



VR Counselor Transition Practices in "High Performing" States

will begin at 2 pm ET

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- **Rehabilitation Research & Training Center on VR Practices and Youth (RRTC)**

 - The Center conducts research and provides trainings and technical assistance which investigates problems, crafts solutions, and designs actionable strategies for translating research into useable, feasible, and effective strategies for transition stakeholders – VR agencies, policymakers, researchers, transitioning youth and their families, educators, practitioners, and employers.

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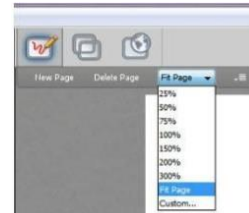
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Customizing Your View

- Resize the whiteboard where the presentation slides are shown to make it smaller or larger by choosing from the drop down menu located above and to the left of the whiteboard; the default is “fit page”



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- Please consult the reminder email you received about this session for instructions on obtaining a certificate of participation for this webinar.
- **You will need to listen for the continuing education code which will be announced at the conclusion of this session.**
- Requests for certificate of participation must be received no later than **5 PM ET on Wednesday February, 28th.**

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Visit us at
VRPracticesAndYouth.org.

The website highlights our research findings, publications, related products, tools, and other resources – providing up-to-date, evidenced-based information, with the ultimate objective of enhancing VR service delivery to accomplish the long-term goal of improving the lives of transitioning youth with disabilities and their families.

Feel free to reach out to us with any questions and sign up to join our mailing list on our website's homepage.



VR Counselor Transition Practices in "High Performing" States

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WIOA = new activities for VR counselors

- Authorizing service before school exit:
 - More direct and intensive collaboration with schools and their partners
 - Authorizing and/or providing Pre-ETS
 - Job exploration counseling
 - Workplace readiness training
 - Work based learning experiences
 - Counseling on post-secondary education opportunities
 - Self-advocacy instruction

Research Questions

1. How do VR counselors rate the importance of transition-related activities and their preparation to perform them?
2. Are there differences between counselor perception of importance of skill and their preparation to perform them?
3. What are the barriers to implementing effective practices

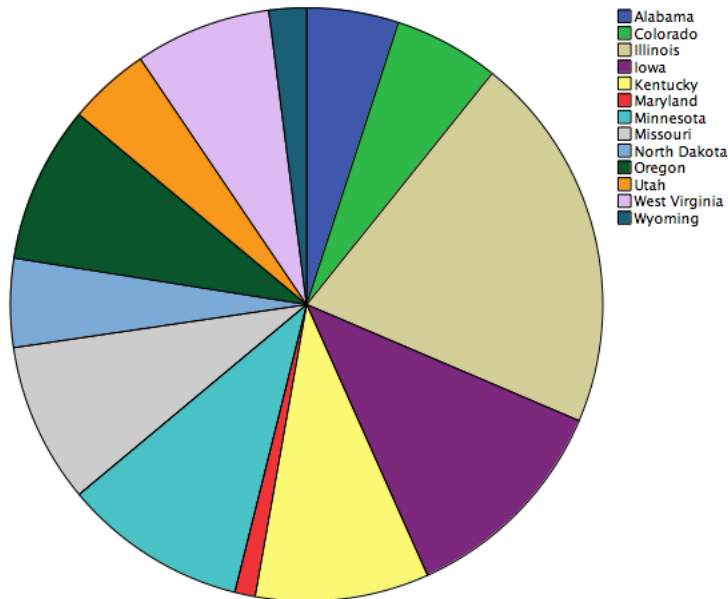
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Participants

- Counselors from 13 SVRAs with highest successful closure rates for youth (Honeycutt et al., 2015) were asked to participate in survey
- 538 (out of a possible 1,690) counselors completed survey
 - 70% of counselors had caseloads comprised of at least 25% of students and youth
 - 16% served exclusively students and youth

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State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Response Rate



The Instrument

VR Transition Practices Scales (derived from Plotner et al., 2012; and Kierpiec, 2012 with national experts review)

- Respondents rated importance of 35 items on Likert scale
 - Perceptions of *Importance*
 - Perceptions of their *preparation to perform them*
- Identified major barriers to serving students and youth from drop down menu of 12 items (collaboration, local employment opportunities, etc.)

VR Counselor participants

- Gender: **77% female**
- Highest Degree: **90% have MA or better**
- CRC: **45%**
- Degree earned: **58% Rehab counseling**
- Caseload of at least 25% youth: **70%**

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Results: most important skills

- All items rated at least moderately important (3.0 out of 4.0 on scale)
- Highest rated:
 - Job exploration counseling (3.80)
- Lowest rated;
 - Collaborating with LEAs on evaluating post-school outcomes (3.06)

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Importance of the Transition Activity?

- 5 *Highest* rated items on Importance ($\geq 3.5/4.0$):
 - Job Exploration Counseling
 - Provide work-based learning experiences
 - Partner with CRPs (adult service agencies)
 - Conduct career assessments
 - Provide workplace readiness training

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Importance of Transition Activity?

- Five *lowest* rated items ($\leq 3.4/4.0$):
 - Provide self-advocacy training
 - Participate in IEP meetings
 - Participate in person-centered planning
 - Involve employers in transition process
 - Collaborate with LEAs on Summary of Performance

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Results: Preparation to perform skills

- All items *lower* for Perception than Importance
- Highest rated:
 - Developing Individual Plan for Employment (3.5 out of 4.0)
- Lowest rated:
 - Involving employers in the transition process (2.5 out of 4.0)

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How Prepared to Perform Activity?

- Five *highest* rated items (≥ 3.0)
 - Develop IPE prior to school exit
 - Initiate VR case prior to school exit
 - Provide counseling on PSE opportunities
 - Conduct job exploration counseling
 - Participate in IEP meetings

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How prepared to Perform Activity?

- Five *lowest* rated items (≤ 2.9)
 - Arrange for paid work experiences
 - Provide self-advocacy training
 - Collaborate with workforce development centers
 - Collate with LEAs on Summary of Performance
 - Involve employers in the transition process

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Items with largest (significant) gaps

- Items with *high* importance & *low* preparation
 - Involve employers in transition process
 - Provide work-based learning experiences
 - Provide workplace readiness training
 - Collaborate with workforce centers (AJCs)
 - Secure paid employment prior to school exit

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Results: Barriers to effective practice

Most frequently cited:

- Time and case management
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of viable employment options in area

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Results: Barriers to effective practice

Counselors with specialized caseloads perceived *fewer* barriers in four categories:

- Severity of disability
- Lack of LEA and service provider collaboration
- Need for additional training
- Difficulty engaging youth in VR services

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Conclusion

- VR counselors perceived all of the transition-related practices as at least moderately important to their success with the transitioning youth population
- Gaps existed between perceptions of importance and preparation on several items, notably those related to employment
- Higher caseload proportion of youth associated with higher perception of preparation

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Implications

Need for improving VR counselor capacity regarding employment-related services:

- Securing paid employment
- Engaging employers
- Coordinating with AJCs

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Limitations

- Our response rate is an estimate since we do not know the # of VR counselors in the specific agency with transitioning youth on their caseload
- Sample may be biased as those counselors most motivated and/or knowledgeable may be those who responded to the survey
- Our survey did not tap into ALL VR transition practices

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Future Research

Since paid employment during HS is a robust predictor of adult employment we need more complete understanding of:

- Perceived challenges
- Caseload specifications
- Use of specific categories of Pre-ETS by counselors and their effectiveness

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References

- Honeycutt, T., Thompkins, A., Bardos, M., & Stern, S. (2013). State differences in the Vocational Rehabilitation Experiences of Transition-age youth with disabilities. Available at: <http://www.disabilitypolicyresearch.org/DRC>
- Kierpiec, K. (2012). *Transition counselor efficacy: Essential knowledge domains for best practice*. Michigan State University, Counseling, Educational Psychology & Special Education. Retrieved from: ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Plotner, A.J., Trach, J.S., & Strauser, D. (2012). Vocational rehabilitation counselors' identified transition competencies: Perceived importance, frequency, and preparedness. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 55(3) 135–143. doi: 10.1177/0034355211427950

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More information

<http://vrpracticesandyouth.org/>

(click Studies, then VR practices, then Center Publications)

Neubert, D., Luecking, R., & Fabian, E. (in press). Transition practices of vocational rehabilitation counselors serving students and youth with disabilities in high performing state vocational rehabilitation agencies. *Rehabilitation Research, Policy & Education*.

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Thank You!



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