

# The VR Program Evaluation Coach

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# VR Program Evaluation Coach

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- Accessed for free online ([www.VREvalCoach.com](http://www.VREvalCoach.com))
- Developed as part of the evaluation of the SGA Project Demonstration
  - Funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration
  - Partnership between the Institute of Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts and Mathematica
  - Capacity building component for vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies

# VR Program Evaluation Coach

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- **Helps VR staff conduct more rigorous program evaluations to assess the impacts of services**
  - Could be any service, program, or policy change
- **Guides staff through the program evaluation process, from developing an evaluation question to statistical analysis and reporting**
- **Includes guides, tips, and examples**

# Introductory Brief

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**MATHEMATICA**  
— CENTER FOR —  
**STUDYING DISABILITY POLICY**

DISABILITY

## IssueBRIEF

Rachel Miller and Todd Honeycutt

### THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM EVALUATION COACH

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The VR Coach is a tool that enables VR program staff to test short-term and long-term impacts of

State vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies can use a new, free performance management tool—the VR Program Evaluation Coach ([www.VREvalCoach.com](http://www.VREvalCoach.com))—to evaluate the outcomes of their policies, programs, and services. VR agencies collect or have access to large amounts of data on client services, programs, and outcomes. However, these data may be largely underused for the purpose of improving services and outcomes. The VR Coach can help agencies use their data to better serve clients. When an agency is considering a change in services or processes, whether small or large, the VR Coach can help staff evaluate whether that change will have the desired impact. Rigorous

# Useful Across the Continuum of Evaluation Needs

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- Relies on agencies' administrative data
- Rapid cycle evaluation
  - Quickly assess innovations
- Formative evaluation
  - Eligibility, individualized plan for employment, time to service, service receipt, cost of purchased services
- Outcome evaluation
  - Short-term: closures, employment at closure, time to closure
  - Long-term: Unemployment insurance earnings, SSA cost reimbursement

# Five Steps to Program Evaluation

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- 1. Getting started**
- 2. Planning your program evaluation**
- 3. Preparing your data**
- 4. Analyzing your data**
- 5. Summarizing your findings**

# Step 1 – Getting Started

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- **Specify the service and intended outcome**
- **Select the target group for the service**
- **Identify comparison group**
  - **Matched comparison versus random assignment**
  - **Client-, counselor-, or office-level analysis**
- **Consider monitoring innovation delivery (performance management)**

# Step 2 – Planning Your Program Evaluation

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- **Craft the research question**
  - Does [SERVICE] lead to [OUTCOME] among [TREATMENT GROUP] compared to [COMPARISON GROUP]?
- **Consider service cost, what success would look like, and actions that will result from different evaluation outcomes**
- **Provide context for the service**
- **Develop an evaluation plan that includes milestones**



# Step 3 – Preparing Your Data

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- **Create the data set**
  - CSV format, single row per observation, categorical variables coded as numbers
- **If random assignment design, assign cases into treatment and control groups**
- **If comparison group design, build evaluation sample through propensity score matching**
- **Create a final data set with outcome variable**

# Step 4 – Analyzing Your Data

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- Identify parameters for success and failure
- Upload data file
  - Identify treatment, outcome, and background variables
- Use Bayesian analytic approach, not frequentist
  - Results shown in terms of likelihoods (*There is a 97% probability that the innovation increases employment by 5 percentage points or more*)
  - More interpretable from a policy perspective

# **Step 5 – Summarizing Your Findings**

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- **Produce final report and technical appendix that incorporates:**
  - Information regarding the innovation
  - Statistics about the sample
  - Results regarding the innovation
- **Simple format that can be shared**

# Contact Information

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