



VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION MONTHLY

USING COMPREHENSIVE JOB DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS TO FACILITATE SUCCESSFUL JOB PLACEMENT AND RETENTION.

The subjectivity of the phrase “job placement” has been historically debated by academics and professionals alike. Over how long of an employment period must be established in order to classify as “job placement” can be defined differently depending on the perspective or the agency compiling the statistics. Research studies have shown that even job placement statistics may misrepresent the actual number of people who remain working after initially returning to work following an injury.

Simply put, “job placement” is typically interpreted as achieving the intended vocational rehabilitation goal of the injured party returning to work. It is generally perceived as the final result of a multitude of rehabilitation services which were provided to the worker over a period of time. It is also assumed that the worker has again achieved an ability to earn wages in the economy. And while “job placement” receives the brunt of attention, “job retention” issues lag behind.

The question then becomes, what can vocational rehabilitation counselors do to facilitate the job retention of persons with injuries who have recently returned to the workplace?

Job retention begins with job readiness. As referred to in earlier newsletters, comprehensive job development programs begin with proper assessment. Once this has been achieved, bringing the injured party to a job-ready state is equally as important. This process may be referred to as “job readiness”.

As a component of job development, job readiness training is a comprehensive program used to facilitate disadvantaged and injured workers into a job-ready status. It employs a variety of workshops, counseling sessions, and exercises to improve one’s employability specifically within his or her own labor market area. It focuses on labor market education and understanding as key components of job preparation, in addition to the tangible aspects of job hunting such as, proper dress and attire and resume writing.

Many times, rehabilitation counselors are faced with clients who are unable to return to their original occupation due the nature or severity of their injury. They have had little or no reason to consider additional career interests, or even how to look for work within their labor market. It is also not uncommon for persons who have been displaced from employment to have an inaccurate understanding of the employment characteristics for their surrounding area. Most often, they are unaware of the jobs that are in-demand and for which employers are heavily recruiting. Gaining this understanding and knowledge can aid the worker in identifying occupational areas of interest which are attractive, thus improving the probability job retention over time.

Job readiness training is also a useful tool in assessing a persons willingness, motivation, and desire to return to work. The multitude of exercises and sessions where counselors are able to work hands-on with clients allows them to gain an accurate understanding of the persons job readiness. The interactive counseling environment promotes continuous feedback from the injured worker and is useful in job coaching and mentoring, a useful and common component of many job development programs.

While the ultimate goal of vocational rehabilitation service focuses on facilitating successful job placement, there also should be a substantial effort made to help improve and predict rates of job retention.