RPEN News

President's Message

The opportunity and the challenge

Program evaluation is filled with opportunity and challenge. It presents an opportunity to make a tremendous difference through rigorous evaluation of services rendered, of met and unmet needs, and the designing of new services. The challenge lies in knowing what evaluation tools to use, under what conditions, for what question, with what purpose, within a certain budget and timeframe. It is thus the purpose of this newsletter to explore the many ways of effectively evaluating programs, to celebrate the good work of program evaluators in both public and private settings, to share best program evaluation practices, and to keep evaluators informed. To this end, I am pleased to present to our

> *Program evaluation is filled with opportunity and challenge. It presents an opportunity to make a tremendous difference… The challenge lies in knowing what evaluation tools to use, under what conditions, for what question, with what purpose, and within a certain budget and timeframe.*

membership the first edition of RPEN News. It is my hope that you will find this quarterly newsletter to be a source of support, reliable information, and a vibrant community of likeminded professionals.

Respectfully,

Saara T. Grizzell, Ph.D., CRC, LVRC
RPEN Board President 2017

In This Issue

Upcoming Events

Summit Conference
September 6th and 7th, 2017
Double Tree Hotel
Omaha, Nebraska

NRA Annual Training Conference
October 27-29, 2017
Omni Corpus Christi Hotel
Corpus Christi, Texas

Featured Evaluator: Kellie Scott

Every quarterly newsletter will feature a program evaluator / RPEN member. This edition features an interview with Kellie Scott, a program evaluator based in Kentucky.

Q: Please tell the readers a little bit about yourself.
I graduated from the University of Kentucky with a Bachelor's in Social Work and Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling and have now worked for the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for 23 years. I spent 17 years as a counselor covering everyone from rural Eastern Kentucky to high school students in Louisville. I have been a program evaluator now for 6 years and have thoroughly enjoyed it. I live in Louisville, Kentucky with my husband and two teenage daughters.

Q: Reflecting on your accomplishments within the past five years, which ones are you most proud?
In the last five years, there are probably two accomplish-ments which stand out the most. I have attended the Program Evaluation Summits since 2011 and have enjoyed each and every one of them. But in 2013 I volunteered our

agency to host the 2014 Summit. This was a journey I enjoyed – call it a labor of love if you will. This was a lot of work, but I enjoyed getting to know many of you much better as we worked on a planning committee together.

Another accomplishment has been working on the Substantial Gainful Activity Grant. I did not actually write the grant, but coordinated our agency's efforts to implement the project and ensure the project protocols were carried out. I also provided program evaluation services on this project. The grant project administrator is the Institute of Community Inclusion. I couldn't have asked for a better group of professionals to provide the technical support and assistance for this project. We had our statewide conference recently and asked consumers who had benefited from the SGA project to speak

on a panel. That was when we realized that the hard work was totally worth it and quite enjoyable.

Q: What program evaluation practices do you utilize and find most helpful in your work?
Although not formally trained as a Program Evaluator, I have taken advantage of trainings as they have been offered. Most of the time I utilize my knowledge of statistics, research, and vocational rehabilitation to determine if a particular program or practice is effective; sometimes I just use my common sense. When determining whether a practice or protocol is effective, I first define it. Sometimes when a co-worker asks me to evaluate a particular set of practices, they may ask for one measure but are actually addressing a totally different matter. Therefore, I always clarify the question and dimensions before querying the measure. I query my own data so I can verify the data to ensure it is measuring what was intended. However, on the rare occasion that I must enlist a programmer to help with my data queries, I validate the data to ensure that it is reliable.

Summit Navigator Members

The Summit Navigators – the life line of RPEN, are a collection of committed professionals who are responsible for planning and coordinating the annual Summit conference, developing and managing the Summit Group website, and coordinating Summit (SuRGE) reading groups. Please find below a short description of each summit navigator.

Darlene Groomes, Ph.D., CRC, LPC
Associate Professor
Human Development & Child Studies
Oakland University
Rochester, Michigan

Dr. Groomes has been part of the Summit Group Navigators since the committee's inception. She facilitated the Summit Reading Groups from 2010-2015. Dr. Groomes has a continued interest in the training of specialists in program evaluation and continuous improvement, and is in frequent communication with the new PEQA Training Center through the University of Wisconsin-Stout. As a university professor, her line of research is on identifying performance value and innovation in the Vocational Rehabilitation Public Program, now under the WIOA environment.

Steven W. Collins, Ph.D.
Chief, Bureau of Planning
and Performance
Florida Division of
Vocational Rehabilitation
Tallahassee, Florida

Dr. Collins is engaged in a number of activities related to VR Performance Management and Community of Practice. He currently facilitates the monthly Navigator calls, makes contacts with WIOA Technical Assistance Center partners, and recently participated in a webinar on WIOA implementation with the WINTAC. He is also facilitating the WIOA Interagency Implementation Team for the state of Florida, as well as working on a major VR initiative for implementation of the new RSA-911 data elements. All of Dr. Collin's work is in collaboration with wonderful interdisciplinary and interagency teammates and partners.

Kathe F. Matrone, Ph.D., CRC
Director, Center for Continuing
Education in Rehabilitation
University of Washington
Seattle, Washington

Dr. Matrone is the Director for the Center of Continuing Education in Rehabilitation (CCER) at the University of Washington. This center, originating out of the old RCEPs approximately 20 years previous, currently provides training and technical assistance to VR organizations and their partners for the

purposes of Performance Management/Improvement. In addition, the center hosted the 3rd and 4th Summit in Vancouver, Washington. The center also houses the Northwest ADA Center, providing training and technical assistance to a variety of stakeholders on their rights and responsibilities under the ADA. With regard to program evaluation, CCER hosts a quarterly teleconference with Program Evaluators of seven VR and blind agencies in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. This teleconference provides participants an opportunity to discuss issues surrounding program evaluation and performance management. Discussions within the past year have mostly focused on meeting the requirements of WIOA and less on performance improvement. In addition, CCER faculty meet in-person at the yearly Summit Group Conference and offer a forum for open dialogue regarding program evaluation and quality assurance issues.

Elizabeth Moody, MPA
Strategic Planning Director
Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Tallahassee, Florida

Elizabeth Moody is currently serving as the Strategic Planning Director of the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (FDVR). In the past year, Ms. Moody has been an integral part of FDVR's success in implementing the newly mandated WIOA regulations.

Scott Sabella, Ph.D., CRC
Assistant Professor
Counseling, School, and Educational Psychology
University of Buffalo
Buffalo, New York

Dr. Sabella is a currently teaching rehabilitation counseling courses and conducting research at the University of Buffalo. His research broadly encompasses the field of performance management in public rehabilitation, including: leadership components at various levels across state VR agencies, identifying the most important competencies for program evaluators in state VR, and the impact of changes to CSPD on the performance of public rehabilitation agencies.

Michael Shoemaker, M.A., CRC, LVRC, CPM
Founder of RPEN and Navigators
Utah State Office of Rehabilitation
Salt Lake City, Utah

Michael Shoemaker, as lead presenter, recently submitted a presentation proposal for the upcoming 10th Annual Summit in Omaha, Nebraska entitled *Tools of the Trade,* a two-part breakout workshop. During the first hour of the proposed presentation, workshop participants would describe, explain, and share their program evaluation tools in groups of five. During the second hour, smaller group participants would be given feedback and an opportunity to engage in continuous quality improvement for tools previously shared.

John Stem, MS, CRC
Program Manager, Maryland State DOE
Baltimore, Maryland

John Stem, the newest member of the Summit Navigators, manages the Quality Assurance, Policy, and Planning program for the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services. He also serves as the Division's liaison to the NIDILRR-funded VR-ROI Project, and recently concluded a 3-year term as RPEN representative to the National Board. John participated in the fourth Summit Reading Group (SuRGE-4), as well as presented sessions and facilitated round table discussions at previous summit conferences. John is currently using resources obtained through this community of practice to update the Maryland DORS customer satisfaction survey process, in collaboration with the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council, to include satisfaction surveys for consumers with open cases. John looks forward to presenting on this process at future Summits.

David Vandergoot, Ph.D.
President, WorkLife Resources, Inc.
Ashville, North Carolina

Dr. Vandergoot currently manages the website and develops the online program evaluation curriculum for the Summit Group. The Summit Group website welcomes contributors to the curriculum and inquiries from interested developers.

RPEN Board

A Tool for Analyzing Program Evaluation Data: SEM

By Saara Grizzell, Ph.D., CRC, LVRC

The purpose of this section is to introduce you to an effective way of analyzing program evaluation data, namely, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). This type of analysis assesses relationships among and between unobserved (latent) and observed (manifest) variables.

This concept is best illustrated with an example. For the sake of this discussion, imagine that you are asked to identify factors that contribute to successful employment outcomes. You might start by looking at available data on employment outcomes within your agency (e.g. case closures). You then might hypothesize that certain factors (e.g. counselor characteristics, provision of services, and client characteristics), may have influenced employment outcomes within your agency. Please find an illustration of this example, *Figure 1*, on the next page.

In *Figure 1*, each straight arrow leading to the left reflects a hypothesized relationship in the direction of the arrow. For example, counselor characteristics, provision of services, and client characteristics are hypothesized to have influenced employment outcomes in your agency. In this case, these factors are considered 'latent variables' in that they are of interest, but are not the things you are actually measuring. On the other hand, the factors listed to the right of the circles are 'manifest variables,' which are the variables that you are actually tracking. The data for each of the manifest variables can be collected in a variety of ways. It is important to understand that the data obtained for each manifest variable is conceptually related to one of the latent variables. Thus, in *Figure 1*, we see that the latent variable of counselor characteristics is represented by the manifest variables of years of experience, level of education, and counselor age, gender, and ethnicity. Likewise, the latent variable of provision of services is represented by the manifest variables of type, frequency, and duration of services. In addition, the latent variable of client characteristics is represented by the manifest variables of client age, gender, ethnicity, disability type, and disability severity.

So, this is all very interesting and theoretical, but, you may ask, has SEM been used for analyzing vocational rehabilitation outcomes? Yes, in fact, SEM has been used in VR in a variety of studies. However, one study in particular is worth mentioning here. Jun, Osmanir, Kortering, & Zhang (2015) recently used SEM to examine the impact of participation in VR programs and school work-related programs on employment outcomes for transition students. In this particular study, the source of the data was taken from the database of the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services. If you are interested in learning more about SEM, there are a wide variety of online courses, books and YouTube videos with which you can consult.

Contact: saara.grizzell@utrgv.edu

References

Jun, S., Osmanir, K., Kortering, L., & Zhang, D. (2015). Vocational rehabilitation outcomes: A look at one state's evidence. *Journal of Rehabilitation, 81*(2), 47-53.
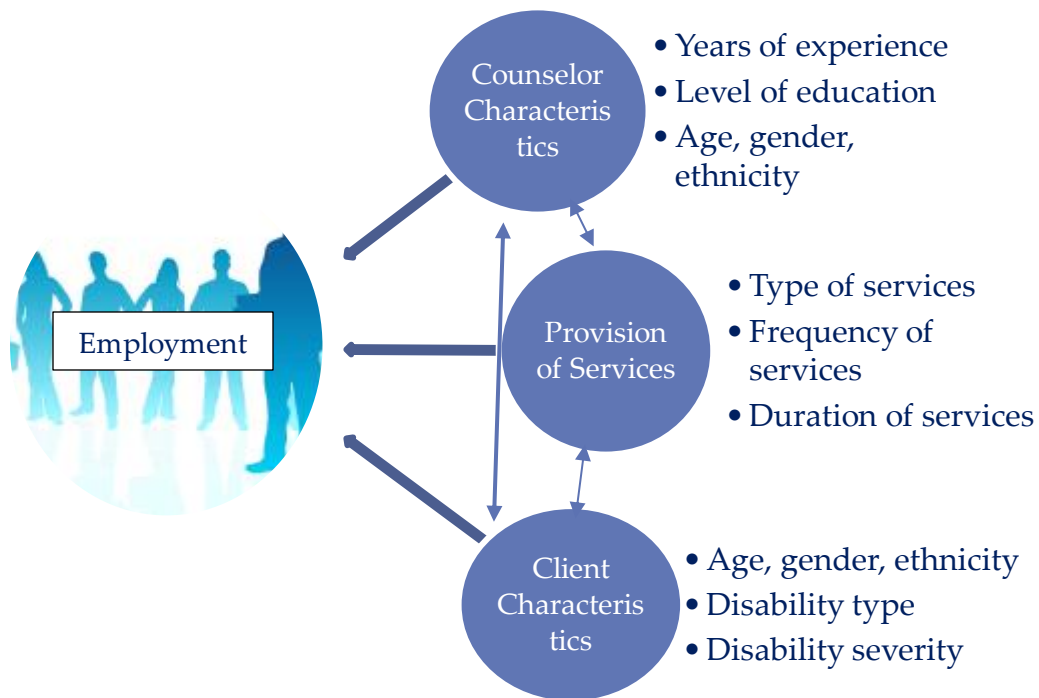
Figure 1: SEM Vocational Rehabilitation Example

Nomination and Submission Guidelines

Nomination Guidelines: RPEN members are welcome to nominate themselves or other colleagues for the "Featured Program Evaluator." To do so, please send an e-mail to terry.donovan@wintac.org with the following: the name and place of employment of the person being nominated (nominee) and an explanation as to why the nominee is being nominated. The RPEN board will then evaluate submissions and inform the nominator/nominee of the board's decision. Please note that the nominee must be a member of RPEN.

Submission Guidelines: RPEN members are welcome to submit an article for publication in this newsletter. Please submit your article to the following e-mail: matthew.markve@vr.idaho.gov. Articles are limited to no more than 400 words (including references), and one table, graph, or figure. Please include information about the author (name, place of employment, job title, credentials).

What is RPEN?

Established in March 2011, the Rehabilitation Program Evaluation Network (RPEN) is a division of the National Rehabilitation Association (NRA) that strives to promote, integrate, and elevate the role of program evaluators in the field of vocational rehabilitation through education, training, and collaboration.

Benefits of RPEN Membership

RPEN members enjoy a variety of benefits, such as: continuing education program evaluation trainings at discounted rates, opportunities to collaborate and exchange ideas with other program evaluators, attendance at an annual membership meeting, a biannual subscription to the Journal of Rehabilitation Administration, and a quarterly subscription to the RPEN newsletter.

How to Join RPEN

There are a variety of ways to join RPEN (online, by phone, or by mail):

*Join online: Visit the NRA website ([www.nationalrehab.org)](www.nationalrehab.org), and follow the links to become a member. You will be asked to fill out a membership form. On the membership form check the box for the RPEN after selected your general NRA membership. There are **two** annual RPEN membership levels, namely: student: $15, and professional: $30.*

Join by telephone: Contact the National Rehabilitation Association office at (703) 836-0850.

Join by mail: Send a membership application form and check to:

> *National Rehabilitation Association*
> *PO Box 150235*
> *Alexandria, VA 22315*