# **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act**

This was the first disability civil rights law in the US that was enacted in 1973. The act primarily prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities particularly in programs that gain financial assistance from the federal government (Act, 2003). I selected this specific policy because I am a strong civil right advocate championing for equity in the society. I hate acts of discrimination as I have experienced it and it is a frustrating experience. Disabled persons experienced the highest severity of discrimination. I believe we are all equal and everyone deserves fair treatment. I selected this policy as its champions and protects persons with disabilities from unequal treatment and exclusion in jobs, schools and the community and also the fact that these are the individuals that receive the highest level of discrimination.

Legislative history of the policy

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was introduced as a bill by Senator Hubert Humphrey to the United States Senate in 1972. He argued that time had come for them not to tolerate no longer the invisibility of the disabled in America stating that these people also have a right to live like any other normal person. The Act intends to provide kids with disabilities equal access to educational services, facilities as well as activities.

The early history of federal legislation benefiting individuals with disabilities was the Smith-Fess Act (Civilian Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1920) that was enacted and passed after the First World War, and it offered services to all Americans that were disabled. It was the first legislation to offer services for all Americans that were disabled regardless of their affiliations. Subsequent laws and amendments were done to include vocational rehabilitation measures. Rehabilitation of Act 1973 was brought up by Section 504 of the Civil Rights of 1964 (Bloomfield, 2007). It was a law that was under the office of Health Education and welfare, it did not receive significant social justice provision, but then the rights clause happened without fanfare (Yell, 1998). This brought a lot of confrontation with some desiring for the act to be separated while others are seeing no need. This even led to protests for the controversial section 504 since it afforded disabled persons many rights that were same with those of the minority groups postulated in the Civil Rights of Act 1964. The protest was done in the Civic Center Plaza chanting victory songs.

From the above short history, it is clear that the Act has advanced over the years. The Act was an improvement of the Civil Rights of 1964 after some fundamental amendments that ensured that it is all inclusive (Weber, 1994). Before the enactment of the act, the disability rights movement noted significant injustices against the disabled persons. However, after the passage, significant improvements were experienced regarding how the disabled were treated (Tucker, 1989). They gained a voice and equal treatment in the society. The policy was supported by members of the Senate who passed the bill into law. It is mainly funded by the federal government.

## **How the policy is intended to Work**

The rehabilitation policy is intended to work with any program that is getting federal financial services assistance including public as well as private schools.

The social problem that the policy is addressing regards the student discrimination based on disability. It addresses this social problem since it is important to students with disabilities as well as their families to gain equal access to educational activities and programs.

The Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act provides some resources and policies to the people that it is intended to serve the most. This act provides financial resources to the people. This is why it applies mostly to the beneficiaries of any kind that gets the federal funding like the hospitals and the different levels of schools (Gupta, et al. 2015). The policy has a primary duty of ensuring that the persons with disabilities are well taken care of and receive the federal funding to help them live a comfortable life. This is why Section 504 ensures that groups or agencies must adjust their work requirements and eligibility standards to be able to sustain the individual with disabilities (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2016)). This is also part of an in-kind service provided by the Act to ensure that individuals with disabilities are taken care of and get the right opportunities to do the things that they love the most. However, it is of an essence to note that Section 504 will only serve or offer the resources and opportunities mentioned above when the individuals will prove to be qualified and able to meet the set standards for the given program, job or activity (Yell, 1998). In summary, Section 504 has been able to create vocational and educational opportunities that otherwise would not have been there without legislation.

Social work has played an essential role in the development of Section 504 of the rehabilitation act. It is a social role to take care of every individual with the disability. Discrimination against this kind of individual is not morally right. The society is expected to take good care of the individuals with disabilities (Winnick, 2016). When the law was not there, they could have been left out of many opportunities such as job employment or ability to go to better schools. People with the disability also find it very difficult to access some jobs or achieve some of their goals just by the fact that they are discriminated against those kinds of jobs (Horrigan, 2016). There are some employers that do not deem them right for those jobs. Section 504 is aiming therefore to be part of the social work role of fighting for every member of the society to be treated with the kind of respect they deserve. All these explain the development of the rehabilitation act. The policy is executed to assist the beneficiaries in getting the federal funding (Lipton, 2017). Also, the need to offer educational programs is a social work role that inspired the development of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

As a social worker, I would not go for other alternative policies. This is because of the role that the act plays in the society. However, I will not be rigid in my decision as any alternative policy that is meant or developed to protect the rights, or the well-being of certain group in the society will also be great. The reason why I believe Section 504 is better policy is the fact that it protects people with disabilities against any discrimination that they may be facing. Besides the protection, they also ensure that there is government funding to the people with discrimination. Through this, educational and vocational programs have been attained to the people with disabilities. The Section 504 of the rehabilitation act helps in the enhancement of social role.

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