Development of an Instrument to Measure Consumer Satisfaction in Vocational Rehabilitation

Article Summary

Customer satisfaction within vocational rehabilitation (VR) began receiving attention in the early 1970's with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This legislation mandated that all state agencies conduct program evaluations including customer satisfaction with VR. Although customer satisfaction evaluations are being completed, each state uses its own instrument to measure satisfaction. This not only makes comparisons across states impossible but also means that the quality of these instruments varies widely from state to state. In this article Capella and Turner (2004) outline the development and implementation of their Customer Satisfaction Instrument for the vocational rehabilitation field. The purpose of this study was to create a valid, reliable, multidimensional consumer satisfaction instrument specifically for clients of VR agencies.

Capella and Turner (2004) suggest that a customized customer satisfaction survey would not only give consistency across the field of VR, but would also benefit individual VR agencies. These benefits include, improving services for customers, planning programs, evaluating counselors and providing feedback, identifying staff training needs, and evaluating overall program performance. The instrument developed focuses on customer satisfaction in four major dimensions, (1) counselor interpersonal factors, (2) counselor job effectiveness, (3) services received, and (4) the agency. Capella and Turner (2004) use importance ratings to show the varying importance of these dimensions to individual consumers. The population surveyed in this study was VR consumers who have been closed by VR after receiving service in which the focus was based on the process rather than the outcome of the services received.

Research conclusions were considered positive. The study reinforced the importance of evaluating customer satisfaction and provided evidence for the reliability of the instrument used. The instrument created in this study also gives VR agencies a common tool to use in the evaluation of customer satisfaction that could allow for the creation of national norms for agencies to compare their performance against.

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