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Data Note: Shifts in VR Outcome Trends for VR Customers With and Without Intellectual Disabilities

Frank A. Smith

University of Massachusetts Boston, frank.smith@umb.edu

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Shifts in VR Outcome Trends for VR Customers With and Without Intellectual Disabilities

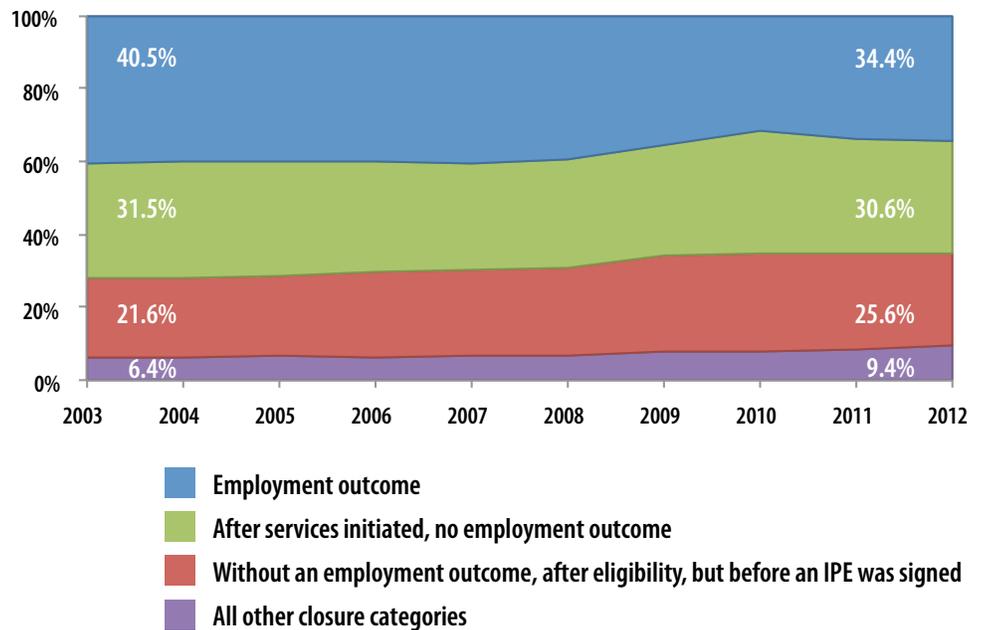
By Frank A. Smith

People with intellectual disabilities (ID) aspire to gainful employment¹. To assist them with this goal, state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies offer employment services based upon Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs). A commonly used measure of outcomes is the rehabilitation rate, defined as the percentage of individuals exiting the program who have achieved an employment outcome after receiving services with an IPE. This indicator does not consider that not all eligible consumers progress to receive services after an IPE is developed. This occurs for a variety of individual, service, and systems reasons. Reviewing data for eligible consumers who do not receive services provides a more complete picture of the experiences of individuals who engage with and exit the VR system.

Figure 1 displays VR closure trends for individuals with ID from FY 2003 through FY 2012. Figure 2 shows these trends for consumers without ID. During this period, employment outcomes as a percentage of all VR closures for individuals with ID decreased.

Employment reached its lowest point for this group in 2010 when just 31.7% of consumers with ID gained employment through VR services. The economic recession of 2007-2009 likely had impact on this group that continued to affect employment outcomes in 2010. The percentage of VR consumers who gained jobs has since improved, reaching 34.4% in 2012, but it has yet to return to pre-recession rates.

Figure 1. VR Closure Trends for VR Customers with ID

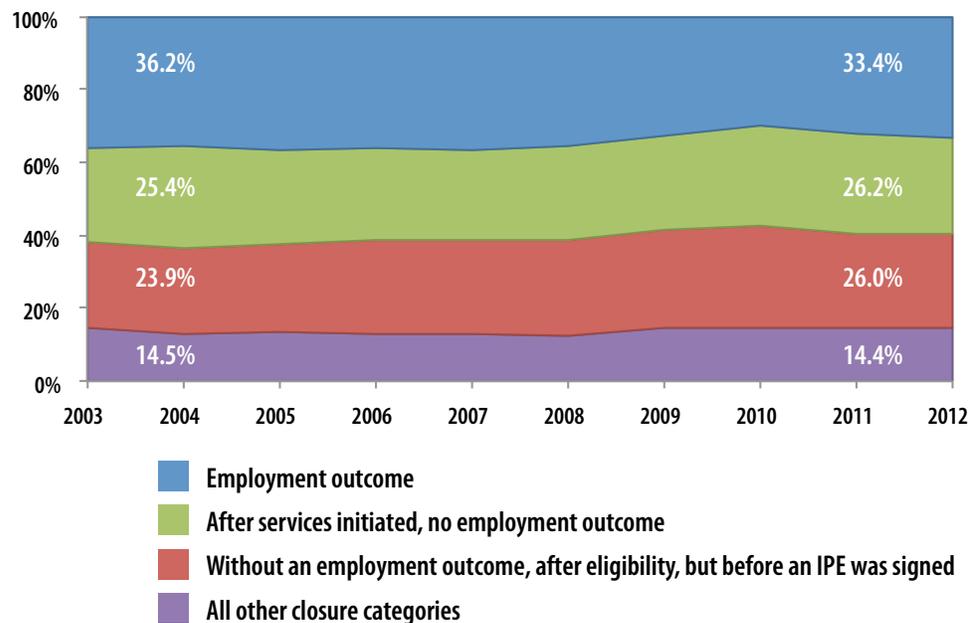


¹ Larson, S., Lakin, C., Kwak, N. & Anderson, L. (2001). Functional Limitations of Adults in the U.S. Non-Institutionalized Population: NHIS-D Analysis, MR/DD Data Brief, Research and Training Center on Community Living, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, October 2001, Vol.3, No. 3, at 11.

The economic recession is not solely responsible for this decline in employment outcomes. If it were, we might expect an increase in closures without an employment outcome after receiving services that is equal, or nearly equal, to the decrease in closures into employment after receiving services. We do not see such an increase from 2003-2012. Rather, we see an increase in a third category: the percentage of closures that exited after being determined eligible but before an IPE was signed. These are individuals who were eligible to receive services but did not. This increased from 21.6% of all closures with ID in 2003 to 25.6% of all closures with ID in 2012.

The increase in eligible individuals who did not get to the point where an IPE was developed and signed is not unique for VR consumers with ID. The increase since 2003 brought individuals with ID to levels similar to those without ID (see Figures 1 and 2). This growth in closures prior to completion of an IPE raises questions about why individuals leave VR services before their IPE is completed and whether strategies that support more individuals to initiate a signed IPE will lead to an increase in employment outcomes.

Figure 2. VR Closure Trends for VR Customers without ID



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