Research BRIEF

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Measure Twice, Cut Once, Part 1:
Using the RSA-911 Case Service Report to Monitor Pre-Employment Transition Services

This brief presents approaches to analyzing one source of administrative data—the RSA-911 Case Service Report—for the purpose of assessing the provision of pre-employment transition services. These services—which are authorized under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA)—are intended to prepare students with disabilities for life after school. But they represent a major change in how VR agencies operate. VR agencies must provide five required pre-employment transition services and, if funds are available, may provide nine other authorized services to secondary and postsecondary students (see table at the end of the brief). Each agency must use at least 15 percent of its federal VR grant award on such services. Any student can receive these services if he or she is eligible or potentially eligible for VR services—meaning that students with disabilities do not have to apply to the VR program before receiving pre-employment transition services.

PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES

Given this increased emphasis on pre-employment transition services, staff at VR agencies might be wondering how best to measure these services. Who is—and who isn't—receiving these services? Is the VR agency on track to use 15 percent of its federal funds on these services, as required? Are providers delivering the services that they are contracted to provide? Do eligible students have access to all required services, or are some students in certain schools or regions not being served? Are the services having the effects that VR agency staff want?

VR agencies already collect rich data on pre-employment transition services that staff could use to answer many of these questions. The agencies compile data on the characteristics of the people they serve, the types of services provided, and expenditures by type of service. These data enable staff to monitor the differences in pre-employment transition services by student characteristic, geography, provider, or counselor; changes in the types or number of these services over time; and spending on various types of pre-employment transition services (as well as relative to the 15 percent federal allotment requirement). VR agency staff could use these data to assess patterns in use and spending compared with their expectations for these services. In many instances, and depending on how the data are prepared, these analyses could be completed using readily accessible software.

In what follows, we present considerations for using the RSA-911 Case Service Report to assess the provision of pre-employment transition services. We begin by describing the report and its advantages and disadvantages. We then offer suggestions about preparing the data to make analyses easier, followed by three examples of analyses involving pre-employment transition services that illustrate how to conduct the analysis, interpret the findings, and extend the analysis.

WHAT IS THE RSA-911 CASE SERVICE REPORT?

Each quarter, VR agencies submit an RSA-911 Case Service Report to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). These reports contain one record for each person who (1) receives pre-employment transition services; (2) has applied for VR services but is not yet receiving them; (3) is a VR participant (that is, has an individualized plan for employment and is receiving services); or (4) recently had their cases closed, and the VR agency must now provide information on their employment and skill gains (up to four quarters after case closure).

Information on students who receive only pre-employment transition services is more limited than information on VR applicants and participants. For the latter two groups, the RSA-911 Case Service Report has data elements related to application, eligibility, services, and (eventually) case closure. For students who receive only pre-employment transition services, the required data elements are unique identifier, Social Security number (if available), date of birth, race and ethnicity, student with a disability, and details on the five required pre-employment transition services.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF USING THE RSA-911 CASE SERVICE REPORT TO ASSESS PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES

Convenience is the main advantage of using the RSA-911 Case Service Report to measure pre-employment transition services (Figure 1). Analyses could be straightforward because the data have one record per person, which simplifies the tasks of calculating counts and averages. Moreover, the data are prepared on a quarterly basis, and the data elements and values are clearly defined (and required) by RSA.[1] The report is a comma-delimited file type, which makes it easy to use in spreadsheet software such as Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets. Most people have access to these types of software, and they are relatively simple to use (or to learn to use) for tabulations and descriptive statistics.

But the RSA-911 Case Service Report does have some disadvantages that limit the types of analyses that could be done (Figure 1). The report does not include data elements on the provider, quantity, or exact timing of services; it only contains information on services delivered in the quarter of observation. It also lacks data elements for VR office, counselor, or supervisor. And as noted previously, most of the data elements in the report are not collected for students who only receive pre-employment transition services.

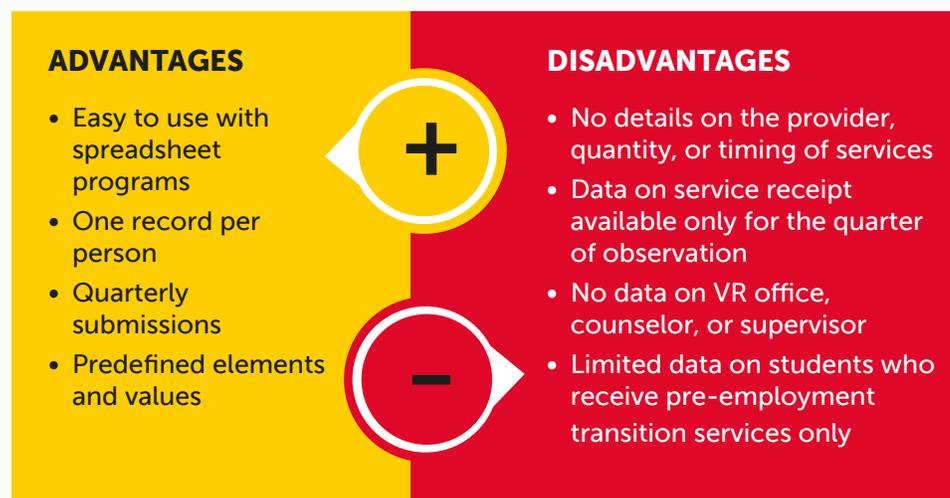### The RSA-911 Case Service Report: advantages and disadvantages

ADVANTAGES
- Easy to use with spreadsheet programs
- One record per person
- Quarterly submissions
- Predefined elements and values

DISADVANTAGES
- No details on the provider, quantity, or timing of services
- Data on service receipt available only for the quarter of observation
- No data on VR office, counselor, or supervisor
- Limited data on students who receive pre-employment transition services only

Figure 1.

PREPARING THE RSA-911 CASE SERVICE REPORT FOR ANALYSES OF PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES

An agency's RSA-911 Case Service Report contains data on everyone involved in the given VR agency and includes numerous data elements, some of which may not be easy to analyze directly. It may therefore be helpful to take certain steps to facilitate the analysis:

- **Limit the records to the population of interest.** To make the data more manageable, limit the records to only those people who will be included in the analysis. Records could be limited based on individual characteristics, such as people ages 14 to 21 (or the eligible age range for pre-employment transition services specific to the state) or students with disabilities (values of 1, 2, or 3 for the "student with a disability" data element). Or records could be limited based on service delivery—for example, by excluding cases that are closed or that closed before the current quarter, or applicants who have not signed an individualized plan for employment (IPE), signifying the start of VR service receipt.

- **Keep only the necessary data elements.** Limiting the number of data elements to only those that are relevant for analyses could make reviewing the data easier. Relevant data elements might include the unique identifier, date of application, date of most recent or amended IPE, race, ethnicity, date of birth, student with a disability, and all data elements related to pre-employment transition services (including the start date of pre-employment transition services). Data elements such as gender, education, Supplemental Security Income at application, barriers to employment, and other services might also be relevant, depending on the analyses.

- **Create indicators for certain types of youth.** It might be useful to examine statistics for different types of youth, such as students only receiving pre-employment transition services, VR clients, or secondary and postsecondary students. The data elements and values needed will depend on the interests of the VR staff. One approach is to create binary indicators for each type of youth; another approach is to create a single indicator based on multiple data elements. With the latter approach, it's important to ensure that the categories for the indicator are mutually exclusive (so that a person cannot meet the criteria for more than one category) and exhaustive (so that everyone falls into a category).

Table 1 presents one approach for categorizing youth ages 14 to 21 at VR application into one of five types, using four data elements from the RSA-911 Case Service Report. The types of youth are (1) students who receive pre-employment transition services but are not VR clients; (2) students who receive pre-employment transition services and are VR clients; (3) students who do not receive pre-employment transition services but are VR clients; (4) youth who are VR clients and who are not enrolled in secondary or post-secondary education; and (5) youth VR applicants who have not yet been deemed eligible for services.

An approach for defining VR youth type

VR youth type	Data element from the RSA-911 Case Service Report			
	Application date	**Date of most recent IPE or amended IPE**	**Student with a disability**	**Start date for pre-employment transition services**
Students who only receive pre-employment transition services	No date	No date	Yes	Valid date
Students who receive pre-employment transition services and VR services	Valid date	Valid date	Yes	Valid date
Students who receive VR services but not pre-employment transition services	Valid date	Valid date	Yes	No date
Nonstudents	Valid date	Valid date	No	No date
Youth VR applicants	Valid date	No date	Yes, no, missing	No date

Table 1.

- **Create indicators of pre-employment transition services.** Because each pre-employment transition service has multiple data elements reflecting whether a student received the service, it might be helpful to create a binary indicator for each service. The indicator could have a value of 1 if the student received a service and a value of 0 if the student did not. (As indicated in the RSA-911 Case Service Report, the service could be provided directly by a VR agency staff, through VR agency purchase from a provider, or by comparable services and benefits providers.) Additional indicators could be created to show receipt of any pre-employment transition services, number of service types, or the provider type.

- **Add other data elements.** VR administrators and staff might be interested in additional data elements for pre-employment transition services that do not appear in the RSA-911 Case Service Report but are available in the VR agency's administrative data. Examples of such data elements include counselor, supervisor, region, and district or office. The VR agency staff responsible for creating the RSA-911 Case Service Report might be able to add those elements to the data using an individual identifier (such as a case identifier or Social Security number).

With any data analyses, including analyses of the RSA-911 Case Service Report, it's important to follow your agency's data security guidelines to maintain the privacy of the data. These guidelines might include conducting analyses on secure computers, not emailing files with personally identifiable information (such as names and birth dates), and storing data and analysis files in specific locations.

EXAMPLES OF ANALYSES INVOLVING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES USING THE RSA-911 CASE SERVICE REPORT
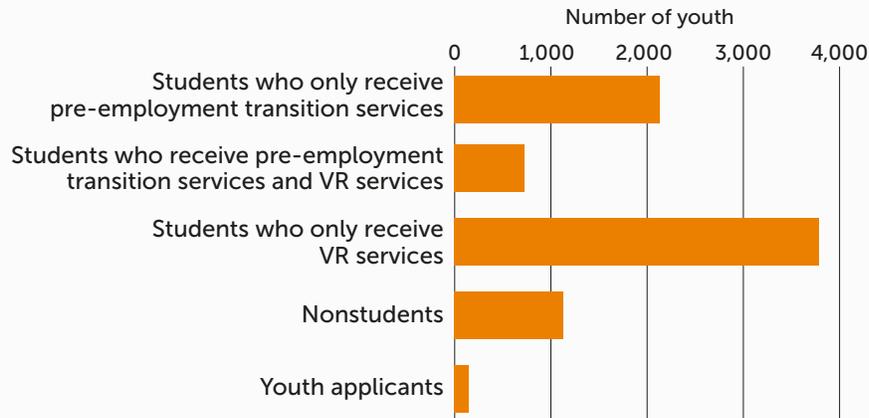
This section presents three hypothetical examples of analyses involving pre-employment transition services using a single RSA-911 Case Service Report (that is, a single quarter of data). The examples show the concrete steps involved in the types of analyses that might be of most interest to VR agency staff.

1. **Example 1** shows a VR agency's youth caseload by the types of services that the youth received. These statistics might be useful for spotting potential issues with caseloads by area or by counselor and for identifying students who could benefit from pre-employment transition services.

2. **Example 2** shows the various types of pre-employment transition services provided to students, which could reflect differences in service emphasis or provider capacity.

3. **Example 3** extends the second example by showing the receipt of pre-employment transition services across a single student characteristic: race. Race is the only required demographic characteristic included for students only receiving pre-employment transition services; other characteristics for students who are VR clients might be of interest. Such analyses could be useful for tracking equity or consistency in service provision.

Each example shows how to use the data to answer a particular analysis question. We pose the analysis question, identify the needed data elements, describe the analysis process, present a figure or table with hypothetical data, offer questions to interpret the findings, and suggest ways to extend the analysis further.

What types of youth ages 14 to 21 is the VR agency serving?

Youth ages 14 to 21 who were served in Quarter 4 of 2017, by VR status

Number of youth

Category	
Students who only receive pre-employment transition services	
Students who receive pre-employment transition services and VR services	
Students who only receive VR services	
Nonstudents	
Youth applicants	

(Bar chart with horizontal axis from 0 to 4,000 in increments of 1,000)

Conduct the analysis

Create a categorical indicator that identifies which youth are in one of five VR youth types (as shown in Table 1).

Calculate the number of youth in each category.

Interpret the results

Is the distribution of youth across types as expected?

Are there students not receiving pre-employment transition services who could be? If so, do they live in areas where pre-employment transition services might not be readily available?

Extend the analysis

Are these the right VR youth types?

Should students be differentiated by their enrollment in secondary versus postsecondary education?

Example 1.

Which types of pre-employment transition services are students receiving?

Percentage of students ages 14 to 21 who received pre-employment transition services in Quarter 4 of 2017, by service and youth type
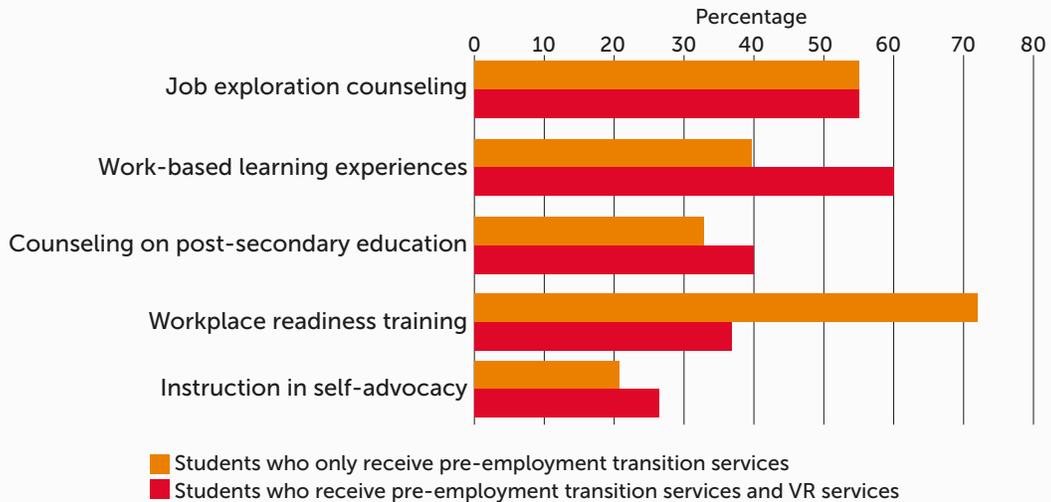
Percentage

- Students who only receive pre-employment transition services
- Students who receive pre-employment transition services and VR services

Conduct the analysis

Create binary indicators of the receipt of individual pre-employment transition services.

Calculate the percentage of students who receive each preemployment transition service, with separate calculations for each youth type.

Interpret the results

Is the distribution of pre-employment transition services as expected?

Should there be differences in pre-employment transition services among students who receive only pre-employment transition services versus students who receive both pre-employment transition services and VR services?
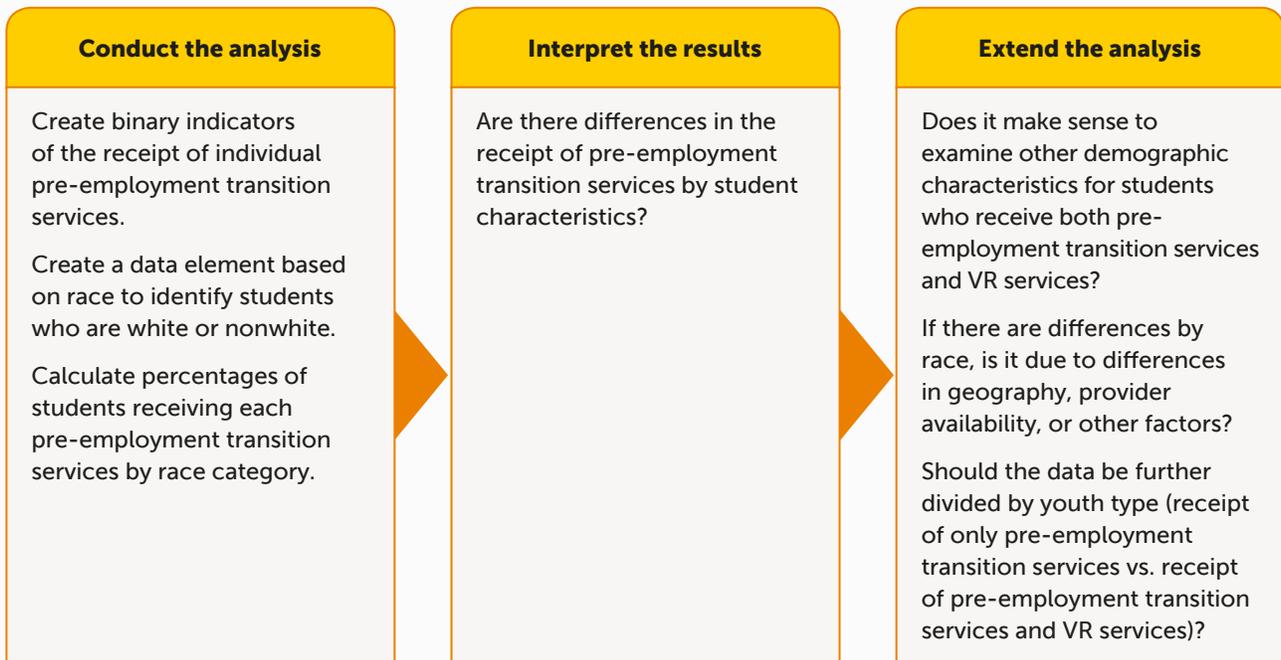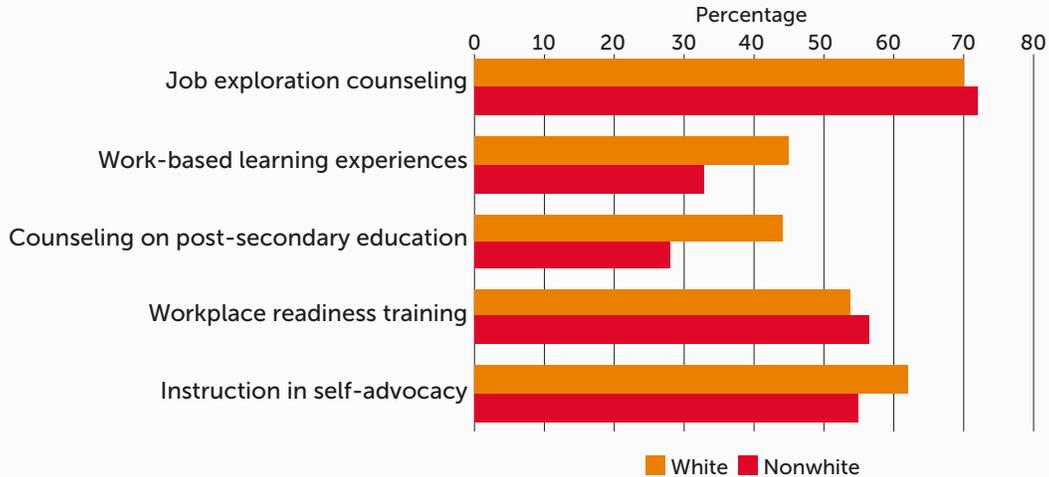
Extend the analysis

Is it worthwhile to show the statistics by youth type?

Should the denominator include all students, not just those who receive pre-employment transition services?

Example 2.

How does the receipt of pre-employment transition services differ by race?

Percentage of students ages 14 to 21 who received pre-employment transition services in Quarter 4 of 2017, by service type and race

Percentage

	White	Nonwhite
Job exploration counseling		
Work-based learning experiences		
Counseling on post-secondary education		
Workplace readiness training		
Instruction in self-advocacy		

■ White ■ Nonwhite

Conduct the analysis	**Interpret the results**	**Extend the analysis**
Create binary indicators of the receipt of individual pre-employment transition services.	Are there differences in the receipt of pre-employment transition services by student characteristics?	Does it make sense to examine other demographic characteristics for students who receive both pre-employment transition services and VR services?
Create a data element based on race to identify students who are white or nonwhite.		If there are differences by race, is it due to differences in geography, provider availability, or other factors?
Calculate percentages of students receiving each pre-employment transition services by race category.		Should the data be further divided by youth type (receipt of only pre-employment transition services vs. receipt of pre-employment transition services and VR services)?

Example 3.

CONCLUSION

Tracking pre-employment transition services across students, counselors, providers, geographic areas, and time could be useful for understanding whether a VR agency's service provision is effective and how these services could be improved. This brief, along with the other two briefs in this series, is intended to provide VR agency staff with ideas for measuring pre-employment transition services, but the examples are just a starting point. An agency could conduct a wide array of analyses to understand these services, limited only by the data elements that it collects. Staff can use the resources on the next page to extend their analyses.

- The VR Program Evaluation Coach, an online tool to help VR agencies assess their programs: https://vrevalcoach.com/

- An issue brief on performance management issues for VR agencies: https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/publications/performance-management-for-state-vocational-rehabilitation-agencies-serving-transition-aged-youth

- An issue brief on VR agencies' early implementation of pre-employment transition services: https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/publications/state-vocational-rehabilitation-agencies-early-implementation-experiences-with-pre-employment

- The Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center, which provides resources related to pre-employment transition services: http://www.wintac.org/

- The Program Evaluation and Quality Assurance Technical Assistance Center, which provides training, technical assistance, and resources for data analysis and evaluation: https://peqatac.org/

Definitions of required and authorized pre-employment transition services	
The five required pre-employment transition services	1. Job exploration counseling 2. Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after-school opportunities, or experiences outside the traditional school setting (including internships), provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible 3. Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education 4. Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and indepen-dent living 5. Instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring
The other nine authorized pre-employment transition services	1. Implementing effective strategies to increase the likelihood of independent living and inclusion in communities and competitive, integrated workplaces 2. Developing and improving strategies for individuals with intel-lectual disabilities and individuals with significant disabilities to live independently; participate in postsecondary education experi-ences; and obtain and retain competitive, integrated employment 3. Providing instruction to VR counselors, school transition personnel, and other persons supporting students with disabilities 4. Disseminating information about innovative, effective, and efficient approaches to achieving the goals of WIOA 5. Coordinating activities with transition services provided by local educational agencies under the Individuals with Disabilities Educa-tion Act (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.) 6. Applying evidence-based findings to improve policy, procedure, practice, and the preparation of personnel in order to better achieve the goals of WIOA 7. Developing model transition demonstration projects 8. Establishing or supporting multistate or regional partnerships involving states, local educational agencies, designated state units, developmental disability agencies, private businesses, or other participants to achieve the goals of WIOA 9. Disseminating information and strategies to improve the transition to postsecondary activities for members of traditionally unserved populations

Source: Rehabilitation Services Administration. "Pre-Employment Transition Services." RSA-VR-1. 2016. Available at https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/rsa/supporting/rsa-vr-1-pre-employment-transition-services.pdf. Accessed January 8, 2019.

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