

Career Counseling for Displaced Workers

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Employment is necessary for most people who need income to survive and contribute to society. The act of finding, growing, and maintaining a career with longevity can be challenging in a myriad of ways. In this paper, we will discuss the population and statistics of displaced workers. We will examine career counseling theories, barriers faced, treatment plans, resources, and spirituality's role in finding new work for displaced workers while also treating comorbid issues.

Displaced Workers Population and the Need for Career Counseling

Displaced workers can be defined as someone who has lost their job by termination or layoff and may not return to the same job or industry (Connecticut Department of Labor, 2021). It also includes homemakers returning to the workforce after losing financial support from their spouses and those entrepreneurs affected by a bad economy. Spouses of military personnel who had to leave their jobs directly due to relocation are also categorized as displaced workers (New York State, n.d.). It is when unemployment is not due to performance or disciplinary reasons. Career counseling can be a helpful resource for displaced workers as they can feel lost in their next steps toward employment. Career counseling can help guide them as well as provide support for any comorbid issues, such as anxiety or depression due to job loss.

Displaced Workers Employment Statistics

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were 2.6 million displaced workers who held jobs for at least three years from 2021-2023 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024). In addition, there were 3.7 million displaced workers who held their jobs for less than three years (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024). According to the career website Indeed.com, the industries with the highest numbers of dislocated workers are agriculture, amusement parks,

bars and pubs, media and entertainment, construction, manufacturing, non-profits, hotels and accommodations, and retail sports and performing arts, to name a few (Herrity, 2024). Workplace displacement can also impact specific demographics. According to the American Institute of Research (AIR), black workers are the first to be let go and spend a longer time in unemployment compared to White, Asian, and Latino workers. In addition, women are displaced more often than men, and those over 65 years of age usually spend more time in unemployment before finding a new job (Neering & Davis, 2023)

Career Counseling Theory Utilized for Displaced Workers

Different career counseling theories and assessments can be utilized to help guide displaced workers. Counselors must make sure to explore employment as well as any comorbid issues presenting that may be due to unemployment. Theories that can be used in counseling displaced workers include the theory of work adjustment (TWA), narrative theory, Holland's theory of personality and traits, and Super's Life Span and Life Space theory. In addition to these career counseling theories, other modalities such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and solution-focused therapy (SFT) can be used to explore comorbid presenting issues such as depression or anxiety due to unemployment.

Career Counseling Displaced Workers Treatment Plan

The treatment plan for displaced workers is unique to each person. The counselor must build rapport and trust with the client to explore their unemployment situation and its additional issues. Theories such as Super's Life Span and Life Space theory can be utilized to address that careers are not always conducted in a linear path and can often move through stages back and forth from growth to establishment to maintenance and back to growth again (Brown, 2020).

Narrative theory can help the client and therapist understand their path to employment and career choice and how their past influenced it. Dissecting why the client was interested in their job can help their future search. In addition, the Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) can be used to discuss what is important and valuable to them regarding work. Are they looking for a high-paying job or prefer flexibility over salary? As part of the job search, Holland's theory of interest can be explored with assessments such as the ONET Interest Profiler to find different industries and occupations. In addition to the career counseling modalities, the counselor will also want to assess any presenting issues, such as low self-confidence, isolation, anxiety, or depression, that may be present due to losing their job and being unemployed. A modality like cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) can help explore and reframe any negative thoughts to increase productivity toward career and personal goals. This type of treatment plan would be efficient in assisting a displaced worker to cope with the loss of their job and explore opportunities to find a new one. In addition, it would provide client support, validation, and coping skills to be utilized during the career search and transition.

Environmental and Personal Barriers to Work

Unfortunately, there are personal and environmental barriers to employment. Black workers are statistically let go at higher rates than White, Asian, and Latin American workers and are also unemployed longer (Neering & Davis, 2023). Other barriers, such as technology and automation, may also be contributing environmental factors forcing layoffs (Neering, 2023). Finally, aging is another barrier, as clients get older and are sometimes forced to retire early. Awareness of these barriers while exploring future opportunities will help us find the right fit.

Recommendations and Resources

There is a plethora of resources available to help in the job search. Online job search platforms like LinkedIn, Glassdoor, and Indeed exist to help both clients and companies find the right matches for the job. In addition to job search platforms, some companies help with resume-building and interviewing tips, such as myperfectresume.com. Finally, there are agencies known as headhunters that can be used to help guide people to a job that is a win-win for the client and company.

Spirituality and Career Counseling

To treat a patient who is a displaced worker, a counselor must explore a patient's career path, unemployment, and comorbid issues such as low self-confidence, anxiety, or depression. Furthermore, a counselor must address any client's barriers when exploring new opportunities and career fields. The counselor will also want to discuss any religious or spiritual beliefs that may affect the job search. Some clients work toward finding a career that is more of a passion or calling, such as ministry. A research study stated that the perception of a calling for work has been reported to include 44% of college students and 50% of working adults (Lemke, 2020).

Conclusion

In conclusion, displaced workers are described as people who have lost their jobs not due to performance or disciplinary action but to layoffs, lousy economy, closures, or losing a spouse's income and re-entering the workforce. This type of unemployment can also leave a patient feeling lost and not knowing their next step. This is where career counseling can be an effective tool in guiding them to a new career. Career counseling can provide resources to search for new job opportunities, explore new careers, and work through barriers. In addition, during career counseling, a therapist can also work on any comorbid issues associated with job loss,

such as depression and anxiety. Overall, career counseling can benefit displaced workers as it explores past career opportunities and helps guide them to their next career.

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