

SPOTLIGHT ON DAVID W. KEER

David Keer joined the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) in 1997 as a program specialist. His portfolio at NIDRR includes work in the areas of the demographics of disability, independent living, multiple sclerosis, and other topics. In addition, he serves as Co-Chair of the Interagency Subcommittee on Disability Statistics (ISDS). Prior to joining NIDRR, David had worked in survey research and development, first at the University of Illinois Survey Research Lab and then at the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Over the years, he has worked with national and international agencies and organizations to improve measurement of disabilities and the range of facilitators and barriers associated with participation at home, in the community, and when learning and working. David states: "Academic training and personal history have contributed to my interest in supporting the ICF. My own involvement with ICF goes back to my days at NCHS with Gerry Hendershot and Paul Placek. I participated in some of the earlier work but was pulled in other directions during the middle stage of the ICF development. My current thinking about ICF is easily summarized by a few sentences I had written for a request for funding NIDRR had in the field a couple of years ago:

“Lack of standard definitions, terminology, coding, classification, and measurement of disability and functioning often limits generalization of research findings. Extending use of research findings or population trends to inform policy or clinical interventions is limited due to the difficulty of extrapolating knowledge about disabilities that is gathered from a disparate range of data sources, classification and coding systems, and measures of disability. For example, it is important to estimate future potential demands on rehabilitation systems, but existing population data sources do not adequately provide for planning, development, and evaluation of rehabilitation services and population trends. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF) allows one to assess disability as a dynamic interaction between the person and the environment. The ICF can assist with generating evidence-based policy, research, programs, and services. To extend the use of the ICF within the United States, a variety of measurement tools and data systems must be examined in addition to further evaluation of the implications of the classification system for U.S. populations. To better serve consumers, we

must support the development, evaluation, and improvement of the ICF as it applies to participation of individuals with disabilities in society and the environments, systems, and policies that have the potential to affect their lives.”

David's graduate work was in sociology at the University of Chicago, and his undergraduate studies were in philosophy and literature. David says these studies reflect his love of thought, language, and the wonder of social interaction. David says that his life has taken unexpected twists due to health and illness, a variety of difficulties that interrupted my academic career as well as the geography of his life when Chicago winters became too much. He moved to DC to work at NCHS, then worked on the NHIS-D, just as the MS was flaring up more strongly and other problems began. He sees the Capitol most mornings on his way to work. David says: I try to stay away from the political heat. DC has sure been interesting and this is where I have built a nice life with my partner and friends. One of these days I will ICF code my life and figure it all out. Maybe later this year, on my 50th." David is long overdue to be in the ICF Spotlight. Here's how to contact him: David W. Keer, Program Specialist, Cochair, Interagency Subcommittee on Disability Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20202-2550, voice: 202-245-7402, fax: 202-245-7323, David.Keer@ed.gov.