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Changes in the Concept of Vocational Rehabilitation of People with Intellectual Disabilities in Poland

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Introduction: The problem of employment of people with intellectual disabilities is present in many countries. The literature on this topic draws attention to the fact that the improvement of the situation in this area is conditioned by changes in government policies, practices of employers and adequate preparation to undertake professional duties by persons with intellectual disabilities.

Objective: The objective of this review was to explore the changes in vocational rehabilitation forms in Poland.

Methods: The analysis of documents and accessible literature was done.

Results: As one of the ways to solve this problem since 1991 in Poland the so called Workshops of Vocational Therapy have been created. According to the regulations the Workshops were designed for adults with intellectual disabilities, aged over 16 years with a total incapacity of gaining an employment, for which occupational therapy was a form of social rehabilitation. The further step in this process was the establishment of Vocational Activation Centers, with which high hopes were associated. They were expected to be an intermediate link in the creation of career paths from rehabilitation forms ultimately to open labor market. In practice it turned out that the creation of these Centers in Poland has been too slow.

Conclusions: This raised the necessity to change the attitude from the concept of matching the participant to work and to the new environment, which frequently ends as a trauma, to the concept of matching jobs to people. New initiatives and new rehabilitation programs are developed based on this attitude.