

Collaboration Strategies Between the Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living Services for People with Disabilities

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Abstract The concept of the Independent Living (IL) movement has been affected on recent disability public policy to enhance the right of consumers with disabilities, as well as to eliminate the barriers on employment. The IL movement emphasizes the empowerment and autonomy of consumer with disabilities to achieve their rights in educational, social, and employ environment. This paper presents three vocational rehabilitation(VR) services that affect consumers with disabilities based on the values of the Independent Living movement, and recommend some practical strategies. These VR services include the collaboration projects between the VR agencies and Independent Living Centers, the intervention programs to enhance the self determination or informed choice as a consumer, and the projects to strengthen the relationship between consumers with disabilities and their service providers.

Key Words : People with Disabilities, Vocational Rehabilitation, Independent Living Movement, Collaboration Strategies, Disability Policy

요 약 자립생활(IL)운동은 장애인의 권리를 신장시키고 세부영역으로는 고용상 장벽을 제거하기 위한 다양한 장애인관련 정책에 영향을 미쳤다. IL운동은 장애인들이 교육적, 사회적, 고용 환경상 그들의 권리를 쟁취시키기 위한 소비자로서의 자율권과 역량강화를 강조한다. 본 연구는 IL운동의 가치에 기초하여 장애인에게 영향을 미친 세 가지 직업재활(VR) 서비스를 제시하였다. 이 서비스들은 직업재활기관과 자립생활센터 간 연계 프로젝트, 그리고 소비자로서의 자기결정권 혹은 정보 제공된 선택권을 향상시키는 중재 프로그램들, 마지막으로 소비자와 실무자간 관계를 강화시키기 위한 프로젝트들을 포함하였다. 그리고 본 연구는 장애인의 권리신장과 IL운동 기초에 입각하여 장애인고용을 향상시킬 수 있는 몇 가지 방안을 제안하였다.

주제어 : 장애인, 직업재활, 자립생활운동, 연계 전략, 장애인 정책

1. Introduction

The independent living (IL) movement began in 1973 and the Berkeley center of independent living for people with severe disabilities was first operated. Since then, over the past 45 years, the IL movement has

increasingly expanded as a new paradigm of disability to the world. Until the early 1970's, the medical model regarded the disability as a personal matter, that is the source of problems experienced by people with disabilities, whereas the minority model promoted by the IL activities viewed of it as the source of social

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Received September 19, 2018

Accepted October 20, 2018

Revised October 2, 2018

Published October 31, 2018

problems toward them[1,2]. Like other social minority groups, people with disabilities have been systematically discriminated due to their disabilities[2-8].

The IL activists have been enormous bringing about the fundamental changes in the lives of people with disabilities[3]. Moreover, IL activists performed the major role in the passage of the most anti-discrimination law in disability[9]. These disability civil rights acts would contribute to eliminate the majority of social and environmental barriers against people with severe disabilities. However, people with severe disabilities requires more services to be integrated into society with equal opportunities equal rights[10].

Since started the IL movement, their tireless efforts of IL activists have significantly influenced in transforming the already existing long-term care policies and programs in the US, which were strongly institution-biased[11].

The IL activists have been performing in various activities such as advocacy, demonstration, and lobbying to policy makers in order to force the policy maker and government[12]. They also have been advocating in deinstitutionalization which to intermediate into home and community from facilities. The Home and community based services could purchase their services according to their choices and preferences[11,12]. The outcome of all these IL activists' efforts has made it possible for many people with severe disabilities to live in their home and community now rather than in facilities.

The IL movement has drastically changed the lives of many people with disabilities. Also, many of the principles of the independent living movement have affected public policy[13], as well as vocational rehabilitation (VR) services. However, studies related to collaboration strategy between the IL movement and VR service are rare. Therefore, this paper presents some IL philosophies and values affected vocational rehabilitation services and provides several recommendations to secure the rights of consumers

with disabilities utilizing these VR services.

2. Issues in VR Services based on IL Values and Recommendations

The IL movement can be involved in civil rights movement of individuals with severe disabilities who have been excluded from rehabilitation services. In the meantime, the IL movement made a great effort to access in social service, employment, education, transportation, and information etc. After emerged the IL movement, self determination or informed choices, the key values of the IL movement, has been broadly accepted as an important concept to enhance consumer satisfaction and service outcomes for people with severe disabilities in disability public policy[14], as well as rehabilitation services[15,16] and VR services[17-20]. Moreover the significant values have influenced social perception to eliminate many of the barriers to employment for people with disabilities[21].

2.1 Issue 1: Collaboration between the VR agencies and ILCs

One of the emerging new issues in vocational rehabilitation services based on IL values is the collaboration between VR agencies and Centers for Independent Living (CILs). For instance, collaborations might occur in which CILs provide training for independent living skills, home accessibility, or assistive technology, while the VR agency offers job training and vocational evaluation services for people with severe disabilities to achieve their vocational goals. However, there have been difficulties in the collaboration process between VR agencies and CILs.

2.1.1 Recommendations

To maximize the effect of the collaboration,

- VR staff should increase their understanding of IL philosophy through a structured training program or workshop, etc.

- VR staff should work in partnership with IL staff to produce more positive employment outcomes for their customers with disabilities.
- VR and IL staff should participate actively in the decision making process in team meetings.

This collaboration between VR agencies and CILs would be emphasized as a program to increase the employment of people with more severely disabilities who have been neglected by other VR services. To increase the efficiency of VR service, this point may sometimes be missed during collaborations.

- VR staff, in collaboration with IL staff, should provide educational programs for potential employers as well as current employers of people with disabilities to change their negative attitudes toward people with disabilities.

2.2 Programs to enhance consumer self-determination or informed-choice

Another issue is intervention or programs to increase self-determination or informed choice for people with disabilities. Self-determination has been defined as the capacity to exert control over and select the course of one's life and employment [9]. Particularly, people with severe disabilities are often unemployed, resulting in financial dependence [17].

2.2.1 Recommendations

To support employment, job coaches would have the opportunities for effective training conducted to enhance the self-determination or informed-choice of their customers with disabilities. This may be accomplished by communicating job preferences and needs, as well as monitoring and evaluating the task progress of their customers with severe disabilities.

- VR agencies should aim to increase informed choice for customers with disabilities throughout the VR services process to improve their empowerment and opportunities for independent choice.
- VR staff should conduct customer satisfaction

surveys regularly to satisfy the unmet needs of consumers with disabilities using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

- The rehabilitation educators and researchers should develop strategies and programs to increase the self-determination of people with developmental disabilities and mental illness who have been not considered as independent persons in decision making processes.

2.3 Involvement and partnership between counselor and consumer with disability

Final issue in the vocational rehabilitation in this paper is the consumer involvement or partnership between consumers with disabilities and service providers. The issues of consumerism such as consumer involvement or the partnership is a key value of the IL movement to be considering in the VR[23].

The Ability Center launched on the initial IL stage in 1970's identified consumerism as consumerism is the person buying or using the service or product decides what is best for themselves[22], and Rubin and Roessler defined that consumerism in independent living is controlled over the services provided to people with disabilities[24].

The IL movement has emphasized consumer involvement or partnership between consumer with disabilities and their service providers in the process of program decision making. It is significant that the consumers with disabilities are considered as equal partners with service providers in the process of service delivery. Regarding the participation of consumers with disabilities in the VR service procedure, service providers in VR agencies agreed that the participation of consumers with disabilities can be made better service outcome in VR program implementation[25,26]. However, even through most of service providers support the consumer involvement to increase VR outcome, it is substantially not easy to achieving this relationship [23,27].

To enhancing consumer involvement and

partnership between consumers with disabilities and service providers in the VR services, several strategies have been investigated in the process of VR assessment[28], and counseling[23,29].

2.3.1 Recommendations

- The VR staffs would consider consumer with disabilities and their family members as partners actively in the process of the service delivery.
- The VR agencies would assist their consumers in self supporting program that consumer with disabilities in employment is designed to support emotionally to provide some information to other people with disabilities who are looking for jobs.
- The VR agencies would encourage empowerment of consumers with disabilities through self employment.

3. Conclusion

Current VR services have been modified to adopt strategies and programs that enhance the values of the IL movement such as consumer involvement, informed choice, or self-determination.

However, there are still many things that require changing to eliminate the barriers against disability employment. Similar to the tireless effort by IL activists since the initiation of the IL movement, current disability activists should fight against emotional and social barriers that limit the rights of people with disabilities. Recommendations regarding VR services are provided based on the conceptions of the IL movement. In a future study, the recommendations will be specified and detailed to secure the rights of people with disabilities with respect to employment.

In addition, this paper states about the misnamed term, "Independent Living" at the personal points of view. The core philosophical and conceptual elements of IL movement have been misinterpreted and distorted

with the IL movement. It used to be regard as if it were just small scale self-help efforts by people with severe disabilities to become economically self-sufficient on their own. Moreover some ones with and without disabilities have considered the IL movement as a resistance action of rehabilitation services provided by the professionals.

In substance, there is a false aura about "In-dependence." No one is truly independent including people without disabilities. Everybody is all Inter-dependent. Therefore the independent living paradigm is misnamed. For instance, although people without disabilities do many things for themselves, they don't build roads or schools, grow food, perform surgery on ourselves, raise armies, or a million other things. People without disabilities as well as one without disabilities depend on governments, people, and other entities to do these things for them. Governments depend on people in their society to perform their duties as citizens, and to make contributions to society. We are all, with disabilities or without, inter-dependent on each other for some things in today's society.

Therefore "Inter-dependent living " would consists in two difference concepts: one is everybody would do to create a system in which everyone not only realizes his or her reliance on others, but realizes and maximizes his or her contribution to society. Overall, however, nothing could be further from the intention of original IL movement, which was the security of basic civil rights of people with disabilities than these kinds of misconceptions of the IL movement. To live independently, persons with severe disabilities are greatly dependent on the availability of both person change and environmental change services.

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