

# Research Summary

CenterOnTransition.org

Center on  
transition  
innovations  
VCU

## Promoting Quality Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities through the Public Vocational Rehabilitation Program

This summary is for general information and reference purposes. The original article is owned and copyright-protected by the Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Chun, J., Anderson, C. A., Rumrill, S., Richard, C., Zhou, K., Fry, H., & Froehlich, R.J., (2024). Promoting quality career pathways for individuals with disabilities through the public vocational rehabilitation program. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 60(3), 299-310. DOI:10.3233/JVR-240014

### A Quick Look

Many state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies have introduced a new strategy to improve quality employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. These new initiatives are called career pathways. The term career pathways refers to planned training, education, support services, and employment opportunities that help someone prepare for work in a specific job area and advance throughout their career. For individuals with disabilities, the career pathway approach helps prepare them for a lifelong career, rather than just their next job. The authors emphasize how this shift is improving employment for individuals with disabilities across the country. This article looked at career pathway initiatives in nine states and their impact on employment for individuals with disabilities.

### Key Findings

This article shows the importance of quality career planning, collaboration, and lifelong learning. The authors found that the career pathway approach promotes quality career planning, lifelong learning, and employer partnerships. By preparing clients for career pathways, they can continually grow and find new opportunities. This supports more sustainable career choices and greater career growth compared to focusing on specific entry-level jobs.

The career pathway approach braids vocational training, education, and work experiences. This prepares employees for an ever-changing job market and sustainable careers. Students with disabilities can now begin work in an area they enjoy while preparing for advancement. These career pathway programs are mutually beneficial for employers, employees, and whole communities.

## Putting It Into Practice

The article highlights key practices educators can use to prepare students for Career Pathway success.

1. Introduce the idea of a career pathway early. Help students understand career development rather than staying in one job for their whole career.
2. Encourage lifelong learning, postsecondary education, and workplace credentials.
3. Connect students with VR early for personalized career guidance.
4. Make sure students are happy with their chosen career pathway. Check often.
5. Empower students throughout their career planning process. Self-advocacy is key to future career development.

## Where To Go from Here?

Partnering with your local Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselors is critical. VR offers new opportunities, insights, and employer partnerships. Involving employers helps students prepare for in-demand careers. Employers can also support the development of valued and adaptable employment skills.

You can prepare students for their future careers by introducing career pathways. Instead of helping students pick a specific job for the future, support them in finding a career path. This means emphasizing continued education, skill development, and career advancement. Identify postsecondary education opportunities, workplace credentials, and apprenticeships in their career pathway. And finally, support self-advocacy skills and self-direction. These skills prepare students for the active role they will play in their future career development.

## Learn More

Access this article by visiting the [RRTC Research Articles Database](#).