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**Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC)
on Research and Capacity Building for Minority Entities**

National Survey of State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency and Veterans Affairs Interagency Collaborations: An Emerging Conceptual Framework for Co-Serving Veterans of Color with Disabilities

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LU-RRTC State-of-the-Science Conference

September 28-29, 2017

Atlanta, Georgia

Presentation Objectives

- + Present findings that resulted from an online survey completed by SVRA administrators on perspectives about co-services with VA-VR&E that could facilitate improved employment outcomes among veterans of color
- + Translate key findings from this study into an emerging conceptual framework for a new SVRA and VA-VR&E Co-Service Model for potential adoption by SVRAs and VA-VR&E Programs.



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BACKGROUND

+ Need:

- Veterans of color comprise about 22% of all U.S. veterans: African American=11.2%. Native American or Alaskan Native=.6%, Latino=6.6%, Asian American or Pacific Islander=1.6% and projected to increase to 36% by 2040 (Minority Veterans Report, 2017)
- Significant numbers of these veterans are discharged with various service-connected physical and mental disabilities that present employment barriers (Ainspan, 2011, Tennant, 2012, Twamley et al., 2013)
- Employment outcome disparities still exist for these veterans (Moore & Wang, 2016; Moore et al., 2015)
- Section 21 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 and the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 have documented disparities in VR delivery service and require SVRAs to maximize the employment of persons with disabilities (McDonnall & Crudden, 2015)
- Studies that have explored interagency collaborations report higher measurable goal attainment, more engagement in work-related experiences, and higher rates of successful outcomes. Interagency collaborations between SVRAs and VA-VR&E could serve as a pivotal mechanism for increasing and enhancing employment of these veterans (Fleming, Del Valle, Kim & Leahy, 2013; Johnson, et al., 2016)



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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

+ Research Questions:

- What SVRA and VA co-service practices and collaborations are perceived as effective for assisting veterans of color with disabilities to obtain employment?
- What SVRA and VA co-service practices and collaborations aimed at facilitating veterans' of color with disabilities successful return-to-work are potentially adoptable by these agencies?



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METHOD

+ Method: Sampling

- Utilized survey methods to explore and identify SVRA and VA-VR&E promising co-service practices and inform the development of a conceptual framework for a new SVRA and VA-VR&E Co-Service Model
- Participants:
 - Study population consisted of 80 SVRAs (blind and general) that were members of Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR); 39 responded for a response rate of 50% (i.e. .487 rounded to the nearest tenth); (1 was not included in the analysis due to incomplete data)



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Participants Characteristics

TABLE 1. Demographic Information of Online Survey Participants

Variables	Label	n	%
Gender	Female	23	59.0
	Male	16	41.0
Age group	31 - 40	06	16.0
	41 - 50	11	28.0
	51 - 60	18	46.0
	61 & above	04	10.0
Race/ Ethnicity	White/Caucasian	29	74.0
	Black/African American	5	13.0
	American Indian	2	5.0
	Latino	2	5.0
	Other	1	3.0
Job Title	Administrator	6	15.0
	Assistant Director	2	5.0
	Chief of Services	1	3.0
	Commissioner	1	3.0
	Deputy Chief	1	3.0
	Deputy Director	3	7.5
	Director	12	31.0
	Education Consultant	1	3.0
	Manager	4	10.0
	Program Specialist	4	10.0
	VR Consultant	2	5.0
	VR Coordinator	2	5.0

Note. VR = Vocational Rehabilitation.

METHOD (continued)

+ Method: Procedures

- **Instrument Development:** Advisory panel member input, a focus group discussion, pilot-test and CSAVR review of the survey used to enhance the validity of the instrument.
 - Advisory panel member reviewed the focus group protocol and that input was used to assist with development of the survey's framework.
 - Focus group convened on 12-12-14 that included OK-DRS counselors, specialists, program managers and field coordinators, AIVR program and VA-VR&E program counselors for a total of 12 focus group participants.



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METHOD (continued)

+ Focus Group

Using NVivo (vs 10) , major themes and categories emerged from the analysis of this qualitative data that were used to further the framework for the “Promising Practices in SVRA and VA-VR & E Co-Service Partnership Survey” inclusive of the following domains.

- + Current Collaborations
- + Previous Collaborations
- + Current or Previous Involvement in Co-Service Practices with VA-VR&E
- + Effectiveness of Co-Service Practices
- + Benefits of Co-Service Practices
- + Barriers to Co-Service Practices
- + SVRA Positions that Participate in Co-Service Practices



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METHOD (continued)

Procedures, Instrument Development, continued

- + Survey was uploaded on the Psydata.com online system and pilot tested with 9 of the original 12 focus group participants. Participants were asked to respond to survey questions regarding co-service practices and to share comments or suggestions about how the survey could be improved. Feedback was used to inform the instrument's development.
- + A sub-contract was entered into with CSAVR to further refine the survey for relevance to the target population. Feedback regarding survey item content and format was used to enhance the utility of the instrument in answering research questions.



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METHOD (continued)

+ Procedures, Instrument:

+ Data Collection

- **Instrument:** The online “Promising Practices in SVRA and VA-VR&E Co-Service Partnership Survey” included a total of 99 Likert-type items and a demographic form. Likert-type items asked respondents to indicate the nature of partnerships/collaborations between SVRAs and VA-VR&E programs.
- **Survey Administration:** CSAVR facilitated the administration of the online survey via psychdata.com to administrators of all 80 VR agencies nationally who were members of CSAVR. Activities to obtain a 50% response rate included follow-up by CSAVR by email blasts and telephone contact, reminders in CSAVR newsletter, an article by RRTC team members in the CSAVR newsletter. Appeals by RRTC team members included telephonic and face-to-face at CSAVR committee meetings and attendance at CANAR Conference.
- **Analysis:** Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS (v22) . Frequencies and percentages were generated for demographics and survey questions across seven domains. Means and standard deviations were generated for the survey questions. Results informed the new co-service model development.



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RESULTS

Research Question #1:

What SVRA and VA co-service practices and collaborations are perceived as effective for assisting veterans of color with disabilities to obtain employment?

- + Ninety percent (90%) of SVRA respondents considered 11 of the 15 identified co-service practices to be moderately, very or extremely effective in contributing to successful employment outcomes for veterans of color with disabilities.



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RESULTS (continued)

Five (5) Co-Service Practice Dimensions were identified as follows.

- Job Placement Co-Service Practices (collaborative job placement, collaborative job training, collaborative provision of maintenance, collaborative case management)
- Referral and Information Co-Service Practices (development of referral process)
- Cultural/Diversity Co-Service Practices (cultural training)
- Co-Service Agreements (memorandum of understanding and informal agreements)
- Co-Agency Procedures (development of co-communication procedures, joint determination of resource allocations, development of co-hierarchy and co-responsibilities)

RESULTS (continued)

Research Question #2:

What SVRA and VA co-service practices and collaborations aimed at facilitating veterans of color with disabilities successful return-to-work are potentially adoptable by these agencies?

- + As mentioned, we do know that interagency collaborations have been shown to contribute to successful employment outcomes (Johnson, et al., 2016)
- + Current study findings show that SVRAs engage in various partnerships and co-service practices with VA-VR&E but not consistently or uniformly across these agencies.
- + Current study findings and Diffusion of Innovations Theory used to develop a SVRA and VA-VR&E Co-Service Model for possible adoption by these agencies.



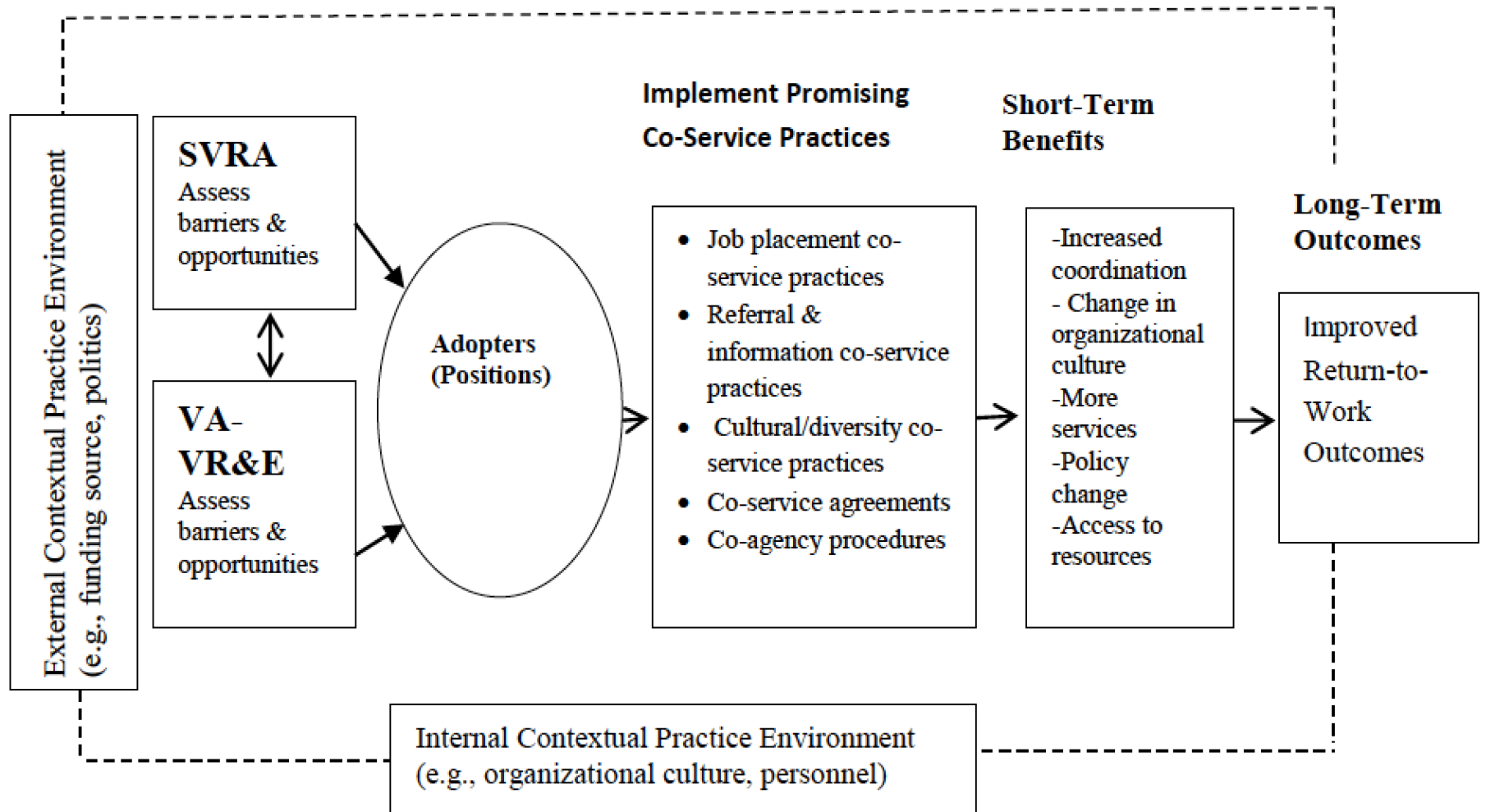
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CO-SERVICE MODEL



CO-SERVICE MODEL (continued)

- + Diffusions of Innovations Theory explains how new ideas, practices or strategies are spread into a social system and what will likely increase or decrease adoption of the innovation.
- + For this study, the innovation is conceptualized as the integration of these promising co-service practices into an innovative new model that would result in more successful employment outcomes for veterans of color with disabilities.



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CO-SERVICE MODEL (continued)

- + SVRAs and VA-VR&E are conceived as key partners in providing coordinated services.
- + Each agency identifies adopters/positions responsible for implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the model in the context of the interplay between the internal and external contextual environments.
- + The social system is represented by both the external and internal contextual practice environments and positions that represent individuals who are potential adopters.



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CO-SERVICE MODEL (continued)

- + Implementation and engagement of effective co-service practices are influenced by barriers and opportunities for engagement.
- + Barriers and opportunities and short-term benefits are interrelated and are continually identified throughout the process of engagement in co-service practices so they can be adapted to fit the contextual environments.
- + Monitoring and evaluation of the model is a continuous process to determine whether implementation is on track and where changes may be needed.



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Limitations of the Study

- + Although the current findings describe respondents' results on ratings of promising co-service practices, the efficacy of these practices or the SVRA and VA-VR&E Co-Service Model in facilitating increased outcomes among veterans of color were not evaluated.
- + The respondent sample was inclusive of SVRA administrators, but excluded VA-VR&E Program administrators. Given the inherent barriers in securing the VA's approval to involve their VA-VR&E Program administrators in research being conducted by external entities, we concluded that engaging SVRA respondents would represent a more feasible first-step.
- + Testing the efficacy of the model and including VA-VR&E respondents in future research could provide new knowledge and further advance the field's understanding of effective co-service practices.



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Advancing the State-of-the-Science

- + Enhances the field's understanding of promising co-service practices that could lead to increased employment outcome rates for veterans of color with disabilities served by state-federal VR system.
- + Outlines an emerging new model for providing coordinated SVRA & VA-VR&E program co-services.
- + Adoption of this model could provide a needed framework to evaluate its efficacy and contribute to evidence-based findings that could be utilized in practice.



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Knowledge Translational Resources & Deliverables

- + Johnson, J. E., Moore, C. L., Wang, N., Sanders, P., Sassin, J. (2016). Diffusion of innovations theory and veterans of color: A framework for promoting the adoption of effective state vocational rehabilitation agencies, American Indian vocational rehabilitation programs, and veterans affairs-vocational rehabilitation & employment co-service practices in vocational rehabilitation. *Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling*, 47(1), 7-16.
- + Moore, C.L., Wang, N., Johnson, J., Manyibe, E.O., Washington, A. L., & Muhammad, A. (2015a). Return-to-work outcome rates of African Americans versus White veterans served by state vocational rehabilitation agencies: A randomized split-half cross-model validation research design. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 1-14 , doi:10.1177/0034355215579917.
- + Moore, C. L., Wang, N. (2016). A national benchmark investigation of return-to-work outcome rates between African American, Native American or Alaskan Natives, Latino, Asian American or Pacific Islander, and non-Latino white veterans served by state vocational rehabilitation agencies: Application of bootstrap data expansion. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 45, 133-147. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3233/JVR-160818>

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