Vocational Rehabilitation Outcomes for Students Participating in a Model Seamless Transition Program

Richard Luecking
University of Maryland
Recent research suggests:

- Work-based experiences, especially paid employment, during HS predicts adult employment (Wehman, et al., 2014)
- Collaboration between schools, VR and other partners is effective to the extent it is outcome driven (Fabian, et al., 2016)
- Early VR case initiation is associated with successful youth engagement and successful case closure (Honeycutt et al., 2014)
WIOA features:

- Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS), including work experiences
- VR/LEA collaboration
- VR service case referral well before projected school exit for eligible, or potentially eligible, students
One Transition Service Model that Integrates these Features

Maryland Seamless Transition Collaborative (MSTC) interventions:

- Discovery
- Work-based experiences
- Paid employment
- Family supports
- Early VR agency case initiation
- Systems linkages and collaboration
- Coordination with teachers and instructional staff
Seamless transition is intended to be:

A sequential delivery of specific transition service features beginning in early high school and...

the integration of resources of transition partners (VR, schools, CRPs, AJCs, PSE, other community services),

resulting in uninterrupted, collaborative transition from public secondary education to employment and/or postsecondary education.
MSTC Services Flow Chart

10th Grade (or 3 yrs prior to exit)
- Discovery (continues throughout)
- Family support (throughout)
- Coord. with education (throughout)
- Coord. with education (throughout)

11th Grade (or 2 yrs prior to exit)
- Work experiences
- VR opens case

12th Grade (or 1 yr prior to exit)
- Paid Employment
- Linkages to post-secondary supports, including CRPs and/or PSE disability supports

Post School Completion (2 yrs beyond high school)
- Employment & Postsecondary Education
- Follow Up supports as needed

STUDENT
MSTC Implementation

- Led by Maryland Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) (2007 – 2012)
- Technical assistance from TransCen, Inc.
- 11 county-wide school districts, each with a local interagency team of collaborators
- Participants: eligible for DORS, consent to participate
- Targeted enrollment: 400
Methods

• Electronic administrative case service records extracted from DORS from 10/2007 – 1/2013 for 2 groups:
  – All MSTC youth (n=377)
  – Non-MSTC youth in MSTC counties (n=6844)
• Estimated propensity scores using youth characteristics
• All analyses conducted with inverse probability of treatment weighting (IPTW) to account for potential sample selection bias
Participants (n = 377)

- Male = 70%
- White = 61%; Black = 36%
- Disability:
  - Intellectual = 14%
  - Psychiatric/behavioral = 14%
  - Specific learning disability = 20%
  - Autism = 18%
  - Other = 34%
Key Service Findings

Compared to matched comparison group of other VR service recipients in the same counties, MSTC participants:

• Had shorter time between eligibility and IPE by average of 104 days
• Received more job training, job search assistance, and on-the-job support services
• Received less assessment and diagnosis/treatment services
Key Service Findings

Compared to matched comparison group of other VR service recipients in the same counties, MSTC participants:

- Had lower service costs - ~$1,200 less on average

- Experienced longer time between application and closure – average of 1,013 v. 844 days
Key Outcome Findings

Compared to matched comparison group of other VR service recipients in the same counties, MSTC participants at closure:

• Were more likely to be employed – 55% v. 33%

• Earned less per hour - $8.07 v. $8.60

• Worked fewer hours/week – 22 v. 24.7

• Earned $36 less per week on average
Discussion

• Overall, the MSTC intervention:

  – Resulted in faster time to IPE, but cases open longer
  – Cost less in terms of VR service dollars
  – Included more work focused services
  – Resulted in higher employment, but slightly lower earnings
Limitations

• Results are correlational, not causal
• IPTW analyses addresses some, but not all of the issues with lacking true control group
• An external objective indicators of outcome – such as record of post-exit earnings – would provide additional support for model effectiveness on youth employment outcomes
Implications

- Early VR case initiation yields better outcomes
  - Consistent with new WIOA regulations requiring more active outreach and case referral by VR counselors
- Focus on use of vocationally-oriented services vs assessment
- Focus on work experience category of WIOA Pre-ETS rather than other categories
- Maximize resources through multi-partner collaboration
Conclusions

• This evaluation study demonstrated the potential effectiveness of a career/work-focused transition intervention on improving employment outcomes for transitioning youth regardless of disability.

• The study demonstrated that strategic management of existing services and resources (early case initiation, work-focused experiences, outcome-oriented service collaboration) = less service cost + better service outcome.
Future study questions

• What is the reason for lower earnings?
  – IPE goals?
  – Referral selection biased?
  – Other?

• Do earning change over time, post-closure?
More on study and its implications:

- **Summary on RRTC on VR Practices website:**
  

- **Full report:**
  

More background on MSTC

This study is sponsored by:
RRTC on VR Practices and Youth
A partnership between:
  – TransCen, Inc.
  – University of Maryland
  – Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Funded by the National Institute of Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Grant #H13310007