Using VR Data to Improve Outcomes for Transitioning Youth

Do We?  Can We?  Why Now?

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2015 Capacity Building Institute: Improving Postsecondary Outcomes for All Students with Disabilities, May 5-7, 2015 Charlotte, NC
In Our Audience?

- Individual with disability
- Family Member
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Developmental Disabilities Personnel
- CRP staff
- Teachers
- Transition Specialists
- Researchers
- Administrators
RRTC
Vocational Rehabilitation & Transitioning Youth
NIDRR 2014

4 Partners
Objectives for Today

1. Discuss how VR data can be important to state teams

2. Provide examples of types and use of data to improve VR services for TY

3. Identify challenges to Using Data

4. Make recommendations for teams to use VR data
Objective 1: Why are VR data important to state teams?

1a. Explore strategies, predictors to improve outcomes for TY across populations

1b. Align practices and outcomes with recent laws & policies (WIOA, ABLE)

1c. Answer demands from stakeholders (families, schools, policy-makers, state legislators)
Honeycutt et al., 2013 found wide variation across VR agencies in service access, utilization, and outcomes for TY.

In special education/transition, research does exist on effective, even evidence-based practices across disability groups.

To date, VR lacks similar research basis to identify effective strategies & promising practices.
### Characteristics as Predictors of Outcomes

- Parent expectations for employment
  - High adaptive behavior
  - High functional academics
- Parent expectations for attending postsecondary ed
  - Parent employed, medium family income, some college ed

### Best Practices As Predictors of Outcomes

- Youth involved in transition planning
- Family involvement
- Work experience (even short term employment)
- Life skills instruction/Self determination
- Interagency collaboration

SVRAs make pre-employment transition services available to all students with disabilities:

- set aside 15% of federal funds for these services to assist youth with disabilities transition from:
  - School to Postsecondary Education
  - School to Competitive Integrated Employment
- half of federal Supported Employment funds
  - provide youth with significant disabilities with supports, including extended services, to obtain competitive integrated employment
3c. Respond to critical stakeholders

- Youth & families need information about VR services, access & utilization
- SVRA directors need evidence to identify state goals, priorities, and fund new practices
- State planning teams need data to identify service gaps and needs
- Congress & state legislators use evidence to allocate funding & support new initiatives
Stakeholders need to use VR data to:

- improve understanding of what SVRAs offer TY
- enhance collaboration around identifying mutually important evaluation questions for state planning teams
- offer a longer-term (after school exit) perspective on TY
Objective 2: Examples
NEEDS for data, types and use of data to improve VR services for SVRA

USE Data to address a specific purpose or answer a question, such as:

What are the needs of TY in my state?
  ◦ What are the programs, services or strategies offered in my state to TY?
  ◦ How well does the state collaborate across agencies – VR, DD, special ed?

Are TY accessing VR services in my State?
  ◦ How effective is this program, service or practice for TY?
  ◦ How efficient is this program, service or practice for TY?
  ◦ Does this program, service or practice work equally well across diverse youth?

How adaptable or replicable is this program, service practices to my own region or state?
**Data sources for SVRAs & states in planning**

**Databases and sources to access:**
- National and state databases (**RSA-911** databases, state administrative/case management databases)
- Accessible national databases (American Community Survey, Current Population survey data, state-specific education demographic and other data, etc.)
- State demographic and background data on children & youth (**State Report Cards**-NCLB)
- RSA and OSEP **Annual State Plans** & Monitoring Reports

**Data to consider collecting:**
- Surveys & interviews
- Focus groups & key informant
- Observations & document reviews
DO WE HAVE GAPS.....

to fill in our knowledge base for VR and school staff to find, understand and use data to improve outcomes for TY?
Objective 2. Example how RRTC will use data to address knowledge gaps to SVRAs and TY

**Stakeholders:**
- Youth with disabilities and their families
- SVRA directors
- VR counselors and related personnel
- Federal and state policy makers
- NIDDR research community
- Employers and the business community

**Challenges:**
- Fragmented & inefficient service systems
- Insufficient transition evidence basis
- Inadequate VR transition knowledge
- Inadequate KT methods to bridge the gap between research & practice

**Outcomes:**
- New accessible knowledge in youth transition models & methods
- Evidence-base of effective policies, procedures & programs
- Improved SVRA system capacity for youth transition

**Research in:**
- National analyses of RSA 911 data linked to SSA earnings data
- Design & evaluation of a data analytic system to improve VR system outcomes
- Evaluation of a VR transition intervention to be replicated across State VR agencies
- Assessing & compiling VR counselor transition skills & practices with transitioning youth.
- A blueprint for VR collaboration in PSE

**Innovations in:**
- Training via multi-method, multi-modal approaches
- TA to build system capacity & strengthen skills sets
- Dissemination that promotes access to robust, contextual knowledge base in youth transition.
2. RRTC studies using diverse data sources to improve outcomes

- Analyses of RSA-911 case record data merged with earnings, SSA beneficiary data

- Analyses of DORS AWARE data to evaluate a longitudinal model transition intervention

- Design & Implement Data Analytic Systems to improve SVRA data access, monitoring

- Collect national data using surveys & interviews to describe effective VR practices for TY
RRTC Study 1
Analyses of RSA-911 Data

Use multiple national data sources to analyze individual and agency-based factors leading to better outcomes for TY

- National RSA-911 case service records administrative database
- Linked to the Master Earning File (SSA)
- Linked with SSA records

TO: address knowledge gap in long-term VR employment outcomes and agency-level factors influencing employment outcomes
RRTC Study 1 - Sources of data

- **RSA-911** Case Service records containing individual (consumer) level factors released annually by RSA to researchers (access available to SVRAs)

- **Master Earnings File (MEF)**, housed on the SSA mainframe (not publicly available)

- **DAF File** housed on the SSA mainframe containing longitudinal records of SSI or DI recipients (not publicly available)
RRTC Study 2: Evaluate data from model transition intervention

- Maryland DORS received RSA funding to design, implement & evaluate model demonstration program for TY

- Maryland model was aligned with the NCWD Guidepost of Success best-practice features

- Model ran at 11 sites over a 5 year period
RRTC Study 2: Sources of Data

- MD DORS one of 22 SVRAs using AWARE electronic database to retrieve case records
- TY cases from AWARE matched to state quarterly earnings data up to one year after case closure
- Use a matched case control design and/or nested design to exert ad hoc controls relevant to the limitations of most demonstration projects!
- Conduct structured interviews with critical stakeholders in project to assess implementation, adaptation, and innovations in practice
Study 3: Use Data Analytics to Improve VR services

- Combines data available on SVRA electronic administrative databases (i.e., AWARE) with information technology
- Addresses the SVRA need for access to quantitative information on service and program effectiveness
- Addresses data and design limitations arising from SVRA demonstration models exhibited in Study 2
RRTC Study 3 Sources of Data

- Use RSA monitoring reports, annual state plans, interviews to complete an environmental scan to identify sample of SVRAs offering array of services & supports for TY, software capacity to support a DAS.
- Develop and test a Data Analytic System (DAS) to be used by SVRAs (often in conjunction with AWARE software) to develop systematic approach for ongoing evaluation & service improvement.
RRTC Study 4: Investigating VR counselor best practices

Tool Kit: Identify, describe, compile “best practices” implemented by VR counselors serving TY in high performing SVRAs

- Identify top quartile of SVRAs and TY outcomes from Study 1 data
- Survey all VR counselors in the top quartile using adapted version of VR-Transition Assessment Inventory (Plotner et al., 2012)
RRTC Study 4: Sources of Data

- RSA-911 case service records to identify SVRAs in top quartile on proportion of youth served & service outcomes Study 1
- Collect survey data using Plotner’s VR-TAI
- Conduct follow-up interviews to “drill down” into survey data for more understanding of strategies & practices for replication
# Example: Summary of Data Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Primary Focus</th>
<th>Availability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Community Survey</td>
<td>Demographics, state &amp; large cities</td>
<td>Publicly available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Population survey</td>
<td>Economics, state, local</td>
<td>Publicly available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA-911 case services records</td>
<td>VR clients, national &amp; state</td>
<td>SVRAs have access; researchers with permission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State VR administrative records</td>
<td>VR clients, local, by office &amp; counselors</td>
<td>SVRAs have access, researchers with permission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual State Plans</td>
<td>Progress, plans, priorities, needs assessments, special projects, personnel, budgets</td>
<td>On RSA website; with access to MIS system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA State Monitoring Reports</td>
<td>Progress, recommendations</td>
<td>On RSA website; with access to MIS system</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Objective 3 Challenges to Using Data

- Accessing databases, Conducting Analyses
- Dissemination across the State
- Translating knowledge acquired from research into actionable practices & strategies
- Costs – direct & indirect
- Planning and preparation—OR our best intentions go awry!!
Objective 4 Recommendations

- Identify problem or purpose
  - in narrow terms for your SVRA or state team wants to address
- Verify importance of problem with stakeholders
- Identify source and/or type of data needed to answer problem or purpose
- Determine feasibility of a plan
  - modify as necessary
- Determine state’s capacity to implement
  - modify as necessary
Remember …

- Data sources exist but we need for better uniformity across SVRAs regarding purpose and use of data for TY
  - (what works, what outcomes)

- Helpful to have **federal guidance** on what to measure and report on TY

- Need more rigorous research to determine **causality** between agency practices and outcomes
Questions for Audience

- What is capacity of your SVRA and state team to access and analyze data? What do you see as the purpose and benefit?

- How useful are research reports on TY outcomes in SVRAs to your state? What additional guidance would you need for understanding & implementation?

- How can experiences of the agencies doing relatively better on TY outcomes be applied to all agencies?

- What promising VR practices have you identified for TY in your state? How are these disseminated?