Background

This is the fourth in a series of briefs on the findings from a Delphi process conducted by the Employment Learning Community in 2013–2014. More information on the Employment Learning Community and the Delphi process can be found in Brief #1 (Introduction, Values, and Overall Themes).

This brief focuses on the role of education and training for job seekers with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), which was the third-ranked overarching priority among the Delphi panel members.

Understanding the role of education and training for job seekers

This category of policies and practices was focused on effective use of job skills training and/or postsecondary education to prepare people with IDD for jobs. Recommendations are grouped into two sub-categories:

1. Increasing the use and effectiveness of job skills training (69*)
2. Increasing the use of postsecondary education as a step toward integrated employment (31)

Increasing the use and effectiveness of job skills training

Of the two sub-categories, the higher-ranked priority was increasing the use and effectiveness of job skills training for job seekers with IDD. The panel’s recommendations were the following:

• Providing skills training that is aligned with the individual's strengths and interests and is required to meet their vocational goal. These trainings can be formal, within a separate training program, or less formal (such as an on-the-job training) (66)
• Developing training to facilitate the transition from sheltered settings to community employment (63)
• Tailoring training to fit sectors that are hiring (54)
• Promoting vocationally specific or pre-employment skills-based training (46)

Increasing the use of postsecondary education as a step toward integrated employment

The other major aspect of education and training discussed was increasing postsecondary education opportunities for individuals with IDD. Recommendations related to postsecondary education were:

• Developing certificates which can be attained by attending postsecondary education programs in the local community that match the training and skills that local businesses seek (59)
• Tapping the direct link between postsecondary institutions and business to find work opportunities (54)
• Developing job training and technical skill classes for people with and without disabilities within the community college system (53)
• Promoting greater demonstration of outcomes, data collection, and dissemination of information on the impact of postsecondary education (including

* Numbers in parentheses are the standardized scores of the item's ranking across panel members. The standardized scores were calculated as follows: Standardized Score = (sum of scores-minimum score)/(maximum score-minimum score)
comparisons of those who access postsecondary education and those who don’t, and longitudinal studies that assess impact and benefit over time) (50)

• Promoting access to and funding for postsecondary education (47)

This area also had two lower-ranked recommendations: promoting dual enrollment in high school and postsecondary education (44), and increasing support for meaningful disability services in colleges for youth with IDD (38).

Conclusions

Job skills training can be controversial within the supported employment field, due to past misuse of the term to place individuals in long-term sheltered “training” programs that did not lead to integrated employment outcomes. The Delphi panel’s responses, however, have indicated a need to rethink the role of training, including both postsecondary education and job-specific skills training.

Panelists recommended improving the skills training options available to job seekers with IDD, with a focus on training aimed at specific job skills related to vocational goals and to employers’ hiring needs. Postsecondary education, while lower-ranked than specific skills training, also emerged as an important goal. Recommendations in this area emphasized both increased access to postsecondary education options and better linkages between postsecondary education and employment opportunities.