

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation Progressive Employment Model Replication and Evaluation Report: 2019-2020 Update



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WORKING PAPER SERIES, VERSION 2

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BACKGROUND

In January 2015, the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston launched the Vermont Progressive Employment (PE) Model Replication and Evaluation study. Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation (NVR) was an early adopter of the PE model. NVR adopted the PE model and requested to refer to it internally as the Rapid Engagement (RE) Model to fit within its toolbox of practices. NVR participates in the ICI's Progressive Employment Learning Collaborative with four other state VR agencies. Hereafter, we refer to the NVR RE model as NVR PE for purposes of clarity.

The NVR approach delivers all the components of the PE model:

- Focus on employers and businesses as partners (dual-customer model)
- Early engagement: clients are offered work-based learning (WBL) experiences very early in the VR process
- Team approach and high level of staff communication including Working in Nebraska (WIN) meetings
- Business Account Managers (BAMs) develop business contacts and client opportunities
- NVR covers wages, stipends, liability coverage, and workers' compensation in place of business
- "Meet You Where You Are" approach for clients with significant barriers to employment

This brief update to the working paper provides recent information on key PE services delivered and outcome data in Nebraska. For additional background information and early outcome data, please refer to the full working paper: *Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation Progressive Employment Model Replication and Evaluation Report: Working Paper, Version 1. (May 2018), Moore, D., Haines, K., Foley, S., Kwan, N., Mitchell, D. Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion.*

UPDATE ON PROGRESSIVE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE DELIVERY

After a short pilot effort, NVR determined it was viable to launch PE statewide for all clients in July 2015. NVR updated their data systems and ICI together with Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation provided training and technical assistance.

PROGRESSIVE EMPLOYMENT CLIENTS

Between the statewide roll-out in July 2015 and July 2019, NVR has reported providing PE services to 1,089 clients including 328 youth who are 14 to 24 years old and 761 adults 25 years and older. This represents approximately 10% of youth and 6% of adults who became NVR clients during this time. Students served exclusively in pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) are not included in this analysis. Individuals must apply to VR and be found eligible for services in order to receive PE. Demographic characteristics of PE and non-PE clients differ slightly. PE clients are less often employed at application, have a higher percentage of mental illness, co-existing disabilities, and a slightly higher enrollment in Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance.

NVR went into an order of selection (OOS) in 2017 which limited the flow of new applicants into services. NVR closed priority groups 2 and 3 in December 2017 and then closed priority category 1 in April 2018. From 2015-2017, NVR served over 1,000 individuals in PE. In the 2018- 2019 period following OOS, NVR added just over 50 new cases to the PE cohort.

As NVR begins to serve more clients off of the waiting list in 2020, the staff will continue to implement PE statewide, and the number of clients receiving PE is expected to increase.



PROGRESSIVE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROVIDED

As of July 2019, NVR documented 1,692 PE work-based learning (WBL) services provided to the 1,089 PE clients. PE WBL services are direct interactions with businesses including experiences that are “low dose” such as informational interviews or job tours to more intensive “high dose” activities such as on the job training, internships, and paid short term work experiences. PE WBL services are generally available through any VR agency for any VR client that might benefit. What is different about the PE WBL experience is that it is structured within a team and delivered as a dual-customer strategy in which services to businesses are balanced with services to clients. There is a pronounced emphasis on communication between counselors, employment specialists, and business account managers, and a high priority on rapid engagement in work-related activities in the business setting. The goal is to expand opportunities for jobseekers who may have multiple barriers to work and to increase the engagement of businesses in providing opportunities to those jobseekers.

PE is designed as a low risk/no risk dual-customer strategy for both businesses and jobseeking clients. Businesses are not required to offer a permanent job before or after participating. PE clients tend to have multiple barriers to work. Real work exposure often serves multiple purposes including, but not limited to, resume building for clients with no or problematic work history, vocational assesment for clients uncertain about whether or not to return to work, and vocational assessment for clients who have uncertain work goals.

Table 1. Type and number of PE services provided to NVR adults and youth (2015–2019)

Type of PE Work-Based Learning Experience	Adult Services Provided	Youth Services Provided
On-the-job-evaluation	607 (51.5%)	237 (46.2%)
On-the-job training	194 (16.5%)	71 (13.8%)
Informational interview	157 (13.3%)	35 (6.8%)
Job shadow	76 (6.4%)	78 (15.2%)
Employer tours- individual	74 (6.3%)	39 (7.6%)
Mock interviews- employer	47 (4.0%)	39 (7.6%)
Volunteer experience	24 (2.0%)	14 (2.7%)
Total Number of Services	1179	513

Most business exposures for youth and adults tend to be “high-dose” exposures, meaning that the experience lasts more than one day. NVR uses

an array of WBL experiences though volunteer experiences tend to be used on a limited basis. Higher dose exposures often require more planning and possible expenditures and thus may be recorded more consistently. Low dose activities such as job tours may occur spontaneously and may not be recorded as consistently.

UPDATE ON SERVICE-RELATED AND EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

We looked at two types of client outcomes: a) continued engagement with VR; and b) attaining a paid job. Continued engagement was measured as remaining connected to VR until at least an individual plan for employment (IPE) was completed. Job attainment was the number of people that completed VR services who acquired a paid job and had their VR case closed successfully. Engagement with VR is an important issue that researchers have linked to client satisfaction and to costs (Ipsen & Goe, 2014). The Progressive Employment Learning Collaborative partnering VR agencies have also identified continued engagement of youth as a concern.

The use of PE appears to be particularly effective at reducing the rate of attrition in NVR.

Table 2. PE and non-PE youth and adult cases closed unsuccessfully prior to IPE between July 2015 and July 2019

Cases	PE			Non-PE		
	Total Closed	Prior to IPE	%	Total Closed	Prior to IPE	%
Adult (25 yo +)	644	142	19.3	8788	3943	44.9
Youth (14 to 24)	248	74	29.8	2158	1205	55.8
Total	892	216	24.2	10,946	5,148	47.0

NVR clients who participated in PE work experiences achieved a higher percentage of successful rehabilitation outcomes compared with consumers who did not participate in PE.

In examining outcome differences, we excluded open cases. Table 3 compares PE and Non-PE cases by youth and adult population. The most distinctive difference appeared between PE and non-PE youth. Successful closure rate was calculated as the number of successful outcomes divided by the sum of successful outcomes plus unsuccessful outcomes. This measure counts all cases, including those cases closed prior to IPE.

Table 3. PE and Non-PE cases closed successfully between July 2015 and July 2019

	PE			Non-PE		
	Successful	Unsuccessful	Rate	Successful	Unsuccessful	Rate
Adult (25 yo +)	291	353	45.2	3086	5702	35.1
Youth (14 to 24)	100	148	40.3	440	1718	20.4
Total	391	501	43.8	3526	7420	32.2

The successful closure rate considers all VR participants, including those who dropped out or were terminated from services prior to IPE. The rates were calculated this way to consider all persons who were found eligible for VR, which is appropriate considering the apparent association of PE with retention in the VR program as described in the previous table. To date, the success rate for PE adults is over 10 percentage points higher than for non-PE adults, and for PE youth there is a 20 percentage point higher success rate than for non-PE youth. Given the profile of persons entering PE, the outcome numbers are impressive. PE appears to be a potentially effective means for addressing individuals with limited work histories or conditions that might stigmatize or otherwise seriously prevent them from finding successful employment. The next step is to carry out a matched comparison group analysis to determine if these outcome differentials are statistically significant.

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Suggested citation:

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation Progressive Employment Model Replication and Evaluation Report: 2019-2020 Update. Working Paper. Version 2. (May 2020), Moore, D., Haines, K., Foley, S., Kwan, N. Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion.

RESOURCES

For more information about PE, visit:

www.explorevr.org/content/vermont-progressive-employment-model

Access the full 2018 Nebraska VR PE report here:

www.explorevr.org/sites/explorevr.org/files/files/nebraska_F.pdf

QUESTIONS?

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