Closures Are the Tip of the Iceberg: Exploring Variation in Who Receives State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services

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Disclaimer

- The contents of this presentation do not necessarily represent the policies of ED or any other federal agency (Edgar, 75.620 [b]).
State VR Agencies

- VR represents the largest employment-related federal expenditure for persons with disabilities
- Researchers have studied VR acceptance rates, services, and closures/outcomes but not the extent to which the larger population with disabilities receives VR services
  - The latter could vary due to state-level demographic and economic factors as well as agency-level variables
Research Questions

● Nationally, what proportion of people with disabilities exit the VR program after receiving services?
  – Across demographic, educational, and disability subgroups

● How much do states vary in the proportion who exit after receiving VR services?
  – Across demographic, educational, and disability subgroups
Data Sources

● RSA-911
  – VR administrative data
  – Fiscal year 2007

● American Community Survey (ACS)
  – Nationally representative survey conducted by the Census Bureau
  – State and subgroup estimates
  – Calendar year 2007
Methods

- Closure ratios
  - Numerator = closures after service receipt (RSA-911)
    - Those who have completed an individualized plan for employment, received VR services, and exited with employment (status 26) or before becoming employed (status 28)
  - Denominator = estimated number of people with disabilities (ACS)
National Closure Ratio of 1.3 Percent in 2007
Closure Ratios

- Some numbers are likely underestimated
  - Those receiving VR services in a given year
  - Those interested and eligible for services
  - Those who could benefit from services

- Closure ratios are higher for some subgroups
  - Males
  - 18- to 24-year-olds
  - Black individuals
  - Those with higher education

- Considerable state variation
Closure Ratios Vary from State to State
# Closure Ratios by Sex and Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Closure Ratio</th>
<th>Percentage Difference</th>
<th>State Minimum</th>
<th>State Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>0.58%</td>
<td>3.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1.41%</td>
<td>17.10%</td>
<td>0.61%</td>
<td>4.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1.19%</td>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>0.54%</td>
<td>3.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age Category (broad)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 14–24</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
<td>61.40%</td>
<td>1.14%</td>
<td>7.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 25–49</td>
<td>1.51%</td>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>0.66%</td>
<td>5.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 50–64</td>
<td>0.57%</td>
<td>-97.10%</td>
<td>0.12%</td>
<td>2.02%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Closure Ratios by Race, Ethnicity, and Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Closure Ratio</th>
<th>Percentage Difference</th>
<th>State Minimum</th>
<th>State Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1.29%</td>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>0.61%</td>
<td>4.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1.86%</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>0.59%</td>
<td>4.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>1.51%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>0.42%</td>
<td>3.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.95%</td>
<td>-31.1%</td>
<td>0.46%</td>
<td>1.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0.90%</td>
<td>-42.0%</td>
<td>0.45%</td>
<td>3.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>1.36%</td>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>0.59%</td>
<td>3.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school</td>
<td>0.78%</td>
<td>-26.7%</td>
<td>0.12%</td>
<td>2.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school or GED</td>
<td>1.01%</td>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>0.23%</td>
<td>4.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>1.22%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>0.55%</td>
<td>3.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College degree</td>
<td>1.06%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>0.48%</td>
<td>2.82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
State Variation in Closure Ratios

- State variation reflects how well consumer needs are met at the local level
  - Closure ratio for Vermont is six times that of Washington State
- Some states have higher closure ratios for specific subgroups (e.g., transition youth)
- Some subgroups are less likely to receive services in any state (e.g., older working-age population)
Closure Ratio Is Inversely Proportional to Disability Prevalence

Source: RSA-911/ACS; www.ilr.cornell.edu/edi/disabilitystatistics.
Closure Ratio Is Proportional to Federal VR Funding

Source: RSA-911/ACS; GAO 09-798.
Conclusion

- Starting point for further comparisons across states and subgroups to understand the state and agency predictors of closure ratios
  - High ratio does not imply high performance, and vice versa
Conclusion (cont’d.)

- Should VR agencies direct resources to groups with lower closure ratios?
- What role does funding play?
  - Federal VR funding is based on total state working-age population and per capita income, not state disability population and local costs of services
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