

Abstract: Center on Effective Delivery of Rehabilitation Technology by
Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies

The Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) at Syracuse University and the Institute for Matching Person and Technology (IMPT), in collaboration with the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), RESNA, and the National Council for Independent Living (NCIL) propose to serve as the Center on the Effective Delivery of Rehabilitation Technology (RT) to Improve Employment Outcomes for Persons with Significant Disabilities.

The Center's multidisciplinary research team will evaluate selected model employment and training programs to identify policies, procedures, and practices that result in the effective delivery of RT to assist individuals with significant disabilities to achieve employment. With input from Directors of State VR RT support units, State AT projects, Centers for Independent Living, and a Blue Ribbon Advisory Panel, methods and criteria will be developed and refined to frame quality indicators of effective RT service delivery. RSA data will inform the proposed selection of model programs to be reviewed and finally approved by NIDRR.

The Center, through quantitative and qualitative research methods, will identify and document indicators of effective RT service delivery. Effectiveness will be defined by quality indicators incorporating variables of structure, policy, decision making processes and costs related to outcomes and counselor and consumer satisfaction. The Center will also analyze supports necessary for effective RT delivery, including counselor education, assessment tools and measures, information management, consumer education, quality assurance mechanisms, and public and private sector relationships. Selection and analysis of "effective RT service delivery models" will take into account variances related to urban versus rural areas, different types of disabilities, and programs administered within and outside State VR agencies. The Center's research team will conduct in-depth evaluation of six State VR programs and six outside programs.

Research findings compared and contrasted across the 12 selected programs will result in a series of case studies, a new empirical framework for defining "effective delivery of RT services," and a multivariate database of factors affecting the success of RT in the workplace. This first research study will be complemented by a second project to identify, test and develop strategies to support VR counselors making informed decisions in concert with individuals with disabilities to select the most appropriate RT specific to employment objectives.

This project will result in a new validated instrument and system of measurement to improve RT service delivery and reduce RT non-use and poor employment outcomes. The tool will be accompanied by an interactive training program for VR counselors to build knowledge of RT solutions and an improved assessment process, including a set of exemplars, tools and guidance that VR agencies and other programs can use to improve RT service delivery. A comprehensive dissemination plan will accelerate knowledge translation into practical use, focusing on 12 target audiences: State VR leaders, VR counselors, VR AT/RT lead staff, AT staff, rehab graduate programs, employers, employment service providers, school transition coordinators, AT/RT service delivery programs, AT suppliers and manufacturers, and persons with disabilities and family members. The Center will coordinate knowledge dissemination with other relevant programs.

Expected outcomes include: new knowledge among target audiences of the systemic supports needed for effective RT service delivery; changes at state and local levels through replication of effective practices; and use of new methods to collect and analyze data on the impact of RT on employment outcomes.