



National Network

Information, Guidance and Training on the
Americans with Disabilities Act

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ADA Systematic Review: Summary of Year 2, Rapid Evidence Review¹

Background: Research on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) includes many different issues and impacts diverse groups of people. Because of this broad range of research, policy makers are often unsure about the true impact of the ADA. We are getting close to the 25th anniversary of the ADA, and we still do not know for certain if the law is meeting its original goals. To address this uncertainty, the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) is conducting a five-year review of the ADA as part of the NIDRR-funded National ADA Knowledge Translation Center based at the University of Washington. The project has three steps: a scoping review, a rapid evidence review, and systematic reviews. The research team has recently finished the second year of the project (the rapid evidence review).

Rapid Evidence Review: The purpose of the rapid evidence review is to begin improving our understanding of what findings exist about the impact of the ADA, and to create a process for reviewing research in the future. This second stage responds to findings from the first year of this project (the scoping review) that was completed in 2013. The scoping review involved gathering all of the scientific research on the ADA. We created a summary of which groups of people were studied; what areas were most often studied; how the topics were studied; and what research needed further attention. The area of employment was selected for the rapid evidence review because it is a critical policy priority. It also has the largest amount of research and presents many conflicting arguments that need further answers.

Research Question: Based on ADA stakeholder feedback, the rapid evidence review specifically looked at: *What evidence exists that the ADA has influenced knowledge, attitudes and perceptions about the employment of people with disabilities?*

What We Did:

- Collected feedback from the ADA Expert Panel and representatives from the ADA National Network to help identify the different topics areas to review, the type of research to include, and common debates about the ADA's influence.
- Assessed the quality of the employment research using an evaluation guide.
- Compiled ADA employment research evidence in a database and categorized it using a process called thematic coding.
- Analyzed the evidence using an adapted technique called meta-synthesis. This process involves identifying and describing findings and conclusions about the ADA in relation to the research question.

What We Found:

- 208 records (i.e. research journal articles/reports) about employment were identified and reviewed. 118 of these records were assessed to be rigorous qualitative and/or quantitative research. 60 of these records were specific to the research question.
- The research evidence shows that the ADA has influenced:
 - Individual knowledge and experiences of employment: (e.g. self-advocacy, impairment type/stigma, role of service providers, dispute resolution/complaints, workplace culture).
 - Employer perspectives and responsibilities related to employing people with disabilities (e.g. accommodations, role of disability, technical assistance, indirect/direct costs).
- From these findings, we conclude that the ADA has influenced knowledge, attitudes and perceptions about the employment of people with disabilities with regards to: (1) knowledge of the law; (2) the perceived employability of people with disabilities; and (3) workplace culture.

What Is Next: We will begin stage three of the project: full systematic reviews of selected topics identified by the research team with help from the ADA Expert Panel and other key stakeholders. Moving forward, we will continue to share our research findings to increase the use of ADA research to help inform policies and practices that maximize the full inclusion in society for individuals with disabilities.

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Content was developed by the Department of Disability and Human Development at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and is based on professional consensus of ADA experts and the ADA National Network.

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