Two Problems, One Solution: Early Intervention and Eligibility Determination

David Stapleton

Early Intervention Disability Demonstration Projects—Concepts for Action

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Two Problems

1. Workforce exit and SSDI entry for lack of access to timely employment support

2. SSDI eligibility determinations

- The connection:
  - A social insurance program based on an outdated concept of work disability—inability to work because of a medically determinable condition
  - Modern concept: other worker characteristics and the environment matter
One Solution

- Integrated early intervention and eligibility determination (IEE)
  - Preferably starts while attached to employer

Initial Assessment

- No support needed
- Employment support and continued assessment
- Fast track
  - SSDI
  - Work

Attempt unsuccessful
Why it solves both problems

- Consistent with the concept that non-medical characteristics and the environment matter
- Workers who can continue to work with assistance do so because medical, non-medical and environmental issues are addressed timely
- Failed good-faith efforts, with assistance, demonstrate to SSDI gatekeepers it is not feasible to address all issues
Reframes existing ideas

- Previous proposals include IEE systems
  - Social Security Advisory Board (2006)

- IEE Systems already exist in other contexts
  - Private disability insurers
  - Workers’ compensation
  - Other countries

- Reframed: A common solution for two problems that both stem from an outdated concept
Pieces of pilot IEE systems for SSDI already exist

- **State agencies**
  - Workforce development (American Job Centers)
  - Vocational rehabilitation
  - Disability determination system
  - Mental health
  - Medicaid/long-term services

- **Private sector**
  - Health, disability and employment service providers
  - Disability and workers’ compensation insurers and their vendors
  - Private health insurers
High risks to development without tests

Key test characteristics

- Adapt what we know to the SSDI context
- Well-designed, targeted outreach
  - Before application to SSDI
- No new burden on employers
- Invite, support and learn quickly from ground-up pilots
- Start small, build on success, abandon failure
References

Stapleton, David and Yonatan Ben-Shalom. “An integrated employment support and eligibility determination system,” in-progress book chapter under the McCrery-Pomeroy SSDI Solutions Initiatives, organized by the Center for a Responsible Federal Budget


Contact Information

David Stapleton
Center for Studying Disability Policy
Mathematica Policy Research
1100 1st Street NE, 12th Floor
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 484-4224

dstapleton@mathematica-mpr.com