

# **Transition Innovations: Promising Vocational Rehabilitation Practices for Youth**

## **Presenters:**

**Rich Luecking, University of Maryland**

**Meg Grigal, Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts**

**Purvi Sevak, Mathematica Policy Research**

## **Discussant:**

**David Test, Department of Special Education and Child Development  
University of North Carolina at Charlotte**

**Webinar**

**April 26, 2018**



# Welcome

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**Moderator:**

**Todd Honeycutt**

**Mathematica Policy Research**

# About the Center for Studying Disability Policy (CSDP)

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**Mathematica established CSDP in 2007 to provide the nation's leaders with the data necessary to shape disability policy and programs to fully meet the needs of all Americans with disabilities.**

# Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Practices for Youth and Young Adults

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- Addressing the gaps between knowledge and practice to improve VR practices and employment outcomes for youth and young adults with disabilities
- Funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR), Grant Number 90RT5034-02-01
- The findings and conclusions expressed are solely those of the authors and do not represent the views of NIDILRR or any agency of the federal government



# Today's speakers

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**Rich Luecking,  
University of Maryland**



**Meg Grigal,  
Institute for  
Community  
Inclusion,  
University of  
Massachusetts**



**Purvi Sevak,  
Mathematica Policy  
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University of North  
Carolina at Charlotte**



# **VR Counselor Transition Practices in "High Performing" States**

Richard Luecking, Ed.D.  
University of Maryland

# WIOA = New activities for VR counselors

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- Authorizing service before school exit:
  - More direct and intensive collaboration with schools and their partners
  - Authorizing and/or providing Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)
    - Job exploration counseling
    - Workplace readiness training
    - Work-based learning experiences
    - Counseling on post-secondary education opportunities
    - Self-advocacy instruction

# Goals of our study

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1. Identify importance of transition-related activities to VR counselors from “high performing” states
2. Determine differences between counselors’ perception of importance of skills and their preparation to perform them
3. Identify barriers to implementing effective practices



# Participants

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- Counselors from 13 states with highest successful closure rates for youth (Honeycutt et al., 2015) were asked to participate in survey
- 538 (out of a possible 1,690) counselors completed survey
  - 70% of counselors had caseloads composed of at least 25% students and youth
  - 16% served exclusively students and youth

# The instrument

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- VR Transition Practices Scales (derived from Plotner et al., 2012; and Kierpiec, 2010 with national expert review)
- Respondents rated importance of 35 items on Likert scale
    - Perceptions of *importance*
    - Perceptions of their *preparation to perform them*
  - Identified major barriers to serving students and youth from dropdown menu of 12 items (collaboration, local employment opportunities, disability severity, etc.)

# Analysis

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- Means, percentages, and standard deviations for each item
- Multivariate analysis of variance to explore effect of caseload specialization

# Results: Most important skills

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- All items rated at least moderately important (3.0 out of 4.0 on scale)
- Highest rated:
  - Job exploration counseling (3.80)
- Lowest rated;
  - Collaborating with LEAs on evaluating post-school outcomes (3.06)

# Results: Preparation to perform skills

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- All items rated lower for preparation than for importance
- Highest rated:
  - Developing Individual Plan for Employment (3.2 out of 4.0)
- Lowest rated:
  - Involving employers in the transition process (2.5 out of 4.0)

# Results: Differences between importance and preparation

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- Differences in all items except two (attending IEP meeting and developing IPE)
- Biggest differences:
  - Involving employers
  - Securing/offering work-based experiences
  - Collaborating with workforce centers (AJCs)

# Results: Barriers to effective practice

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Most frequently cited:

- Lack of time for caseload management
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of viable employment options in area

# Results: Barriers to effective practice

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Counselors with specialized caseloads perceived fewer barriers in four categories:

- Severity of disability
- Lack of LEA and service provider collaboration
- Need for additional training
- Difficulty engaging youth in VR services



# Implications

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- Gap between importance and preparation suggests need for ongoing professional development and training
- Caseload specialization may mitigate barriers

# Implications

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Need for improving VR counselor capacity regarding employment-related services:

- Securing paid employment
- Engaging employers
- Coordinating with AJCs

# Future research

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Since paid employment during high school is a robust predictor of adult employment, we need more complete understanding of:

- Perceived challenges
- Caseload specialization
- Use of specific categories of Pre-ETS by counselors and their effectiveness

# More information

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<http://vrpracticesandyouth.org/>

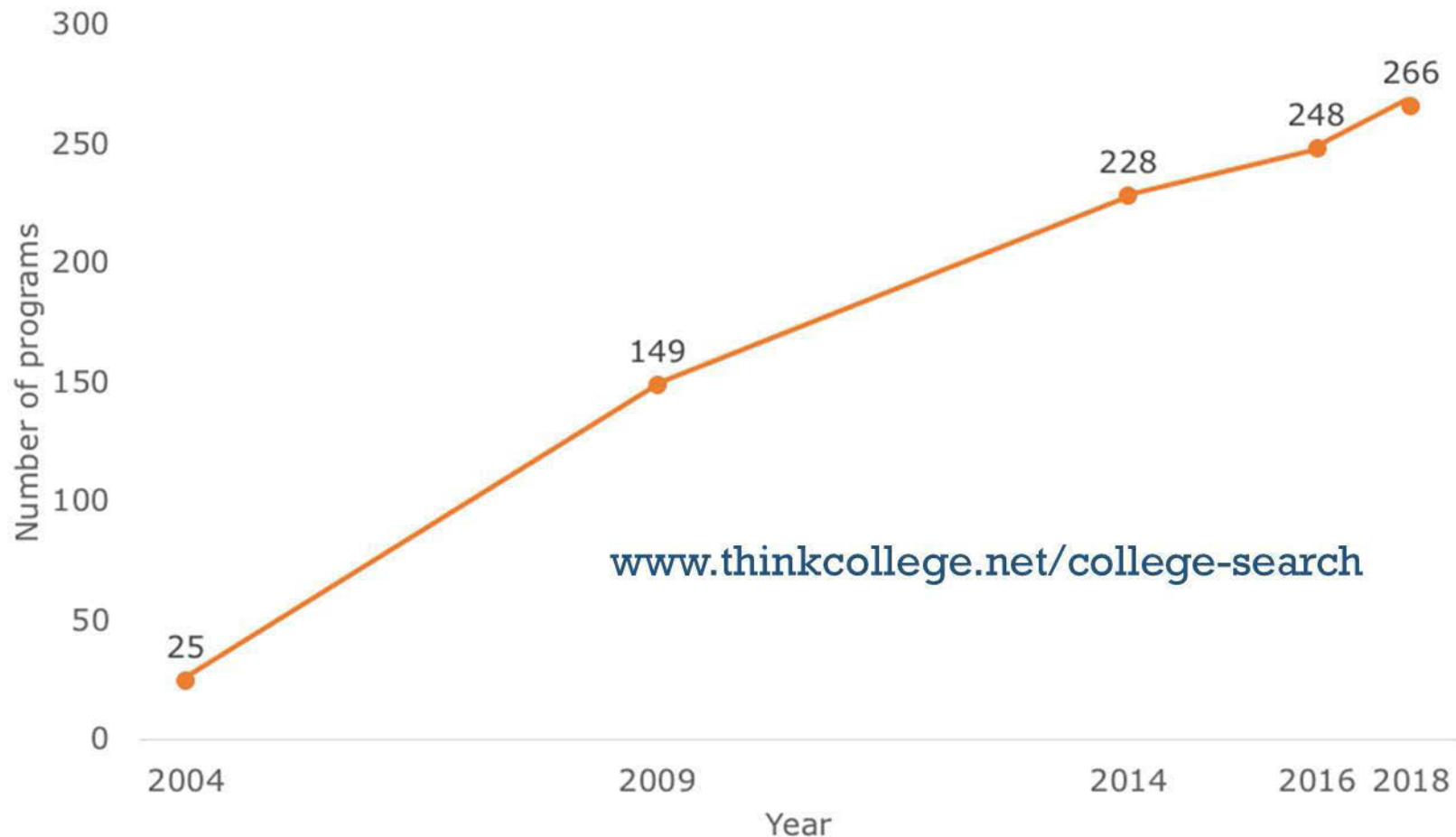
(click Studies, then VR practices, then Center Publications)

Neubert, D., Luecking, R., & Fabian, E. (in press). Transition practices of vocational rehabilitation counselors serving students and youth with disabilities in high performing state vocational rehabilitation agencies. *Rehabilitation Research, Policy & Education*.



Case Studies on Effective Partnerships between Vocational Rehabilitation and Higher Education Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability and Autism

# Growth in Higher Education Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability in the U.S.



The TPSID National Coordinating Center at Think College is a project of the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston.

The Center is funded by the Office of Postsecondary Education Grant #P407B100002.





Creates the Comprehensive Transition Program



Provides access to Federal Financial Aid



Provides funding for model demonstration projects and a coordinating center



Requires development of model accreditation standards



Requires collection of program level and student level data

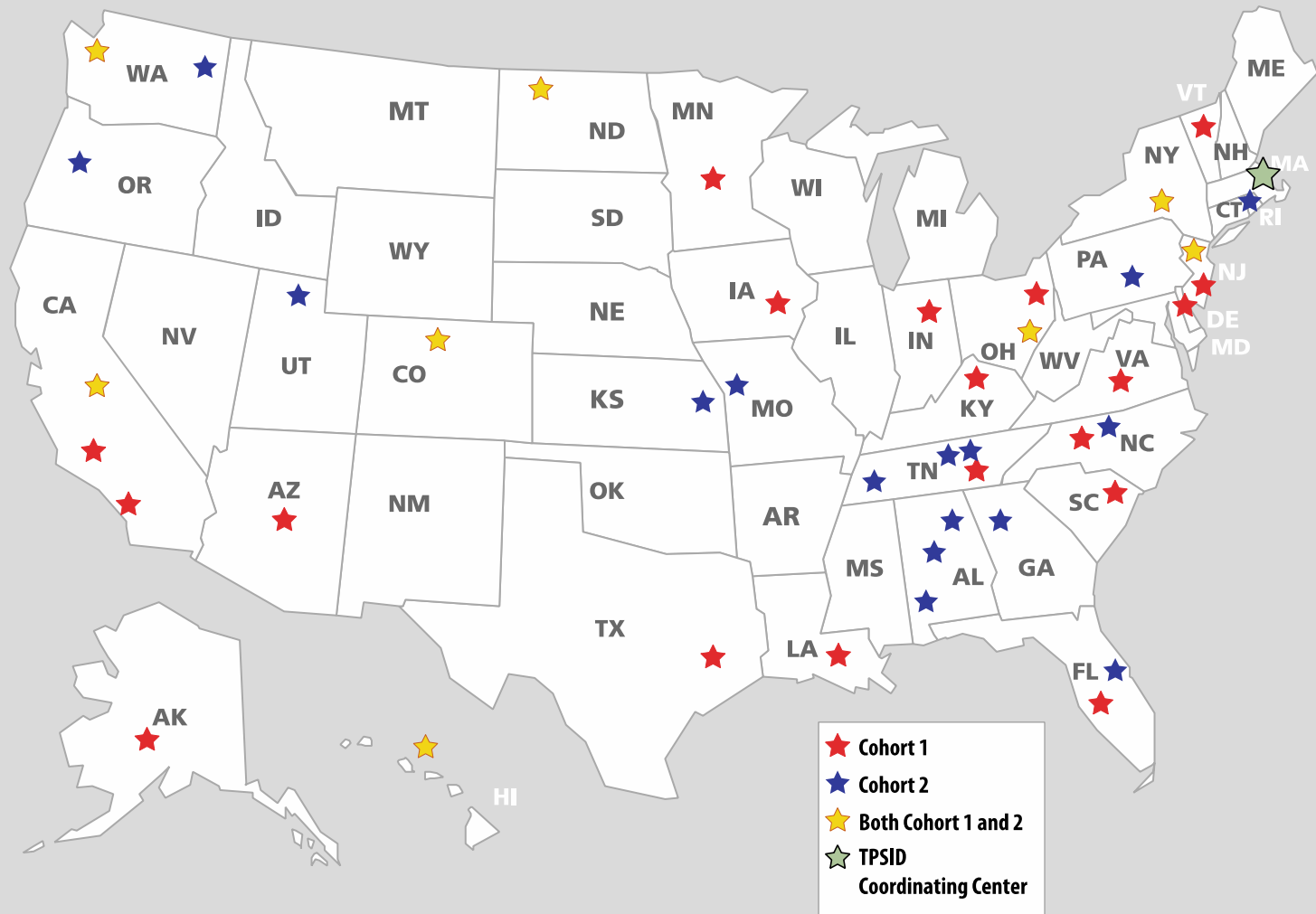
**Higher  
Education  
Opportunity  
Act, 2008**

# What is a TPSID?

- Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID)
  - Model Demonstration projects funded by the US Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education
  - 27 projects funded 2010-2015
  - 25 projects funded 2015-2020
  - National Coordinating Center



# TPSID 2010 - 2020 GRANTEEES




TPSID Cohort 1 & 2 Trend Data (2010–2016)

# National Coordinating Center

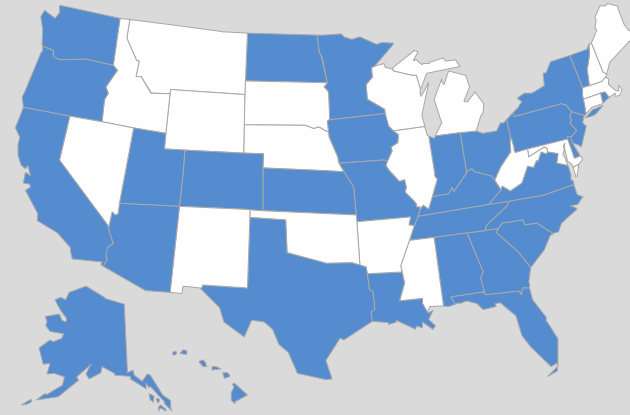
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## TPSID Data

More than 2,700 students served

**88** **CAMPUSES** 

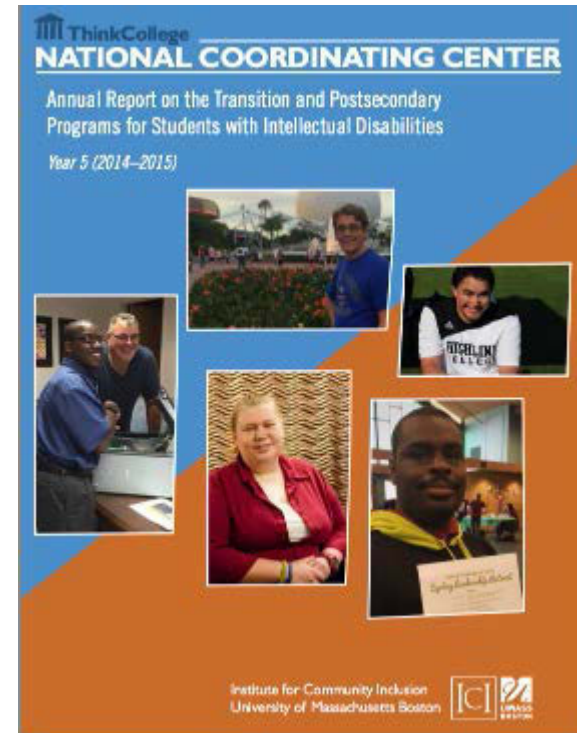
**31** **STATES**



# National Coordinating Center TPSID Data

Data includes:

- Course enrollment
- Credentials attainment
- Employment
- Residence Life
- Exit & Follow up data



For more information about the TPSIDs go to: <https://thinkcollege.net/tpsids>

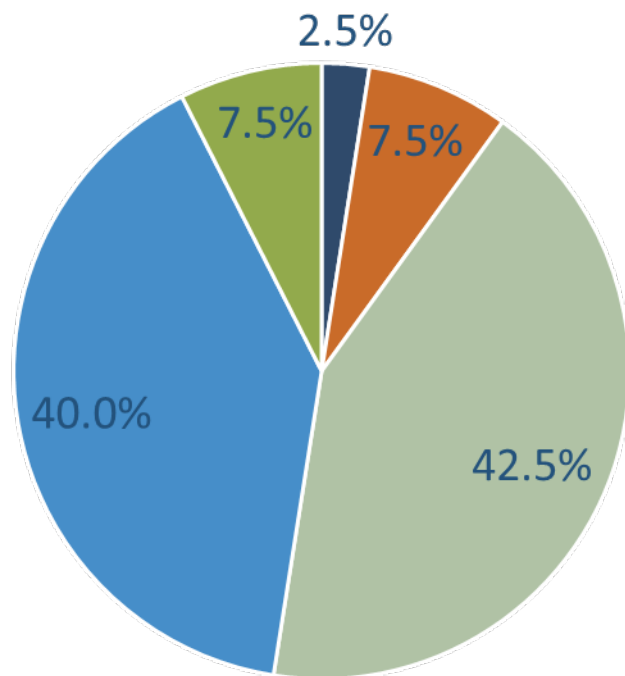


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The Center is funded by the Office of Postsecondary Education Grant #P407B100002.



# High level of partnership and frequent interaction between VR Agencies and IHEs hosting TPSID programs



77% (40/52) of the TPSIDs partnered with VR

■ Annually ■ Bi-annually ■ Quarterly ■ Monthly ■ Weekly



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The Center is funded by the Office of Postsecondary Education Grant #P407B100002.



UNIVERSITY



# + Site Selection

## Quantitative information

- Evidence of VR partnership
- Level of engagement
- Employment outcomes



## Qualitative information

- Sustained partnership
- Connection to State VR
- Willingness to participate

# + Who did we talk to?

- 4 higher education programs (four serving adults, one serving transition-aged youth)
- Program length 1-4 years
- 1 junior college, 1 provided 2 & 4 year degrees, 2 were four-year colleges
- 2-3 day site visits
- Interviews with program staff VR counselors, supervisors, students and parents





# Strategies for Effective Collaboration





## Understand each other's goals

- **IHE is looking at the full picture**
  - Academic
  - Campus life and independent living
  - Employment
- **Each component of the program helps build employment capability and potential**
- **Providing a longer-term path to employment**
- **Historically VR has focused on shorter-term employment outcomes**





**“ A VR agency is a very different thing than a university [so you need to] be aware and respectful of the differences.”**

**–IHE staff**



**“With VR, we always put it into the perspective of how it relates to employment.”**

**“...It’s helpful to be aware of the academic schedules & rhythms of a college campus”**

**–VR personnel**



# Strategies that enhanced understanding



- Reviewed program goals
- Articulated performance measures
- Held a “get to know you” meeting
- Varied where meetings were hosted
- Established relationship with specific individual



Created formal  
meeting and  
communication  
structures



“We meet quarterly with the VR staff [at the management level], and then ... monthly or every other month with the counselors just to check in about each student.”

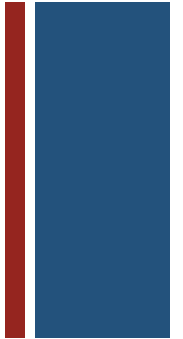
–IHE program staff



## Other activities

- Serving on advisory boards
- Developed cooperative agreements or memorandum of understanding
- A joint-agency ad hoc committee
- Invitation to join existing committees





I think the biggest tool that we have that VR appreciates is that we communicate and we have a relationship with them."

"The VR point person and I probably email three or four times a day ... at least."



I'm communicating with the VR counselors probably several times a week.... Mostly emails, but phone calls if things need to move faster."

# Informal Communication



**Ongoing communication** contributes to a sense of working as a team.



“So that personal relationship, I think, is as important as what does the contract say or what are we required to do. That we feel like a team and there’s real affection between us.”

–VR personnel



Ensure students are connected  
to both partners



“All of our students that come in, we always tell them, Educate the families and the individuals about [VR as] a resource for them at some point in their life... there’s a lot of times when families don’t, for some reason, even know anything about VR. We do a lot of educating families.”

–IHE staff



# Ensure documentation meets everyone's needs



IHE

“With VR, when they're going to financially support our students, there are several things that VR has to have... So our job is to get all that paperwork to VR so it goes as smooth as possible.”

VR

“Typically with our contracts, they want a monthly placement report [but] that is just not really practical for a college student, so we've asked for a progress report at mid-semester and at the end of the semester for all the students.”



## Documenting employment placements



“If I start working with a student and we find them a job, I send VR the employment information about who they work for, who the manager is, what’s their start date, to give VR an anticipated successful closure date.”





# Issues and implications



- Existing long-term partnerships
- New IHE programs developed under HEOA
- New VR guidance developed under WIOA
- Uncertainty related to the nature and structure of Pre-ETS and newly established credential requirements

# THE BIG PICTURE

- ✓ Honor & understand each system
- ✓ Be flexible & responsive
- ✓ Engage & communicate
- ✓ Clear expectations & roles



# The VR Affinity Group



An online community for review and discussion of issues, strategies, and results related to the partnership between VR agencies and IHEs

For more information contact Russ Thelin at:  
[russell.thelin@umb.edu](mailto:russell.thelin@umb.edu)





What is Inclusive Higher Education for People with Intellectual Disabilities, and How Does it Connect to Vocational Rehabilitation? A Primer for VR Leaders and Practitioners

Vocational Rehabilitation Partnerships with Higher Education Programs Serving Students with Intellectual Disability

Characteristics of Students that Attended Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability (TPSIDs) by VR Partnership Status

<http://vrpracticesandyouth.org/post-secondary/center-publications/>

Want to learn  
more?

[www.thinkcollege.net](http://www.thinkcollege.net)

Need Advice?  
Think College  
can help...

[thinkcollegeTA@gmail.com](mailto:thinkcollegeTA@gmail.com)



Thank you!

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# **State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Agencies' Early Implementation Experiences with Pre-Employment Transition Services**

**Purvi Sevak**

**April 26, 2018**



# Who is potentially eligible?

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- **Students with a disability as defined by**
  - Receipt of special education or related services under Part B of IDEA
  - Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
- **Enrolled in a recognized educational setting**
- **Usually 14–21 years of age**

# Five required Pre-ETS

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- **Job exploration counseling**
  - Discussion of job opportunities
- **Workplace readiness training**
  - Development of employment-related soft skills
- **Work-based learning experiences**
  - Paid and unpaid placement of students in workplaces
- **Counseling on post-secondary enrollment**
- **Instruction in self-advocacy**
  - Improving abilities to communicate and negotiate

# Early implementation experiences

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- **Collected information on 10 state VR agencies' experiences in implementing Pre-ETS**
  - Alabama, Alaska, Missouri (General), New Jersey (General), North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Washington, West Virginia
- **Used structured interviews, presentations of agency staff and reports**
  - Six states also shared counts of Pre-ETS authorizations
- **Builds on National Council on Disability (2017), which identified a number of challenges agencies were experiencing**

# Common agency challenges

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- **Cannot authorize support services for potentially eligible students who are not VR clients**
  - E.g., transportation, technology, equipment
  - Some agencies plan to encourage all potentially eligible students to apply for VR services
- **Capacity constraints**
  - New collaborations with local school districts and community-based organizations
- **Tracking need and receipt of Pre-ETS**

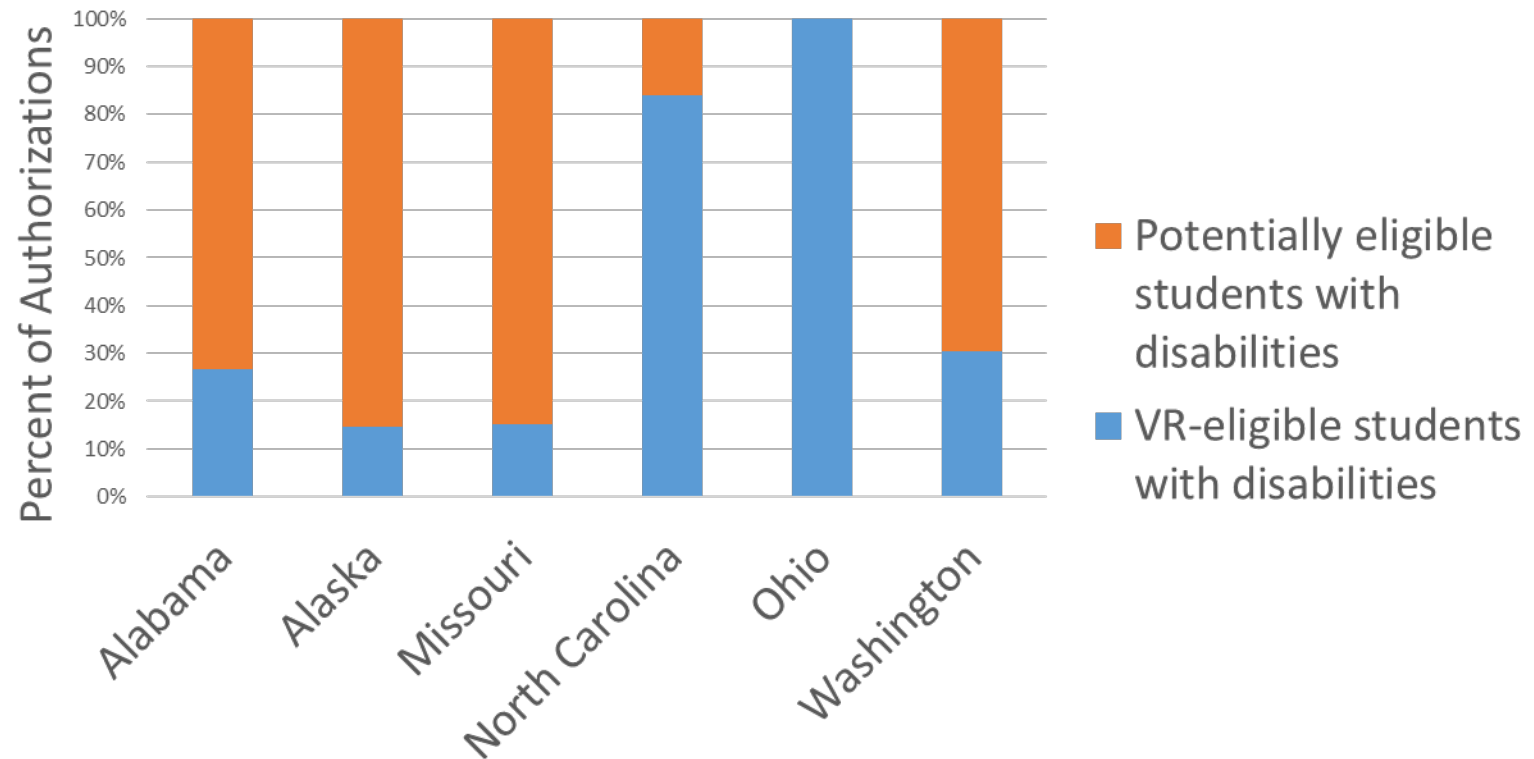
# Who provides Pre-ETS?

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- **Traditional service providers**
  - VR agency staff, including counselors
  - Contracted service providers
    - Community rehabilitation providers (CRPs)
    - Independent living centers (ILCs)
- **New nontraditional contracted service providers**
  - Teacher-vendors delivering after-school activity (AK)
  - School of Education at state university (MO)
  - State hired social workers as new early reach coordinators to provide outreach in schools (PA)

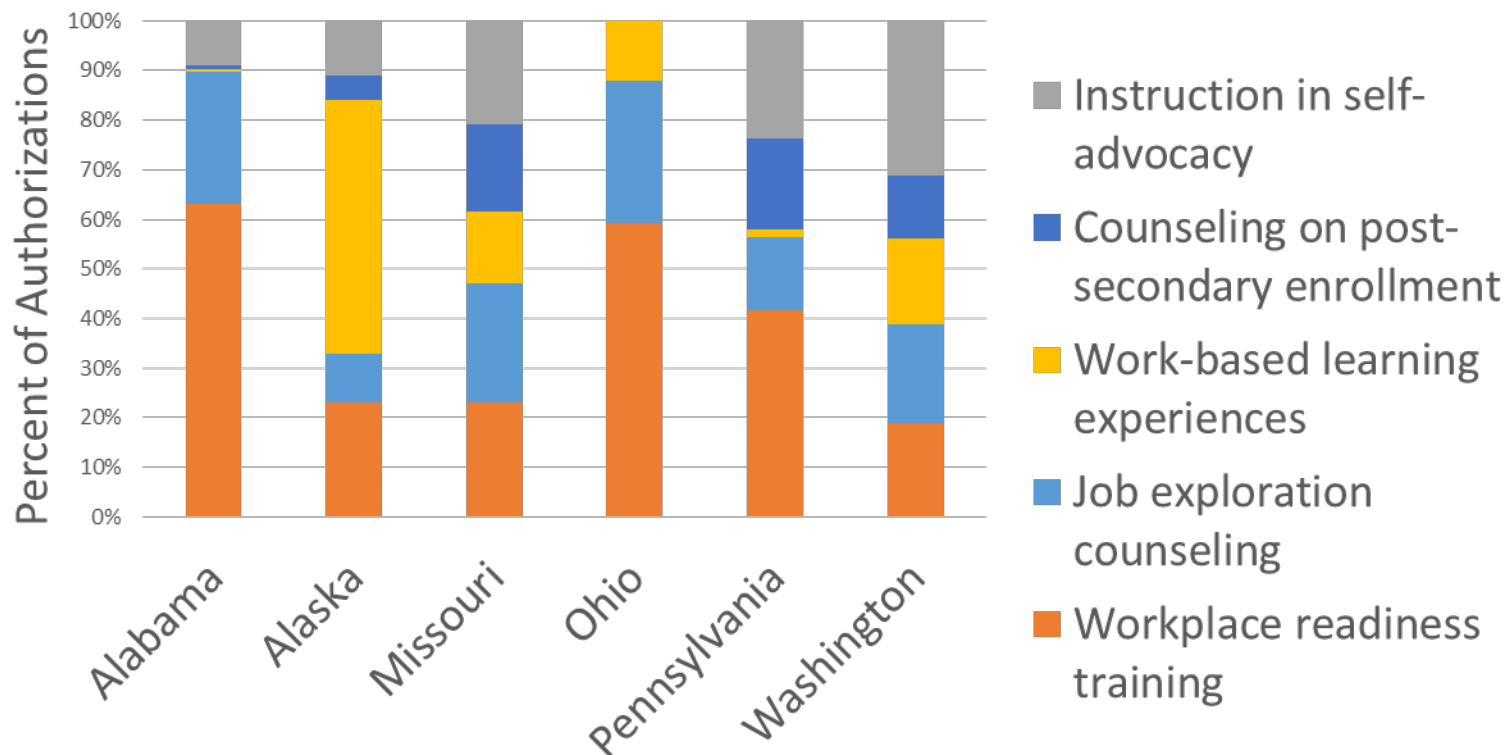


# Authorizations to VR-eligible and potentially eligible students



Source: Reports from six VR agencies that provided data on services authorized July 1, 2017, through September 30, 2017.

# Relative shares of authorized Pre-ETS



Source: Reports from four VR agencies on services authorized July 1, 2017, through September 30, 2017 (Alabama, Missouri, Ohio, and Washington) and two agencies on services authorized July 1, 2016, through June 30, 2017 (Alaska and Pennsylvania).

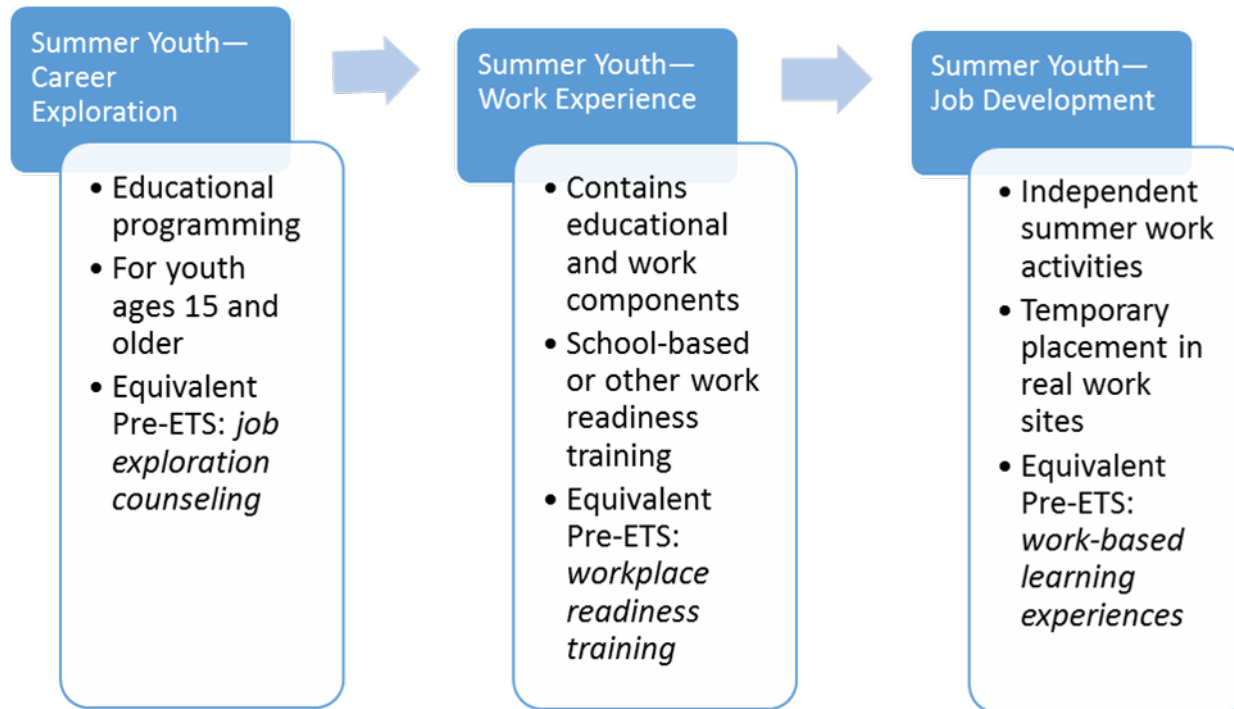
# Prioritization of individual Pre-ETS?

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- **Workplace readiness training and job exploration most frequent**
  - Can be provided in larger groups
- **Work-based learning experiences are more resource intensive**
  - Requires collaboration with employers
  - Students often need transportation
- **Depended on offerings of existing service providers**

# Some agencies sequence Pre-ETS

## Ohio's progressive career development pathway



# Examples of new programs to deliver Pre-ETS

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- **Texas's Summer Earn and Learn**
- **Alaska JOBZ Clubs**
- **Missouri's Groundhog Job Shadow Month**

# Texas's Summer Earn and Learn

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- **A paid work-based learning experience that also provides workplace readiness training**
- **A model for expanding scale through partnerships**
  - **VR contracts with local workforce boards to provide the services and placements**
  - **VR provides referrals, case management, and supporting services**
- **1,500 students participated in Summer 2017; plans to double number of students in 2018**

# Alaska's JOBZ Club

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- **Clubs are afterschool activities that provide workplace readiness training**
  - **Seven-module curriculum**
  - **Focus on soft skills (communication, teamwork, attitudes, and professionalism)**
- **Using teachers as vendors expands reach of VR, with clubs at**
  - **Residential psychiatric facilities**
  - **Remote, rural towns**
  - **Urban areas**

# Missouri's Groundhog Job Shadow Month

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- **In February, a month-long work-based learning experience**
  - Opportunity to cover all five Pre-ETS in the context of an industry of student's interest
- **Collaboration between VR and**
  - School districts
  - Pre-ETS specialists at the state university
  - Local businesses (libraries, restaurants, manufacturing facilities, grocers, and medical centers)



# Conclusions

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- **Agencies have used varied approaches in implementing Pre-ETS**
  - Delayed expansion to potentially eligible students
  - Incremental progress in covering all five Pre-ETS
  - Partnerships with new providers, organizations, and businesses
- **As agencies continue to scale up, can look to other agencies for models of innovative approaches**

# For more information

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- *State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies' Early Implementation Experiences with Pre-Employment Transition Services*, an issue brief of the RRTC on VR Practices for Youth.
  - [http://vrpracticesandyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Early\\_Experiences\\_with\\_Pr\\_e-ETS.pdf](http://vrpracticesandyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Early_Experiences_with_Pr_e-ETS.pdf)
- **Please contact Purvi Sevak**
  - [psevak@mathematica-mpr.com](mailto:psevak@mathematica-mpr.com)



# NTACT

National Technical Assistance Center on Transition

## Discussant Comments

**David W. Test**

Co-Director, NTACT & Professor, UNC Charlotte

The purpose of NTACT is to assist State Education Agencies, Local Education Agencies, State VR agencies, and VR service providers to implement evidence-based and promising practices ensuring students with disabilities, including those with significant disabilities, graduate prepared for success in postsecondary education and employment.





# NTACT

<http://vrpracticesandyouth.org/employment-outcomes/center-publications/>

## Some Initial Thoughts...

- There is a need for research-based models of collaboration
  - Maryland Seamless Transition Collaborative  
<http://vrpracticesandyouth.org/employment-outcomes/center-publications/>
  - CIRCLES  
<https://circles.uncc.edu/>
- There is a need for ongoing, joint VR-SPED professional development
- There is a need for collaborative data collection
  - IDEA's Part B Indicator 14 (post-school outcomes)
  - WIOA's Common Performance Measures





# NTACT

National Technical Assistance Center on Transition

## ...and a Final Thought

- There is a need for research- and evidence-based practices for implementing Pre-ETS
  - **NTACT's Effective Practices and Predictors Matrix:**  
<https://transitionta.org/epmatrix>
  - **Predictor Implementation Self-Assessment:**  
[https://www.transitionta.org/system/files/resources/Predictor\\_Self-Assessment2.0.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=1359&force=](https://www.transitionta.org/system/files/resources/Predictor_Self-Assessment2.0.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=1359&force=)



# Audience Q&A

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