Best Practices in Achieving Employment Outcomes: Findings from a Multiple Case Study of Agencies in the Public Rehabilitation Program

Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Evidence-Based Practices in Vocational Rehabilitation
(RRTC-EBP VR)
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Madison, WI

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The Call For Evidence-Based Practices (EBP)

State-federal vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies, rehabilitation counselors and practitioners are under increased pressure to adopt and pursue evidenced-based practices.

The rehabilitation counseling literature has been criticized for a lack of empirical work providing support for the development and use of evidence-based practices.
5 Levels of EBP

Level 1: Systematic review of multiple, well designed, randomized controlled trials

Level 2: Properly designed, randomized controlled trials of appropriate size

Level 3: Well-designed trials, single-group pre-post, cohort, time series, or matched case-controlled studies

Level 4: Well-designed non-experimental studies

Level 5: Opinions of respected authorities based on clinical evidence, descriptive studies, or reports of expert committees.
Best Practices in Achieving Employment Outcomes: Findings from a Multiple Case Study of Agencies in the Public Rehabilitation Program

The purpose of this qualitative study was to discover emerging and promising vocational rehabilitation service delivery practices that help improve employment outcomes of people with disabilities.
PURPOSE (Continued)

In addition to promising best practices, the study also provides a comprehensive analysis of the policies, procedures, practices and structural elements related to the provision of effective best practices to individuals with disabilities served in the four state sample of VR agencies that lead to successful employment outcomes.
Investigators – Phase II

- Michael J. Leahy, Ph.D., Principal Investigator, RRTC Phase II
- Roy J. Del Valle, Doctoral Research Assistant
- Susan G. Sherman, Doctoral Research Assistant
- Fong Chan, Ph.D.
- Cayte Anderson, Ph.D.
- Timothy Tansey, Ph.D.
- John Lui, Ph.D.
- David Rosenthal, Ph.D.
- Jill Bezyak, Ph.D.
- Madan Kundu, Ph.D.
- Alo Dutta, Ph.D.
- Kat Lui, Ph.D.
- Sandra Fitzgerald, Ph.D.
Preliminary Phase II Activities

• Comprehensive literature review on EBP (published)
• Online survey of state VR Agency Directors, CSAVR Regional Representatives, NET state contacts and TACE Directors
• Design and development of the Research Protocol
• Pilot study in the State of Michigan (MRS)
• Comprehensive review of all state agencies for potential inclusion in the four-state sample
RRTC-EBP-VR Phase II Methodology

Multiple state VR agency case study approach of four state VR agencies participating in the study: Maryland, Mississippi, Texas and Utah.

Agency document analysis: State VR Plan, Innovation Unit Proposals, and other information about programs

Semi-Structured and Focus Group Interviews: Organizational Promotion of Best Practices, Design and Best Practice Intervention and Evaluating Impact.
Modified CQR Methodology

Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) (Hill, 2012).

• Domain identification
• CORE ideas
• Cross analysis
• Use of an auditor

Process repeated for each of the four states and a final cross-analysis performed by the Research Team across all four states in the sample
RRTC-EBP-VR Phase II Research Questions

1. What are the specific best practices that appear to be evidence-based and transportable to other state VR agencies?

2. What are the best models of effective practice, policy and procedures among state VR agencies that result in the creation of an environment that promotes innovation and the effective delivery of services to assist individuals with disabilities to achieve employment outcomes?
Research Question 1

• What are the specific best practices that appear to be evidence-based and transportable to other state VR agencies?
Service Delivery Promising Practices

Service Provision:

*Valforce*

*Work Incentive Planning and Benefits Services.*

*Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) program*

Partnerships:

*Choose To Work*

*Utah Defendant Offender Workforce Development Taskforce*

*Maryland Seamless Transition Collaborative*

*Individual Placement and Support*
Service Delivery Promising Practices

Technology:
DARSforce
Soft Skills Training

Certification:
CRP Certification
Supported Job Based Training and Supported Employment
Research Question 2

What are the best models of effective practice, policy and procedures among state VR agencies that result in the creation of an environment that promotes innovation and the effective delivery of services to assist individuals with disabilities to achieve employment outcomes?
Organizational Promising Practices

Innovation:

*Incubator unit*

Technology:

*SharePoint*

*Data Driven*

Dual Customer Approach

*E-3*

*Business Relations*

*Business Development Program and Employment Coordinators*
Organizational Promising Practices

Staffing:
Specialized Coordinators, Counselors, and Caseloads

Training:
Clinical and Organizational Skills Enhancement

Service Development:
Rapid Response and Internal Service Delivery
Linking Innovative Networks of Community Services
Innovative Environment & Effective Service Delivery Practices

State VR Agency Leader Domains

**Environment:**
- Culture
- Partnerships
- Business Model
- Resources

**Practices:**
- Working Alliance
- Autonomy
- Processes/Systems
- Technology
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<tr>
<th>Environment:</th>
<th>Practice:</th>
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<td>Culture Change</td>
<td>Client Centered Evaluation</td>
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<td>Promising Practices/Innovation</td>
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Innovative Environment & Effective Service Delivery Practices

State VR Agency Mid-Manager Domains
Innovative Environment & Effective Service Delivery Practices

State VR Agency Counselor/Staff Domains

Environment:
- Culture/Innovation
- Committed Leadership
- Processes/Systems
- Promising Practices/Innovation

Practices:
- Leadership
- Comprehensive Services
- Partnerships
- Technology
# State Agency Cross Analysis

**Effective Practices That Promote Innovative VR Service Delivery Practice: Agency Leaders**

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# State Agency Cross Analysis

## Effective Practices Promote Innovative VR Service Delivery Practice: Mid-Managers

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## State Agency Cross Analysis

### Effective Practices That Promote Innovative VR Service Delivery Practice: VR Counselors/Staff

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Multiple Case Study Summary

The qualitative data collected and analyzed in this initial study of evidence-based and promising practices will be used in the next stage of this investigation in a national Delphi Study of vocational rehabilitation experts to gain a national consensus on the importance and portability of these promising practices for other state agencies to implement to increase employment outcomes for those served.
Multiple Case Study Summary

The current study also collected qualitative data for each of the four states on their performance with specific sub-populations of customers that have been historically underserved.

We also designed and implemented a survey instrument to examine the perceptions of rehabilitation counselors in each of the four states regarding EBP. This data is displayed and discussed in detail within the overall research monograph and the special Issue on evidence-based practices of the Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation - Volume 41, Number 2 / 2014 - IOS Press
Multiple Case Study Summary

Each of the four states studied were very forthcoming with information, candid in all discussions and very helpful to the study by opening up their agency to the research teams. The state directors were particularly helpful to the study by arranging for meetings with senior level staff, mid management personnel and rehabilitation counselors, providing reports and documents the team needed to review and effectively communicating to their respective staff the importance of this study for public rehabilitation efforts.
Multiple Case Study Summary

The multiple case studies and onsite reviews were very satisfactory to the research teams.

The CQR methodology worked extremely well, across the four state agencies, levels of staff interviewed (senior, mid-management and rehabilitation counselor levels) and multiple research teams.
Multiple Case Study Summary

Two types of best practices emerged from our review of each state:

• Organizational best practices that lead to better employment outcomes for those served.
• Service delivery best practices (interventions, services) that lead to employment.

We use the term “promising practices” rather than evidence-based practices in this study to describe creative organizational and service delivery practices leading to increased levels of employment for customers served by the four state agencies.
Multiple Case Study Summary

Lack of rigorous research validating these practices. While some practices had more specific outcome data associated with them than others, many of the practices had very indirect evidence of effectiveness and although highly promising in terms of staff and management perspectives, they lack empirical support at the level needed to refer to them as evidence-based practices.

Most did not meet the expectations of manualized interventions or services. It is clear that staff within these agencies are doing their best to identify and design promising organizational and service delivery practices, but they lack for the most part, the technical expertise to design and carry out empirical studies to formally measure the impact on employment outcomes.
Multiple Case Study Summary

The CQR methodology was effectively used to study the responses of three levels of staff within each state agency to questions that tried to uncover and understand significant organizational or cultural factors and initiatives that were implemented to support the agencies environment that lead to creative interventions and services aimed at increasing employment opportunities for those served.

The qualitative data here is highly rich and validated not only across the three levels of personnel within each respective agency, but also across all four agencies in the sample.
Next Steps

• National Delphi Study of promising practices
• Publication of the Phase II findings in the Special Issue of the Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation (seven manuscripts) released this past fall (2014).
• Dissemination of the Special Issue – Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation - Volume 41, Number 2 / 2014 - IOS Press
You can access it FREE at IOS Press. Articles include:

- Evidence-based Best Practices in the Public Vocational Rehabilitation Program that Lead to Employment Outcomes
- Methodological application of multiple case study design using modified consensual qualitative research (CQR) analysis to identify best practices and organizational factors in the public rehabilitation program
- Promising best practices that lead to employment in vocational rehabilitation: Findings from a four-state multiple case study
- Organizational and cultural factors that promote creative best practices in the public rehabilitation program: Findings from a four-state multiple case study
- Social-cognitive predictors of readiness to use evidence-based practice: A survey of state vocational rehabilitation counselors
- Knowledge translation strategies to improve the resources for rehabilitation counselors to employ best practices in the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services
- An analysis of evidence-based best practices in the public vocational rehabilitation program: Gaps, future directions, and recommended steps to move forward
Plain language summaries of the Phases I & II research are now available:

- **RRTC-EBP VR Findings Phase I highlights**
- **RRTC-EBP VR Findings Phase II Service Delivery Practices**
- **RRTC-EBP VR Findings Phase II Organizational Practices**
- **RRTC-EBP VR Findings Phase II Models of Effective Practice, Policy, and Procedures**
Conclusion and Questions

Thank you!

Questions or comments?
Selected EBP References

Selected EBP References (continued)

If you want to improve employment and quality of work outcomes for people with disabilities,
*make OUR research, YOUR best practice!*