



# ***Using VR Data to Improve Outcomes for Transitioning Youth***

**Do We?      Can We?      Why Now?**

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2015 Capacity Building Institute: Improving Postsecondary  
Outcomes for All Students with Disabilities, May 5-7, 2015  
Charlotte, NC

# In Our Audience?

- Individual with disability
- Family Member
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Developmental Disabilities Personnel
- CRP staff
- Teachers
- Transition Specialists
- Researchers
- Administrators

# RRTC

## Vocational Rehabilitation & Transitioning Youth NIDRR 2014

4 Partners



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INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY INCLUSION  
*promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities*



# Objectives for Today

1. Discuss how VR data  
Can be important to  
state teams

2. **Provide examples**  
*of types and use of data to*  
improve VR services for TY

3. **Identify**  
**challenges to Using**  
**Data**

4. **Make recommendations**  
For teams to use VR data



## **Objective 1:**

**Why are VR data important to state teams?**

**1a. Explore strategies, predictors to improve outcomes for TY across populations**

**1b. Align practices and outcomes with recent laws & policies (WIOA, ABLE)**

**1c. Answer demands from stakeholders (families, schools, policy-makers, state legislators)**

# Ia. Explore Strategies

- Honeycutt et al., 2013 found wide variation across VR agencies in service access, utilization, and outcomes for TY
- In special education/transition, research does exist on effective, even evidence-based practices across disability groups
- To date, VR lacks similar research basis to identify effective strategies & promising practices

# I b. Explore

## \*NTLS2 Data on TY with significant disabilities

### Characteristics

as Predictors of Outcomes

- parent expectations for employment
  - High adaptive behavior
  - High functional academics
- Parent expectations for attending postsecondary ed
  - Parent employed, medium family income, some college ed

### Best Practices

As Predictors of Outcomes

- Youth involved in transition planning
- Family involvement
- Work experience (even short term employment)
- Life skills instruction/Self determination
- Interagency collaboration

\* **Papay, C.K., & Bambara, L.M. (2014)** Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals 2014, Vol. 37(3) 136 –148.

## Ib. Align with WIOA 2014 (ABLE Act of 2014; Employment First)

SVRAs make **pre-employment transition services** available to all students with disabilities:

set aside 15% of federal funds for these **services** to assist youth with disabilities transition from:

- *School to Postsecondary Education*
- *School to **Competitive Integrated Employment***

half of federal **Supported Employment** funds

- provide youth with significant disabilities with supports, including *extended services*, to obtain **competitive integrated employment**

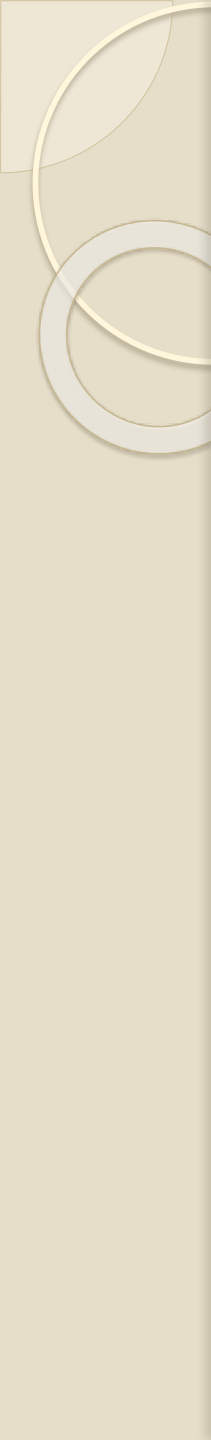


## **3c. Respond to critical stakeholders**

- Youth & families need information about VR services, access & utilization
- SVRA directors need evidence to identify state goals, priorities, and fund new practices
- State planning teams need data to identify service gaps and needs
- Congress & state legislators use evidence to allocate funding & support new initiatives

## **Stakeholders need to use VR data to:**

- improve understanding of what SVRAs offer TY
- enhance collaboration around identifying mutually important evaluation questions for state planning teams
- offer a longer-term (after school exit) perspective on TY



## **Objective 2: Examples**

### **NEEDS for data, types and *use of data* to improve VR services for SVRA**

USE Data to address a specific purpose or answer a question, such as:

What are the needs of TY in my state?

- What are the programs, services or strategies offered in my state to TY?
- How well does the state collaborate across agencies – VR, DD, special ed?

Are TY accessing VR services in my State?

- How effective is this program, service or practice for TY?
- How efficient is this program, service or practice for TY?
- Does this program, service or practice work equally well across diverse youth?

How adaptable or replicable is this program, service practices to my own region or state?

# Data sources for SVRAs & states in planning

## Databases and sources to access:

- National and state databases (**RSA-911** databases, state administrative/case management databases)
- Accessible national databases (American Community Survey, Current Population survey data, state-specific education demographic and other data, etc.)
- State demographic and background data on children & youth (**State Report Cards-NCLB**)
- RSA and OSEP **Annual State Plans** & Monitoring Reports

## Data to consider collecting:

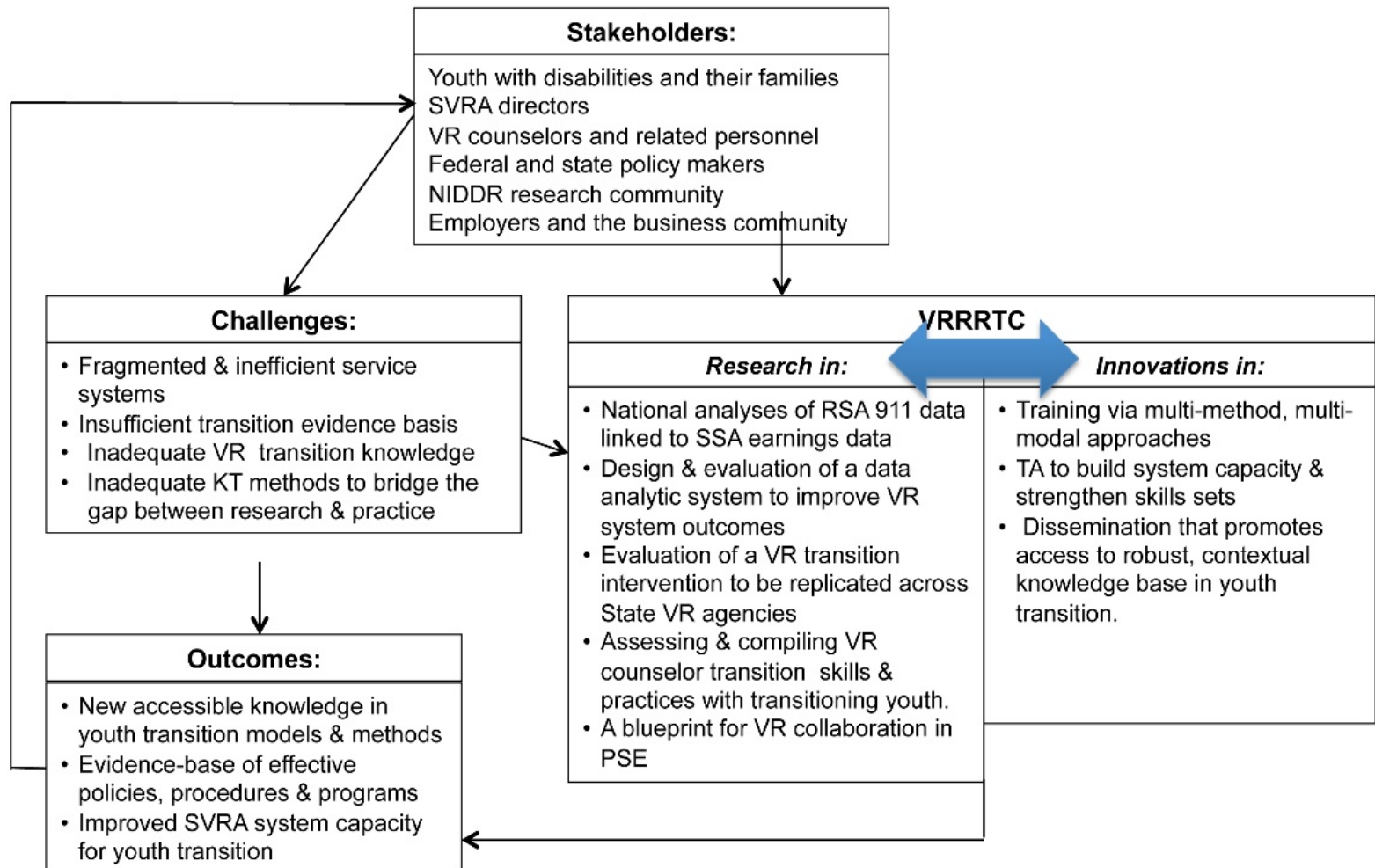
- Surveys & interviews
- Focus groups & key informant
- Observations & document reviews



# DO WE HAVE GAPS.....

to fill in our knowledge  
base for VR and school  
staff to find, understand  
and use data to  
improve outcomes for  
TY?

## Objective 2. Example how RRTC will use data to address knowledge gaps to SVRAs and TY



## **2. RRTC studies using diverse data sources to improve outcomes**

- Analyses of RSA-911 case record data merged with earnings, SSA beneficiary data
- Analyses of DORS AWARE data to evaluate a longitudinal model transition intervention
- Design & Implement Data Analytic Systems to improve SVRA data access, monitoring
- Collect national data using surveys & interviews to describe effective VR practices for TY

## **RRTC Study I Analyses of RSA-911 Data**

Use **multiple national data sources** to analyze individual and agency-based factors leading to better outcomes for TY

- National RSA- 911 case service records administrative database
- Linked to the Master Earning File (SSA)
- Linked with SSA records

**TO:** address knowledge gap in long-term VR employment outcomes and agency-level factors influencing employment outcomes



# **RRTC Study I-Sources of data**

- **RSA-911** Case Service records containing individual (consumer)level factors released annually by RSA to researchers (access available to SVRAs)
- **Master Earnings File (MEF)**, housed on the SSA mainframe (not publicly available)
- **DAF File** housed on the SSA mainframe containing longitudinal records of SSI or DI recipients (not publicly available)

## RRTC Study 2: Evaluate data from model transition intervention



- Maryland DORS received RSA funding to design, implement & evaluate model demonstration program for TY
- Maryland model was aligned with the *NCWD* Guidepost of Success best-practice features
- Model ran at 11 sites over a 5 year period

# **RRTC Study 2: Sources of Data**

- MD DORS one of 22 SVRAs using AWARE electronic database to retrieve case records
- TY cases from AWARE matched to state quarterly earnings data up to one year after case closure
- Use a matched case control design and/or nested design to exert ad hoc controls relevant to the limitations of most demonstration projects!
- Conduct structured interviews with critical stakeholders in project to assess implementation, adaptation, and innovations in practice

# Study 3: Use Data Analytics to Improve VR services

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- Combines data available on SVRA electronic administrative databases (i.e., AWARE) with information technology
- Addresses the SVRA need for access to quantitative information on service and program effectiveness
- Addresses data and design limitations arising from SVRA demonstration models exhibited in Study 2

# **RRTC Study 3 Sources of Data**

- Use RSA monitoring reports, annual state plans, interviews to complete an environmental scan to identify sample of SVRAs offering array of services & supports for TY, software capacity to support a DAS
- Develop and test a Data Analytic System (DAS) to be used by SVRAs (often in conjunction with AWARE software) to develop systematic approach for ongoing evaluation & service improvement

# RRTC Study 4: Investigating VR counselor best practices



**Tool Kit:** Identify, describe, compile “best practices” implemented by VR counselors serving TY in high performing SVRAs

- Identify top quartile of SVRAs and TY outcomes from Study I data
- Survey all VR counselors in the top quartile using adapted version of VR-Transition Assessment Inventory (Plotner et al., 2012)

# RRTC Study 4: Sources of Data

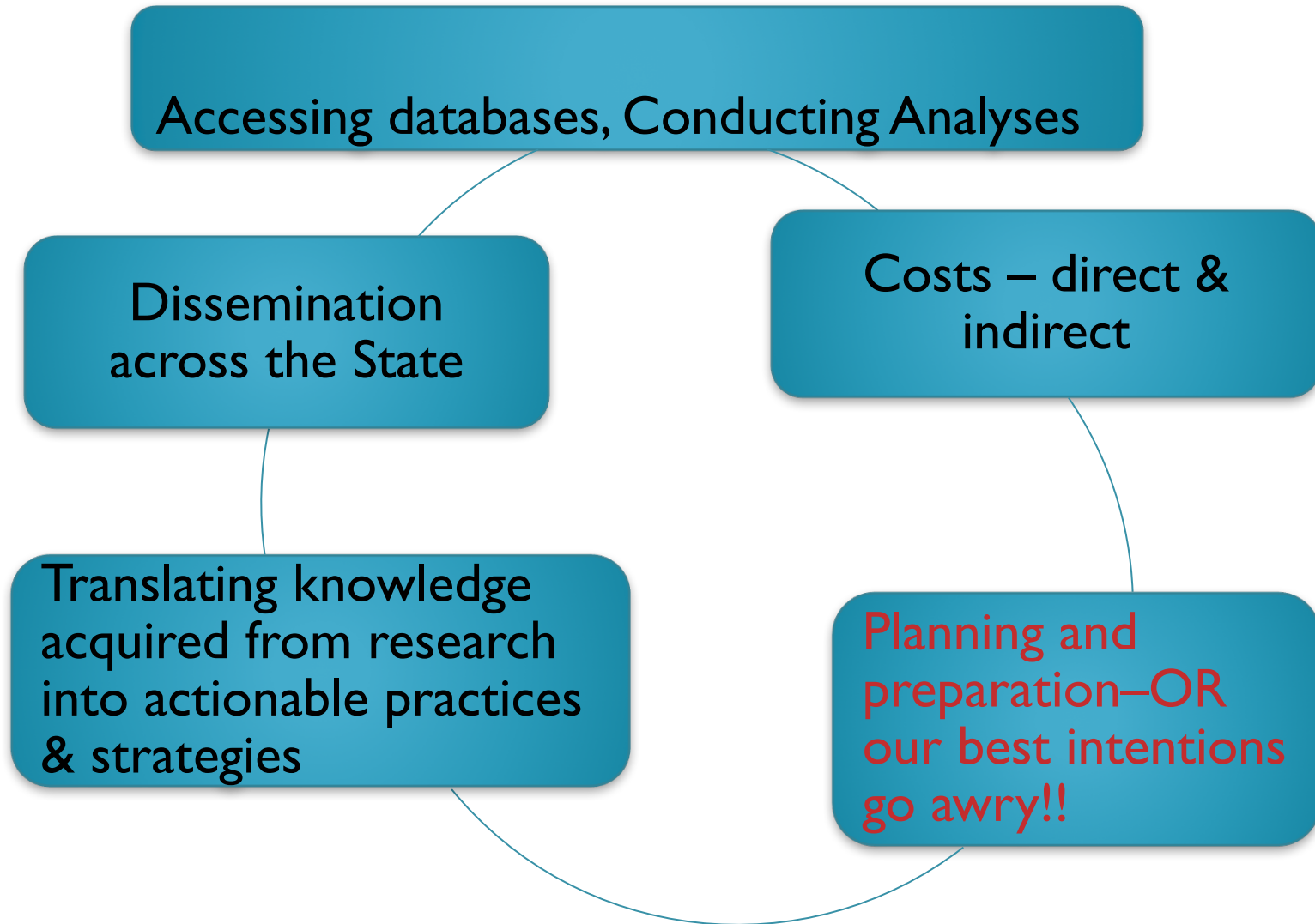
- **RSA-911** case service records to identify SVRAs in top quartile on proportion of youth served & service outcomes **Study 1**
- Collect survey data using Plotner's VR-TAI
- Conduct follow-up interviews to “drill down” into survey data for more understanding of strategies & practices for **replication**

## Example: Summary of Data Sources

Data Source	Primary Focus	Availability
American Community Survey	Demographics, state & large cities	Publicly available
Current Population survey	Economics, state, local	Publicly available
RSA-911 case services records	VR clients, national & state	SVRAs have access; researchers with permission
State VR administrative records	VR clients, local, by office & counselors	SVRAs have access, researchers with permission
Annual State Plans	Progress, plans, priorities, needs assessments, special projects, personnel, budgets	On RSA website; with access to MIS system
RSA State Monitoring Reports	Progress, recommendations	On RSA website; with access to MIS system



## Objective 3 Challenges to Using Data



# Objective 4 Recommendations

- Identify problem or purpose
  - in narrow terms for your SVRA or state team wants to address
- Verify importance of problem with stakeholders
- Identify source and/or type of data needed to answer problem or purpose
- Determine feasibility of a plan
  - modify as necessary
- Determine state's capacity to implement
  - modify as necessary

# Remember ...

- Data sources exist but we need for better uniformity across SVRAs regarding purpose and use of data for TY
  - (what works, what outcomes)
- Helpful to have federal guidance on what to measure and report on TY
- Need more rigorous research to determine causality between agency practices and outcomes

# Questions for Audience

- **What is capacity of your SVRA and state team to access and analyze data? What do you see as the purpose and benefit?**
- How useful are research reports on TY outcomes in SVRAs to your state? What additional guidance would you need for understanding & implementation?
- **How can experiences of the agencies doing relatively better on TY outcomes be applied to all agencies?**
- What promising VR practices have you identified for TY in your state? How are these disseminated?