Data Note

Measuring the Outcomes of Job Seekers with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program
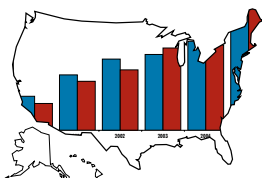
By Daria Domin and Alberto Migliore

Most people with intellectual or developmental disabilities aspire to gainful employment. To assist them with this goal, state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies offer employment-development services that are based upon Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs). A commonly used measure of outcomes is the rehabilitation rate, which is defined as the percentage of individuals who achieve employment out of all individuals whose cases were closed after receiving services. This indicator, however, neglects to consider that for various reasons not all individuals progress to receive services. This information is important because not receiving services translates directly into exiting the VR program without an employment outcome. This Data Note explores how many individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities progressed from application to eligibility to IPE development and services, and how this figure varied across states.

Based on RSA-911 data from fiscal year 2008, we found that on average 65% of individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities nationally progressed to completing an IPE and received VR services, whereas 35% exited VR without receiving services and, therefore, without employment. These figures varied widely across states. Some states served twice the percentage of individuals who achieved an IPE compared to other states (see Figure 1). Missouri served the lowest percentage at 43% and Alabama served the highest at 89%. These variations were not limited to people with intellectual or developmental disabilities. We found that the percentage of people with any type of disability who progressed to receive services varied from 27% in Washington to 84% in South Carolina. A high correlation of 0.77 between the two disability groups' figures confirmed that these variations were relatively consistent across disability groups. In other words, if a state provided services to a high percentage of people with intellectual or developmental disabilities, that state was also likely to provide services to a high percentage of people with any other disabilities.

The reasons for such large variations in the percentages of individuals progressing to receive VR services are not clear and may include factors such as individuals' characteristics, procedural standards within the VR agencies, order of selection on waiting lists, and the states' socio-economic environments. More investigation is needed. In the meantime, we recommend caution when reporting the rehabilitation rate as a stand-alone measure of outcomes. We emphasize the importance of also reporting the percentage of people who progress to developing an IPE and receiving services. These are valid measures of outcomes and necessary steps towards gainful employment.
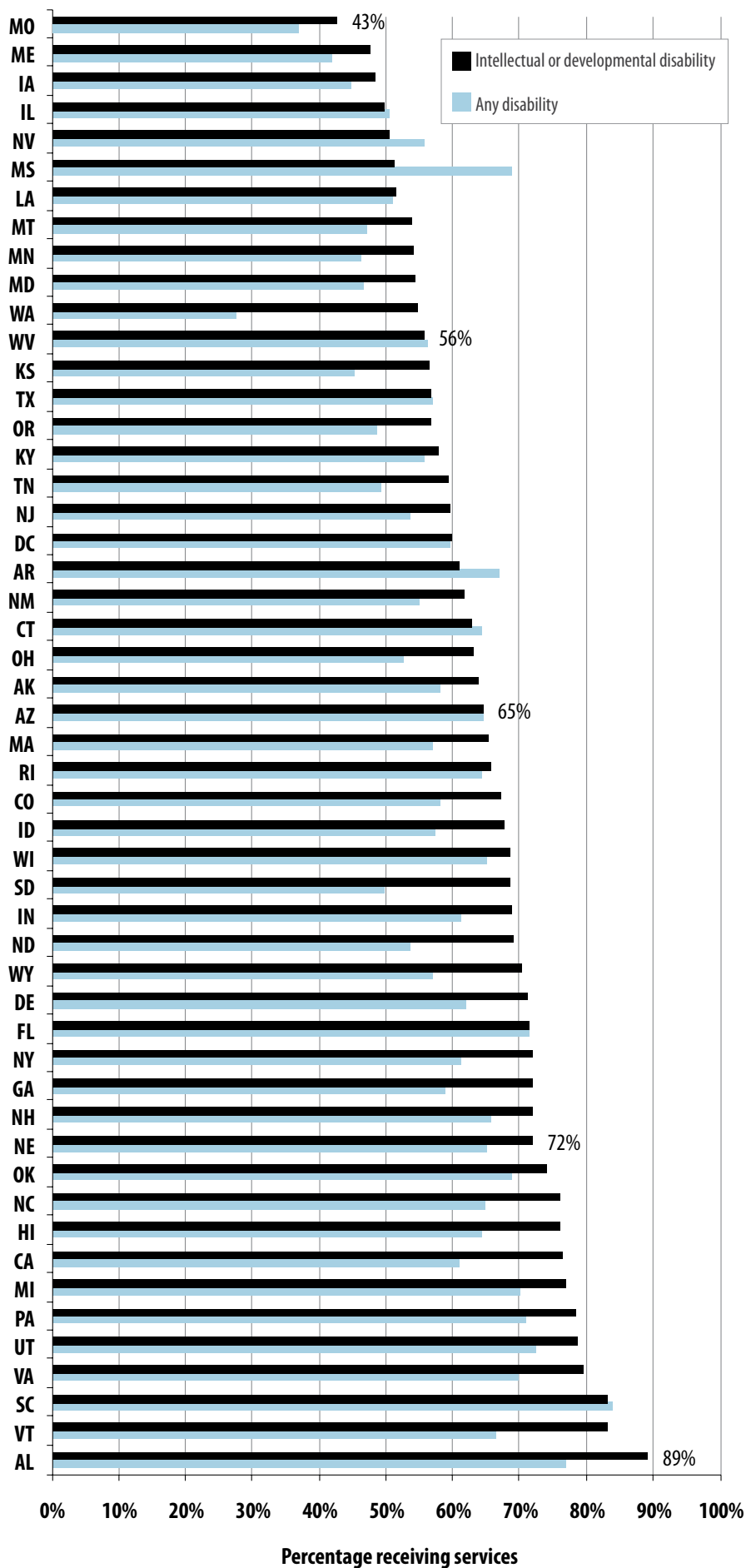
StateData.info
A project of the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston

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FIGURE 1: Percentage of applicants who received rehabilitation services

Sorted by percent of ID/DD receiving services

Legend:
- ■ Intellectual or developmental disability
- ▨ Any disability

States (top to bottom): MO (43%), ME, IA, IL, NV, MS, LA, MT, MN, MD, WA, WV (56%), KS, TX, OR, KY, TN, NJ, DC, AR, NM, CT, OH, AK, AZ (65%), MA, RI, CO, ID, WI, SD, IN, ND, WY, DE, FL, NY, GA, NH, NE (72%), OK, NC, HI, CA, MI, PA, UT, VA, SC, VT, AL (89%)

X-axis: Percentage receiving services (0% to 100%)

Sorted alphabetically by state

State	NON-DD	ID/DD
AK	58%	64%
AL	77%	89%
AR	67%	61%
AZ	65%	65%
CA	61%	76%
CO	58%	67%
CT	64%	63%
DC	60%	60%
DE	62%	71%
FL	71%	72%
GA	59%	72%
HI	64%	76%
IA	45%	48%
ID	57%	68%
IL	51%	50%
IN	61%	69%
KS	45%	57%
KY	56%	58%
LA	51%	52%
MA	57%	65%
MD	47%	54%
ME	42%	48%
MI	70%	77%
MN	46%	54%
MO	39%	43%
MS	69%	51%
MT	47%	54%
NC	65%	76%
ND	54%	69%
NE	65%	72%
NH	66%	72%
NJ	54%	60%
NM	55%	62%
NV	56%	50%
NY	61%	72%
OH	53%	63%
OK	69%	74%
OR	49%	57%
PA	71%	78%
RI	65%	66%
SC	84%	83%
SD	50%	68%
TN	49%	59%
TX	57%	57%
UT	73%	79%
VA	70%	80%
VT	67%	83%
WA	28%	55%
WI	65%	68%
WV	56%	56%
WY	57%	70%