State Vocational Rehabilitation Program Delivery and Hourly Wages: A Multilevel Analysis

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Introduction

Background
There is growing attention on the importance of increasing the employment participation of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The Rehabilitation Act has become an influential driver of employment outcomes for people with IDD by providing formula grants to states for vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs. Due to the state-by-state implementation of VR services, state and program contextual factors are important to understand when evaluating VR outcomes.

Research Questions
1. How does VR program delivery moderate the average wages of people with IDD?
2. Does VR program delivery affect people with different impairments equally?

Method

Data and Sample
• Level-1 Data: The RSA-911 case closure dataset is a public access database from FY11 and provides individual level information on every person who participated in the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program.
• Level-2 Data: The RSA Annual Review Report for FY11 provides VR system results for each state. U.S. Dept. of Labor – Wage and Hour Division state non-farm employment minimum wage law dataset.
• Sample: Includes all people with IDD that received VR services who were employed and achieved a case closure in FY11 with the sample size, N = 17,888.

Variables
Level-1: • Demographic • Impairment • Sig. Disability • Public benefits usage • Job acquisition services • Hours at closure
Level-2: • Pct. of State VR outcomes in integrated setting • State minimum wage – Large businesses (FLSA) • State minimum wage – Small businesses

Data Analysis
• HLM: A structured regression approach was used to explain the nested nature of the data – individual VR within a state VR system. Three-step modeling process was applied, building a model upon the previous one.
• The Unconditional Model: State nesting was found to have a significant effect on the outcome, t(47) = 77.82, p < .001.

Results

Figure 1 - Intercept Model: Effect of State VR Program on Hrly Wage

- Physical
- Communication
- Cognitive
- Social/other mental

Figure 2 - Slope-as-Outcome Model: Inequity of VR Program Effects

VR services are critical supports to many people with IDD to enter and remain in the workforce. In evaluating program outcomes, it is clear that state program delivery matters. It would benefit state VR programs to assess their level of integrated support to those employed and adjust to provide greater levels, since it relates to higher wages.

Additionally, attention should be paid to those with different impairments. The positive effects of VR program delivery are not equally distributed across individuals. Greater attention to the support needs of people with cognitive and social/other mental impairments is recommended.

References