



Project E3: Educate, Empower, and Employ

Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center: Targeted Communities (VRTAC-TC)



CSAVR Fall Conference, 10/30/2018



Acknowledgement and Disclaimer

- ⇒ The contents of this presentation were developed with support from the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Targeted Communities (VR TAC TC: Project E3) at the Department of Rehabilitation and Disability Studies, Southern University, Baton Rouge, LA funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (Grant# H264F15003).
- ⇒ The ideas, opinions, and conclusions expressed, however, are those of the presenters and do not represent recommendations, endorsements, or policies of the U.S. Department of Education.





Project E3: Educate, Empower, Employ

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER:
TARGETED COMMUNITIES (VR-TAC-TC)



Americans with Disabilities



Prevalence

Employment

Poverty

Out of 314 million U. S. Population (2014):

- **58,214,000 individuals** (18.7% of the population) are persons with disabilities.
- **74.2%** of persons *without disabilities* were employed
- **33.9%** of persons *with disabilities* aged 18-64 were employed.
- **28.7%** of persons *with disabilities* of working-age were living in poverty.
- **13.6%** of persons *without disabilities* were living in poverty.
- **18%** of households headed by a working-age person with a disability were unbanked, while **25%** were underbanked.
- **6%** of households headed by a working-age person without a disability were unbanked, while **20%** were underbanked.

FDIC, *National Survey of Unbanked and Underbanked Households* (October 23, 2018)

Intersection of Disability and Poverty

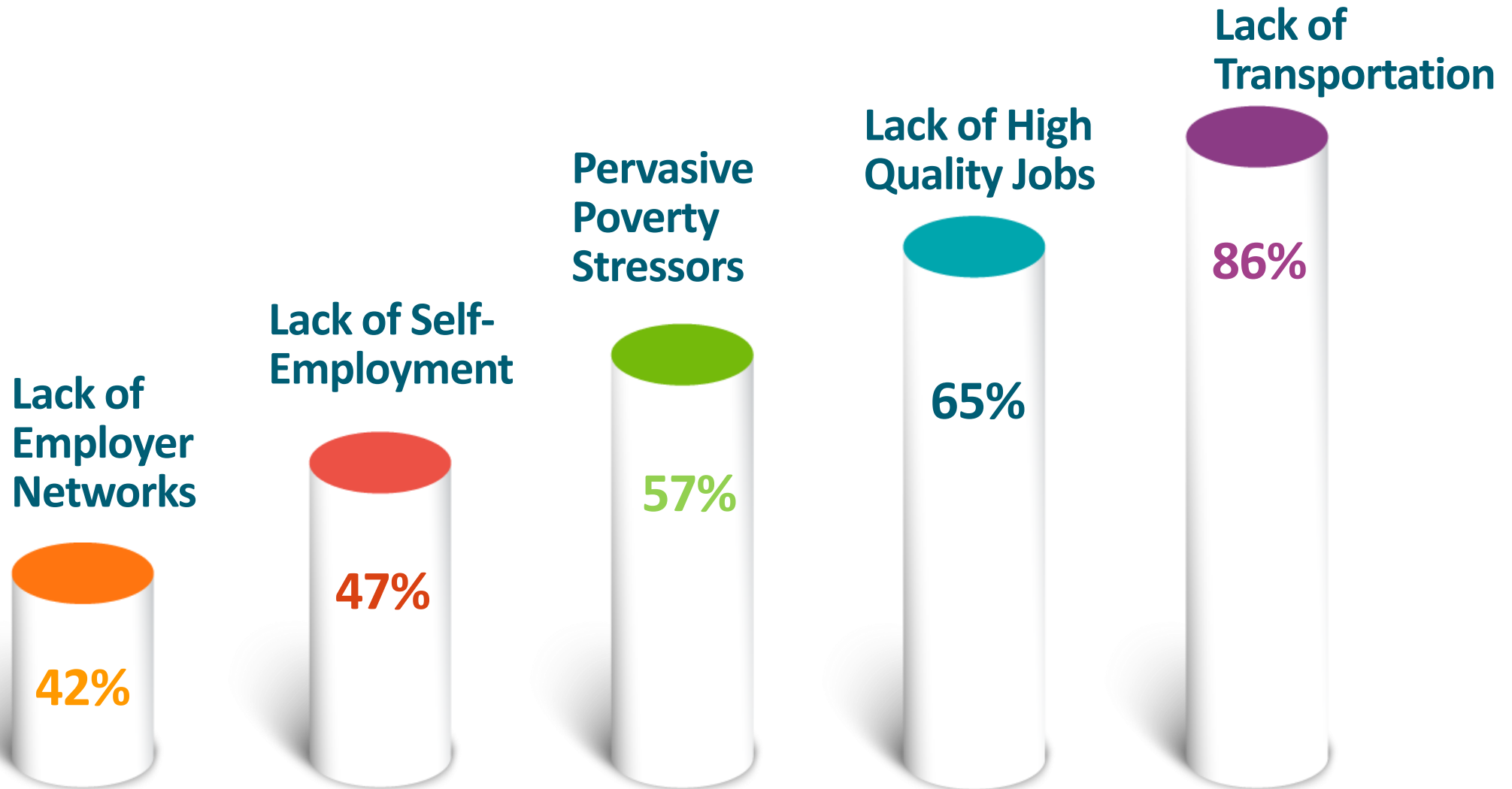
- **Financial stress is associated with poor health**
(American Psychological Association, 2015)
- **Mental health and debt are associated**
(Meltzer et al., 2012; Fitch et al., 2007)
- **Hardship experiences themselves lead to poor health and disability (secondary conditions, emergent disability)**
(Yoo et al., 2009)
- **Relationship between poverty, disability, and health is often cyclical**
(Allard, Danzinger, & Wathen, 2012; Iceland, 2013; Nye-Lengerman & Nord, 2016)

Hergenrath, K.; Zeglin, R.; McGuire-Kuletz, M.; & Rhodes, S.(2016). *Employment as a Social Determinant of Health: A Review of Longitudinal Studies Exploring the Relationship Between Employment Status and Mental Health*. Rehabilitation Research, Policy, and Education, 29 (3), 261-290.

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Top 5 Concerns Limiting Service Provision or Economic Opportunities of People with Disabilities



Barriers to VR Participation & Employment

Psychosocial

- Low expectations
- Society attitudes toward disability
- Lack of soft skills
- Distrust of institutions

Daily Stressors

- Lack of safe and reliable transportation
- Food insufficiency
- Lack of affordable housing
- Lack of employment opportunities

Barriers to VR Participation & Employment

Financial

- Fear of losing government benefits, e.g., SSI/Medicaid
- Lack of experience with money and saving
- Lack of employment opportunities

Systems

- Lack of service and funding coordination
- Complex systems of public supports
- Lack of capacity to serve targeted populations with complex service needs



The Purpose of Project E3

Improve capacity of State VR agencies and their partners to address barriers to VR participation and attainment of competitive, integrated employment of historically-underserved groups of individuals with disabilities from low-income communities.

Intensive TA will be provided onsite through long-term service delivery relationships with local VR agency personnel and community-based partners in economically disadvantaged communities identified by the VR agencies.



Targeted Communities

Defined as any economically disadvantaged community that qualifies as an Empowerment Zone:

- The median **household income** is under 200% of the Federal poverty level;
- The **unemployment rate** is at, or above the national average;
- As a group, individuals with disabilities have historically sought, have been eligible for, or have received Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services or **achieved competitive integrated employment at 65% or less** of the State VR agency's employment outcome level.



Targeted Populations

Targeted populations, or high-leverage groups with national applicability, are underserved groups who have achieved substandard performance with needs in multiple locations across the country:



- Residents of rural & remote communities
- Adjudicated adults and youth
- Youth with disabilities in foster care
- Individuals with disabilities receiving Federal financial assistance
- Culturally diverse populations
- High school dropouts and individuals who are functionally illiterate
- Persons with multiple disabilities
- SSI and SSDI recipients, including subminimum wage employees

Project E3 Engagement with VR Agencies

⇒ Objective 1:

- Involve state VR agencies in the development of knowledge and identification of targeted communities.

⇒ Objective 2:

- Design modules and strategies to provide intensive, targeted, and universal technical assistance and coordination activities.

⇒ Objective 3:

- Provide technical assistance to state VR agencies, partners, employers, and community leaders designed to maximize community services.

⇒ Objective 4:

- Measure and track effectiveness of on-going technical assistance, training, and alliance-building activities.



Project E3 Outcomes

For individuals with disabilities in low-income communities:



Increase the participation in State VR programs;

Increase the number and percentage who complete their VR program and enter into competitive integrated employment.

Increase the amount of community support services provided;

Develop collaborative, coordinated service strategies among State VR programs and community support service agencies to provide more comprehensive services to consumers.



Project E3 Alignment with WIOA

- ⇒ The passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) has given way to a renewed emphasis on helping people (including people with disabilities and social security beneficiaries) find quality long-term sustainable employment as demonstrated through the establishment of **“Common Performance Measures”** across core programs – including Vocational Rehabilitation.
 - Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit
 - Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit
 - Credential Attainment
 - Measurable Skills Gain

- ⇒ Quality Long-Term Employment as a goal shifts the focus for employment programs under WIOA (including those serving persons with disabilities), from placement as the goal to retention as the goal. This shift supports and is consistent with a push for self-sufficiency and necessitates new ways of approaching consumers who experience poverty.

CBPR

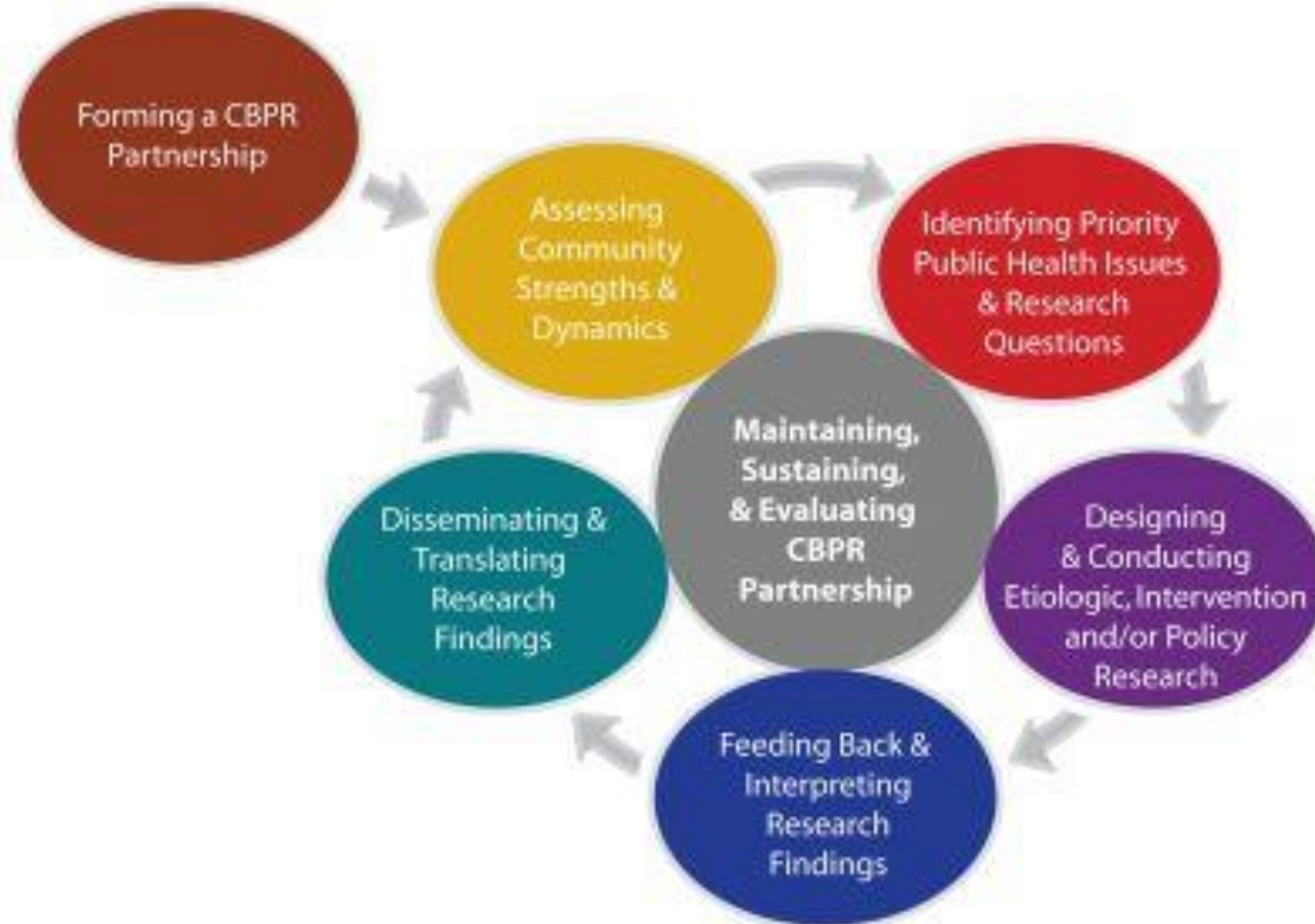


Community- Based Participatory Research

Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) has emerged as an approach designed to promote community well-being through the establishment and maintenance of partnerships.

The foundation of CBPR is the collaborative partnership

- ⇒ Rather than assuming what is best for a community, *CBPR utilizes community partnerships to establish full and equal participation in research by three groups:*
- *Community members (e.g., persons with disabilities receiving VR services)*
 - *Organizational representatives (e.g., VR agencies and service providers)*
 - *Academics (e.g., Rehabilitation Counseling program faculty)*



14 Partnership Principles

- ⇒ Mutual respect and genuineness
- ⇒ Establishing and utilizing formal and informal partnership networks and structures
- ⇒ Committing to transparent processes and clear and open communication
- ⇒ Roles, norms, and processes evolving from the input and agreement of all partners
- ⇒ Agreeing on values, goals, and objectives of the project and practice
- ⇒ Building upon each partner's strengths and assets
- ⇒ Offering continual feedback among members
- ⇒ Balancing power and sharing resources
- ⇒ Sharing credit for the accomplishments of the partnership
- ⇒ Facing challenges together
- ⇒ Developing and using relationships and networks outside of the partnership
- ⇒ Incorporating existing environmental structures to address partnership focuses
- ⇒ Taking responsibility for the partnership and its actions
- ⇒ Disseminating conclusions and findings to state agencies, community members, and policy makers

Networking, Building Trust, & Negotiation are key throughout the partnership development and maintenance

Seven Components of CBPR

- 1. Identify issue(s) and the community**
- 2. Assess community challenges, assets, and strengths (community forum)**
- 3. Define priorities**
- 4. Develop project and data collection methodologies (e.g., training needs, measurable outcomes)**
- 5. Collect and analyze outcome information**
- 6. Interpret findings**
- 7. Disseminate findings**

Project Activities

- 1. Community Outreach and Orientation for Target Populations**
- 2. Community Needs Assessment/Strategies for Change**
- 3. Training and Technical Assistance for staffs of State VR Agencies, Community Rehabilitation Programs, and Community-Based Organizations**
- 4. Coordinated Support Systems Capacity Building**
- 5. Expansion of Employment Opportunities**

Training & Technical Assistance

Motivational Interviewing

Impression Management

Financial Literacy/Empowerment

Poverty Awareness

Work Incentives/Benefits Counseling

Labor Market Information and Trend Analysis

HIV/AIDS Awareness

Mental Health Awareness

Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Trauma Informed Care

Soft Skills (Train-the-Trainer)

Mindfulness

Customized Employment & Discovery Process

Braiding and Leveraging Resources

Integrated Resource Team Model (IRT)

Grant Writing

Self & Home-Based Employment

Employer Engagement/Business Development

Intensive Technical Assistance

Targeted Communities of Focus



Targeted Communities

Louisiana (SUBR)

TC 1: New Orleans, LA [70112, 70113, 70117, 70119]
(Orleans Parish)

TC 2: Baton Rouge, LA [70802]
(East Baton Rouge Parish)

- ⇒ **HLGNA 1:** African Americans from with HIV/AIDS (as primary or secondary disability)
- ⇒ **HLGNA 2:** African Americans with Mental Health Diagnosis (e.g., anxiety disorder, depressive and other mood disorders)



Louisiana E3

New Orleans Regional AIDS Planning Council (NORAPC)

Benefits of E3 Project for VR and Community Based Organization (CBO) from a CBO perspective

- ⇒ Increased understanding of VR services and process
- ⇒ Streamlined Application Process
- ⇒ Improved collaboration between agencies





TC 1: Martinsville and Henry Counties

TC 2: Hampton Roads Region

- ⇒ **HLGNA 1:** Persons with Drug Abuse/Dependence
- ⇒ **HLGNA 2:** Persons with Mental Illness (i.e. Anxiety Disorder, Depressive and Other Mood Disorders, Mental Illness, Mental Illness Not Listed, Personality Disorders, Schizophrenia/Psychotic Disorders)

**Virginia
Department for
Aging and
Rehabilitative
Services
(DARS)
E3**



- ⇒ **Partnership Development**
 - Community Based Participatory Research – Advisory Councils
- ⇒ **Braiding and Leveraging Resources/Integrated Resource Team Model**
- ⇒ **Poverty Awareness/Financial Empowerment**



Virginia E3 Strategies and Benefits

Using Community Based Participatory Research as the foundation for the E3 Projects in Virginia, the E3 Project formed Advisory Councils in the local areas to help direct project implementation as a way to generate buy-in and ownership of the project. Advisory Councils consist of a wide range of community partners including representation from both traditional and non traditional partners, for example:

- Other WIOA Core Partners
- Community Rehabilitation Providers
- Centers for Independent Living
- Community Service Boards (Community Mental Health)
- Community Colleges
- Department of Social Services Programs
- Non-Government Organizations/Community Based Organizations
- Faith-Based Organizations
- Volunteer Networks
- Community Action Programs
- Sheriff's Offices
- Community Food Banks
- Local Bank Branch
- United Way



Virginia E3 Strategies and Benefits

Implementation of Braiding and Leveraging Resources using The Integrated Resource Team (IRT) Model

- ▶ An IRT is initiated on behalf of an individual consumer who is experiencing multiple challenges to employment in order to address that one individual's specific needs.
- ▶ It brings together a team of diversified service providers, including community and partner agencies and other core partners, who work together with the individual consumer to strategize on how services can be coordinated to reach and maintain an employment goal.
- ▶ The consumer along with the team of service providers come together to establish three main components:
 - ▶ Consumer-identified, mutually agreed upon, employment goal
 - ▶ Lines of Communication
 - ▶ Sequence of Services



Virginia E3 Strategies and Benefits

Poverty Awareness

- Bridges Out of Poverty
 - Partnership with United Way
 - Local Bank Participation

Financial Empowerment

- Behavioral Economics
- Your Money Your Goals Toolkit

Integrated Resource Team

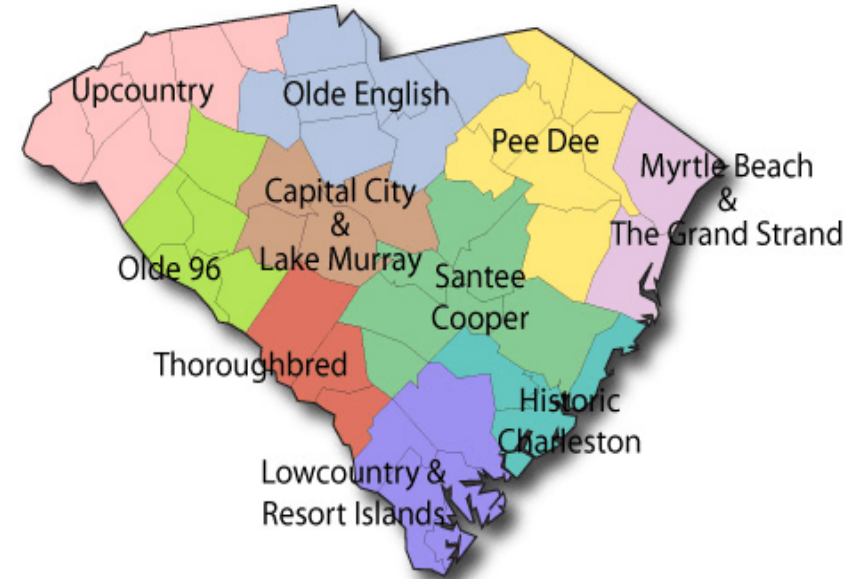
- Vehicle for Financial Empowerment

E3TC South Carolina (UW-Madison)

TC 1: Pee Dee Region (Horry, Georgetown, Florence, and Marion)

TC 2: Midland Region (Sumter, Calhoun, Richland, Kershaw)

- ⇒ **HLGNA 1:** Women over the age of 18 who have specific sensory impairments including (1) Blindness or (2) Other visual impairments, who are receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).
- ⇒ **HLGNA 2:** African-American males over the age of 18 who have specific sensory impairments including (1) Blindness or (2) Other visual impairments



Targeted Communities

**South Carolina
Commission for
the Blind
E3**

⇒ **Training in evidence-based practices**

⇒ **Building new partnerships**

⇒ **Developing toolkits**





South Carolina E3 Strategies and Benefits

⇒ Training in evidence-based practices:

- **Motivational Interviewing (Individual & Group)**
- **Understanding Benefits Counseling**
- **Social Skills (“Skills to Pay the Bills”)**
- **Financial Literacy (“Your Money, Your Goals”)**

⇒ Partnerships:

- **Technical Colleges**
- **South Carolina – General**

⇒ Toolkit:

- **Revised self-employment policy and development of new toolkit to promote self-employment**

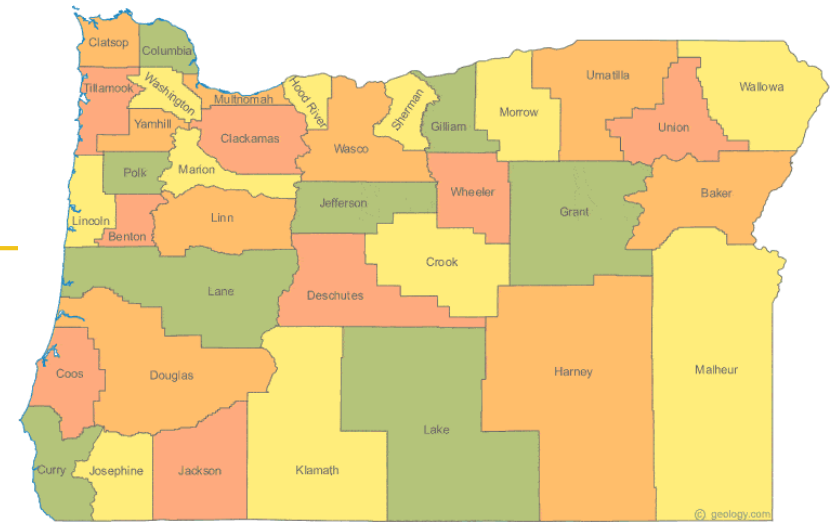


E3TC

Oregon (UKY-HDI)

TC 1: Southwest Oregon (Jackson, Josephine, Klamath, and Douglas)

TC 2: Central Oregon (Deschutes, Jefferson, and Crook)



⇒ **HLGNA 1:** Students or transition-aged youth (ages 14-24 at the time of contact with the Project) who are residents of rural & remote communities, and who have specific sensory impairments, or deaf-blindness, seeking VR services.

⇒ **HLGNA 2:** Adults over age 24 who have specific sensory impairments including blindness, other visual impairments, who are residents of rural & remote communities

Oregon
Commission for
the Blind
(OCB)
E3



- Improved collaboration
- Toolkits for students, families, and counselors
- Financial literacy
- Braiding and leveraging services



Oregon E3 Strategies and Benefits

- ⇒ **Increased collaboration between partners in the provision of Pre-ETS & Transition services**
- ⇒ **Better understanding of work incentives programs and financial literacy**
- ⇒ **Braiding and leveraging services to increase wrap-around services**
- ⇒ **Tools for families and students, including Transition 101 training and Introduction to Assistive Technology. Employment Success videos as business engagement tools.**

Conclusion and Questions





Website & Community of Practice



projectE3.com

- Webinars;
- Resource library;
- Strategies to address barriers;
- Other virtual methods of information dissemination and technical assistance.

Join our Community of Practice at:

<https://projecte3.com/community/>

Presenters and Panelists

Presenters:

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The Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center: Targeted Communities (VR-TAC-TC) is established under a grant from the Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) award CFDA H84.264F15003.