



CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES

UNEMPLOYMENT, LOW WAGES, AND INADEQUATE HEALTH CARE CAN LEAD TO DISABILITY

Persons with disability should be provided with secure employment and trained with skills commensurate with their abilities and acquire necessary supports to maintain health to prevent secondary disabling conditions.

A forum on “A New Safety Net for Working Families” was held at the Urban Institute. Presenters at the forum were a researcher from the Urban Institute on employment for low wage working families, a policy researcher from the Brookings Institution on poverty issues, and a national economic reporter from the Washington Post.

Summary

It was acknowledged that there are substantial numbers of persons with physical and mental impairments who face significant barriers to employment. Some suggested strategies to overcome these barriers were service-focused employment preparation, employer subsidized employment, financial incentives to encourage work, and treatment management programs. These initiatives may be beneficial for some people with disabilities. However, the strategy that has been effective is employment placement in set-a-side secure jobs with training to perform to standards of tasks of specifically designed jobs. More general, non-specific education has proven to be of questionable value for people with disabilities to improve work opportunities. While a college education may improve employment opportunity, the Urban Institute data reveals that over 60% of persons of the general population with a college education work at less than 200% of poverty.

Disability Prevention Issue

There are 30 million working age people with disabilities and only approximately 12 million with disability health benefits. Nine percent of working age people with disabilities work full time, all of the time. There are 40% to 65% of the people with disabilities who work do so at sub-poverty wages, most without adequate health insurance. Thus, there may be as many as 15 million working age persons with disabilities who may not have disability or employment health insurance. Persons with poor health and disability, who have inadequate, timely health insurance all of the time are at jeopardy of diminished health that may lead to secondary disabling conditions.

Intervention

A letter was written to an employment policy researcher to comment on the safety net with implications for people with disability's access to health insurance through employment.

Recommendation

Persons with disability should be provided with secure employment and trained skills commensurate with their abilities with necessary supports that include adequate health insurance to prevent secondary disabling conditions.