Examining the state of practice in RT/AT service delivery

Despite national legislative initiatives promoting research and development, financing, and service delivery, people with diverse disabilities still experience a critical gap in awareness and acquisition of suitable technology products. Significant barriers to the effective use of rehabilitation and assistive technology (RT/AT) service delivery has been the subject of considerable speculation, but has not been well researched. While existing data systems such as the RSA 911 show that individuals with disabilities who receive RT/AT devices as part of their individual plan for employment are more likely to achieve employment outcomes, there is a lack of scientifically rigorous research on which specific elements of RT service delivery achieve improved employment outcomes in line with efficient management of costs, and why. The NIDRR funded Center on Effective Rehabilitation Technology (CERT) aims to close this knowledge gap by identifying service delivery policies, procedures, and practices that result in the effective delivery of RT to assist individuals with disabilities to achieve employment.

To assess and establish the current state-of-practice in RT service delivery, CERT is conducting a baseline survey of vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies (including RT Support Units), State AT programs, and Centers for Independent Living (CILs). Data from the survey will:

- Establish a baseline of current practice (services, systems, policies, practices, and outcomes as well as barriers and facilitators) throughout the country,
- Identify the important aspects of service delivery for detailed assessment & analysis in the next four years of funding,
- Assist in the ongoing development of a quality indicators framework (including system supports, decision-making process, information management, quality assurance, and funding) to evaluate RT/AT service delivery programs.

The survey will be conducted again during the fifth year of implementation to track any changes that occurred over time and re-establish the current practice throughout the country.

This presentation provides an overview of CERT and its research activities. The presenters discuss the development and structure of the survey instrument, describe data collection and analysis methods, and present preliminary findings. Presenters also describe the development of the quality indicators framework to assess the effectiveness of RT/AT service delivery, share the core categories being included in the framework, and request audience feedback on the relevance and importance of each quality indicator category.