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Older Workers and the Workplace: A New Challenge for Occupational Social Work

[Michàl E. Mor-Barak](#), [Margaret Tynan](#)

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Abstract

The trend toward early retirement, coupled with the diminishing numbers of youths entering the labor market as a result of lower birth rates, presents

American industry with an impending shortage of available workers. Concurrently, many older adults can anticipate a prolonged and healthy aging and are interested in continuing their productive involvement in society. Despite this interest, older adults face many difficulties in obtaining and retaining a job, the most important of which is age discrimination. Social workers who are trained in both occupational social work and gerontology are in a unique position to respond to these problems. This article suggests several areas for social work intervention to promote continued employment and rehiring of older workers, including advocacy, linking older job seekers with interested employers, advising companies on work arrangements and training programs, and counseling older workers and their families.

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