

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES
REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, DC 20202

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM
RSA-IM-99-31
DATE: August 25, 1999

ADDRESSEES: STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES (GENERAL)
STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES (BLIND)
STATE REHABILITATION COUNCILS
CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY OF INDIVIDUAL
RIGHTSPROGRAMS
REGIONAL REHABILITATION CONTINUING EDUCATION
PROGRAMS
AMERICAN INDIAN VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICE
PROGRAMS
RSA SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

SUBJECT : FY 1997 National Data Tables

CONTENT : Section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended in 1998 (the Act), requires RSA to conduct annual reviews and periodic on-site monitoring of the State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies to determine whether the State is complying substantially with the provisions of its State plan and with the applicable performance standards and indicators. In the event that a program fails to comply substantially with these requirements, then the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) is to provide technical assistance to establish a corrective action plan.

Until such time as the final version of the performance standards and indicators required by Section 106 of the Act is published, RSA has adopted a performance-based monitoring approach, which supplements the review of statutory and regulatory requirements with an analysis of State VR agency performance in achieving the primary purpose of the Act, i.e., to assist individuals with disabilities to achieve quality employment outcomes.

Enclosed are the National Data Tables and graphs containing the achievements of each State VR agency funded under title I of the Act. Three sets of tables are included: one is in alphabetical order; another is arranged by program expenditures; and a third is listed by State

population. As you will note there are no national tables numbered 3, 6, and 11. These numbers are being reserved for State-specific tables that will not be produced this fiscal year. Also enclosed is a section entitled "Data Notations and Explanations" which further explains the caveats that should be considered when reviewing the tables and graphs. The tables and graphs must be interpreted with care in light of the limitations that are noted.

The National Data Tables may be used by State VR agency management and by the members of the State Rehabilitation Council as a self-assessment tool to gain insight into State VR agency performance useful in improving agency efficiency and effectiveness. The National Data Tables serve as a companion piece to RSA's FY 1999 Self-Assessment and Technical Assistance Guide, disseminated by RSA-IM-99-20, dated April 16, These two documents provide RSA with the tools necessary to assist each State VR agency in complying with the requirements of Federal law and regulations and in improving the achievement of employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

For the past four years, RSA has been using VR program monitoring guidance that emphasizes State VR agency achievements in assisting individuals with disabilities to achieve employment outcomes. This outcome-oriented monitoring system supplements the focus on compliance with the law and regulations that has characterized RSA's monitoring of the State-Federal VR program. This system is designed to enable the State-Federal partners to jointly develop performance-based plans focusing on each State VR agency's strengths and limitations. In this manner, particularly effective practices are shared with other agencies, and technical assistance is provided to agencies most in need.

Fredric K. Schroeder, Ph.D.
Commissioner

Enclosure

cc: CSAVR
NAPAS
NCIL
NRFC

NATIONAL DATA TABLES DATA NOTATIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

TABLE 1 - PERCENT OF PERSONS WITH EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

- The "Percent of Persons with Employment Outcomes" is calculated based on status 26 closures divided by status 26 closures plus status 28 closures. A status 26 closure is a person with one of the following employment outcomes defined in the RSA-911: (1) competitive employment, (2) Business Enterprise Program (BEP), (3) self-employment, (4) worker in extended employment (workshop), (5) unpaid family worker, or (6) homemaker. A status 28 closure is a person exiting the VR program without an employment outcome after having received VR services.

TABLE 2 - PERCENT OF PERSONS WITH EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES IN THE TARGET GROUP

- This table is similar to Table 1 except that the focus is on the "Target Group." The Target Group is comprised of persons exiting the VR program with one of the following three employment outcomes: (1) competitive employment, (2) BEP, or (3) self-employment. Excluded from the Target Group are: (1) workers in extended employment (workshop), (2) unpaid family workers, and (3) homemakers.

TABLE 4 - MEAN WEEKLY WAGES FOR PERSONS WITH EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

- This table is based on the gross weekly wages of persons with employment outcomes. State-to-State comparisons may not be meaningful unless other factors are considered, such as the average weekly wages for entry-level positions in the same geographical area. Refer to Table 1 for information concerning "Employment Outcomes."

TABLE 5 - MEAN WEEKLY WAGES FOR PERSONS WITH EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES IN THE TARGET GROUP

- Refer to the comments concerning Tables 2 and 4 in reviewing this table.

TABLE 7 - PERCENT OF PERSONS WITH EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES EARNING AT OR ABOVE \$4.75/HR

- This table reflects the "Federal Minimum Wage." The Federal Minimum Wage was \$4.75 per hour until September of 1997 when it was raised to \$5.15 per hour. The figure of \$4.75 per hour was used as a uniform standard for comparative purposes. This table is not intended to represent the statutory Federal Minimum Wage in all States and for all occupations, nor does the table imply compliance with minimum wage laws.

TABLE 8 - PERCENT OF PERSONS WITH EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES EARNING ABOVE THE POVERTY LEVEL

- The "Poverty Level" for the purpose of the VR program was determined to be \$8,350 per year or \$160 per week. This was the Federal poverty level for 1997 for a single head of household under 65 years of age determined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The U.S. Bureau of the Census uses the CPI when viewing poverty levels in State-to-State comparisons. Refer to Table 1 for information concerning "Employment Outcomes."

TABLE 9 - PERCENT OF PERSONS WITH EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES WORKING MORE THAN 20 HOURS PER WEEK

- The standard of working more than 20 hours per week was intended to reflect the full-time versus part-time working status of persons exiting the VR program with employment outcomes. It is advisable to consider this table in conjunction with other tables related to earnings and income for an indication of the nature and level of the work performed. Refer to Table 1 for information concerning "Employment Outcomes."

TABLE 10 - MEAN COST OF PURCHASED SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

- "Purchased Services" are VR services contracted for and provided to persons receiving VR services from a State VR agency. These services do not include VR services provided directly by a State VR agency. The "Cost of Purchased Services" should be seen in relative terms. The cost of purchased services is expected to be higher in States that have a higher cost of living, and the Consumer Price Index (CPI) may be useful for comparative purposes. Further, the cost of purchased services may be higher for State VR agencies offering a greater diversity and level of sophistication of VR services than other State VR agencies. In addition, State VR agency policies regarding (1) purchasing services, (2) "order of selection" of persons with significant disabilities, and (3) financial needs tests, may affect the cost of purchased services. Refer to Table 1 for information concerning "Employment Outcomes."

TABLE 12 - PERCENT OF PERSONS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES WITH EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES EARNING AT OR ABOVE \$4.75 PER HOUR AS A PERCENT OF ALL PERSONS WITH EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES EARNING AT OR ABOVE \$4.75 PER HOUR

- Qualified VR counselors determine both the eligibility of the person seeking services from the Public VR program, and whether or not the person has a "significant" disability based upon the statutory definition of this term. The variance in the application of this definition, and each State VR agency's ability to serve all individuals determined to be eligible within the state, impact on the data contained in Table 12. Refer to Table 1 for information concerning "Employment Outcomes."

GRAPHS

- Included with each table is a graph that is a histogram and curve of State frequency distributions depicting State table values along an axis of a continuum and grouping of mean values and standard deviations. The mean value for each histogram is calculated as the total of the individual State VR agency values divided by the number of State VR agencies. This differs slightly from the computation of the means of the national data tables where the means are computed independently of the individual State values. Thus, there may be some variation between the national table means calculated using individual values from all States and the histogram means calculated as the mean of State values.

CONCLUDING NOTATION

- These tables and graphs provide insight into the performance of the VR program both on a State and National level. They provide greater insight regarding the impact and import of the VR program when considered collectively. However, these tables and graphs must be interpreted with care in light of the limitations discussed above.

DATA SOURCES:

- Federal and State expenditures data were obtained from the SF-269 Financial Report Form.
- Population data for 1997 were obtained from the U.S Bureau of the Census.
- Poverty data were obtained from the 1997 U.S. Bureau of the Census statistics.
- VR program data were derived from the 1997 RSA-911 National database.
- SPSS was the statistical program used to produce the tables and graphs.