

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

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM  
IM-04-07  
DATE: February 11, 2004

ADDRESSEES: STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES  
(GENERAL)  
STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES  
(BLIND)  
PROTECTION & ADVOCACY PROGRAMS  
CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS  
AMERICAN INDIAN VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION  
PROGRAMS  
REGIONAL REHABILITATION CONTINUING EDUCATION  
PROGRAMS  
RSA SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM  
PWI GRANTEES

SUBJECT: Final Evaluation Report on the Projects With Industry (PWI)  
Program

CONTENT: The Final Report on the Evaluation of the Projects With Industry  
Program has been approved by the U.S. Department of Education  
for release. Research Triangle International conducted the study.  
This study can be found at the Rehabilitation Services  
Administration's website at:

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/speced/leg/rehab/eval-studies.html#pwi>

In October 2000, Research Triangle Institute (RTI) initiated an evaluation of the Projects With Industry (PWI) program under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education. The broad purpose of the evaluation was to examine the role and performance of the PWI program as one component of the broader set of employment-related services available to individuals with disabilities, with a particular focus on the extent to which PWI projects fulfilled their intended goal to create and expand job opportunities for individuals with disabilities at the project level. The specific objectives of the study were to:

- Describe the structure and operations of PWI projects with respect to types of grantee organization, project foci, funding, staffing, types of services provided, and other variables.

- Describe the relationship of the PWI program to the employment community in terms of Business Advisory Councils, local employers, and Workforce Investment Act entities.
- Identify the characteristics of individuals served by PWIs in terms of demographic and disability characteristics, types of PWI services received, and employment outcomes obtained.
- Describe the degree to which there is cooperation and coordination between the PWI and State/federal Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs, and compare the characteristics and outcomes of PWI participants with those of VR consumers.
- Identify the degree to which PWI compliance indicators influence project operations and are supported by accurate and reliable data.
- Describe the extent to which PWI projects vary in how they pursue program purposes and identify how the PWI model might be improved in ways that would enhance its ability to function as a complement to the VR services program.

RTI collected the data needed to address these study objectives through (1) a survey of all PWI projects funded as of October 2000, and (2) on-site data collection at 30 randomly selected PWI projects. Among the study's key findings:

- In FY 2001, 88 organizations located in 32 States and the District of Columbia operated 99 PWI projects.
- The program provided services to approximately 13,300 individuals with disabilities and assisted approximately 7,000 of these persons to obtain competitive employment.
- Minority representation in the PWI program nearly doubled over the last two decades, from 22 percent in 1983 to 42 percent in 2001.
- Individuals with mental illness represented 22 percent of all former participants, followed by individuals with learning disabilities (15 percent), non-orthopaedic physical impairments (13 percent), orthopaedic impairments (12 percent), alcohol or substance abuse (11 percent), and hearing impairments (10 percent).
- Eighty-three percent of all former participants for whom documentation was available had a "significant" disability.
- Nearly half (49 percent) of former participants were active VR service consumers at entry to PWI, another 21 percent had a prior experience with the VR agency, and 30 percent had no experience with the VR program.
- State VR agencies were the largest single source of referral to the PWI program (58 percent), followed by self, family, or friends (16 percent), schools (10 percent), and community rehabilitation providers (10 percent).
- PWI services most frequently received by former participants, according to evidence in participants' case files, included job placement (62 percent), job readiness training (59 percent), and job development (42 percent). Less frequently received services included job skills training (25 percent), supportive services (17 percent), worksite modifications (two percent), and career advancement services (two percent).
- Overall, 62 percent of former PWI participants either obtained employment (60 percent) or retained employment (two percent).

- On average, PWI participants who obtained employment worked for 31 hours per week and earned \$8.94 per hour (median of \$8.00); most jobs were in either the service sector (38 percent), or retail sales (28 percent).
- PWI participants were 11 percent more likely to obtain or retain employment following PWI services if they had some prior experience with the VR program.
- And finally, PWI and State VR agency staff agreed that PWI services do not duplicate VR agency services; individuals served by both programs tend to receive placement assistance only through the PWI program, with any training usually provided or at least funded by the VR agency.

If you have any questions concerning the Final Report, please call Fred Isbister, Branch Chief, Service Projects Branch, at (202) 205-9297. If you wish copies of the report, please contact Mrs. Tammy Nelson or Ms. Deborah Barnes at (202) 205-8299. Their e-mail addresses are [tammy.nelson@ed.gov](mailto:tammy.nelson@ed.gov) and [deborah.barnes@ed.gov](mailto:deborah.barnes@ed.gov).

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Joanne Wilson  
Commissioner

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NORP