

# The Disability Research Institute



College of Applied Life Studies  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



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## ***DRI NEWS***

### **DISABILITY RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

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### *The Disability Research Institute: Partnership in a New Paradigm*

Welcome to the first issue of **DRI News**, the newsletter of the Disability Research Institute (DRI)—a research partnership between the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA) and the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (UIUC).

The Institute plans and conducts a broad range of research to further disability policy information. The projects focus on disability issues relating to people with disabilities and disability programs under the Social Security Act.

DRI acts as a clearinghouse for researchers who want to access SSA data for research purposes. Under the direction of Chrisann Schiro-Geist, the DRI staff oversees technical facilities, manages fiscal resources, and enforces privacy standards related to data accessibility and storage. Policy decisions regarding the research agenda, research implementation plan, education and training program, and development and direction of DRI are guided by scholarly advisors and a Technical Advisory Panel.

In addition to conducting research, the DRI trains and educates scholars both to encourage promising young researchers to concentrate on disability issues and to keep current practitioners abreast of the results of new research. To expand its vision, the Institute has formed collaborative partnerships with other academic institutions and policy experts in the fields of economics, rehabilitation, public health and public policy. Specifically, the DRI, which is housed in the College of Applied Life Studies, is

affiliated with three institutions as well as related campus units at UIUC, such as the Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations, National Center for Supercomputing Applications, Office of Continuing Education, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, and Institute of Government and Public Affairs. DRI scholarship and research is enhanced by the input of graduate students, visiting scholars and educational outreach participants.

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*“The SSA is privileged to  
have a working  
partnership with some of  
the foremost disability  
policy experts in America.”*

- Kenneth S. Apfel,  
Immediate Past Commissioner  
of Social Security

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An important component of the DRI mission is to inform policymakers, government officials, the academic community and the public at large—in particular, members of the public who have disabilities—about disability policy issues. To that end, the Institute prepares reports for the Office of Research Evaluation and Statistics and will publish research results in scholarly, governmental and popular media. Updates on DRI activities are disseminated through an informative website, and the print and electronic publication of **DRI News**. ♦



# First Year Research Projects

## Employment Outcomes for Persons with Disabilities in a Mature Economic Environment

University of California, San Francisco

Edward Yelin, Ph.D.

**Assesses the factors affecting labor force participation and transitions into and out of employment**

*How do contingent employment arrangements affect persons with disabilities in emerging sectors of the economy?*

### About the Director and Co-Principal Investigator...

*Dr. Schiro-Geist's research deals with the improvement of the quality of life of persons with disabilities. She has developed a data bank of information on university-educated persons with disabilities who graduated from UIUC from 1952 to 1992. This database has generated several national and international presentations, internal and external grant money and a doctoral dissertation.*

*She is also involved in research on the efficacy of animal-assisted therapy for children with severe disabilities. She is the author of two books on disability-related issues. Dr. Schiro-Geist was the winner of the campus-wide "Excellence in Off-Campus Teaching" award in Spring 2000. ♦*

Using the telephone-based longitudinal California Work and Health Survey (CWHHS), the project will describe the risk factors among the employed for poor labor market outcomes, including involuntary part-time employment, episodic employment, and employment that leaves individuals and their households with a poverty-level income. Eight hundred persons with disabilities will be added to the CWHHS, permitting the study of transitions in employment among CWHHS respondents with and without disabilities. The research takes advantage of previous analyses completed by the investigators, the longitudinal design of the CWHHS, and the Survey's enumeration of specific services and accommodations used by sample persons.

This study is designed to show the extent to which persons with discrete disabilities are able to secure and maintain employment, and to describe the combination of occupations, industries, and working conditions that maximize the labor market success of people with disabilities. Employment issues are of central importance to policy because persons with disabilities have such low rates of job accession. Gaining and maintaining access to employment in the emerging sectors of the economy will markedly improve the long-term well-being of persons with disabilities. ♦

## Research Approaches to Validation of SSA's Medical Listings

Northwestern University, Allen Heinemann, Ph.D.

University of Chicago, Mary Grace Kovar, Ph.D.

**Assesses the extent to which the medical severity of impairments embodied in the listings are predictive of the inability to work**

*What are appropriate criteria by which SSA may assess the ability to work?*

The SSA's medical listings are a series of medical conditions (physical or mental) which, based upon thresholds of medical severity (in some cases with specific functional consequences), are believed to be *de facto* evidence of the inability to work. The project will develop a methodology that may be used to assess the validity of the listings, and, possibly, other parts of the disability decision process.

The research will include the identification or development of external criteria reflecting the inability to engage in Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA), development of assessment methods, identification of appropriate statistical methods, and the application of these methodologies to one of the medical listings.

The DRI will involve internal and external stakeholders in this research by conducting a series of meetings with interested parties. ♦

# First Year Research Projects

## New Work Arrangements and Disability Income

Rutgers University

Lisa Schur, Ph.D., and Douglas Kruse, Ph.D.

### Ascertains advantages and disadvantages of different work arrangements

This project will produce estimates and comparisons between workers with and without disabilities in different types of contingent and flexible work arrangements. The researchers will analyze the prevalence of and reasons for alternate work arrangements among workers with and without disabilities and learn more about their individual household characteristics, pay, hours, occupation and industry.

*Should entry into contingent and flexible work arrangements be encouraged? Under what conditions?*

### Determines how people with disabilities experience contingent work arrangements

The researchers will assess the movement into and out of contingent work arrangements relative to the business cycle and receipt of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits. Drs. Schur and Kruse will review the experience and outcomes for contingent workers with disabilities who have filed lawsuits based on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or the Rehabilitation Act. If the data show that new work arrangements provide inroads to high-paid, high-skill jobs, new disability policy may promote these positions by providing information on the types of skills that may be gained by workers with disabilities in alternative work arrangements. ♦

## Disability Benefits as Household Income and Labor Supply Decisions of Household Members

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Stephanie So, Ph.D.

### Investigates household labor supply decisions for members of different disability groups

This study explores the incentive effects of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefit programs on persons with disabilities and their household members to enter, exit or change the level of effort supplied to the labor force. The "Added Worker Effect" (AWE), the notion that periods of unemployment for one member of the family may raise the labor supply of another member, will also be examined.

*What is the impact of disability benefits in a family-unit context?*

### Looks at unemployment spells related to disability and the impact of benefits on household income, by disability type

The study examines the risk-of-unemployment profiles attached to populations with different disabilities and will test the hypothesis that types of disabilities systematically pose different risks to household income, depending on factors such as severity and timing of disability within the life cycle.

The results will provide direct evidence of the incentive effects of disability benefits programs on work effort, taking into account the fact that persons with disabilities often have informal arrangements within their households to mitigate unemployment shocks. In addition, the study will develop disability risk profiles that will help SSA understand how household groups can react differently to a household member's receipt of SSDI benefits. ♦



### About the Dean and Co-Principal Investigator...

Dr. Tanya M. Gallagher became Dean of the College of Applied Life Studies in December, 1998, succeeding Interim Dean Robert Sprague. As a Professor of Speech and Hearing Science, Dr. Gallagher has served on the faculties of the University of Michigan and McGill University prior to coming to UIUC. She has held several leadership positions including Director of the School of Communication Sciences and Disorders, Associate Dean for Allied Health Sciences, and Associate Dean for University Affairs, Planning and Resources in the Faculty of Medicine at McGill University.

Dr. Gallagher recently served as President of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Foundation and is an advisor to the National Center for Treatment Effectiveness in Communication Disorders.

Dr. Gallagher earned her bachelor's degree (1967) and master's degree in speech-language pathology (1969) and her doctorate in speech and language science (1971) at the University of Illinois. Her research has recently focused on brain-behavior relationships in populations at high risk for communication disorders and on neuromuscular and functional head and neck post-treatment effects following chemotherapy radiation in patients with head and neck cancer. ♦

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Upstate Medical University

# First Year Research Projects

## Barriers to Employment Among Persons with Mental Impairments

Rutgers University  
David Mechanic, Ph.D.

### Analyzes unemployment factors among those with mental illness

The objectives of this project are to examine the barriers to employment among persons with a primary mental illness; to examine how mental illness may complicate the effect of physical illness and disabilities on the risk of unemployment; and to describe the factors that may ameliorate risk for unemployment among those with mental illness.

### Addresses several research questions

Dr. Mechanic will pursue the following questions through his research:

- 1) What mental health specialty services ameliorate the risk of unemployment?
- 2) How do characteristics that shape opportunity (e.g., age, education, and race) interact with mental impairment to make employment more or less difficult?
- 3) How do comorbid mental impairments influence employment for those with physical disabilities?
- 4) What are the perceived barriers to work among those with mental impairments?
- 5) How do employers view accommodations for workers with mental impairments?

*What are the facilitating and impeding factors for employment among those with mental impairments?*

By understanding the facilitating and impeding factors for employment among those with mental impairments, policy needs associated with the interaction between and impact on medical, functional and occupational factors and disability determinants for purposes of entitlement to Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplementary Security Income (SSI) Benefits are addressed. The project will identify persons most likely to succeed in disability-to-work programs and program characteristics most likely to facilitate success. ♦

## Designing an Early Intervention Experiment and Demonstration Approach for the Social Security Administration

Rutgers University  
Monroe Berkowitz, Ph.D. and John Burton, Ph.D.

Under the demonstrations authorized by the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWWIIA), services could be offered to applicants for benefits. This represents a distinct change from the current law and practice where services can be paid for out of trust funds only for beneficiaries.

This research will develop models which will help to:

- 1) Identify likely eligible applicants to participate in a Return to Work Program.
- 2) Create models that lead benefit applicants to work. ♦

*Under the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (Public Law 106-70, December 1999), the Social Security Administration is given authority to conduct experiments and demonstrations to test the idea that the return to work record for potential applicants to the Disability Insurance program could be improved by early intervention and the provision of return to work services.*



## See Our Web Site for Latest News from DRI

<http://www.als.uiuc.edu/dri>

Click on <http://www.als.uiuc.edu/dri> for the latest from DRI. The site features information about DRI research projects, our staff and affiliate partners, as well as recommended web links related to disability research and a calendar featuring future events and conferences. ♦

## Join the Discussion Online

### *International listserv launched*

Everyone interested in disability research and policy is invited to become a member of the DRI electronic discussion list, or listserv. By joining this online community, you will have an opportunity to communicate with colleagues around the world on disability research issues.

Future editions of the newsletter will be distributed through the listserv; by joining now you ensure prompt delivery of the latest edition of this free newsletter.

To subscribe, go to our web site at <http://www.als.uiuc.edu/dri/listserv.htm>. ♦

## DRI Symposium and Opening Celebration

*Thursday, April 26, 2001*

Mark your calendars now for the upcoming Symposium and Opening Celebration officially marking the inauguration of the Disability Research Institute! Special speakers and dignitaries will participate. More information about the event will be posted on the web site soon. ♦

## Disability Equality Symposium Held November 2000

*Researchers from around the globe meet in Chicago*

A highly regarded group of leaders and experts in the field of disability and the disability-rights movement participated in the Symposium on Disability and Equality: Strategies for Success.

The sponsors of the Symposium from UIUC were the DRI, the European Union Center and the Office of Continuing Education. Other institutional sponsors included the University of Illinois at Chicago's Department of Disability and Human Development and the Continuing Education Center for Community Based Rehabilitation Programs at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. Co-sponsors were: American Psychological Association Division 22, Association of Higher Education and Disability, and National Council on Rehabilitation Education. Speakers included Ken McGill, Associate Commissioner for the SSA's Office of Employment Support Programs, and Monroe Berkowitz, Professor Emeritus at Rutgers University, a leading expert on the economics of disability and a key promoter of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999.

The goal of the symposium was to provide a "reality-based" review of progress toward equality—as well as toward equity in quality of life indicators—for people with disabilities. Participants looked not only at the potential legislative agenda, but at what changes have occurred and are projected to occur in world society and culture, and what should be on the research agenda in coming years.

Transcripts are available by calling (217) 265-0279. ♦



### *About the Symposium...*

*One of the featured speakers at the Symposium was Ken McGill of the Social Security Administration (SSA). Mr. McGill directs the Office of Employment Support Programs (OESP), which was created in 1999 to provide a focus within the SSA on matters affecting the employment of Social Security beneficiaries with disabilities. Mr. McGill and his staff are currently leading the implementation of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999.*

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*Future editions of DRI News will be available through the listserv. If you prefer not to join the listserv, but would like to receive future DRI announcements and newsletters, send an email message to the editor at [drinet@prairienet.org](mailto:drinet@prairienet.org), or call us at (217) 333-6202. A text-only version of DRI News on diskette is available on request.*

*We will not share or sell the email and mailing addresses of our subscribers.*

*DRI Symposium and Opening Celebration  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

*Thursday, April 26th, 2001*

*Visit our web site for details*

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