

Preliminary Data From Effects of Knowledge Translation Methods on VR Counselors Providing Pre-ETS to Youth with Significant Disabilities

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A Quick Look

One of the studies from the Virginia Commonwealth University Research and Training Center on Employment of Transition-Age Youth with Disabilities focuses on pre-Employment and Transition Services (pre-ETS).

Funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR), this study focuses on developing a toolkit for vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors. The toolkit goal is to improve the facilitation of pre-ETS to students 14-16 years old with significant disabilities.

This study consists of three phases. Phase 1 gathered information on barriers and facilitators. Researchers interviewed VR counselors, students, family members, and educators in Virginia and Kentucky. During Phase 2, 55 students participated in pre-ETS lessons in Virginia and Kentucky. Researchers collected feedback to guide the development of the toolkit. Phase 3 will evaluate the effectiveness of a targeted knowledge translation strategy. This brief will outline preliminary findings from Phases 1 and 2 of the study.

Key Findings

Phase 1 (completed):

- Identified challenges included time constraints, difficulty engaging students and parents, limited collaboration, and resources.
- Stakeholders desired early, interest-driven community-based experiences.
- VR counselors requested more training. In particular, how to teach younger students and specific resources for significant disabilities.

Phase 2 (ongoing):

- There were benefits to adapting lessons for virtual and in-person instruction.
- Lesson information needed to be relevant and engaging for younger students.
- Lesson content, tests, and workbook activities needed to be simplified.
- Assessing student technology skills aided instruction.
- Concrete examples, interactive activities, and relatable content increased student engagement.

Putting It Into Practice

The developed pre-ETS lessons addressed the challenges identified in Phase 1. Lesson facilitation focused on early exposure, collaboration, and communication. Lesson design included family communication. Workbooks functioned as tools to document student learning. However, researchers played a crucial role in facilitating instruction. This underscored the difficulty of interagency collaboration.

Where To Go from Here?

Preliminary data shows that pre-ETS is valuable for younger students. However, content needs to be meaningful to them. Phase 3 will evaluate a knowledge translation method to identify best practices. This evaluation will help VR professionals deliver pre-ETS to younger students with significant disabilities. Phase 2 also showed that increased collaboration is crucial. To better serve this population, it is necessary to address student schedules, space, and resources.

Learn More

Read the [full article](#) for more detailed information.

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