

# VR Agency Operations and Services that Lead to Employment

## At-a-Glance:

This study examined vocational rehabilitation agencies in four states to learn what operation and service practices lead to increased competitive employment for people with disabilities. They identified promising best practices that set both vocational rehabilitation professionals and consumers up for success.

## Key Findings

Agencies that use at least some of the identified promising best practices shift focus from process to consumer needs and cultivate an environment of innovation. The practices need to be sustainable, replicable, and portable across states, and flexible enough to be tailored to local need. Agency use of these practices enable practitioners to provide services that pave the way for successful, lasting positive consumer outcomes.

## Putting It into Practice

### *Agencies*

- Outsource non-core duties to let counselors provide essential services.
- Build business relationships as part of a dual-consumer (employer and potential employee) approach.
- Use cloud-based software that enables all employees to share and learn from each other.
- Support agency collaboration with specialists to ensure appropriate services for clients.
- Use incubator units to encourage innovation, risk taking, and cultivation of new practices.
- Base agency operations and services on a strong business model, program evaluation, and data-informed decision making.

- Require national or agency accreditation of partners to ensure dependable service provision.

### ***Practitioners***

- Provide work incentive benefits counseling to all consumers who qualify for services.
- Use rapid response cycles to build on consumer interest, quickly provide services, and prepare consumers for work.
- Get specialized training and learn best practices for working with specific consumer populations.
- Offer consumers on-site training at places of employment to help them get used to the environment, learn the job, build work tolerance, and demonstrate value to the employer.
- Partner with the justice system and ex-offenders to conduct work assessments, assist with placement, and reduce the risk of recidivism.
- Assist youth with disabilities to negotiate the transition from school to adult life and the workplace.
- Offer soft skills training to teach or enhance personal habits and interpersonal workplace skills.
- Establish single-point-of-entry programs that braid mental health services and job preparation programs.
- Give struggling consumers assistance when traditional job searches fail.

### **More about this Research**

Although there has been research conducted within the vocational rehabilitation field on evidence-based practices, this study is unique in that it identified “active practices” – or those best practices that correlate with increases in competitive employment for people with disabilities. To gather the information, the study used a version of the consensual qualitative research methodology using semi-structured questions and a review of administrative reports.

### **Learn More**

Access this research by visiting the [Project E3 Research Database](#)

Del Valle, R., Leahy, M.H., Sherman, S., Anderson, C.A., Tansey, T. & Schoen, B. (2014).

Promising best practices that lead to employment in vocational rehabilitation: Findings from a four-state multiple case study. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 41 99-113.

### ***Questions? Feedback?***

Do you have questions or feedback about putting this research into practice? We're waiting to hear from you! [Send us your questions.](#)

### **Join Our Conversation**

Have you tried any of these practices? Have you had success working with these populations in your area? Tell us more and [join our conversation.](#)