

Vocational Rehabilitation on the Way to SSDI

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**Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on
Disability Statistics and Demographics
State of the Science Conference**

April 23, 2012

**MATHEMATICA
Policy Research**

Center for
STUDYING 
DISABILITY POLICY

Acknowledgments

- **Project funded by the Social Security Administration through a grant to the Michigan Retirement Research Center**
 - David Stapleton, Principal Investigator
 - Jim Sears, SSA Analyst
 - Dawn Phelps, Program Analyst
- **The contents of this presentation do not necessarily represent the policies of SSA, MRRC or any other federal agency (Edgar, 75.620 [b]).**

Overview

- **To what extent do SSDI entrants receive state VR services before they enter SSDI**
 - Is VR an early intervention?
 - Is there scope for VR services to divert clients from SSDI entry?
 - Do VR services facilitate SSDI entry?
- **Analysis of matched RSA and SSA administrative data**
- **Descriptive statistics**

Social Security Disability Insurance

- **SSDI is an essential lifeline for millions**
- **SSDI benefits are available to persons with established work histories who have a medically determinable work disability expected to last at least one year or to result in death.**

Policy Concerns

- **Only a very small minority of SSDI beneficiaries ever leave the rolls for work**
- **In December 1999, 4.7 million working-age adults received SSDI benefits; by December 2008, that number had jumped to 7.4 million**
- **Payments to beneficiaries totaling more than \$8.6 billion in a single month.**
- **SSDI trust fund will expire by 2018**

Vocational Rehabilitation Program

- **VR is the largest employment-related federal expenditure for people with disabilities**
- **Federal/state program (states provide at least 21 percent of agency funding)**
- **Eligible: anyone who has an impairment that interferes with work, who can benefit from VR services, and who requires VR services to achieve VR outcomes**
- **Approximately 600,000 cases closed each year**

Research Questions

- **How many VR applicants who are not on SSDI eventually enter SSDI?**
- **How long from VR application to SSDI entry?**

Analysis File

- **RSA-911 for 1998 – 2008 matched to**
- **Master Earnings File (MEF) and Ticket Research File (TRF)**
- **1 record for each VR applicant**

Methods

- **Descriptive**
- **Heavy use of MEF requires substantial SSA assistance (Jim Sears)**

Demographics

Individual Characteristics	All Applicants	SSDI at close
	480,566	51,343
Age		
Under 18	9.0%	2.5%
18-29	31.5%	21.5%
30-39	20.5%	21.8%
40-49	23.3%	28.7%
50-59	12.1%	21.9%
60-FRA	3.6%	3.6%

Demographics

Individual Characteristics	All Applicants	SSDI at close
	480,566	51,343
Blindness/visual impairment	4.3%	6.5%
Deafness, Primary Communication Visual	0.8%	1.1%
Deafness, Primary Communication Auditory	0.4%	.2%
Hearing Loss, Primary Communication Visual	0.5%	.2%
Hearing Loss, Primary Communication Auditory	2.7%	.8%

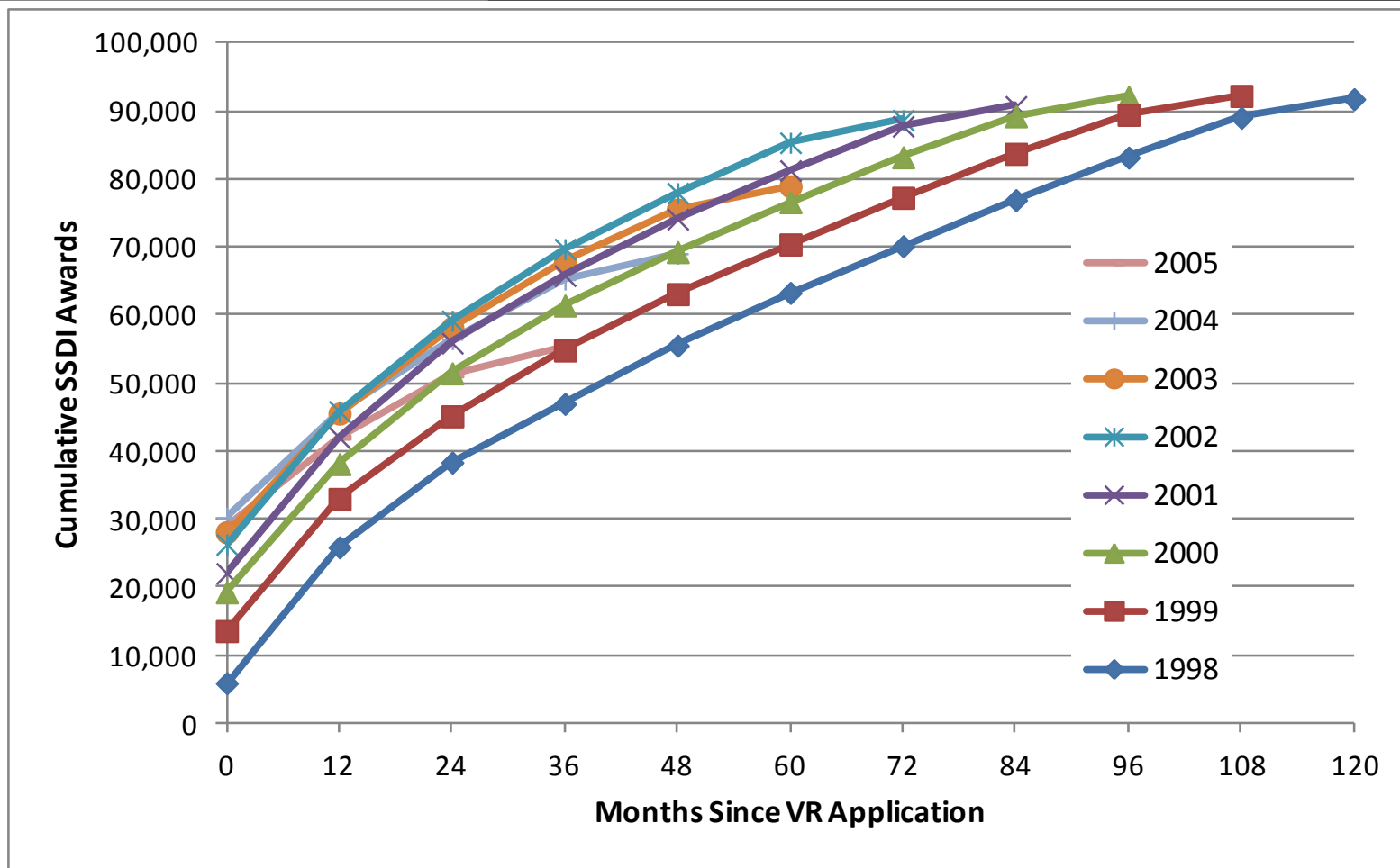
Demographics

Individual Characteristics	All Applicants	SSDI at close
	480,566	51,343
Mobility Orthopedic/ Neurological Impairments	6.4%	10.1%
Manipulation/ Dexterity Neurological Impairments	3.0%	3.6%
Cognitive Impairments	22.6%	13.8%
Psychosocial Impairments	19.3%	21.3%
Other Mental Impairments	10.4%	6.9%

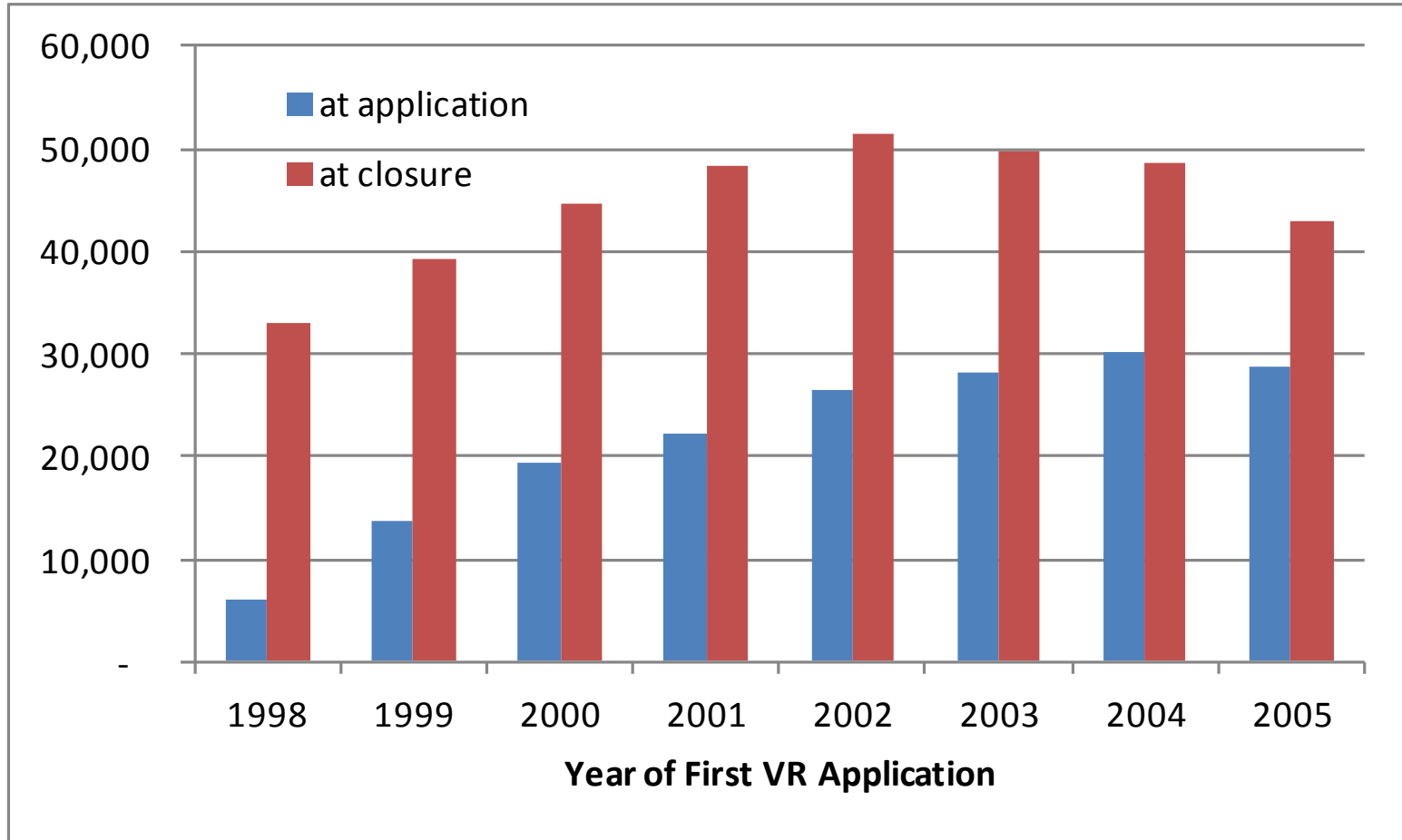
Demographics

Education at application	All Applicants	SSDI at close
	480,566	51,343
8th grade or less	4.8%	3.9%
Grade 9-12th no diploma	28.5%	17.5%
Special education certificate	5.9%	4.8%
High school graduate or GED	36.1%	38.7%
Post secondary education, no degree	13.1%	17.4%
Associates or Vocational/Technical Certification	5.5%	8.3%
Bachelor's degree	4.2%	7.0%
Masters degree or higher	1.3%	2.1%

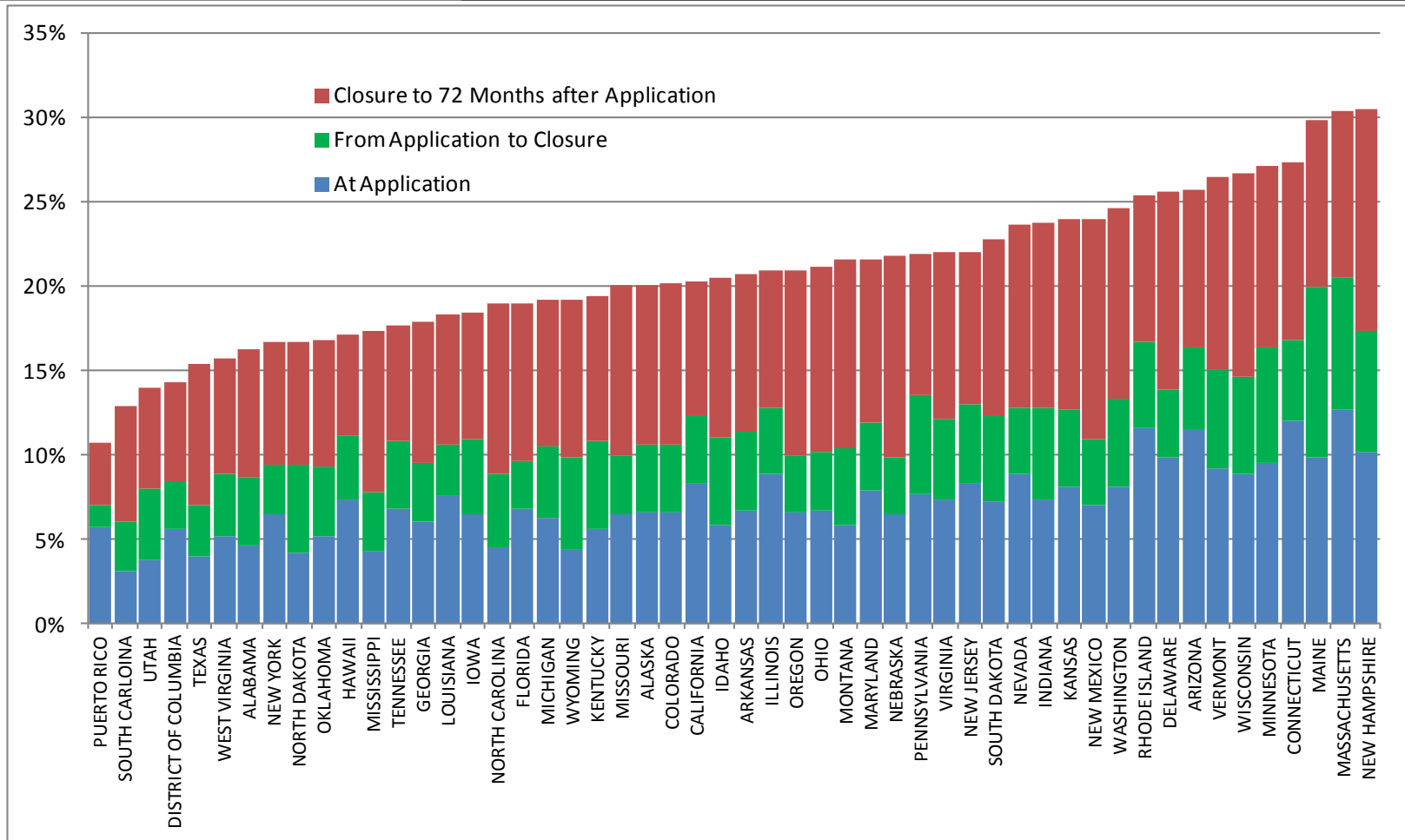
SSDI Awards to New VR Applicants



SSDI Awards of New VR Applicants as of VR Application and Closure



Percentage of 2002 Applicants Awarded SSDI at Application, Closure and 72 Months, by State



Initial Reactions

- **Health and function**
 - Consumers are likely to become eligible overtime
- **Low quality employment outcomes**
 - Wages lower, when compared to general labor force
- **VR reimbursement**
 - Does VR encourage consumers to apply for SSDI?
 - Would a different VR reimbursement policy impact SSDI entry?

Future Research

- **VR services and type of closure**
- **What characteristics (including state and earnings), predict SSDI entry for non-SSDI VR?**
- **Waiting time analysis**
 - **What is the potential for estimating the impact of delay in VR service receipt (i.e., waiting time) on SSDI entry?**

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