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## Disabled Applicant Educational Needs in Russian Regions

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### Abstract

Health limitations and disabilities of students affect the structure and content of their educational needs. In some cases, these students may require special counseling in career guidance, assistance in social and psychological support in the educational process. The aim of the study is to analyze educational needs of applicants with disabilities and develop recommendations to expand the accessibility of higher education for this category of students. The researchers monitored the educational needs of applicants with disabilities using the survey method in the form of an online questionnaire. The article presents the results of monitoring educational needs of 170 Russian school graduates with disabilities and health limitations who studied in 16 comprehensive educational institutions of 7 regions of the Russian Federation. Based on the analysis of the results, the authors of the article have developed recommendations for regional and municipal authorities and educational organizations subordinate to them. The aim of these recommendations is to show ways to increase the accessibility and quality of higher education for students with disabilities, their further employment and career growth. The practical significance of the obtained results. The results of the study can be used when creating vocational guidance programs for students with disabilities and health limitations and improve their socio-psychological support.

*Keywords:* applicants with disabilities, educational needs, career guidance, higher education.

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## **Introduction**

Nowadays, including people with disabilities in various areas of public life is a priority task of the social policy of developed countries. However, its practical solution is rather complicated. One of the problem areas is their inclusion in work, as there is “chronic” unemployment of people with disabilities. 28.8% of the disabled of working age have stable work in Russia (Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Russian Federation, 2019). At the same time, people with disabilities occupy a significant share in the structure of Russian society – their number is almost 10% (Rosstat of the Russian Federation, 2019). In addition, the rate of “childhood” disability is high, and this number is increasing annually (ibid).

The choice of the specialty for the person with permanent health disabilities is very difficult, which is determined by the risk of a gap between physical abilities, personal sympathy for the chosen type of activity and demands from the employer. The bad choice makes it impossible for people with disabilities to fully compete with his/her peers. For example, he/she can perform production operations more slowly, react to external stimuli poorly and others.

Moreover, for people with disabilities education plays an important role, as it is one of the most effective social resources aimed to reduce their social isolation and economic dependence (Khaimovskaya & Bocharova, 2016).

An important feature of an inclusive education is that the profession for students with disabilities and health limitations is not only a way to economically support their existence, but also a way to realize their abilities, and raising their social status (Kasimova & Sharafutdinova, 2016).

The solution of these problems should be based not only on the search for optimal employment mechanisms for people with disabilities, but also on the development of a well-functioning system of career guidance for students with disabilities and health limitations.

## **Purpose and objectives of the study**

The purpose of the study is to analyze educational needs of applicants with disabilities and develop recommendations to expand the accessibility of higher education for this category of youth.

The objectives of the study are:

to analyze the problem in the psychological, pedagogical and methodological literature on the research topic; to define the scientific apparatus and research base.

to monitor educational needs of applicants with disabilities, who studied in graduation classes at 17 educational organizations of 7 regions of the Russian Federation: the Republic of Bashkortostan, Mari El, Tatarstan, the Udmurt and Chuvash Republics, the Orenburg and Kirov regions.

to systematize and process the research results, to make theoretical and experimental conclusions.

### **Literature review**

The complex process of integrating students with disabilities into the conditions of the educational organization of higher education has determined a scientific interest to this problem.

Romanovich (2015) in his research proposes to differentiate vocational guidance work with applicants with disabilities according to the type and degree of their health limitations, the level of their education and motivation of professional self-determination. The professional preferences of applicants must be taken into account when developing and implementing the course "Psychology of personality and professional self-determination" for pre-university training of disabled people and people with disabilities. To take into account professional preferences is also necessary when choosing forms of work with applicants. Here the author highlights vocational counseling, vocational diagnostics and vocational education. According to the author, pre-university training is a condition for the successful construction of an individual educational trajectory by applicants with disabilities.

A group of authors (Petrova, Pchelinova, Jafar-zade, & Karplyuk, 2016) underlines that a comprehensive system of vocational guidance is necessary for the effective vocational rehabilitation of people with disabilities. It will allow to form motivation to work and make a personal contribution to the development of society.

Tendencies for developing the system of vocational guidance for people with disabilities and health imitations abroad, identified by the authors (Bikbulatova, Petrova, & Kozyakov, 2016) are of great interest.

They are: lowering the age limits of vocational guidance; gaining practical experience in the profession; developing information systems and network databases that ensure the interaction of all participants in the career guidance process; the tendency to expand the rights of disabled people to full-fledged vocational education and developing professions and types of work that minimally restrict interests of disabled people; giving an opportunity to work for disabled people according to their level of abilities and interests with any form and degree of disability, who, by virtue of their capabilities, are not able to participate in productive labor. Scientists have come to a logical conclusion that psychological and pedagogical support of children and young people before entering the world of professions is of great importance.

According to an analysis of the practice of organizing social and pedagogical work with both disabled children and people with disabilities related to different nosologies and able to work, and an analysis of the results of scientific research in this area, we can state that there is no effective career guidance system aimed at work and vocational guidance of the specified people with disabilities nowadays yet.

Boginskaya Yu.V. (2015) reveals the need to organize inclusive education for students with disabilities and points out some difficulties in integrating youth with disabilities into the educational environment.

First-year students with disabilities face problems of adaptation to the educational process, self-realization, interaction with teachers and tutors, life problems and attending classes. This emphasizes the need to organize social and pedagogical support for students at university, which will create conditions for increasing adaptive capabilities, autonomy and social activity, promoting the development of intellectual processes, disclosing creative potential, and forming students' values.

The analysis of these works and many other studies underlines the need to research educational needs of applicants with disabilities. This emphasizes the novelty and significance of our work.

### **Methodology**

For monitoring, we have developed a questionnaire for applicants with disabilities and health limitations, which was approved by the Ministry of education and science of the Russian Federation.

The aim of the questions is to determine the following indicators:

1. Professional interests of applicants with disabilities and health limitations.

2. The degree of confidence of applicants with disabilities and health limitations in the profession they want to get.
3. The choice of career.
4. The choice of educational organization.
5. The most important arguments for applicants with disabilities and health limitations for choosing a profession and the main sources of information to help make a choice.
6. The need of applicants with disabilities and health limitations in vocational guidance services.
7. The demanded form of study at university by applicants with disabilities and health limitations.
8. Needs of applicants with disabilities and health limitations when entering the university.

The study involved the applicants with the following disabilities (Fig. 1):

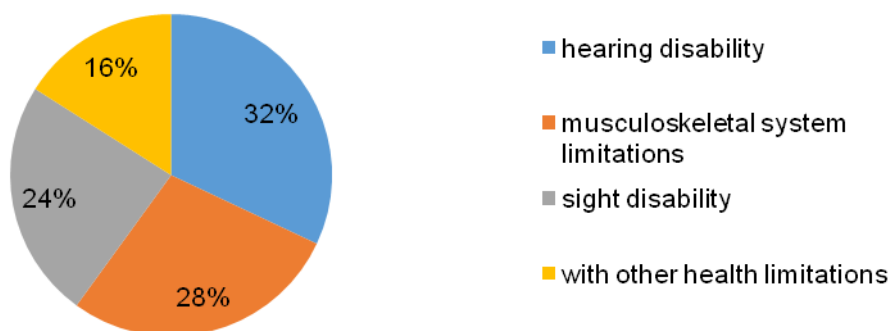


Figure 1. Health limitations of the applicants

Most of the respondents were applicants of the category “Disabled child” - 54%, there were 28% of respondents who had disability category III, category II - 10%, category I - 8%. Thus, the given characteristics mean that the study sample presents applicants with various health limitations.

The analysis of the monitoring results was carried out according to the indicators given above.

## Results

### Professional interests of applicants with disabilities and health limitations

According to the first monitoring indicator, “Professional interests of applicants with disabilities and health limitations”, we relied on the applicants' answers to the question: “What professional sphere interests you, attracts you most of all?”

The first place in the structure of interests is information technologies. Among other common students' hobbies are art, technology and medicine. It is noteworthy that 16% of school students are fond of sports.

The analysis of professional interests of applicants emphasizes the versatility of students' personality, their interest in various areas of life, their desire to be full members of society. However, if there are different interests, and on average, each student chooses at least 3 different areas of interest, it can be difficult for students to identify the leading interest that can be a career. Therefore, timely career guidance assistance to students in determining the leading professional interest is important.

### The choice of profession

According to the second indicator “The degree of confidence of applicants with disabilities and health limitations in the profession they want to get”, we asked the question “Have you chosen your future profession?” (Fig. 2).

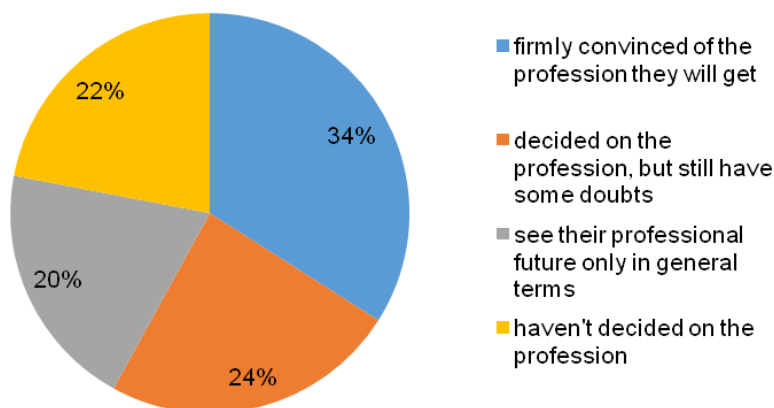


Figure 2. Professional choice of applicants with disabilities and health limitations

Thus, the presented data allow us to state that more than half of the respondents found it difficult to choose a profession. Consequently, the relevance of career guidance work is confirmed. It is important to determine appropriate methods and content of this work to help people with disabilities and health limitations. It should be emphasized that the situation of uncertainty has a relation to the category - school graduate - potential applicant. Thus, we can assume that it is necessary to carry out career guidance in earlier age periods, for example, beginning with grade 7.

The analysis of professional preferences of applicants with disabilities and health limitations shows their orientation towards higher education (see Fig. 3).

**% of the applicants**

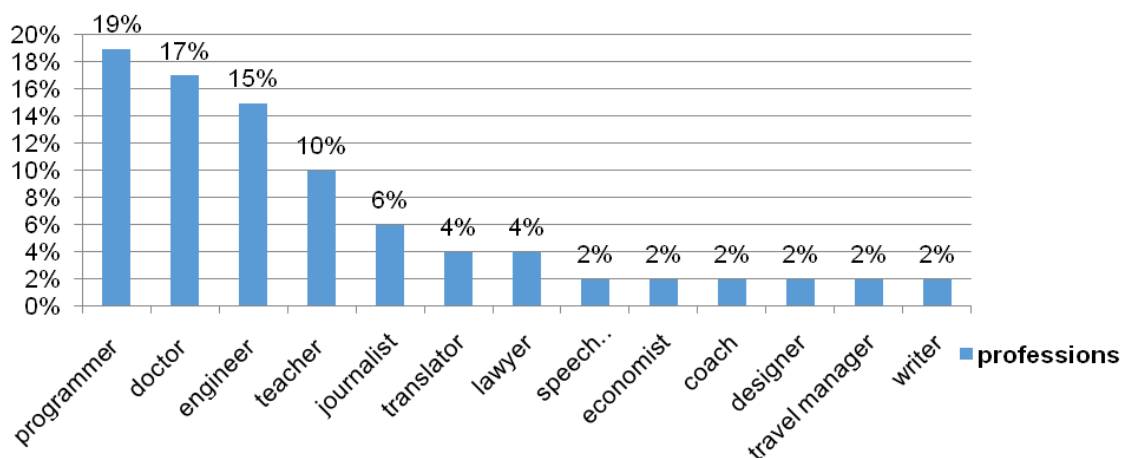


Figure 3. The choice of professions by the applicants with disabilities and health limitations

It is noteworthy that applicants with disabilities and health limitations tend to change the structure of the distribution of professional preferences in general. The structure of the most popular higher education professions in Russia is gradually changing: a few years ago there were areas of training outside the competition, such as law, economics and management, social and human sciences (Toksanbaeva, 2014), now the demand for professions related to information technologies and medicine is gradually increasing. It is important to consider and implement these trends when working with students. The dynamism of developing professions in the modern world should be emphasized; it requires flexibility while organizing career guidance with applicants with disabilities.

### **The choice of educational organization**

In order to identify the fourth indicator “The choice of educational organization” the researchers analyzed the respondents' answers to the question: “If you know exactly where you will go to get higher education, then indicate the university”. 3% of respondents have chosen professional educational organizations, 26% - specific educational institutions of higher education. As a result, 76% of students have decided on their future profession, and 29% have chosen only the educational organization.

The obtained data may indicate a low level of awareness of students with disabilities and health limitations about the opportunities for inclusive education in higher education institutions. We can assume that applicants do not have information about the areas of training at universities; about learning conditions adapted to the needs of students with disabilities of various nosologies; about forms of higher education, including distance learning.

The analysis of the results of the monitoring has indicated the need to develop tools to inform students about the possibilities of educating people with disabilities and health limitations at universities, implementing various options for professional education of applicants.

#### **Arguments for choosing a profession and the main sources of information to help make a choice**

According to the fifth criterion “The most important arguments for applicants with disabilities and health limitations for choosing a profession and the main sources of information to help make a choice”, we asked the respondents two questions:

- “What influenced your choice of your future profession?”;
- “What sources of information do you focus on when choosing a profession?”.

The analysis of the answers to the first question has shown that for the majority of modern schoolchildren with disabilities and health limitations, it is important that the profession corresponds to their hobbies and interests (see Fig. 4). When choosing a profession, the income, that the profession brings, and the advice of parents is important for students.

It should be noted that an important factor when choosing a profession for young people is the compliance of the state of health with the requirements for the profession. Students with disabilities want to work not only for wages, but also for self-realization in order to be needed by society; it is evidenced by the fact that 15% of the respondents have indicated this argument for choosing a profession as the opportunity to benefit people.



It is noteworthy that no one of the respondents has chosen a profession, because of the simple and easy nature of the work, and also because of the opportunity to have a lot of free time, which indicates a conscious approach of the respondents to their future and a desire to work.

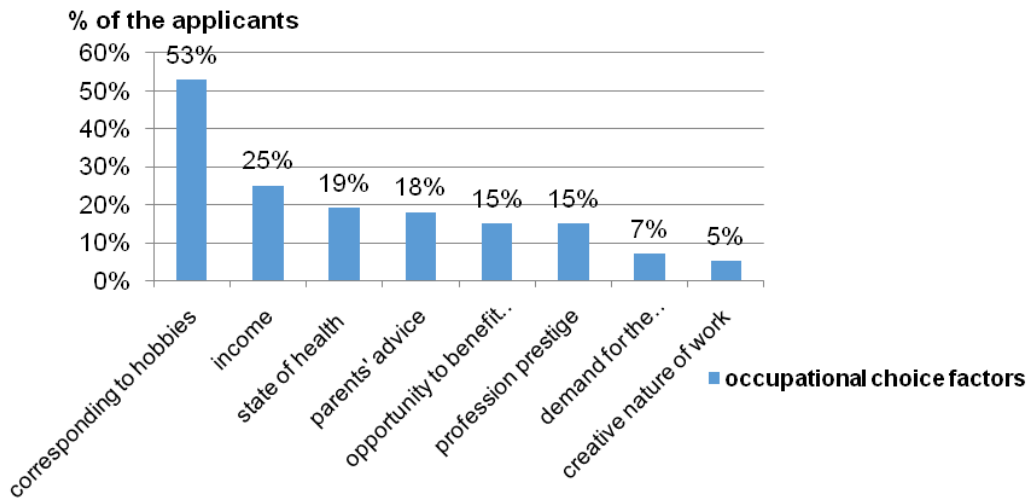


Figure 4. Factors of choosing a profession by applicants with disabilities and health limitations

About half of the respondents has chosen the advice of their parents as the main source of information that students are guided by (Fig. 5).

As a rule, children with disabilities and health limitations are strongly attached to their parents; their opinion is authoritative for the child. Therefore, parents should be well aware of the situation on the labor market, abilities and capabilities of their child, which makes it necessary to carry out career guidance work also with applicants' parents.

Moreover, the ability to organize a dialogue with parents or legal representatives, to attract them to participate in career guidance events, to discuss professional plans and professional orientation of children is a powerful resource when creating a situation of success for students when entering the university.

We consider it important to use such traditional forms of work with parents as public speaking at parent-teacher meetings at schools, parenting lectures, online consultations, meetings with employers, and parents participating in interactive meetings with successful graduates.

A small number of students are guided by information from employers. This result indicates that the activities of employers in vocational education for students are not carried out on a sufficiently large scale, or that students are not informed about it, or this work is not being done. It is possible that employers and Employment Centers use such forms of professional education that do not always meet the interests of applicants. Often, applicants are not able to come to see events.

Researchers believe that active forms of participation in career guidance events are interesting and useful for students. An example of such an event is a visit to a factory; this visit might be with elements of the practice of observation. Career guidance practice of the included observation provides an opportunity for short-term participation of applicants in real practical activities at an enterprise in order to specify the attitudes towards studies at a higher educational institution.

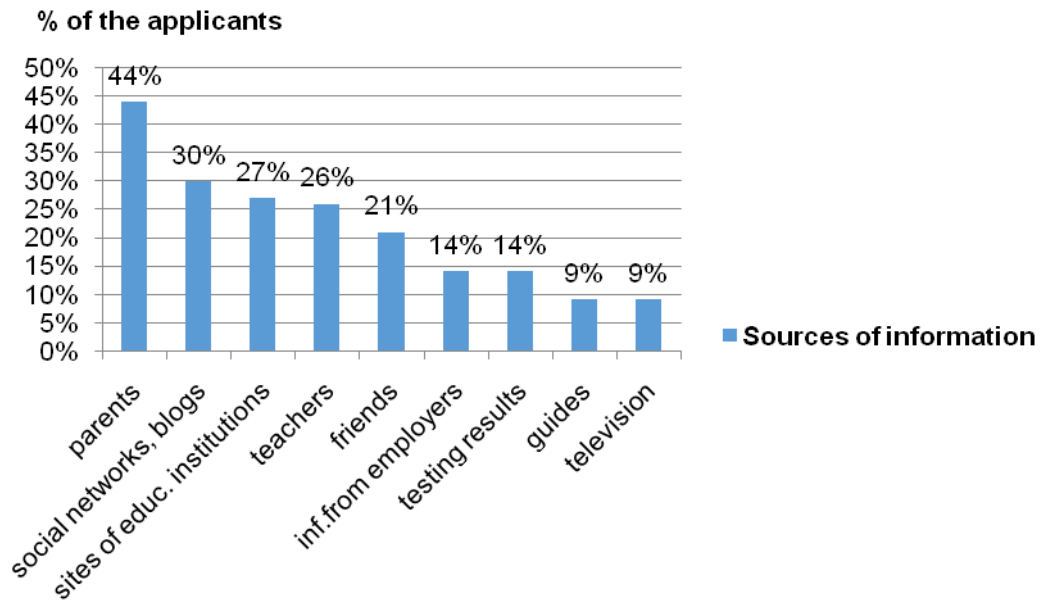


Figure 5. Sources of information used by applicants with disabilities and health limitations when choosing a profession

### **The need of applicants with disabilities and health limitations in vocational guidance services**

In order to analyze the sixth indicator: the need of applicants with disabilities and health limitations in vocational guidance services, we asked the respondents the question: “Do you need help of a career guidance specialist in choosing a profession?”

The results indicate that most of students do not see the benefit of career guidance services.

### **The demanded form of study at university by applicants with disabilities and health limitations**

According to the indicator “The demanded form of study at university by applicants with disabilities and health limitations” we analyzed the answers to the question: “What forms of study are convenient for you to obtain knowledge and qualifications in the chosen profession?” (fig. 6).

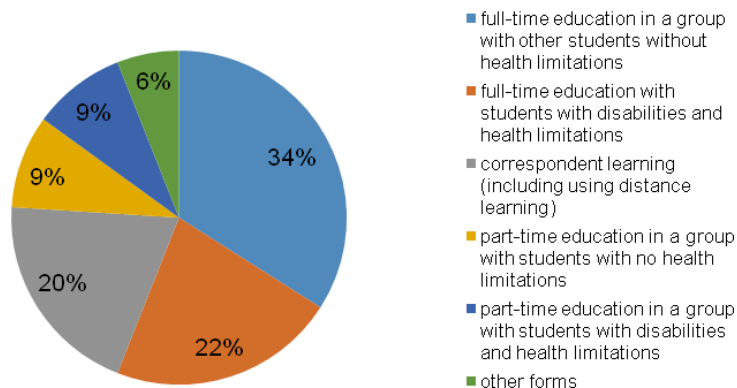


Figure 6. Preferred forms of study at university by applicants with disabilities and health limitations

Thus, most of the students with disabilities would like to study in groups with students without health limitations.

### **Needs of applicants with disabilities and health limitations when joining the University**

To determine the eighth indicator: needs of applicants with disabilities and health limitations when entering the university, we asked the following questions:

- “What needs can you have when getting higher education?”;
- “What technical equipment and special services do you need when studying at a higher education institution?”;
- “Do you think that the training program for people with disabilities and health limitations needs to be changed and adapted to their needs?” (Fig. 7)

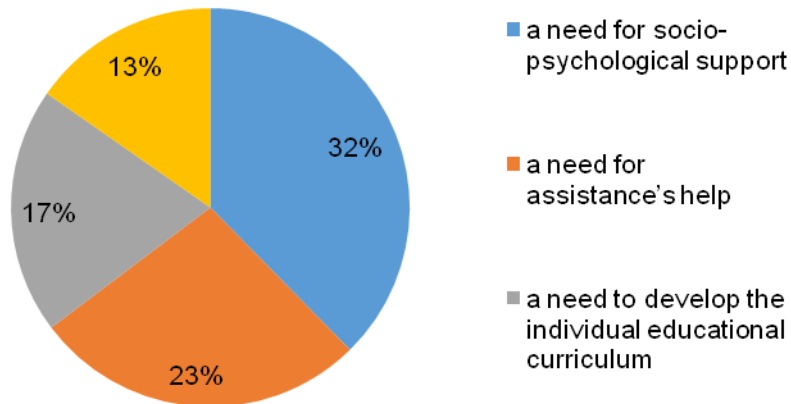
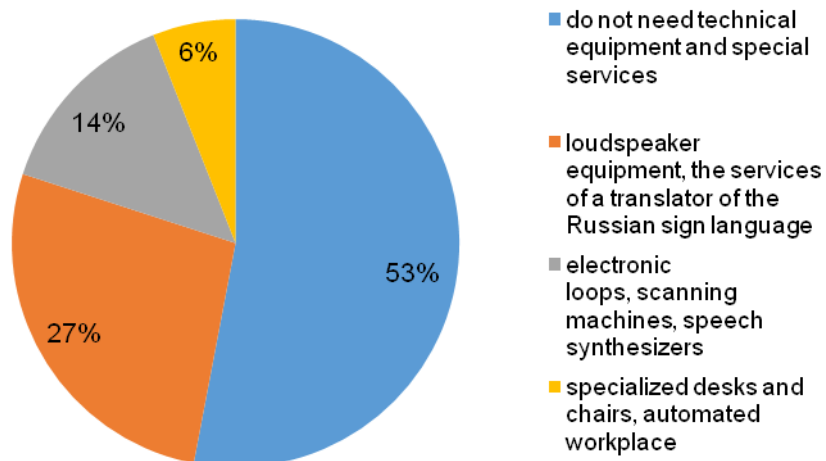


Figure 7. Needs that may arise for applicants with disabilities and health limitations when getting higher education

The results indicate the need for specialist support for students with disabilities who enter the university.

The analysis of answers to the question “What technical equipment and special services do you need when studying at a higher education institution?” allowed us to draw the following conclusions (Fig. 8).



### Figure 8. Required technical equipment and special services for applicants with disabilities and health limitations when studying at university

In order to expand the accessibility of higher education for people with disabilities and health limitations, these needs must be taken into account. It will expand the material and technical base of the university and, importantly, it is necessary to familiarize students and their parents with the material and technical capabilities of the university. So, thanks to the resource training center of Vyatka State University, the university has experience in organizing and conducting excursions for students with disabilities and health limitations and their parents which demonstrate specialized tools to help students to get higher education.

When answering the question: “Do you think that the training program for people with disabilities and health limitations needs to be changed and adapted to their needs?” 75% of the respondents think that university training programs should be adapted to the needs of people with disabilities and health limitations.

Thus, the use of adapted educational programs in the educational process, which will increase the number of students with disabilities and health limitations in universities, can become an effective tool for getting a quality education for people with disabilities and health limitations.

### **Discussion**

The segregation and isolation of people with disabilities are global problems, rooted in legislation and policy, social norms and traditional practices (Lewis & Richardson, 2020). However, there are very few researches on the transition experiences of youth who have a disability (Harwick, Deanne & Lindstrom, 2020).

The right to live independently and be included in the community, set in Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2006), was created to combat the phenomenon of institutionalization and to spur efforts towards its eventual eradication. In this connection, there are studies aimed to monitor compliance with and implementation of this right.

Scientists Sheila Riddell and Elisabet Weedon in their study conclude that the university is a critical arena for young disabled people in the construction of the adult identity and in obtaining higher level qualifications which have a major impact on future labour market opportunities (Riddell & Weedon, 2020).

Collaboration among students and their families, educators, and service providers is an expectation of secondary transition services for young adults with disabilities.

Such collaboration is outlined in special and general education policies, and the research demonstrates the positive influence of collaboration on postsecondary outcomes for young adults with disabilities. However, too often, collaboration among them does not take place, leaving students and their families struggling for support after children's leaving high school.

In the book «International Review of Research in Developmental Disabilities» (Francis, Judith, Schmalzried, Monroe-Gulick & Reed, 2018) the authors describe researched transition programs that increase collaboration among students, families, educators and service providers to support successful transitions to adulthood.

In order to develop collaboration among students and their families, educators, and service providers, we consider it necessary to monitor the educational needs of young people with disabilities.

The analysis of professional preferences of applicants with disabilities and health limitations shows their orientation towards higher education.

## **Conclusion**

Thus, we have come to the following conclusions:

Most of the applicants with disabilities and health limitations have chosen the profession. The most demanded professions for getting higher education among the applicants with disabilities and health limitations are a programmer, engineer, trainer, doctor, teacher.

However, in some cases, the decision-making process on choosing a profession is replaced by the adoption of ready-made decisions proposed by the close circle of a young man: parents, friends and teachers.

Professional preferences of the applicants indicate a high demand for higher education by people with disabilities and health limitations. However, half of the applicants who decided on the profession have not chosen an educational organization yet, which indicates the need for the effective use of existing tools to inform school students about the possibilities of educating people with disabilities and health limitations at universities, and implementing various options for professional education of applicants.

The main factors in choosing a profession are the relevance of the profession to hobbies, interests and income that the profession brings. It is also important for high school students that the chosen profession is suitable for their health condition and is prestigious. Unfortunately, the students do not take into account their abilities when choosing a profession.

Most of the applicants do not feel the need for special career guidance and at the same time they find it difficult to choose an educational organization where they can get the appropriate education. Despite the fact that most students have made their professional choice, they still doubt in their decision.

The most convenient forms of education for gaining knowledge and qualification for the applicants with disabilities and health limitations are full-time studies in a group with students without health limitations and in a group with students with disabilities and health limitations, as well as correspondent learning (including using distance education technologies). Thus, most young people positively assess the prospects of co-education with students without health limitations, that is, inclusive higher education.

In general, it should be noted that at present there is an increase in the interest of applicants with disabilities and health limitations to education, social interaction within various social groups and communities.

The main needs that may arise in obtaining a higher education for people with disabilities and health limitations are the needs for socio-psychological support and help of the assistant.

When studying at a higher education institution, 53% of the respondents said that they did not need technical equipment and special services.

75% of the respondents believe that university study programs should be adapted (individual) to the needs of people with disabilities and health limitations.

As a result of the study, researchers can say that the scope of the provision of career guidance services to students with disabilities and health limitations is limited. Due to the lack of specialist assistance, students are guided not by the most pragmatic considerations. Most of them follow the advice of their parents, and also focus on the interest in professional activities. At the same time, career guidance services, even if the advice of consultants is not taken into account, contribute to a more responsible attitude to the choice of the profession. In this connection, we offer the following recommendations for regional, municipal authorities, and educational organizations. Consider them.

It is necessary to introduce effective tools for informing students with disabilities and health limitations about the possibilities of studying at universities, and implementing various options for professional education of applicants.

We consider it necessary to arrange a separate tab for students with disabilities and health limitations on the university's website in the section "For the Applicant", where the schedule of all conducted activities for this category of students both by the university and employers, the Employment Center and public organizations would be placed.

The event "The University Day" on the basis of special (correctional) comprehensive schools for the training of people with disabilities and health limitations with the participation of teaching staff, students, including those who already work in their specialty, is proposed as an effective form of work.

One of the effective tools of informing school students about universities is such an organizational form as the Exhibition of Inclusive Education with the participation of employers and Employment Centers. Also an effective tool is work of the Internet dispatch room to have monthly consultations on educational issues with the participation of a Russian sign language translator.

In order to familiarize students with disabilities and health limitations and their parents with the material and technical capabilities of universities, it is necessary to organize and conduct excursions for them to demonstrate specialized tools to help students get qualifications in their chosen profession, to demonstrate special educational conditions. For students and their parents living in remote areas, it is recommended to arrange virtual tours.

The department of career guidance and work with applicants with a disability and health limitations of the university should continue to develop and implement programs for interaction with educational institutions using vocational and diagnostic methods that can be implemented via the Internet, with the provision of detailed recommendations. Based on the test results, it is necessary to divide students into groups and carry out group and individual consultations with them, taking into account test results, including individual telephone consultations, Skype consultations.

The importance of providing quality professional services for the diagnosis and counseling of applicants with disabilities and health limitations at the stage of professional self-determination should be emphasized.

At the same time, regardless of the state of health, consultations on choosing a profession before entering the labor market seem to be the most optimal, since many people with disabilities who mastered the profession without taking into account its prospects in the labor market and the attitude of employers face difficulties when looking for a job and getting a job. Career guidance consultations expand knowledge of people with disabilities and health limitations about their real opportunities, about the state and prospects of the modern labor market, and help them better navigate in the social environment.

We offer to supplement career counseling with holding open coaching sessions for students aimed to build an educational and professional career path. At the end of each coach session, you have to decide what actions to take, in what time frame, and ways to control the implementation of the plan.



After school students complete the tasks, they, together with the coach, analyze the results achieved and evaluate both their effectiveness and the effectiveness of the coach session.

When creating vocational guidance programs for students with disabilities and health limitations, it is necessary to provide cooperation of specialists with parents on issues of formation of the social competence of their children. In our opinion, the vocational guidance program should be supplemented with career guidance classes where various specialists (for example, representatives of public organizations, employees of Employment Centers, social educators, correctional educators, doctors) and parents take part. This kind of integrated approach to career guidance for students with disabilities will provide career guidance services taking into account psychophysical abilities of people with disabilities and health limitations and real areas of application of these abilities.

Working with parents, it is important to use such forms as: public speaking at parent-teacher meetings in schools, parenting lectures, online consultations, meetings with employers, and parents participating in interactive meetings with successful graduates.

Universities are recommended to organize research competitions and contests for students with disabilities and health limitations, including online academic competitions and remote contests. Participation in such events will help students test their abilities and increase their motivation to study at university.

For implementation of higher inclusive education in Russia, it is necessary to create not only the material and technical base, but also introduce comprehensive socio-psychological support for students with disabilities and health limitations. We believe that the process of supporting people with disabilities should be implemented throughout the entire learning process, including graduation from school and entering the university, studies at university, graduation from university and entering employment.

The role of the specialist (teacher-psychologist, psychologist, social work specialist) in support should be associated with the creation of favorable conditions for the productive movement of students with disabilities and health limitations along those professional paths that they choose themselves and / or in accordance with the opinion of the social environment (for example, family). It is also important to assist in the constructive resolution of difficulties and crises that arise while studying at university.

In order to solve this problem, we consider it necessary to implement work of the resource educational and methodological center associated with the development of effective means of socio-psychological support for the professional and personal development of students with disabilities and health limitations.

In order to solve the problem of determining effective means of socio-psychological support for students with disabilities and health limitations, we consider it necessary for the resource educational and methodological center to carry out monitoring of educational needs of students of this category and their social well-being in conditions of higher inclusive education. The monitoring results will improve such areas of socio-psychological support for students as their social activity, involvement in student self-government, organization of leisure activities, development and provision by learning materials.

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