Center For
Public Policy & Administration
THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

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COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN UTAH

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prepared for the

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Center for Public Policy & Administration conducted a comprehensive assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities in Utah at the request of the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation. The purpose of the study is to provide information for development of a three year vocational rehabilitation state plan. The needs assessment and state plan are requirements of the federal Rehabilitation Act. Seven research questions guided the study:

1. What are population estimates and characteristics of individuals with disabilities in Utah?
2. What are estimates and characteristics of individuals who receive Social Security disability benefits (SSDI and SSI) in the State?
3. How do the processes and outcomes of Utah Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services compare with other peer states? What are the anomalies and are these of concern?
4. What do vocational rehabilitation clients perceive as their unmet needs and barriers to successful outcomes?
5. What do rehabilitation providers perceive as unmet needs and barriers to successful outcomes for their clients? How do providers' perceptions of needs and barriers compare with the clients' perceptions?
6. What individuals with disabilities appear to be unserved or underserved by VR services? What are the unmet service needs of these groups?
7. What are barriers and special service needs of individuals with disabilities from racial and ethnic minority populations?

POPULATION ESTIMATES AND SOCIAL SECURITY DATA

Analysis of U.S. Census American Community Survey data shows Utah has a lower percentage (9%) than the nation as a whole (12%) of people who state they have a disability according to the 2008-2010 American Community Survey. In Utah the proportion of males and females with disabilities is nearly equal; while nationwide there is a slightly larger proportion of females with disabilities than males (0.95 to 1). According to Census data the employment rate of individuals with disabilities in Utah (44%) is significantly higher than in the U.S. (36%).

According to USOR, the agency served 28,537 clients in 2010. This is 12% of Utah's disability population using the American Community Survey definition of disability. Looking at all USOR clients, 55% are male, 45% are female. This is in contrast to Utah's disabled population which is evenly split with 50% male and 50% female.

A smaller percentage of Utah's population receives SSDI and SSI benefits than nationally. In 2010 approximately 2.8% of Utahns received SSDI compared to 4.5% nationally, and 1.0% received SSI compared to 2.6% nationally.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE

An analysis of vocational rehabilitation caseload data shows how Utah's program compares with six peer states (Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and West Virginia). In terms of types of disability, Utah has the highest percentage of psychosocial impairments and lowest percentages of clients with visual, communicative, and other mental impairments compared with the six peer states. Among the peer states Utah had the median "successful employment" rate in FY 2010 - 67% of all individuals whose cases were closed in FY 2010 after receiving services were employed - but this is still well above the national average employment rate of 51%. During the same year, Utah had the highest successful employment rate (71%) for transition-age clients (16-24 years of age) compared to the peer states. The Utah Vocational Rehabilitation program had the highest successful employment rate for clients with cognitive impairments (69%), and mental and emotional disabilities (66%) compared to the peer states.

The Utah vocational rehabilitation program was able to accomplish this excellent performance despite having a lower than average staff size (269 in 2010) compared with its peer states. Additionally, Utah's staff size as a percentage of cases closed (5.2%) is second lowest (behind Kansas at 4.0%) of peer states and below the national average for combined agencies (6.3%).

CONSUMER SURVEY

The purpose of the consumer survey was to assess what vocational rehabilitation clients perceive as their unmet needs and barriers to successful employment outcomes. In October 2012, surveys were sent to 3,730 individuals in Status 10. These individuals had been determined eligible for the program but had not begun receiving services under an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). Completed surveys were received from 318 respondents which represented an 8.5% response rate. The survey asked individuals to check which services they needed from a list of 31 items. The survey then asked open-ended questions for individuals to list barriers they have in becoming successfully employed, and other service needs not listed elsewhere. Administrative data obtained from USOR included age, gender, race, ethnicity, education level, significance of disability designation, SSDI and SSI, TANF, and GA status at application, and primary disability. Survey data were matched with the administrative data in order to analyze the survey results by demographic indicators.

Respondents were representative of the overall Status 10 population in gender, age, and racial status. However, there were several characteristics of the respondents that differed statistically from the Status 10 population. There were fewer Hispanic-Latino survey respondents compared to the overall Status 10 population. This difference was significant at the .05 level, with 12% of the population classified as Hispanic/Latino and only 5% of the respondents. The respondents were slightly more educated than the overall Status 10 population, and individuals with primary disabilities of mental and cognitive responded less than their proportion in the Status 10 group. Individuals identified as having most significant disability were more likely to have responded. Also, respondents were significantly more likely to be receiving SSDI or GA at application than the overall Status 10 group.

SERVICES NEEDED – CONSUMER SURVEY

The following list of needs is the top ten service needs identified by USOR clients in 2012.

1. Locating employers with suitable job openings (76%)
2. Paying for a school or training program, including books or tools (74%)
3. Learning what jobs are available (69%)
4. Choosing a suitable job (67%)
5. Learning what programs and/or benefits they are eligible for such as Social Security or health care benefits (66%)
6. Understanding how work will impact benefits (62%)
7. Understanding health benefits and finding providers (59%)
8. Job coaching including short term on-the-job training or help with problems on the job (57%)
9. Choosing a school or training program (57%)
10. Writing a resume and preparing for job interview (55)

The service need responses were analyzed by subgroups to see if consumers with certain characteristics differed from the other consumer respondents. The characteristics examined were most significant disability status, transition age (16-24 years old), and primary disability. Subgroup comparisons were made using a Chi-Square statistical test to determine whether differences between the measures were statistically significant. The results of the Chi-Square tests are reported for the variables that have significant difference at a 95% confidence level. Significant results are reported as a p value of less than .05.

The following need areas were higher for individuals coded as most significantly disabled (statistical significance levels are noted).

- Writing a resume and preparing for a job interview ($p<.01$)
- Job coaching ($p<.05$)
- A wheelchair, scooter, or other mobility device ($p<.05$)

It was also found that fewer individuals coded as most significantly disabled needed assistance with finding and paying for a place to live (Chi-Square $p<.05$).

The older age group (25 and older) indicated they needed help significantly more than younger respondents in two areas:

- Obtaining prescription drugs ($p=<.01$)
- Assistance with car maintenance, repairs or gasoline ($p=<.05$)

The younger age group (16-24) indicated they needed help significantly more than older respondents in one area:

- Finding and paying for a place to live ($p<.01$)

The following service needs are those that showed differences that were significantly higher than expected or lower for the specific primary disability.

- Pursuing self-employment – Physical (higher)Choosing a school or training program – Sensory (lower)
- Paying for school or training program – Sensory (lower)
- Improving self-advocacy skills – Cognitive and Mental (higher)
- Understanding health benefits and finding providers – Physical (higher); Sensory (lower)
- Obtaining mental health and substance abuse counseling – Mental (higher)
- Assistance with car maintenance, repairs or gas – Physical and Mental (higher)
- Visual aids – Sensory and Physical (higher)
- Hearing devices – Sensory (higher)

- Wheelchair, scooter or other mobility device – Physical (higher)

INDIVIDUALS WITH MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITY

The service needs expressed by individuals coded as most significantly disabled were compared with the needs of the remaining consumers. Individuals who were coded as most significantly disabled expressed higher frequency of needs in the areas of: writing a resume and preparing for a job interview ($p<.01$); job coaching ($p<.05$); and a wheelchair, scooter, or other mobility device ($p<.05$). In contrast, consumers coded as most significantly disabled had lower needs for finding and paying for a place to live ($p<.05$). The rank order of the needs list was very similar between groups.

TRANSITION AGE CONSUMERS

The needs of transition age consumers (16-24 years old) were compared with respondents 25 years and older. Results of the Chi-Square analysis found three services in which age groups differed significantly in the degree they felt they needed help. The older age group (25 and older) indicated they needed help significantly more than younger respondents in two areas: obtaining prescription drugs ($p=.01$); and assistance with car maintenance, repairs or gasoline ($p=.05$). The younger age group (16-24) indicated they needed help significantly more than older respondents in finding and paying for a place to live ($p<.01$).

PRIMARY DISABILITY

Respondents identified as having mental disability comprised 42% of the total, physical 30%, cognitive 23%, and sensory 6% of the total number of respondents (n=318). The following service needs are those that showed differences that were significantly higher or lower for the specific primary disability. Chi-Square tests are reported in Table 4.13.

- Pursuing self-employment – Physical (higher)
- Choosing a school or training program – Sensory (lower)
- Paying for school or training program – Sensory (lower)
- Improving self-advocacy skills – Cognitive and Mental (higher)
- Understanding health benefits and finding providers – Physical (higher); Sensory (lower)
- Obtaining mental health and substance abuse counseling – Mental (higher)
- Assistance with car maintenance, repairs or gas – Physical and Mental (higher)
- Visual aids – Sensory and Physical (higher)
- Hearing devices – Sensory (higher)
- Wheelchair, scooter or other mobility device – Physical (higher)

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Consumers listed barriers to employment in response to an open-ended question: “What are the top three factors that cause you the most difficulty in becoming successfully employed?” Their responses were grouped into 34 different categories. The following categories represent the most common barriers expressed:

- Physical limitations and health concerns (33% of respondents)
- Mental health issues including bipolar, depression, anxiety, ADD/ADHD, depression (28%)
- Transportation issues including those related to employment such as cannot take bus, do not have car, no driver license (23%)
- Lack of education or skills training, including computer (20%)
- Soft skills training needed including interpersonal/social skills, interview skills, money and time management; decision making (18%)
- Cognitive issues (13%)

PROVIDER SURVEYS

Three groups of service providers were surveyed to assess their perceptions of rehabilitation needs of the individuals they serve: Utah State Office of Rehabilitation employees (n=123), Department of Workforce Services' (DWS) employees (n=81), and employees of other community agencies serving people with disabilities (n=62). The third group, referred to as All Other Providers, included employees of Veterans Administration Vocational Rehabilitation, Deseret Industries, the Worker's Compensation Fund of Utah, and the Division of Services for People with Disabilities. The invitation email was also sent to members of the Utah Association of Community Services, and the Utah Behavioral Health Network, which represent community providers of day, habilitation, mental health, and rehabilitation services for people with disabilities. These organizations were encouraged to forward the invitation email to their members. Surveys were conducted during September 2012 and December 31, 2012; a total of 266 responses were received from all groups.

Providers were asked to rate on a 4-point scale the level of clients' needs for each of 31 different services. A mean score for each need rating was calculated and then ranked from the largest mean as number 1 rank to the smallest mean as number 31. The rankings were compared across the three provider groups (USOR, DWS, and All Other Providers).

Then questions were asked about the availability of each service for the same list of needs, also using a 4-point scale. A mean for the availability rating was calculated and then ranked from largest mean (i.e., most available) as number 1 to least available as 31. The level of need for the service was defined as "demand" for a service and the level of availability was defined as "supply" of the service in the community. The differences between demand and supply rankings were also compared across provider groups. If the demand for a service is much larger than the supply, this is an issue that needs attention. For this survey, researchers chose to use a difference of 10 or more points between demand and supply to indicate an area that deserves further consideration.

SERVICES IDENTIFIED BY PROVIDERS

Of the list of 31 service needs on the survey, the top ten (upper third) identified by USOR employees of their clients were:

1. Learning what jobs are available
2. Choosing a suitable job
3. Assessing client's interests and abilities
4. Locating employers with suitable job openings
5. Writing a resume and preparing for a job interview
6. Understanding their health benefits and finding providers

7. Improving self-advocacy skills
8. Learning what programs and/or benefits they are eligible for (such as Social Security and health care)
9. Paying for a school or training program including books or tools
10. Understanding how work will impact benefits

The rankings of DWS employees were compared with those of USOR. There was only one need which showed significant difference between USOR and DWS. Improving self-advocacy skills was ranked number 7 by USOR, while DWS ranked it number 22.

AVAILABILITY OF SERVICES

Provider ratings of service availability resulted in three service needs identified by USOR with a gap of 10 or greater between demand and supply. This is a marked change from the prior needs assessment survey in 2009 for which USOR rankings showed twice as many service needs (i.e., 6) with a 10-or-more point gap. The researchers divide the rankings into upper third, middle third, and lower third to differentiate the highest from the medium from the lowest requested needs.

Only one of the needs identified by USOR this time was in the upper third group of services:

- Improving self-advocacy skills (Demand rank 7, Supply rank 22)

Two other needs with a 10-point or greater gap was in the middle third of rankings:

- Obtaining life skills training such as money and time management, or getting along with people (Demand rank 13, Supply rank 23)
- Finding and paying for a place to live (Demand rank 17, Supply rank 29)

Department of Workforce Services rankings displayed three service needs with more than a 10-point gap between demand and supply. Two of the needs were in the middle third, and one was in the lower third of the rankings:

- Finding and paying for a place to live (Demand rank 11, Supply rank 21)
- Maintaining or repairing a home (Demand rank 15, Supply rank 25)
- Environmental controls (enable hands-free control of lighting, heating and air conditioning, and other devices within the home or office) (Demand rank 8, Supply rank 28)

The All Other Providers group had *two* service needs that showed a 10-point or greater gap between demand and supply. This could be shortage of capacity, lack of training, or difficulty in accessing the services. Both needs were in the upper third of the All Other Providers rankings:

- Locating employers with suitable job openings. (Demand rank 4, Supply rank 16)
- Understanding their health benefits and finding providers. (Demand rank 5, Supply rank 12)

BARRIERS PERCEIVED BY PROVIDERS COMPARED WITH CONSUMERS

The survey asked providers an open-ended question: “What are the top three barriers that prevent your clients from achieving successful outcomes?” The barriers listed by providers were coded into the same 34 categories as the consumer barriers. Below is a comparison between the top ten rankings of consumers with the top ten rankings of providers.

Consumer Rank	Barriers to Employment	Provider Rank
1	Physical limitations, health	6
2	Mental Health issues (including Bipolar, depression, anxiety, ADD/ADHD, depression)	5
3	Transportation issues (including those related to employment such as cannot take bus, do not have car, no driver license)	2
4	Lack of education or skills training, including computer	3
5	Lack of soft skills training including interpersonal/social skills, interview skills, money and time management; decision making	10
6	Cognitive issues	22
7	Medical needs (such as conflicts between work and doctor appointments, medication schedule conflicts with job, paying for medication and Dr. visits)	17
8	Financial constraints including poverty and inadequate income. Cannot pay financial obligations	13
9	Need a job/ need an employer willing/able to hire me (no reference to discrimination)	15
10	Assistance with barriers to education (funding for education, tutoring, school application process)	29
24	Lack of family/social/community support	1
15	Employer and social discrimination, stigmas, societal stereotypes; lack of disability awareness by public; tattoos	4
18	Lack of motivation & boredom; dependence on system	7
31	Disability specific issues not noted in other category	8
30	Economic factors (bad economy, lack of jobs)	9

UNSERVED AND UNDERSERVED GROUPS AS IDENTIFIED BY PROVIDERS

The providers were asked to identify groups that may be unserved or underserved by the rehabilitation system. The largest number of responses (16% of all responses) listed people with mental illness and substance abuse as unserved or underserved groups. Tied for second rank were students in transition from high school, and individuals with developmental disabilities (9% each). Racial and ethnic minorities were listed in fourth place with 8%. Individuals who are homeless were tied for fifth place with individuals who are not aware of vocational rehabilitation services at 7%.

RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINORITIES

An analysis was done to compare the responses of consumers who indicated they were racial and ethnic minorities with responses of non-minority consumers. The percentages of minority consumers indicating “I need help” are higher than non-minorities in all 31 need areas. The higher need for services was statistically significant for this group in seven areas:

- Understanding how work will impact benefits
- Writing a resume and preparing for a job interview
- Maintaining or repairing a home
- Assessing my interests and abilities
- Finding and paying for a place to live
- Assistance with car maintenance, repairs or gasoline

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this comprehensive needs assessment is to call attention to perceptions and concerns of individuals who are most involved in receiving and providing rehabilitation services. This attention can then be directed toward remediation of these concerns through Utah's next three-year Vocational Rehabilitation State Plan.