Right on Time?
Early Interventions and Initiatives for Promoting Employment

Noelle Denny-Brown, Todd Honeycutt, and Jody Schimmel Hyde
Mathematica Policy Research

Discussant: Jade Gingerich
Maryland Department of Disabilities
Washington, DC
May 8, 2014
Welcome

Moderator

Thomas Fraker

Mathematica Policy Research
About CSDP

The Center for Studying Disability Policy (CSDP) was established by Mathematica Policy Research in 2007 to provide the nation’s leaders with the data they need to shape disability policy and programs that fully meet the needs of all Americans with disabilities.
Today’s Speakers

Todd Honeycutt
Mathematica

Jody Schimmel Hyde
Mathematica

Noelle Denny-Brown
Mathematica

Discussant:
Jade Gingerich
Maryland Department of Disabilities
Youth with Disabilities at the Transition Crossroads: Employment and SSA Outcomes After Seeking VR Services

Todd Honeycutt

*Presented at the Center for Studying Disability Policy Research Forum*
Washington, DC

May 8, 2014
The research reported herein was pursuant to a grant from the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA) funded as part of the Disability Research Consortium (DRC). The findings and conclusions expressed are solely those of the author(s) and do not represent the views of SSA or any agency of the Federal Government.
Vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies are well-positioned to assist youth and young adults (ages 16 to 24) with disabilities in their transitions to adulthood and employment.
• Almost one in three VR applicants is a transition-age youth
Six percent of youth with disabilities ages 16 to 24 applied for VR services each year from 2004 to 2006 (137,000 youth annually)
● One in five youth VR applicants were already receiving SSA youth or adult benefits

● Four percent of SSA youth applied for VR services each year (29,000 annually)
VR Employment Outcomes Higher for Non-Beneficiaries

- Applied for VR Services: 100% Non-SSA Youth, 100% SSA Youth
  - Non-SSA Youth: 29,330
  - SSA Youth: 108,432

- Received VR Services: 57% Non-SSA Youth, 55% SSA Youth
  - Non-SSA Youth: 16,753
  - SSA Youth: 59,761

- Exited from VR with Employment: 25% Non-SSA Youth, 33% SSA Youth
  - Non-SSA Youth: 7,287
  - SSA Youth: 35,266
Wide Variation of Youth Employment Outcomes Among Agencies
Across VR Agencies, 15 Percentage Point Difference in SSA Youth with Benefit Suspension
One in 10 Nonbeneficiary VR Youth Applicants Received SSA Benefits Within Four Years
Conclusions

- VR agencies are an important source of services for youth with disabilities
- Transition population important for VR agencies
Policy Questions

● What is the role of VR as an early intervention mechanism for youth?
● What federal guidelines should be in place for monitoring and reporting on agency work with youth?
● How can the experiences of the agencies doing relatively better be applied to all agencies?
Working Paper Available

- “State Differences in the Vocational Rehabilitation Experiences of Transition-Age Youth with Disabilities”
- Todd Honeycutt, Allison Thompkins, Maura Bardos, and Steven Stern
The Availability of Federal/State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services and Subsequent Claiming and Receipt of Federal Disability Benefits

Jody Schimmel Hyde

Presented at the Center for Studying Disability Policy Research Forum
Washington, DC

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VR’s Potential Role as an Early Intervention (EI) Provider

- Once individuals receive federal disability benefits, very few leave the rolls for work
- There is an increasing emphasis on supports to keep workers with disabilities in the work force and from claiming benefits
- VR can be a unique and potentially wide-reaching option for offering EI
Motivation for This Study

- VR agencies have limited resources and are not able to serve all clients timely
  - Four out of 10 clients do not receive services
  - Of those who do, the median wait is two months; nearly one in 5 waits six months or more

- Our study assesses the relationship between VR service availability and VR applicants’ subsequent federal disability benefit application and receipt
Data Description

- Linked Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA)-911 to Social Security Administration (SSA) 831 and Disability Analysis File (DAF)

- Working-age, first-time VR applicants from 2002 to 2005 who were not yet receiving federal disability benefits at application
Outcomes Considered

- Application to and receipt of
  - Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)
  - Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Each outcome is measured 48 months after VR application
Rates of SSDI and SSI Application and Receipt Following VR Application

Time Since VR Application

SSDI application
SSI application
SSDI receipt
SSI receipt

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Measures of VR Service Availability

- Calculated the availability of services for each VR applicant at the time they applied
  - Proportion of applicants receiving an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)
  - Average wait time to IPE (among those who received one)
- Measures calculated based on all applicants in the same agency and month
Features of Our Measures of VR Service Availability

- Defined to be uncorrelated with individual characteristics affecting VR service receipt and subsequent benefit claiming

- Analysis presented here is limited to applicants in agencies not operating in Order of Selection (OOS) status from 2002 to 2005
  - Agencies operating in OOS must submit a plan for how services will be prioritized to those with the most severe disabilities first
## Measures of VR Service Availability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distribution of Waiting Time Measure</th>
<th>Percent with IPE (%)</th>
<th>Average Wait Time (Months)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; percentile</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; percentile</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VR Service Availability and Later SSDI Application and Receipt

Proportion with IPE
- Bottom 25%
- Lower Middle 25%
- Upper Middle 25%
- Upper 25%

Average Wait Time to IPE
VR Service Availability and Later SSDI Application and Receipt

Proportion with IPE

- Bottom 25%
- Lower Middle 25%
- Upper Middle 25%
- Upper 25%

Average Wait Time to IPE

- Apply for SSDI
- Receive SSDI

Percent of VR Applicants

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Estimating the Effect of VR Service Availability on Subsequent SSDI Application

- Regression model controls for
  - Applicant characteristics
  - Characteristics of the agency that stay constant over time
  - Changes in the broader policy environment
Predictions for the Effect of VR Service Availability on Subsequent SSDI Application

● All else equal, we expect that the likelihood of applying for SSDI will be higher among applicants who sought services when:
  – A lower proportion of VR applicants in the same month and to the same agency received an IPE
  – The average waiting time to IPE among those in the same agency and month (among those who received one) was higher
Findings for SSDI Application

● Estimated effects are in line with expectations and statistically significant

● Suppose all agencies performed at the level of agencies currently at the top 10th percentile, all else equal

● From 2002 to 2005, there would have been
  – 5,800 (8 percent) fewer SSDI applications based on the likelihood of receiving an IPE
  – 2,500 (3 percent) fewer SSDI applications based on average wait time
Findings for SSDI Receipt

- Estimated effects are in line with expectations and statistically significant
- Suppose all agencies performed at the level of agencies currently at the top 10th percentile, all else equal
- From 2002 to 2005, there would have been
  - 4,600 (16 percent) fewer new SSDI beneficiaries based on the likelihood of receiving an IPE
  - 2,300 (8 percent) fewer new SSDI beneficiaries based on average wait time
Conclusions and Policy Implications

● Timely VR services play an important EI role by diverting workers with disabilities from SSDI and perhaps SSI
  – Number diverted from SSDI is tiny relative to all who applied for SSA disability benefits

● Getting all agencies to perform at the top 10th percentile level would require significant investment

● Increased investment may be more than offset by savings in delayed or forgone disability benefits
Acknowledging Coauthors

For responses to tough questions, please contact:

- Todd Honeycutt
  - thoneycutt@mathematica-mpr.com
- David Stapleton
  - dstapleton@mathematica-mpr.com
Promoting Integrated Employment: Lessons Learned from States’ Efforts to Transform Their Employment Service Systems for People with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities

Noelle Denny-Brown

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Overview

- Policy context
- Research objectives and methods
- Challenges that have hindered states’ efforts to increase integrated employment
- Strategies implemented to promote integrated employment
- Lessons learned
Policy Context

- Congress has established federal policies emphasizing employment and community integration for people with disabilities
- U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Olmstead v. L.C.*
  - Prohibits the unnecessary institutionalization of individuals with disabilities because doing so “constitutes a form of discrimination based on disability”
- Employment rates are consistently low, particularly among people with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDDs)
● Many states are transforming their employment service systems to make integrated employment the preferred service outcome for people with IDDs (Employment First)

● Integrated employment is participation in competitive employment in which people with disabilities work alongside people without disabilities for at least minimum wage
Research Objectives

- Identify barriers that have hindered states’ efforts to expand integrated employment
- Identify key strategies that states have implemented to increase integrated employment
- Synthesize lessons learned that can help other states advance their efforts to transform their employment service systems
Methods

- Semi-structured telephone discussions with officials in DC, IN, KY, MN, and WA
- Analysis is based on the experiences and perspectives of these five states
- Selected states have made progress over the past five years in moving their delivery systems from facility-based employment to integrated employment
- Respondents included administrators of developmental disability service agencies and employment program managers
Challenges Encountered

1. Payment structures do not incentivize integrated employment
2. Provider incentives are misaligned across funding authorities
3. Economic downturn has limited employment opportunities
4. Perception that pre-vocational services are not time-limited
5. Misconception about individuals’ ability to work
6. Minimum wage certificates that allow employers to pay subminimum wages
Types of Strategies Implemented

- Payment system changes
- Service system innovations
- Policy changes
- Other strategies
Strategies Implemented: Payment System Changes

- In DC, employment services are paid at a higher rate than facility-based services
- KY nearly doubled the reimbursement rate for supported employment in its Supports for Community Living (SCL) waiver to incentivize providers and expand service capacity
Strategies Implemented: Payment System Changes (cont.)

- MN changed its disability waiver rate system allowing for rate variations to capture differences in services and clients’ needs
- WA revised its waiver payment structure to tie funding allocations for employment supports to individuals’ support needs
Strategies Implemented: Service System Innovations

- KY added Community Access service to its SCL waiver which supports individuals’ involvement in clubs and organizations to increase their reliance on natural supports.
- IN implemented the Indiana Training and Employment Results Network which provides employment opportunities to people with disabilities.
Strategies Implemented: Service System Innovations (cont.)

- In DC and IN, most vocational rehabilitation (VR) providers are also waiver providers which facilitates continuity of services
- DC has changed its DD waiver service system to
  - Emphasize employment readiness in its pre-vocational service offering
  - Add individualized day services
  - Limit how long a provider is authorized to provide services that are intended to lead to a job
Strategies Implemented: 
Policy Changes

- KY requires employed SCL waiver participants to have an employment support plan that determine the amount of employment supports they receive
- In WA, the Working Age Adult policy establishes employment supports as the primary use of program funds for adults with IDDs
Strategies Implemented: Policy Changes (cont.)

- MN is implementing its Olmstead Plan to increase competitive employment among people with disabilities
  - Strategies include revising waiver service definitions and standards and adoption of an Employment First policy directive
Other Strategies Implemented

- Inter- and intra-agency collaboration is key to advancing system transformation efforts
  - Stakeholders include
    - Vocational rehabilitation
    - Individuals with IDDs and family members
    - DD councils
    - Departments of education
    - Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs)
    - Chambers of commerce
    - University partners

- Ongoing trainings to foster shared expectations and goals among frontline workers and providers
Other Strategies Implemented (cont.)

- Supporting transition-age youth in gaining employment
- Youth with severe disabilities often exit high school without the work experience and skills that lead to meaningful employment (Carter et al. 2012)
  - DC, IN, MN, and WA have implemented Project SEARCH to provide youth with training and work experiences to support them in obtaining integrated employment
  - IN prioritizes high school youth in the waiting list for waiver services
  - MN developed a Transition Toolkit to educate youth with IDDs and their families about the benefits of work
Four Lessons Learned for Promoting Integrated Employment

1. Leadership support is important
   - Ensure that integrated employment is highly prioritized and resources are dedicated towards related initiatives
   - Embed expectations for employment in policies, contractual agreements, and reimbursement rates so they are upheld

2. Evaluate employment service delivery systems to identify and remove disincentives that hinder people with IDDs from becoming competitively employed
   - IN implemented an Employment First demonstration to identify needs within its employment service system
Four Lessons Learned to Promote Integrated Employment (cont.)

3. Establish strong partnerships with stakeholders early
   – Coordinate efforts around common goals
   – Maximize the benefits that agencies can provide for people with IDDs

4. Collect and use data on employment outcomes
   – Evaluate state efforts toward integrated employment
   – Incentivize providers to improve service delivery
   – Inform stakeholders about their progress
Final Thoughts

- System transformation takes time
- Leadership matters
- Evidence matters too
Discussant

Jade Gingerich
Maryland Department of Disabilities
Audience Q & A

Todd Honeycutt
Mathematica

Jody Schimmel
Hyde
Mathematica

Noelle Denny-Brown
Mathematica

Discussant:
Jade Gingerich
Maryland Department of Disabilities
Contact Information

The Center for Studying Disability Policy:

Noelle Denny-Brown: ndenny-brown@mathematica-mpr.com

Thomas Fraker: tfraker@mathematica-mpr.com

Jade Gingerich: JGingerich@mdod.state.md.us

Todd Honeycutt: thoneycutt@mathematica-mpr.com

Jody Schimmel Hyde: jschimmel@mathematica-mpr.com