



Research Summary

Criminal Histories and RSA-911 Data: The Effect on Employment Outcomes for People of Color Receiving VR Services

At a Glance

Leaving out criminal records from consumers' vocational rehabilitation (VR) case records affects VR counselors' ability to help ex-offenders find and maintain employment. It also reduces the overall success rate of the VR system. These researchers suggest including criminal history codes in the RSA-911 codebook would allow improved data collection, service delivery, and training related to improving employment outcomes of ex-offenders with disabilities.

Key Findings

- Current VR practices do not meet the needs of most African American and Latino ex-offenders receiving VR services.
- Including criminal history in RSA-911 data would enable researchers to study how VR services could be improved for this population.

Putting it Into Practice

Rehabilitation counselors who are aware of a consumer's criminal status can help them find and keep employment by providing support with:

- Interviewing techniques
- Resume development
- Customized employment

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) could consider implementing a model for tracking the criminal history of people who are in prison and/or who have a criminal record at

the time they apply for VR Services. Data collection would begin at application and continue throughout the VR process.

More about this research:

Research shows that people of color with criminal records have a much harder time than others getting jobs as a result of VR services. Specific data that could help researchers improve services to this group is not available because criminal records aren't recorded in RSA-911 data. This research was done to examine this issue and suggest a model to track consumers' criminal status. The suggested model could give researchers a better understanding of how services could improve employment outcomes for people of color.

Learn More

Dowden, A.R., Ethridge, G., and Brooks, M. (2016). The impact criminal history has on the employability of African American and Latino populations with disabilities receiving state vocational rehabilitation services: Implications for adding a criminal history variable to the RSA-911 data. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 45 (2), 213-224.