

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.