

Healthcare providers' role in addressing employment challenges in PD

Some people with Parkinson's disease (PD) may experience employment challenges due to their motor and nonmotor symptoms. You may benefit from seeking assistance from a professional to help you address these challenges. Here are some resources that could help.

How could a neurologist help?

A neurologist, preferably a movement disorders neurologist, is the best doctor to treat PD-specific challenges.

Treat: Help manage PD symptoms such as tremor, anxiety, or mood

Refer: Provide referrals to see other specialists who could help with job-related issues

How could rehabilitation help?

Physical Therapy (PT): Help with walking, balance, endurance, pain or stiffness.

Occupational Therapy (OT): Provide strategies for hand coordination for computer use, handwriting, energy conservation for fatigue, ergonomic advice for office setup

Speech Language Pathologist (SLP): Provide strategies to improve voice control for phone calls, public speaking, and concentration at work

Assistive Technology: Could work with VR, OT or SLP to learn about technology that can help with productivity in the workplace, including working from home

How could a social worker help?

Social workers have knowledge about supportive resources for people with PD.

Support: Help find community resources, discuss changes in the workplace, provide strategies for stress management

Educate: Share information about employment-related policies, problem-solve and make referrals regarding difficulties at work

Guide: Provide guidance on issues related to Medicare, insurance, and Social Security and Disability.

How could vocational rehabilitation (VR) help?

A vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor is different from an occupational therapist. A VR counselor has expertise in topics such as disclosing PD to an employer, helping to request the right accommodations, and discussing how to interview for new jobs.

Navigate: Help work through the decision to disclose PD status to an employer or colleagues, guide through job search, changing job roles, or returning to work, facilitate benefits or FMLA with employer

Accommodate: Recommend strategies to assist with organization and concentration, physical accessibility at work, transportation, or travel

If you have additional questions or concerns about employment:

For vocational rehabilitation: contact Paulo Aco at paco@sralab.org or (312) 238-7275

For social work: contact neurologist, Parkinson's Foundation helpline, or Michael J. Fox Foundation helpline for assistance.