



# Research Synopsis

## Fall 2013

Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Effective VR Service Delivery Practices  
(RRTC-EBP-VR)

[www.research2vrpractice.org](http://www.research2vrpractice.org)

This document serves as a synopsis of research previously completed and/or currently underway through the RRTC-EBP-VR. This work is established at both the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of Wisconsin-Stout through a grant from the Department of Education, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR), grant number PR#H133B100034. Research partners at Michigan State University, the University of Texas-EI Paso, and Southern University have also been instrumental partners and contributors to the research.

## PHASE I RESEARCH

Phase I research involved secondary analysis of the Rehabilitation Services Administration's (RSA) 911 data across a three year timeframe, FFY 2007-FFY 2009.

- **Between-State Differences in Employment Quality**  
State variations account for 7% of the variance in employment quality
- **Predictors of Employment Outcomes (those most likely to achieve quality employment outcomes through VR):**
  - Male
  - Higher educational attainment
  - Sensory disability (> physical disability and psychiatric disability > developmental disability)
  - Non-significant disability
  - Not receiving disability benefits
- **Personal Factors**  
Individual characteristics decrease both between state by 50% and within state variation by 20%
- **Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services**
  - VR services decrease within-state variation (by 5%) and no change in between-state variation
  - Most state agencies provide a similar pattern of services to VR consumers based on their types of disabilities
  - Supported employment (-ve)
  - Educational change during VR (+ve)
  - Job placement assistance (+ve)
  - VR services also reduced the effect of personal factors on employment quality
- **Environmental Factors**
  - Environmental factors such as economic indicators and state VR agency characteristics have a moderate impact on both employment quality and outcomes
  - Individual and disability-related characteristics have a stronger influence
  - Per capita income helps explain between-state difference in employment quality

## PHASE II RESEARCH

Findings from Phase I research provided the basis for conducting multiple case study research with VR agencies. Rather than selecting a random sample of state VR agencies, states were identified, through demonstrated past performance, that they had developed effective models of delivering of services that set them a part in performance from other state agencies. A number of resources were used to identify the selected state VR agencies including guidance from the advisory council, data available through the Phase I studies using RSA 911 data, survey data from state agencies regarding best or promising practices in public rehabilitation, and the nomination from other state agencies of exemplary states in terms of effective practices.

This study focused on highlighting agencies that have been relatively successful in establishing promising practices and could serve as models to learn from in the delivery of these services in the future.

## **Organizational Promising Practices across the Four States**

- Incubator Unit: The development of “incubator units” where new approaches to service delivery are piloted may have merit for implementation throughout the agency or in certain areas of the state
- SharePoint: Use of the web based “SharePoint” site that the agency calls “Replicating Success” to share innovative practice and manage employer/business accounts
- New Approach to Customer Service/Dual-Customers: Excellent Service, Every Customer, Every Time (E3); heightened employer relations; business development programs and dedicated employment coordinators
- Rapid Response and Internal Service Delivery
- Specialized Caseloads and Counselors: Transition, Supported Employment, Blind/Deaf
- Professional and Leadership Development

## **Service Delivery Promising Practices: Examples from the States**

### **Maryland**

#### ***Specific Promising Practices***

Benefits Counseling, Maryland Seamless Transition Collaborative (MYSTC), Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Program, Supported Employment, Staffing (3 levels of counselors and support staff), Braided Funding/Partnerships, Evaluation, Idea Development, Training, Sustainability

#### ***Informal Promising Practices***

Innovation/Best Practices, Resources/Funding, Use of Technology and Data, Evaluation, Policy and Process, Culture of Creativity and Flexibility, Partnership

### **Mississippi**

#### ***Specific Promising Practices***

Ability Works/LINCS (rapid response & internal service delivery), Smart Work Ethics (soft skills training), Business Development Program and Employment Coordinators, Specialized Coordinators/Counselors/Caseloads

#### ***Informal Promising Practices***

Business Model, Leader Continuity with a Focus on Performance, Monitoring and Accountability, Communication and Constituent Relations, Training and Staff Development, Support for Innovative Practice, Recognition

### **Texas**

#### ***Specific Promising Practices***

Incubator Units, Replicating Success (SharePoint), Excellent Customer Service (E3 and Four Way Test coaching model), Distinct Culture Shift (promotes flexibility in service delivery, reduced reliance on bureaucratic procedures, increased flexibility in service delivery), Valforce (outsourcing non-essential VR functions)

#### ***Informal Promising Practices***

Culture Shift, Transformational Leadership, Processes and Systems Alignment, Technology, Partnerships, Resources, Staff Recognition, Evaluation, Training

## Utah

### ***Specific Promising Practices***

Employer Relations, Supported Job Based Training and Supported Employment, Work Incentive Planning Services, Choose to Work, Defendant Offender Workforce Development Taskforce, and Career Exploration Services

### ***Informal Promising Practices***

Partnerships and Collaboration, Recognition, Increasing Visibility, Community Outreach, Communication, Quality Outcomes Evaluation

## **PHASE III RESEARCH**

The following research projects are currently underway.

### **Evaluating the ICF as a VR Model**

Preliminary findings indicate that several ICF predictors (medical benefits, perceived stigma, social support, work tolerance, work communication skills, hope, etc.) strongly associated with employment outcomes of people with disabilities. Two hundred of the 300 participants needed for the study are currently participating and we will continue to collect data until achieving our goal of N=300. Preliminary analysis of the data and validation of the psychological instruments developed specifically for this study are underway (e.g., the Engagement in VR Scale).

### **Motivation to Work**

We are evaluating Bandura's social cognitive career theory and Deci and Ryan's (2002) self-determination theory as a motivation to work model for people with disabilities. An instrument is being developed to measure motivation to work and will be available for use by VR counselors once validated.

### **Motivational Interviewing/Motivation to Work Curriculum**

Development of the Motivational Interviewing (MI) motivation to work curriculum has been completed. Dr. Trevor Manthey, a national MI expert, is currently reviewing the curriculum and his feedback will be integrated into the materials. We are hoping to conduct a randomized-control trial of the curriculum in Wisconsin and Texas.

### **VR Counselors' Toolkit**

The toolkit will include evidence-based resources for VR counselors to use in practice to assess and improve consumer motivation to work. The toolkit will be developed once the research noted above has been completed.

### **Evidence-Based Practice VR Survey**

The intent is to identify the needs of rehabilitation professionals in regard to evidence-based practice. Researchers have completed the survey of counselors in four state VR agencies (TX, MS, MD, and UT) with N=445. Data is currently being collected with community-based rehabilitation organization personnel (N=214).