

Vermont Progressive Employment Model Replication and Learning Collaborative: Frequently Asked Questions

Part I. Vermont Progressive Employment (VTPE) Model Resources

Q. Are any written reports on the methodology and results of the Vermont evaluation available?

A. The most complete report of VTPE published at this time can be accessed at <http://vocrehab.vermont.gov/sites/vocrehab/files/pdf/ProgressiveEmploymentDescriptivePaperAug2012.pdf>. A more comprehensive, five year evaluation has recently been completed by the Institute for Community Inclusion and project partners, and an article has been submitted for publication. A synopsis of selected findings is being developed at this time, and it will be made available on ExploreVR.org in the near future.

Q. In the Vermont DVR / ICI preliminary evaluation of VTPE, (1) how large were your sample sizes (i.e., the number who got PE and the number who didn't), (2) how did you control for any selection effects (i.e., pre-existing differences between those who participated in PE and those who didn't), and (3) was the rehab rate difference statistically significant?

A. In a five year evaluation of VTPE that has just been submitted as a journal article, a total of 1722 persons participated in VTPE from 2009 – mid 2014 (11% of the Vermont VR consumers), and they were contrasted in outcomes with 14089 persons who did not participate in VTPE during the same time. It was not possible to conduct a controlled study of participants in each group; however, the VTPE profiles strongly suggest these consumers were at higher risk for unsuccessful closures. The VTPE group consisted of a higher percentage of transition youth, persons with corrections involvement, higher participation in supported employment, a lower education level, and they were younger overall. Additionally, VTPE participants were more likely to receive public benefits, and only 17% of them enter the VR program with current earnings.

In spite of the above characteristics of the VTPE group, their rehabilitation rate was 67%, whereas non-VTPE participants in the VR agency had a rehabilitation rate of 58% over the same time period. This was highly significant statistically (chi-square = 41.4, $p = .0000000001237$), but it was also clinically significant as the much better outcome rate came from a group of consumers with a high risk profile.

Q. Is the VTPE model currently being implemented or tested in other state VR agencies?

A. Yes! As part of the VR-RRTC on Demand-Side Strategies, the ICI and DVR are working with the Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation program to Beta test VTPE. Nebraska VR is a close partner of the VR-RRTC and has been instrumental in helping the ICI and Vermont DVR in the early stages of defining the VTPE model components and fidelity measures.

The Beta test of VTPE approaches in Nebraska VR will be fully initiated in the upcoming months. It is too early to explain the differences in approaches to model replication at this time – for example, the way Nebraska VR will address training offsets to VTPE consumers may differ; however, this is the type of information that will be shared in the Learning Collaborative when it becomes available.

Q. When will the VTPE fidelity measures be available?

A. It is anticipated that fidelity measures will be completed and field tested during the first quarter of 2015. The categories of fidelity have been established, however, and they can be accessed at ExploreVR.org. It is important to note that implementation of VTPE will vary from state to state, as structural and fiscal differences exist in how services are delivered to VR consumers. The research design for this project recognizes this fact, and documentation of these differences is one of the project goals at this time. Once we know more about program-to-program differences in the operation of VTPE, then a randomized clinical trial can be configured that takes these differences into account.

Q. How are Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) or vendors contracted by state VR agencies to provide employment services integrated into the VTPE Model?

A. The VTPE model is based on a team approach, where the counselor, job placement person, and business account manager all meet frequently to discuss employer needs and consumer work experience placements. Other team members may include vocational evaluators, special education teachers, CRP case managers, or other staff with interest in specific cases. In Vermont, the primary responsibility for job experience placement typically falls to the CRP job placement person. They do not need specific approval from the VR counselor to initiate a work experience, as VR DRS has found that this step can significantly slow down their rapid engagement model. Moreover, the funds needed for initiating the work experience are separate from the VR counselor's. The area of how to engage CRP's in the VTPE model will likely evolve over time, depending on the situations in replication states.

Part II. Model Replication and Learning Collaborative Design

Q. Is there any additional information on the planned research/evaluation design?

A. The research design recognizes that state-to-state variations in how VTPE is implemented will vary depending on a number of factors. Therefore, the research strategy will be based on within state comparisons. Rehabilitation outcomes, case characteristics, and costs will be compared between consumers who utilize VTPE and those who do not within each participating agency. This will be accomplished using a variable to identify those who go into VTPE work experiences, collection of basic information about the VTPE work experience (information collected by counselors or job coaches), basic information about employment settings that are

utilized, and already available RSA 911 Case Service data. The research design will also allow each participating VR agency to independently evaluate the effectiveness of VTPE within their program. Additional information on the research design, fidelity factors, and potential variables to be collected can be accessed at ExploreVR.org.

Q. What sample size are you looking for?

A. The specific populations and overall scope of VTPE implementation will be discussed in the preliminary consultation call during the Request for Participation fielding period, and during the individual site visits with the participating VR agencies. The decision on the scope of the project in your state will be based on several factors that will be discussed in detail at that time. The final decision on the extent of the VTPE trial will be the decision of the participating agency. ICI and Vermont DVR are most interested in assisting state VR agencies that are considering implementing VTPE state-wide, so a preference will be given to agencies that can demonstrate good faith efforts toward that goal. The research evaluation design will allow for discretion in how large a cohort is involved in VTPE in each state; however, initial power analysis of the size of the VTPE cohort suggests that at least 200 consumers should be enrolled in VTPE in a replication state in order to more fully guarantee statistically sound results.

Q. Have you identified the data elements needed in the employer database?

A. The VTPE is predicated on a dual customer philosophy, and therefore information about employers and work sites is important for two reasons – it better serves VR consumers in finding work experiences, and employer needs are better met by the VR program. Vermont utilizes the “Salesforce” software to maintain employer data such as employer contact name, alternate business name, date of last employment opportunity for VR, types of jobs offered dates and types of contact with VR program, and variables about what employer is willing to provide for VR consumers. Replication sites can opt to purchase the proprietary Salesforce software and replicate the VT database, or they can adapt existing databases. The employer variables to be collected would be chosen by the replication agency following the site visit discussion on this topic with ICI. Although important information for evaluation purposes, the specific variables collected on employers is less critical than the fact that this information is being collected in the first place.

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