

Disability and Poverty: *Improving US Anti-Poverty Policy with a Disability Lens*

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Poverty and Disability

Who Are We Talking About?

- -public benefit recipients
- -marginally employed or unemployed and at-risk of poverty

Work as Anti-Poverty Policy

- Promotion of work as a critical way out of poverty
- Employment rates of PWD about half
- US anti-poverty policy increasingly work-focused

Not just work alone....

- “maximum economic self-sufficiency at a reasonable standard of living”
- Long-term income support system necessary - requires benefit adequacy
- Work supports important
- Wage/income supplementation for low-wage and/or part-time workers

Income targeted Benefits

- Food stamps (SNAP)
- SSI
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Earned Income Tax Credit

Effective in reducing poverty

Public Disability Benefits Policy

- “Poverty Trap”
 - Improve work incentives
 - Adequacy of benefits – many still in poverty

Not Eligible for SSI

- EITC biggest \$ program- limited for childless, target disability
- TANF small but instructive
 - Incentives for work & mandates
 - More difficult access/temporary → not serving those in need
 - Struggles w/ how to support work
 - Cost of investing in work & supports
 - Lack of available support systems – particularly mental health

Policies to Invest in Work Capacity

- Current Low education levels
- Employment and training
 - Workforce Investment Act (WIA)/ VR
 - Issues w/ focus on low-wage workers
 - Efficacy of programs – limited evaluation
 - Even positive results – earnings remain low due to low wages and low hours
- Improve education outcomes
 - college attendance/retention

Policy Changes to Support Work

- Paid Leave
- Health Insurance
- Accommodations
- Anti-discrimination

Policy to Support Workers at Onset of Disability and Avoid Poverty

- At later ages harder to continue work
poverty doubles after onset of disability among
51 to 64
- Unemployment Insurance reform
TDI, partial benefits
- Remaining attached to work
Solutions for less-skilled workers

Conclusions

- Work is a clear goal toward promoting higher living standards and a focus of much of US poverty policy
- Appropriate incentives, investments, and supports for work among persons with disability are not in place
- Income Support or supplementation given work capacities needs to be addressed