

The Interface of Employment,
Health, Family Support, and Human
Services for Persons with
Psychiatric Disabilities

Funded by the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center

Linda E. Jensen RN PhD, Associate Professor
Clarkson College

jensenlinda@clarksoncollege.edu

Jeff Willett PhD

Expanded with assistance of grad students from UNMC
CON:

Purpose



1. Investigate experiences of persons with diverse range of disabilities who had been or were currently engaged in competitive employment to determine common problems they experience with finding and maintaining employment

Purpose

2. To formulate recommendations to increase the number of persons with disabilities successfully employed



Qualitative Design

Semi structured interview guide covering specific categories of demographics, disability, family and friends, work history, use of services, health and quality of life.

Interviews lasted 1-2 hours, were audiotaped

Interviews in private setting (home or office)



Sample



- Purposeful recruitment of:
- Participants with diverse range of disabilities and characteristics including: physical, psychiatric, cognitive, sensory, and/or developmental disabilities,
- Diversity of gender, age, employment, experience, race, & ethnic origin

Consent

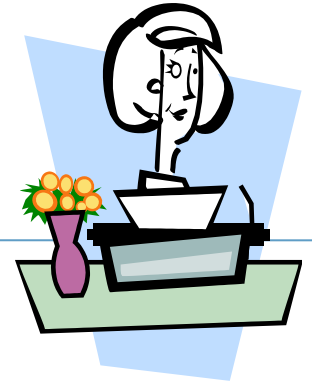


Participants encouraged to discuss study with family members.

Could bring family members with them to interview.

Proxy Consent forms signed by guardians


Data Analysis



Audio recordings transcribed by university research transcription service.

Nudist SR-6 used for content analysis

Coding methods

- Open Coding: breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, categorizing
 - Axial Coding: making connections between categories
 - Selective coding: selecting core categories, validating data relationships, refinement & development of themes
- 

Demographics


50% men, 50% women

Ages 24 to 60 year, Mean age=43

55% rural, 45% urban



Demographics

- Physical disabilities: quadriplegia, loss of limbs, arthritis
 - Sensory disabilities: blindness, deafness
 - Cognitive disabilities: brain injuries, developmental disabilities
 - Psychiatric disabilities
 - Co-morbid (multiple) disabilities
- 

Themes

Perceptions of Health

Interaction of Health and Employment

Ways to Maintain Health

Value of Family, Friends



Perceptions of Health

- Their “health was good.”
- “So, I’m a little higher risk than a normal person, but otherwise I feel fine.”
- Co-morbidities: debilitating problems: heart conditions, orthopedic problems, high blood pressure, thyroid problems, bowel & bladder problems, headaches, seizures, kidney failure, diabetes, obesity, hearing loss, respiratory problems, recurrent infections.



Depression

100% of subjects had struggled with depression,
but only 50% were treated for it.



Employment and Health

100% told of losing full time jobs because they developed additional health problems due to the stress of a full time job and struggling with the demands of a serious disability.

Most felt work was important to them and worth the strain on their health



Barriers to Employment

Need time away from employment due to medical appointments, hospitalization, and frequent relapse

Need additional training for suitable job.

Job coaching needed


Need to start out working part time.

Need understanding employer


“Medications make me tired, can’t concentrate for long periods.”




Barriers to Employment

- Stigma and discrimination.
 - Frustrations with Government policies
“If I go back to work, will lose Medicare, Medicaid, and other benefits.”
 - A struggle to stay well enough to work.
- 


Ways to Stay Healthy

- Memory books, journals
 - Stay as independent as possible
 - Vitamins & healthy diet
 - Rest and sleep
 - Exercise
 - Stress reduction strategies
 - Counseling
- 


Ways to Stay Healthy

- Medications, exercise, Physical Therapy
 - Most had struggled with depression, and several continued to take medications.
 - Family assistance very important.
 - Personal care attendants
- 


Barriers to Health

- Physicians need to look beyond the disability and assess the whole person
 - Importance of Health promotion, physical fitness, assessment of adverse side effects
 - Frustrations of Insurance and Medicaid not covering some services or medications.
 - All participants had struggled to find and access services.
- 


Value of Family & Friends

- Couldn't work or exist without Family or friends.
 - Family can be overprotective, keep me from trying
 - Some families gave up on helping them.
 - Friends very important for relaxation
- 

Practice Implications

- Need to examine the whole person: physical, mental, family support, and services available
 - Need to have more health promotion programs for people with disabilities.
 - Need more support groups, information about dealing with everyday life, and referral to services. Medical homes
- 

Research Implications

- More study with specialty areas such as Individuals with Mental Illnesses and other physical disabilities.
 - More study with various populations such as soldiers returning from war, young mothers, family members, others
 - More study of successful coping strategies, and case management techniques.
- 

QUESTIONS?

