

# Youth with Disabilities at the Crossroads: Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Disability Benefits

## At-a-Glance:

Vocational rehabilitation agencies have the opportunity to help youth with disabilities gain the skills they need to get jobs, rather than rely on benefits, as they transition from youth to adulthood. Youth who receive benefits make up 21% of people seeking vocational rehabilitation services, and that number is expected to grow. This study compared youth with disabilities by state to see how many applied for and received vocational rehabilitation services and what job outcomes looked like for service recipients.

## Key Findings

1. Providing vocational rehabilitation services to youth with disabilities increases employment, reduces dependence on benefits, and results in fewer Social Security applicants.
2. Youth with disabilities make it through vocational rehabilitation programs at twice the rate of their older, working-age peers, making them a good investment for agencies.
3. Many social security work incentive programs are available to encourage beneficiaries to work.
4. If youth apply for vocational rehabilitation services but do not receive them, they are more likely to apply for and receive social security benefits.
5. Post-vocational rehabilitation employment outcomes for youth were lower for those who previously received Social Security benefits (44%) as opposed to those who didn't (59%).
6. 14.2% of youth experienced at least one month of benefit loss after applying for vocational rehabilitation services.

## Putting It into Practice

- Provide youth with supported employment and job skill training services to increase job longevity and wages.
- Educate youth on available work incentive benefits and their impact on monthly income to encourage them to get training and find work.
- Be aware that young applicants who receive Social Security benefits may face more obstacles and need more help than those who don't.
- Use findings from this study to observe how well your agency is serving youth compared to other states.

## More About this Research

This study examined RSA 911 data along with the Disability Analysis File to find the answers to four research questions:

1. How many of a state's youth apply for vocational rehabilitation services?
2. How many youth vocational rehabilitation applicants received vocational rehabilitation services?
3. How many vocational rehabilitation service recipients got jobs?
4. Of all employed youth in a state, how many vocational rehabilitation service recipients were working?

## Learn More

Todd C. Honeycutt, PhD, Allison V. Thompkins, PhD, Maura E. Bardos, BA, and Steven N. Stern, PhD (2017). **Youth With Disabilities at the Crossroads: The Intersection of Vocational Rehabilitation and Disability Benefits for Youth With Disabilities.** *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 60 (3), 131-144.

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## 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 or feedback](#)

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