



# EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE DISABILITY SECTOR

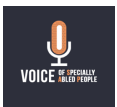
## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The social model of disability finds its organism in the social and rights movements of the 1960s surrounding race, gender, sexuality, and disability led to questioning of power, knowledge, and rights imbalances. Powered by people with disabilities' low public profile, conformist societal attitudes, design models, weak legislation, and poor understanding of built environment accessibility needs of people with disability, a significant extent of the existing built environment has been designed without people with disabilities in mind. Hence, this paper seeks to analyze the future demand trends for rehabilitation jobs within the disability sector within the United States.

The need for rehabilitation services is consistently increasing with an exponential rise in the burden of disabilities. Over 1 billion people, that is, 15% of the world's population experience disability globally (World Bank). In the United States, approximately 57 million people, 20% of the global population, live with a disability (Disability in the USA Now, 2015). These disabilities exist across groups, with the most common groups listed under mobility, visual, hearing, and intellectual disabilities. Beyond limitations, the burden of disability is strongly linked to enormous healthcare costs. It was projected to be responsible for about 60% of personal bankruptcies, a significant factor on the nation's economy (Ma et al, 2014). The concept of disability has been repeatedly established as a presence of impairment, activity limitation, and participation restriction. Health rehabilitation is crucial to ensure that persons with disabilities live independently without developing preventable secondary conditions. Within the context of this paper, health rehabilitation jobs such as audiology, nursing, occupational therapy (OT), and physical therapy (PT) target the diverse health needs of persons with disabilities with a common goal—to achieve functional independence. Despite a glaring need for health rehabilitation services within the disability sector, human resources for rehabilitation remain inadequate.

Despite its centrality in the supply-demand chain, few studies examine nurse turnover and work environment factors that influence patient and nurse outcomes. Understanding the quality of nursing work life is important to the future of the United States' healthcare system as these findings may contribute to the improvement of nursing retention strategies which ultimately reflect upon the care individuals with disabilities receive. In turn, the future of employment opportunities for rehabilitation nurses will remain bleak unless strides are taken to highlight the dire situation they face and legislation and policy concurrently address their needs.

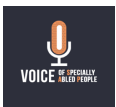
According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, in 2020-2021, there were 7.2 million public school students that received special education services. This statistic accounts for 15% of the total American student population (private schools, excluded), which suggests that there is a necessity to make sure that resources for this minority group. Therefore, evaluating whether there are tangible resources available for this populous is evermore paramount. Primarily, there is an advantage in identifying supply and demand trends within the education sub-sector—as it pertains to the disability industry. The importance of disability service extends to the manner in which students are educated: from 2009 to 2020, there was an average 13% of students that spent 40% (or less) in general education classes (NCES, 2022). Taking this into consideration, there is a need to demystify future demand trends—for educational counselors—to better showcase how government and state legislation can properly tackle disability within the public school system.



The aforementioned professions represent the subcategories that were explored throughout the paper: rehabilitation services (including nursing), education, and social work. In order to better isolate future deficits within the disability sector (2020-2023), the research was guided by three metrics: demand deficiencies across American states, funding and concurrent policies in place to support persons with disability, as well as geographical trends. Secondary data was sought from the United States government database and health organization's database. A short-term population projection (2022-2023) of professionals in the disability sector was obtained from Projections Central and the U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics. Subsequent data was extracted from the National Center for Educational Statistics, and the United States Center for Disease Control when looking at target demographics that would be hindered by a lack of disability professionals; for the education sector, this would be considered to be public school students with disabilities, and for rehabilitation workers, this would be the American disability population at large. The data collected spanned all states and regions of the United States. In order to appropriately utilize the term regions, within an American demographic, it was necessary that our data utilize the United States Census Bureau's categorizations for American regions. Regions were categorized states into south, west, northeast, and midwest. Following data extraction, data was scanned for null values, duplicates, and other errors, after which they were appropriately cleaned. Required variables were extracted from the broad data into concise tables to facilitate data analysis and visualization.

For the years 2020 to 2023, there will be a staggering 261,600 annual openings among the selected professionals analyzed in this study: audiologists, nurses, occupational/physical therapists, and school educational counselors. In observing a select portion of the entirety of the disability sector, we elucidated particular venues of analysis, promoting a deeper inspection into the sector as a whole.

Our study does not address the many intersectionalities fully that enunciate disability and its repercussions, therefore future studies should aim to direct legislation for these subsections of disabled people. While our research does lay out good groundwork to form better disability legislation, we have implied a high expectation to foresee that these actions are filed to put in place real treatment for our disabled population, who are the most important and main subject that needs to be protected here.



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Yingxin Wu is an undergraduate student at the University of Southern California majoring in Human Biology. On campus, Yingxin is involved with the USC Asian American Tutorial Program, USC APASS (Asian Pacific American Student Services), and is a peer mentor for the First Year Experience program to provide guidance for first-year and first-generation college students. She has also been involved in the First Year Experience student committee to design and lead professional development and wellness workshops. Outside of school, Yingxin enjoys hiking, reading, and baking.

Ezi Ozoma is a recent Human Biology graduate of the University of Southern California. On campus, she was involved in residential education as an RA, athletic medicine, the pre-physical therapy club, and a few other cultural clubs. During her free time, Ezi enjoys playing sports and watching her favorite shows.

Phillip Jang is an undergraduate student at the University of Southern California majoring in Biomedical Engineering. His current career goal is to become a prosthetist.

Adebayo Omileye is a recent graduate of Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria and majored in Physical Therapy. On campus, he was involved in his class and fellowship administration and department volunteering. Adebayo enjoys reading and watching anything football (Arsenal FC precisely) in his free time.

Clio Klapsis is an undergraduate student majoring in Political Science at the University of Southern California with minors in International Relations and Spanish. Clio's campus involvement includes competing with the Model United Nations team (Clio was the 2021 President!), doing research with a security and political economy lab called SPEC, tutoring elementary school students, and providing after school programming for kids from third to twelfth grade through USC Troy Camp. She is passionate about disability justice, international human rights, labor rights, and learning languages (Clio speaks Greek and Spanish!), as well as reading, camping, and hiking in her free time.

Ojuade Fatimat Modupe is a recent graduate of Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria and majored in Occupational Therapy. She was inspired to pursue research in the disability sector after seeing the many challenges that persons with disabilities have faced, such as lack of inclusion in society, lack of access to rehabilitation services and assistive technology, and lack of support to help them live independently.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## WHY THIS MATTERS TO VOSAP

VOSAP advocacy is strengthened with greater insight on the current state of rehabilitation services in the United States. This project addresses employment opportunities in the disability sector to highlight the need for laborial deficits in rehabilitation workers. The results of this study serve to direct future research into unearthing the multitude of societal factors that influence employment in the disability sector.

## ABOUT VOICE OF SPECIALLY ABLED PEOPLE INC

Voice of Specially Abled People (VOSAP) is a global advocacy organization built on the principles of Empowerment of Specially Abled People. In Special Consultative Status with UN ECOSOC, VOSAP is working to create an Inclusive and Accessible world by accelerating implementation of UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and goals of UN CRPD (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) treaty. In addition to enabling individuals with assistive devices, surgical interventions, scholarships etc, VOSAP has created innovative digital transformation tools to promote inclusion of Person with disabilities such as (a) Virtual Art Gallery on Disability to educate masses on disability and promote inclusion, (b) create crowdsource demand for accessibility of public places and create mass movement of virtually connected  $\approx 10,000+$  volunteers/changemakers using VOSAP App.

