

Disabled Workers And Rehabilitation Services

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IN THE FALL of 1960 the Social Security Administration conducted a sample survey of disabled workers—disability insurance beneficiaries and workers whose insurance status had been frozen—in the eight largest metropolitan areas of the Nation.¹ The survey was started before the effective date of the 1960 amendment to the Social Security Act providing for disability benefits to workers under age 50.

Before this amendment a disabled worker under age 50 could not receive disability insurance benefits. He could, however, be allowed a “disability freeze”—that is, the length of time for which he was allowed a period of disability would not be counted in determining eligibility and computing the benefit amount unless it was to his advantage.

Field representatives and claims representatives of the Social Security Administration obtained information through personal interviews with disability insurance beneficiaries aged 50 and over and workers under age 50 with a disability freeze. The sample originally included 2,280 beneficiaries and 1,113 workers with a freeze. Exclusion of persons in a hospital or other institution or physically or mentally unable to respond to the survey questions reduced the number in the first group to 1,984 and the number in the second group to 629. These disabled workers were asked if they had received special services to help them learn a new kind of work or to manage better with their handicaps.

Everyone who applies² to the Social Security Administration for a determination of disability

under the old-age, survivors, and disability insurance program is brought to the attention of the appropriate State vocational rehabilitation agency. Relatively few of the disabled persons who were interviewed, however, reported that they had received rehabilitation services of any kind since the established date of the onset of the disability.³

In interpreting the figures presented here, one should keep in mind the fact that the data represent only those workers who were able to respond to the questionnaire, who were not in an institution, and whose benefits were still in current-payment status or whose insurance status was still frozen because they were not engaged in substantial gainful employment.

A larger proportion of the workers with a disability freeze than of disabled insurance beneficiaries were excluded from the analysis. The exclusion of disabled workers in hospitals may have affected to some extent the proportion shown as receiving rehabilitation services,⁴ particularly for workers with a disability freeze. The data for both the beneficiaries and those whose insurance status was frozen are affected, of course, by the length of the period of recall, which extended from the date of onset of the disability to the date of the interview. For many of the disabled, the period to be recalled was one of several years.

PERSONS WHO RECEIVED SERVICES

Only a small proportion of the disability insurance beneficiaries had received rehabilitation services—7 percent of the men and 5 percent of the women (table 1). The beneficiary group received such services less frequently than the workers with a disability freeze, but even among the latter

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¹ New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, San Francisco, Boston, and Pittsburgh metropolitan areas.

² All applicants are given an initial screening by a State disability determination unit. This screening shows that most of them (about 76 percent in 1960) would not profit from vocational rehabilitation services. The remaining applicants are referred to a vocational rehabilitation counselor, and his evaluation results in the elimination of an additional number of applicants from consideration for services. The proportion of all applicants who are ultimately accepted for rehabilitation services is small; it was about 3 percent in 1960. See Division of Disability Operations, *Vocational Rehabilitation of OASDI Disability Applicants: Selected Data, 1961*, December 1962.

³ The established date of onset is the administratively determined date when the worker first became disabled under the definition of disability specified in the law. A worker may have had some work handicap before the established date of onset.

⁴ Rehabilitation facilities have increasingly become a part of hospital operations, and some hospitals now provide extensive services. See *Modern Hospitals*, October 1961, pages 90-105.

group three-fourths said they had not taken part in a rehabilitation program. A considerably larger proportion of the men (almost a third) who had been allowed a disability freeze than of the women (a fifth) reported receipt of rehabilitation services.

Public agencies sponsored most of the services received by the disabled persons in the survey. They were the sponsor of the services for more than half of the disability insurance beneficiaries and more than two-thirds of the workers with a disability freeze who had received rehabilitation services (table 2). The disabled workers who said they had received such services under the sponsorship of a State vocational rehabilitation agency outnumbered 2 to 1 those reporting services sponsored by any other type of public agency.

The State public welfare departments were second to the State rehabilitation agencies in the number of men and women disability beneficiaries whom they served. For male workers with a disability freeze, the Veterans Administration was the second most common source of the services.

About 1 in every 5 of the disabled workers who reported receipt of rehabilitation services said that the services were received through a private facility. The proportion was 21 percent among the disabled beneficiaries and 18 percent among the workers with a disability freeze.

Of the disabled persons who reported that they had received rehabilitation services, relatively

TABLE 1.—Rehabilitation status: Percentage distribution of disability insurance beneficiaries and workers with a disability freeze, 1960 survey

Rehabilitation status of disabled workers	Disability insurance beneficiaries			Workers with a disability freeze		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Number in sample who were interviewed ¹	1,984	1,374	610	629	424	205
Total percent.....	100	100	100	100	100	100
Rehabilitation services received:	7	7	5	28	32	20
No rehabilitation services received.....	93	93	95	72	68	80
Did not know of services.....	81	79	86	52	47	63
Knew of services.....	12	14	9	20	21	17
Made no contact with rehabilitation agency.....	7	7	6	7	6	8
Made contact with rehabilitation agency.....	5	6	3	13	15	9
Contact with agency not reported.....	(?)	-----	(?)	(?)	(?)	-----
Knowledge of services not reported.....	(?)	-----	(?)	-----	-----	-----

¹ Persons in an institution or a hospital and those physically or mentally unable to participate in an interview were excluded from the analysis. No interview was held with 296 beneficiaries and 484 workers with a disability freeze.

² Less than 0.5 percent.

TABLE 2.—Sponsorship of rehabilitation services: Percentage distribution of disability insurance beneficiaries and workers with a disability freeze who had received rehabilitation services, 1960 survey¹

Type of agency	Total	Men
	Disability beneficiaries	
Number in sample who reported rehabilitation services ²	135	103
Total percent.....	100	100
Public agencies.....	54	56
State vocational.....	33	30
Public welfare.....	13	15
Veterans Administration.....	7	10
State workmen's compensation.....	1	2
Private agencies.....	21	18
Agency not identified ³	21	20
	Workers with a disability freeze	
Number in sample who reported rehabilitation services.....	176	135
Total percent.....	100	100
Public agencies.....	71	78
State vocational.....	41	45
Public welfare.....	9	6
Veterans Administration.....	19	24
State workmen's compensation.....	2	2
Private agencies.....	18	16
Agency not identified ³	12	9

¹ Percentage distribution for women in this group not shown; too few cases in sample.

² See footnote 1, table 1.

³ Facilities not clearly identifiable as either public or private.

twice as many of those whose insurance status was frozen as of those who were getting disability insurance benefits received vocational training (table 3). (When all the disabled persons in the sample survey are considered, it is found that the proportion who received this type of training is 11 percent among those whose insurance status had been frozen and 1 percent among the beneficiaries.)

In contrast, physical therapy and medical services were received by proportionately more of the beneficiaries who reported receiving any type of rehabilitation services (55 percent) than of the workers with a disability freeze (41 percent). There was relatively little difference between the two groups in the proportion who received training for leisure-time activities; 16 percent of the beneficiaries and 12 percent of the workers with a disability freeze were given such training.

PERSONS WHO RECEIVED NO SERVICES

One reason that so few of the disabled persons received rehabilitation services seems to have been

TABLE 3.—Rehabilitation services received: Percentage distribution of disability insurance beneficiaries and workers with a disability freeze who had received rehabilitation services, by type of service, 1960 survey ¹

Type of rehabilitation service	Total	Men
Disability beneficiaries		
Number in sample who reported rehabilitation services ²	135	103
Total percent ³	100	100
Vocational training.....	19	22
Physical therapy and medical services.....	55	52
Training for leisure-time activities.....	16	14
Other ⁴	16	17
Workers with a disability freeze		
Number in sample who reported rehabilitation services ²	176	135
Total percent ³	100	100
Vocational training.....	39	42
Physical therapy and medical services.....	41	39
Training for leisure-time activities.....	12	10
Other ⁴	14	16

¹ Percentage distribution for women in this group not shown; too few cases in sample.

² See footnote 1, table 1.

³ Total is smaller than sum of subitems because subitems are not mutually exclusive.

⁴ Includes job placement, training for self-care, and psychological evaluation services.

that few of them were aware of the existence of such facilities. The 1960 survey showed that, among the disabled workers who received no services, almost 9 out of every 10 of the insurance beneficiaries and almost 3 out of every 4 of the workers with a disability freeze said they had not known of such facilities (table 4).

Of the small group that had not received rehabilitation services although they said they knew about them, most (75 percent) were speaking of vocational training. Only 15 percent said they knew about training for self-care.

Among the relatively few disabled persons who knew of but had not received rehabilitation services, more than half of the insurance beneficiaries and a third of the workers with a disability freeze reported that they had made no contact with any rehabilitation agency (table 5). Some of the others had been in touch with a rehabilitation agency but had received no offer of help. This was the substance of the replies from two-thirds of the disability beneficiaries and almost three-fifths of the workers with a disability freeze who had not received rehabilitation services but who had been in contact with an agency. Still others—14 percent of the beneficiaries and 9 percent of

the workers with a disability freeze—said that they had been offered a rehabilitation program but did not accept it because of poor health, inability to pay for services, or lack of transportation to a distant rehabilitation center.

Only a small number of disabled workers said that at one time or another they had been in touch with a rehabilitation agency about the possibility of services but had not as yet received them (table 6). Within this group, more than half of the disability insurance beneficiaries and more than two-fifths of the workers with a disability freeze indicated at the time of the interview that they were no longer interested in the service they had sought earlier. Of those who did express a continued interest in rehabilitation, a larger proportion showed interest in vocational training than in any other type of rehabilitation service.

CONCLUSION

The survey data showed marked differences, with respect to rehabilitation services, between the disability insurance beneficiaries and the workers whose insurance status was frozen. Age was an important factor in the differences. The

TABLE 4.—Knowledge of rehabilitation services: Percentage distribution of disability insurance beneficiaries and workers with a disability freeze who had not received rehabilitation services, by extent of knowledge, 1960 survey

Type of service known	Total	Men	Women
Disability beneficiaries			
Number in sample with no rehabilitation services ¹	1,849	1,271	578
Total percent	100	100	100
Did not know of services.....	87	85	91
Knew of services.....	13	15	9
Knew of vocational training.....	10	12	6
Knew of self-care training.....	2	2	2
Knew of other training.....	2	2	2
Not reported.....	(²)	(²)
Workers with a disability freeze			
Number in sample with no rehabilitation services ¹	453	289	164
Total percent	100	100	100
Did not know of services.....	73	69	79
Knew of services.....	27	31	21
Knew of vocational training.....	21	23	16
Knew of self-care training.....	4	5	4
Knew of other training.....	6	7	3

¹ See footnote 1, table 1.

² Less than 0.5 percent.

TABLE 5.—Contact with rehabilitation agencies: Percentage distribution of disability insurance beneficiaries and workers with a disability freeze who knew of rehabilitation services but had not received rehabilitation services, 1960 survey ¹

Knowledge of and contact with rehabilitation agency	Total	Men
Disability beneficiaries		
Number in sample with no rehabilitation services who knew of services ²	240	187
Total percent.....	100	100
Made no contact with rehabilitation agency.....	55	52
Made contact with rehabilitation agency.....	45	48
No offer of rehabilitation received.....	30	33
Offer not accepted.....	6	5
Other ³	8	10
Not reported.....	(4)	
Workers with a disability freeze		
Number in sample with no rehabilitation services who knew of services ²	124	89
Total percent.....	100	100
Made no contact with rehabilitation agency.....	33	27
Made contact with rehabilitation agency.....	66	72
No offer of rehabilitation received.....	38	43
Offer not accepted.....	6	7
Other ³	23	22
Not reported.....	1	1

¹ Percentage distribution of women in this group not shown; too few cases in sample.

² See footnote 1, table 1.

³ Contact was made, and either the arrangements were in progress or the offer of help had been accepted by the disabled worker who subsequently withdrew from the rehabilitation program.

⁴ Less than 0.5 percent.

workers with a disability freeze were younger than the beneficiaries and probably more aggressive in seeking rehabilitation services and more likely to be regarded by an agency as having a good possibility of rehabilitation. Ever since benefits have been payable to disabled workers under age 50, the number and proportion of favorable disability determinations for workers under age 50 have increased substantially, with some changes in the composition of this group. The proportion in institutions decreased, and the

TABLE 6.—Interest in rehabilitation services at time of interview: Percentage distribution of disability insurance beneficiaries and workers with a disability freeze who had made contact with a rehabilitation agency but had not received rehabilitation services, 1960 survey ¹

Interest in rehabilitation services at time of interview	Total	Men
Disability beneficiaries		
Number with agency contact but no rehabilitation services ²	107	89
Total percent.....	100	100
No interest.....	55	57
Some interest.....	35	31
In vocational training.....	13	12
In psychological and medical services.....	7	4
Job placement.....	8	10
Other.....	7	6
Not reported.....	10	11
Workers with a disability freeze		
Number with agency contact but no rehabilitation services ²	82	64
Total percent.....	100	100
No interest.....	43	39
Some interest.....	49	50
In vocational training.....	18	23
In psychological and medical services.....	5	3
Job placement.....	16	14
Other.....	10	9
Not reported.....	9	11

¹ Percentage distribution for women in this group not shown; too few cases in sample.

² See footnote 1, table 1.

proportion ambulatory without help outside the home increased. These changes suggest the increased possibilities of rehabilitation for the younger disabled worker. As other studies have found, younger disabled workers have a greater chance of acceptance in a rehabilitation program than older workers. If the trend observed in the comparison of 1960 and 1961 disability allowances continues, future studies should find a higher proportion of disabled workers receiving rehabilitation services.