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

National Survey of American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Program 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

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Atlanta, Georgia

Presentation Objectives

- + Present findings that resulted from an online survey completed by AIVRP 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 AIVRP and VA-VR&E Co-Service Model for potential adoption by AIVRPs and VA-VR&E Programs.



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BACKGROUND

+ Need:

- Veterans of color comprise about 22% of all U.S. veterans and projected to increase to 36% by 2040. Native American or Alaskan Native comprise .6% of these veterans (Minority Veterans Report, 2017)
- However, American Indians and Alaska Natives serve at the highest rate of any ethnic group (Kaufmann, Richardson, Floyd, & Shore, 2014)
- 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 121 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 have documented disparities in VR delivery service and require AIVRPs 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 AIVRPs 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 AIVRP and VA co-service practices and collaborations are perceived as effective for assisting veterans of color with disabilities to obtain employment?
- What AIVRP 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 AIVRP and VA-VR&E promising co-service practices and inform the development of a conceptual framework for a new AIVRP and VA-VR&E Co-Service Model
- Participants:
 - Study population consisted of 84 AIVRPs (blind and general) that were members of Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR); 35 responded for an acceptable response rate of 42%



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PARTICIPANTS CHARACTERISTICS

TABLE 1. Demographic Information of Online Survey AIVRP Participants

Variables	Label	n	%
Gender	Female	27	77.0
	Male	08	23.0
Age group	30 or less	02	6.0
	31 - 40	03	8.0
	41 - 50	07	20.0
	51 - 60	15	43.0
	61 & above	08	23.0
Race/ Ethnicity	American Indian	29	83.0
	White/Caucasian	06	17.0
Job Title	Administrator	02	6.0
	Director	19	54.0
	Manager	07	20.0
	TVR Specialist	01	3.0
	VR Counselor	05	14.0
	VR Trainee	01	3.0

Note. TVR = Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation VR = Vocational Rehabilitation. n=35

METHOD (continued)

+ Method: Procedures

- **Instrument Development:** Advisory panel member input, a focus group discussion, pilot-test and CANAR 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 AIVRP 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
- + AIVRP Positions that Would 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 CANAR 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 AIVRP 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 AIVRPs and VA-VR&E programs.
- **Survey Administration:** CANAR facilitated the administration of the online survey via psychdata.com to administrators of all 84 TVR agencies nationally who were members of CANAR. Activities to obtain a 50% response rate included follow-up by CANAR by email blasts and telephone contact. Appeals by RRTC team members included telephonic and face-to-face at CANAR 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 AIVRP and VA co-service practices and collaborations are perceived as effective for assisting veterans of color with disabilities to obtain employment?

- + Eighty percent (80%) of AIVRP respondents considered 12 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.
- + 1=Not at all effective, 2=Slightly Effective, 3=Moderately Effective, 4=Very Effective, 5=Extremely Effective



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RESULTS (continued)

Table 3. Means AIVRP current or past involvement in co-service practices with VA-VR&E

Co-Service Practice	Mean	Std. Dev.
Informal agreement between agencies	2.69	1.510
Collaborative job placement services	2.60	1.288
Development of process of referrals from and to each agency	2.51	1.422
Memorandum of understanding	2.49	1.721
Collaborative provision of maintenance (e.g., transportation, shelter, clothing, food)	2.49	1.422
Collaborative job training services	2.46	1.336
Cultural training provided by one agency to another	2.37	1.215
Collaborative case management	2.31	1.255
Collaborative case review	2.31	1.255
Development of co-communication procedures	2.20	1.023
Determination of resource allocations	2.17	1.175
Development of procedures for Conflict Resolution Issues	2.06	1.282
Development of co-hierarchy and levels of co-responsibilities	2.00	1.260
Development of integrated manual of available resources from each agency	1.86	1.061
Development of joint training manuals of co-service practices	1.74	.919

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RESULTS (continued)

Table 4. Means of effective co-service strategies between AIVRP & VA-VR&E, whether or not currently participating

Co-Service Strategy	Mean	Std. Dev.
Memorandum of Understanding	3.83	1.124
Collaborative maintenance services (e.g., transportation, shelter, clothing, food)	3.57	1.145
Collaborative job training services	3.54	1.146
Collaborative case management	3.54	1.245
Collaborative job placement services	3.51	1.197
Collaborative case review	3.51	1.245
Informal agreement between agencies	3.46	1.094
Cultural training provided by one agency to another	3.34	1.187
Determination of resource allocations	3.34	1.162
Development of process for referrals from and to each agency	3.20	1.232
Development of co-hierarchy and levels of co-responsibilities	3.03	1.200
Development of co-communication procedures	3.03	1.124
Development of procedures for Conflict Resolution Issues	2.91	1.245
Development of integrated manual of available resources from each agency	2.91	1.124
Development of joint training manuals of co-service practices	2.63	1.124

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RESULTS (continued)

Research Question #2:

What AIVRP 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 AIVRPs 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 AIVRP and VA-VR&E Co-Service Model for possible adoption by these agencies.



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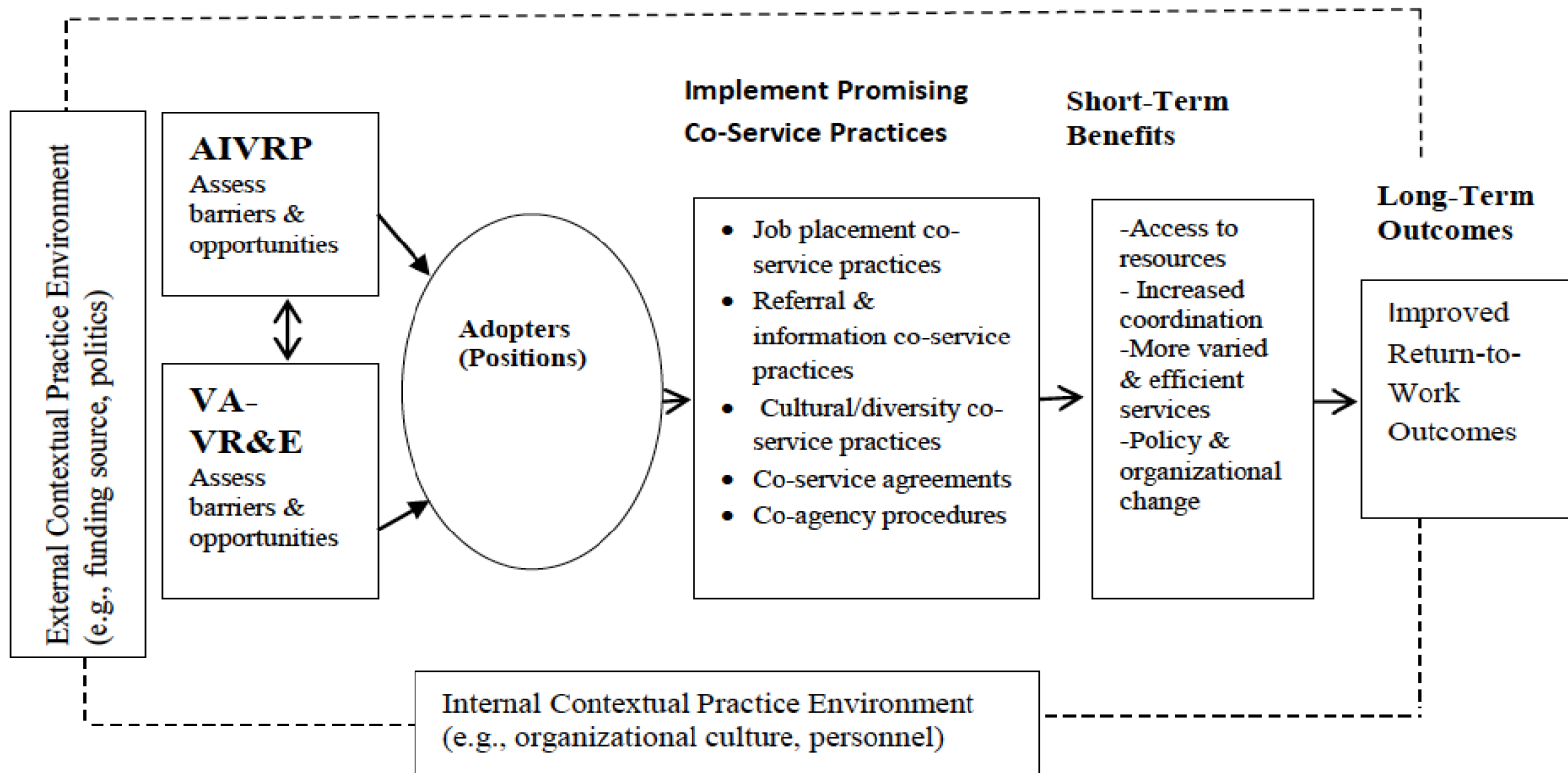
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CO-SERVICE MODEL

Figure: Emerging Conceptual Framework for AIVRP and VA-VR&E Co-Service Model; Guided by Diffusions of Innovations Theory.



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)

- + AIVRPs 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 AIVRP and VA-VR&E Co-Service Model in facilitating increased outcomes among veterans of color were not evaluated.
- + The respondent sample was inclusive of AIVRP 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 AIVRP 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 AIVRP & 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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