

The Disability Research Institute



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



February 2003

Volume 3 Number 1

DISABILITY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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University of Illinois at Chicago,
Department of Disability and Human
Development

DRI NEWS

January 2003 GAO Report Cites DRI Contributions: *Vital to the Debate About the Future of Social Security*

The **U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO)** has issued a new report dated January, 2003, detailing the operations of the SSA that is complimentary of the DRI and its research. The report, *Major Management Challenges and Program Risks*, is part of the GAO's Performance and Accountability Series and calls the work of the DRI "vital to informing the debate over the long-term solvency of the Social Security system." It specifically highlights the following DRI efforts:

- Designing a demonstration to provide earlier return-to-work services to disability insurance (DI) applicants who are likely to be found eligible;
- Exploring the paths DI applicants and beneficiaries take to the benefit program to determine whether SSA might be able to redirect some applicants to work rather than a prolonged stay on the benefit rolls;

Continued on page 3

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

The Disability Research Institute announces a call for major research (approximately \$100,000) and small grant (maximum of \$25,000) proposals for its next year of funding. The DRI, which is beginning its fourth year of funding through a cooperative agreement with the Social Security Administration, has supported a broad range of research with disability policy implications for programs administered by Social Security. For its Year 4 funding, the DRI is particularly interested in projects addressing the following research themes:

- Return-to-work and transition-to-work including studies that might utilize the DRI Longitudinal Rehabilitation Services Administration Database.
- Population changes impacting SSA programs, such as increases in incidence of mental health problems, the proportion of older individuals, etc.
- Investigation of programs providing benefits to persons with disabilities such as Worker's Compensation, private insurance, health insurance, etc.
- Investigation of the range of employer incentives for hiring SSA beneficiaries/applicants.

Submission Date
March 7, 2003
Award Period
12-months
Average Award
Major Research
Approximately
\$100,000 per year
Small Grants
Up to \$25,000

Monitor the
DRI web site for
possible updates

Application instructions are available on the DRI web site at www.als.uiuc.edu/dri/. For additional information contact Judee Richardson, Ph.D. (217) 244-1661 or jar@uiuc.edu. ♦

Current DRI Research Projects

The DRI has funded a range of research projects with disability policy implications for Social Security programs.

Facilitating the Transition to Employment of Childhood SSI Beneficiaries and Other Children With Disabilities

This project examines the young adult transitions to employment of individuals who are limited in activities or experience specific chronic health conditions in childhood. Particular attention is paid to children who participate in the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. The project proceeds in two phases. In the first phase, a careful assessment of the patterns of the young adult transition into the labor market is conducted. The second phase of the project is concerned with 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.

Researcher: Elizabeth T. Powers, Ph.D. - University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

This analysis provides answers to basic questions such as: when do children with health limitations begin working; are their employment patterns continuous or fitful; do they experience earnings growth; and are their earnings levels commensurate with economic self-sufficiency?

Employment Networks: The Supply Side of the Ticket to Work / Work Incentives Improvement Act (PL 106-170)

The purpose of this project is to explore and describe the experiences and attitudes of Employment Networks as factors in 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.

Researchers: Bruce Growick, Ph.D., and Judith Drew, M.A. - The Ohio State University

Little has been done to explore and describe the experiences and attitudes of rehabilitation providers who have become, or want to become, Employment Networks.

Age of Disability Onset and Employment Outcomes: Results From the National Health Interview Study - Disability Supplement (NHIS-D)

The purpose of this research is to examine the impact of onset of disability early in life on later employment outcomes. The early onset of disability (at birth through young adulthood) can affect a person's employment outcomes in many ways. In addition to the direct impact of disability on employment, early onset of disability likely affects the acquisition of education and job skills (human capital). This reduced “investment” in human capital in turn 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. 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.

Researchers: Pamela Loprest, Ph.D., and Elaine Maag, M.S. - The Urban Institute

How can the reduced investment in the “human capital” of education and work skills due to earlier onset of disability be better supported by intervention programs?

Current DRI Research Projects

Community Rehabilitation Programs: Phase I

Are there specific structural models for community-based programs that may be applicable to SSA recipients?

The study explores the University of Wisconsin-Stout (UWS) database on the universe of Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs). This database includes basic information on services, staffing, outcomes, needs, resources, and programs to serve people with disabilities, though not specific to SSDI/SSI recipients. The proposed study will build upon this existing foundation of information and will examine how CRPs currently serve SSDI/SSI beneficiaries, their effectiveness in enabling beneficiaries to return to work and to sustain work, and develop recommendations on what may be done to increase their effectiveness in serving the SSDI/SSI population.

Researcher: Frederick Menz, Ph.D. - University of Wisconsin-Stout

The Impact of Changes in the Occupational and Industrial Mix Between 1970 and 2000 On the Employment of Persons With and Without Disabilities

Has change in the distribution of occupations and industries between 1970 and 2000 affected the probability of employment of persons with disabilities?

The project is based on the observations of the investigator and others that changes in the nature of work itself affect the probability of employment among persons with disabilities. In the project, we focus on the impact of longer-term changes in the structure of the economy, particularly the shift over the past 30 years from an economy based on the production and distribution of goods to one based on services and information. The overarching aim is to evaluate the impact of changes in the distribution of occupations and industries between 1970 and 2000 on the employment situation of persons with disabilities during this period. The project draws upon data from the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS).

Researchers: Edward Yelin, Ph.D., and Laura Trupin, M.P.H. - University of California, San Francisco ◆

January 2003 GAO Report Cites DRI Contributions: *continued from page 1*

- Examining how the onset of disability early in life affects later employment outcomes;
- Analyzing and facilitating the transition to employment of youths with disabilities;
- Assessing the validity of medical criteria as measures of disability;
- Identifying the most salient job demands compared to a claimant's remaining capacity for work; and
- Examining the impact and cost of assistive technology on employment of persons with spinal cord injuries.

The work of the DRI is "vital to informing the debate over the long-term solvency of the Social Security system."

According to the GAO, these DRI projects represent positive steps the agency has taken to strengthen its research and evaluation activities. As a result, policy development issues that had been cited in earlier reports no longer were considered to be a major management challenge for the agency. The GAO suggested that the DRI continue to assist SSA through investigations of the impact of medical advances and social changes on disability. The Institute was described as playing a pivotal role as the agency develops a comprehensive return-to-work strategy that integrates earlier intervention, including earlier and more effective identification of work capacities, and the provision of essential return-to-work assistance. ◆

Symposium Presenters

Fabricio E. Balcazar - Associate Professor, Department of Disability and Human Development, University of Illinois at Chicago

Edward D. Berkowitz - Chair, Department of History, George Washington University

Monroe Berkowitz - Professor of Economics, Emeritus, Rutgers

Scott Bilder - Project Director and Data Analyst, Institute for Health, Health Care Policy, and Aging Research, Rutgers

Ruth Brannon - Associate Director, Division of Research Sciences, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research

Debra Brucker - Associate Director, Disability Research and Education Program, Rutgers

Thomas DeLeire - Assistant Professor, Labor Economics, University of Chicago

Tanya M. Gallagher - Scientific Director, DRI, and Dean, College of Applied Life Studies, UIUC

Martin H. Gerry - Deputy Commissioner, Office of Disability and Income Security Programs, SSA

Susan Grad - Acting Associate Commissioner, Office of Research, Evaluation and Statistics, SSA

Thomas Hale - Economist, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Brad Hedrick - Director, Division of Rehabilitation Education Services, UIUC

Allen Heinemann - Professor, Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Northwestern University, Associate Director, Research, Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago

Todd Honeycutt - Research Analyst, Rutgers

Richard Horne - Senior Policy Advisor, Presidential Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities, Office of Disability Employment Policy, Department of Labor

Tim Johnson - Congressman, Illinois 15th District

William Johnson - Professor, School of Health Administration and Policy, Department of Economics, Arizona State University

Martin H. Gerry Addresses the DRI Annual Symposium



Martin H. Gerry

The DRI Annual Symposium, “SSA Disability Benefits: Apply, Qualify...Return to Work,” was held June 6, 2002, at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. It was attended by many leading policy makers, academics, administrators and other professionals in fields involving disability issues and research. The focus of the sessions was primarily on the integration of persons with disabilities into the work economy—what has been done, what is being done now, and what could be done to improve work opportunities in the future. Highlights of the remarks offered at the symposium are offered below.

Martin H. Gerry, recently appointed by President Bush as Deputy Commissioner, Office of Disability and Income Security Programs, addressed three areas of greatest concern to his agency. First, the Ticket to Work program, because it is a new effort, requires careful review to determine what actually works and what does not work to meet the program's goals. Second, because the level of effort required of applicants as they pursue a disability determination is unacceptable, sometimes requiring 3-5 years, a thorough overhaul of the application process is essential. Finally, the president's New Freedom Initiative requires a comprehensive evaluation of "how people with disabilities in the United States are affected by the range of programs, formal and informal, and their benefits, strategies, and policies, and how those together do or do not advance the goal of economic self-sufficiency for as many people as possible, involving work."

Deputy Commissioner Gerry continued by outlining four efforts the Office of Disability and Income Security Programs is pursuing as part of the New Freedom Initiative's broad review of disability programs. The Office has undertaken new partnerships with three other government agencies to fund demonstration programs with individual states in three areas: transition-to-work, the population which qualifies for home- and community-based waivers, and the population with affective or mood disorders. The Office is also pursuing outsourcing of the work needed to create an electronic folder for its applicants. The outsourcing organizations will be required to hire disability program beneficiaries as workers .

The honorable Congressman **Tim Johnson** (Illinois 15th District) spoke about the importance of the research conducted by the DRI in helping to ensure that all citizens are able to work productively and that the economy remains strong. He commended the DRI for pursuing interagency cooperation, noting that the DRI serves as a nationwide model for effective cooperation. He expressed his personal pride in the leadership role that the University of Illinois has taken in its pioneering work to promote educational services to people with disabilities.

Speaker of the House, **Dennis Hastert**, sent a letter which was read by Congressman Johnson. Speaker Hastert wrote that the DRI's "service to our citizens, our researchers, and the Social Security Administration has been unparalleled and has allowed us to ensure all citizens are receiving the best possible services of the government."

Continued...

The DRI Annual Symposium (continued)

Paul N. Van de Water, Acting Deputy Commissioner, Office of Policy, Social Security Administration, provided an overview of the three goals for the establishment of the DRI: disseminating research findings to scholars and policy analysts, developing scholars and analysts of the future, and encouraging research and analysis on the critical issues facing Social Security disability programs. He remarked that this symposium was part of the greater effort to ensure that "our future is not one of social fragmentation, but...one of solidarity, inclusion, and opportunity" between researchers and policy makers.

Ruth Brannon, Associate Director, Division of Research Sciences, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, discussed the range of factors which are needed in order to support effective interagency cooperation. These include: avoiding the overlapping of services, exploring technological innovation, examining attendant services, improving communication to all parties involved in the employment experience, studying the policy initiatives of the last few years more closely, pursuing research on best practices and the effectiveness of intervention, and formalizing the mechanisms for discussing research findings.

Thomas Hale, Economist, Bureau of Labor Statistics, discussed two major difficulties that face researchers in the field of disability: first, it is difficult to define what constitutes a disability; and second, researchers know little about the population of people with disabilities who respond to research surveys and why they respond as they do. He encouraged the use of qualitative analysis to help clarify the definition of disability as well as to gather more information about the population being studied.



Harold B. Kay, Jr.

Harold B. Kay, Jr., Director of Evaluation, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) since 1992, discussed the Longitudinal Study undertaken by the RSA to gather data about its program participants. He noted that the research finding of most interest to the RSA is that the variable most strongly correlated with earnings is literacy. Next year the RSA will issue a new research design to examine literacy levels in the study population.

Edward D. Berkowitz, George Washington University, an authority on the history of the Social Security program, was the keynote speaker. Dr. Berkowitz provided a fascinating historical account of the evolution of social benefits policy in the United States. His presentation began with a review of 19th century asylums and Civil War pension issues, and moved into issues of compensation for victims of social accidents in 1910 and disability insurance initiatives in 1926. He described the social programs of the New Deal and the social welfare and benefits programs of the 1960s and early 1970s. He explained that since reformers seldom destroy ongoing programs when they build new ones, "we live with the consequences of our very oldest as well as very newest programs." ♦

**Visit the DRI web site to see slides
presented by the symposium speakers:
<http://www.als.uiuc.edu/dri/events/2002symposium>**

Symposium Presenters

Harold B. Kay, Jr. - Director of Evaluation, Rehabilitation Services Administration

Mary Grace Kovar - Consultant, National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago

Douglas Kruse - Professor, Human Resources Management, Rutgers

Ken McGill - Associate Commissioner, Office of Employment Support Programs, SSA

Fred Menz - Professor, Director, Rehabilitation, Research and Training Center, University of Wisconsin-Stout

Mark V. Nadel - Associate Director, Income Security Issues, General Accounting Office

Ken Nibali - Associate Commissioner, Office of Disability, SSA

Elizabeth Powers - Assistant Professor of Economics, Institute of Government and Public Affairs, UIUC

Virginia Reno - Vice President, Research, National Academy of Social Insurance

Richard Roessler - Professor Emeritus, Rehabilitation Education, University of Arkansas

Chrisann Schiro-Geist - Managing Director, DRI, and Professor, Community Health, UIUC

Lisa Schur - Assistant Professor, Labor Studies and Employment Relations, Rutgers

Marlene Simon - Associate Division Director, Research to Practice Division, Office of Special Education Programs

Sue Suter - Developmental Disability Program Specialist, Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services

Denise Tate - Associate Professor of Psychology, Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Paul N. Van de Water - Acting Deputy Commissioner, Office of Policy, SSA

Edward Yelin - Professor of Medicine and Health Policy, University of California, San Francisco

The DRI Makes RSA-VR Data Available to Researchers

Data sets from the Longitudinal Study of the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program are now available to researchers via the DRI web site at:

<http://www.als.uiuc.edu/dri> Click "RSA-LSVRSP"

The DRI is pleased to announce the availability via its web site of data from the Longitudinal Study of the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program, conducted by the Research Triangle Institute for the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) of the U.S. Department of Education. Experts at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications on the campus of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign have worked with the DRI to develop an interface that provides convenient access to the data from this important longitudinal study. The new interface, which allows specific subsets of the data to be searched and downloaded, became operational on November 25, 2002. In addition to the data sets, summary reports and a user's guide containing an overview of the design, sampling, and data collection activities of the Longitudinal Study are also available.

Initiated in fall of 1992, the Longitudinal Study addresses key questions of interest to Congress, the Rehabilitation Services Administration, state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies and consumers about the performance of the state-federal VR program. The broad purpose of the study is to assess the performance of the state-federal VR services program in assisting eligible individuals with disabilities to achieve positive, sustainable economic and non-economic outcomes as a result of their receipt of VR services. The study results are in the form of survey data collected from applicants, consumers, and staff of the program between 1995 and 1999. ♦

Interim Papers Available from the DRI Early Intervention Project

Papers Available Include:

Calculating a Maximum Expenditure Formula

Data Assessment for the Early Intervention Pilot

Designing an Early Intervention Demonstration to Return Applicants for Social Security Disability Benefits to Work

Evaluation Design of the Early Intervention Pilot

Lessons from Project NetWork Recruiting for the DRI "Early Intervention" Project

The Selection of Social Security Disability Applicants for an Early Intervention Program

This DRI Year 1 and 2 demonstration project emerged out of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act, or TWWIIA (Public Law 106-170), authorizing the development of such demonstrations that would, for the first time in the history of Social Security, provide return-to-work services to Social Security Disability Insurance *applicants*. This distinctive feature of the legislation granted SSA the authority to offer services to persons who have not yet been accepted onto the rolls, but would likely receive benefits if they applied.

Before the demonstration could get underway, however, important questions and problems had to be resolved. The project team, headed by Monroe Berkowitz of Rutgers' Disability Research and Education Program, dedicated the first year of the Early Intervention project to responding to these issues by deciding on candidate selection procedures, developing models, and designing the demonstration.

Project papers are available at <http://disabilityresearch.rutgers.edu/eiproject.htm>

The report, "Designing an Early Intervention Demonstration to Return Applicants for Social Security Disability Benefits to Work," describes the selection procedures, the so-called "menu of inducements," such as temporary cash stipends and medical care insurance, that can be offered to applicants, as well as the programs and models that will be piloted in three states: Vermont, New Mexico, and Wisconsin. The Rutgers-based researchers continue to work with work groups in the states to implement the pilots. ♦

Researchers Affiliated With DRI

Growick, Loprest and Powers Lead New Projects



Bruce S. Growick, Ph. D., is an Associate Professor of Rehabilitation Services at The Ohio State University and has published widely in the field of rehabilitation, especially the rehabilitation of injured workers. In 1989-1990, he was Director of the Rehabilitation Division of the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation and has been President of the International Association of Rehabilitation Professionals. He is currently editor of the Journal of Forensic Vocational Analysis and a vocational expert for various national and state agencies . **DRI Research Project:** *Employment Networks: The Supply Side of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (PL 106-170)*

Pamela J. Loprest, Ph.D., is a Senior Research Associate with The Urban Institute in the areas of disability and employment, welfare reform and safety net issues, TANF, and family well-being. Her Ph.D. in economics is from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. **DRI Research Project:** *Age of Disability Onset and Employment Outcomes: Results from the NHIS-D*



Elizabeth T. Powers, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor of Economics and a faculty member of the Institute of Government and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois. She was previously an economist with the Federal Reserve of Cleveland and a Junior Staff Economist with President George H. W. Bush's Council of Economic Advisers. Her two major areas of research interest are the economic impacts of children's health problems and retirement of low-income elderly. She is currently conducting studies on the long-term outcomes of childhood SSI recipients and other children with health problems. **DRI Research Project:** *Facilitating the Transition to Employment of Childhood SSI Beneficiaries and Other Children with Disabilities* ♦

Meet DRI Staff

Richardson and Spencer contribute expertise in managing research activities.

Judee Richardson joined the DRI in November 2002 as Associate Research Coordinator in the Scientific Branch. Dr. Richardson's background is in experimental psychology and survey research methodology. She brings to the DRI a specialty in large grant management, negotiation, and oversight with quality research expertise. Prior to joining the DRI, Dr. Richardson held academic and administrative positions at Northwestern University and the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. In addition, she has been the Director, Department of Survey Research Design and Management at the American Medical Association and senior research director for small private sector consulting firms.

Ray C. Spencer joined the DRI in January 2002 and is working as Visiting Project Coordinator in the Scientific Branch. Dr. Spencer's background is in public policy research. He holds a Ph.D. in Leisure Studies and formerly served as Coordinator of Research Programs in Political Economy and Public Policy at the University of Illinois. ♦

Directors' Corner

As the Disability Research Institute proceeds with its third year of work, we continue to serve as the research arm of the SSA, working to provide information that informs disability policy decisions. Originally the DRI reported to the SSA Office of Policy where the idea for creating the Institute was born. We now report to the Office of Disability and Income Security Programs, where we continue to evolve into a meaningful source of quality, policy-related, research that will impact Americans with disabilities in the 21st century.

After the initial two years of funding, we now have research findings and reports that we are disseminating through our website, newsletters and working papers. We strongly encourage you to read our materials which are available upon request and to visit our web site on a regular basis to stay abreast of the latest research information.

Tanya M. Gallagher, Ph.D. - DRI Scientific Director and Co-Principal Investigator

Chrisann Schiro-Geist, Ph.D. - DRI Managing Director and Co-Principal Investigator ◆

Visit the DRI Web Site at <http://www.als.uiuc.edu/dri>

We welcome you to the DRI web site where you will find more information about DRI research projects, our staff and affiliate partners, as well as web links related to disability research.

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