**RESEARCH SUMMARY**

# Understanding Employers’ Hiring Intentions in Relation to Qualified Workers with Disabilities: Preliminary Findings

## A Quick Look

In the profession of rehabilitation counseling, it is important to understand how employers feel about hiring and managing qualified workers with disabilities. This study conducted three semi-structured focus groups with key hiring decision makers from small, medium, and large sized companies to get a sense of their beliefs, normative influences, and perceived control relative to hiring workers with disabilities.

## Key Findings

* Previous research shows that employers generally have a positive attitude toward hiring people with disabilities. But when pressed specifically about hiring, they seem to become more reluctant.

**From small-sized company focus groups:**

* Had the widest range of concerns: risk aversion to hiring people with disabilities; fears of litigation; loss of revenue; difficulties implementing accommodations; lack of contact by VR agencies.
* Despite concerns they were altruistic and empathetic toward hiring workers with disabilities.

**From medium-sized company focus groups:**

* Concerned about line managers and coworkers being accepting and accommodating of workers with disabilities.
* Felt that employees with disabilities were less qualified.

**From large-sized company focus groups:**

* Biggest concerns were lack of efficiency in contact with VR agencies.
* Of all concerns profiled across all focus groups, the lack of VR professionals’ visibility as a hiring resource was the most common and “most troubling”.

## Putting It Into Practice

* Results from this study help inform professionals on areas to target in developing effective interventions.
* Education interventions can be delivered to employers on topics such as tax credit, information on worksite accommodations, and sensitivity training.
* It seems that VR agencies have some room for improvement in communicating and collaborating with employers--particularly in regard to marketing their services and outreach.
* Results of this study also reveal that small, medium, and large-sized companies have different feelings and needs in regard to hiring people with disabilities, thus interventions and marketing efforts can be tailored to specific companies/organizations based on their size.

## Learn More

Narratives were taken from the three focus groups (6 participants in the small-sized company group, 8 participants in the medium-sized company group, and 6 participants in the large-sized company group) and themes were developed based on statements from the discussions, and then statements were assigned to themes. Narrative data that was obtained from the focus groups were examined and categorized according to the Theory of Planned Behavior- and thus, the themes extracted from the focus groups fell into categories of behavioral beliefs, control beliefs, or normative beliefs.

* Download the [Disability Sensitivity Guide (pdf)](https://www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/supplemental-guide-sensitivity.pdf)
* Article on how VR agencies can better engage with employers: Fraser, R. T. (2008). Successfully engaging the business community in the vocational rehabilitation placement process. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 28,* 115-120.

## Source

Fraser, R., Ajzen, I., Johnson, K., and Hebert, J. (2011)**.** Understanding employers’ hiring intention in relation to qualified workers with disabilities. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation,* 35, 1-11. DOI: 10.3233/JVR-2011-0548e.

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