



Information Brief

Refining Policies and Services for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders—Why Bother?

By Weol Soon Kim-Rupnow, Ph.D.,
Hee-Chan Park, Ph.D. & David E. Starbuck

National Technical Assistance Center

www.ntac.hawaii.edu
Tel: (808)956-3648
Fax: (808)956-5713
Tty: (808)956-2890

Mission:

To increase employment opportunities for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders with disabilities nationwide.

Based at:

University of Hawaii
at Manoa, Center on
Disability Studies

In collaboration with:

Hawaii Centers for
Independent Living

Hawaii Vocational
Rehabilitation and
Services for the Blind
Division

Funded by:

U.S. Department of
Education
Rehabilitation Services
Administration

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) are one of the fastest growing minorities in the United States. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, this group has experienced a 57 percent increase in population from 1990 to 1999, proportionately more than any other minority group in the country. In addition, a current projection portends total number of AAPIs at more than 35 million by the year 2050—nine percent of the total U.S. population.

The rapid AAPI population growth makes it imperative for disability service providers, policy makers, and advocates to focus on refining policies and services to better respond to the unique needs of AAPIs with disabilities. However, there is little information on the prevalence of various disabilities among AAPIs and the number of AAPIs receiving state-federal vocational rehabilitation (VR).

The state-federal vocational rehabilitation system provides a major service delivery program for people with disabilities. Vocational rehabilitation (VR) is the component of the rehabilitation process that assists individuals with disabilities in attaining employment and independent living. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders with disabilities have been under-served in the Rehabilitation Services System for decades, yet there has been little research published with specific data depicting their overall status. The purpose of this brief is to depict the status of rehabilitation services provided to this target population by using the 1999-2000 RSA-911 database. Utilizing this data, the percentages of AAPIs with disabilities who applied for VR services are compared with the percentages of AAPI in the general population of each state in the U.S.

A strong indication of the underserved nature of the AAPI population throughout the country can be seen in Table 1, a compilation of VR service delivery statistics from RSA-911 data on all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Ratios comparing the percentages of total AAPI population to the percentages of total VR services delivered to AAPIs in each state show that this group is underserved in 48 out of 50 states. The total population in this table contains 4.54 percent AAPI yet only 1.31 percent of VR services are provided to this minority group. The percentage of AAPIs receiving services is nearly four times less than the percentage of the total national AAPI population.

Table 1. Comparison of AAPI Population and VR Services by State

State	AAPI Population (a)	Total Population (b)	AAPI Population Applying VR Services (c)	Total Population Applying VR Services (d)	AAPI Population Ratio (a/b*100)	AAPI VR Service Ratio (c/d*100)
California	4,377,143	33,871,648	1,969	41,003	12.9	4.8
New York	1,197,812	18,976,457	482	44,080	6.3	1.1
Hawaii	985,899	1,211,537	1,448	1,975	81.4	73.3
Texas	673,287	20,851,820	652	66,856	3.2	1
New Jersey	534,421	8,414,350	135	13,293	6.4	1
Illinois	485,497	12,419,293	145	17,816	3.9	0.8
Washington	438,502	5,894,121	346	11,434	7.4	3
Florida	357,011	15,982,378	170	31,747	2.2	0.5
Virginia	314,543	7,078,515	161	10,672	4.4	1.5
Massachusetts	273,518	6,349,097	184	11,698	4.3	1.6
Pennsylvania	257,391	12,281,054	109	24,205	2.1	0.5
Maryland	244,587	5,296,486	110	9,220	4.6	1.2
Michigan	215,605	9,938,444	120	17,992	2.2	0.7
Georgia	209,501	8,186,453	47	9,861	2.6	0.5
Minnesota	168,281	4,919,479	184	10,709	3.4	1.7
Ohio	166,760	11,353,140	86	21,053	1.5	0.4
North Carolina	144,786	8,049,313	165	29,115	1.8	0.6
Oregon	143,358	3,421,399	208	10,091	4.2	2.1
Arizona	132,087	5,130,632	72	7,828	2.6	0.9
Colorado	130,932	4,301,261	80	7,618	3	1.1
Nevada	128,690	1,998,257	48	3,314	6.4	1.4
Wisconsin	107,078	5,363,675	111	15,255	2	0.7
Connecticut	99,444	3,405,565	46	4,543	2.9	1.1
Missouri	82,845	5,595,211	94	18,171	1.5	0.5
Indiana	77,206	6,080,485	179	12,282	1.3	1.5
Tennessee	73,496	5,689,283	56	17,466	1.3	0.3
Utah	70,059	2,233,169	91	7,040	3.1	1.3
Louisiana	67,587	4,468,976	45	8,235	1.5	0.5
Oklahoma	63,846	3,450,654	44	9,673	1.9	0.5
Kansas	59,166	2,688,418	30	4,384	2.2	0.7
South Carolina	48,709	4,012,012	65	20,568	1.2	0.3
Iowa	45,315	2,926,324	46	7,358	1.5	0.6
Alabama	42,627	4,447,100	35	13,761	1	0.3
Kentucky	40,224	4,041,769	46	14,476	1	0.3
Alaska	38,201	626,932	42	1,552	0.6	2.7
Rhode Island	30,073	1,048,319	18	1,616	2.9	1.1
New Mexico	29,688	1,819,046	26	5,609	1.6	0.5
Nebraska	28,542	1,711,263	23	3,237	1.7	0.7
Arkansas	28,530	2,673,400	27	7,838	1.1	0.3
Mississippi	25,182	2,844,658	23	9,427	0.9	0.2
Idaho	20,237	1,293,953	18	4,353	1.7	0.4
New Hampshire	19,996	1,235,786	14	2,940	1.6	0.5
Delaware	19,615	783,600	12	2,044	2.5	0.6
District of Columbia	18,741	572,059	15	1,224	3.3	1.2
West Virginia	12,760	1,808,344	13	6,326	0.7	0.2
Maine	12,619	1,274,923	9	3,707	1	0.2
Montana	8,178	902,195	15	3,439	0.9	0.4
Vermont	6,930	608,827	7	2,577	1.1	0.3
South Dakota	6,565	754,844	13	2,327	0.9	0.6
North Dakota	5,442	642,200	6	2,424	0.8	0.2
Wyoming	4,721	493,782	5	1,670	1	0.3
TOTALS	12,773,233	281,421,906	8,095	617,102	4.54	1.31

Source: (a) & (b) – US Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1. (c) & (d) – Rehabilitation Administration Services. RSA-911 Data of 1999-2000.

The vocational rehabilitation system needs to be more responsive to the unique needs of minority populations. The reason to address the concerns of minorities with disabilities arises from several perspectives. The number of minority persons with disabilities is increasing and will continue to increase. The future workforce needs of America will be met not only by its diverse racial and ethnic populations, but by persons within those populations who have disabilities (National Council on Disability, 1993).

The following recommendations are based solely on statistical analyses of Table 1 which depicts only those AAPIs who applied for services and not the quality of services provided to them or types of closure. Therefore, these recommendations focus primarily on improving outreach and intake strategies and programs rather than on services provided.

Recommendations

- Develop community-based outreach programs to increase outreach efforts by service providers.
- Develop personal relationships with AAPI community leaders and gatekeepers.
- Hire rehabilitation counselors with AAPI background or provide cultural competency training to rehabilitation counselors who are not familiar with AAPI culture.
- Encourage rehabilitation counselors to visit the AAPI clients' homes to establish rapport, gain insight about the client and their situation, and to help establish a home support system.
- Reduce paperwork as much as possible for AAPI clients, especially during their initial visit to a rehabilitation agency.
- Develop a pragmatic, culturally sensitive approach to AAPI client assessment rather than using standardized tests that tend to be highly verbal and culturally biased.
- Provide interpreters to assist AAPIs at rehabilitation agencies who are knowledgeable about both rehabilitation terminology and services.
- Empower AAPIs with disabilities by providing training regarding their rights established by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the availability of rehabilitation services.
- Provide written information in AAPI native languages regarding types of services available.
- Increase visibility and accessibility of rehabilitation services within AAPI communities.

References

National Council on Disability. (April 26, 1993). Meeting the unique needs of minorities with disabilities: A report to the President and Congress. Available at <http://www.ncd.gov/newsroom/publications/>
