

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES
REHABILITATIVE SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20202

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM
RSA-IM-00-31
DATE: August 23, 2000

TO : STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES (GENERAL)
STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES (BLIND)
CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
AMERICAN INDIAN VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAMS
RSA SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

SUBJECT: Longitudinal Study Reports on Transitional Youth and Supported Employment

CONTENT: Attached are copies of two reports: 1) *Characteristics and Outcomes of Transitional Youth in Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)* and 2) *Vocational Rehabilitation Experiences Among Individuals Who Achieved a Supported Employment Outcome*. The *Transitional Youth* study is the *Fourth Interim Report of the Longitudinal Study of the VR Services Program*. The *Supported Employment* report is a substudy of the *Longitudinal Study*.

The *Longitudinal Study* has followed over 8,000 VR consumers at 37 locations for at least three years for the purpose of identifying the types of individuals served, types of services provided, environments in which the services were provided and short-term and long-term economic and non-economic outcomes of the VR program. Research Triangle Institute (RTI) is conducting the study. RTI produced interim reports on Consumer Satisfaction (1996) and Employment Outcomes (1998).

Transitional Youth

The *Transitional Youth* report addressed questions concerning the characteristics, services, and outcomes of transition-aged youth (defined as youth with disabilities between the ages of 18 and 25) who applied for VR services during the *Longitudinal Study's* sample acquisition period (November 1994-December 1996). The study questions focused on comparisons of transition age VR consumers who had received special education versus those who did not in terms of 1) their characteristics, 2) reasons why they applied for VR services, 3) types of services and financial support they received, 4) extent to which families or advocates were involved in the rehabilitation process, 5) variables associated with their attrition from the VR program, 6) sociodemographic, disability, education,

program participation, and self-esteem factors associated with their employment outcomes and earnings levels, and 7) gains in terms of employment, functional capacities, and reduction in public dependency. The findings reported are nationally representative and are generalizable to the transition-aged VR consumers nationwide.

Among the findings were:

- Transitional youth represent 13.5 percent of all VR consumers; nearly two-thirds of these youth had participated in special education in high school.
- Youth who had been special education students, in comparison with their peers who had not received special education, were more often male (61.6 versus 52.9 percent), African-American (21.2 versus 10.3 percent), and mentally retarded (32.9 versus 1.2 percent) or learning disabled (40.2 versus 12.9 percent).
- Youth VR consumers who received special education in high school were more likely than their other peers to have lower grade level equivalent achievement in reading (5.1 versus 9.8) and mathematics (5.2 versus 8.7).
- More special education students than nonspecial education students in this population received SSI-Disabled both at entry to VR (66.9 percent versus 44.1 percent) and following exit (67.5 versus 53.8 percent), though the gap narrowed following exit.
- Special education students were lower in self-esteem and perceived themselves to be more often controlled by chance and other people than youth VR consumers who had not received special education services in high school.
- More special education students obtained diagnostic and evaluation services (85 versus 72 percent) and transportation, housing, and maintenance services (25 versus 18 percent).
- More nonspecial education youth obtained support for education (55 versus 45 percent) and averaged more of those services (2.0 versus 1.2).
- For about one-third of special education students, family members were involved in the VR experience, compared with 14 percent of other youth.
- Of those who achieved employment, nearly all of the nonspecial education youth entered competitive employment (99 percent), compared with 81 percent of special education students.
- Special education youth VR consumers earned less per hour (\$5.57 versus \$6.47) and worked fewer hours (33.6 versus 37.1) than did other youth, who more often obtained jobs in the professional/managerial/technical fields (21 versus 6 percent).
- Multiple regression analyses found that:
 - ? Receipt of specific VR services, including education or training services, physical or mental restoration services, and diagnostic or evaluation services, was strongly associated with achieving an employment outcome, and to entering competitive employment, for both special education recipients and nonrecipients.

- ? Self-esteem, locus of control, gender, and limitations in gross motor or cognitive functioning were also associated with employment outcomes.

Supported Employment

This report contains findings from a descriptive study of the characteristics, services, and outcomes of consumers who achieved a supported employment (SE) outcome after exiting VR services. RTI obtained the data for the study through case file abstraction, consumer interviews, and an extended service provider interview for a nationally representative sample of 259 SE consumers as part of the larger Longitudinal Study.

The purpose of the SE study was to compare individuals who had obtained the SE employment outcome with individuals who had obtained other employment outcomes in terms of their characteristics, services received, earnings, employment retention, and satisfaction with services. The study also examined the type and persistence of extended services provided to individuals in SE.

Among the findings were:

- Mental retardation was the primary disability for one-half of all SE consumers, and individuals with mental illness accounted for an additional 18 percent.
- SE consumers performed four grade levels below other successful consumers in reading and three and one-half grade levels lower in math.
- Persons with mental retardation who exited VR services into SE were more similar to other mentally retarded consumers of VR services (who exited into other forms of employment) than they were to other successful SE consumers with respect to age, receipt of special education, academic achievement levels, referral sources, and prior earnings.
- SE consumers overall tended to be more significantly disabled, to have relied on financial assistance, and to have had a more limited work history than other significantly disabled consumers who obtained employment.
- Nearly half (49 percent) of all the jobs that SE consumers obtained were in the service industry, more than double the percentage among other former consumers with significant disabilities who worked in service occupations (21 percent).
- Between 65 and 79 percent of SE consumers who held the same job one year after exiting VR services continued to receive some type of support services. Over 90 percent of these consumers reported receipt of job coaching services.
- One year after exiting VR services, 84 percent of SE consumers were still working; 74 percent in the same job obtained through VR services, and an additional 10 percent in another job. Eighty-three percent of other employed former consumers with significant disabilities were employed one year after VR services ended

- The average hourly wage earned by former SE consumers one year after exiting VR services was \$4.68 (median of \$5.20), \$3.34 less than the average wage earned by other significantly disabled consumers.
- Average hours worked per week by former consumers exiting VR services into SE was 22.2 (median of 23), an average that varied little by disability. Consumers exiting into employment other than SE worked 13 hours more per week.
- Former SE consumers were significantly less likely to receive health insurance and other job-related benefits than were other employed former consumers with significant disabilities.
- Overall, SE consumers with retardation reported general satisfaction with various aspects of their employment one year of the exiting VR services.
- Other SE consumers were less satisfied; at least 45 percent reported being “not satisfied” with their earnings, benefits, or opportunity for advancement.

If you have any questions concerning the Final Report, please call Dr. Harold Kay, Director of Evaluation, at 202-205-9883.

Fredric K. Schroeder
Commissioner

Attachment

CC: NCIL
CSAVR
NAPAS