Vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies are required partners in the one-stop system mandated by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). The following features have long characterized VR: the primary goal of integrated competitive employment for persons with disabilities; state flexibility in VR systems, approaches, and structures; case management with individualized and comprehensive services; use of assistive technology; consumer choice and participation; inclusion of individuals with severe disabilities; and a comprehensive research base. Inclusion, access, and impact have been deemed the three major VR themes for the 21st century. The Rehabilitation Act of 1992 introduced provisions to increase coordination and linkages between the education and VR systems to serve individuals with disabilities who are transitioning from school to higher education or employment. The Rehabilitation Amendments of 1998, Title IV of WIA, go further by emphasizing collaboration and cooperation across the entire workforce investment system as the best approach to meaningful improvements, including increased employment, in the lives of individuals with disabilities. Well-developed, collaborative WIA partnerships will allow all...
partners to benefit from each other's resources and expertise while
fulfilling their own vital roles. (Annotated lists of 21 print and 3 World
Wide Web resources constitute approximately 80% of this document.) (MN)
Vocational Rehabilitation
Trends and Issues Alert No. 31

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Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies are required partners in the One-Stop system mandated by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 (Hoff 2000). WIA calls for an interactive, mutually beneficial relationship between VR and the One-Stop system. This Alert identifies important issues and trends in VR that can affect that relationship, including differing definitions of disability and eligibility for services, availability and appropriate use of services and resources from all partners, and consumer choice in selecting One-Stop services.

Vocational rehabilitation has long been characterized by the primary goal of integrated competitive employment for persons with disabilities; state flexibility in VR systems, approaches, and structures; case management with individualized and comprehensive services; use of assistive technology; consumer choice and participation; inclusion of individuals with severe disabilities; and a comprehensive research base (Carnny, in Perlman and Hansen 1995). McAulees (in Perlman and Hansen 1995) says inclusion, access, and impact are the three major VR themes for the 21st century, leading to increased emphasis on VR on independent living consumer control, career development (as opposed to just job placement), lifelong services, serving the most severely disabled (e.g., through supported rather than competitive employment) and a shift in emphasis from program capacity to support quality.

The Rehabilitation Amendments of 1992 introduced provisions to increase coordination and linkages between the education and VR systems to serve individuals with disabilities transitioning from school to higher education or employment. The Rehabilitation Amendments of 1998, Title 11 of WIA, go further by emphasizing collaboration and cooperation across the entire work force investment system as the best approach to meaningful improvements, including increased employment, in the lives of individuals with disabilities; working across systems highlights state and local implementation issues such as communication, linkages, cooperation, collaboration, and coordination (Kochhar 1998). Well-developed, collaborative WIA partnerships will allow all partners to benefit from each other's resources and expertise while fulfilling their own vital roles (Hoff 2000).

Resources


Recommends strategies to improve knowledge of special education and VR staff, coordination of school and VR roles (assessment practices, transition planning), and support for students and parents.


Analysis of results of 13 experimental studies of 10 small-group skills training interventions suggested that VR clients received substantial benefit; recommended wider implementation with VR clients.


Question-and-answer format covers key VR information and implications for postsecondary students, including transition from secondary education and coordination with postsecondary disability services.


Analysis of an 8-year national panel data set of 28,986 VR client records for 14 disability cohorts indicated that the VR program is generally cost effective (although not across all disabilities), with substantial long-term earning gains possible; previous research showing little evidence of long-term treatment effects may have been affected by selection bias.


Compares special education and VR definitions and diagnosis of learning disability and eligibility; discusses range of VR services available; recommendations for successful transition include informing students and families about VR services, empowering students to make informed choices, informing VR counselors about learning disabilities, and preparing special educators to add a focus on employment outcomes to secondary curricula.


Written agreements between state VR agencies and other VR agencies providing disability services are most frequent and viewed as having a highly positive impact on supported employment outcomes. Agencies providing employment services to the general population (e.g., One-Stop, other WIA partners) are more likely involved in informal interagency activity, which is viewed as having a low impact.


Discusses consumer informed choice in VR; changing roles of consumer, counselor, supervisor, administrator, and consumer; evaluation and reform of VR; and process of implementing informed choice.

Gilson, B. B. "One-Stop Career Centers: Will They Be Used by People with Disabilities?" Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities 15, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 30-36.

Discusses potential strengths of One-Stops as a resource for people with disabilities; issues in effective use include participation of local disability agencies and organizations as partners, accessibility, availability of assistive technology, availability of adult education and literacy services, One-Stop staff expertise, appropriateness of self-service, and disclosure of disability.


Only special education and VR agencies consistently defined learning disabilities and eligibility criteria, but definitions varied widely across and within even those agencies; suggestions are offered for definitions and eligibility criteria policy across state agencies.

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As required One-Stop partners, state VR agencies face issues of different eligibility, order of selection, consumer choice and options, appropriate use of VR funds and staff, and creating interactive, mutually beneficial relationships for seamless service delivery.


Outlines implications of WIA for transition policies in prior legislation, and differences in state VR programs and local rehabilitation services, and eligibility criteria. Presents untested assumptions and policy analysis questions to guide reconfiguration of VR programs.

Marrone, J. Hoff, D.; and Helm, D. T. "Person-Centered Planning for the Millennium: We're Old Enough to Remember When PCP Was Just a Drug." Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation 8, no. 3 (June 1997): 285-297.

Review of core values in person-centered planning (PCP) and key system and skill problems leads to conclusions that PCP requires (1) attention to values, not program standards; (2) different client-staff power relationships and processes to accommodate core values; and (3) greater attention to individual client characteristics.


The Transition Profile summarizes pertinent information collected during high school and may be used to establish eligibility for VR services.


Compendium includes "State/Federal Program Issues and Trends" (Nell C. Carney); "Consumerism and Choice: Basic Standards for Judging Efforts and Expectations in the Vocational Rehabilitation Process" (Patricia A. Morrissey); "Rehabilitation Education in the 21st Century" (Daniel C. McAleece); "Providers of Rehabilitation Services" (Patrick W. McKenna) "Women and Vocational Rehabilitation: An Urgent Need for New Directions" (Margaret A. Nosek); "Rehabilitation as a Knowledge Business" (Jon Lundin).


Discusses small business and self-employment opportunities for people with disabilities; offers recommendations for addressing barriers to business ownership.


Explains changes in Supplemental Security Income program, including work incentives, maintaining health care and benefits during transition years, and key transition issues, including rehabilitation services and service coordination.


Provisions include VR membership and participation in (1) state and local work force investment boards; (2) development of state plan for coordinated, unduplicated services; and (3) planning and operation of One-Stop delivery system. WIA Title IV, Rehabilitation Amendments, addresses submission of state plan for VR programs, interagency agreements on payment for VR services, reporting and data elements, and requirements for cooperative agreements between state VR agency and other state work force investment components.


Final regulations envision creation of a streamlined collaborative partnership between state VR programs and other components of state work force investment systems, requiring major system changes and more activist role for state VR programs.


Training package to help postsecondary education and VR staff understand each other’s philosophy, mandates, process, and issues and to promote productive working relationships.


Examines processes and strategies to facilitate coordination of state-level special education, vocational education, and VR systems. Recommendations include specific interagency policies, capacity building, cross-discipline training, technical assistance, and process evaluation.


Four Tennessee community rehabilitation agencies used both cold calls and referrals in 3 months of tracked job development activity; substantially fewer rejections and more placements occurred with referral.

Web Resources

Institute for Community Inclusion <http://www.childrenshospital.org/ict> develops resources and supports for people with disabilities and their families, including publications on One-Stop centers and WIA.

Rehabilitation Services Administration, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, U. S. Department of Education <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/RSA/> is the principal federal agency authorized to carry out Titles I, III, VI, and VII, as well as specified portions of Title V of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

USWorkforce.org <http://usworkforce.org> is gateway to WIA information, including legislation, policy, the One-Stop system, resources, and implementation questions.

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