Enclave Employment at Virginia Colleges and Universities

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Summary. Surveys taken in 1991 and 1992 in Virginia suggest that the enclave model of employment may be a more successful and long-term method of employing individuals with mental disabilities (IMDs) within Virginia college grounds departments. Individual, competitive placement of IMDs seems to be less successful, resulting in increased level of temporary and short-term employment. Additional research is needed to document the methods and benefits of employment used by other grounds departments, including colleges outside Virginia in the employment of IMDs.
to the survey. The 1992 survey consisted of open-ended or opinion questions and was sent to the 13 colleges agreeing to participate in a follow-up survey. Three weeks after sending the survey, a follow-up letter was sent to the colleges encouraging them to participate in the survey. Two weeks after the second contact, nonresponding colleges were telephoned to encourage participation. This survey had 10 respondents. Both surveys were tallied and the results were reported quantitatively and descriptively to measure several aspects of IMD employment within Virginia college grounds departments.

Results of the 1991 survey showed that 21 of the 62 colleges responding (36%) have employed IMDs, with 11 colleges (18%) currently employing, and 10 colleges (16%) previously employing IMDs. The survey also showed the methods used to employ IMDs within a college grounds department (Fig. 1).

From the 1992 survey, we found that 27 IMDs currently worked for 8 of the 10 Virginia college grounds departments responding. Of these 27 IMDs, 20 (74%) were employed as members of an enclave and 7 (26%) were individual employees (Fig. 2).

Whether an employee was a member of an enclave may relate to the job's being permanent or temporary and should be explored in future research. A slightly higher number of permanent than temporary jobs were filled by IMDs. Of the 20 permanent employees, 15 (75%) were members of an enclave, and of the 7 temporary employees, 5 (71%) were members of an enclave (Fig. 2). The five temporary employees were to be given the opportunity to transfer out of the enclave and become an individual, permanent member of a college grounds crew after completing their temporary assignment.

Whether an IMD was an individual employee or part of an enclave appears to influence length of employment. According to the 10 survey respondents with a history of employing IMDs, 20 of the 25 IMDs ever employed as members of an enclave were still employed (Fig. 3). Of the 42 previously or currently employed as individual employees, only 7 were still employed.

When asked to evaluate the IMDs on specific work-related criteria, only 5 of the 10 responded; therefore, it is impossible to make broad judgments from this information (Table 1). However, the results are consistent with similar surveys in other employment areas (DeHart-Bennett and Reif, 1990; Rhodes and Valenta, 1985) and are useful to indicate trends worth further investigation. IMDs are rated above medium on all characteristics except ability to work with supervisor. The latter problem may be due in part to lack of training or experience of supervisors in working with IMDs, as the survey reveals that only three colleges have grounds supervisors who are trained to work with IMDs.

The responses to the open-ended questions from grounds supervisors with experience in working with IMDs are useful in evaluating and reinforcing the perceived effectiveness of enclave and individual employment of IMDs. Also, the responses target issues for further research such as the benefits of employing IMDs as part of a grounds crew, as shown by the following responses to the question "What are the advantages to using IMDs as part of the grounds staff?"

- "We currently have a groundsman position that is frozen. The enclave has enabled the college to accomplish its grounds maintenance responsibilities."
- "Helps build staff morale. The grounds staff and the IMDs work well together."
- "The two enclaves free our regular grounds staff to operate equipment for more complicated jobs. Their primary duties are to police the campus daily for litter. They do a fantastic job."
- "Is here every day and does a great job."
- "IMDs work well with proper supervision."
- "We receive additional supervision help from the head-injury department affiliated with the Virginia Commonwealth University Rehabilitation and Training Center."

Additional areas of research could involve looking at the difficulty a grounds supervisor may encounter in employing IMDs, as shown by the responses to the question "What have
been the disadvantages to using IMDs as part of the grounds staff?"

- "Sometimes slows down work progress" (when not part of an IMD enclave).
- "None."
- "At times, it may be impossible to have another employee work with the IMD."
- "The IMDs become confused and wander occasionally."
- "The IMDs have limited versatility."
- "There were some communication problems. There was also the problem of getting the crews to always treat the IMDs as valuable employees."
- "Most often, bureaucratic snags are the greatest disadvantage."

(The respondent was referring to the paperwork and procedures involved in employing IMDs.)

This information could be particularly valuable in developing training programs for grounds supervisors.

The top four duties performed by IMDs, as reported by college grounds departments, were litter control (90%), leaf removal (81%), lawn mowing (76%), and snow removal (76%). The college grounds departments report that the top six tools used by IMDs were leaf rakes (100%), shovels (100%), their own hands (87%), snow shovels (78%), paper picks (78%), and garden rakes (78%). These results are consistent with the study by DeHart and Relf (1990) concerning the work skills and tools used by IMDs in private horticulture businesses in Virginia. This information is helpful to grounds supervisors in understanding what type of tasks IMDs can perform and where IMDs can fit into the grounds maintenance program.

The grounds maintenance industry has a need for capable, reliable employees. Contractual employment of enclaves from sheltered workshops eliminates some of the related problems with training, supervision, and paperwork for the employer and provides long-term employment to the individual than individual competitive placement.

**Table 1. Ratings (1 = poor; 4 = excellent, with 2 and 3 equally distributed) of individuals with mental disabilities by five Virginia college and university grounds supervisors.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to work with other grounds employees</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to work with supervisor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to interact with the public</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to interact with employees during free time (breaks and lunches)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall contribution to the appearance of the college campus</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fig. 3. Employment record of individuals with mental disabilities at 10 Virginia college grounds departments.**

**Literature Cited**


