
Disability and Vocational Rehabilitation in Rural Settings

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Editors

Disability and Vocational Rehabilitation in Rural Settings

Challenges to Service Delivery

 Springer

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ISBN 978-3-319-64785-2 ISBN 978-3-319-64786-9 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-64786-9

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017955366

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Printed on acid-free paper

This Springer imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Foreword

Disability and Vocational Rehabilitation in Rural Settings is an exceptionally timely, unique, and comprehensive body of work that was created to ultimately help persons with disabilities and their family members living in underserved and rural geographic areas of the United States as well as internationally. This text brings renewed interest to the complex interplay of the unique cultural differences that challenge persons with disabilities who are disadvantaged on so many different levels politically and economically, especially in mental and physical healthcare, accessibility to services, and government entitlement programs that assist individuals and families transitioning in and out of poverty. Counselor educators and researchers, preprofessional rehabilitation counselors, and others in the related counseling professions will easily recognize this material as a highly respected body of work. Clearly, this text has been handcrafted by a group of expert authors that have a unique point of view to offer the rehabilitation counseling and related counseling professions.

Indeed, this text brings new meaning to older constructs such as the “war on poverty” and “health disparities.” This authoritative source enhances the renewed interest in the complex interplay of issues related to poverty and how this cycle involves multiple dimensions such as social, cultural, familial, and economic. Today, the consequence and impact of poverty on vulnerable populations is far-reaching and multidimensional. Poverty in rural America transcends individuals’ mental and physical health conditions, educational and career opportunities, financial stability, and many other life areas which impacts everyone.

One of the unique aspects this comprehensive body of work offers is the careful attention given to the widespread problem of poverty in vulnerable populations, within different cultural groups in the United States as well as internationally. Moreover, this work extends beyond a “statement of the problem” approach. It offers guidelines and solutions for increasing coping and resiliency skills, capacity building, and educational training approaches that have shown to positively impact rural communities and groups of individuals with disabilities.

The effects of poverty are most harmful to those most vulnerable which overpoweringly include children, older adults, and people with disabilities. The condition of poverty is particularly worrisome for persons with disabilities where almost 22% live in poverty, compared to 13% of those without disabilities. Persons with chronic and persistent health conditions require greater financial support and access to healthcare than those without such

financial constraints or healthcare issues. This body of work makes it clear that the implication for living in poverty, particularly in rural and underserved areas geographically, is that one is at risk in so many different life areas. Overall, the devastating consequences of poverty itself may be reflected in poverty of the mind, body, and spirit.

Disability and Vocational Rehabilitation in Rural Settings is extraordinary because it offers much more than a review of the literature and discussion of issues related to poverty and social justice. Such limited constructs do not translate well into our twenty-first-century political and economic environments. Thus, readers will find that the material is comprehensive in nature, practical, and particularly functional for counselor educators, researchers, practitioners, as well as preprofessional counselors in the helping professions. It offers a very close, up-front, personal, and experiential account of the problems and solutions for rehabilitation counselors and other related helping professions providing services to persons with disabilities in rural settings. The expert authors who embody this work understand the critical mass that impacts persons in poverty from the medical, physical, vocational, psychosocial, emotional, spiritual, and cultural perspective.

One of the most valuable lessons offered in *Disability and Vocational Rehabilitation in Rural Settings* highlights the delicate balance of providing services that are both culturally sensitive and culturally appropriate yet can be offered within the boundaries of certain governmental programs and policies that determine eligibility and assistance. The chapters in this unique work provide an in-depth discussion that can be used as a primary resource to educate, inform, and advocate reality-based, solution-focused, and culturally relevant approaches rooted in cultural empathy.

I started my own career at a community-based rehabilitation center (sheltered workshop) around 1979 in Murphysboro, IL, a small rural town in Southern Illinois close to the border of Kentucky and Missouri. Besides doing work adjustment training, job placement activities, and job coaching with these clients, I also drove the bus to pick them up for work in the morning and drop them off at the end of the day. I really got to know their family members and the psychosocial challenges of individuals with mental and physical disabilities living in rural America. This was my introduction to working with people who had a variety of medical, physical, developmental, neurocognitive, psychiatric, and chronic health conditions that were disabling. I remembered this as a very rewarding opportunity that helped launch my career, which has spanned over 30 years. Metaphorically, driving the “short bus” placed me in the position of leadership, guiding people to find their way through work, education, and career opportunities and then independent or support living arrangements. I have learned some valuable lessons living and working in this small rural community because it reflected the content in this volume. This work provides a valuable resource to the reader that reflects my own experiences working with “salt-of-the-earth” people who have come from humble beginnings.

Overall, I found *Disability and Vocational Rehabilitation in Rural Settings* to be well written, organized in a clear and concise manner, and presented in a well-informed and balanced way. This is a valuable resource

for counselor educators, researchers, and preprofessional counselors alike. It is an authoritative resource for practitioners who care about serving persons with disabilities and others vulnerable to the conditions and experiences of poverty.

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Preface

As editors of this book, Noel, Malachy, Allison, and I have over 45 years of combined experience in education, research, and service delivery in rehabilitation, disability, social justice, and social services. As faculty members in rehabilitation counseling education programs, we were looking for a book on rural rehabilitation and discovered a 1999 edition as the most current. The United States and other countries are nations of primarily rural landmass; therefore, understanding the challenges of rural residents with disabilities in these regions is important in service delivery, education and training, research, and funding and policy development. In addition to areas in which the terms rural, frontier, territory, and remote regions are identified specifically in chapters, throughout this book, the term rural is used as an umbrella term that is inclusive of all others. Our goal for this book is to discuss both challenges and strengths of rural life. We acknowledge the diversity and complexity of rural regions, but they share some common characteristics.

Our 38 chapters cover the following topics pertaining to disabilities in rural communities: economic development; poverty; transportation, accessibility, and accommodation; technology; healthcare; ethical practice and dual relationships; resilience and strengths; military personnel; marginalized racial and ethnic adults and cultural competence and social justice; adolescents and transition students; offender populations; American Indians; agricultural, farm, and immigrant workers; sensory impairments; international perspectives from Africa, Asia-Pacific region, Australasia, Canada, Mexico, India, Turkey, Colombia, and the United Kingdom; multiple sclerosis; substance-related and addictive disorders; Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; impact of the Americans with Disabilities Act; forensic vocational rehabilitation; climate and weather; developing personnel through online learning; recruiting and retaining rehabilitation counselors in rural communities; capacity building and collaboration; volunteers and paraprofessionals; and research and evidence-based practices. Our comprehensive text recognizes the challenges faced by vocational rehabilitation, like other human service providers in rural communities, which are well documented.

Our text provides a perspective to rethink the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services in rural areas. A unique feature is that authors of individual chapters represent an array of diverse backgrounds and expertise, including doctoral students in rehabilitation counseling. The inclusion of an international perspective adds to the understanding of globalization of disabilities in rural areas.

We do not present this text as inclusive of all aspects that impact rural communities, but rather, we hope that it will be an important contribution to the existing literature as well as a response to the contextualization of rural rehabilitation service, practice, policy, and research. Our desire is for this text to serve as a practical and reliable resource for those studying and teaching and for those involved in vocational rehabilitation and other human and social service delivery. Similarly, policy and decision-makers, advocates, community leaders, families, and persons with disabilities themselves may benefit from this text.

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Amy D. Spriggs, PhD is an associate professor of special education at the University of Kentucky. She received her bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees in special education from the University of Georgia. She teaches classes in methods, assessment, and research for individuals with moderate to severe disabilities at the undergraduate and graduate level. Each spring, Amy leads a service learning trip to a small rural village in Southern India. There, she partners with interdisciplinary teams of parents, teachers, therapists, doctors, and students to assess children and adolescents with various disabilities. The team works together to create intervention plans for the special education school, home, community, specialized programs, and the general education school, as appropriate. Amy spends time each year training the staff for sustainable implementation of interventions.

Matthew E. Sprong, PhD is an assistant professor in the Rehabilitation Counseling and Rehabilitation Services program at Northern Illinois University. His primary areas of research include public and private sector rehabilitation counseling service delivery, substance abuse and addictive behaviors, and disability equity and post-secondary education.

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Sara VanLooy, BA has worked at YTI since 1999 as an administrative assistant and publications assistant, providing research, editing, administrative, and writing support on numerous projects. She currently provides research and editorial support to the YTI research team and to the Employer Practices Rehabilitation Research and Training Center Grant.

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Thomas Young is the Jim and Suzanne Elliott & Family professor of pediatrics at the University of Kentucky. He is the founder and serves as chair of Shoulder to Shoulder Global (STSG) at the UK. STSG operates a health center in Ecuador; partners in the children with special needs center in Mayasandra, India; and leads service learning trips to both countries. He has been participating in the Mayasandra, India, project for 6 years and participated in the planning and implementation of this project. In pediatrics, his work is in general pediatrics, developmental and behavioral pediatrics, global health, and school health.