**The Americans with Disabilities Act’s Impact on Vocational Rehabilitation Outcomes:**

**Findings from a Review of the Literature and Focus Group**

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction and Background

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) passed in 1990 to great fanfare. There were high hopes that “the shameful wall of exclusion” that had historically constrained the participation of people with disabilities in society would “finally come tumbling down” in major domains of life such as public accommodations, state and local government services and, most relevant to the topic at hand, employment (C-span, 2018). The ADA was intended to build upon the concepts and legislation inspired by the Civil Rights Movement, including the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibited discrimination against people with disabilities by entities that received federal funding (Gostin, 2015).

This quality improvement (QI) project undertaken on behalf of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB) seeks to answer the following question: What impact, if any, did enactment of the ADA have on the vocational rehabilitation (VR) outcomes of people who are blind or visually impaired? To answer this question, we conducted a review of the literature on this topic, supplemented by a focus group of MCB VR counselors.

In this literature review, we focus on the employment provisions of the ADA, which are contained in Title I. These provisions prohibit discrimination in employment against “qualified individuals with disabilities” by employers with 15 or more workers and require employers to make “reasonable accommodations” for disabled employees (Gostin, 2015; Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990). Enforcement of Title I was phased in, first becoming effective for employers with 25 or more employees two years after the ADA’s enactment in July of 1992, and then becoming effective for all employers with 15 or more employees in July of 1994, four years after the ADA’s enactment.

We organized our discussion according to the three main approaches used by researchers to address this question, including: 1) employment rates and wage disparities; 2) employer attitudes and practices, and 3) “empowerment” effects among people with disabilities themselves such as the filing of discrimination allegations with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Moss & Burris, 2007). In each section, we first describe the relevant research about the ADA’s impact on the disabled population as a whole, of which blind and visually impaired people are, of course, a part. We then describe the limited relevant research that focuses exclusively on people who are blind or visually impaired.

## Employment Rates and Wage Disparities

### Findings Regarding All People with Disablities

Studies on the impact of the ADA on employment rates of people with disabilities have yielded conflicting findings and generated significant controversy. Some studies suggest that the ADA has had a negative impact on employment (DeLeire, 2000; Acemoglu and Angrist, 2001; Jolls and Prescott, 2004). There have even been calls for repeal (Deleire, 2000). Others have found no significant effect (Beegle and Stock, 2003; Houtenville and Burkhauser, 2001; Jolls and Prescott, 2004). Yet other studies have shown an increase in employment among people with disabilities (Kruse and Schur, 2003; Armour, et al., 2016).

### Findings Regarding People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired

The same challenges posed by methodological differences in researchers’ estimates of the impact of the ADA on employment rates among the broader disabled population also complicate efforts to discern the ADA's impact on employment among people who are blind or visually impaired.

One of these studies showed an increase in the employment rate among blind and visually impaired people between 1997 and 2007 while the other showed a decrease in the employment rate between 2005 and 2012, which the author attributed largely to the impact of the Great Recession (Bell, 2010; Clapp, 2017).

A recent study by McDonnall and Sui (2019) showed that the employment rate for blind and visually impaired persons fell during the Great Recession, but then recovered and exceeded its previous level in 2016 and 2017. This study also showed that by 2017, the gap in employment rates between blind and visually impaired people and sighted people had begun to narrow. The results were consistent among several data sources, which was an improvement over previous studies.

## Employer Attitudes and Practices

### Findings Regarding All People with Disablities

The literature suggests that although employers have relatively positive attitudes towards people with disabilities generally, their attitudes towards disabled people in the role of worker are less favorable (Hernandez, 2000). On the other hand, attitudes toward workers placed by VR agencies tend to be positive as are attitudes of employers who had previous experiences with people with disabilities. Some studies show that employers tend to hold more positive attitudes toward people with physical or sensory (e.g., visual or hearing impairments) disabilities than toward those with psychiatric disabilities (Hernandez, 2000), but others show that employers have less positive attitudes specifically toward people who are blind (Unger, 2002; Gilbride, 2000).

In studies conducted in the early 2000s, Bruyere and colleagues found that federal employers were more familiar with disability accommodations than private employers and, in turn, that larger private employers were more knowledgeable than smaller employers. The researchers found that employers of all sizes were less familiar with the accommodations needed by people with visual or hearing impairments than with other types of accommodations (Bruyere, et al., 2006).

A more recent study which compared employers’ responses to fictional resumes attributed to disabled and nondisabled job applicants found that government entities and publicly held companies were significantly more likely to indicate interest in the disabled applicant than closely held companies, but not necessarily to call them in for an interview. The same patterns were seen among federal contractors (Ameri, 2015).

### Findings Regarding People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired

With respect to blind and visually impaired people specifically, recent studies demonstrated the persistence of a lack of understanding about hiring and accommodating these individuals. A 2012 survey of hiring managers commissioned by the National Industries for the Blind found that a majority of human resource managers thought that there were few jobs in their organizations that visually impaired people could perform and that it would be more expensive to hire someone with a visual impairment. However, responses from managers with personal experience with blind or visually impaired individuals were more positive, (Lynch, 2013; Repass & Associates, 2012).

Additional literature suggested that employers were significantly more likely to assume competence among sighted people than among those who are blind or visually impaired. Attitudes about the productivity of a blind employee were the strongest predictor of an employer’s intention to hire a blind or visually impaired person. Also key were employer’s perceptions about their companies’, supervisors’, and co-workers’ beliefs about hiring blind and visually impaired people (McDonnell & Lund, 2020. McDonnell & Antonelli, 2019; McDonnell & Antonelli, 2018).

These studies also shed light on the factors that mitigate these biases. McDonnall, Crudden, and O’Mally (2018) identified three factors that predicted positive employer attitudes: having hired someone who was blind or visually impaired, knowledge of how these individuals perform job tasks and communication with a state VR agency. In addition, in a separate study, McDonnall and Crudden found that communication with a VR agency had a positive impact on employer attitudes (McDonnall & Crudden, 2018).

The focus group findings closely mirrored the literature in describing employer attitudes and practices. Participants described employers’ doubts about the competence of blind and visually impaired individuals and their lack of knowledge about how to accommodate them in the workplace. They described the practice of educating employers about the abilities, rather than the disabilities, of blind and visually impaired persons and the many strategies and technologies available to accommodate them in the workplace as key to establishing a successful employment relationship that worked well for both employer and employee.

## “Empowerment” and EEOC Allegations

### Findings Regarding All People with Disablities

In 2003, the EEOC entered into an agreement with Virginia Commonwealth University to establish the National EEOC ADA Research Project (NEARP), which is a data-mining effort that utilizes the EEOC’s master database. The most recent study of EEOC allegations of disability discrimination conducted as part of the NEARP examined data collected between Title I’s effective date and December 31, 2011 and revealed that during this time period, companies with 500 or more workers had a relatively modest rate of allegations filed against them as compared to smaller companies. This finding suggests that the greater formal human resources capacity typical of a larger employer provides managers with more accurate knowledge of the ADA’s requirements and strategies for implementing them, including reasonable accommodations. Allegations by blind individuals were among the top fifteen disability categories identified and comprised 2.1% of claims.

### Findings Regarding People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired

An analysis comparing the EEOC claims of people who are blind or visually impaired with those of all other people with disabilities between 1993 and 2002 revealed that blind and visually impaired people were more likely than other disabled complainants to receive settlements from their employers and to withdraw their complaints after they received benefits without EEOC intercession. They were also less likely to have charges resolved by the issuance of a right-to-sue letter from the EEOC (Unger, 2005).

Our focus group took a different approach to “empowerment”. Participants described how educating the people they serve about their rights under the ADA and the accommodations that would make work feasible helped give their consumers the confidence they needed to advocate for themselves and, as part of that process, to educate their employers.

## Summary and Recommendations

The most promising evidence of the ADA’s impact found in our review and in the focus group we conducted pertained to employer attitudes and practices. The comparisons showing that federal employers and large employers, who likely have robust human resources departments with ready access to information about their Title I obligations and how to implement them, appear to be promising targets for VR counselors seeking to find placements for blind and visually impaired persons.

There were conflicting findings about whether employers had better or worse attitudes toward blind and visually impaired individuals than other disabled persons, but there was substantial evidence from both the literature review and the focus group that educating employers about the capacities of blind and visually impaired people, and how they can accomplish job-related tasks, has the potential to lead to successful employment for these individuals.

Research by McDonnall & Lund (2020), leading researchers in the field of blindness and employment, suggests that another important factor in employer’s decisions to hire and retain blind and visually impaired employees is their perception of their companies’, supervisors’, and co-workers’ beliefs about hiring blind and visually impaired people. Based on this finding, they suggest that rehabilitation programs target employers “who already have top management commitment, demonstrated, for example, by a policy about hiring people with disabilities.” In Massachusetts and across the country, such employers can be found in the Disability:IN network, which is a consortium of employers committed to the inclusion of people with disabilities. This network can serve as an important starting point for expansion of MCB’s efforts, which could be combined with other connections to the business community that the Executive Branch has the potential to leverage. In addition to trade associations and individual companies and organizations, these could include federal and state contractors. As employers increase their focus on diversity in response to recent events, this provides another opportunity to raise their awareness of the potential benefits of including members of the blind and visually impaired population in their workforce.

Given the current climate, it is important to note the potential impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on employment for blind and visually impaired people. The shifts in the economy necessitated by the pandemic could ultimately lead to expanded employment opportunities for people with vision loss. Lack of access to transportation has been identified as a major barrier to employment for people who are blind or visually impaired (Silverman, et al., 2019; Crudden & Sansing, 2011). In response to the pandemic, large numbers of people have switched to working remotely and there is evidence that this trend may persist. In recent surveys of both small and large firms, researchers from Harvard Business School found that, “more than 35 percent of firms think that forty percent or more of the current switch to remote working will be permanent” (Bartik, et al., 2020). Expanded opportunities to work remotely would eliminate transportation as a barrier and could potentially lead to a “seismic shift” in the employment prospects of people with vision loss (Adams, K., 2020). VR professionals and the people they serve should be prepared to seize the expanded opportunities that this transition may create.

It is worth remembering that during the Great Recession, the employment rate among members of the blind and visually impaired community was harder hit than the employment rate for the general population, but that it rebounded and the gap between the people with vision loss and those who are sighted began to close. If employment for blind and visually impaired people can rebound after an event as devastating as that economic downturn, it can rebound again and perhaps even expand as the world finds a new way of working.

# Introduction and Background

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) passed in 1990 to great fanfare. There were high hopes that “the shameful wall of exclusion” that had historically constrained the participation of people with disabilities in society would “finally come tumbling down” in major domains of life such as public accommodations, state and local government services and, most relevant to the topic at hand, employment (C-span, 2018). The ADA was intended to build upon the concepts and legislation inspired by the Civil Rights Movement, including the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibited discrimination against people with disabilities by entities that received federal funding (Gostin, 2015). The statute defines “disability” as “(a) having a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; (b) having a record of such an impairment; or (c) being regarded as having such an impairment” (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990). The ADA contains five titles that prohibit discrimination against people with disabilities and requires that reasonable accommodations and other strategies be utilized to ensure equitable treatment by employers, state and local governments, public accommodations, telecommunications services and other miscellaneous entities (Gostin, 2015).

In this literature review, we will focus on the employment provisions of the ADA, which are contained in Title I. These provisions prohibit discrimination in employment against “qualified individuals with disabilities” by employers with 15 or more workers and require employers to make “reasonable accommodations” for disabled employees (Gostin, 2015; Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990). Enforcement of Title I was phased in, first becoming effective for employers with 25 or more employees two years after the ADA’s enactment in July of 1992, and then becoming effective for all employers with 15 or more employees in July of 1994, four years after the ADA’s enactment.

In the thirty years that have elapsed since passage of the ADA, there have been several intervening events, which could potentially have had an impact on employment among people with disabilities. These include multiple economic recessions, most notably the Great Recession, which lasted from 2007 to 2009 (Hurd and Rohwedder, 2010) and the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Congress passed the ADAAA in response to a string of court decisions (the Sutton Trilogy) that narrowed the definition of disability in a manner that conflicted with the ADA’s original intent. Through passage of the ADAAA, Congress made clear that the statute was intended to provide a “broad scope of protection” and that, therefore, disability was to be defined expansively. It broadened the scope of “major life activities” in which an individual must be substantially limited in order to be considered disabled and ensured that individuals who used mitigating measures such as prosthetic limbs would once again be considered disabled (Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act, 2008; Victor, 2017; Armour, et al., 2016).

# Methodology

## Research Question

As part of a quality improvement (QI) project undertaken on behalf of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB), the purpose of this study was to answer the following question: What impact, if any, did enactment of the ADA have on the vocational rehabilitation outcomes of people who are blind or visually impaired?

## Definition of Terms

There is a great deal of confusion and misuse of terminology regarding measures of employment and so we define the relevant terms here. The United States Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) uses three different statistics to measure employment. The labor force participation rate is the percentage of the entire noninstitutionalized working-age population (16-64 years) that is currently employed or actively seeking work (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). To calculate this percentage, analysts include people who are working or looking for work and compare it to the total noninstitutionalized working-age population which includes such groups as: retired persons, students, homemakers, those who feel unable to work, and those who have given up looking for work or have never worked.

The labor force participation rate stands in contrast to the more commonly used unemployment rate. The unemployment rate does not include people who have dropped out of or never entered the workforce. Instead, the unemployment rate only measures people who report that they are currently available for work, but do not currently have a job and have actively looked for work in the prior four weeks. It excludes retirees, students, homemakers, and others who may have chosen not to work, along with individuals who feel that they are unable to work, have given up looking for work, or have never worked. (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015).

Lastly, the employment to population ratio describes the number of employed persons as a percentage of the civilian noninstitutionalized population. It does not include those actively seeking work, but not currently working. It only represents the number of people who are actually employed (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015).

An oft-cited statistic among those in the blindness community is that 70% of visually impaired people are “unemployed”. The original source of this statistic is widely believed to be a 1985 study by Kirchner and Peterson that included national estimates of labor force participation rates of people with visual impairments that dated from the 1970s (McDonnall, et al. 2019; Kirchner and Peterson, 1985). These data indicated that approximately 70% of the blind and visually impaired population was not employed and this statistic became incorrectly referred to as a 70% unemployment rate for this population. The measure of employment actually cited in this original statistic is actually the inverse of the labor force participation rate. It represents the number of people who are not in the labor force, which for reasons that are explained above, does not represent the number of people who are considered actually “unemployed” because many of them may not be currently seeking work. Nevertheless, this statistic is still routinely cited among professionals and advocates in the blindness field (McDonnall, et al., 2019). We hope that this explanation and the definitions provided herein bring some clarity to the discussion about employment trends among blind and visually impaired persons.

## Literature Review Methodology

To guide our literature review, we conceptualized “vocational rehabilitation outcomes” broadly to include not just the outcomes of rehabilitation consumers’ cases that can be traced using the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) system’s RS-911 database, but also to include the employment of blind and visually impaired persons more broadly. To answer this question, we conducted a systematic review of the existing literature related to the ADA and employment for people with disabilities generally, and also for blind and visually impaired persons in particular. Additionally, we also conducted a focus group with MCB VR counselors to supplement the findings from our literature review and explore how the legal requirements of the ADA may impact their efforts to support blind and visually impaired persons in obtaining and retaining employment within the Massachusetts context.

Because the employment provisions of the ADA did not become fully effective until 1994, we limited the scope of our search to articles published between 1994 and 2020. We conducted an online search for articles using Psycinfo, ERIC, NBER and Google Scholar (13 databases including Medline, CINAHL, CINAHL health), ProQuest Central, Cochrane, Embase, Informit Health, Science Direct, PubMed, PubMed Health, AAHD (abstracts), ProQuest Journal),. We listed the key concepts and used OR/AND Boolean operator techniques combining variations of either the word blind\* or vis\* impair\* with a variety of terms including Vocational Rehab\*, Employ\*, Employ\* AND Accommodations, Employ\* AND Americans with Disabilities Act, Employ\* AND Accommodations, Employ\* AND Disability AND Discrimination, Employment AND Disability. We also enhanced our searching techniques using the words Americans with Disabilities Act AND Impact AND Vocational Rehab\* and Americans with Disabilities Act AND Impact AND Employment. We included published papers that pertained to the impact of the employment provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act generally and those that pertained to blind and visually impaired people with, but excluded those that focused specifically on people with other disabling conditions. We also excluded all papers that utilized data from countries other than the United States. Excluding duplicates, our search yielded 42 articles that were directly relevant.

## Focus Group Methodology

In order to obtain input on the focus of this review from vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors as part of this QI project, we conducted a focus group with five MCB VR counselors. The focus group was determined a Non-Human Subjects Research Determination by the University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS) Institutional Review Board (IRB). To recruit participants, MCB staff sent an email to all currently employed VR counselors informing them of the opportunity to participate in the focus group and instructing interested counselors to contact the UMMS project team to volunteer. VR counselors who volunteered to participate were sent a Fact Sheet describing their rights as focus group participants and how the confidentiality of any information that they shared would be protected. This Fact Sheet was reviewed at the start of the focus group, and all participants verbally agreed to participate. The focus group guide can be found in Appendix A.

The focus group consisted of five VR counselors and was conducted online via Zoom. It was recorded and extensive notes were taken by two project staff and then compared in order to ensure consistent, valid, interpretations of data.

# Results – Findings from Studies of the ADA’s Impact on Employment for People with Disabilities

Around the time of the 10th anniversary of the ADA in the year 2000 and in the several years that followed, there was a flurry of research intended to address the question of how the ADA had impacted the employment experiences of people with disabilities. Researchers used a variety of data sets and measures to answer this question. The use of different data sets and methodologies, which at times conflicted, made it difficult to draw a definitive conclusion on the ADA’s impact on employment among the broader population of people with disabilities. In this review, we will organize our discussion according to the three main approaches used by researchers to address this question, which include: 1) employment rates and wage disparities; 2) employer attitudes and practices, and 3) “empowerment” effects among people with disabilities themselves such as the filing of allegations of discrimination with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Moss & Burris, 2007). In each section, we first describe the relevant research regarding the ADA’s impact on the disabled population as a whole, of which blind and visually impaired people are, of course, a part. We then describe the limited relevant research that focuses exclusively on people who are blind or visually impaired.

## Employment Rates and Wage Disparities

### Findings Regarding All People with Disablities

Studies on the impact of the ADA have yielded conflicting findings and generated significant controversy over what the actual impact of the ADA has been on the employment of people with disabilities. Some studies that have utilized employment rates to answer this question suggest that the ADA has had a negative impact on employment for this population (DeLeire, 2000; Deleire, 2003; Acemoglu and Angrist, 2001; Jolls and Prescott, 2004). There have even been calls for repeal among some published studies (Deleire, 2000). Others have found no significant effect (Beegle and Stock, 2003; Houtenville and Burkhauser, 2001; Hotchkiss, 2004; Jolls and Prescott, 2004). Yet other studies have shown an increase in employment among people with disabilities (Kruse and Schur, 2003).

Underlying these conflicting findings have been methodological differences such as the use of different definitions of the relevant disabled population. For example, Deleire and Acemoglue and Angrist defined the entire population of individuals who reported a work limitation as their population of interest. On the other hand, Kruse and Schur argued that the ADA’s employment provisions limited the relevant population to “qualified” individuals, i.e., those who, despite work and functional limitations, reported being able to work (Kruse and Schur, 2003; Stapleton and Burkhauser, 2003; Blanck, et al., 2003). Using this definition, they found that the employment rate among people with disabilities had actually risen (Kruse and Schur, 2003).

Another example of the methodological differences that contributed to conflicting findings about the ADA’s impact on employment rates was that researchers’ definitions differed with respect to the length of time that an individual had to report a limitation in order to be consider disabled. Acemoglu and Angrist (2001) defined disability as a work limitation that was reported during one period of time while Houtenville and Burkhauser defined disability as a work limitation that was reported during two periods of time, which they argued more accurately described the population with long-term disabilities that the ADA was intended to protect (Houtenville and Burkhauser, 2001).

Some authors attributed any negative employment trends to factors other than the ADA, such as the expansion of the disability definition used to establish eligibility for Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income, a change which occurred in the mid-1980s, just a few years before the ADA’s enactment (Houtenville and Burkhauser, 2004; Bound and Waldman, 2002). Other authors attributed it to an increase in the prevalence of impairments and chronic conditions over time (Kaye, 2003).

Initial analyses of the ADA’s potential impact on wages suggested that it had little to no impact. Deleire found no significant increase in the wages of disabled men post-ADA (Deleire, 2000). Choe found that the gap in wages between disabled and nondisabled men rose both before and after the ADA, and that post-ADA this gap could be explained primarily by measurable factors such as education, experience, health conditions, family structures, level of unearned income rather than unmeasurable factors that might be related to discrimination (Choe, 2008).

More recent studies suggest that the ADA may have had a positive effect on employment. Armour, Button and colleagues (2016) conducted a study using Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) data to examine the ADA’s impact on labor market outcomes for work- and functionally-limited individuals, using a disability definition similar to Kruse and Schur. They found no effect on hiring or employment for the work-limited population as a whole, but a positive effect on hiring for those with any ADL impairment, which disappeared for those whose impairment was severe. They concluded that although the ADA had no effect, positive or negative, on the work–limited population overall, it did improve labor market outcomes for those who had at least some lesser degree of functional impairment.

To assess the impact of the ADAAA’s expanded definition of disability on employment, Button, et al. (2018) conducted a study using SIPP data to examine labor market outcomes for work and functionally limited individuals overall (as defined in their above mentioned study) and by the saliency, or lack thereof, of the disabling health condition. Examples of conditions that they considered salient included missing limbs, blindness, and using a mobility device. They considered conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, multiple sclerosis, and arthritis to be “non-salient physical conditions.” Additionally, they created categories for those with intellectual and mental disabilities. Unfortunately, they did not define “blindness”, although the fact that they described it as “salient” suggests a degree of impairment that might require the use of a white cane or guide dog or, alternatively, which might be noticeable simply because of the person’s physical appearance. They did not describe how they might characterize types or degrees of visual impairment that might not be readily noticeable to an employer. They found that the ADAAA’s expansion of the scope of prohibited discrimination laws had no effect on hiring for the work-limited population as a whole, but when they examined their results separately by type of disabling health condition, they found a substantial improvement in hiring rates for individuals with less salient physically disabling conditions. They found no significant improvement in employment rates for those with salient physical conditions or with intellectual or mental disabilities. They concluded that their findings suggested that while disability discrimination laws might increase hiring among individuals with non-apparent disabling conditions, they were likely to be less effective in preventing discrimination in hiring for those with conditions than could be readily observed by potential employers (Button, et al., 2018).

Another method that researchers have used to examine the potential impact of the ADA has been to compare labor force participation and employment rates in states that had their own anti-discrimination laws prior to the enactment of the ADA to these same measures of employment trends in those states without them, particularly in those that required employers to make reasonable accommodations, such as Massachusetts. An early study by Beegle and Stock (2003) found a slight decrease in labor force participation rates, but after controlling for certain factors, they found almost no effect on employment rates, even for states whose anti-discrimination laws required reasonable accommodation. In contrast, Jolls and Prescott (2004) found that employment rates fell after the ADA was passed, but only in states without existing laws that required reasonable accommodations. A more recent study, Button (2016) examined the 2001 expansion of the definition of disability in California’s disability discrimination statute and found that this change was actually associated with increased employment among people with disabilities.

### Findings Regarding People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired

The same challenges posed by methodological differences in various researchers’ estimates regarding the impact of the ADA on employment among the broader population of people with disabilities also complicate efforts to discern the ADA's impact on employment among people who are blind or visually impaired.

Our literature search revealed only two studies that examined long-term trends in employment specifically among vocational rehabilitation consumers who were blind or visually impaired. A 2010 study by Bell using RSA-911 data examined competitive employment rates for VR consumers who were legally blind and showed that between 1997 and 2007, employment among members of this population increased steadily from 27% in 1997 up to 37% in 2007 (Bell, 2010). Another more recent study by Clapp and colleagues (2020) examined employment rates by matching 2007 RSA-911 data of visually impaired applicants in three states (Maryland, Oklahoma and Virginia) to state unemployment records for eight quarters before the consumer applied for VR services in state fiscal year 2007 to twenty quarters afterwards, i.e. from approximately 2005 to 2012. This study showed a decline in employment from approximately 37% to 25% among VR consumers who had received services post-application during this time period, which the authors attributed, at least in part, to the Great Recession. This change was not tested for statistical significance. The employment rate among VR applicants who had received services was consistently higher than among those who had not received services whose employment rates fell from approximately 25% to 18% over the same time period (Clapp, 2020). Further analysis comparing the change in employment rates between the two groups showed “no obvious improvement in employment outcomes by service receipt” (Clapp, 2020, p. 52).

Other studies examined rates of employment among blind and visually impaired persons more broadly. Two of these studies included data that was collected before full implementation of the ADA in 1994. Based on data from the 1991-1992 (SIPP), Kirchner and Schmeidler reported a 26% rate of employment among individuals with a severe functional impairment in seeing and a 46% employment rate when those whose functional impairment in seeing was not severe (Kirchner, 1997). They did not examine trends over time. The second study, which used early data, by Houtenville compared employment rates for men and women with visual impairments between the ages of 21-60 using pooled data from the National Health Interview Survey for 1983-1987 and 1992-1996. The 1992-1996 period encompassed only two years in which the ADA was in full effect. This comparison showed that employment among men with visual impairments declined significantly from approximately 55% to 49% between these two time periods. Conversely, employment among visually impaired women increased from 35% to 40%, a difference which was not statistically significant (Houtenville, 2002).

More recent studies by Bell, in collaboration with various colleagues, utilized data collected five years apart in national surveys conducted in 2011 and 2016. The 2011 survey demonstrated a 37% employment rate for blind and visually impaired adults residing in the United States The second survey of blind and visually impaired adults similarly showed that 32% of this population were employed full-time (Bell and Mino, 2013; Bell and Silverman, 2018).

On the other hand, a non-peer reviewed analysis conducted by the American Foundation for the Blind in 2019 showed a gradual increase in labor force participation among blind and visually impaired people over time. It showed that between 2013 and 2017, labor force participation among people with blindness or visual impairment between the ages of 16 and 64 rose from 36% to 39%. The change was not examined for statistical significance (American Foundation for the Blind, 2019).

Another recent study by McDonnall and Sui (2019) utilized data from the American Community Survey (ACS) to calculate rates of employment among blind and visually impaired persons. Based on their calculations, the employment rate in 2008 among blind and visually impaired people on the cusp of the Great Recession was approximately 43%. This rate fell and remained significantly below its 2008 level throughout the period between 2009 and 2015, finally recovering and slightly exceeding the 2008 rate in 2016 and 2017, when it rose to approximately 44% (McDonnall & Sui, 2019). Although this increase over the entire period of time was not statistically significant, gains from year to year between 2012 to 2013, 2014 to 2015 and 2015 to 2016 were significant. McDonnall and Sui conducted similar analyses using other data sources including the National Health Interview Survey - Disability Supplement dating from 1994-1995, the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHNANES) and the SIPP. Estimates from these surveys fell within the same range as the estimates from the ACS (McDonnall & Sui, 2019), thereby improving upon previous research by showing that methodological differences need not inevitably lead to substantially different conclusions.

McDonnall and Sui also used the ACS to compare the employment rate among blind and visually impaired people to the employment rate for people without disabilities and to the rate of employment for people with other types of disabilities. Their study showed that the rate of employment among blind and visually impaired persons was consistently higher than the employment rate for people with other types of disabilities throughout this same period. In 2009, the employment rate among blind and visually impaired people was nearly 4% higher than among individuals with other disabilities. This gap steadily increased and then stabilized at around 9% in 2016 and 2017. The increase in this gap during this period was statistically significant (McDonnall & Sui, 2019).

McDonnall and Sui’s study showed that rates of employment among people without disabilities were consistently higher than among blind and visually impaired people, but the size of the discrepancy between their rates of employment changed significantly over time. During the first few years of the Great Recession between 2008 and 2012, the gap grew larger, rising from approximately 35% to 37%. It then fell below its 2008 level to 33% by 2017. This decrease in the size of the gap between employment rates was statistically significant. In other words, McDonnall and Sui’s research suggests that by 2017, blind and visually impaired persons may have started to close the gap in employment as compared to sighted persons

## Employer Attitudes and Practices

### Findings Regarding All People with Disabilities

A literature review early in the years following implementation of Title I of the ADA revealed that although employers had relatively positive attitudes towards people with disabilities generally, their attitudes toward people with disabilities in the role of worker were less favorable (Hernandez, 2000). On the other hand, attitudes toward workers who had been placed by vocational rehabilitation agencies tended to be positive as were attitudes of employers who had previous experiences with people with disabilities. Some studies showed that employers tended to hold more positive attitudes toward people with physical or sensory (e.g., visual or hearing impairments) disabilities than toward those with psychiatric disabilities (Hernandez, 2000), but others showed that employers had less positive attitudes specifically toward people who are blind (Unger, 2002; Gilbride, 2000).

Although some states had statutes requiring that employers provide reasonable accommodations to disabled employees before passage of the ADA, our review found no studies comparing rates at which employers accommodated individuals with disabilities before and after the ADA was passed. However, Bruyere and colleagues conducted two post-ADA surveys of employers’ understanding of the accommodations required by this law (Bruyere, 2000 and Bruyere, et al., 2006). The first study compared the responses of federal and private employers and found that both groups of employers were familiar with the ADA’s requirements regarding general questions about when to ask about how the applicant would actually perform job tasks, along with restrictions on eliciting and obtaining medical information. They further found that more federal employers had a history of making accommodations than private sector employers. However, they found that both federal and private employers were much less familiar with the types of accommodations needed by people with visual or hearing impairments than those needed by persons with other disabling conditions, although the knowledge of federal employers was significantly greater than that of private employers (Bruyere, 2000). Their second study involved a survey of human resources professionals comparing the experiences of large and small businesses with making accommodations. They found that large employers had more experience with making accommodations than small employers. As with federal and private employers in the previous survey, they found that both large and small businesses were substantially less familiar with the types of accommodations needed by people with visual or hearing impairments than they were with other types of accommodations (Bruyere, et al., 2006).

Ameri et al. (2015) conducted an experiment in which they sent resumes purporting to belong to highly-qualified fictional applicants, accompanied by cover letters to employers of various sizes (<15 employees, 15-99 employees, 100-499 employees and 500+ employees). A third of the cover letters disclosed that the applicant has a spinal cord injury, while another third disclosed that the applicant had Asperger’s Syndrome and the remaining third did not mention having a disability of any kind. They found that those companies that had less than 15 employees, and were therefore not subject to the ADA, were significantly more likely to show no interest in the disabled applicants and to decline to call them in for an interview. They also found that government and publicly held companies were significantly more likely to indicate interest in the disabled applicant than closely held companies, but not necessarily to call them in for an interview (Ameri, 2015). Additionally, they compared employer behavior in states that had their own anti-discrimination laws with the behavior of employers in those states without them. They found that the ADA had a significant positive impact on employer interest in applicants with disabilities and callbacks for interviews, but that state disability discrimination laws had no significant effect on employer interest or call backs.

### Findings Regarding People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired

As noted previously, Bruyere’s studies of employer knowledge and practices regarding reasonable accommodation demonstrated that employers reported being less knowledgeable about providing reasonable accommodations to blind and visually impaired people than they were with people with other types of disabilities. More recent studies demonstrated the persistence of a lack of understanding about hiring, employing and accommodating blind and visually impaired persons. A 2012 survey of hiring managers commissioned by the National Industries for the Blind found that a majority of human resource managers thought that there were few jobs in their organizations that visually impaired people could perform and that it would be more expensive to hire someone with a visual impairment. Recruiting people who were blind or visually impaired was also a lower priority than recruiting other minorities. However, among managers who had a personal experience with someone who was blind or visually impaired, there were more positive responses regarding hiring someone from this population (Lynch, 2013; Repass & Associates, 2012).

Recent studies by McDonnall and various colleagues found that concerns among employers about the ability of people who are blind or visually impaired to perform in the workplace continue to have the potential to impact hiring decisions. In their study of employers’ implicit attitudes toward blind and visually impaired people, McDonnall and Antonelli found that employers were significantly more likely to assume that sighted people were competent than they were to assume competence among blind or visually impaired people. A subsequent study showed that attitudes about the productivity of a blind employee were the strongest predictor of an employer’s intention to hire someone who was blind or visually impaired. Also important were employer’s perceptions about their companies’, supervisors’, and co-workers’ beliefs about hiring blind and visually impaired people. (McDonnell & Lund, 2020. McDonnell & Antonelli, 2019; McDonnell & Antonelli, 2018)

These studies also shed light on the factors that mitigate these biases. McDonnall, Crudden, and O’Mally (2018) identified three factors that significantly predicted positive employer attitudes: having hired someone who was blind or visually impaired, knowledge of how blind or visually impaired people perform work-related tasks and communication with the state VR agency.

## “Empowerment” and EEOC Allegations

### Findings Regarding All People with Disabilities

As noted previously, certain statistics which indicate “empowerment” or self-advocacy by people with disabilities, such as allegations of discrimination filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), have the potential to provide evidence about the experiences of people with disabilities in the workforce post-ADA. It is important to note, however, that because it was only after the ADA was passed that charges of discrimination on the basis of disability could be filed with the EEOC, there is no comparison of EEOC charges filed before and after the ADA was enacted.

In 2003, the EEOC entered into an agreement with Virginia Commonwealth University to establish the National EEOC ADA Research Project (NEARP), which is a data-mining effort that utilizes data from the EEOC’s master database. An early study conducted as part of this project by McMahon and colleagues reported that between the effective date of the employment provisions of the ADA (Title I) on July 26, 1992 and September 30, 2003, more than 600,000 allegations were filed. Of these, 328,738 allegations were resolved, including 7,030 allegations filed by people with vision impairments. The remaining allegations were resolved otherwise (McMahon, 2005).

The most recent study of EEOC allegations of disability discrimination conducted as part of the NEARP examined data collected between Title I’s effective date and December 31, 2011. Although that study did not examine changes over time, it did reveal that over the course of this time period, companies with 500 or more workers had a relatively modest rate of allegations filed against them as compared to smaller companies, which suggests that perhaps robust human resources capacity typical of a larger employer provides managers with more accurate knowledge of the ADA’s requirements and strategies for adhering to them, including reasonable accommodations. These large companies may also be more likely to employ ADA coordinators and have additional supports such as employee assistance, integrated disability management, and equal opportunity programs (McMahon and McMahon, 2016). Companies with 15-100 employees had a comparatively high rate of ADA discrimination claims, which the authors suggest may related to the fact that they lack the resources often available to larger companies and that this hinders their efforts to comply with the ADA’s nondiscrimination provisions (McMahon & McMahon, 2016). Of the top fifteen disability categories identified in the EEOC database, 2.1% of allegations were filed by individuals who were blind or visually impaired.

### Findings Regarding People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired

Our review of the literature identified only two studies using data from the EEOC database that focused specifically on allegations filed by blind and visually impaired individuals. A study by Victor and colleagues (2017) endeavored to examine the impact, not of the original ADA legislation, but of the ADA Amendments Act passed in 2008 on charges filed by blind and visually impaired individuals. In comparing charges of discrimination pre- and post-ADAAA, the authors found significant differences in three categories including job acquisition (hiring), job retention, and job satisfaction. The percentage of job acquisition allegations fell significantly by nearly 9 percent. Although their stated purpose had been to demonstrate the impact of the ADAAA, the authors suggested that because the original ADA had been on the books for approximately 20 years by the end of data collection in 2011, employers had had sufficient time to acquire relevant knowledge and implement solutions that enabled them to be in compliance with both the ADA and the ADAAA, at least in terms of hiring practices (Victor, et al., 2017).

Conversely, discrimination charges in the job satisfaction category increased significantly by approximately 4% under the ADAAA as compared to previous charges filed under the ADA alone, and job retention charges increased by 5%. The authors attributed these changes to an increased number of individuals covered under the ADAAA’s expanded disability definition without a corresponding increase in employers’ understanding of how to accommodate these individuals on the job (Victor, et al., 2017).

An analysis comparing the EEOC claims of people who are blind or visually impaired with those of all other disabled people showed that, between 1993 and 2002, blind and visually impaired people were more likely than other disabled complainants to receive settlements from their employers and to withdraw their complaints after they received benefits without EEOC intercession. They were also less likely to have charges resolved by the issuance of a right-to-sue letter from the EEOC (Unger, 2005).

# Results – Findings from the Focus Group

Information obtained from our focus group with VR counselors was consistent with many of the findings identified in the literature, particularly relating to themes of employer attitudes and practices.

### Barriers

Focus group members felt that the impact of the ADA pertaining to employment was limited by a lack of employer knowledge of the ADA requirements. One participant commented:

“People know that there is an ADA Act, but they don’t what it is… it’d be nice if employers had to read that and keep it on their desks like other manuals.”

This counselor provided one example in which a consumer’s employer said “‘if you can’t do the job then you can’t work here’” even though a simple accommodation could quickly and easily be made to help the consumer perform their work duties. This counselor also mentioned that consumers are screened out of the application process if a job description asks for a driver’s license, despite driving being unnecessary for the specific job. Other focus group members confirmed that this reflected their experience as well with one participant stating that, “across the board I have seen that in several different industries.”

Participants described several instances where employers’ pre-conceived notions about people with disabilities had been an obstacle. One VR counselor noted that “the biggest barrier is whatever that employer’s perception is of disability.” In speaking about educating employers about the capacities of young adults who are blind or visually impaired, another participant stated that, “changing [the employer’s] mindset is often the most difficult . . . (in persuading them) to give a kid a shot.”

### Strategies for Educating Employers

When asked about effective ways to educate employers, one participant mentioned in-services for employers as being particularly helpful and that several corporations and the regional transportation system has asked that MCB train their staff not only about blindness and vision impairment, but also on disability in general. Another counselor emphasized the importance of establishing a personal rapport with employers, saying:

“I often find that face to face, a warm-type call as opposed to a cold call to an employer . . . being able to approach an employer and frame the individual… as competent and skillful in specific areas that are relevant to the specific job for the initial conversation.”

Focus group participants emphasized the importance of educating employers on the specific strategies that blind and visually impaired individuals use to successfully perform job-related tasks. This included informing employers of the accommodations available that will maximize their employee’s performance, thus building the employers’ confidence and willingness to hire blind and visually impaired people. Some participants reported that advancements in assistive technology (AT) and improved access to AT over the years have positively impacted employment outcomes.

### Educating the People Served by MCB

Participants noted the value of self-determination among the individuals they serve, as well as counselors’ roles in building confidence among the people they serve to enhance their ability to build and maintain relationships with their employers. Participants noted that educating blind and visually impaired people is key to empowering them and, ultimately, to educating employers. One VR counselor, who happened to be legally blind, discussed the strength of role models and stated that, “I use myself as an example to help consumers understand that it’s okay and that they can do it as long as they have their hearts to it.”

According to participants, bad news travels faster than good news. People who have little or no work experience hear negative stories about disclosing in the workplace and, as a result, are more fearful about working. Therefore, it is imperative to focus on and share success stories with them. One participant noted that

“if somebody is well versed [and can say] ‘this is my visual impairment and this is what I need to do the job’ that makes all the difference… If the individual can have that conversation with the employer, that can change the whole tone.”

# Talking Points for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors

Our literature review and focus group findings provide evidence that VR counselors’ current strategies are effective and suggest additional strategies. Both are described below:

* Employers’ beliefs about their company’s commitment to people with vision loss may impact their hiring decisions. Therefore, job applicants may want to target companies whose top management has shown a commitment to hiring people with vision loss or people with disabilities generally.
* Previous experience with someone with vision loss can sometimes increase an employer’s willingness to consider hiring someone who is blind or visually impaired. Therefore, job applicants may want to target employers who either have personal or professional experience with someone with vision loss.
* Although employers may initially be more uncomfortable with people whose visual impairment is obvious, educating employers about how the individual performs tasks can overcome this initial discomfort.
* The involvement of a vocational rehabilitation counselor can increase an employer’s comfort level with a person who is blind or visually impaired and make them more willing to consider hiring that person.
* People who are blind or visually impaired may find it helpful to work with their VR counselors to devise strategies they can use to explain and/or demonstrate how they can perform-job-related tasks to a prospective employer.

# Summary and Recommendations

In their efforts to evaluate the impact of the ADA on vocational rehabilitation outcomes, researchers’ use of different data sets and conflicting methodologies have made it difficult to draw definitive conclusions about the ADA’s impact on employment patterns for the disabled population as a whole. Although these same methodological issues have also impacted studies of employment rates among blind and visually impaired people, recent research has shown solid evidence that, after declining during the Great Recession, employment rates among this population began to rebound in 2016 and 2017. The gap between employment rates among people who are blind or visually impaired showed a similar pattern, which began steadily narrowing in 2015, suggesting that the gap in employment rates among this population and the general population had begun to close at that time.

The most promising evidence of the ADA’s impact found in our literature review and the focus group results pertained to employer attitudes and practices. The comparisons showing that federal employers and large employers, who likely have robust human resources departments with ready access to information about their Title I obligations and methods for providing accommodations appear to be promising targets for VR counselors seeking to find placements for blind and visually impaired persons. That said, even these employers were less likely to understand how to accommodate blind and visually impaired individuals than other disabled persons. There was substantial evidence from both the literature review and the focus group that this lack of understanding can be addressed effectively by educating employers about the capacities of blind and visually impaired people, and how they can accomplish job-related tasks. Additionally, the research shows that communication with VR professionals can have a positive impact on employer attitudes (McDonnall & Crudden, 2018; Hernandez, 2000).

Research by McDonnall & Lund (2020), leading researchers in the field of blindness and employment, also suggests that employers’ perceptions about their companies’, supervisors’, and co-workers’ beliefs about hiring blind and visually impaired people are another key factor that make employers willing to hire and accommodate blind and visually impaired people. Based on this finding, they suggest that rehabilitation programs target employers “who already have top management commitment, demonstrated, for example, by a policy about hiring people with disabilities.” In Massachusetts and across the country, such employers can be found in the Disability:IN network, which is a consortium of employers committed to the inclusion of people with disabilities. Organizations such as this can serve as an important starting point for expansion of MCB’s efforts which could be combined with other connections to the business community that the Executive Branch has the potential to leverage. In addition to trade associations and individual companies, these could include federal and state contractors. As employers increase their focus on diversity in response to recent events, this provides another opportunity to raise their awareness of the potential benefits of including members of the blind and visually impaired population in their workforce.

Given the current climate, it is important to note the potential impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on employment for blind and visually impaired people. The shifts in the economy necessitated by the pandemic could ultimately lead to expanded employment opportunities for people with vision loss. Lack of access to transportation has been identified as a major barrier to employment for people who are blind or visually impaired (Silverman, et al., 2019; Crudden & Sansing, 2011). In response to the pandemic, large numbers of people have switched to working remotely and there is evidence that this trend may persist. In recent surveys of both small and large firms, researchers from Harvard Business School found that, “more than 35 percent of firms think that forty percent or more of the current switch to remote working will be permanent” (Bartik, et al., 2020). Expanded opportunities to work remotely would eliminate transportation as a barrier and could potentially lead to a “seismic shift” in the employment prospects of people with vision loss (Adams, K., 2020). VR professionals and the people they serve should be prepared to seize the expanded opportunities that this transition may create.

It is worth remembering that during the Great Recession, the employment rate among members of the blind and visually impaired community was harder hit than the employment rate for the general population, but that it rebounded and the gap between the people with vision loss and those who are sighted began to close. If employment for blind and visually impaired people can rebound after an event as devastating as that economic downturn, it can rebound again and perhaps even expand as the world finds a new way of working.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Focus Group Guide

**MCB Implications of the ADA on VR Outcomes Focus Group and Interview Guide and Questionnaire -**

**INTRODUCTIONS**

Thank you all for joining us; we appreciate you all taking the time to talk with us today.

My name is Linda Long-Bellil and I am an Assistant Professor at UMass Medical School and I’ll be leading the discussion today along with my colleagues Kathy Muhr and Erica Ferreira.

We’re going to have everyone introduce themselves in a few minutes, but first we have a few items we need to cover.

**PURPOSE**

Number one is why we are all here today.

The overall goal of this project to provide VR counselors to demonstrate the extent to which efforts to ensure non-discrimination may have progressed and workplace barriers may have been removed and/or diminished. We aim to provide relevant evidence and talking points for rehabilitation counselors to support their efforts to assist consumers in obtaining and retaining employment.

The purpose of today’s session specifically is to hear your perspectives and experiences as VR counselors on this topic.

Any questions on the purpose and goal of today’s session?

**LOGISTICS**

Ok a few more things before we dive in.

This session will last for up to 90 minutes.

**ZOOM**

A couple notes on Zoom.

We do ask that you mute yourself when not talking to minimize background noise.

And remember to unmute yourself when you want to talk!

You can use the chat box to ask any questions or make any comments – Kathy will be monitoring that for us.

Any questions on Zoom?

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

A note on confidentiality. You should have received a Data Collection Fact Sheet and Frequently Asked Question document before this focus group.

As indicated in the document, we are recording today’s session and in doing so, we are using the Zoom recording function, which records both audio and video at the same time. The recording will be saved in a secure drive on the UMMS server.

The purpose of recording is to accurately capture what everyone says.

Your name or any other personally identifiable information will not be used the report, and the recordings will be deleted after the project ends.

By allowing us to record, we are taking that as your consent to participate in this focus group. You can still choose now whether you want to participate, and you may stop at any time during the discussion. You can answer whatever question you want or decline to answer any question you want.

**FINAL NOTES**

Your participation today is voluntary; you don’t have to answer a question if you don’t want to. And, you don’t have to answer all the questions.

There are no right or wrong answers. We want to hear a variety of viewpoints and would like for everyone to contribute their thoughts. So, please help us to make sure that everyone is getting the chance to speak if they want to.

We will do everything we can to protect your confidentiality. We also want everyone to respect each other’s privacy and confidentiality by not disclosing anything that was discussed during the focus group. In other words, what is said here stays here.

Are there any questions before we begin?

Let’s get started! Now, we will start recording! [Pause to start the recording.]

**QUESTIONS**

1. **Introductions** - to start, we’re going to take a few minutes for introductions. Please share:
* Your name, your role at MCB and how long you have been there
* Just the basics; make it brief please as we have a lot to cover and everyone will have the opportunity to share more about themselves as the conversation evolves
1. **As we mentioned in the fact sheet, the purpose is to demonstrate the extent to which efforts to ensure non-discrimination may have progressed and workplace barriers may have been removed and/or diminished and to provide relevant evidence and talking points for rehabilitation counselors to support their efforts to assist consumers in obtaining and retaining employment. This made us wonder -** **what are you hearing from consumers about their concerns or experiences with the workplace?**
	1. Probes:
		1. Do they have to do with getting technology, e.g. screen readers or other accommodations??
		2. Are their concerns about the attitudes of employers or co-workers?
2. **Are these concerns based on their prior experiences in the workplace or something else?**
3. **Do you feel that concerns about barriers and discrimination in the workplace are justified? Why or Why not?**
	1. Probes
		1. Technology and Accommodations
		2. Attitudes
4. **Do you feel that over time barriers or discrimination in the workplace have diminished? Why or Why not?**
	1. Probes
		1. What is the conversation in the workplace about disability and inclusion? Accommodations? Attitudes?
		2. Is website accessibility an issue?
		3. Is there awareness of the requirements of Section 508 of the Rehab Act
5. **Do you feel that employers understand the law about their obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act ?**
6. **Do you feel that your consumers generally have the skills that make them a good match for the workplace?**
	1. Probe
		1. Are they able to acquire those skills (if they don’t have them already)?
7. **What kind of information would be helpful in encouraging consumers to feel more confident about being accommodated in the workplace?**
8. **Do you find that there are particularly effective ways to talk with consumers to encourage them to believe they will succeed in the workplace?**
9. **Are there particular types of information that you could share with consumers to encourage them to fell more assured that they will succeed in the workplace?**
10. **What kind of services or resources would be helpful to make it easier for consumers to succeed in the workplace?**
11. **Is there something that could be done to make employers or the workplace more receptive to your consumers?**
12. **Blue Sky Question – In order to ensure that your consumers feel more assured of their success in the workplace, what is one word that you would use to describe what is needed? One word (or short phrase).**

**CLOSING**

Thank you all for volunteering to share your experiences and perspectives with us; this has been a great session! We really appreciate your time and input.

If you have any additional comments or questions about our research and would like to follow up with us, please feel free to reach out to me at linda.long@umassmed.edu.

Thank you!