says it will be working "in collaboration with the DRI" to develop a demonstration project for early intervention. This demonstration project will test a variety of interventions, such as early medical insurance and employment supports. The goal is to assist persons with disabilities in returning to work as soon as possible, thereby reducing long-term dependency on the Social Security Disability Insurance rolls. The Institute continues its commitment to both individuals with disabilities and the SSA as efforts to identify innovative return to work solutions continue.

SSA Includes DRI in List of Major Accomplishments

The Social Security Administration website lists the Disability Research Institute as one of the agency's major accomplishments for the period 1997-2001. In the list of critical initiatives it has undertaken, the agency reiterates that the DRI was created "to help provide policy makers with improved information and data in the disability policy area including ways to strengthen return-to-work policies." The DRI was first funded in 2000 and is now entering its fourth year of operation. Additional facts on the history of the agency can be viewed at: <http://www.ssa.gov/history/>.

The image displays two screenshots of the Social Security Administration's website. The top screenshot shows the main homepage, featuring the Social Security Online logo, navigation links (Home, Questions?, How to Contact Us, Search), and a search bar. The bottom screenshot shows the 'History' page, titled 'The History of Social Security'. This page includes a central image of President Roosevelt signing Social Security legislation, surrounded by various historical resources and special collections. The 'History' page also features a 'This Month in History' section and a 'Note to our readers regarding the "Dove" mystery'.

Visit SSA online to learn more about the DRI and other disability research programs.

Employment Opportunities at DRI

The Disability Research Institute is currently seeking a Post-Doctoral Research Associate and Research Coordinators. Brief descriptions of these positions are noted below. Additional information is available on the DRI website at www.als.uiuc.edu/dri and by contacting Judee Richardson, Ph.D., Associate Director, Disability Research Institute, at 217-244-1661, or jar@uiuc.edu.

Post-Doctoral Research Associate Position

The initial appointment is for one year and will be renewable for a second year pending continued funding. General responsibilities include:

- Assist in the preparation and submission of papers and proposals related to disability policy;
- Construct and maintain DRI research and reference databases;
- Update staff on developments and current issues in disability research;
- Coordinate group participation in technical meetings;
- Facilitate collaborations between staff and researchers from other institutions;
- Provide liaison assistance with the funding agency;
- Participate in responding to SSA quick-response requests for information; and
- Perform other duties as assigned.

Research Coordinator Positions

Qualified individuals are sought to fill twelve-month full-time academic professional positions as Research Coordinators. General responsibilities include:

- Possesses and demonstrates knowledge of research design, disability issues and research areas pertinent to the Social Security Administration. Has current knowledge of trends in employment, disability, and transition to work;
- Possesses organizational and writing skills required to produce project materials and reports. Supervises others in the organization and preparation of deliverables and reports;
- Develops research proposals and procedures for Institute projects;
- Responds to inquiries regarding research projects from a substantive knowledge base and from an ability to identify appropriate resources to determine solutions;
- Exercises initiative in the identification and resolution of challenges encountered in order to achieve project and Institute objectives;
- Develops study protocols for database design, sampling and data analysis. Directs graduate assistants in the execution of assignments, database development, and analysis;
- Serves as a liaison between the Institute and collaborating institutions and researchers;
- Constructs and maintains DRI research and reference databases; and
- Participates in responding to SSA quick-response requests for information.

Announcements...

DRI Annual Symposium

The Disability Research Institute will hold its Annual Symposium in March 2004. Watch for additional updates on the DRI website <http://www.als.uiuc.edu/dri>.

New Accessible Website Coming Soon

A new website design team has been organized within the DRI. This team will focus on editing and redesigning the website, with special attention paid to state-of-the-art accessible formats. The team's efforts will be concentrated over the next few months but developments will continue on an ongoing basis.

Year 4 Call for Major Research Proposals and Small Grants Research Proposals

As noted in the last edition of the DRI Newsletter (February 2003), the Disability Research Institute announced a call for major research and small grant proposals to be considered for funding next year. Many strong proposals were submitted to the DRI in response to the call this year. To date, the proposal review committees have completed their reviews and discussions with final decisions in progress. Projects are anticipated to begin August 1, 2003 with notification of awards announced in July.

Reorganization of the Disability Research Institute

The Disability Research Institute has recently combined its Scientific and Management branches. Dr. Tanya Gallagher, former Scientific Director of the DRI, is now Director of the Institute. Dr. Judee Richardson, formerly Associate Research Coordinator, is the Institute's Associate Director.

Congratulations to Dr. Chrisann Schiro-Geist

Dr. Chrisann Schiro-Geist, formerly the Managing Director of the Disability Research Institute, has recently accepted a special responsibility in the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Public Engagement and Institutional Relations at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In her new position, Dr. Schiro-Geist will be leading a disability and rehabilitation continuing education and training initiative that will facilitate outreach activities throughout the state of Illinois.

Dr. Schiro-Geist will retain a reduced appointment with the DRI, moving full-time into her new position on January 1, 2004. We extend our congratulations to Dr. Schiro-Geist and wish her much success as she continues her professional dedication to the identification of issues surrounding the needs of individuals with disabilities.



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University of Chicago, National Opinion Research Center

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tion Institute

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and Human Development

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Education Services, College of Education



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