

Demand-Side Strategies: Prevalence of Business Employment Representatives in Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies

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Many vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies hire business employment representatives (BERs) to foster relationships between the agencies and local businesses. BERs may have some prior experience in business or sales, and are tasked with managing VR agencies' relationships with employers. The Vocational Rehabilitation RRTC at the ICI surveyed state VR agencies in 2011 about a wide range of their practices, policies, and structural features. As one set of questions, the ICI asked VR agencies about the total number of full time specialized staff that invested 50% or more of their time working as BERs or placement specialists.

Findings reveal that the majority of VR agencies employ business employment representatives (45 out of 64 reporting agencies; 70.3%). Of those VR agencies employing BERs, 21 reported employing five or fewer BERs, 10 reported employing between six and ten BERs, and 14 reported employing more than 10 BERs (Figure 1). BERs compose 0.1% to 43.9% of staffing relative to the total number of counseling staff throughout VR state agencies employing BERs.

Employment of BERs was also examined in relation to VR agencies' type of parent agency. Ten out of 13 VR agencies that had a parent agency within an education department employed BERs. Twelve out of 16 VR agencies that operated independently employed BERs, and 13 out of 18 VR agencies that had a parent agency within the human/social services department employed these specialists. Six out of 12 VR agencies that were part of a labor/workforce department hired BERs, and four out of five VR agencies that had another type of parent agency employed BERs.

As researchers, policy-makers, and advocates strive to understand promising VR agency staffing procedures promoting the employment of people with disabilities, research on BERs is a fruitful and important avenue for continuing examination.

Welcome to Review VR!

The Review VR series is a product of Explore VR: a web portal that provides a range of vocational rehabilitation (VR) data. Explore VR (explorevr.org) increases knowledge about the public VR program and its role within the larger employment and disability service system. This interactive platform allows users to customize and manipulate live data.

Through Review VR, we will provide a snapshot of VR data in an accessible, user-friendly format. In each issue, we will explore a hot topic in the field, and will provide an easy-to-read visualization and table linked to live data on Explore VR.

Figure 1. BER staffing within VR agencies

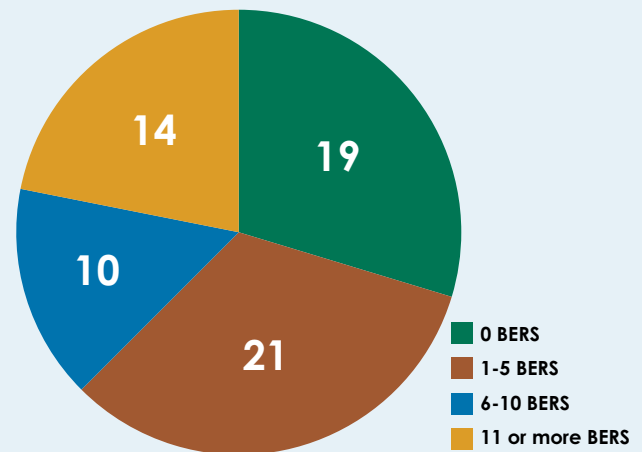


Table 1. BER staffing at VR agencies

State	Agency	Total number of BERs	Total number of counseling staff ¹	% of BERs to counseling staff	Total number of clients at VR agency ²	# of BERs per 1000 clients at VR agency
Alabama	Combined	17	502	3.4%	50603	0.34
Arkansas	General	9	425	2.1%	21362	0.42
Colorado	Combined	15	193	7.8%	19016	0.79
Connecticut	General	10	124	8.1%	8428	1.19
Delaware	Blind	3	10	30.0%	252	11.90
District of Columbia	Combined	6.5	62	10.5%	7689	0.85
Florida	General	1	676	0.1%	80185	0.01
	Blind	11	76	14.5%	6030	1.82
Illinois	Combined	6	496	1.2%	45546	0.13
Indiana	Combined	3	277	1.1%	32134	0.09
Iowa	General	1	195	0.5%	19241	0.05
	Blind	2	23	8.7%	536	3.73
Kentucky	General	22	331	6.6%	36736	0.60
	Blind	18	41	43.9%	2084	8.64
Louisiana	Combined	8	268	3.0%	28520	0.28
Maryland	Combined	3	331	0.9%	24364	0.12
Massachusetts	General	24	353	6.8%	37198	0.65
	Blind	2	67	3.0%	1860	1.08
Michigan	General	31	462	6.7%	58521	0.53
	Blind	3	78	3.8%	2092	1.43
Minnesota	General	35	337	10.4%	25820	1.36
Mississippi	Combined	10	488	2.0%	25090	0.40
Missouri	Blind	2	73	2.7%	2291	0.87
Nebraska	General	13	166	7.8%	12239	1.06
New Hampshire	Combined	3	72	4.2%	9321	0.32
New Jersey	General	0.5	227	0.2%	37501	0.01
	Blind	8	77	10.4%	2037	3.93
New York	General	15	643	2.3%	116326	0.13
North Carolina	General	68	754	9.0%	69919	0.97
	Blind	0.7	154	0.5%	4366	0.16
North Dakota	Combined	5	75	6.7%	7523	0.66
Oklahoma	Combined	8	317	2.5%	25872	0.31
Oregon	General	3	184	1.6%	16362	0.18
	Blind	1	40	2.5%	664	1.51
Rhode Island	Combined	2	57	3.5%	7780	0.26
South Carolina	Blind	4	83	4.8%	1687	2.37
South Dakota	Blind	1	13	7.7%	616	1.62
Texas	General	8	1112	0.7%	96857	0.08
	Blind	18	365	4.9%	9963	1.81
Utah	Combined	12	236	5.1%	32321	0.37
Vermont	General	4	92	4.3%	12294	0.33
Virginia	General	29	489	5.9%	36747	0.79
Washington	General	1	263	0.4%	27490	0.04
	Blind	1	51	2.0%	1379	0.73
West Virginia	Combined	10	237	4.2%	16213	0.62

¹ Total Number of Counseling Staff =# of counselor staffing+ staff supporting counselor activities (Data Source: RSA2 FY2010)

² Total Number of clients = Total number of individuals eligible at the end of the fiscal year(RSA113: line A11+A12+A13+A14)+ Total Individual Served (RSA113: line C1+D1+D2) (Data Source: RSA113 FY2010)

Explore VR

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