Serving VR Clients on the Delayed List[1]

Issue

Virginia VR had been in Order of Selection and therefore required to prioritize clients considered the Most Significantly Disabled. The CPID grant offered Virginia VR the opportunity to work with clients on the delayed list that had a career goal in alignment with the CPID project. It was a surprise to VR to find that almost all of the people in delayed status had not gone on to other services or found jobs on their own. Their sole plan was to wait for DARS' services. The length of time in delayed status was as long as 3 1/2 years in duration.

Strategies for Serving Clients on Delayed:

Staffing: A part-time VR Counselor was employed using only grant funds. This enabled VR to provide services to clients on the delayed list at both DARS and DBVI. Strict record keeping was required to track services funded by the grant versus services provided by VR. Many clients who were initially serviced by the CPID Counselor were moved off the delayed list to VR.

Outreach: Direct mail to clients in Delayed status proved very effective at raising interest in training for Career Pathways credentials, particularly because the trainings are short term, there is no cost to the client for the training, and the career fields included offer great pay and benefits. We included a statement about the ongoing shortages in those fields, as most were not aware of labor market demand.

Group Information Sessions: We invited clients to their local office to participate in four separate **Information Sessions** about four different career pathways. Some clients attended a single session of interest, while others wanted to hear about all four career paths. At these sessions we described the academic testing piece so there would be no surprises to the client later.

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[1] Order of Selection (OOS)

The Rehabilitation Act, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), requires the Vocational Rehabilitation program to serve individuals with the most significant disabilities first when there are not enough resources to serve everyone who is eligible for VR services. Individuals with the most significant disabilities are given a priority over those with less significant disabilities, a process called an "order of selection." VR clients waiting for services are referred to as on being on the "delayed" list.

Group testing was conducted that allowed clients to build some camaraderie within the group and lessened the stress of test-taking. Those who chose the same Career Pathway liked seeing a familiar face on the first day of class. The CPID Counselor was trained to administer and score the WRAT[2] and the CASAS, a time saver that shortened the time for the client. The CASAS can be administered on the computer and automatically scored instantly, saving time when doing group testing. The CPID counselor spent a great deal of time trying to find an assessment for IT that could be used by those with limited sight only to find that, at this time, there wasn't one comparable to what was offered for sighted individuals. Notably, Northstar Digital Literacy, a free online assessment that is widely used, does not work with screen readers.

Outcomes: Over twelve months, the part-time CPID Counselor touched 108 individuals on the delayed list and opened 61 cases.

Barriers: Most of the problems reported related to processing authorizations and payments. This was due to the fact that the counselor was working without the supports provided by a typical field office.

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[2] The WRAT-4 is a norm-referenced test that measures the basic academic skills of word reading, sentence comprehension, spelling, and math computation. The CASAS tests assess basic and academic skills in real-world contexts. This system monitors progress in reading, math, English language, writing, and work-readiness skills. CASAS is the most widely used adult education competency-based testing system in the United States.