Module 0

Welcome to the disability statistics training. This project is run by the statistics Rehabilitation Research and Training Center, sponsored by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research. This curriculum is for anyone who wishes to learn more about disability statistics in the US. Over the course of seven modules, we will introduce you to data sources and some of the measurement issues associated with understanding the topic of disability.

My name is Megan Henly and I'm a Project Director at the Institute on Disability, or the IOD at the University of New Hampshire. Throughout this curriculum, you'll hear from me, as well as Andrew Houtenville, and Shreya Paul. Our research team at the IOD consists of scholars trained in a variety of disciplines and we bring a multi-disciplinary perspective to studying social issues for people with disabilities. One thing we have learned is that a barrier for many people who want to know more about disability statistics is that they don't know where to begin.

First: What is disability statistics? Simply put, disability statistics are methods of counting people who have a disability. Originally, counting people with disabilities was of use to the government in order to determine who qualifies for disability benefits so that funds can be allocated for these resources. However, researchers, service providers and advocates, also, may have an interest in knowing how many people have a disability. These statistics are not always easy to find. While the data may exist, they may not be an a readily usable format.

Why do we need disability statistics? As mentioned, having data on the number of people with disabilities is useful for informed policy planning, implementation and monitoring of policies. Without this information, it can be difficult for federal and state programs to estimate budgets. Beyond this, when advocates and social scientists use Disability Statistics, they can assess the full lived experiences of people with disabilities. Just as researchers examine disparities by race, ethnicity, gender, and other characteristics, it's useful to know how disability status relates to various social and economic characteristics.

A couple of notes: These lessons are designed to be as accessible as possible to provide equal access and opportunities to all users. We invite users of this product to consider accessibility issues as they use disability statistics in their own reports, research, and presentations. We use person first language throughout these lessons. That is, we say "people with disabilities." We recognize that there is not consensus on language preference in the disability community and that some people prefer identity-first language. We urge you to consider the preferences of your audience when communicating disability statistics. Throughout this curriculum, we provide several specific numbers in order to illustrate examples of disparities. These numbers may not always be the most recent data. Do keep in mind that some data sources release updated numbers annually, some bi-annually, and some less often. Finally, it may be possible that the numbers used in these lessons as examples may be different from statistics obtained from other data sources. As we will show, disability prevalence rates may vary across sources due to a variety of factors. It is very possible that different data sources may report different estimates for the same indicator or variable. So, the numbers mentioned in these lessons may be different from those obtained from a different data source.

Objectives: Through this curriculum, we aim to build capacity in future disability policy researchers, provide resources to advocacy professionals interested in data analysis and train individuals interested in accessing and analyzing disability data independently.

This disability statistics curriculum is designed to provide resources for a variety of audiences. These include current, undergraduate or graduate students looking to propose a for-credit independent study to their professors; Professors interested in including a disability statistics module and their existing work; And individuals willing to learn to access and analyze data sources related to people with disabilities.

In terms of a prerequisite, we recommend you have a basic undergraduate level understanding of statistics. If you've not taken statistics at the undergraduate level then the first few non-technical modules may still be of interest to you. The later technical modules may be useful as a guide to the development of needed statistical skills.

This curriculum is organized into seven distinct modules. These include disparities and program participation, disability measurement and eligibility criteria, models and concepts of disability, Accessing disability data sources, technical details, software, and basic statistical analysis.

In terms of expected outcomes, we anticipate that students will be able to learn about the importance of disability data. Learn about the available data sources. Learn how to access different data sources. Learn about definitions and models of disability. Learn about the issues and disability survey research and learn basic statistical analysis using statistical software.

After completing this module, we recommend moving forward to module one. If you have any questions. We welcome them at disability.statistics@unh.edu. Our website is research ondisability.org.

Thank you.