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ABSTRACT

Surveyed were 81 vocational rehabilitation directors of general agencies and agencies for the blind concerning the nature of post-employment services for the handicapped. Questionnaires on the extent, basis, and monitoring systems of post-employment services were completed by 82 percent of the Ss. Analysis of the data indicated such findings as 87 percent of the general agencies and 95 percent of the agencies for the blind provided the services; most client contacts were made personally or by phone; and state guidelines received from most of the agencies did not delineate specific criteria for post-employment services. (A sample questionnaire including needs assessment and record of post-employment services is provided.) (CL)

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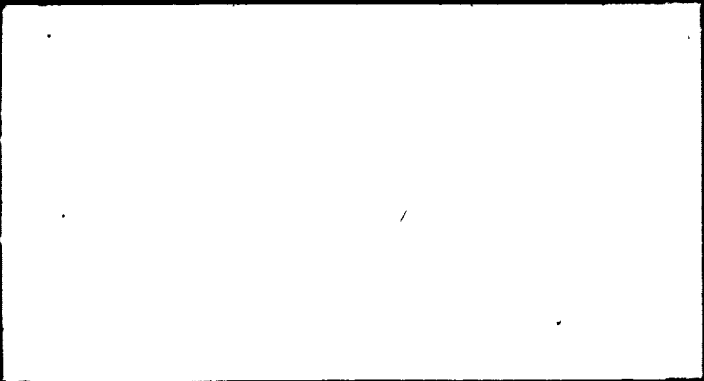
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WORKING PAPER NO. 82

The Evaluation of Post-Employment Services
Provided by Rehabilitation Agencies

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March 31, 1975

This report was developed in collaboration with Region X Program
Evaluation Task Force.

THE EVALUATION OF POST-EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROVIDED BY REHABILITATION AGENCIES

Program Evaluation Standards

In July, 1974, nine standards were published for evaluating programs and projects under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (P.L. 93-112). The purpose of the standards was to determine the "effectiveness" of rehabilitation programs in achieving the stated goals of the legislation. The Social and Rehabilitative Service was given responsibility for program evaluation by the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare.

The published standards, 45 CFR Part 410, did not offer precise criteria against which a state agency might be evaluated. In fact, one purpose of the standards was to "establish criteria for the evaluation of program effectiveness." Essentially, the standards provided objectives for the Vocational Rehabilitation program and descriptions of certain data that might be collected by an agency to evaluate its achievement of those objectives.

The response to the standards throughout the rehabilitation system was mixed. On one hand, virtually all of the people involved in vocational rehabilitation agree that updated standards and criteria for evaluation must be developed in order to determine agency compliance with the goals and objectives of the new legislation. On the other hand, the Rehabilitation Services Administration, CSAVR, and state agency personnel have insisted that all levels of the system should participate in the development of standards and criteria.

Some serious questions have been raised concerning the appropriateness of the published standards for evaluating the goals and accomplishments of rehabilitation programs. Until these philosophical issues are resolved, there is little enthusiasm from state agencies to provide data that might be used to compare programs and determine funding according to the published "standards."

In October, 1974, central office staff of RSA sponsored a national conference on program evaluation in Memphis, Tennessee. The purpose of this conference was two-fold: 1) to provide rehabilitation personnel with increased understanding of the nine program evaluation standards contained in the 1973 Vocational Rehabilitation Amendments; and 2) to lay a foundation for further clarification and development of each of the nine standards.

In order to accomplish this second task, regional teams throughout the country were assigned the task of designing and implementing studies which address each of the nine standards. The results of these studies will be presented and discussed at a second national conference that is

scheduled during April, 1975, in New Orleans. One outcome of this meeting, hopefully, will be to provide RSA with recommendations for revisions of the nine standards. CSAVR is taking a primary role in developing these recommendations. Region X has been assigned the task of addressing Standard Number Seven which deals with the provision of post-employment services.

Historical Development of Post-Employment Services

The 1968 amendments to the Vocational Rehabilitation Act (P.L. 90-391) and Senate Report No. 93-318 identified follow-up services and follow-along services for the purpose of helping a rehabilitated client maintain employment. Follow-up and follow-along differed primarily in the length of time after closure that services could be provided. The current concept of post-employment services, having the same purpose as follow-up and follow-along, embraces those services and all others that may be needed after a successful closure to sustain rehabilitation benefits.

The provision of post-employment services is being particularly stressed now that vocational rehabilitation agencies are directing more of their services to the severely disabled. Congress has expressed interest in the severely handicapped population over the last several years. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 put into law the intent to serve "first those with the most severe handicaps..." (P.L. 93-112, Sec. 2.(1)). The Rehabilitation Services Administration, in its Revised Draft Manual Chapter on Post-Employment Services, quotes Report No. 92-928 of the House of Representatives as follows:

The Committee holds that severely disabled persons should be given the maximum opportunity to maintain gainful employment,...It does not seem right to bring a severely disabled person to the point of employment and then cut him off from services that enabled him to progress that far.

Within this framework it is understandable that mechanisms for supportive services after a successful closure are being given greater attention by the Federal agencies.

Legislative References and Definition of Post-Employment Services

Public Law 93-112, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 103 (a) and (b) state that:

Vocational rehabilitation services provided under this act are any goods or services necessary to render a handicapped individual employable including but not limited to the following: ...

counseling, guidance, referral, and placement services for handicapped individuals, including follow-up, follow-along, and other post-employment services necessary to assist such individuals to maintain their employment and services designed to help handicapped individuals secure needed services from other agencies, where such services are not available under this act;...

Neither the Act nor the Federal Register offer further definition of post-employment services.

The Rehabilitative Services Administration has drafted a manual chapter on Post-Employment Services. The purpose of the chapter is to translate the congressional intent into a practical service delivery model, defining terms, suggesting criteria, offering guidelines for service delivery parameters, and delineating agency responsibilities. In this document, post-employment services are defined as "services [which] are provided after clients have been determined to be rehabilitated to assist those in need of such services to maintain themselves in employment." (Sec. 1543.02 Revised Draft Manual Chapter on Post-Employment Services, January 10, 1975). The concept of post-employment services now utilized by RSA is inclusive of follow-up and follow-along. Moreover, any vocational rehabilitation service available to a client prior to closure may also be provided after a successful closure under the scope of post-employment services. In this sense, "post-employment services" is more appropriately described as a client status within which a variety of services may be provided as needed to maintain employment.

The Standards for Evaluating Programs and Projects, Interim Regulations (45 CFR Part 410, July 2, 1974), promulgated by the Secretary of HEW as developed by Social and Rehabilitation Services, make reference to post-employment services as follows:

Standard No. 7. To insure that the need for "post-employment" (Section 103 (a) and (b), P.L. 93-112) services is satisfied.

According to 45 CFR Part 410, each of the nine standards is designed to identify and measure the impact and effectiveness of service delivery. To accomplish this, relevant data must be collected, analyzed, and interpreted.

Most services which are provided to rehabilitation clients occur before closure and, consequently, are monitored in the current management information systems. Services provided after closure are not so monitored. Summative data on the provision of post-employment services can be derived only from the current fiscal accounting system. As it becomes more important to provide

post-employment services to rehabilitated clients, it will be important to establish a method of monitoring client data related to that facet of the rehabilitation program. Unless such a system is developed, it will not be possible to implement meaningfully a standard of performance.

There has been significant discussion among state agency directors in Region X around the issue of whether or not the evaluation of post-employment services should be reflected in a separate standard. Post-employment service is only one of several statuses in which clients receive services. In this sense, post-employment service has the same importance to the rehabilitation process as do Extended Evaluation (06) and the In-Service Statuses (14, 16, and 18). These other statuses are not singled out to be scrutinized separately under the Federal Standards for Evaluating Programs and Projects, and it may be inconsistent that post-employment services should be addressed in this way.

Survey of Current Practices

While the provision of post-employment services is neither new nor incidental to the vocational rehabilitation program, it is, as mentioned in the previous section, poorly monitored. Consequently, little is known about the policies and practices of state agencies regarding this service. The Region X Program Evaluation Task Force decided to begin its study of Standard Seven with a survey of all state agencies. The Task Force wanted to find out the extent to which post-employment services are being provided, the basis on which they are provided, and how the provision of services is monitored. A brief questionnaire was developed by the Research and Training Center at the University of Oregon with the assistance of the Task Force and the state directors in Region X. The instrument was mailed to the director of each general agency and agency for the blind. Responses were received from 67 of the 81 questionnaire recipients, yielding an 82% return.

The first questionnaire item indicated the extent to which post-employment services are provided by vocational rehabilitation agencies. As shown in Table 1, below, 87% of the general agencies and 95% of the blind agencies said that they do provide post-employment services.

Table 1
Agencies Currently Providing Post-Employment Services

	General Agencies		Agencies for the Blind		Total N
	N	%	N	%	
Yes	39	87	21	95	60
No	6	13	1	5	7
Total	45	100	22	100	67

The agencies were also asked to estimate the percent of clients closed in status (26) who received post-employment services during the preceding 12 months. Table 2 shows the distribution of responses which ranged from "less than 1%" to "30%." The figures can only be accepted as rough estimates, since the agencies were not asked to provide verified data. The table suggests that agencies for the blind tend to provide post-employment services to more clients than do the general agencies.

Table 2
Percentage of Closures (26)
Receiving Post-Employment Services Last Year

Percent Receiving Services	General Agencies		Agencies for Blind	
	N	%	N	%
n/a*	12	31	4	19
0-3%	14	36	4	19
5-10%	9	23	7	33
11-30%	4	10	6	29
Total	39	100	21	100

* not available; i.e., no estimate was provided.

An attempt was made to determine the basis for providing services after closure, and to specify the procedures used to identify clients who might need such services. The agencies were asked if they screened all closed (26) clients or, if not, what criteria they used to select clients for follow-up contact. Of those agencies responding, four general agencies and one agency for the blind said that they screen all closed (26) clients for follow-up. The remaining agencies indicated that client initiative and counselor judgment are the most frequently used criteria for client follow-up. Table 3 shows the distribution of these responses.

Table 3
Basis for Initial Contact After Closure

Basis for Contact	General Agencies		Blind	
	N*	%	N*	%
All (26) Closures	4	10	1	5
Nature of disability	6	15	1	5
Severity of disability	5	13	3	14
Counselor's judgment	25	64	15	71
Client initiative	32	82	17	81
Other	5	13	5	24

*For general agencies, total N = 39; for blind agencies, total N = 21.

The general agencies indicated that most of their post-employment contacts come through field offices rather than central offices. Agencies for the blind tended to contact somewhat more of their clients through central offices. This may be due entirely to the fact that, in some states, the agency for the blind has only a central office.

Table 4
Source of Initial Contact

Percent of Initial Contacts	Central Office				Field Office			
	General		Blind		General		Blind	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No response	3	8	3	14	3	8	3	14
0-25%	31	79	12	57	3	8	4	19
26-50%	2	5	1	5	0	0	1	5
51-75%	0	0	1	5	2	5	1	5
76-100%	3	8	4	19	31	79	12	57
Total	39	100	21	100	39	100	21	100

Telephone calls, personal interviews, and mail inquiries were all used as methods for contacting clients in order to ascertain their need for post-employment services. Most agencies tended to make more of their contacts personally or by phone than by mail. Tables 5 and 6 summarize these results.

Table 5
Methods of Initial Contact (General Agencies)

Percent of Initial Contacts	Telephone		Mail		Personal	
	N	%	N	%	n	%
0-25%	26	67	33	85	16	41
26-50%	10	26	5	13	6	15
51-75%	1	2	0	0	8	21
76-100%	2	5	1	2	9	23
Total	39	100	39	100	39	100

Table 6

Methods of Initial Contact (Agencies for Blind)

Percent of Initial Contacts	Telephone		Mail		Personal	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
0-25%	13	62	20	95	9	43
26-50%	3	14	1	5	3	14
51-75%	4	19	0	0	4	19
76-100%	1	5	0	0	5	24
Total	21	100	21	100	21	100

In many instances, as Table 7 shows, a second follow-up inquiry was made if the first contact revealed no need for post-employment services. The conditions which cause an agency to make additional inquiries include employer request, counselor interest, severity of disability, nature of disability, and client initiative.

Table 7

Agencies Making Subsequent Inquiries

	General Agencies		Blind	
	N	%	N	%
Yes	17	44	14	67
No	20	51	5	24
No response	2	5	2	9
Total	39	100	21	100

Most agencies find occasion to provide post-employment services to clients who have lost their jobs, so long as the reasons for job loss do not indicate a need to reopen the case. Table 8 summarizes this information.

Table 8
Agencies Providing Post-Employment Services
After Loss of Job

	General Agencies		Blind	
	N	%	N	%
Yes	33	85	14	67
No	5	13	6	28
No response	1	2	1	5
Total	39	100	21	100

According to federal regulations, vocational rehabilitation agencies may provide, as post-employment services, any service which is available to the client in an active status, with the exception of medical treatment for an acute condition. Table 9 shows the services which are rarely provided as post-employment services. The results indicate that placement and counseling are the services most frequently provided by general agencies, whereas counseling and restoration seem to be the most frequently utilized services in agencies for the blind. The greatest disparity between two types of agencies in both rank and percent is in the utilization of placement services. Only 15% of the general agencies said that placement was rarely provided compared to 52% of the blind agencies. The disparity may be due in part to the policy differences reflected in Table 8, which show that a higher proportion of general agencies than blind agencies will provide post-employment services to a client who has lost a job instead of reopening the case. As Table 9 shows, Services to Family Members ranks low for both types of agency and Counseling is ranked high by both. The percent of responses to these two items is comparable for both general and blind agencies.

Table 9
 Services Rarely Provided As A
 Post-Employment Service

	Rank	General		Blind		
		Number	%	Rank	Number	%
Placement	1	6	25	8.5	11	52
Counseling and guidance	2	7	18	1.5	6	28
Restoration	3	10	25	1.5	6	28
Prosthetics (new or repair)	4	11	28	5.00	8	38
Transportation	5	12	31	3.5	7	33
Licenses, tools, initial stocks	6	14	36	6.5	10	48
Maintenance	7	15	38	8.5	11	52
Diagnosis	8	16	41	3.5	7	33
Training	9	17	44	6.5	10	48
Services to family members	10	23	59	10.0	12	57

Agencies were asked to indicate whether or not they currently have guidelines pertaining to the delivery of post-employment services. Table 10 shows that 72% of the general agencies and 33% of the blind agencies have such guidelines. Except for three of the general agencies, those guidelines also include criteria for reopening a case. Other agencies are in the process of developing new guidelines or revising existing ones.

Table 10

Availability of Guidelines Pertaining
to Post-Employment Services

	General		Blind	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
For provision of Post-Employment Services				
Currently available	28 (72%)	11 (28%)	7 (33%)	14 (67%)
In process or being revised	25 (64%)	14 (36%)	9 (43%)	12 (57%)
For reopening a case	25 (64%)	14 (36%)	7 (33%)	14 (67%)

Twenty-nine respondents sent copies of state guidelines for delivery of post-employment services. Twenty-three of these were from general agencies and six were from agencies for the blind. The guidelines, variously referred to as Follow-up Service, Placement-Retention Services, Post Closure Expenditures, Extended Services, and Services after Closure, were as brief as one-half page or as long as five. They showed broad variation in specificity of definitions, criteria, and standards.

While the guidelines utilize, for the most part, the RSA Program Regulation Guide (RSA-PRG-72-2), Chapter 21, Section 2, "Standards for Followup Services" published February 7, 1972, many variations appeared. In some cases they seemed to limit the intent of the RSA Guide. For example, one regulation found in several guidelines stated that post-employment services should not be provided later than six months after closure, whereas the RSA guide suggests that services may be provided as long as 12 months after closure.

The RSA Manual suggested that the State Plan reflect the criteria for selecting closed (26) clients who would receive follow-up and post-employment services. The state guidelines received from most of the agencies did not delineate such criteria beyond stating that clients must be closed rehabilitated (status 26) and that the presenting problem would, if not ameliorated, cause breakdown or loss of employment. A few states suggested follow-up for all cases closed under sheltered conditions. For the most part, however, the screening practices adopted by agencies (Table 3, above) have not been incorporated into their regulations.

The RSA Manual also suggests that all types of vocational rehabilitation services for individuals may be allowed as Followup Services. Most of the state guidelines include a statement to the same effect. Several states make no reference to scope of services which can be provided, and a few states seem to limit unnecessarily the scope of services available.

The agencies were asked if they have a mechanism for giving counselors "credit" for the provision of post-employment services. Only two of the responding agencies said yes. In one case the "credit" is provided by entering a service report in the client file. This process is incorporated by many other agencies but not necessarily seen as a "credit" system for the counselor. The second state incorporates the provision of post-employment services in its data management system and consequently has precise information by which to "credit" and evaluate counselors.

When asked if they encourage staff to provide post-employment services, 79% of the general agencies and 67% of the agencies for the blind said yes. This philosophical affirmation of the importance of post-employment services may be somewhat inconsistent with a system in which the counselors are not specifically required to document their provision of these services.

The inclusion of post-employment services in the state agency data management system is essential if the provision of these services is to be evaluated in a systematic way. If the survey response is accurate, only one state (Texas) has a mechanism for including post-employment services in its client data system. That state has developed a brief reporting form to be completed by the counselor which meshes with client data already on record. The information is available to be used in a variety of ways for evaluation purposes. Modifications of this system will be discussed next in the context of recommendations for future directions.

Recommendations

Post-employment services represent only one status within the total rehabilitation process. The procedures required to evaluate this component carefully can only be accomplished with a substantial commitment of time and money. Such a commitment may not be warranted unless other statuses are evaluated with similar depth and care.

The foundation required to facilitate the evaluation of post-employment services is the development and implementation of a client-based data system. Without such a system, it is meaningless to propose a standard and related data elements against which to measure the effectiveness of the various agencies.

The cornerstone of a well functioning data system is the reporting mechanism through which data are generated. It is important that the reporting mechanism require very little of a counselor's time. Reporting forms should be easy to use, and they should mesh with the existing data system.

Current RSA forms were examined in order to determine if data being collected now could provide information about post-employment services. The RSA-2 form provides for an annual accounting of service expenditures, but not on an individual client basis. The RSA-300 form provides a record of services rendered to clients on an individual basis, but it allows for recording services only to clients in the active caseload prior to closure.

One example of a useful reporting system was provided by the general agency in Texas. This agency has developed a client reporting form for post-employment services which is brief, relevant, and incorporated into their existing data management system. The form at the end of this report is offered as a modification of the Texas product. Utilizing any data reporting mechanism that is convenient to a given agency, this single page of information can provide sufficient data for the comprehensive evaluation of post-employment services.

The individual client form is divided into four sections reflecting identification data, needs assessment, services rendered, and outcomes of service. Some of this information can be immediately translated into proposed standards of agency performance. Most of the derivable data elements, however, do not contain inherent value. Any statistics that are presented for such data elements must therefore be regarded as descriptive rather than prescriptive. The development of truly normative standards (data elements) will be possible only after the completion and careful interpretation of extensive research over a moderate period of time.

Given these limitations on interpretation, a number of data elements can be proposed for presenting information that will enhance our understanding of the role played by post-employment services within rehabilitation agencies. Each proposed data element is identified further as value-laden or value-neutral. In those few instances where value can be attached, the preferred direction is also indicated.

Needs Assessment

1. Agency Criteria For Reviewing Closed (26) Clients (Value-laden)

(Best) all (26) closures

_____ selected sample

a. counselor judgment

b. nature or severity of disability

_____ client initiative only

_____ random sample

(worst) no established procedures for review

2. Reviewing Methods: Percent of clients in each category. (Value-laden)

(best) personal contact (phone or face-to-face)

(worst) mail contact

3. Time Between Closure and Initial Review: Percent of clients in each category. (Value-Neutral)

_____ 0-3 months

_____ 4-6 months

_____ 7-9 months

_____ 10-12 months

_____ 13+ months

4. Disposition of Review Contact: Number and Percent of Reviewed Clients Receiving Service (Value-Neutral)

	A. Number <u>Reviewed</u>	B. Number Receiving <u>Service</u>	Percent Receiving <u>Service (B ÷ A)</u>
Severely Disabled	_____	_____	_____
Not Severely Disabled	_____	_____	_____

5. Employment Status at Time of Review of Clients Requiring Post-Employment Services: Percent of clients in each category (value-neutral)

____ Employed

____ Unemployed

6. Problems Requiring Service: Percent of clients in each category (Value-Neutral)

____ difficulty getting to the job

____ poor social interactions on the job

____ new skills needed to retain the job

____ opportunity for upgrading the job

____ family and/or personal problems

____ chronic health problems

____ poor economic conditions

____ other

Services Rendered

7. Specific Services: Percent of Clients in each category (value-neutral)

____ counseling and guidance

____ transportation

____ diagnosis and evaluation

____ services to family

____ restoration

____ licenses, tools, supplies

____ placement

____ training

____ maintenance

____ other

8. Time Between Post-closure Review and Initiation of Post-Employment Services: Percent of clients in each category (value-neutral)

____ 0-3 months

____ 4-6 months

____ 7-9 months

____ 10-12 months

____ 13+ months

Service Outcomes

9. Time Between Initiation and Completion of Post-Employment Services:
Percent of clients in each category (value-neutral)

- 0-3 months
- 4-6 months
- 7-9 months
- 10-12 months
- 13+ months

10. Client Disposition: Percent of clients in each category (value-laden)

- (good) retained same job
- (good) obtained different job
- (bad) not employed
- (neutral) case reopened

Summary and Discussion

The data elements just presented can only be construed as a preliminary effort aimed at describing post-employment services and evaluating their impact upon clients. In order to achieve even this minimal effort, the data generated on post-employment services must be collected on an individual client basis and incorporated into the agency's management information system. Fortunately, a relatively simple one page form seems to be possible for generating the needed information.

In order to utilize such information for the ultimate purpose of suggesting performance standards, many additional questions will need to be asked of the data being generated. Do different types of disabled people tend to develop different types of post-closure problems? Do certain post-employment services tend to be needed more frequently than others? Which combination of services tends to produce the more favorable outcomes? Which post-closure problems are least likely to result in favorable outcomes? Only as we find answers to these and similar questions will we be able to suggest appropriate standards of agency performance, and unless we are willing to allocate resources (dollars!) for the implementation of such research, we will never find answers to these important questions.

RECORD OF POST-EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Supervisor: _____

Client Name: _____

Counselor: _____

Client Number _____

Office: _____

Disability Code (Status 10): _____

Date of (26) Closure: _____

_____ Severe _____ Not Severe

Date of Initial Contact: _____

Conditions Warranting Service:

Method of Contact

_____ Difficulty Getting To The Job

_____ Personal

_____ Poor Social Interactions on Job

_____ Mail

_____ New Skills Needed to Retain Job

Status At Time of Contact:

_____ Opportunity for Upgrading Employment

_____ Employed

_____ Family And/Or Personal Problems

DOT Classification _____

_____ Chronic Health Problems

Current Earnings _____

_____ Poor Economic Conditions

_____ Unemployed

_____ Other (specify): _____

Disposition: _____ Services Required

_____ Services Not Required

Type of Service Provided:

Date of Service Initiation: _____

_____ Guidance and Counseling

_____ Diagnosis and Evaluation

_____ Restoration

_____ Training

_____ Placement

_____ Licenses, Tools, Supplies

_____ Services to Family

_____ Maintenance

_____ Transportation

_____ Other

Service Outcome:

Date of Service Termination: _____

_____ Retained Same Job

_____ DOT Classification

_____ Obtained Different Job

_____ Current Earnings

_____ Not Employed

_____ Case Reopened