



CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES

PREVENTION OF DIMINISHED HEALTH OF VULNERABLE POPULATIONS IN AN ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

During an economic downturn, people with disabilities and vulnerable people should be considered for public sector work with accommodations and needed human supports to prevent diminished health and disability.

A forum was held by the Urban Institute on “Help Wanted: Mitigating the Recession’s Toll on the Workers Most at Risk.” Presenters at the forum were staff from the Urban Institute, a labor economist, and researchers on the economic condition of the elderly and persons released from prisons attempting to gain employment for self-sufficiency.

Summary

The issue was raised of revisiting programs like the “Comprehensive Employment Training Act” (CETA) as a vehicle for providing jobs for workers at risk. Employment training of vulnerable populations is effective when specific tasks of particular jobs are defined, followed by training to meet the demands of specific job skills. On the other hand, job searches, performed mostly on one’s own after training, have not been successful for vulnerable populations. For instance, approximately 20% of the potential 40 million working age people with disability are employed and 10% are working full time for the full year.

Disability Prevention Issues

The political focus is now on saving the middle class through employment in the private sector. There are arguments that there is a need for job creation through the public sector that can accommodate a vulnerable workforce via programs that serve the public (such as CETA). It may be desirable to subsidize acquisition of particular jobs with training, health care, nutrition benefits and other public health programs to prevent diminished health that can lead to disability.

Intervention

A letter was written to a participant of the forum to comment on CETA as a vehicle for providing meaningful jobs in the community to stabilize economic downturns with implications for vulnerable populations, such as people with disabilities, from a public health perspective.

Recommendation

“Most at-risk populations” who are vulnerable to economic downturns should be trained with skills for a public, reserved set of jobs commensurate with their abilities. These jobs should be accompanied by public health services to meet their basic human needs.