

Waiting Time for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services and Post-Closure Outcomes for SSDI Beneficiaries

**David Stapleton
Todd Honeycutt**

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

April 23, 2012

MATHEMATICA
Policy Research

Center for
Studying 
DISABILITY POLICY

Acknowledgments

- **Project funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration through grant #H235L100004 to the Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts-Boston (Bill Kiernan, Susan Foley)**
- **Goal is to improve the capacity of VR agencies to help SSDI-only beneficiaries engage in substantial gainful activity (“the SGA Project”)**
- **More information: www.vr-ssdi.org**
- **The contents of this presentation do not necessarily represent the policies of ED or any other federal agency (Edgar, 75.620 [b]).**

Overview

- **Background on VR services**
- **Motivation for analyzing wait times**
- **Data**
- **Methods**
- **Results**

Background

- **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**
- **656,655 cases closed in 2010 (RSA-911, FY2010)**

Waiting Lists

- VR agencies often have long waiting lists due to resource limitations
- Agencies use “order of selection”

Use of Order of Selection in 2010

Agencies	Clients on Waiting List
18	Fewer than 10
11	11–49
6	50 or more



Waiting List and VR Applicants Receiving SSDI

- States must serve those with the most significant disabilities first
- SSDI and SSI beneficiaries are in the two “most significant” groups
- But the duration of waiting for SSDI beneficiaries can still be long in some states and periods

Are Long Waits Detrimental to Employment Outcomes?

- **Initial focus: SSDI-only applicants (those receiving SSDI but not SSI at VR application)**
 - **Should we test the acceleration of service delivery for the SGA project?**
- **Future focus: Other VR applicants**

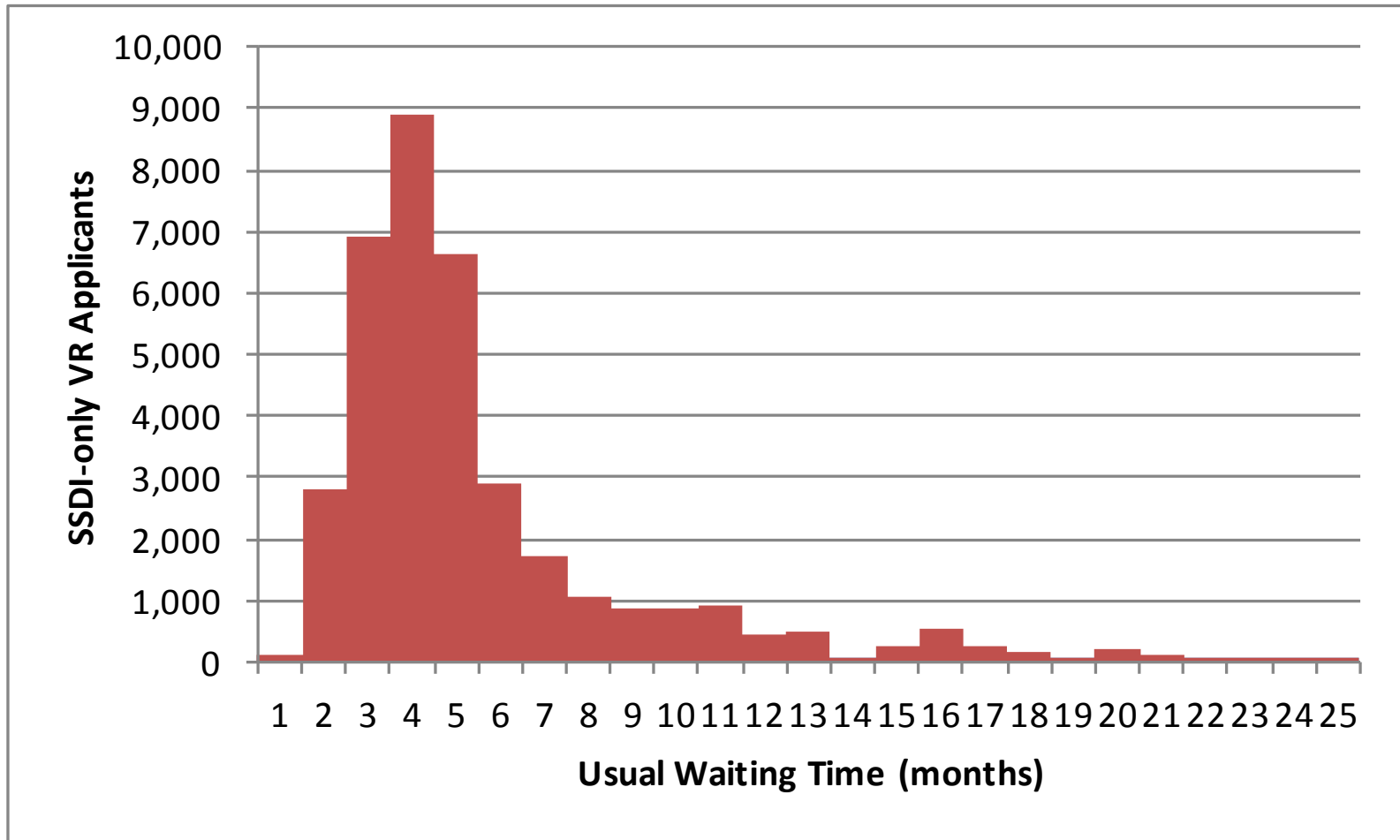
Data

- **FY2005 VR applicant cohort from FY2005–2009 RSA-911 closure records**
- **Matched records to SSA Ticket Research File to identify people who were SSDI-only recipients at the time of application**
- **Excluded territories, agencies for the blind, blind beneficiaries, deaths, people with prior VR service**
- **Measured outcomes in SSA data**

Measuring Wait Time

- **“Usual wait time” (UWT) for SSDI-only applicants who applied to the same agency in the same month**
 - **Need measure that is independent of the person’s wait time**
 - **Avoid any effect of the person’s characteristics or behavior on measured wait time**
 - **Based on distribution of months from application to completion of Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) for all applicants in the same month**
 - **33rd percentile**
 - **“99” assigned to cases closed before IPE or found to be ineligible**

UWT Distribution for the 2005 SSDI-Only Applicants



Outcome Measures from SSA Data

- **Five measures:**
 - Trial work period (TWP) started after VR application (TWPS)
 - TWP completed after TWP application (TWPC)
 - Number of months of SGA earnings (NSGA)
 - Any suspension or termination of benefits due to work (STW)
 - Number of months in nonpay status after suspension or termination of benefits due to work (NSTW)
- **Measured at four points**
 - 12, 24, 36, and 48 months after application



SSA Outcome Statistics for 2005 Applicants

Dependent Variable	Within 12 Months	Within 24 Months	Within 36 Months	Within 48 Months
TWPS (%)	10.7	16.0	18.6	19.7
TWPC (%)	4.1	10.5	14.0	15.8
NSGA months	0.69	1.57	2.32	2.76
STW (%)	2.0	5.7	8.2	9.3
NSTW months	0.08	0.40	0.87	1.31
Sample size	36,187	36,187	36,187	36,187

Methods

- **Multivariate models using UWT as key explanatory variable**
 - **Logistic regression for binary outcomes**
 - **Poisson regression for count outcomes**
 - **Controls for individual, agency, and state characteristics**

Logistic Regressions

Dependent Variable	Time Period (months)	Estimate	Standard Error	P-value
TWP Started	12	-0.015	0.009	0.118
	24	-0.016	0.008	0.046
	36	-0.014	0.007	0.052
	48	-0.014	0.007	0.053
TWP Completed	12	-0.016	0.015	0.276
	24	-0.016	0.010	0.097
	36	-0.022	0.008	0.009
	48	-0.020	0.008	0.011
STW	12	-0.007	0.020	0.731
	24	-0.023	0.013	0.077
	36	-0.007	0.011	0.526
	48	-0.015	0.010	0.153

Poisson Regressions

Dependent Variable	Time Period (months)	Estimate	Standard Error	P-value
NSGA months	12	-0.014	0.008	0.095
	24	-0.017	0.007	0.019
	36	-0.014	0.007	0.038
	48	-0.016	0.007	0.023
NSTW months	12	-0.001	0.023	0.961
	24	-0.019	0.014	0.187
	36	-0.017	0.012	0.162
	48	-0.020	0.011	0.075

Assessment of Magnitude

- **Impact of reducing UWT in every month to no more than 2 months for 2005 applicants, as of month 48:**
 - 4.3 increase in NSTW months (2,043 months)
 - Up to \$1.5 million more SSA payments to VR agencies for each applicant cohort
- **Impact of reducing UWT to 0 months:**
 - 8.5 increase in NSTW months (4,038 months)
 - Up to \$2.9 million more in SSA payments to VR agencies



Important Caveats

- **FY2005 applicants only**
 - 48 months ends in 2009, at the bottom of the recession
- **Assumes UWT is not correlated with important unobserved factors**
 - Interaction of economy with VR funding
 - State agency or state policy characteristics
- **Payment impacts are the *maximum***
 - Based on outcome-only payment system
 - Some NSTW months would not generate payments
 - Payment losses in 48 months might be recovered after 48 months

Conclusion

- **Long wait times appear to:**
 - **Delay client success**
 - **Have financial consequences for both the VR agencies and SSA**
- **A rigorous test of the impacts of expedited services for SSDI-only beneficiaries would be worthwhile**
- **Do service delays for non-beneficiary clients increase SSDI entry?**

Contact Information

David Stapleton
Center for Studying Disability Policy
Mathematica Policy Research
1100 1st St., NE
Washington, DC 20002-4221
(202) 484-0220

dstapleton@mathematica-mpr.com

www.DisabilityPolicyResearch.org

Mathematica® is a registered trademark of Mathematica Policy Research.