

Why do adults with intellectual disabilities work in sheltered workshops?

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Abstract. The literature shows that many adults with disabilities and their families prefer integrated employment. Federal and state policies promote participation of individuals with disabilities in the general labor market, yet the majority of individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) attend facility-based programs. The purpose of this paper is to determine what factors influence adults with intellectual disabilities and their families in choosing between sheltered workshops and integrated employment. To this end, adults with ID (210), families (185), and staff members in sheltered workshops (224) were surveyed. Findings showed that, when deciding about day services, some adults with ID and their families had concerns about safety, transportation, long-term placement, work hours, disability benefits, social environment, and work skills issues. Long-term placement, safety, and social environment emerged as the most important concerns. Additionally, professionals in disability services appeared to play a relatively minimal role in encouraging adults with ID and their families to pursue integrated employment and in some cases, professionals have even encouraged adults with ID and their families to choose sheltered workshops. Recommendations are provided for advancing the transition of adults with ID from sheltered workshops to integrated employment.

Keywords: Sheltered workshop, employment, intellectual, disabilities, developmental, families

1. Introduction

Progress has been made over the past several decades to improve legislation, policy, practice and community attitudes for individuals with disabilities so that they may have better access to integrated and competitive employment. We have seen the numbers of individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities employed increase from 9% in 1988 to 24% in 2002. Federal Medicaid funding for supported employment has risen from \$0 in 1997 to \$108 million in 2002 [6].

Outcomes for individuals who were once in a sheltered workshop and now in competitive employment show promise. For instance, a study following 291 individuals with disabilities from 40 sheltered workshops from across the country who entered competitive employment, specifically supported employment,

showed a significant difference in wages and integration [50]. When the participants were in a sheltered workshop, their average hourly earnings were \$2.30 or average monthly earnings of \$175.69. When these same individuals moved out of the sheltered workshop and into a competitive job, their average hourly earnings increased to \$5.75 with average monthly earnings of \$455.97. Although the average hours worked per week were approximately the same for both environments, those in sheltered workshops had periods of “down time” when no work was available. Furthermore, the need to educate individuals and their families about social security work incentives became evident. This data supports other state data where 32% of individuals with developmental disabilities spent the majority of their day in a sheltered workshop earning an average of \$1.74 per hour compared to 28% of individuals with developmental disabilities who spent the majority of their day in a competitive job earning an average of \$6.74 per hour [22].

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Even with the dramatic improvements in competitive employment, we continue to see that for every one person working in competitive employment, three individuals remain in a segregated day program. Medicaid spending increased to \$108 million from 1997 to 2002 for competitive employment while only slightly dropping from \$514 million to \$488 million for segregated day programs. Consequently, \$1 was spent on supported employment compared to the \$4 utilized for segregated day programs [6].

Adults with disabilities and their families have indicated that they are in favor of integrated employment [13,37]. So why do people with disabilities and their families continue to choose facility-based day programs, including sheltered workshops, over competitive employment? The purpose of this article is to explore the reasons for having such a high percentage of adults with disabilities involved in facility-based programs. Two research questions are addressed in this study: (a) What considerations influence adults with ID and their families in their choice between sheltered workshops and integrated employment? and (b) What role do professionals play in encouraging adults with ID and their families to pursue integrated employment?

2. Literature review

A number of issues emerge from the literature that may impact the choice that individuals with disabilities and their families make between sheltered workshops and integrated employment. This section focuses on the following areas of concern regarding integrated employment: (a) long-term placement, (b) safety, (c) work skills issues, (d) social environment, (e) transportation, (f) agency support, (g) disability benefits, and (h) system of services.

2.1. Long-term placement

Some adults with ID, their families, and day service staff fear that employment outside of workshops may entail higher risks of schedule discontinuity compared to sheltered workshops [5,37,41]. The problem can become particularly difficult if services are not immediately made available between the ending of one job and the beginning of the next one [23,34]. The fear of the instability of employment outside of workshops may encourage families to prefer alternatives such as sheltered employment [17,27,49]. It is noteworthy that sheltered workshops also experience periods when there is no work to do. However, families perceive it reassuring that sheltered workshops provide some structure during these periods of "downtime".

2.2. Safety

Some adults with disabilities and their families have concerns about possible risks outside facility-based services. Some of the risks that concern families include crime [15], people who may take advantage of workers with disabilities [16,23,41]; and a lack of safety in the work environment [8,15,49]. Although sheltered workshops are not necessarily risk free [48], families may perceive that the environment in workshops is safer.

2.3. Work skills

Employment outside of sheltered workshops has been said to be too complex and, therefore, more frustrating [46,65]. Indeed, some workers with disabilities indicated that employment outside of workshops was more demanding [18]. Brickey, Campbell, and Browning [7] found that the fact that jobs were too difficult was one of the reasons why 34% of 53 employees with disabilities lost their jobs within 5 years after they were hired. This problem may have been due to poor job placement. However, some people with disabilities believe that employment outside of workshops is not too difficult and that their disabilities are not barriers to performing in integrated employment [13,15]. Additionally, there are employers who are interested in hiring employees with disabilities [18,40,61]. For instance, Smith et al. [21] found that a sample of 656 employers were satisfied with the speed and accuracy of their employees with disabilities. Nietupski et al. [39] found that employers who had already hired job seekers with disabilities were more optimistic about hiring future candidates with disabilities. Similarly, Blessing and Jamieson [4] found that 78% of employers who had employees with disabilities were satisfied with this choice. Finally, McLoughlin [35] found that 81% of employers who already had experience working with employees with disabilities were optimistic about hiring individuals of this population.

2.4. Social environment

Adults with ID in sheltered workshops and their families are sometimes concerned that relationships with co-workers without disabilities might not develop as easily as with peers in sheltered workshops [15,27,43]. A possible reason why employees without disabilities might be less willing to treat co-workers with disabilities as equal colleagues might pertain to a preconceived notion that workers with disabilities will not be able

to complete their share of work, and as a result, the employee without the disability will have to do more work [35]. Another reason might be that workers without disabilities may be unaccustomed to dealing with the level of social skills of co-workers with ID [12,35,46]. On the other hand, these concerns might fade after workers with and without disabilities spend time working together [54]. Indeed, social interactions between workers with disabilities and workers without disabilities do occur in integrated employment, and have been rich and mutually satisfying. The nature of social interactions varies based on the type of job, work setting, and the culture of the workplace [10,57]. In addition, organizations, families, and self-advocacy groups may promote social interactions and relationships of people with ID with their friends outside the workplaces.

2.5. Transportation

The availability of a means of transportation to and from the workplace can also determine the actual availability of work opportunities. Beare et al. [2] found that transportation was a greater problem for adults with ID living in rural areas. However, Loprest and Maag [29] found that either public or special transit was available to about 80% of adults with disabilities, but few people took advantage of it. Perrin [43] found that the lack of transportation was a problem for only 29% of respondents. Finally, West, Revell, and Wehman [64] reported that transportation was an issue for only 14.6% of respondents. It is noteworthy that transportation services are almost always provided for people working in sheltered workshops [8,19,27].

2.6. Agency support

Inadequate support from employment agencies may inhibit success in competitive employment [32,63]. Lack of adequate support could be due to employment specialists having limited work experience. For instance, Test et al. [59] surveyed employment specialists across 32 states and found that 54% of them had less than one year of work experience. Another problem could be that funding is not sufficient to support all the job seekers who apply for services [18,28,34,37]. Lack of funding may be a problem, for instance, when multiple work trials are needed to enhance job matching [37,38] or ongoing support is necessary to retain employment [7].

2.7. Disability benefits

Fear of losing disability benefits is often mentioned as a reason for preventing some people with disabilities and their families from seeking employment in the general labor market [27,33,51,64]. Indeed, historically people with ID seeking cash disability benefits have been advised to underplay their work skills in order to obtain the best compensation deal. Not surprisingly, therefore, they tend to see themselves unable to work, or at least they worry about the impact that work will have on their disability benefits, including medical care [3,60].

2.8. System of services

Finally, some adults with ID and their families are concerned that choosing employment outside sheltered workshops might jeopardize those disability services that traditionally are provided in conjunction with facility-based programs such as residential services, transportation, or other disability-related services [2,37,40]. However, many programs throughout the country have demonstrated that people can work in integrated jobs while maintaining other critical services.

3. Method

Survey research methods were used to investigate those factors which adults with intellectual disabilities and their families considered important in their choice for sheltered workshops. This method section mirrors and completes the method section of a previously published article that focused on the preferences of adults with intellectual disabilities (ID) and their families regarding sheltered workshops and competitive employment [36]. This section will describe the participants, the instrumentation, validity issues, and data analysis.

3.1. Participants

The sample of participants was composed of 210 adults with ID attending 28 sheltered workshops in a mid-western state, the families or caregivers of these adults with ID ($N = 185$), and staff in workshops who knew well the participants with ID ($N = 224$). Overall, 142 triads composed of adults with ID matched with their respective family members and with their respective staff in workshops were included in the sample.

These participants were selected by contacting 22 organizations that operated sheltered workshops. Of these 22 organizations, 19 participated in the study, whereas 3 organizations did not because they did not have participants who met the selection criteria. Some of these organizations operated programs in multiple locations, bringing the number of sheltered workshops up to 28. The sheltered workshops were distributed across the state as follows: 39% (11) in the northern region, 32% (9) in the central region, and 29% (8) in the southern region of the state.

The 28 workshops identified the participants with ID using the following criteria:

- a) demonstrated intellectual disability as a primary condition,
- b) placed in the workshops most recently, and after January 1st, 2000, and
- c) did not have a job outside the workshop as a secondary activity.

Of the 364 adults with ID identified based on these criteria, 154 individuals did not participate in the study because of one of the following reasons: (a) their guardians did not return the signed consent forms (42%); (b) they were not at work on the days of the interviews (18%); (c) they did not show an understanding of the consent form and, therefore, their responses were considered invalid (10%); (d) they no longer attended the workshops (10%); (e) they were mistakenly selected from among people attending non-work day programs (7%); (f) they were nonverbal (5%); (g) there was no explanation made available (3%); (h) they declined to participate (2%), (i) they had a job as a secondary activity (1%); or (l) there was a mistake in the selection process (1%).

The 210 participants with ID were almost equally distributed between women (51%) and men (49%). Their ages ranged between 18 and 79 years ($M = 38.5$; $SD = 13.5$). Of the 205 individuals whose diagnosis was known, 95% were diagnosed as having an intellectual disability ($N = 205$). Specifically, 60% of the people with ID were labeled as mild ID, 29% as moderate ID, 3% as severe ID, and none were considered to have profound ID. The majority of the individuals who participated were their own guardians (78%).

This article uses the term "family" to refer to either actual family members of the participants with disabilities or their paid professional caregivers. In the case of participants who no longer had connections with their families, the managers of the sheltered workshops provided contact information for these paid caregivers. Of

the 364 families identified, 185 returned the completed survey (51% return rate). The reasons for 179 families not to participate included that they did not return the survey (66%); the consents of adults with ID who were their own guardians were not available (30%); or surveys were returned as undeliverable (4%). Respondents were parents (43%), extended family (19%), or paid professional caregivers (38%). Most of the family respondents were females (81%). Finally, the ages of family members ranged between 22 and 83 ($M = 51.4$, $SD = 13.6$, $N = 177$).

Staff members in the sheltered workshops were asked to complete a survey for each person with ID who participated in the study as well as for each person with ID who did not participate yet his or her guardian did. As a result, staff members were asked to complete 246 surveys. The response rate was 91% with 224 surveys returned. On average, each staff member completed 1.9 surveys ($SD = 2.09$) with a range from 1 to 18 surveys completed per each staff member. Of the 219 staff who indicated their roles in workshops, 41% were supervisors, 14% were program managers, 5% were job coaches, 7% were quality specialists, and 6% were qualified mental retardation professionals (QMRP). The remaining 28% of the staff members had other various roles including coordinators, specialists, administrative personnel, or team leaders. Most staff respondents were female (79%), whereas males comprised 21% of the total, and their ages ranged between 20 and 71 ($M = 39$; $SD = 11.4$; $N = 212$).

3.2. Instrumentation

A structured interview protocol for adults with ID and two written surveys for families and staff members were developed for the purpose of data collection. The instruments asked participants to rate the importance of 24 items influencing their choice to work in sheltered workshops over employment outside of sheltered workshops. However, adults with ID were asked to rate only 17 out of the 24 items because a pilot revealed that some questions would require additional time for explanation and therefore would not fit into the 30 minutes allowed for interviewing. As a result, items such as those referring to past negative work experiences (two items), agency support (four items), and the preservation of disability-related services and benefits (one item) were dropped.

The 24 items were designed to assess the importance of the following 10 main considerations: (a) long-term placement; (b) safety; (c) work skills; (d) social envi-

ronment; (e) work hours; (f) transportation; (g) disability benefit; (h) agency support; (i) system of services; and (j) negative experiences. More than one item was associated with each of the 10 considerations in order to increase the stability of responses.

The surveys for families and staff members also asked respondents to indicate the most important consideration. The three instruments then focused on who encouraged adults with ID and their families to choose the sheltered workshops and who, if anyone, encouraged adults with ID and their families to pursue employment outside workshops. Respondents were asked to check one or more items from a list of possible categories of people such as parents, friends, or professionals.

3.3. Validity

Social validity, instrument validity, and inter-observer agreement data were collected to enhance the validity of the study.

3.3.1. Social validity

To enhance the social validity of the study, the investigator requested the opinion of members of the disability community and of other experts regarding the importance of the study, the relevance of the questions, and the appropriateness of the method [1,14,42,67]. Overall, 17 people were involved in this phase of the study, including two parents of individuals with ID, their respective son and daughter, three advocates and members of the disability community, four faculty members at the University (three experts in disability policies and one in inquiry methods), three professionals who provide training and technical assistance to employment agencies, a director of a supported employment agency, a person responsible for a transition program designed for high schools students, and a professional in the area of social services pursuing a doctoral degree in special education. These people gave positive feedback about the importance of this study and contributed with suggestions about the instruments.

3.3.2. Instrument validity

A second way the validity of the study was enhanced related to improving the accuracy of the instrument for data collection. One of the major threats to validity was identified in the risk of acquiescence on the part of people with ID. Acquiescence occurs when the participants answer in a way that they believe will be pleasing to the investigator instead of providing an honest

response. Typically this happens when they have not understood a question, but are probably uncomfortable asking for clarification [24,47,55,66]. To reduce the risk of acquiescence, the questions were designed to be short, specific, and succinct [45]. All questions included the option of “do not know/not applicable” to discourage respondents from blindly guessing among the available options. Moreover, open-ended questions were asked both as ice-breaker at the beginning of the survey [47] and as a way to allow for some degree of conversational interactions during the interviews. The intention of the open-ended questions was also to help respondents to focus on the topics of the survey, yet still offering them an opportunity to expand on the information provided in the close-ended questions. All of the questions in the interview protocol were supported with icons or drawings that graphically represented alternative answers [25,44,45].

In addition, the investigator rated on a scale 1 (understanding) to 4 (no understanding) his perception about whether or not respondents with ID understood each question. Answers rated with either 3 or 4 (i.e. almost no understanding and no understanding) were discarded from data analysis.

3.3.3. Inter-observer agreement

A third way to enhance the validity of the study was based on ensuring that the interviewer understood the respondents' answers correctly. The accuracy with which the interviewer interpreted and recorded the answers was determined by computing the Cohen Kappa coefficient of inter-observer agreement [30,60]. The coefficient was computed by comparing the answers recorded by the investigator with the answers recorded by external observers who assisted during 38 interviews (18% of the total). The coefficient yielded a score of 0.79, considered high agreement [26]. The external observers were two doctoral students in Special Education, one doctoral student in Education Psychology, and one professional expert in training and technical assistance of supported employment. All the external observers spoke English as their first language.

3.4. Data analysis

Given the descriptive nature of this study, most data analysis was based on statistics such as frequencies or means. Before proceeding with these computations, however, the 24 items were consolidated into 10 considerations. This was performed by averaging the rat-

ings of each group of items that corresponded to each of the 10 considerations, respectively.

An attempt was made to perform repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare the triad-wise responses of each adult with ID with his or her respective family members and with the staff member who supervised him or her in the workshop (triad-wise comparison). Unfortunately, this analysis was not feasible because of missing data. Although the sample included 142 completed triads of adults with ID, their respective family members, and their respective staff in workshops overall, only 45 triads at most were available with responses about the importance of the 24 considerations. This resulted from an inconsistency in responses, whereby not all components of any given triad rated the same considerations listed in the survey.

4. Results

The result section is divided in two parts. The first part focuses on the considerations that were important or very important for respondents in the choice between sheltered workshops and competitive employment. The second part focuses on who encouraged or supported the decision to choose a sheltered workshop over integrated employment.

4.1. Considerations influencing the choice in favor of sheltered workshops

Most families identified the following considerations as important or very important in influencing their choices in favor of sheltered workshops: safety (69%), transportation (69%), long-term placement (66%), work hours (59%), disability benefits (57%), social environment (55%), and work skills (55%). Less than half of the families also indicated the following as important or very important reasons for choosing workshops: system of services (38%), negative experiences (36%), and agency support (42%). Overall, the responses of adults with ID and staff members mirror families' responses (see Fig. 1).

Family and staff were also asked to indicate which consideration was the most important in influencing their choice between sheltered workshops and outside employment. Families ($N = 142$) reported that the most important concerns were long-term placement (29%), safety (23%), work skills issues (11%), and social environment at work (11%). Less than 10% of families considered other concerns as most important

for them. Staff members reported that the most important considerations driving their choices in favor of sheltered workshops regarded the social environment at work (29%), safety (16%), long-term placement (14%), and work skills of adults with ID (11%). Less than 10% of staff members considered other concerns as most important for them (see Fig. 2).

4.2. Professional influence on the choices made by adults with ID and their families

This section describes the extent to which professionals and other people encouraged adults with ID and their families either to pursue employment outside of workshops or to choose sheltered workshops.

4.2.1. Encouragement to pursue employment outside of sheltered workshops

According to families ($N = 184$), there were a number of people who encouraged adults with ID to pursue employment outside of the workshops and are as follows: case managers (31%), vocational rehabilitation counselors (29%), mothers (26%), residential services staff (22%), staff members in the workshops (22%), fathers (14%), siblings (11%), school personnel (10%), relatives (10%), and friends (7%). Because respondents could indicate more than one category of people, percentages do not sum up to 100%. Interestingly, 40% of the families, 46% of the adults with ID, and 60% of staff members in workshops either reported that nobody had encouraged the adults with ID to seek employment outside of sheltered workshops or that they did not know if anybody had done so. Figure 3 shows the responses provided by each group of participants.

4.2.2. Encouragement to choose sheltered workshops

According to families ($N = 182$), the following individuals encouraged their sons or daughters to choose sheltered workshops: case managers (43%), mothers (30%), residential services staff (30%), vocational rehabilitation counselors (28%), fathers (23%), staff members in the workshops (23%), school personnel (14%), siblings (12%), friends (10%), relatives (8%), or other people (13%). The responses from staff members and adults with ID mirrored these results. It is noteworthy that 37% of the families reported that their sons or daughters decided on their own to attend workshops. Moreover, 23% of the families reported that their sons and daughters did not have other choices other than to attend the sheltered workshops. Percentages do not sum up to 100% because each respondent could indicate more than one category of people. Figure 4 shows the responses provided by each group of participants.

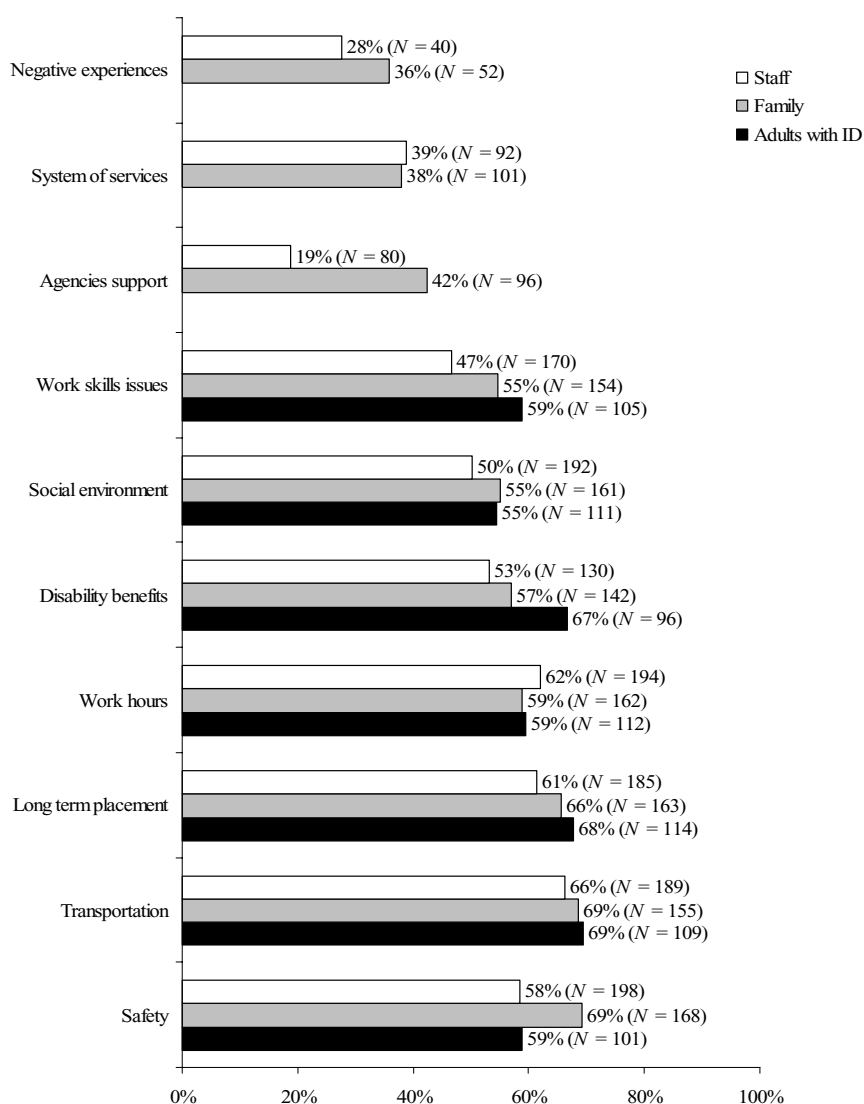


Fig. 1. Considerations influencing the choice of employment.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore why adults with intellectual disabilities (ID) work in sheltered workshops despite the prevalence of literature indicating that they and their families would prefer integrated employment [7,13,37] and despite the institution of national and state regulations promoting the participation of people with disabilities in the general labor market. A major focus of the study was to understand the factors that influence the choices of adults with ID and their families in favor of sheltered employment as well as to comprehend the role played by professionals in disability services in encouraging adults with ID and

their families to pursue employment outside sheltered workshops.

The majority of respondents indicated that the following considerations were important or very important reasons influencing their choices between sheltered workshops and outside employment: safety, transportation to and from the workplace, long-term placement, convenience of work hours, retention of disability benefits, work skill requirements, and social environment. However, respondents did not demonstrate wide agreement on which one of these considerations was the most important reason influencing their choices. For instance, although 57% of the families considered “disability benefits” as an important or very important con-

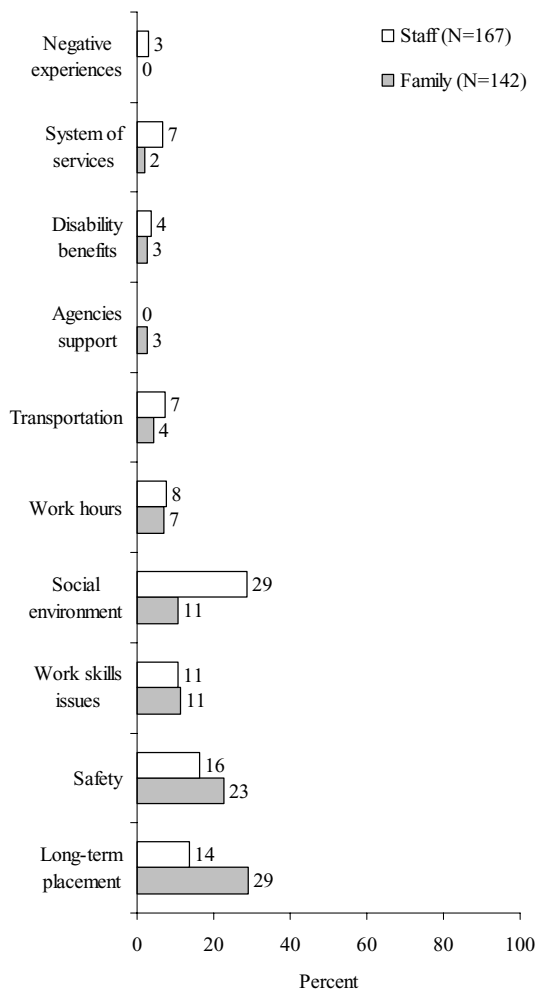


Fig. 2. Most important considerations influencing the choice of employment.

sideration, only 3% of them regarded this issue as the most important reason influencing their choices about day activities. Similarly, whereas 69% of the families considered “transportation” an important or very important consideration, only 4% of them considered it as the most important reason influencing their choices. It is noteworthy that only 11% of the staff members in sheltered workshops reported that the work skills of adults with ID were the most important issue in their choices about employment ($N = 167$). Overall, only three considerations were regarded as the most important ones by groups of participants representing at least 20% of the total: 29% of families agreed that “long-term placement” was the most important consideration, whereas 23% agreed that safety was the most important when deciding about day activities. Similarly, 29% of staff members agreed that “social environment” was the

most important consideration influencing the choices of adults with ID.

This data suggest that if families are to choose or support integrated employment for their sons and daughters, the service-delivery system must address the long-term placement factor. It is important that employment services work to increase job retention, reduce the time necessary for the transition between jobs, and place adults with disabilities on a career path. Moreover, it is important to reassure families that safety in integrated employment is not a greater concern than in sheltered workshops and is something that can be easily addressed when and if the need arises. Additionally, the findings showed that the social environment of workplaces is an important factor in encouraging adults with disabilities and their families to seek and retain integrated employment.

Findings also showed that professionals in disability services could play a greater role in encouraging adults with ID and their families to pursue employment outside sheltered workshops. It is noteworthy that 46% of adults with ID, 40% of families, and 60% of staff in workshops did not recall anybody encouraging adults with ID to pursue employment outside sheltered workshops. Moreover, only 22% of the families reported that staff in sheltered workshops encouraged their sons or daughters to pursue employment outside workshops. Similarly, only 29% of the families reported that vocational rehabilitation counselors encouraged adults with ID to pursue employment outside workshops, and only 31% of the families reported that case managers recommended outside employment. At the same time, some professionals in disability services encouraged adults with ID and their families to choose sheltered workshops. For instance, 43% of families reported that case managers encouraged their sons or daughters to choose sheltered workshops, 30% of the families reported that staff in residential services did so, and 28% of the families indicated that vocational rehabilitation recommended the choice of sheltered workshops.

These findings suggest that a notable percentage of professionals may not value or believe that integrated employment should be the first choice available to individuals with ID and other developmental disabilities. Opportunities for employment are influenced by the attitudes that staff holds towards the abilities of people with disabilities. Decades of research and practice have shown that when given the proper support and appropriate job placement, individuals with significant disabilities can have real jobs with real pay [31]. However, it appears that many neglect to educate the “gatekeep-

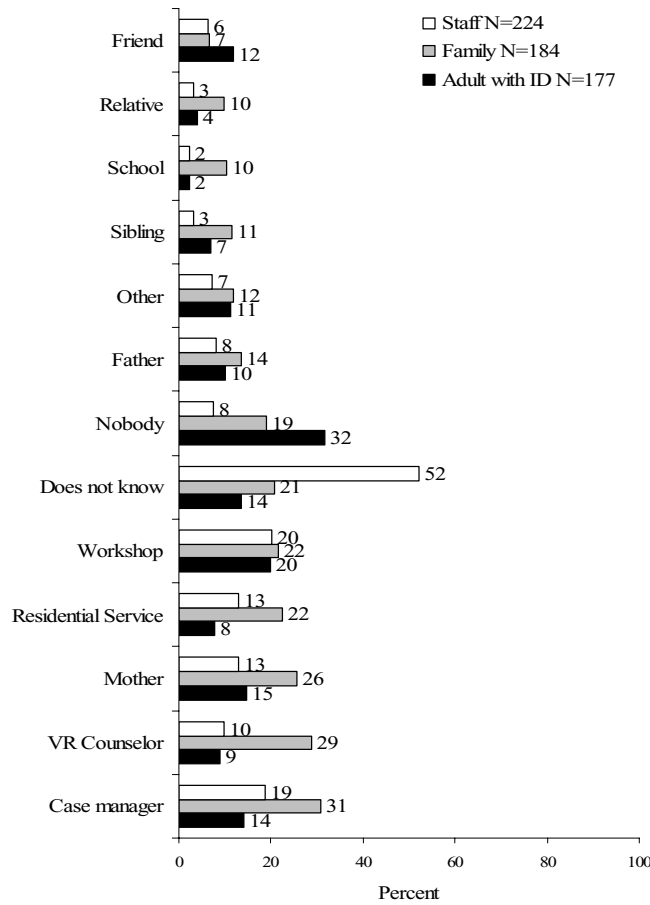


Fig. 3. People encouraging participants to pursue integrated employment.

ers” to employment—case managers, teachers, workshop staff, residential staff, and most importantly individuals with disabilities and their families. Professional development for all stakeholders is essential in ensuring employment as the first option for people with disabilities.

Finally, if policy makers want community rehabilitation programs to promote competitive employment, then a higher percentage of the funds must emphasize competitive employment. We can no longer accept that only \$1 is being spent on supported employment services while \$4 is being spent on segregated services. Will states create systems that can increase the percentage of individuals working competitively? Will we begin to develop comprehensive ways to increase outcomes (e.g., wages and hours) to reduce the poverty-level of many individuals with disabilities? When will the *Olmstead* court decision impact employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities?

5.1. Limitations

Some caution may apply in generalizing the findings of this study beyond this sample. For instance, because the study was conducted within one state, generalization of findings to other geographic areas of the country should be made with discretion. Moreover, because there were no lists of adults with disabilities who attended sheltered workshops, participants could not be randomly selected. Instead, participants’ selection was performed through contacting service providers who run sheltered workshops. Sheltered workshops could not be randomly selected either because it was necessary to identify organizations willing to collaborate extensively by selecting participants, mailing surveys and reminders to the guardians, allowing the investigator to interview the participants in the facilities, and permitting staff to complete the surveys about personnel in the workshops. Random selection typically is recommended to enhance the potential of generalizing

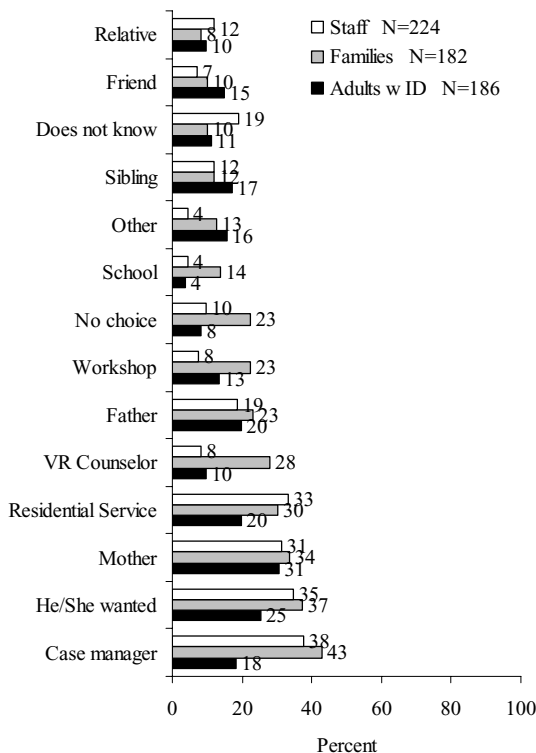


Fig. 4. People encouraging participants to choose sheltered workshops.

the findings beyond the sample. Another limitation related to sampling was that adults with disabilities were selected by staff in the workshops. Although the investigator provided staff with specific selection criteria, the investigator did not have direct control over the extent to which the criteria were actually applied. This procedure was necessary in order to comply with the regulations in place for the protection of human subjects. Finally, adults with disabilities who were their own guardian were overrepresented compared to participants who had appointed guardians. This unbalance occurred because a number of guardians failed to return the signed consent forms that would have allowed for the interviewing of the adults with disabilities. In contrast, almost all adults with disabilities who were their own guardians could give their consent to be interviewed without the need for another's permission.

6. Conclusion

Despite the fact that individuals with disabilities, families and staff prefer integrated employment and contrary to current state and federal regulations favor-

ing integrated employment, a number of concerns still remain and impact the decision in favor of entry into sheltered workshops. We recommend that policy makers and service providers address the following considerations when designing new regulations or delivering services, respectively: 1) prioritizing initiatives that lead to long-term employment and career paths, 2) addressing safety concerns, 3) supporting workplaces that foster good social environments, and 4) educating case managers, teachers, workshop staff, residential staff, and most importantly, individuals with disabilities and their families to ensure that employment is the first option for people with disabilities. To sustain such choices, it is necessary that national and state policies and practices shift funding and services away from facility-based programs to integrated community employment.

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