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Analyzing Relationships Between Disability, Rehabilitation, and Work (ARDRAW) Small Grant Program

Informational Webinar
January 30, 2020

analyzing relationships between
ARDRAW
disability, rehabilitation, & work

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Welcome!

Laura King, Federal Project Officer, Social Security Administration
Erica Smitka, Project Coordinator, Policy Research, Inc.

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Agenda

I.   Overview of ARDRAW Small Grant Program
II. ARDRAW Program Details and Application Process
III. Presentation from current ARDRAW program participants
IV. Overview of SSA Program Areas
V.   Questions and Answers

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ARDRAW Small Grant Program

- Sponsored by the Social Security Administration
- Coordinated by Policy Research, Inc., Delmar, New York
- http://ardraw.policyresearchinc.org/

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ARDRAW: A Brief History

- A successor research grant program to the Disability Determination Process (DDP) Small Grant Program
  - Completed projects: https://ardraw.policyresearchinc.org/completed-projects/
- The goals of ARDRAW
  - To provide new analysis of work, rehabilitation, and disability issues, in suggested research areas
  - To provide experience in conducting funded, independent research projects
  - To promote continued research in the area of disability
- This is the fourth ARDRAW cohort

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ARDRAW Program Focus

- Analysis of work, rehabilitation, and disability
- Focus on SSA's employment programs, specifically rehabilitation, work and SSA's disability programs
- Some suggested areas:
  - Characteristics of SSA beneficiaries, such as age and job characteristics
  - Workplace accommodations and benefits
  - Impact of policy changes on individuals' ability to work
  - Vocational and other services used by SSA beneficiaries

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Research Stipends

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- One-year program
- Graduate-level students
- Supervised independent research
- $10,000 stipends

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Professional Development Opportunities

- Writing and research resources for students on website
- Professional conferences
- Interact with SSA experts
- Post-project opportunities
  - Webinars for Cohort 4 students to present their findings

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ARDRAW Program Details and Application Process

Erica Smitka, ARDRAW Program Coordinator

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ARDRAW Program Eligibility Criteria

- Full or part-time graduate student in an accredited program at the time of award (Fall semester 2020)
- Academic emphasis on employment, rehabilitation, disability, public health, economics, social work, occupational medicine, etc.
- U.S. citizen or non-citizen national
- University faculty mentor committed to assist in research
- Employees of SSA or those receiving funds from other federal sources are not eligible

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ARDRAW Grant Program Expectations

- Complete application packet submitted online by February 28, 2020
- Students and faculty mentors participate on quarterly calls
- Submit deliverables in a timely fashion
  - Work Plan – June 5, 2020
  - Quarterly reports
  - 15 page final research project – Draft due: May 14, 2021

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Application Process

- Complete application packet on the ARDRAW website
- Application packet includes
  - An abstract and research proposal (5 pages)
  - Proof of access to data
  - IRB approval and timeframe
  - A resume or CV
  - Two letters of recommendation emailed directly to ardraw@policyresearchinc.org
- Submit by February 28, 2020
- Notification by May 1, 2020

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Selection Criteria

- Detailed description in the RFA
- First level of review
  - Completeness of the application packet
  - Relevance to the ARDRAW research objectives
- Second level
  - Review by ARDRAW Project Coordinator
  - May provide feedback on suggested improvements to proposal before "official" review
- Third level
  - Review by a panel of researchers and the Social Security Administration

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You're selected! What's next?

- You will have 1 month to submit a detailed Work Plan (by June 1)

- Upon approval of your Work Plan, you will receive the first installment of your award ($5,000)

- The following month you will have your first in a series of calls with PRI staff, you and your mentor. These quarterly calls occur in August, November, February, and May.

- Upon successful submission of your final paper, you will receive the second installment of your award ($5,000)

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Research Stipend FAQs

- Is there a budget or reporting required?
  - No
- Can my university accept the stipend payment directly and apply it to my account?
  - Yes
- If it is a group project, will both of us get a stipend?
  - No, one representative of the team will receive the payment.
- Can I pay participants in my research project with the stipend funds?
  - Yes

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Timeline Recap

- Application deadline: February 28, 2020

- Award notification: May 1, 2020

- Work Plan due: June 5, 2020

- Final Project due: June 25, 2021

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Tips for Success

- Topics that are relevant
- Basic understanding of SSA programs
- Research that is feasible
  - Can be completed in a year
  - Enough participants
  - Access to data
  - Factor in time for IRB review

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Current ARDRAW Small Grant Program Awardees

Katie Savin, University of California, Berkeley

Erica Smitka on behalf of Jessica Murray, The Graduate Center, City University of New York

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Katie Savin

- ARDRAW grant awards:
  - 2018-2019: *Making Ends Meet: How SSI and SSDI Beneficiaries Work Within and Around Labor Incentive programs*
  - 2019-2020: *Extra Costs of Vision Loss: Understanding the Persistence of Poverty Amongst and Through the Words of Disabled Adults*

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Application Tips

- Make sure you can explain how your research topic/ product can inform SSA policy
- Know the current state of the literature around your topic
- Get to know the disability benefit application and receipt/management process
- Take feedback you receive on your application into consideration
- Front-load your work in the workplan
- Apply for your IRB as soon as possible

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General Tips

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- Network!
- Keep ARDRAW posted with your progress
- Apply for a second grant!
- Consider your publishing/dissemination goals

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Jessica Murray

ARDRAW grant awards:
- 2018-2019: *Understanding Transportation Challenges for People with Disabilities Returning to Work*
- 2019-2020: *Self-Determination in Transportation: The Route to Social Inclusion for People with Disabilities*

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Application Tips

- Think outside the box!
- Will the answers to your research questions lead to policy recommendations?
- Look at which areas are lacking research or data
- Ask for feedback on your proposal from people who work for disability service organizations

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General Tips

- Build a list of contacts to disseminate your survey/recruiting materials
- Think through potential recruiting problems and strategies for adapting
- Check the accessibility of any survey instruments
- Consider offering an incentive to attract participants
- Develop a detailed timeline with plenty of wiggle room
- Create a budget and keep track of all expenses
- Take advantage of professional development opportunities

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Overview of SSA Program Areas

Disability Programs and Work Incentives

Laura King, ARDRAW Project Officer

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SSA's Disability Programs and Work Incentives

Laura King

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analyzing relationships between

disability, rehabilitation, & work

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SSA has two different disability programs.

- Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) provides benefits to disabled or blind people who are "insured" by workers' contributions to the SSA trust fund.

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) makes cash assistance payments to the aged, blind and disabled who have limited income and assets.

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SSA's Definition of Disability

The inability to engage in **ANY** substantial gainful activity because of a medically determinable impairment:
- That is expected to result in death, or
- That has lasted or is expected to last for a period of 12 continuous months.

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Definition of Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA)

- SGA is work activity either as an employee or a self-employed person
- It is used as a guideline to determine initial and continuing disability entitlement for SSDI beneficiaries and initial entitlement for SSI recipients.
- Monthly amounts for 2020
  - $1,260: Non-blind
  - $2,110: Blind

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Work Incentives

- Work Incentives are SSA rules that help beneficiaries keep their benefits as they explore work.
  - For SSDI recipients, work incentives provide opportunities for beneficiaries to make money that exceeds SGA, gain new skills, and achieve greater independence through work without losing access to valuable benefits.
  - For SSI recipients, the more income an individual has, the lower his or her benefit will be – but work incentives include some exclusions that help the individual keep a higher benefit payment.

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Work Expenses

- Impairment Related Work Expenses
  - The cost of certain disability-related items and services that a person needs in order to work can be deducted from earnings in determining substantial gainful activity for SSDI and excluded from earned income in determining the SSI monthly payment amount.
- Blind Work Expenses
  - The cost of ordinary and necessary work-related expenses may be deducted from countable earned income.

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Trial Work Period

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- Trial Work Period
  - Nine calendar months during which work will not be used to determine if disability has ceased
- Extended Period of Eligibility
  - After the Trial Work Period is exhausted, if individual continues to make over SGA, benefits are suspended (rather than terminated) for the next 36 months
  - If earnings fall below SGA during 36 months, benefits can be reinstated without reapplication

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For Beneficiaries Who Successfully Return to Work and Transition Off Benefits

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- Continuation of Medicare Coverage
  - Medicare coverage continues for at least 93 months after the TWP. Part A is premium-free.
  - Medicare for the Working Disabled can be used beyond the 93 months, however, Part A is no longer premium-free.
- Expedited Reinstatement
  - For people who successfully return to work and lose their entitlement to SSDI or SSI benefits, but work stops within 5 years of when benefits ended
  - Allows up to 6 months of temporary cash benefits

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Income Exclusions

- Earned income exclusion
  - $65 plus 1/2 of the remaining monthly earned income (wages or self-employment) is excluded from countable income to provide an incentive for SSI recipients to work
- Student Earned Income Exclusion
  - SSI student (under age 22) regularly attending school may exclude earned income up to $1870/month, up to $7,550 a calendar year (for 2019)
- Plan to Achieve Self Support
  - Allows beneficiaries to set aside wages or other income besides SSI and/or resources to pursue a work goal (e.g., education, vocational training, etc.) assistive technology used for employment–related purposes, or starting a business. Money set aside under PASS does not count when the SSI payment amount is calculated.

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More Information

- For more information on employment supports visit the SSA website and download The Red Book
  https://www.ssa.gov/redbook/index.html

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Questions and Answers

- Please type your question into the Q&A panel located underneath the participant tab, or

- To ask a question by phone, please raise your hand by clicking the hand icon in the participant pod. We will unmute you so you can ask your question.

- Following today's webinar, you can email questions directly to ardraw@policyresearchinc.org

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Contact Us

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