



RRTC – EBP VR

VR Counselors’ Engagement in Knowledge Translation Processes: Preliminary Results

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify incentives, barriers, and specific training needs of VR practitioners related to participation in a knowledge translation process, and to learn if acquiring new knowledge about evidence-based practices (EBP) results in applying and sharing such knowledge.

Goal: learn how to best facilitate implementation of EBP and services within the state-federal VR program.

Participants

- 281 respondents nationally
 - 81% Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors; 19% Administrators, Directors, Managers, Specialists (19%)
- 72% have been employed with the state-federal VR program for at least 5 years

Results

Acquire

90% of participants expressed interest in “acquiring new knowledge that promotes EBP in vocational rehabilitation”

- 48% Very interested
- 42% Somewhat interested

63% of participants reported acquiring new knowledge that promotes EBP in vocational rehabilitation in the past 3 years.

Primary sources of new knowledge acquired were identified as:

- Agency/employer provided trainings
- Webinars/other online trainings
- College courses/higher education
- Reading articles/other information
- Peers/colleagues

Preferred formats for acquiring new knowledge were identified as:

- Face-to-face interactions (conferences, briefings, etc.) (68%)
- Online, but not interactive (webinars, online trainings) (46%)
- Summary of findings (abstracts, newsletters, etc.) (45%)



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Participants reported believing that they would benefit from receiving further information in these specific knowledge areas related to EBP:

- Disability-related strategies related to successful employment outcomes (Mental illness, transition, autism spectrum disorders, brain injury and intellectual/developmental disabilities, learning disabilities)
- Labor market information/employer needs
- Skill development (counseling practices, motivational interviewing, job placement/job development/supported employment, assessment)
- Other (culture of poverty, cultural competence)

Apply

96% of participants reported interest in “applying new knowledge that may affect employment outcomes for people with disabilities”

- 79% Very interested
- 17% Somewhat interested

58% of participants reported having already applied the new knowledge they acquired.

Application of the newly acquired knowledge focused on:

- Employment planning/goals/placement
- Motivational Interviewing and Individual Placement and Support (IPS)
- VR Counselor supervision/management
- Work with employers
- Transition
- Counseling practice

Share

85% of participants expressed interest in “sharing new knowledge that may affect employment outcomes for people with disabilities”

- 50% Very interested
- 35% Somewhat interested

Only 45% reported having already shared the newly acquired knowledge; primarily shared with colleagues.

Communities of Practice

16% of participants reported strong interest in joining an internet-based community of practice (CoP) related to the use of EBP in VR.

- 51% Somewhat interested
- 26% Not interested



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The participants who reported previous experience with a CoP identified their primary reasons for joining as:

- To openly discuss and exchange feedback with other VR practitioners on issues related to VR practice
- To interact with others who have shared interests and values
- To gain access to evidence-based practices and other information that could improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities
- To develop mutual supportive relationships with other VR practitioners

Challenges to Acquiring, Applying, and Sharing New Knowledge

- Lack of time
- Access/technology (specific difficulty reported in accessing online training/resources due to technical challenges such as security restrictions and firewalls, accessibility issues such as a lack of closed captions, compatibility problems)

Conclusion

VR Counselors working in the state-federal system report strong interest in acquiring, applying, and sharing new knowledge related to EBP. EBP can help improve the number and quality of employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Enhanced use of EBP within the state-federal VR program will become increasingly important to counselors and administrators in the new environment presented by the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Researchers must continue to work closely with VR administrators in identifying and developing EBP relevant to the profession. Researchers and training professionals must develop training, technical assistance, and supports for VR agency staff that fit with the demands and challenges in the field. Equally important is the need for practitioners and administrators to actively engage with researchers to ensure that a clear bi-directional approach, consistent with knowledge translation, is in place.

About the RRTC-EBP VR

The Rehabilitation Research & Training Center on Evidence-Based Practice in Vocational Rehabilitation (RRTC-EBP VR) is designed to generate knowledge and evidenced-based vocational rehabilitation practices that improve employment rates, and quality of employment, for persons with disabilities. We collaborate closely with key stakeholders (VR counselors, community partners, rehabilitation researchers, employers, families and individuals with disabilities) to identify, study and exchange essential elements that contribute to successful rehabilitation outcomes.

Visit our website: <http://research2vrpractice.org>