Workplace Accommodation Use for Individuals with Mental Function Limitations

A segment from the NARRTC 2011 presentation:
Update from the RERC on Workplace Accommodations
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Purpose

To examine the relationships between functional ability, job requirements, and characteristics of accommodation use.

Presentation Focus:
Accommodation used by those with different mental function impairments across age groups.
Why Investigate Age?

• The workforce is Aging
  – In 2012, 19% of all employees will be 55 or older¹

• Age is Highest Predictor of Disability
  – About 30% of those 65-74 have a disability²

Methods

• Survey relating characteristics of the individual to the accommodation
  – Administered dominantly electronically
  – Marketed through consumer lists, national publication lists, social networking venues.
  – Inclusion Criteria:
    • Individual has 1 or more functional limitations
    • Individual is currently employed or volunteers
Job Characteristics

- EEOC Categorization
- Relationship to Employer
- Location of Work
- Pay Rate and Hours/wk
Functional Limitations

Broad functional limitation categories were selected from the ICF and further delineated by specific activities.

Example: Mental Function Impairment
“I have difficulty taking in or processing information.”
Accommodations

- Accommodations divided into 4 categories
  - Universal features
  - Adaptations
  - Help or Assistance
  - Assistive Technology
Satisfaction, Importance, Frequency

- Recorded for each accommodation individually.
- Instrument was nominal Likert scale for each construct.
Population Demographics

373 individuals responded to the survey, of which 80 reported impairment with mental function.

61% Female; 29% under the age 55

Race:
• 1% African
• 5% Native American
• 90% Caucasian
• 3% multi-racial

Ethnicity: 90% non-Hispanic
Population Demographics

Educational Background

- Some High School / Diploma: 13%
- Some College / Associates Degree: 25%
- Bachelors Degree: 34%
- Master’s Degree: 22%
- Ph.D. / Professional Degree: 5%
## Population Job Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One full-time</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One part-time</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Jobs</td>
<td>21%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self – Employed</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>9%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Population – EEOC Job Category

- Professionals: 24%
- Service workers: 33%
- Managers: 11%
- Clerical: 11%
- Sales: 5%
- Technicians: 11%
- Craft workers: 2%
- Laborers: 3%
Population – Location of Work

- Same place: 64%
- Split: 10%
- Different places daily: 15%
- Home: 11%
Reported Limitation Group

- receiving / processing information: 35%
- mental health / behavioral: 24%
- learning disability: 15%
- memory: 26%
Additional Limitations

Older workers with mental function limitation have MORE limitations than younger workers.

Older workers average 2.8 limitations
Younger workers average 2.1 limitations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Under age 55</th>
<th>Over age 55</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Extremity</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Commonly-Used Accommodations

Top Accommodations
• Memory Aids
• Adjustable Schedule
• Co-Worker Help
• Flexible Schedule
• Different Work Area

Top AT Accommodations
• Memory Aids
• Reading Devices
• Modified Work Surface
• Wayfinding Tools
A WORD ON STATISTICAL ANALYSIS
Accommodation Use Described by Limitation Group

- **adj work schedules**
  - mental health/behavioral
  - learning disability
  - memory
  - receiving / processing information
- **co-worker help**
- **different work areas**
- **flexible schedules**
- **memory aids**
Satisfaction with Accommodations

Respondents were generally satisfied with
- Adjustable & flexible schedules
- Different work areas

Respondents were NEUTRAL about co-worker help and memory aids.
Perceived Importance of Accommodations

All accommodations were rated at least “important” by the whole group

• Age group strongly influenced Co-worker Help (P<0.01)

• Type of Limitation strongly influenced Different Work Area (P < 0.05)
Frequency of Use of Accommodations

Most accommodations were used “frequently” or “always”

• Age group had an influence on frequency of use of Coworker Help ($p = 0.06$)
Unmet Needs

35% Reported Unmet Needs

- Quieter work area (6%)
- Accommodation Requests Rejected (5%)
- More Coworker Understanding (4%)
Conclusions

• Workers with mental function impairment average more limitations than other groups
  – older workers average more limitations than younger workers

• Assistive technology is not meeting the needs of this population.

• A large percentage of the population reports unmet needs
Study limitations

- Respondent pool is limited
- Preliminary analysis
Thank you

This research was conducted as part of the RERC on Workplace Accommodations, which is supported by Grant H133E070026 of the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research of the U.S. Department of Education. The opinions contained in this publication are those of the grantee and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of Education.