

# Return-to-work outcomes better for SSDI beneficiaries who use vocational rehab services

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Researchers have published results of a study showing a relationship between enrollment in state vocational rehabilitation agency (SVRA) services and return-to-work outcomes for beneficiaries of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). Employment outcomes were better among those who enrolled in SVRA services compared with beneficiaries who did not enroll for these services. The article, "Return to work of disability insurance beneficiaries who do and do not access state vocational rehabilitation agency services" appears in a special issue of the *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*. The authors are John O'Neill, PhD, of Kessler Foundation, Arif Mamun, PhD and Elizabeth Potamites, PhD, of Mathematica Policy Research. Fong Chan, PhD, of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Elizabeth da Silva Cordoso, PhD, of the City University of New York.

SVRAs provide services in every state and U.S. territory, supporting more than one million people annually. Effective delivery of SVRAs can reduce the cost of SSDI while helping individuals achieve their employment goals. This study examined SVRA services and employment outcomes among beneficiaries of SSDI. Researchers compared outcomes for beneficiaries who enrolled in SVRA (n=17,369) with a matched comparison group (n=17,369) that did not enroll for these services.

Data were examined for a 10-year period starting with their date of entry

into SSDI. Both groups were drawn from first-time beneficiaries aged 25 to 54 who entered SSDI in 2000. To assess the impact of timing of service and [employment outcomes](#), the SVRA group was subdivided into 6 subgroups by timing of application for services: before receiving DI award,

"Those who enrolled in SVRA services were more likely to achieve work milestones and did so at a higher rate," said Dr. O'Neill. "There was close association between timing of enrollment in SVRA and a concurrent uptick in achieving work milestones. This new information indicates that SVRA services help beneficiaries meet employment goals and achieve independent living. It also shows that provision of these services may be a means of reducing the costs of SSDI, currently more than \$2 billion each year."

There's more information to be gained through further research, according to Dr. O'Neill. Looking at earnings and taxes paid for Medicare and Social Security, for example, would provide a better understanding of long-term patterns of employment among users of SSDI and SVRA services.

**More information:** *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, [DOI: 10.1177/1044207315583900](https://doi.org/10.1177/1044207315583900)

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