MEASURING FIDELITY OF FOUR STATE MODELS FOR EXPANDING WORK-BASED LEARNING AND TRANSITION OPPORTUNITIES

PEQA ANNUAL SUMMIT ON PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE

September 5, 2019

Objectives of this Session

➢ Describe each state's design including key partners

➢ Identify key work-based learning approaches

➢ Discuss strategies for monitoring the fidelity of each state's model

➢ Discuss evaluation results to date

Transition Work-Based Learning Model Demonstrations

- 5-year research project

- Funded by: U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration – Disability Innovation Fund Grants

- Awarded to: California, Massachusetts, Maine, Maryland, Vermont

Transition Work-Based Learning Model Demonstrations

Identify and demonstrate practices, which are supported by **evidence**, in providing **work-based learning experiences** in integrated settings under the vocational rehabilitation (**VR**) program, in **collaboration** with State educational agencies (**SEAs),** local educational agencies (**LEAs),** and other key partners within the local community, to improve post-school outcomes for students with disabilities.

Program Fidelity Versus Program Effectiveness

➢ **Program fidelity**
  ➢ Extent to which the implementation of a program or set of services is consistent with what is intended (defined in a model or protocol)
  ➢ Difference with fidelity between models/protocols <u>found</u> to be effective versus those that are <u>hypothesized</u> to be effective

➢ **Program effectiveness**
  ➢ Determining whether a program or set of services has the intended effect on outcomes

➢ These demonstrations are testing different work-based learning models that are hypothesized to be effective
  ➢ Though work-based learning is linked to positive youth outcomes (Carter et al. 2012; Mazzotti et al. 2016; Test et al. 2009, Fraker et al. 2018, Mamun et al. 2018), we have little information on the mechanics of implementation from a VR agency perspective
  ➢ Fidelity: each program is currently monitoring how services are delivered compared to its model
  ➢ Effectiveness: each program will track whether its model, as implemented, has the intended effects on student outcomes (such as employment and educational achievement)

WAY2WORK

The Maryland Project

Way2Work Maryland

- **Purpose:** To evaluate the effectiveness of the Way2Work Maryland model on post-school academic and career outcomes for students with disabilities

- **Evaluation design:** A randomized control trial recruiting **400 students** with disabilities – half randomized to the treatment or model condition and half to services as usual
  - The model is implemented at **8 local school districts** throughout Maryland
  - Participating students are recruited 2 years prior to school exit (either Certificate or Diploma-bound)
  - Recruit students and implement the model in **2 cohorts**: fall 2017 & fall 2018

- **Goal:** Within one year after school exit, at least 90% of the students participating in the intervention will have enrolled in post-secondary institutions or secured competitive integrated employment

Way2Work Structure & Partners

- **Partners**
  - Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services – DORS (Jill Pierce, project manager)
  - University of Maryland (model implementation and fidelity monitoring across sites)
  - Local school districts or **LEAs** implement model, collect and enter data, convene inter-agency teams
  - Mathematica Policy Research conducts process and outcome evaluation

- **Structure & Staffing**
  - Each participating LEA (8) received grant funds to recruit students and implement the model via MOU with DORS; designate LEA lead to manage site
  - UMD staff (5) provide technical assistance, review & fidelity monitoring of model implementation
  - Intervention duration by student = 18 to 24 months

Work-based Learning Approaches

- **Features of the Way2Work Model**
  - **Target population** = students with IEP or 504 plan 2 years prior to school exit
  - Early referral to DORS for Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) authorization
  - A minimum of 3 work-based learning experiences (WBLE) – at least one of which is paid
  - Strategic local-level service coordination/collaboration conducted via local inter-agency teams:
    - DORS field staff
    - LEA representatives
    - Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs)

- **Work-based Learning Experiences (paid and unpaid)**
  - LEAs refer students to CRPs for WBLE development and follow along
  - Must be of sufficient duration to offer meaningful experience in a community-based integrated setting
  - Paid work experience – wages paid by employer

Way2Work Current Status

8 LEA sites active

- Cohort 1 (4) – Fall 2017
- Cohort 2 (4) – Fall 2018

Total enrollment = 402

- 201 in enhanced services
- 201 in usual services

Way2Work Current Status

- **Work-based Learning Experiences**
  - 198 completed WBLEs (across 2 cohorts and 8 sites); 21 paid directly by employer
  - 52 ongoing WBLEs; 4 paid by employers
  - 68% of students have completed at least one paid or unpaid WBLE to date

- **Paid employment**
  - 78 paid jobs
  - 38 ongoing paid experiences

- **67% of students have completed at least one WBLE or had one paid employment experience**

Way2Work: Approach to Fidelity Monitoring

- Monitoring Reports generated by Mathematica Management Information System (RAPTER) for internal TA/leadership review & MIAT monthly review

- Intensive technical assistance to each inter-agency team by UMD TA consultants for implementation monitoring

- Fidelity Checklists for quality assurance of program components reviewed monthly with MIAT teams

- Monthly management team meetings between DORS and UMD partners

- Weekly staff meetings with TA consultants to review fidelity, progress, and resolution.

Intended Outcomes and Future Vision

➢ Students with disabilities exit school with paid employment or enrollment in post-secondary programs

➢ Improve linkages between DORS, LEAS, and community-based providers for outreach and provision of pre-employment transition

➢ Improve the capacity of Maryland community-service providers to deliver work-based learning experiences in integrated settings to students with disabilities

➢ Sustain Way2Work Maryland model by convening and maintaining local inter-agency teams focused on student engagement, outreach, and service provision

➢ Address system barriers to facilitate seamless transition for students with disabilities in Maryland

TRANSITION WORK-BASED LEARNING

The Maine Project

Overview, Structure and Partners

- Maine DVR expects that the TWBL Model Demonstration will enhance statewide collaboration that facilitates the transition process from secondary and postsecondary schools, to competitive integrated employment at or above minimum wage. Within 1 year after graduation, at least 90 percent of study participants will enter postsecondary education or competitive integrated employment.

- This project uses a quasi-experimental design to conduct rigorous evaluation of two innovative interventions, Enhanced JMG and Progressive Employment. Maine DVR utilizes the Progressive Employment model to expand employer relationships and align this dual customer community-based strategy with Enhanced JMG programs for students with disabilities.

- Jobs for Maine Graduates (JMG), the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts Boston, American Institutes for Research (AIR), and the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR).

Work-based Learning Approaches

- **Progressive Employment in Augusta and Bangor**
  - Utilizing a dual customer approach to engage business relations and increase career exploration activities for students and young adults.
  - Team approach to business development and student opportunities
    - Popcorning Ideas
  - Embracing the philosophy, "Everyone is Ready for Something."
    - Rapid Engagement vs Assessment
  - Low Dose Activities that can be completed in less than a day.
    - Informational Interviews
    - Job Tours
    - Job Shadows
  - High Dose Activities that require more than a day to complete.
    - Paid Work Experiences (2 opportunities per student)
    - On-The-Job Training (OJT) Employer and Vocational Rehabilitation share training wage

    JMG

    5 Classrooms in Bangor area schools

    Integrated Classroom

    Hands-on opportunities for leadership development, self-advocacy

Approach to Fidelity Monitoring

- ICI is measuring the fidelity of Progressive Employment in four locations in Maine using a fidelity instrument specifically designed for the model.

- AIR is conducting process evaluations and interim reports to identify any needs for modifications, clarity, and enhancements.

- JMG services follow a national protocol developed by Jobs for America's Graduates as a manualized intervention

- The Grant Manager, Elizabeth Nitzel, reviews data reports from vendors and provides ongoing support to counselors, employment specialists and vendors.

- Maine VR modified data systems to be able to track whether or not participants received the services identified in the model.

Current Status & Interim Outcomes

- Grant-developed JMG sites completed second year of cohort of students
  - Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors embedded in classrooms

- Progressive Employment well-established in Bangor and Augusta

- **Current Data**

  Augusta
  - 125 enrolled in Progressive Employment
  - 188 recorded PE Activities, 51 Work Experiences completed

  Bangor
  - 117 enrolled in Progressive Employment, JMG or Both
  - 171 recorded PE Activities, 42 Work Experiences completed

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TRANSITION PATHWAY SERVICES

The Massachusetts Project

Overview, Structure and Partners

- The Transition Pathway Services Project has dedicated TPS counselors in the Roxbury, Lawrence, and Springfield MRC offices recruiting high school students who met eligibility criteria for VR services and are about 2 years from high school graduation.

- MRC leads the initiative and houses it with the Statewide Transition Director (Jennifer Stewart) who reports to the Deputy Commissioner.

- Major Implementation Partners include:
  - Three Independent Living Centers: Northeast Independent Living Program, STAVROS, and Boston Center for Independent Living
  - Career Centers: Valley Works, Future Works, Boston Career Links
  - School Districts in the Catchment Areas of the three MRC offices
  - Transition Specialists from the Federation for Children with Special Needs
  - Partners for Youth with Disabilities
  - Work Without Limits
  - Vendors

Work-based Learning Approaches

Transition Pathway Services uses a Career Discovery Support Team to coordinate transition services that...

... help students achieve employment or education opportunities after high school.

Approach to Fidelity Monitoring

- MRC contracted with the Institute for Community Inclusion for evaluation and technical assistance activities. Fidelity approaches include a combination of TPS counselor coaching, monthly data reports, fidelity monitoring, and a process evaluation.

- **TPS Counselor Coaching**: Neil McNeil (Senior Policy Fellow at ICI) works directly with each of the three counselors as a group (counselor meetings) and through individual coaching to address implementation challenges.

- **Monthly Data Reports:** MRC provides data to ICI for internal monthly data reports that show the flow of services.

- **Fidelity Instrumentation, Data, and Site Visits:** ICI created a fidelity instrument based upon the model as described in the proposal and early start up. Evaluation staff use the tool to identify local adaptions and potential early implementation issues, particularly those with a systems focus.

- **Process Evaluation:** ICI interviewed MRC and partners at baseline, Spring 2019 and during year of completion. The fidelity goal is to understand partner implementation, challenges, system level suggestions and local adaptions.

Current Status & Interim Outcomes

As of July 29th 2019:

- **246 Students enrolled** with 71% Male; 42% Black, 33% Latino/Hispanic

- Most Frequent Primary Disability: **Autism (33%); Specific Learning Disorder (31%)**, Cognitive impairment (12%) and Mental Health (11%).

- **42 Students have received the full TPS model** (8 out of 10 services) to date. About 45% have received 4 to 7 TPS services.

- The top 5 services are: Vocational Counseling, Peer Mentoring, Transportation Coordination, Workplace Readiness Training, and Benefits Counseling.

- **96/223 have completed their first work based learning experience** with **80 of those being a paid work experience** of about 15 hours per week for about 8 to 9 weeks.

- **32 Students have graduated from high school**.

- **26 students have enrolled in post secondary education** this fall and 6 who have graduated have job offers.

LINKING LEARNING TO CAREERS

The Vermont Project

Overview

Goal: To develop and implement a model that provides work-based learning experiences and postsecondary access for secondary students and otherwise enhances their progress on a successful career path.

To get there, LLC will deliver:

➢ Career development support via classroom, small group, & one-on-one services resulting in   an individual LLC Plan.

➢ A continuum of work-based learning experiences.

➢ Access to postsecondary education, including earning college credit while still in high school.

➢ Intensive individualized Assistive Technology support.

➢ Transportation for WBL, employment, & college activities.

Evaluation design: A randomized control trial recruiting 800 high school students with disabilities in 12 VR district offices statewide – half randomized to the treatment or model condition and half to services as usual

Structure and Partners

Structure & Staffing:

➢ State leadership and coordination by VocRehab VT

➢ New Career Consultant positions at all 12 district offices

➢ Two Assistive Technology Specialists dividing the state

➢ Dedicated LLC Youth Employment Specialists

➢ Youth teams in every office collaborate to support students

Essential Partners:

➢ VABIR – Work-Based Learning delivery

➢ Community College of Vermont – Postsecondary options

➢ Vermont Agency of Education – essential school connections

➢ TransCen – Fidelity monitoring and technical assistance

➢ Mathematica Policy Research – Evaluation and technical assistance

Work-based Learning Approaches

LLC will deliver a continuum of work-based learning experiences including:

➢ At least one formally prepared and evaluated job shadow

➢ At least one formally prepared and evaluated unpaid internship and/or volunteer experience

➢ At least one employer-paid job in a competitive, integrated setting

Other WBL activities such as career guest speakers, work

site visits, and informational interviews are incorporated

Approach to Fidelity Monitoring

➢ Fidelity Checklists developed by TransCen for quality assurance of all program components

➢ Site visits conducted with youth team members from 12 district offices

➢ Quarterly fidelity checklist reviews conducted and submitted by youth teams

➢ Actual services data submitted bi-weekly to Mathematica; summary reports generated for LLC and VocRehab leadership to inform program management

➢ On-going technical assistance to LLC leadership and district youth teams from TransCen and Mathematica; planning for use of Learn, Innovate, Improve (LI[2]) process with select teams

Current Status & Interim Outcomes

LLC is designed to achieve these outcomes:

➢ High school completion
➢ Competitive, integrated employment
➢ Postsecondary education and training enrollment
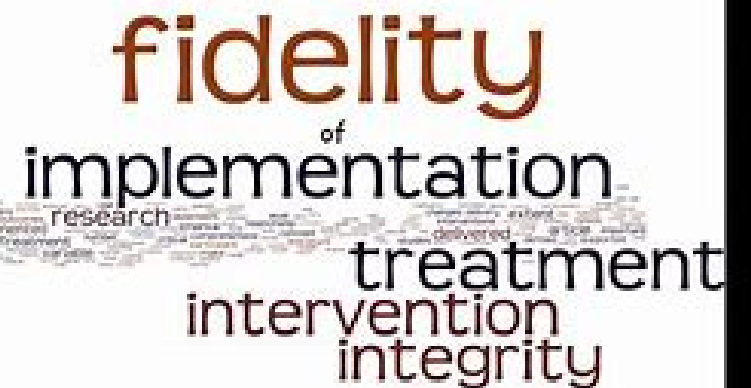➢ Confidence and motivation to achieve career goals

Interim Outcomes:

➢ 802 students enrolled; 413 assigned to treatment (enhanced) group
➢ 58.7% of enhanced group received at least one long term unpaid WBL or paid employment; 22.1% for control (core) group
➢ 30.8% enhanced with paid competitive employment; 13.6% for core
➢ 17.7% enhanced receiving assistive technology supports; .5% for core
➢ 50.3% enhanced post-secondary exploration; 30.6% for core
➢ 83.9% enhanced students with open VR case

MONITORING FIDELITY AND USING DATA TO IMPROVE RESULTS

What's changed as a result? – State examples

Maryland: Substantially Increased field-based technical assistance to CRPs to improve capacity to develop/secure DORS authorized work-based learning experiences.

Massachusetts TPS: Changed data collection system; changed how MRC is defining what is a work-based learning experience; and identifying systems issues such as job placement specialist capacity, partnership and contracting strategies, and team approaches.

Maine: Have needed to look at contracts with Community Rehabilitation Providers and how to incentivize participation in a grant intervention. How to address the impact of provider turnover and building capacity.

Vermont: Developed best practice for local youth teams to collaborate in support of enrolled youth, and supported teams with improving their school collaboration efforts.

# How can research partners help to improve fidelity?

Maryland: *(1)* Collaborated closely with DORS to modify WBLE policies and procedures to align with CRP experience in developing/securing/monitoring WBLEs
(2) Mathematica provided more detailed weekly data tracking reports to identify implementation and service gaps/issues across Way2Work LEAs

Massachusetts: Scope/Intensity/Capacity: One of the issues with new interventions at an early phase is that an intervention may be designed in ways that extend beyond the capacity of an agency to fully implement the practice. Defining what is the core intervention and the measures that are necessary to monitor fidelity, sets an early expectation. It becomes quickly apparent when expectation may exceed capacity.

Maine: Researchers can assist by addressing how models will work in agencies where a significant portion of employment services are contracted out to vendors

Vermont: Detailed tracking reports of actual enhanced services being provided to participating youth proved to be a highly valued management tool to state project leaders as well as to district managers and youth teams to improve fidelity and motivate performance.
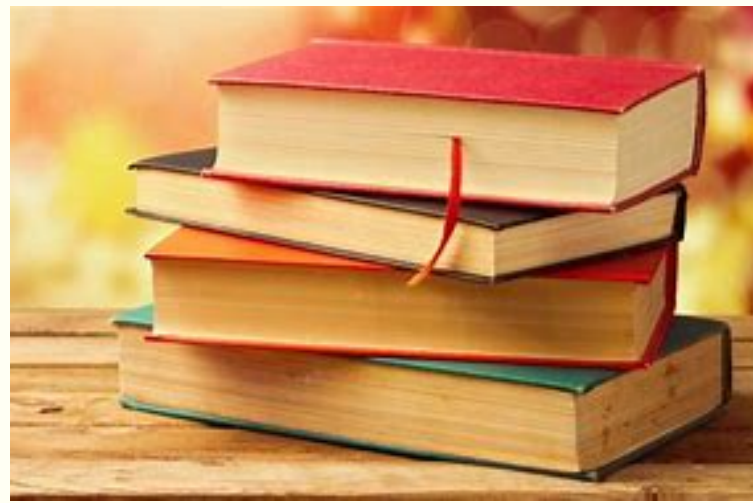
QUESTIONS & WRAP UP

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