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Vocational Rehabilitation Closure Trends for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities: A Snapshot of Five U.S. Territories

By Jean E. Winsor and Daria Domin

Beginning in FY2013, the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities requested that each Project of National Significance include the five primary territories of the United States in data collection and analysis efforts. The five territories included in this analysis are American Samoa, Guam, Northern Marianas, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands of the United States.

This data note is the first in a series on the territories produced by the Access to Integrated Employment project that will be focused on the secondary data analysis of federal data sets. Data for this data note comes from the RSA-911, a public access database that captures individual characteristics, services provided, and employment outcomes¹ at the point of closure from vocational rehabilitation (VR) services.

Table 1 provides a summary of closures for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) in each of the five territories across the past 10 years. The data demonstrate that in many territories, fewer than five individuals with ID per year typically experience a closure into an employment setting.

Table 1. Closures for Individuals with ID in Each Territory

Territory	Total closures			Total closures with ID			Total closures with ID into an employment setting			
	Year	2003	2007	2012	2003	2007	2012	2003	2007	2012
American Samoa		75	70	48	<5	<5	<5	<5	0	<5
Guam		100	73	40	14	9	6	<5	<5	<5
Northern Mariana		101	170	79	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5
Puerto Rico		6,277	7,382	7,050	631	531	476	269	211	198
US Virgin Islands		96	71	120	35	23	11	13	14	<5

There are likely several reasons for the small number. For example, Puerto Rico probably has a larger number of closures than the other four territories because its total population is much greater. Other reasons for the variation across territories may include the number of individuals in any given year who request employment services from their territorial VR agency, and the availability of expertise in employment supports for people with ID in each territory.

While grouped together by their status as territories, each of the five areas represents a unique government and population. Some key ways that the territories vary are their access to federal government programs and resources, size of their populations, demographics, geographic locations and characteristics, and cultures. Therefore, we will not be benchmarking their outcomes against one another, nor against the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Future data notes will focus on individual territories and on understanding their data trends.

¹ For the purpose of this data note, a person was considered to have an intellectual disability (ID) if code 25 (mental retardation in the RSA-911 dataset) was reported as the cause of either a primary or secondary impairment to employment. A closure is defined as the conclusion of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services. A closure into an employment setting means that at the conclusion of VR services, the individual had an employment outcome (integrated employment (including supported employment), self-employment, state-agency-managed business enterprise, homemaker, and unpaid family worker).

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