



a project of

Explore VR

Informing Research, Policy, and Practice

Progressive Employment in Oregon: 2017 At a Glance

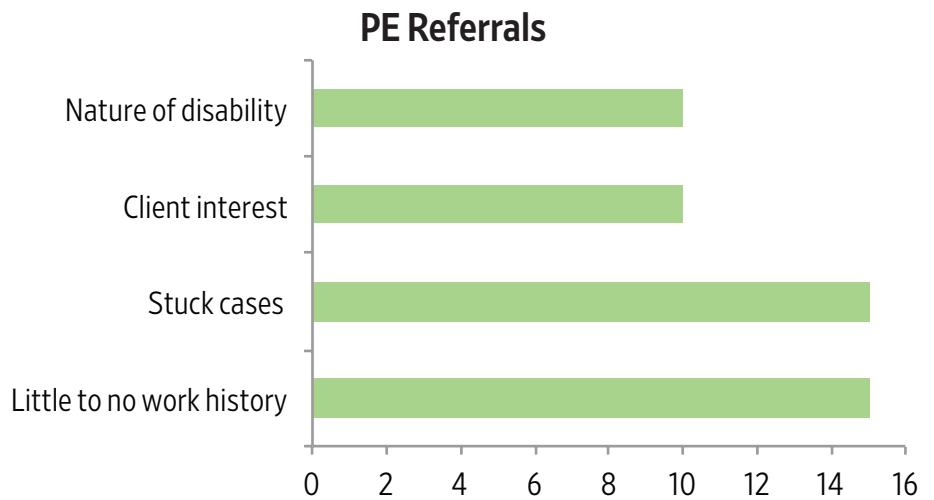
About Oregon Commission for the Blind

The Oregon Commission for the Blind (OCB) provides services to citizens who experience vision loss and need specialized training and support to live full and productive lives. OCB has between 80-100 successful VR closures per year, which indicates that the agency is small by state-wide standards. At the beginning of the Progressive Employment (PE) replication, they reportedly had 9.5 FTE VR Counselors.

OCB Progressive Employment

There are low rates of labor force participation for Oregonians who are blind or have serious difficulty seeing. OCB uses the PE model as a strategy to increase the percent of consumers who close with competitive employment and better utilize employer-based trial work options as ladders to employment. OCB targets consumers for PE that are:

- On caseloads for two years or more without recent activity or progress;
- Nearing completion of skills training without a clear idea of intended work;
- Out of workforce for an extended period of time; and/or
- Students looking to gain work experiences.



The majority of PE clients were served by the Portland office (76.1%), with the Medford, Central Oregon, Eugene, and Salem offices each serving less than ten PE clients. When asked about referral to PE, respondents identified the top characteristics for jobseekers that are a good fit for PE as follows:

- 1) Little to no work history (n=15),
- 2) "Stuck cases" (no progress for some time) (n=15),
- 3) Client's stated interest in obtaining work experience (n=10), and
- 4) Nature of client's disability (n=10).

OCB Implementation Strategies

Business Account Managers (BAMs): OCB has two Business Account Managers with roles of engaging new businesses and troubleshooting and assisting with specific consumer work experience placements. They also serve as primary liaisons with CRPs engaged in PE.

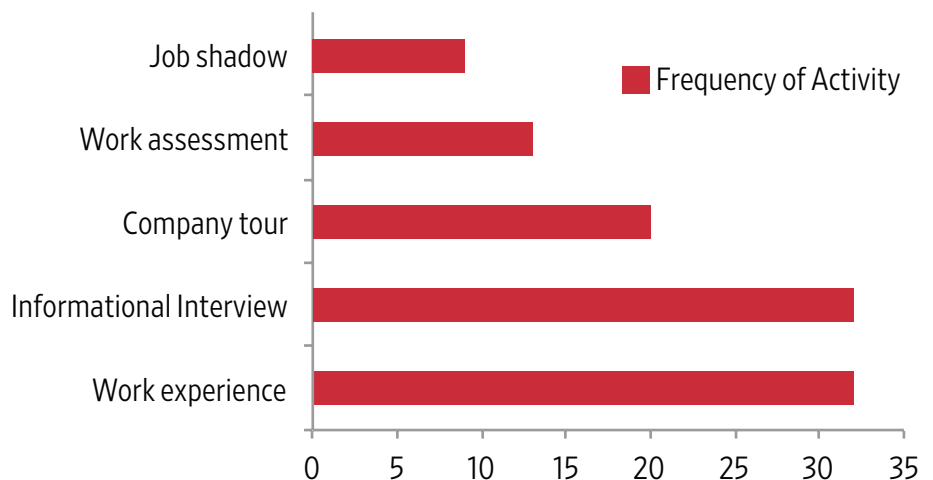
- **Dual-Customer Approach:** VRCs and CRPs receive more accurate and useful information on consumer performance and rehabilitation needs from employers due to new approach in employer relations.
- **Jobsville Meetings:** OCB hosts structured weekly meetings with all VRCs, job placement and CRP staff, and BAMs. Selected CRPs assist cases and perform job placement duties.
- **Funding & Liability:** OCB is able to cover funding for most PE cases through a foundation as the employer of record. Risk management is overseen by an Oregon state office.

OCB PE Consumer Experiences

OCB has recorded 55 PE cases. The agency is providing and recording a variety of PE activities for clients, with more than half of clients receiving work experiences (n=32) or informational interviews (n=32). Less than half of the PE clients received a company tour (n=20), work assessment (13), or job shadow experience (n=9).

- A total of 19 PE cases were closed with employment outcomes during the evaluation period, and during the same period only 4 were closed unsuccessfully.
- Eight of the 19 successful closures were coded as “employment without supports in integrated setting”, and 10 were recorded with supported employment (2 of the 10 were “short term” supported employment).
- Approximately 25% of the agency clientele are transition youth, so there is likely much potential for using PE for Pre-ETS as well as for VR clients.
- OCB VRC and CRP staff rate the model as improving working relationships, and a number of successful VR closures have occurred for clients enrolled in PE.

PE Experiences: Total Number of Services Provided



This 2017 data and research 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 full working papers and other products associated with this study are housed on ExploreVR.