
Article Summary

Hartnett, Collins, & Tremblay (2002) examined strategies, which provided "increased choice" to service recipients in the Vermont state vocational rehabilitation process from 1993 - 1999. The study compared costs, services received as well as employment outcomes for people served in the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) or Section 110 and its Consumer Choice Demonstration Project. The Consumer Choice Demonstration Project's objectives were to enhance the current system by increasing consumer self-direction, expedite service delivery, and to empower both consumers and counselors in the rehabilitation process. Hartnett et al. (2002) collected data from both rehabilitation programs to determine different outcomes, which included completion status, earned income, employment retention as well as the cost of rehabilitation. Client specific variables including age, race, sex, marital status, education level, type of disability, and SSI and SSDI state were also examined to determine possible relationships with the various outcome variables.

The study revealed that 60% of participants enrolled in the Choice program successfully completed the program. Approximately, 41% of the Section 110 participants completed the program. Similar results were found for the overall completion rate for client-specific characteristics. Median first quarter earnings following completion of the rehabilitation program demonstrated a significant difference between the two groups. The choice group's median first quarter earnings were $3,052 compared to $2,364 for the Section 110 group.

In addition, the study uncovered a discrepancy between earnings for people receiving SSI and/or SSDI than those who do not, regardless of the group. SSI and SSDI recipients earned significantly less per quarter than those who do not receive SSI or SSDI. Hartnett and colleagues hypothesize that the income discrepancy is due to a function of work disincentives that exists in the design of SSI/SSDI programs.

Hartnett believe this study reveals that it is possible to design a fully operational and effective choice delivery model that will not compromise employment outcomes or significantly increase rehabilitation costs. They conclude, "For the large population of unemployed people with disabilities, it suggests a systematic as well as empowering path to build a quality career life that is sustainable. For vocational rehabilitation providers it provides elements of an effective and choice-directed service delivery model. For policy makers and advocates, it provides a road map for future design of rehabilitation models."

Reference


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