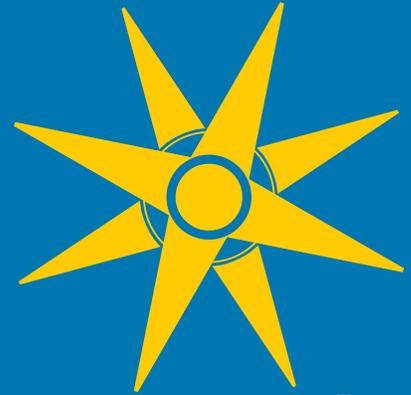


# Maine Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Progressive Employment Model Replication and Evaluation Report



Dennis Moore  
Kelly Haines  
Susan Foley  
Ngai Kwan  
DeBrittany Mitchell

2018



Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston

## **Maine Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Progressive Employment Model Replication and Evaluation Report: Working Paper**

2018

Dennis Moore, Kelly Haines, Susan Foley, Ngai Kwan, DeBrittany Mitchell

This working paper is a product of the Progressive Employment Model Replication and Evaluation study, funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (Grant # H133B120002). The products associated with this study are housed on ExploreVR ([www.explorevr.org](http://www.explorevr.org)), a data hub for a group of vocational rehabilitation research projects based at the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at UMass Boston.

The data, information, and views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the overall findings or outcomes of the ongoing Progressive Employment Model Replication and Evaluation study. This working paper series is meant to provide preliminary information and document the process and impact of the model implementation in various state agencies. These papers will be updated as the research progresses to reflect new data and findings.

Suggested citation: Maine Division of 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.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>7</b>
1.1 Contents of this Report.....	7
1.2 Overview of the PE Model.....	7
1.3 Background and Context for PE Model Replication.....	9
1.4 PE Model Implementation Strategies.....	10
1.5 Key Evaluation Questions.....	13
1.6 Methods Used to Address Evaluation Questions.....	13
<b>2. Summary of PE Services</b> .....	<b>15</b>
2.1 Clients Served.....	15
2.2 PE Activities.....	15
<b>3. Impact on Service-Related Outcomes</b> .....	<b>16</b>
3.1 Case Flow.....	16
3.2 Business Relations.....	16
<b>4. Impact on Employment Outcomes</b> .....	<b>17</b>
4.1 Successful Rehabilitation Outcomes.....	17
4.2 Rate of “Drop-Out”.....	17
4.3 PE Activity “Dosage”.....	18
<b>5. DVR and CRP Staff Experiences with PE</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>6. Discussion and Implications</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>7. Additional Observations and Recommendations</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>Appendices</b> .....	<b>25</b>
Appendix 1. Additional Participant Information on PE.....	25
Appendix 2. Additional Comments on Staff Survey of PE.....	27
Appendix 3. Description of Progressive Employment Learning Collaborative.....	30

## Tables

Table 1. Fidelity components and elements of PE .....	8
Table 2. Model components and implementation strategies for DVR.....	12
Table 3. Frequency of PE activities provided .....	15
Table 4. Time measures for PE case flow (N=110).....	16
Table 5. Type of case closure.....	17
Table 6. Statistics on PE service delivery by case status .....	18
Table 7. Number of PE cases.....	19
Table 8. Characteristics of clients referred to PE.....	20
Table 9. Frequency of responses: Usefulness of PE model components in daily work.....	20
Table 10. Frequency of responses: PE as a model for service delivery (N=22) .....	21
Table 11. Frequency of responses: PE as a model for service delivery, continued .....	21
Table 12. Case costs for closed PE and non-PE cases.....	24
Table 13. Demographic information on closed PE and non-PE transition youth.....	25
Table 14. Total number of PE activities provided for PE cases.....	26

## Figures

Figure 1. Number of PE activities for each case.....	16
--	----



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Progressive Employment (PE) model is an innovative, dual-customer practice emerging out of the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VT DVR). This model has demonstrated strong success in Vermont in a five-year evaluation, with PE participants experiencing successful rehabilitation closure rates higher than the average for other VT DVR consumers. Elements of the model include a dual-customer approach, early consumer engagement in work environments (everyone is ready for something), a strong team approach, and VR-provided short-term liability insurance and compensation for consumers receiving a high-dose work exposure.

In January 2015, the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts Boston issued a Request for Participation (RFP) for state VR agencies to join the Vermont Progressive Employment Model Replication and Evaluation study. The study, funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research, was designed to include a learning collaborative co-facilitated by the ICI and VT DVR of four state VR agencies that would adopt and study the PE model. The participating states received training and technical assistance, adapted the model to their states, implemented the key components, and started serving jobseekers and businesses.

Maine Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (ME DVR) staff had some prior knowledge of the PE model before the ICI initiative, and there was interest in applying the model in Maine. In particular, a high percentage of transition-age youth were dropping out of VR services upon graduation from high school without successfully completing the VR process. DVR leadership thought that PE could positively impact this dropout rate.

After multiple discussions with ICI and ME DVR, the decision was made to focus PE on transition youth in the lower portion of the state (Portland and Lewiston areas), where the majority of clients and staff were located. Since multiple community rehabilitation providers (CRPs) can provide accredited services to ME DVR, it was decided to initially select a group of four CRPs to provide PE services in this geographic area. Policy, funding, and staffing decisions were carried out to configure transition services to include PE as an option.

A staff survey conducted by ICI in 2017 indicated that VR counselors and CRPs see the PE model as quite helpful in providing client services that are successful. Although overall ratings of PE were high for both groups, approximately one third of staff were not as enthusiastic about all aspects of PE (e.g., "serving the needs of employers"). This may be a developmental step associated with early implementation, similar to what was encountered in Vermont.

A total of 23 youth were closed in PE since the official start of services in late 2015, and the total youth served were listed as N = 110 on agency spreadsheets. Because of the small number of closures to date, some evaluation findings must be considered tentative. In regard to PE assisting in lowering the rate of transition youth dropout, only 4.3% of PE youth unsuccessfully closed prior to IPE, whereas the rate was 36.9% for non-PE youth. The 36.9% rate was very similar to the 40% figure used in initial discussions of

this situation. It is unclear how age difference differentially impacted outcomes (participants in the PE groups were an average of one year younger than those in the non-PE groups).

Among the 23 PE closures, the successful closure rate of PE transition youth was approximately 48%, whereas 17.5% non-PE youth successfully closed. Nearly 90% of 363 PE exposures were “low-dose,” meaning they were accomplished in less than one day. The youth in PE who were closed successfully tended to have more PE exposures than youth who did not have a successful closure. The median number of PE exposures for successfully closed youth was four, compared with 2.5 exposures for youth who were unsuccessfully closed. The relatively small median number of low-dose exposures suggests that the PE approach can be a cost-effective VR strategy for this population.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

In January 2015, the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts Boston issued a Request for Participation (RFP) for state VR agencies to join the Vermont Progressive Employment Model Replication and Evaluation study. Housed under the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Demand-Side Strategies (NIDILRR Grant #H133B120002) at the ICI, the study was designed to include a learning collaborative co-facilitated by the ICI and the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VT DVR) of four state VR agencies that would adopt and study the PE model. The participating states received training and technical assistance, adapted the model to their states, implemented the key components, and started serving job seekers and businesses.

## 1.1 Contents of this Report

Section 1 of this report gives an overview of the PE model components, and all aspects of the replication and evaluation study. Section 2 of this report provides a summary of PE services delivered. First, we describe the demographic and case profile of individuals in PE, and then we provide an overview of the PE services provided to this group. Section 3 provides the results of the impact analysis on service-related outcomes, and Section 4 discusses the impact on employment outcomes. Section 5 discusses survey findings of Maine Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (ME DVR) staff and CRP who are using the PE model. Sections 6 and 7 provide discussion points and implications of the evaluation findings, as well as additional observations and recommendations.

## 1.2 Overview of the PE Model

The Progressive Employment model is an innovative, dual-customer practice emerging out of DVR. This model has demonstrated strong success at VT DVR in a five-year evaluation, with PE participants experiencing successful rehabilitation closure rates approximately 10% higher than the average for other VT DVR consumers. At its core, PE uses work-based learning strategies to meet the needs of both the business and the job seeker with a disability, while minimizing the risks for both parties. Elements of the model include early consumer engagement in work environments (everyone is ready for something), a strong team approach, and VR-provided short-term liability insurance and training offset compensation for consumers.

The key components of the PE model are listed here, organized as Business-Focused, Customer-Focused, and Team-Focused Components. PE is implemented as a team approach with the job seeker, counselor, employment specialist, and business relations or account manager as core team members. Business account managers have a caseload of businesses, and have unique roles including developing business contacts, becoming familiar with the local economy, and acting as a resource for local businesses.

### BUSINESS-FOCUSED COMPONENTS

- **Creating a “business as customer” delivery system:** Engagement with businesses is a sales approach that seeks to serve the business’s current and future employment needs.
- **Employer risk reduction options:** These include options for liability and worker’s compensation coverage for employers, and sources for stipends for trainees’ time.
- **Business tracking database:** An ever-expanding business database is maintained that includes business specifics, and their levels of availability for providing work experiences.

## CUSTOMER-FOCUSED COMPONENTS

- **Adoption of the “everybody is ready for something” approach:** Work experiences boost confidence, increase motivation to complete VR, and introduce businesses to potential future employees. Early work experiences provide vocational evaluation information while increasing motivation for consumers.
- **Full array of work experiences:** These include low and high dose strategies such as job tours, mock interviews by businesses through to 6-week work experiences and internships.
- **Focus on job seekers with intensive pre-work needs:** This group includes those with multiple significant disabilities, criminal justice involvement, behavioral disabilities, and poor work histories.
- **Rapid engagement in real-life work settings:** Includes a reduction on “job readiness” assessments and evaluations.

## TEAM-FOCUSED COMPONENTS

- **A team approach to service delivery:** This includes the job seeker, business, counselor, employment specialist, and business account manager. The employment specialist has greater autonomy than usual in creating work experiences based on consumer interests. The employment team meets weekly or biweekly through live meetings or teleconferences.
- **Rapid communication of labor market intelligence:** All teams share information across job seekers and businesses to identify matches and opportunities.
- **Disaggregation of rehabilitation caseload dollars from work experience placements:** In states such as VT where funds are allocated to specific VR counselors, there are separate funds for PE so that rehabilitation services do not compete for dollars with early work experience placements.

The Demand-Side RRTC spent time in the first two years to define PE in order to create a working model that could be implemented beyond Vermont. Considering the number of VR and state-specific factors that might impact delivery of PE (e.g., work experience reimbursement policies, use of CRPs, local labor market dynamics, VRC caseloads and funding levels, staffing ratios, and minimum wage regulations), the RRTC project team constructed the following Beta version of a fidelity tool to guide the pilot efforts.

**Table 1. Fidelity components and elements of PE**

Component	Fidelity elements
Dual-customer design	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Employment staff negotiate directly with businesses to implement work-based learning experiences</li> <li>2. Regular contact between employment staff and businesses participating in PE</li> <li>3. Business account manager role focuses on business outreach, not VR caseload</li> </ol>
Team approach with emphasis on rapid engagement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Jobsville or equivalent regular team meetings focused on communication and coordination between employment staff and VR counselors</li> <li>5. Entire team gets credit for successful rehab closure</li> <li>6. Consumers meet with employment specialists close to time of IPE signing</li> </ol>
Focus on high-risk or difficult-to-place consumers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Options exist for consumers with high risk for employment failure due to lack of work history, criminal history, mental illness, multiple disabilities, or co-existing risk factors</li> </ol>
Mechanism for set-asides or training offset funds	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Funds for PE training offset separate from VR counselor case management funds, so that funds do not compete with other VR needs</li> </ol>
Liability and workers’ compensation insurance for trainees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Mechanisms in place for providing liability and worker comp for trainees in lieu of employer need to provide the same, or equivalent method of liability coverage</li> </ol>
Data-tracking tools for PE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. Consumer RSA-911 case services linked at client level with PE data forms</li> <li>11. Continuously updated local business database regularly used by PE team</li> </ol>

## 1.3 Background and Context for PE Model Replication

### OVERVIEW OF MAINE DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

According to the Maine Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (ME DVR) Highlights 2016-2017, the agency served over 6000 persons that year, and 30.8% were youth aged 15-22. The agency achieved over 1000 employment successes during that time, and they report that their success rate for youth for that year was slightly higher than the national average (37.7% ME vs 33.4% US).

VR services are provided by approximately 120 staff, including 62 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor IIs (of whom approximately 25 are dedicated to serving transition-age youth and young adults) and seven staff with the job title Rehabilitation Counselor I. Over 60% of the agency clientele are located in the southern half of the state, with Portland and Lewiston being the largest population service areas. Employment-related services such as job placement typically include contracted services through a network of over 50 certified CRPs. The official state-wide unemployment rate in Maine in October 2017 was 3.5%, which places the state a little over half a percentage point lower than the national average (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017).

### IMPETUS FOR PE MODEL ADOPTION

Several factors appear to have attracted ME DVR to the Vermont PE model. The current VR administration has been focused on improving retention and rehabilitation rates in the program. This has included an effort to streamline and improve the eligibility and Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) processes so that they occur more quickly than in the past. One particular challenge was keeping transition youth engaged so that they do not drop out of the program when they leave school. It was reported that approximately 40% of youth drop out of the VR program while they are still in eligibility status, typically at the time they graduate from high school<sup>1</sup>.

The ME DVR administration became aware of Vermont's PE model, and they visited VT DVR to experience the model first hand. When the opportunity to participate in a learning collaborative with ICI and PE was announced, they applied to the replication project.

In discussions with ICI and ME DVR, it was decided to focus the PE program on transition youth, and particularly on the southern half of the state. This decision was based on anticipated resources for PE, as well as the majority of transition staff and clients residing in the lower half of the state. Portland and Lewiston and the surrounding areas were the focus of this effort.

A total of 200 youth was set as a goal for enrollment in the PE program by the time the ICI project ended. One major evaluation goal for this replication was to determine if PE could improve retention statistics among transition youth and thereby increase VR success rates for this population.

ME DVR took particular care to formulate an approach to working with CRPs in a manner that would be effective within the PE model. Several issues relating to CRP participation in the PE model were discussed. There was concern that opening up participation to all 55 active CRPs would be too complicated for several reasons. Consequently, an RFP was released describing PE and the need for CRPs for the new model.

Four providers were initially chosen following this process. In the Portland area, these included Maine Medical Center – Department of Vocational Services, Maine Vocational & Rehabilitation Associates, and Work Opportunities Unlimited. In the Lewiston area, it included Goodwill Industries of Northern New England, and another office of Work Opportunities Unlimited.

---

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Describing DVR Program Participants, Ruth Pease, 2015, DVR-funded report

Specific staff of these agencies received training in PE, including an orientation to dual-customer approaches with businesses and data-collection requirements. The most recent spreadsheet of business contacts provided to ICI indicates that other CRPs eventually were added to this cadre, including Creative Work Systems in Lewiston & Portland, Gallant Therapy Service, Employment Connections Maine, Terry Smith, and Two Caps Vocational Services.

Since PE has now expanded to two additional offices, following a successful grant application by ME DVR in 2017, the list of participating CRPs is likely larger.

## **TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR MODEL IMPLEMENTATION**

The ICI and VT DVR staff provided training and technical assistance, including in-person and web/teleconference meetings to ME DVR staff and CRPs. PE team staff were available for on-demand technical assistance (via email and phone) throughout the model implementation. A series of meetings via teleconference or site visits were scheduled to address various aspects of the PE model implementation. These included visits by ICI staff in May 2015, a training and data-focused call in August 2015, and a three-day on-site training in the beginning of October 2015. Data collection/reporting for PE participants officially began in October 2015.

## **PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING COLLABORATIVE**

The ICI and VT DVR hosted the PE Learning Collaborative (LC) to facilitate cross-state partnership in PE model replication, implementation, and evaluation. The LC also served as a conduit for sharing and implementing PE materials (written briefs) and other learning objects (videos). The LC featured monthly job development virtual conferences hosted by the ICI in partnership with VT DVR. The virtual conferences were about topics specific to those who directly interact with businesses at participating VR agencies. They covered an array of topics around opportunities and successes in PE job placement and development, including:

- How to help PE consumers through application processes
- Nebraska VR's progressive employment marketing strategies
- How to help PE consumers overcome criminal background checks
- PE business relations with "Big Box" stores

These conferences allowed job developers across states to discuss implementation strategies and challenges related to job development and business relations. ME DVR and CRPs were active participants in both the cross-state LC and the job development virtual conferences. ME DVR shared their experiences applying the PE model to transition-age youth consumers.

As ME DVR relies on CRPs for job placement, they have contributed to the LC discussions with a focus on CRP business outreach and involvement that leads to better employment outcomes and experiences for their youth with disabilities in Lewiston and Portland (later expansion to Bangor and Augusta). (See Appendix 3 for additional information on the Learning Collaborative.)

## **1.4 PE Model Implementation Strategies**

As shown in Table 1 above, a number of components and elements have been linked to the PE model. Each of the replication states addressed how they would implement the model in their application to the learning collaborative, and a series of contacts with ICI and VT DVR ensued so that the model could be adapted to the conditions and policies within each of the VR state programs. This was a necessary step, as many specifics of VR program delivery and policy vary considerably from state to state.

Following extensive discussions among ME DVR, ICI, and VT DVR staff, aspects of model implementation were planned and agreed upon.

## FIDELITY TO MODEL

A PE fidelity to model visit was conducted by ICI staff Kelly Haines and Dennis Moore in May 2016, to estimate the fit of PE implementation in ME DVR with the Vermont model. The two-day visit consisted of observation of a staffing meeting (Jobsville), discussions with CRP job placement staff, ME DVR VRCs, an office supervisor, MIS staff, the PE site representative, and senior ME DVR administration. The visit also included business visits while accompanying job placement staff. An exit interview concluded the visit. Hugh Bradshaw from VT DVR also provided input on the fidelity assessment.

The draft fidelity instrument consisted of 25 items, and it was created specifically for the purpose of estimating fidelity to the model in the PE replication states: Maine, Oregon, and Nebraska.

The overall impressions from the fidelity visit were that ME DVR had created a solid initial implementation of PE in the selected geographic areas. The experience and apparent longevity of ME DVR staff provided a good foundation for PE, and the enthusiasm for PE by ME DVR administration strongly supported the model's adoption. The overarching administrative policies of ME DVR are compatible with Vermont's approach to provision of early work experiences for clients who face substantial barriers to employment.

## SOME AREAS OF PARTICULAR CONFLUENCE WITH THE PE MODEL:

- **Jobsville meetings:** The types and levels of staff communication during staffing sessions appear to parallel the intent of VT Jobsville meetings.
- **Work experience utilization:** Staff seem to be focused on a wider range of work experience options for transition youth than in the past.
- **Mechanisms for covering wages, stipends, liability, and worker's compensation:** Through the contracting arrangements with CRPs and staffing agencies, ME DVR does not rely solely on employers to provide these benefits or coverage.
- **ME DVR administrative commitment to PE is strong,** and a number of adaptations have been made to promote the model, such as the initial contracting with specific CRPs to provide PE services.

## IDENTIFIED AREAS OF DIVERGENCE FROM PE:

- There are multiple streams of data collection for PE, including using the web-based survey to log PE activities (CRPs), AWARE case management system indicators (VRCs), and a list of PE clients generated at Jobsville meetings and managed by business account manager (BAM). There is a need to consider ways to streamline PE data collection to ensure accuracy.
- BAM role: One full-time BAM was initially hired, but some job duties differ from the BAM role in VT (e.g., tracking and data collection for PE participants). Since 2016, PE has expanded to two additional offices, and the Transition Work-Based Learning grant manager is also acting as a BAM.
- The duration from application to first work experience may be long in comparison to what transpires in VT DVR, and this may be influenced by several factors.
- Involvement of CRPs: Because of the contractual nature and history of employment services being provided by CRPs, job placement personnel are not always clear on what they are providing and if it qualifies as a PE service. These personnel do not consistently reflect a dual-customer approach with businesses.

The fidelity visit included interactions with CRPs providing PE services. Job placement services are provided by CRPs, which adds another layer of complexity for any VR program implementing the PE model. It was noted that CRP staff turnover tends to be higher than for VR staff, and job placement personnel may be inexperienced in effective business communication skills. Although CRPs are certified and trained, we received comments that they did not have sufficient exposure to training in how to interact with businesses.

Early discussions at ICI among VR experts noted that VT DVR has a unique arrangement with their primary CRP, as that agency is co-located within DVR offices. This is recognized as a potential large benefit to communication among team members. Replicating PE in states that have more traditional relationships with CRPs is likely to generate greater challenges.

Table 2 below outlines the fidelity components and elements of PE and information/observations about ME DVR relative to this model.

**Table 2. Model components and implementation strategies for ME DVR**

PE Component	Fidelity elements of PE	Maine DVR Implementation Strategy
Dual-customer design	Employment staff negotiate directly with businesses	CRPs provide business contacts. BAM in Portland also has direct business contacts, often the first contact.
	Regular contact between employment staff and businesses participating in PE	Most CRPs have regular contact with employment sites, but some challenges for more rural clients and locations.
	BAM role focuses on business outreach, not VR caseload	BAM role parallels model. BAM maintains a business database. Some challenges in getting CRPs to share business contact info. Two BAMs now hired full time to serve statewide.
PE is a team approach with emphasis on rapid engagement.	Jobsville or equivalent regular team meetings focused on communication and coordination between employment staff and VR counselors	Jobsville meetings held biweekly in Portland and Lewiston. Some challenges in getting all staff to attend. CRP turnover has been issue, as new staff don't fully understand the model. Exact Jobsville agenda followed in biweekly meeting.
	Entire team credit for successful rehab closure	Team credit is acknowledged in Jobsville meeting. CRPs would like more info on client status. Some confusion by CRPs in Jobsville observed re: PE model due to turnover/training issues.
	Consumers meet with employment specialists close to time of IPE signing	Significant variation in timing of meetings for PE with client, based on school status and other factors. Some clients are more difficult to pair with CRPs due to CRP caseloads or geographic location.
	Several, very specific work experience or related consumer options	A full range of work experience options exist. The majority of experiences provided were categorized as low-dose, especially company tours (less than one day).
Focus on high risk or difficult to place consumers	Option for consumers with high risk for employment failure due to lack of work history, criminal justice, mental illness, multiple disabilities, or co-existing risk factors	Some indicators suggest youth in PE have more challenges than those not in PE, e.g. enrollment for Supplemental Security Income, and lower education levels.
Mechanism for set-asides or training offset funds	Funds for PE training offset separate from VR counselor case management funds, so that funds do not "compete" with other perceived VR needs	State set aside funding for the program exists, as well as funds to reimburse youth for high dose experiences.
Liability and workers' compensation insurance for trainees	Mechanism for providing liability and worker comp for trainees in lieu of employer need to provide the same, or equivalent method of liability coverage	Liability coverage and Worker's Compensation are provided by the CRP or a staffing agency as part of the contract.
Data tracking tools for PE	Consumer RSA-911 case services linked at client level with PE data forms	Survey Monkey data system records many aspects of PE at client level. Some challenges in data and difficulty interfacing with AWARE open case data.
	Up-to-date local business database regularly used by PE team	Business database is maintained by BAM. Some fields in the dbase not completed, such as work experience options businesses are willing to offer.

## 1.5 Key Evaluation Questions

Each of the four PE replication states had an evaluation plan that was jointly drafted by ICI and the administrative VR staff of the state. Although the plans are similar, each was changed to take advantage of existing data collection systems and specific topics of interest to VR administrators. Because of state-to-state variations in services, programs, and policies, there was no attempt to do rigorous cross-state analysis in this phase of study.

The following evaluation plan with six hypotheses was finalized for ME DVR in September 2015, and the results to date are provided. Since we could only retrieve complete PE information on the 23 closed cases, some of the observations about findings related to each evaluation hypotheses should be considered tentative or incomplete.

**Overall goals: Determine the effectiveness of PE in providing more early work exposures for transition youth, reduce early dropout rates of youth in VR, and result in a higher percentage of youth achieving a successful VR outcome.**

- Transition consumers who participate in PE work experiences will achieve a higher percentage of successful rehabilitation outcomes compared with consumers who do not participate in PE over the same time period.
- The total dosage (e.g., hours or days) of PE work experience will positively correlate with successful VR closure.
- The median duration of time from eligibility (changed from application date) to first work experience will decrease over the period of the project.
- The dosage of case services provided to transition-age consumers will positively correlate with consumer retention and outcomes and contribute to the Pre-Employment Transition Services requirement.
- Consumers who participate in PE will have a lower rate of early VR “drop-out” than a comparable cohort of consumers who did not participate in PE.
- The business database maintained by BAMs and job developers will result in an increase in total contacts and work experiences offered to individual consumers.

## 1.6 Methods Used to Address Evaluation Questions

To address the evaluation questions and provide a summary of PE activities in Maine, we used multiple quantitative and qualitative primary data sources, described below.

When possible, to measure the impact on service-related and employment outcomes, we linked data across sources using the DVR unique Case ID number.

Although the study design did not specify a comparison group to measure statistical differences between “PE versus non-PE clients,” we summarized variables provided by DVR for closed transition-aged youth cases that did not receive PE in the project period in order to provide some context for reported findings on PE client outcomes.

## DATA COLLECTION AND DATA SOURCES

### *Case Data Files*

ME DVR provided the ICI with multiple datasets for analysis. The data sources included:

1. Case file data for 11,215 closed cases with a date of closure 10/1/14 thru 5/22/17
2. Data exported from the PE Activity tracking tool housed in SurveyMonkey for 110 PE clients
3. Business contacts data sheets

### *Quarterly/Monthly Conference Calls*

A regular, monthly call was established with Libby Stone Sterling and Dennis Moore. Other personnel frequently joined this call as the agenda dictated, most often Darcy Brockman, Betsy Hopkins, and/or Kelly Haines. The purpose of the calls was to talk about aspects of PE implementation and data-related questions, and to solve any specific problems that presented themselves. These calls were maintained until summer 2017, when the official period of data collection for this study was concluded.

Some of the topics discussed in these calls were data collection strategies and issues, ideas concerning practices for involving and reimbursing CRPs in an outcome-based system, “dosage-related” questions on PE work exposures (e.g., how many low-dose PE exposures should be “enough”?), strategies for maintaining full Jobsville participation, and staff understanding and acceptance of PE for transition youth.

### *Additional Document / PE Materials Review*

During the initial start-up period, a number of materials, forms, and data collection points that are used in VT DVR were shared with ME DVR. The ME DVR agency's staff incorporated a number of these elements into their data system and trainings. In addition, they produced a high-quality flyer detailing the advantages of PE for businesses, and that product is currently in statewide use, especially by the BAMs. This flyer had a focus on youth, as well as the options businesses might have in providing work exposures to youth.

### *ME DVR staff and vendor survey of PE*

Described in section 5.

## 2. SUMMARY OF PE SERVICES

### 2.1 Clients Served

ME DVR provided PE service data for a total of 110 VR clients. Of the 110 clients in PE, the majority of cases (n=87 or 79.1%) are still open. A total of 23 cases were closed at the time of data analysis. PE service data housed in SurveyMonkey was matched with ME DVR case file data to determine which PE cases were closed. Case file data (e.g., demographic data) for PE cases that were still open at the time of the data extract were not available in aggregate form, and therefore are not included in the outcome analysis unless specifically noted.

Of the 23 closed PE cases, the majority (69.6%) were male. The median and mean age was 17 years old, and most had some secondary education, but no high school diploma. The predominant primary disability in PE is coded as Mental Retardation (43.5%), followed by Learning Disability (30.4%).

To put these demographic descriptions into context, we compared the group of 23 closed PE cases to non-PE youth (aged 16–24) cases closed within the same period. Among other observations, the closed-case PE group tends to be somewhat more male and one year younger than the closed non-PE group. The PE group has a higher rate of receiving Supplemental Security Income (26.1% vs. 18.3%). The full table of demographic information is included in Appendix 1.

### 2.2 PE Activities

For the 110 PE cases, CRPs provided a total of 363 PE activities. These include company tours, informational interviews, job shadows, mock interviews, on-the-job training (OJT), and paid work experiences.

The following table shows the breakdown of type of PE activities provided to the PE client base. Company tours account for over 40% of all PE activities provided. Informational interviews and job shadows each account for over 20% of all activities, while paid work experience, mock interviews, and OJT were much less frequently provided.

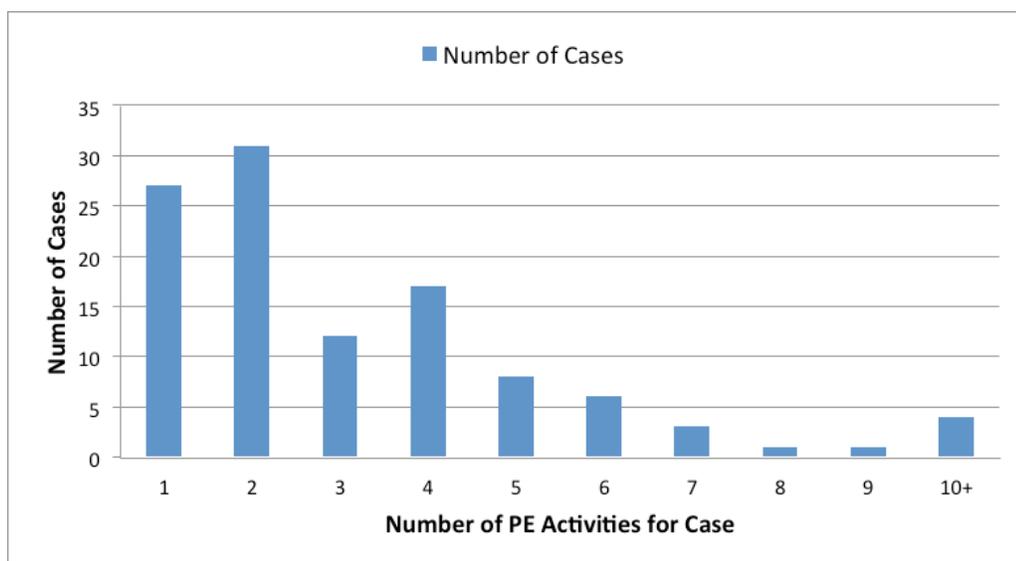
**Table 3. Frequency of PE activities provided**

PE Activities Provided	Frequency of Service*
Company tours	149
Informational interview	86
Job shadows	74
Paid work experience	38
Mock interviews	13
On-the-job training	3
<b>Total number of PE Services</b>	<b>363</b>

\*Total number of PE activities provided for N=110 PE cases

When examining the PE activities per case, the data show that each PE case received an average of three PE services (median = 2). The number of PE activities for each case ranged from 1–18. Figure 1 depicts the number of cases by the number of PE activities for each case. Most cases had either one or two PE activities; but a handful of cases had 10 or more PE activities.

**Figure 1. Number of PE activities for case (N=110)**



\*Includes all PE cases, including those that are open.

### 3. IMPACT ON SERVICE-RELATED OUTCOMES

#### 3.1 Case Flow

*The median duration of time from eligibility to first work experience will decrease over the period of the project.*

The next table divides referrals to PE by calendar year. The table indicates that from 2014 to 2016, the amount of time from eligibility to first PE activity continued to go down. This supports the hypothesis. However, there is still a considerable amount of time from IPE to first PE activity if viewed from the perspective of a transitioning youth – these time frames are three months or longer on average in 2016. Insufficient data exist to list statistics for 2017.

**Table 4. Time measures for PE case flow (N=110)**

Date of Application	Number of Days	Eligibility to Referral	IPE to Referral	IPE to Start of PE Activity	Referral to Start of PE Activity
Before 12/31/14 (n=27)	Mean	743.4	293.6	374.0	78.3
	Median	577.0	196.5	275.5	43.0
1/1/15–12/31/15 (n=43)	Mean	176.1	38.5	170.8	131.0
	Median	152.0	0.0*	87.0	63.0
1/1/16–12/31/16 (n=40)	Mean	90.0	23.7	104.3	79.9
	Median	84.5	21.0	92.0	67.5

\* Potential explanations for this value include a number of cases that were referred prior to IPE, and cases in which the referral happened on the same day as IPE.

#### 3.2 Business Relations

*The business database maintained by BAMs and job developers will increase in total contacts and work experiences offered to individual consumers.*

Several business development spreadsheets were provided to ICI on Nov 9, 2017, and the

following comments are based on these. The spreadsheets include information from five staff who presumably work for contracting CRPs. The BAM's list of businesses is the most comprehensive, with 100 entries. An additional 75 total contacts are listed on the spreadsheets for the CRPs.

Based on the BAM role, as well as the contributions of CRPs, it appears employment and PE opportunities have expanded in the business community based on the PE activities. It is not possible to quantify this, as there was no comparable business database in ME DVR prior to the PE startup. Early spreadsheets on business development, such as the one dated 1/21/16, have extensive information on business availability, business interests in offering specific types of work exposures, and follow-up contact information, sometimes to the client level. These levels of specificity were missing in subsequent spreadsheets, such as the one provided to ICI dated from 11/9/17.

## 4. IMPACT ON EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

### 4.1 Successful Rehabilitation Outcomes

***Transition consumers who participate in PE work experiences will achieve a higher percentage of successful rehabilitation outcomes compared with consumers who do not participate in PE over the same time period.***

Although there have been limited closures to date for youth in PE, the data suggest that this approach is promising for improving the rehabilitation rate for youth, as demonstrated in the following table. It is noted that 23 closures is sufficiently small, and there will likely be variation in the findings when more cases are included.

**Table 5. Type of case closure**

Type of Case Closure	Progressive Employment (N=23)	Non-Progressive Employment (N=3897)
1 Closed: applicant, before a determination of eligibility	0 (0%)	505 (13.0%)
2 Closed: applicant, after Extended Eval, before eligibility	0 (0%)	13 (0.3%)
3 Closed after an employment outcome	11 (47.8%)	682 (17.5%)
4 Closed after services initiated, no employment outcome	11 (47.8%)	1254 (32.2%)
5 Closed after eligibility, before services w/IPE initiated	0 (0%)	4 (0.1%)
7 Closed after eligibility, before IPE	1 (4.3%)	1439 (36.9%)

### 4.2 Rate of “Drop-out”

***Consumers who participate in PE will have a lower rate of early VR “drop-out” than a comparable cohort of consumers who did not participate in PE.***

As demonstrated by Table 5, there is substantial difference in the percentage of participants who are closed after eligibility but before IPE between PE and non-PE. The same caveat of a small sample size applies in this case as in the above hypothesis. The 36.9% rate for non-PE “closed after eligibility, before IPE” is close to the figures provided when we initially discussed replication of PE in ME DVR.

Based on information discussed during the monthly calls, we are assuming that all 110 PE cases listed in the spreadsheet were referred into PE post-IPE. If this is true, then we can assume that the finding that PE lowers dropout rates is worth consideration in spite of the small number of closed PE cases. More time and closed cases will be important as a future step in validating this impression.

### 4.3 PE Activity “Dosage”

*The total dosage (e.g., hours or days) of PE work experience will positively correlate with successful VR closure.*

Because there is so much individual variation in PE dosages, as well as days between referral and first PE activity, we will focus on the median values, as they will be a more appropriate measure. (See Table 6.) The median duration between referral and first PE activity is shortest for unsuccessfully closed cases. The duration for active cases is a cause for concern, as it seems the current PE service delivery approach may not be resulting in timely PE work exposures. With a small N of 23 closed cases, no additional inferences can be made at this time.

The great majority of PE work exposures are classified as low-dose, hence the “0” median for high-dose exposures in Table 6. The table indicates that successful youth have more than twice as many median low-dose exposures as unsuccessful youth. Similarly, “Total PE Activities Completed” has a higher median for successful than unsuccessful youth.

This table supports the hypothesis that success is related to total PE dosage. We do not have sufficient information at this time to do a more detailed analysis of how the nature and number of PE work exposures might correlate with successful rehabilitation.

**Table 6. Statistics on PE service delivery by case status**

	Active cases (N=87)	Successfully closed (N=11)	Unsuccessfully closed (N=12)
<b>Number of days between referral and first PE activity</b>			
Mean	71.26	32.27	48.75
Median	54	36	26.5
<b>Low-dose PE activities completed (less than 1 day)</b>			
Total	259	41	22
Mean	31	4	6
Median	2.98	3.73	1.83
<b>High-dose PE activities completed (more than 1 day)</b>			
Total	0.36	0.36	0.5
Mean	2	4	2
Median	0	0	0
<b>Total PE activities completed</b>			
Total	290	45	28
Mean	3.33	4.09	2.33
Median	2	4	2.5

*The dosage of case services provided to transition-age consumers will positively correlate with consumer retention and outcomes and contribute to the PETS requirement.*

This particular evaluation hypothesis morphed over time as a result of discussions between DVR and ICI. As stated, the hypothesis is composed of two parts. The first, that dosage will positively correlate with successful outcomes, has been supported by Table 6 above. The second, that PE will contribute to PETS requirements, has been discussed with DVR on at least a couple of phone calls.

The consensus between ME DVR leadership and ICI is that there is insufficient information at this time to analyze the impact of PE on Pre-Employment Transition Services activities. This is in part because

some additional data on Pre-ETS activities will be available in the near future. In a phone call within the last several months, agency leadership commented that a more complete picture will emerge on the role of PE in Pre-ETS within the next year.

Consequently, ICI is willing to assist ME DVR with this investigation at a later date, most likely within the rubric of completing an analysis for the PE follow-up study funded by a NIDILRR field-initiated grant that has just begun.

## 5. DVR AND CRP STAFF EXPERIENCES WITH PE

### Progressive Employment Evaluation Survey of DVR and Vendor / CRP Staff

The ICI and ME DVR implemented a web-based Progressive Employment Evaluation Survey of ME DVR staff and vendors / CRPs who are responsible for implementing the PE model. The purpose of the survey was to describe ME DVR and CRP staff use of PE and to gauge satisfaction with the model. Because ME DVR contracts with outside entities to deliver the majority of PE services to clients, additional questions were targeted at respondents who identified as a vendor/CRP.

The ICI project-wide survey instrument was reviewed by ME DVR's PE team, and questions were added and edited based on ME DVR recommendations. Participants were invited to complete the survey through an email with a link to the accessible web-based survey housed in Survey Monkey. ICI research staff managed the data collection and analysis. The survey was launched and data collection was completed in June–July 2017.

A total of 24 survey responses were collected in Maine. Thirteen respondents identified as DVR staff, and 11 as vendors / CRPs. The total number of respondents suggests that most staff directly involved with PE responded to the survey.

Of the ME DVR respondents, most were VR counselors, while two reported titles of business account manager or administrator / supervisor. Most vendor / CRP respondents were job placement or employment specialists, and one was a program manager. Respondents were asked to indicate the number of PE cases they were involved with by selecting a range option. Responses were distributed across the different ranges, indicating a diverse level of involvement in PE cases among respondents.

**Table 7. Number of PE cases**

	0–4 cases	5–10 cases	11–20 cases	20 or more cases	N/A / Don't know
State VR agency	5	0	4	3	1
Vendor / CRP	1	2	4	4	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>

### RESULTS FROM THE SURVEY OF DVR AND CRP STAFF USING PE

ME DVR staff and CRPs using PE were asked to consider referral to PE, and to select the top three characteristics that best describe job seekers who are a good fit for PE. The most frequently selected characteristic by both ME DVR staff and vendor/CRP respondents was “little to no work history” (total n=18). The other responses were distributed across characteristics, with little consensus between ME DVR staff and vendors/CRP respondents.

**Table 8. Characteristics of clients referred to PE**

Characteristic	VR agency	Vendor / CRP	Total
Little to no work history	10	8	18
Soft skills or behavioral issues	7	3	10
Client’s stated interest in obtaining work experience	3	6	9
“Stuck” case (no progress in some time)	6	2	8
Nature of the client’s disability (e.g., most significant disability)	4	3	7
Client’s geographic location	5	2	7
No set criteria: It depends on the client	2	3	5
Previous job failure	2	1	3
Other	2	0	2

The survey included a series of three questions about the utility of the PE model across different aspects of day-to-day work, including engagement with key stakeholders. We asked respondents to think about the usefulness of PE in daily work with job seekers, employers, and team members. Overall, the three major components of the PE model were reported to be very useful or somewhat useful by the majority of respondents (see Table 9).

**Table 9. Frequency of responses: Usefulness of PE model components in daily work**

	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not very useful	Not at all useful	N/A	Total N
Finding work exposures for jobseekers / clients	9	11	2	2	0	24
Meeting employer needs	8	11	0	3	0	22
Communicating within the VR team (e.g. through Jobsville or team meetings)	5	11	3	2	0	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	

Other – write in responses reported as “very useful” included:

- Engaging clients to participate in services
- Working with students’ employment-related supports as a team
- Getting client updates on a regular basis

One additional write-in response reported as “not at all useful” included:

- Not enough CRPs and lack of taking cases that seem extremely hard or out of geographical location

In a similar vein, responses related to the overall utility of the PE model for service delivery were positive. Nearly all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that PE is an important tool for VR, that PE has potential to improve outcomes, and that PE allows staff to be empowered as part of the PE team (see Table 10).

**Table 10. Frequency of responses: PE as a model for service delivery (N=22)**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
PE is an important tool for VR	10	7	3	2	0
I feel that PE has a lot of potential to improve outcomes	12	7	1	2	0
PE has allowed me to be more empowered and part of the PE team	6	9	4	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>

The survey also included statements related to respondents' understanding of the PE model and comparison to business as usual, as well as the potential difficulties in implementing the PE model. There was limited consensus across some of the questions, particularly with regard to the statement that "PE is more difficult because of funding issues." Table 11 shows the frequency of responses.

**Table 11. Frequency of responses: PE as a model for service delivery, continued**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A	Total N
I do not understand how PE differs from what we do on other cases	3	4	9	4	1	21
PE is pretty much business as usual with no real changes	3	1	16	2	0	22
PE is more difficult due to expectations regarding the intensity of contact with clients or employers	3	5	10	4	0	22
PE is more difficult because of funding issues	1	6	9	3	3	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	

See Appendix 2 for additional staff written comments.

## 6. DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS

### Synopsis of Findings Based on the Evaluation Questions

**Successful closures will increase.** Although there were only 23 PE closures during the evaluation period, the results thus far give a tantalizing and optimistic snapshot of the potential of this model for transition youth in ME DVR. The successful closure rate of PE transition youth was nearly 48%, whereas only 17.5% non-PE youth successfully closed. The vast majority of PE experiences were low-dose, meaning they were accomplished in less than one day. The youth in PE who were closed successfully tended to have more PE exposures than youth who did not have a successful closure.

**Lower early VR dropout.** One of the primary reasons for implementing PE with transition youth in ME DVR was an attempt to lower the early dropout rates, and the preliminary data suggest that this approach is very promising for that purpose. Only 4.3% of PE youth closed prior to IPE, whereas the rate was 36.9% for non-PE youth. Furthermore, the PE cohort seems to be more challenged to find employment, by the nature of the predominant primary disabilities as well as the higher enrollment in SSI compared with non-PE youth. It is unclear how the average one year younger age in the PE group differentially impacts outcomes, but it supports recent research findings that early engagement with youth leads to greater VR success. Again, these results are encouraging, but hardly definitive based on the small sample.

**Time from eligibility to first work exposure will decrease.** In 2015, the median was 693 days, and by 2016 this was down to 163.5 days. This is understandable, as the PE project did not become fully functional until later in 2015, so participants who had become eligible in 2014 were being introduced into this model. The time from eligibility to first work exposure shortened over the project, and then somewhat longer delays occurred. By 2017, the initiation of first work exposure to eligibility had lengthened. Discussions with ME DVR suggest that personnel changes in ME DVR as well as CRP agency capacities were believed to be the primary reasons for the slow-downs.

**Total dosage of PE will correlate with success.** Approximately 89% of 363 PE work exposures were classified as low-dose, as the experience lasted one day or less. The median work exposures for successfully closed youth was four, whereas median unsuccessful closures received 2.5 work exposures. The small number of closures to date makes this finding tenuous, but it is in the predicted direction. Another aspect of work exposures parallels data from VT ME DVR: it does not seem to take that many work exposures for the model to be successful for the majority of PE participants.

**Business contacts and the business database.** Throughout the duration of the project, contacts with new potential businesses appear to have increased. The latest spreadsheets shared with ICI indicate that each CRP is maintaining their own spreadsheet, and it seems to fall to the BAM to initiate new business contacts in many cases. Follow-up information on businesses was included in early spreadsheets, but not in the most recent copies. It is hoped that, as CRPs become more comfortable with sharing information, the business database will expand and become more useful for all staff involved.

## 7. ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the challenges identified in the Learning Collaborative (LC) is how to function as a coherent and unified team when the client/business contacts happen largely through CRP participation. (VT DVR is unique in this respect, as the primary CRP is co-located in VR offices.) As discussed as part of our LC activities, CRPs may not have some requisite skills or experience in working with businesses. Of the original DVR-contracted CRP organizations participating in PE, we have been informed that only one person is still in their job placement role. The turnover obviously has had a detrimental impact on the smooth operation of the model, and some comments from VR counselors in the PE staff survey seem to reflect their concerns and frustrations about this.

Staff support of PE might be considered within the “rule of thirds,” with approximately one third of VR and CRP respondents being less than enthusiastic about the benefits of the PE model, or perhaps not fully appreciating the value of the PE approach. One indication of this may be the percent of staff who seem to see PE as “business as usual.”

One issue identified in written comments was CRP competency in providing relevant and timely PE assistance, which goes hand in hand with reports of the high CRP attrition rate overall. That being said, the written comments by ME DVR staff and CRPs tended to be more positive in nature. The comments from VRCs also suggest that some VRCs do not fully understand or embrace the team sharing idea of why they are involved in staffing cases that are not on their own caseload. However, it is also clear from staff survey results that CRPs appreciate the team building and communication potential in the PE model and particularly the potential for better serving clients through Jobsville meetings.

With additional time and training, staff attitudes about PE should continue to improve, which was the trajectory described by personnel in VT DVR when the model was introduced there. The BAM is to be commended for going the extra mile in conducting personal orientations to PE for new CRP staff. Hopefully additional resources can be developed by ME DVR or ICI to assist her in this very important role.

As discussed in previous meetings, ME DVR is encouraged to continue working on shortening the time from IPE to first work exposure. In theory, the PE model espouses rapid engagement in work settings for participants as soon as possible. It seems that 2017 has been a particularly challenging year regarding timely provision of work exposures.

Based on the business development spreadsheets that were provided to ICI, there are some specific observations to consider:

- No dates of business contacts were provided in spreadsheets except those from one staff member (BAM).
- No follow-up contact information is charted for businesses on any spreadsheet.
- By anecdotal report, business information sharing is very limited among CRPs.
- A number of contacts listed by CRPs are related to big box stores or other businesses with likely existing agreements. This suggests the business contacts existed prior to the PE initiative. Although this is fine within the PE model, CRPs should be encouraged to develop new leads for better matches of client interests and business opportunities.
- Arrange for more training/contact with Hugh Bradshaw from VT DVR with both VRCs and CRPs to better appreciate and leverage the concept of business as customer.

One question that has arisen in the PE replication in ME DVR is “How much is enough?” in regard to PE dosages. Although the great majority of PE experiences are low-dose, some PE participants received a great many different exposures. Based on the information available, albeit a small sample, we see a trend that more exposure leads to a greater chance for successful closure. However, the relatively small median of four work exposures for successful closures is encouraging, as it seems to be a manageable resource.

In addition, the actual case costs for PE appear to be somewhat less than those for non-PE youth for both successful and unsuccessful closures. Table 12 provides case service cost data, with the caveat that comparing an N = 23 with N = 3897 may not adequately represent the reality of case service costs.

**Table 12. Case costs for closed PE and non-PE cases**

	Successful closure		Unsuccessful closure	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Non-PE youth (n=3897)	545.0	285.0	420.2	210.0
PE youth (n=23)	363.1	232.5	224.4	195.0

The PE model includes a data component where client-specific information is maintained for PE exposures as well as another database for business contacts. ME DVR has initiated both client-centered and business-centered databases, and they were used for this evaluation report. ME DVR is encouraged to continue refinement of the databases in order to maximize the ability to evaluate and plan future services based on the available information.

In particular, we recommend that feedback be solicited from CRPs regarding the information that is requested of them for PE. We also suggest that exploration of ways to share more client specific data between VRCs and CRPs be explored. Finally, being able to report on active cases as well as closed cases would greatly enhance the ability to conduct future evaluations. ICI is willing to explore these data-related issues with ME DVR.

Overall, the evaluation team has the distinct impression that ME DVR has created a strong initial implementation of PE in selected geographic areas. The experience and apparent longevity of ME DVR staff provide a solid foundation for positive growth and improved VR outcomes using the PE model. The overarching administrative policies of ME DVR are compatible with Vermont’s approach to provision of early work experiences for clients. It is very clear that ME DVR is committed to PE.

Finally, ME DVR is to be commended on their agency’s dedication to implement and modify PE to the specific characteristics of VR in Maine. The recent expansion of PE to more VR offices is another important step toward integration of this model for your clientele. We look forward to continuing the relationship and specifically the refinement of the PE model to better serve the ME DVR mission.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1. Additional Participant Information on PE

**Table 13. Demographic information on closed PE and non-PE transition youth**

	Progressive Employment (N=23)	Non-Progressive Employment (N=3897)
<b>DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION</b>		
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	16 (69.6%)	2389 (61.3%)
Female	7 (30.4%)	1508 (38.7%)
<b>Age at Application</b>		
Mean	17.83	18.7
Median	17	18
<b>Race</b>		
White	22 (95.7%)	3687 (94.6%)
Black	0 (0%)	148 (3.8%)
Native American	2 (8.7%)	85 (2.2%)
Asian	0 (0%)	27 (0.7%)
Hawaiian	0 (0%)	13 (0.3%)
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Hispanic	1 (4.3%)	66 (1.7%)
<b>Level of Education Attained at Application</b>		
Unknown	0 (0%)	1 (0%)
0 No formal schooling	0 (0%)	2 (0.1%)
1 Elementary education	0 (0%)	49 (1.3%)
2 Secondary education, no high school diploma	20 (87.0%)	2556 (65.6%)
3 Special education certificate of completion/attendance	2 (8.7%)	83 (2.1%)
4 High school graduate or equivalency certificate	1 (4.3%)	997 (25.6%)
5 Post-secondary education, no degree	0 (0%)	156 (4.0%)
6 Associate degree or vocational/technical certificate	0 (0%)	15 (0.4%)
7 Bachelor's degree	0 (0%)	22 (0.6%)
10 Vocational/technical certificate or license	0 (0%)	16 (0.4%)
<b>Primary Disability</b>		
1.00 Visual	0 (0%)	9 (0.3%)
2.00 Hearing	0 (0%)	81 (2.3%)
3.00 Orthopedic	0 (0%)	128 (3.6%)
4.00 Mental retardation	10 (43.5%)	705 (20.1%)
5.00 Substance abuse	0 (0%)	4 (0.1%)
6.00 Mental health	0 (0%)	816 (23.2%)
7.00 Learning disability	7 (30.4%)	1299 (37.0%)
8.00 Traumatic brain injury	0 (0%)	31 (0.9%)
9.00 Other	6 (26.1%)	440 (12.5%)
<b>Secondary Disability</b>		
1.00 Visual	0 (0%)	13 (0.3%)
2.00 Hearing	0 (0%)	22 (0.6%)
3.00 Orthopedic	1 (4.3%)	84 (2.2%)
4.00 Mental retardation	1 (4.3%)	167 (4.3%)
5.00 Substance abuse	0 (0%)	23 (0.6%)
6.00 Mental health	3 (13.0%)	878 (22.5%)
7.00 Learning disability	5 (21.7%)	623 (16.0%)
8.00 Traumatic brain injury	0 (0%)	9 (0.2%)
9.00 None or Other	13 (56.5%)	2078 (53.3%)
<b>SSDI Status at Application</b>		
Yes	2 (8.7%)	350 (9.0%)
No	21 (91.3%)	3547 (91.0%)
<b>SSI Status at Application</b>		
Yes	6 (26.1%)	713 (18.3%)
No	17 (73.9%)	3184 (81.7%)
<b>Corrections Involvement (if available)</b>		
Yes	0 (0%)	255 (6.5%)
No	23 (100%)	3642 (93.5%)

	Progressive Employment (N=23)	Non-Progressive Employment (N=3897)
<b>EMPLOYMENT AT APPLICATION</b>		
<b>Employment Status</b>		
1 Employment without supports in integrated setting	1 (4.3%)	377 (9.7%)
3 Self-employment (except Business Enterprise)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.0%)
5 Homemaker	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.0%)
6 Unpaid family worker	0 (0.0%)	3 (0.1%)
7 Employment with supports in integrated setting	0 (0.0%)	66 (1.7%)
8 Not employed: Student in secondary education	19 (82.6%)	1719 (44.1%)
9 Not employed: All other students	2 (8.7%)	527 (13.5%)
10 Not employed: Trainee, intern, or volunteer	0 (0.0%)	7 (0.2%)
11 Not employed: Other	1 (4.3%)	1196 (30.7%)
<b>Weekly Earnings</b>		
Mean	16.5	16.4
Median	0	0
<b>Hours Worked in a Week</b>		
Mean	1.7	1.95
Median	0	0

**Table 14. Total number of PE activities provided for PE cases**

Number of PE Activities	Number of Cases
1	27
2	31
3	12
4	17
5	8
6	6
7	3
8	1
9	1
10+	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>110</b>

## Appendix 2. Additional Comments on Staff Survey of PE

The final question of the survey provided an open text box for all respondents to write any additional comments about their experience using the PE model. In total, 15 respondents provided comments: 8 ME DVR staff and 7 vendors/CRPs. The open-ended responses included both positive comments and criticisms of the PE model.

### DVR STAFF

#### Use of PE model:

- *The concept of PE is terrific and results are good, I like that VR can offer more to student population i.e.; job shadows, tours and assessments.*
- *I find it liberating to be able to allow for youth without work experiences to have the opportunity to gain some of these while learning about the realities of the working world around them...*
- *When using the PE model- being clear with the individual's team that the focus initially is not to get a job - but to explore options and complete an assessment or 2 to get a better fit for job interests.*
- *I think the model as implemented in VT makes sense. My frustration has to do with the lack of real support/training for CRP's to share information and have dialog around what might be best for a client. This has happened a few times but it is mostly a report out. Part of this is that the facilitator is not skilled in how to bring about this change re sharing of information.*
- *I am not in an area covered by PE*
- *The concept is good but some aspects are very problematic. The lack of client choice which results in bad JD matches is the biggest problem. Some of the JDs that are part of the program are incompetent. VRCs do not like being forced to employ them against our better professional judgment. This causes a waste of time and money and causes frustration for clients, their families and school staff. Often, I have to start over at square one after a poor match is ended. Some clients drop out of VR altogether without finding employment.*

#### CRP referral and providing PE services:

- *It has been very hard to make recommendations and present clients only to have no CRP take on any of those clients due to geographical and transportation issues and locations. EXTREMELY DISHARTENING !!!!!!!*
- *Also a real frustration is the constant change in CRP's resulting in most folks not really understanding how the flow could work. I refer very few students due to the fact that CRP's don't cover 2 of the schools I work in.*
- *It is frustrating that the CRP agencies do not allow one ES to be designated primarily to PE. They are often made to carry a full caseload and/or job coach which impacts their ability to rapidly engage the client and keep them engaged. It also impacts their ability to come to Jobsville on a regular basis so we don't develop cohesion as a group. There is also a lot of turnover and no on-going training.*

### **Jobsville structure:**

- *Jobsville is repetitive-going over client updates only. This is useful but takes up VRC's time if their clients are not being discussed. There is little to no exchange among CRPs and CRPs/VRCs about how to collaborate, or brainstorming as a team about how to network with employers etc. It is just focused on client updates.*
- *VRCs and JDs both feel that the Jobsville meetings sometimes waste time. Group problem solving on difficult cases is useful, but we do not need to sit through referrals or client updates for clients not on our caseloads.*
- *The Jobsville meetings have not been as productive this past year as the year prior and at times feels like not the best use of time.*

### **Other:**

- *VRCs and JDs feel the PE coordinator in our office could be doing more employer outreach for employment opportunities. The job market here is excellent and she should be cultivating work sites for CBSA and employment, not just places to tour.*

## **VENDOR/CRP RESPONSES**

### **Use of PE model:**

- *The value is in the level of engagement the client, CRP and VRC have to reach a common goal. Jobsville meetings are also great for problem solving and working with fellow CRP's to help one another.*
- *I also found that when a client is ready to move from PE to job development, the transition can be painful. Voc rehab counselors are less patient and want a placement quickly. Once it's been determined that exploration is over. PE doesn't guarantee a placement will happen or happen within a few months once it's been determined we are looking for employment.*
- *Good model for starting the job process with high school students. I think it would be more effective to hold Jobsville once a month and holding all accountable to attending. Thanks!*
- *Very useful in our work with young adults.*
- *I have worked as a CRP for 8 years in the state of Maine and feel this was a much needed model. It has allowed for a better understanding by more explorations of the different fields of work and steps leading to the road to employment.*
- *I believe its intentions are great, but other agencies may not be fully grasping the concept. Involvement should be high and activities should done consistently. Family support is very low and I am in hopes that we create new ways to get them more involved and fully understand what to expect.*



### **Working with VR and providing PE services:**

- *The PE model where CRP agencies are contracted by VR have greater challenges than the Vermont model. Transportation is a systemic issue. The financial grant that was offered was very helpful to my agency in incentivizing me to take clients farther afield, and provide quality coaching.*
- *I found that I would have liked more feedback from counselors about the work that I did with clients. I [ ] their three-month meetings, set concrete IPE goals, clarify authorizations and future billing etc. I often felt that I was spending money, rather than providing experiences. The mindset to close cases is still strong within the Voc Rehab community.*
- *I am in favor of starting with clients at an early age. To be effective, I found that cooperation with school social workers and ed techs is very beneficial. The group tours and summer work experience are great ways to build relationships with students together with their school supports. By the time they are ready to graduate, they have a foundation with job developers. Development for transition students is “business as usual” where work with students while they are in school is very different without the expectation of placing right away, but preparing for permanent employment.*

### **Jobsville structure:**

- *Jobsville meetings are an important part of the PE model. Less time could be spent on delving out clients. Perhaps monthly, I would like to have more time spent on discussing marketing strategies for PE to engage employers in our model; more activities for providers and counselors to visit and present the PE model to employers; difficult cases and strategies; procedural complications i.e. Billing, paperwork, and solutions;*

### Appendix 3. Description of Progressive Employment Learning Collaborative

The Progressive Employment Learning Collaborative facilitates cross-state discussions and lessons learned about the replication of the PE model to study the impact on employment outcomes for people with disabilities in state VR agency settings. Learning Collaborative activities include regularly scheduled virtual meetings, the dissemination of knowledge and resources to all participating agencies, and the creation and application of multiple training resources informed by research and the field. The five participating state VR agencies are: Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Florida Division of Blind Services, Maine Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Oregon Commission for the Blind, and Nebraska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Each state has played an integral role in sharing lessons learned and observations about the PE model implementation according to their unique state experiences:

- **VT DVR** led many of the LC discussions. As a trainer in the first state to implement the model, Hugh Bradshaw in Vermont has helped other states think through solutions and strategies for multiple challenges related to job development, including using employment specialists and business account managers who focus attention on building relationships with local small businesses.
- **Nebraska VR** shared its unique perspective as the only LC participant that provides employment services directly. Its “Meet You Where You Are Model” has had great success, and the agency have been a great resource for states to brainstorm about marketing the success of the PE model for consumers and businesses.
- **ME DVR** shared its staffers’ experiences applying the PE model to transition-age youth consumers. As Maine relies on CRPs for job placement, they have contributed to the LC discussions with a focus on CRP business outreach and involvement that leads to better employment outcomes and experiences for their youth with disabilities in Lewiston and Portland (later expansion to Bangor and Augusta).
- **Oregon CFB** shared their experiences as a blind agency implementing PE. They shared challenges and successes as the main VR office in Portland piloted PE for blind and low-vision transition-age youth consumers who have barriers to maintaining employment.
- **Florida DBS** shared their experiences as a few of their field offices piloted PE. Their approach of applying the model to engage consumers who have been receiving VR for two years or more without recent progress had some challenges and small successes that were shared with the LC participants.

The LC also featured Monthly Job Development Virtual Conferences hosted by the ICI in partnership with Vermont DVR. The virtual conferences were about topics specific to those who directly interact with businesses at participating VR agencies. The virtual conferences covered an array of topics, such as:

- How to help PE consumers through application processes
- Nebraska VR’s progressive employment marketing strategies
- How to help PE consumers overcome criminal background checks
- PE business relations with “Big Box” stores