



Office of the Inspector General
SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Audit Report

Beneficiaries Who Received
Vocational Rehabilitation Services

A-02-18-50544 | October 2021



Office of the Inspector General

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

MEMORANDUM

Date: October 13, 2021

Refer To: A-02-18-50544

To: Kilolo Kijakazi
Acting Commissioner

From: Gail S. Ennis, 
Inspector General

Subject: Beneficiaries Who Received Vocational Rehabilitation Services

The attached final report presents the results of the Office of Audit's review. The objective was to determine whether beneficiaries who received Vocational Rehabilitation services attribute those services to their work-related outcomes.

If you wish to discuss the final report, please contact Michelle L. Anderson,
Assistant Inspector General for Audit.

Attachment

Beneficiaries Who Received Vocational Rehabilitation Services

A-02-18-50544



October 2021

Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To determine whether beneficiaries who received Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services attribute those services to their work-related outcomes.

Background

VR provides an individual who has a physical or mental impairment the support he/she needs to become employed or maintain employment. VR agencies in each State or U.S. territory administer the VR program to help individuals with impairments become gainfully employed.

While prior Office of the Inspector General reports have noted work outcomes after beneficiaries received VR services, they could not definitively link the outcomes to the VR services. For this report, we surveyed 250 beneficiaries with successful and 250 beneficiaries with unsuccessful work outcomes after receiving VR services to determine whether they attributed those services to their work-related outcomes.

Findings

More beneficiaries in our population had unsuccessful work outcomes after they received VR services than those who had successful outcomes – 62 percent did not have successful work outcomes while 38 percent did. The beneficiaries with successful work outcomes were more likely to attribute the VR services they received to their work-related outcomes. The beneficiaries with unsuccessful work outcomes did not find VR services as helpful. Some indicated they did not receive sufficient help from the VR agencies or counselors.

The VR agencies are an important part of beneficiaries' efforts to return to work. While SSA reimburses VR agencies for services provided, the Agency does not have authority over the quality of those services. However, SSA regularly meets with State VR agencies to discuss reimbursement policy and practices, so it has opportunities to discuss concerns raised in our survey results with the State agencies.

Recommendation

We recommend SSA inform State VR agencies about the results of our survey, especially the survey responses that suggest VR services were not fully effective in assisting beneficiaries to gainful employment.

SSA agreed with our recommendation.

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ABBREVIATIONS

DCF	Disability Control File
IPE	Individualized Plan for Employment
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
POMS	Program Operations Manual System
Pub. L. No.	Public Law Number
RSA	Rehabilitation Services Administration
SGA	Substantial Gainful Activity
SSA	Social Security Administration
U.S.C.	United States Code
VR	Vocational Rehabilitation

OBJECTIVE

Our objective was to determine whether beneficiaries¹ who received Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services attribute those services to their work-related outcomes.

BACKGROUND

VR provides an individual who has a physical or mental impairment the support he/she needs to become employed or maintain employment. VR agencies in each State or U.S. territory administer the VR program to help individuals with physical or mental impairments become gainfully employed.

When an individual is being considered for services by a State VR agency, a rehabilitation counselor evaluates the individual's vocational potential, based on medical and vocational findings, to determine his/her eligibility for services. Before it provides services, the VR agency works with the individual to develop a customized *Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)* that spells out, among other things, employment outcomes consistent with the goal of mainstream employment, the services needed to achieve the employment outcomes, and the timeframes needed to achieve the employment outcomes.²

The *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*,³ as amended, Title I, Parts A and B,⁴ outlines the available services a State VR agency provides. The services may include the following.

- An assessment by qualified personnel to determine eligibility and VR needs, including, if appropriate, personnel skilled in rehabilitation technology.
- Job-related services, including job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up services, and follow-along services.
- Vocational and other training services, including the provision of personal and vocational adjustment services, books, tools, and other training materials.
- Transportation, including training in using public transportation.

The *Social Security Act* authorizes SSA to pay State VR agencies for the services they provide beneficiaries who meet certain conditions.⁵ For example, the services must have contributed to the person achieving work at the substantial gainful activity (SGA) level for 9 continuous months, and the person's reduced reliance on program benefits must generate savings to the trust or general fund.

¹ We use the term "beneficiaries" throughout the report to refer to both Disability Insurance beneficiaries and disabled Supplemental Security Income recipients.

² An employment outcome could also be self-employment or supported employment in which the individual receives temporary services, such as supplementary assessments, a job trainer at a work site, or social skills training to help him/her retain employment.

³ *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, Pub. L. No. 93-112, 87 Stat. 355.

⁴ *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, Pub. L. No. 93-112, 87 Stat. 363-371, §§ 100-111.

⁵ 42 U.S.C. § 1382d.

SSA does not manage State VR agencies. State VR agencies use existing rehabilitation definitions and practices to operate under regulations issued by the Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration. Per SSA, it conducts a teleconference each quarter with all State VR agencies to provide policy and procedural information. The Agency also conducts reviews to ensure it correctly reimburses State VR agencies for services beneficiaries received.

Prior Office of Inspector General Reports

In a June 2017 audit,⁶ we reviewed the accuracy of SSA's reimbursements to State VR agencies and found SSA did not always verify that beneficiaries met the primary conditions for reimbursement or obtain required documentation. In an October 2017 report,⁷ we stated SSA saved more funds when beneficiaries returned to work after they received VR services than it paid for those services. The report also noted that, while SSA saved more than it spent overall for VR services, many beneficiaries had higher costs for VR services when compared to the program savings generated by forgoing Disability Insurance benefits or Supplemental Security Income payments because they returned to work.

While our prior reports may have noted work outcomes after beneficiaries received VR services, they could not definitively link those work outcomes to the VR services provided. This report attempts to do so by asking the beneficiaries whether they attribute their work outcomes to the VR services they received.

Audit Population

From SSA's Disability Control File, we identified 20,478 beneficiaries who left State VR agencies with recorded outcomes from March through May 2019 and who had not re-enrolled with a State VR agency after their exit when we selected our data. Of these, 7,876 (38 percent) successfully worked at the SGA level for 9 continuous months or longer before they exited VR agencies, and 12,602 (62 percent) did not successfully work at the SGA level for 9 continuous months. We surveyed 250 beneficiaries with successful work and 250 beneficiaries with unsuccessful work outcomes to determine whether they attributed the VR services received to their work-related outcomes (refer to Appendix C for our analysis of the beneficiaries' characteristics). Of the 500 beneficiaries surveyed, 285 responded: 148 (59 percent) of the 250 beneficiaries with successful outcomes and 137 (55 percent) of the 250 beneficiaries with unsuccessful outcomes. See Appendix B for the survey questions and responses.

RESULTS OF REVIEW

More beneficiaries in our population had unsuccessful work outcomes after they received VR services than those who had successful outcomes – 62 percent did not have successful work outcomes while 38 percent did. Per our survey, the beneficiaries with unsuccessful work outcomes did not find VR services as helpful as those with successful work outcomes. While SSA reimburses VR agencies for services provided, SSA does not have authority over the quality of those services. Accordingly, while our survey indicates VR agencies could better

⁶ SSA, OIG, *Vocational Rehabilitation Services Reimbursements for Supplemental Security Income and Disability Insurance Beneficiaries*, A-15-14-14095 (June 2017).

⁷ SSA, OIG, *The Cost-effectiveness of Vocational Rehabilitation Services*, A-02-17-14048 (October 2017).

serve some beneficiaries, SSA has limited ability to effect change in the quality of VR services its beneficiaries receive.

Survey Results

Satisfaction Rating

We asked the beneficiaries to rate the VR services they received on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being “it did not help me at all” and 10 being “it helped me greatly.” Beneficiaries with successful work outcomes provided a mean rating of 7.6 while beneficiaries with unsuccessful work outcomes had a mean rating of 4.7 (see Table 1).

Table 1: Satisfaction Rating of VR Services Received

Category	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Mean Rating
Successful Work Outcomes	9	4	8	2	9	8	13	14	15	62	7.6
Unsuccessful Work Outcomes	28	16	8	9	14	13	5	7	9	13	4.7

Note: Figures are based on the beneficiaries’ responses to Question 16 of the survey (see Appendix B). Of the 285 beneficiaries who responded to our survey, 19 did not respond to this question.

Beneficiaries with successful work outcomes generally provided favorable comments on the VR services they received. The following are examples of their comments.

- A beneficiary residing in Ohio stated, “I would say if anyone is interested to get back to work, take advantage of the VR services available.”
- A beneficiary residing in Wisconsin stated, the VR agency “. . . gave me confidence to try to find a job. They made sure I was a good fit. I love my job so thank you! I feel like a part of society.”
- A beneficiary residing in Utah stated, “They were kind and genuinely interested in me and in helping me.”

Beneficiaries with unsuccessful work outcomes generally provided less favorable comments on the VR services they received. Of the beneficiaries with unsuccessful work outcomes who provided a rating of five or less, most indicated they did not receive sufficient help from the VR agencies or VR counselors. The following are examples of their comments.

- A beneficiary residing in New York stated, “They need to do more for people with disability. They were not providing enough help to people who need it. I had to find a job myself without any help from my VR agency.”
- A beneficiary residing in Hawaii stated, “Counselors were very nice but had nothing of any value at all to offer. After 5 years of service, I still have no clue what VR actually does other than keeping themselves employed.”

- A beneficiary residing in Texas stated, “Counselor that closed my case was thoroughly unhelpful. She was difficult to reach and required very personally invasive information about me to continue to help. My case was closed because I refused to seek her help further.”

Employment After Vocational Rehabilitation Services Began

State VR agencies should prepare disabled individuals to engage in employment or supported employment and achieve economic self-sufficiency. We asked beneficiaries whether they worked after they began receiving VR services. Beneficiaries with successful work outcomes before they exited VR were much more likely to report being employed or having been employed than those with unsuccessful outcomes. Specifically, 91 percent of the beneficiaries with successful work outcomes reported they worked after they began receiving VR services, compared to only 38 percent of beneficiaries with unsuccessful work outcomes.⁸

Of those who reported they worked after they received VR services, the majority (76 percent of the beneficiaries with successful and 45 percent of the beneficiaries with unsuccessful work outcomes) reported they were working part time. Additionally, more beneficiaries with unsuccessful work outcomes reported that they were not employed and not looking for a job at the time they completed the survey.⁹

Attribution of Employment to Vocational Rehabilitation Services

We asked beneficiaries who returned to work after they received VR services whether they would have been able to do so without those services.¹⁰ More beneficiaries with a successful outcome attributed their employment outcome to the VR services they received.

Of the 122 beneficiaries with successful outcomes who responded to whether they would have been able to return to work without the VR services they received, 79 (65 percent) replied no. Of the 123 beneficiaries who responded to whether they would have been able to work for as long as they had without VR services, 85 (69 percent) replied no.

Of the 46 beneficiaries with unsuccessful work outcomes who responded to whether they would have been able to return to work without the VR services they received, 22 (48 percent) replied no. Of the 42 beneficiaries who responded to whether they would have been able to work for as long as they had without VR services, 20 (48 percent) replied no.

⁸ We also analyzed the demographical characteristics of 500 beneficiaries with different work outcomes: 250 with successful work outcomes and 250 with unsuccessful work outcomes. We did not identify major differences between beneficiaries who exited VR with successful work outcomes and those who exited with unsuccessful work outcomes in terms of the type of disabilities, benefit entitlements, or educational level. See Appendix C for the results of our demographical analysis.

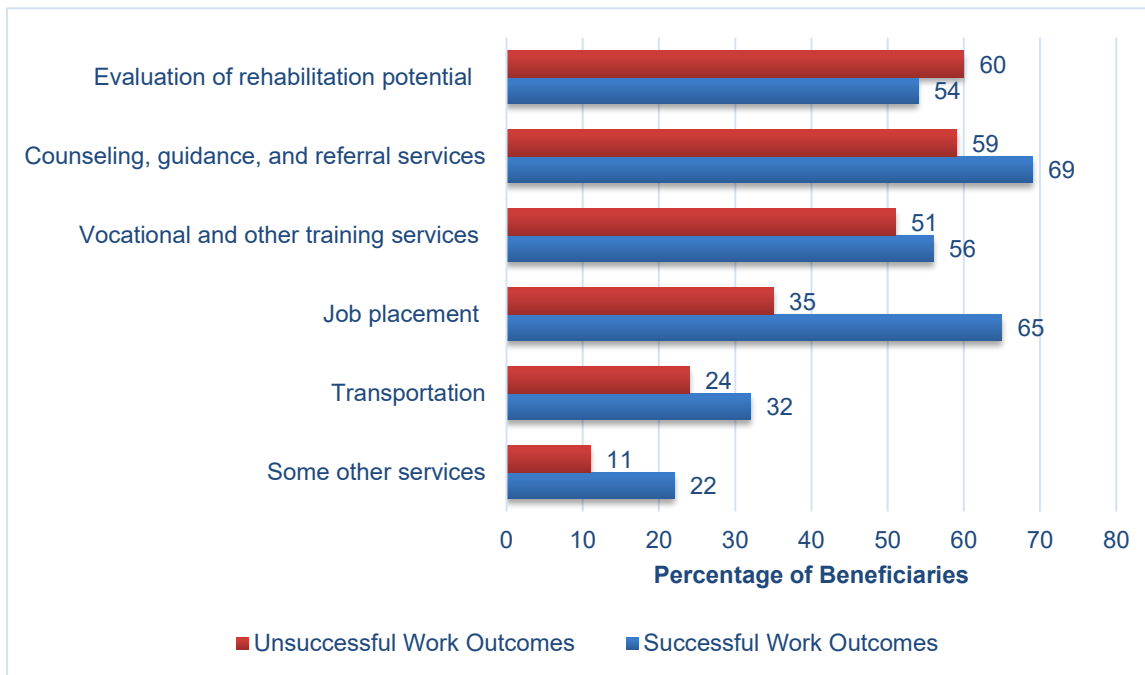
⁹ Thirty percent of the beneficiaries with unsuccessful work outcomes reported they were not employed and not looking for jobs when they completed the survey, compared to 3 percent of the beneficiaries with successful work outcomes.

¹⁰ Based on their responses, 128 beneficiaries with successful work outcomes and 48 beneficiaries with unsuccessful work outcomes indicated they returned to work after they received VR services.

Individualized Plan for Employment

We asked beneficiaries whether their VR counselor worked with them to develop an IPE, which spells out, among other things, employment outcomes consistent with the goal of mainstream employment, the services needed to achieve the employment outcomes, and the timeframes needed to achieve the employment outcomes. Ninety-one percent of beneficiaries with successful outcomes reported they had IPEs, and 73 percent of beneficiaries with unsuccessful work outcomes reported they had IPEs. Beneficiaries with successful work outcomes were more likely to report that job placement was included in their IPEs (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Services Included in the IPE



Note: Figures are based on the beneficiaries' responses to Question 6 of the survey (see Appendix B). Only 224 of the beneficiaries who responded to a previous question on whether they developed an IPE were asked to respond to Question 6. Of the 224 possible respondents, 6 did not respond to Question 6. Beneficiaries could provide more than one response to this question. Therefore, the total may exceed 100 percent.

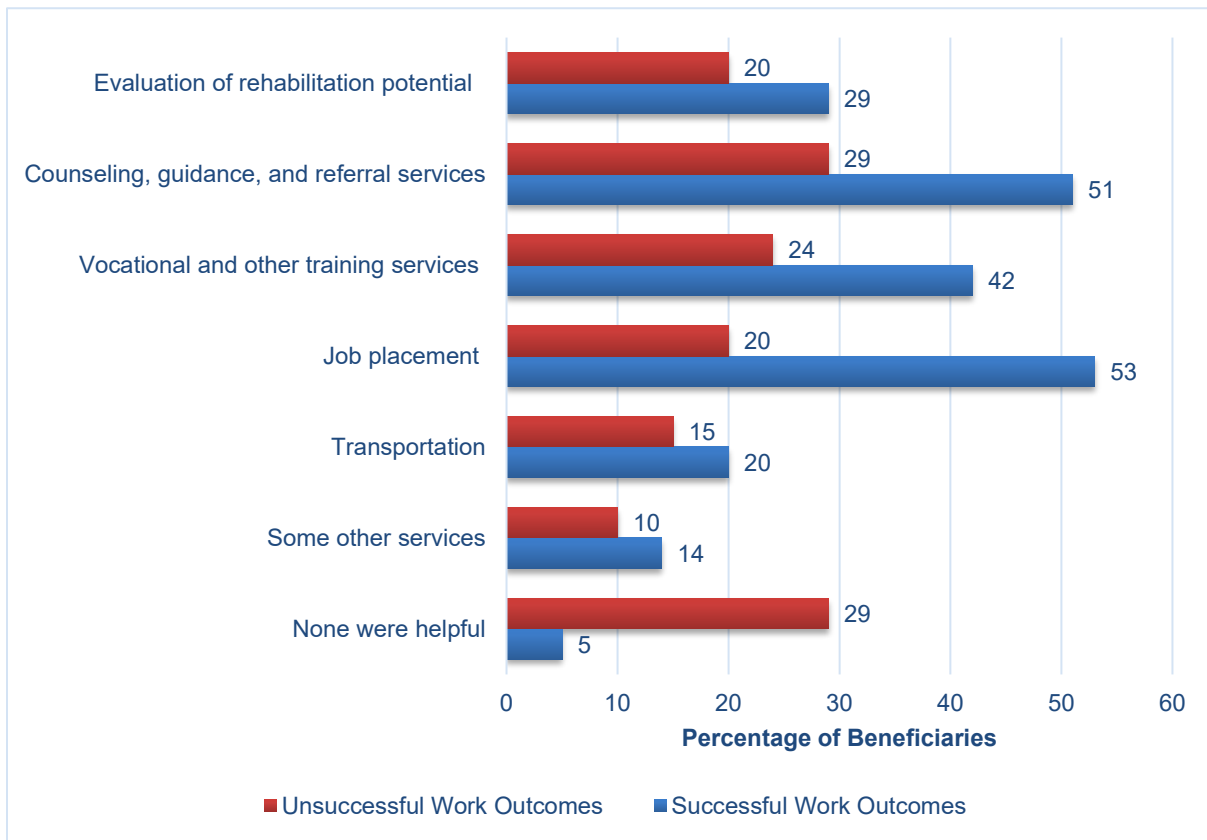
Of those who developed an IPE when they enrolled in VR services, more beneficiaries with successful work outcomes reported they received all services in their IPEs than those with unsuccessful outcomes (87 to 73 percent).

Assessment of Vocational Rehabilitation Services Received

The survey asked the beneficiaries which services helped them return to work.¹¹ Only 137 of the 148 beneficiaries with successful work outcomes responded to this question, and 73 (53 percent) reported that job placement was helpful.

Additionally, 120 of the 137 beneficiaries with unsuccessful work outcomes responded to the same question, and 24 (20 percent) reported that job placement was helpful. Furthermore, 35 (29 percent) of the beneficiaries reported none of the VR services received were helpful because VRs did not provide what was included in the IPE or the counselors did not provide the help the individuals needed (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Types of VR Services Beneficiaries Believed Were Helpful

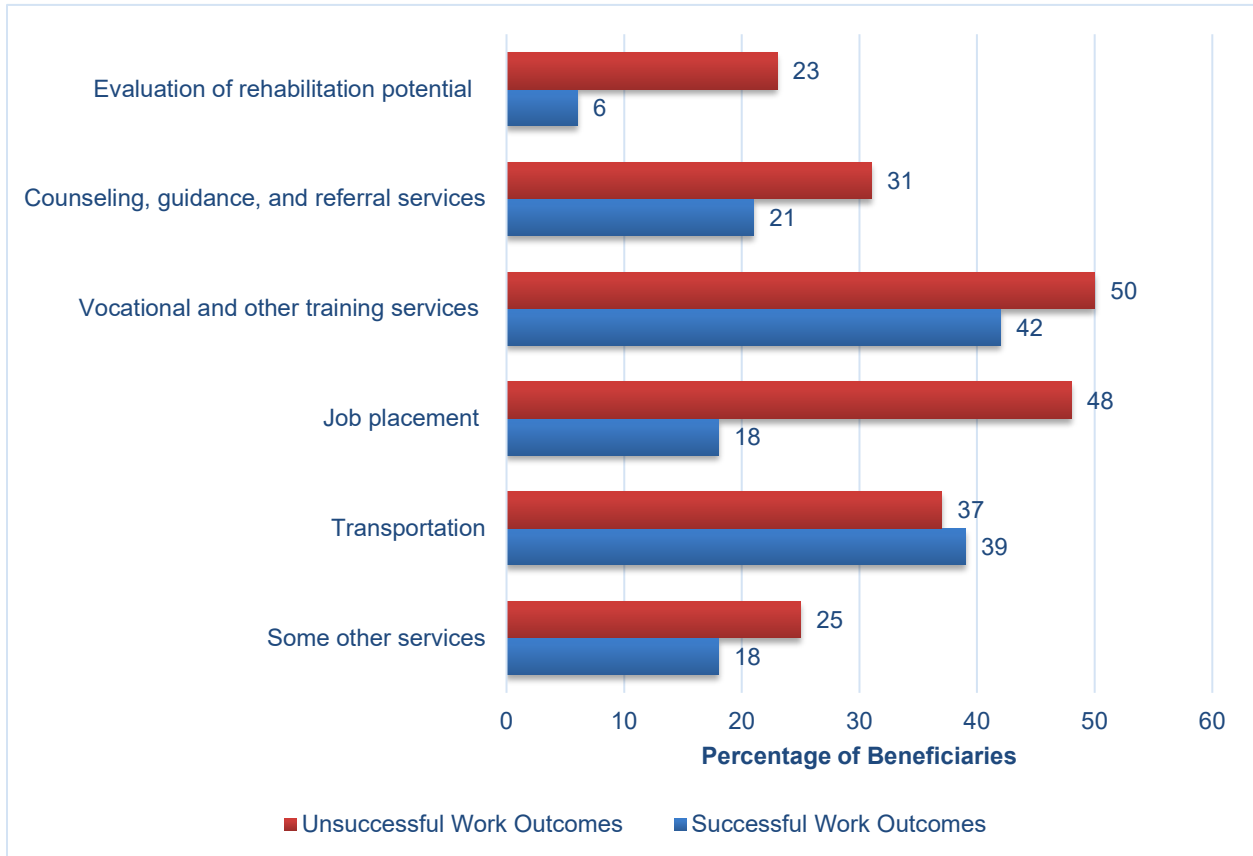


Note: Figures are based on the beneficiaries’ responses to Question 9 of the survey (see Appendix B). Of the 285 possible respondents, 28 did not respond to Question 9. Beneficiaries could provide more than one response to this Question. Therefore, the total may exceed 100 percent.

¹¹ Beneficiaries could select multiple answers to this Question 6.

The survey also asked whether there were other services the beneficiaries did not receive that would have helped them return to work.¹² Of those who responded yes, more beneficiaries with unsuccessful work outcomes reported services they did not receive would have helped their return to work.¹³ For example, 48 percent of these beneficiaries reported job placement, which they did not receive, would have helped them return to work, compared to 18 percent of the beneficiaries with successful outcomes (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Types of Services Beneficiaries Did Not Receive But Reported Could Have Helped



Note: Figures are based on the beneficiaries' responses to Question 10 of the survey (see Appendix B). Only 85 of the beneficiaries who responded VR services they did not receive would have helped them return to work were asked to respond to Question 10. All 85 responded to this question. Beneficiaries could provide more than one response to this Question. Therefore, the total may exceed 100 percent.

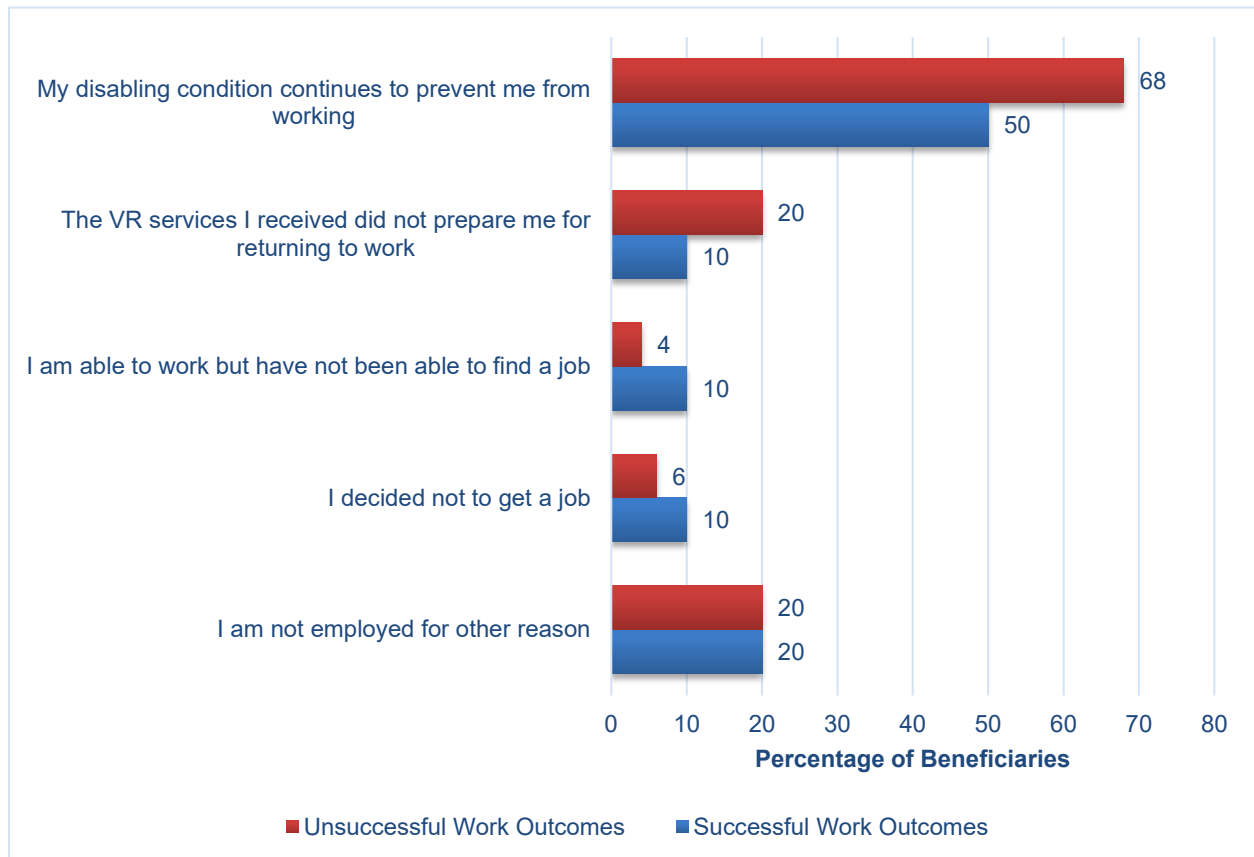
¹² Beneficiaries could select multiple answers to this Question 9.

¹³ Of the 137 beneficiaries with unsuccessful outcomes who responded to our survey, 52 (38 percent) believed VR services they did not receive would have helped them return to work, compared to 33 of the 148 beneficiaries (22 percent) with successful work outcomes.

Reason for Unemployment Since Vocational Rehabilitation Services

The survey asked why beneficiaries had not worked since they began receiving VR services.¹⁴ Of the beneficiaries with unsuccessful work outcomes,¹⁵ 20 percent responded the VR services received did not prepare them to return to work. Most of the remaining beneficiaries reported their disabling condition continued preventing them from working (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Reasons for Unemployment After VR



Note: Figures are based on the beneficiaries' responses to Question 15 of the survey (see Appendix B). Only 90 of the beneficiaries who responded to a previous question on whether they did not work since they began receiving VR services were asked to respond to Question 15. Of the 90 possible respondents, 9 did not respond to Question 15. Beneficiaries could provide more than one response to this question. Therefore, the total may exceed 100 percent.

¹⁴ Beneficiaries could select multiple answers to Question 10.

¹⁵ Of the 137 beneficiaries with unsuccessful work outcomes who responded to our survey, 78 responded they had not worked since they began receiving VR services.

SSA's Relationship with State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies

Authorized by Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the VR program is administered by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), a division of the Department of Education, in partnership with the States. The *Rehabilitation Act* contains the general provisions States should follow in providing VR services. Each State and territory designates a single VR agency to administer the VR program, except where State law authorizes a separate agency to administer VR services for blind individuals.

Recognizing the important role of the VR program, the *Social Security Act* authorizes SSA to pay State VR agencies for the costs of services they provide to disabled beneficiaries if the services result in the beneficiaries achieving work at a specified earnings level. The following shows the number and amount of VR payments SSA paid for Fiscal Years 2016 through 2020 (see Table 2).

Table 2: Reimbursements SSA Made to State VR Agencies

Fiscal Year	Number of VR Payments	Amount of VR Payments	Average Cost Per VR payment
2020	17,885	\$233,102,368	\$12,474
2019	14,573	\$185,499,507	\$12,729
2018	16,237	\$215,417,317	\$13,267
2017	9,924	\$129,576,303	\$13,057
2016	11,932	\$181,403,973	\$15,282

RSA tracks state VR agencies outcomes, including the percentage of clients¹⁶ who have employment outcomes after receiving VR services. Per the latest RSA data available,¹⁷ State VR agencies' client employment outcomes ranged from a high of 72 percent with employment outcomes after services received to a low of 38 percent. See Appendix D for each State's employment outcome.

Earnings for Beneficiaries Who Did and Did Not Receive Vocational Rehabilitative Services

As noted earlier in this report, the beneficiaries with a successful outcome we surveyed were more likely to attribute their employment outcome to the VR services they received. To further determine whether VR services increased beneficiary employment outcomes, we compared SGA-level earnings beneficiaries earned after becoming disabled for beneficiaries who received VR services and those who did not.

More specifically, we compared 2019 and 2020 earnings for the 2,483 beneficiaries in our audit population who became entitled to disability benefits in 2018 to 599,735 beneficiaries who

¹⁶ SSA beneficiaries are a portion of State VR agencies' client base.

¹⁷ FY 2016 is the latest data publicly available.

became entitled to disability benefits in 2018 and did not use VR services. The beneficiaries who received VR services had higher levels of SGA-level earnings (see Table 2).

Table 3: SGA Earnings for Beneficiaries Who Did and Did Not Receive VR Services

SGA Earnings Level	Percent of Beneficiaries Who Received VR Services	Percent of Beneficiaries Who Did Not Receive VR Services
2019 Earnings Exceeding 9 Times SGA	12.9	3.8
2019 Earnings Exceeding 12 Times SGA	7.2	2.5
2020 Earnings Exceeding 9 Times SGA	11.3	3.0
2020 Earnings Exceeding 12 Times SGA	7.8	2.1

RECOMMENDATION

We recommended SSA inform State VR agencies about the results of our survey, especially the survey responses that suggest that VR services were not fully effective in assisting beneficiaries and recipients to gainful employment.

AGENCY COMMENTS

SSA agreed with our recommendation. See Appendix E for the full text of SSA's comments.



Michelle L. Anderson
Assistant Inspector General for Audit

APPENDICES

Appendix A – SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

To accomplish our objectives, we:

- Reviewed the applicable sections of the *Social Security Act* and Social Security Administration's (SSA) *Program Operations Manual System*.
- Reviewed prior Office of the Inspector General reports on Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services.
- Identified from the Disability Control File (DCF), 20,478 beneficiaries who exited State VR agencies with recorded outcomes from March through May 2019 and who had not re-enrolled with a State VR agency after they exited as of the time of our data selection. Of these, 7,876 had successful outcomes, meaning they worked at the substantial gainful activity (SGA) level for 9 continuous months or longer, and 12,602 had unsuccessful outcomes, meaning they did not work at the SGA level for 9 continuous months.
- Randomly selected and reviewed records of 250 of the 7,876 beneficiaries with successful outcomes and 250 of the 12,602 beneficiaries with unsuccessful outcomes.
- Obtained information on the 500 beneficiaries' gender, age, impairments, benefit entitlements, education, VR agency location, and earnings after their exit from VR from the Master Beneficiary Record, the Supplemental Security Record, Numident, DCF and eView.
- Identified from the Master Beneficiary Record, Supplemental Security Record, and Disability Analysis File, 599,735 beneficiaries who became entitled to disability benefits in 2018 and did not use VR services and 2,483 beneficiaries who became entitled to disability benefits in 2018 and used VR services. We extracted earnings from the Master Earnings File for these beneficiaries from 2019 to 2020 to determine whether they had earnings above the SGA level.
- Obtained from the Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration, the latest available data on State employment outcomes by State VR agency.

To determine whether the beneficiaries attribute their work outcomes to the VR services they received, we took the following steps.

- Reviewed SSA records of the beneficiaries.
- Shared our draft survey with SSA and incorporated its comments.
- Mailed up to three surveys to the beneficiaries or their representative payees that consisted of a series of questions regarding their State VR experience.
- Contacted the beneficiaries or their representative payees, as needed, to verify incomplete responses.

We determined the computer-processed data were sufficiently reliable for our intended use. We conducted tests to determine the completeness and accuracy of the data. These tests allowed us to assess the reliability of the data and achieve our audit objective.

We conducted our audit work in the New York Audit Division between September 2019 and February 2021. The entity audited was the Office of Operations under the Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Operations.

We assessed the significance of internal controls necessary to satisfy the audit objective. This included an assessment of the five internal control components, including control environment, risk assessment, control activities, information and communication, and monitoring. In addition, we reviewed the principles of internal controls as associated with the audit objective. We identified the following five components and seven principles as significant to the audit objective.

- Component 1: Control Environment
 - Principle 5: Enforce Accountability
- Component 2: Risk Assessment
 - Principle 9: Identify, Analyze, and Respond to Change
- Component 3: Control Activities
 - Principle 10: Design Control Activities
 - Principle 12: Implement Control Activities
- Component 4: Information and Communication
 - Principle 14: Communicate Internally
 - Principle 15: Communicate Externally
- Component 5: Monitoring
 - Principle 16: Perform Monitoring Activities

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and conduct the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective.

Appendix B – SURVEY RESPONSES

The following provides the number of beneficiaries who responded to each possible question response.

1. After your disability initially prevented you from working, did you try to go back to work on your own (that is, before you received Vocational Rehabilitation [VR] services)? (If you answered yes, continue with Question 2. If no, skip to Question 3.)

	Successful Work Outcomes	Unsuccessful Work Outcomes
Yes	72	67
No	72	65
No Entry	4	5
Total	148	137

2. What was the result of your attempt to get back to work on your own?

	Successful Work Outcomes	Unsuccessful Work Outcomes
I was unable to find a job.	23	20
I found a job but was unable to work consistent hours because of my disability.	20	28
I found a job but decided to enroll in a VR program to better prepare for my return to the work force.	16	5
Something else happened.	13	14
Total	72	67

3. How did you hear about VR services?

	Successful Work Outcomes	Unsuccessful Work Outcomes
From Social Security personnel (Skip to Question 4)	39	30
From another place/person (Please name the place/person below and then skip to Question 5)	105	101
No Entry	4	6
Total	148	137

4. Where did you hear about the services?

	Successful Work Outcomes	Unsuccessful Work Outcomes
My local Social Security office	30	19
A Social Security Publication	5	8
Social Security's Websites (SSA.gov or socialsecurity.gov)	4	1
Other Social Security sources	0	1
No Entry	0	1
Total	39	30

5. After you enrolled in the VR program, did your VR counselor work with you to develop an individualized plan for employment? (If you answered yes, continue with Question 6. If no, skip to Question 9.)

	Successful Work Outcomes	Unsuccessful Work Outcomes
Yes	130	94
No	13	34
No Entry	5	9
Total	148	137

6. What type of services were included in your individualized plan for employment from the VR program? (Check all that apply)¹

	Successful Work Outcomes	Unsuccessful Work Outcomes
Evaluation of rehabilitation potential	69	54
Counseling, guidance, and referral services	87	54
Vocational and other training services	71	46
Job placement	83	31
Transportation	41	22
Some other services	28	10
No Entry	3	3

¹ Beneficiary might select more than one service for this question.

7. Did you receive all of the services included in your plan for employment? (If you answered yes, skip to Question 9. If no, continue to Question 8.)

	Successful Work Outcomes	Unsuccessful Work Outcomes
Yes	109	65
No	16	24
No Entry	5	5
Total	130	94

8. Why did you not receive all of the services included in your plan for employment?

	Successful Work Outcomes	Unsuccessful Work Outcomes
I found a job before I was able to complete my plan for employment	5	4
My health condition worsened	3	7
I decided not to get a job, so I did not think I needed to complete my plan for employment	0	0
I did not receive all of the services for other reasons	7	11
No entry	1	2
Total	16	24

9. What VR services were most helpful in preparing for your return to work? (Check all that apply)²

	Successful Work Outcomes	Unsuccessful Work Outcomes
Evaluation of rehabilitation potential	40	24
Counseling, guidance, and referral services	70	35
Vocational and other training services	58	29
Job placement	73	24
Transportation	28	18
Some other services	19	12
None were helpful	7	35
No Entry	11	17

Please briefly explain how these services helped you?

10. Would other services you did not receive have helped your return to work?³

	Successful Work Outcomes	Unsuccessful Work Outcomes
Yes	33	52
No	103	62
No Entry	12	23
Total	148	137

If yes, which services?

	Successful Work Outcomes	Unsuccessful Work Outcomes
Evaluation of rehabilitation potential	2	12
Counseling, guidance, and referral services	7	16
Vocational and other training services	14	26
Job placement	6	25
Transportation	13	19
Some other services	6	13

² Beneficiary might select more than one service for this question.

³ Beneficiary might select more than one service for this question.

11. Have you worked since you began receiving VR services? (If yes, continue to Question 12, if no skip to Question 15.)

	Successful Work Outcomes	Unsuccessful Work Outcomes
Yes	128	48
No	12	78
No Entry	8	11
Total	148	137

12. What is your current job status?

	Successful Work Outcomes	Unsuccessful Work Outcomes
Employed full-time	12	3
Employed part-time	96	21
Self-employed	3	2
Not employed now, but looking for a job	11	4
Not employed now and not looking for a job at the moment	4	14
Working in other capacity	1	3
No entry	1	1
Total	128	48

13. Would you have been able to return to work without the VR services you received?

	Successful Work Outcomes	Unsuccessful Work Outcomes
Yes	43	24
No	79	22
No Entry	6	2
Total	128	48

Please further explain why you answered Yes or No.

14. Would you have been able to work as long as you have without the VR services you received? (Skip to Question 16)

	Successful Work Outcomes	Unsuccessful Work Outcomes
Yes	38	22
No	85	20
No Entry	5	6
Total	128	48

Please further explain why you answered Yes or No.

15. Why have you not worked since you left the VR program?⁴

	Successful Work Outcomes	Unsuccessful Work Outcomes
My disabling condition continues to prevent me from working	5	
The VR services I received did not prepare me for returning to work	1	14
I decided not to get a job	1	4
I am able to work but have not been able to find a job	1	3
I am not employed for other reason	2	14
No entry	2	7

16. On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is “it did not help me at all” and 10 is “it helped me greatly,” how much did the VR services you received help you in your efforts to return to work?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	No Entry	Total
Successful Work Outcomes	9	4	8	2	9	8	13	14	15	62	4	148
Unsuccessful Work Outcomes	28	16	8	9	14	13	5	7	9	13	15	137

⁴ Beneficiary might select more than one reasons for this question.

17. Please provide any additional comments you may have.

Summary	Successful Work Outcomes	Unsuccessful Work Outcomes
Positive comments regarding VR experience	36	12
Negative comments regarding VR experience	21	39
Miscellaneous comments	13	22
No comments	78	64
Total	148	137

Appendix C – BENEFICIARY DEMOGRAPHICS

We analyzed the demographical characteristics of 500 beneficiaries with different work outcomes: 250 with successful work outcomes and 250 with unsuccessful work outcomes. We did not identify major differences between beneficiaries who exited Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) with successful work outcomes and those who exited with unsuccessful work outcomes in terms of the type of disabilities, benefit entitlements, or educational level. Between the two population groups, the ratio of males to females was higher in the group with successful outcomes (60 percent compared to 40 percent) than in the group with unsuccessful outcomes (55 percent compared to 45 percent). Additionally, the group with the successful outcomes has a slightly younger average age of 39.9 years old, compared to 41.4 for beneficiaries with unsuccessful outcomes.

Gender

Both populations had more males than females. However, the discrepancy is higher for the successful outcome group, with a 20-percent point difference compared to a 10-percent point difference for those with unsuccessful outcomes.

Table C–1: Gender

Gender	Population	Percent in Population	Successful Work Outcomes	Percent in Successful Work Outcomes Population	Unsuccessful Work Outcomes	Percent in Unsuccessful Work Outcomes Population
Male	288	58%	151	60%	137	55%
Female	212	42%	99	40%	113	45%

Age

The average age of beneficiaries with successful outcomes was slightly younger, at 39.9 years old,¹ compared to 41.4 for beneficiaries with unsuccessful outcomes.² See the following for the percentage of beneficiaries in each age group.

Table C–2: Age

Age Group	Population	Percent in Population ³	Successful Work Outcomes	Percent in Successful Work Outcomes Population	Unsuccessful Work Outcomes	Percent in Unsuccessful Work Outcomes Population
61 to 70	65	13%	32	13%	33	13%
51 to 60	92	18%	41	16%	51	20%
41 to 50	64	13%	32	13%	32	13%
31 to 40	114	23%	62	25%	52	21%
20 to 30	165	33%	83	33%	82	33%

Types of Disabilities

When we considered the types of disabilities⁴ on work outcomes, we found that most beneficiaries in both populations had mental impairments. We also identified more beneficiaries with physical impairments in the unsuccessful outcome group and more beneficiaries with vision or hearing impairments in the successful outcomes group.

Table C–3: Types of Disabilities

Type of Disabilities	Population	Percentage in Population ⁵	Successful Work Outcomes	Percentage in Successful Work Outcomes Population ⁶	Unsuccessful Work Outcomes	Percentage in Unsuccessful Work Outcomes Population ⁷
Mental	301	60%	148	59%	153	61%
Physical	152	30%	71	28%	81	32%
Hearing/Vision	47	9%	31	12%	16	6%

¹ The age of the beneficiaries in this group ranged from 21 to 67, with a median age of 37.

² The age of the beneficiaries in this group ranged from 20 to 68, with a median age of 39.

³ The total percentage exceeds 100 percent because of rounding.

⁴ We obtained the disability information based on the disability diagnostic code found in the Master Beneficiary Record and/or the Supplemental Security Record. Some beneficiaries have a primary and a secondary disability diagnostic code. We used the primary diagnostic code to determine the type of disability.

⁵ The total percentage do not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

⁶ The total percentage do not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

⁷ The total percentage do not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

Benefit Entitlement

We identified a higher percentage of OASDI beneficiaries with successful outcomes (50 percent) than those in the unsuccessful outcomes groups (45 percent).

Table C–4: Benefit Entitlement

Benefit Entitlement	Population	Percentage in Population	Successful Work Outcomes	Percent in Successful Work Outcomes Population	Unsuccessful Work Outcomes	Percent in Unsuccessful Work Outcomes Population
Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance	238	48%	125	50%	113	45%
Supplemental Security Income	193	39%	94	38%	99	40%
Concurrent	69	14%	31	12%	38	15%

Educational Level

Beneficiaries' educational experiences ranged from middle school up to those who had attained college degrees. The percentage of beneficiaries with successful outcomes (9 percent) who had a college degree was slightly greater than those with unsuccessful outcomes (6 percent).

Table C–5: Education

Educational Level	Population	Percentage in Population	Successful Work Outcomes	Percentage in Successful Work Outcomes Population ⁸	Unsuccessful Work Outcomes	Percentage in Unsuccessful Work Outcomes Population
College	37	7%	22	9%	15	6%
Special Education Certificate	3	1%	3	1%	0	0%
Some College	68	14%	31	12%	37	15%
High School Graduate	162	32%	78	31%	84	34%
Some High School	112	22%	56	22%	56	22%
Middle School	13	3%	7	3%	6	2%
Unknown	105	21%	53	21%	52	21%

⁸ The total percentages do not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

Appendix D – STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCY ANALYSIS

The table below displays state employment outcomes results by state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency. It includes results based on Fiscal Year 2016 data from the Department of Education’s Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), which was the latest data available.

The table also includes employment outcomes for our audit population of 20,478 Social Security beneficiaries who exited State VR agencies with recorded outcomes from March through May 2019 and who had not re-enrolled with a State VR agency after they exited as of the time of our data selection. Given that our data are for a more limited population and period, it is less representative of State VR agency employment outcomes over time. Given the limited size of our population, some states had limited or no representation. For example, we only had one beneficiary in our population from South Dakota and West Virginia and no beneficiaries from Delaware, Montana, and Vermont.

Table D–1: Percent with Successful Outcomes After VR Services

State	RSA Data – Percent of Employment Outcomes after Service	Ranking Per RSA Data	Audit Data – Percent with Successful Outcomes	Ranking Per Audit Data
AR	71.8	1	62.9	1
ND	69.6	2	42.9	18
NE	68.1	3	25.0	39
AL	67.6	4	53.4	3
MS	65.2	5	18.5	43
GA	65.0	6	14.3	45
OR	64.9	7	53.3	4
WA	64.3	8	52.5	5
TX	63.9	9	46.6	9
CO	62.7	10	49.2	7
DE	62.4	11	N/A	N/A
RI	61.5	12	56.6	2
NJ	61.2	13	49.3	6
MD	60.8	14	29.0	35
MN	60.0	15	46.3	10
SC	59.8	16	39.7	23
MI	59.6	17	34.3	30
SD	59.5	18	0.0	47
NH	58.9	19	43.8	17
TN	58.4	20	45.4	12
CA	58.0	21	31.4	32

State	RSA Data – Percent of Employment Outcomes after Service	Ranking Per RSA Data	Audit Data – Percent with Successful Outcomes	Ranking Per Audit Data
ID	57.8	22	28.5	37
NY	57.5	23	30.8	33
CT	57.5	24	35.3	28
WY	56.9	25	49.1	8
PA	56.1	26	38.3	26
WI	55.1	27	42.3	19
IN	55.0	28	34.7	29
MA	54.9	29	38.0	27
VT	54.5	30	N/A	N/A
WV	54.4	31	0.0	48
AK	54.3	32	45.1	14
NC	54.0	33	28.8	36
OK	53.8	34	23.3	40
IA	52.6	35	2.3	46
HI	52.2	36	20.8	42
VA	52.1	37	40.2	22
KY	50.6	38	38.9	25
IL	50.4	39	39.3	24
OH	50.2	40	41.1	21
NV	49.8	41	22.4	41
UT	49.4	42	44.4	15
LA	48.9	43	45.3	13
KS	46.7	44	44.0	16
ME	46.6	45	25.0	38
AZ	42.0	46	33.0	31
DC	41.0	47	17.1	44
FL	40.8	48	41.9	20
MT	38.9	49	N/A	N/A
MO	38.9	50	46.2	11
NM	37.7	51	29.8	34

Appendix E – AGENCY COMMENTS



SOCIAL SECURITY

MEMORANDUM

Date: September 29, 2021

Refer To: TQA-1

To: Gail S. Ennis
Inspector General

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Frey".

From: Scott Frey
Chief of Staff

Subject: Office of the Inspector General Draft Report "Beneficiaries Who Received Vocational Rehabilitation Services" (A-02-18-50544) — INFORMATION

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft report. We agree with the recommendation.

Please let me know if I can be of further assistance. You may direct staff inquiries to Trae Sommer at (410) 965-9102.



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