

A survey of vocational rehabilitation counselors and special education teachers on collaboration in transition planning

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Revised/Accepted August 2015

Abstract.

BACKGROUND: Interagency collaboration has been identified as one variable predicting successful post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities (Test et al., 2009). However, at times and in certain contexts, collaboration between these disciplines has been inconsistent and limited.

OBJECTIVE: Researchers investigated collaboration between VR counselors and transition teachers by surveying agency personnel in four states: Florida, Maryland, Oregon, and Utah.

METHOD: We disseminated two electronic questionnaires: one to VR counselors and one to transition teachers. The questionnaires explored respondents' satisfaction with collaboration across agencies. Additionally, respondents rated the importance and feasibility of collaboration practices. Statements of collaborative practice were specific to transition and were generated by the researchers based on a review of collaboration literature.

RESULTS: Respondents included 78 VR counselors and 220 teachers. Results showed relatively low levels of collaboration and satisfaction between VR counselors and teachers. Respondents rated a list of collaboration practices relatively high in importance but consistently low in feasibility for implementation.

CONCLUSION: We discuss results with regard to improving collaboration between rehabilitation counselors and transition teachers to improve transition practices.

Keywords: Interagency collaboration, transition teacher, transition coordinator, transition specialist, transition administrator, importance/feasibility of transition practices

1. Introduction

Steere, Rose, and Cavaiuolo (2007) defined *interagency collaboration* as “key people from school personnel, family members, businesses, and human service agencies working together to promote successful post-school outcomes” (p. 115). Collaboration between special education (SE) and vocational

rehabilitation (VR) has been shown a critical variable associated with successful transition outcomes for students with disabilities (Heal, Rubin, & Rusch, 1998; Mazzotti, 2009; Neubert, Moon, & Grigal, 2004; Test et al., 2009). For example, Neubert et al. (2004) found transition to postsecondary education and job placement was more successful when SE transition teachers and VR counselors worked collaboratively. Test et al. (2009) reviewed 22 studies meeting quality criteria for correlational research to identify evidence-based predictors of improved post-school outcomes. *Interagency collaboration* was one

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of 16 predictors. Plotner, Trach, and Strauser (2012) surveyed 291 VR counselors across three states to identify their perceptions of transition competencies. *Building and maintaining collaborative partnerships* was identified as one of seven key domains.

Yet, in practice, collaboration appears inconsistent and limited (Agran, Cain, & Cavin, 2002; Mazzotti, 2009; Oertle & Trach, 2007). Researchers (Agran et al., 2002; Oertle & Trach, 2007) identified a number of limitations to collaboration between VR and SE. For example, Agran et al. (2002) conducted separate but “mirror-image” surveys with 54 special educators and 62 VR counselors to identify transition barriers. About half of the VR counselors reported they had never been asked to attend a transition services IEP meeting even though they had transition-age youth on their caseloads. Many VR respondents indicated they had not received information on the youth in transition prior to the meeting and felt like they had nothing to offer. About half of special education respondents indicated they rarely invited VR counselors to IEP meetings for transition-age youth. Agran et al. concluded there was no clearly delineated set of expectations or responsibilities for VR counselors. Key concerns arising from this research included (a) VR counselors’ reports that they were not integral members of transition planning teams, and (b) SE personnel and VR counselors’ reports of inadequate sharing of relevant student information.

If interagency collaboration is a key variable identified in improving post-school outcomes, then why does it occur at low rates in some contexts? Hurlburt et al. (2014) noted that interacting and developing relationships with professionals from different disciplines, philosophical orientations, and skill sets can be unsettling and challenging. Agran et al. (2002) suggested that neither special educators nor VR understood the transition practices of the other system. Oertle and Trach (2007) pointed to the lack of support within each field for effective collaboration. We suggest three additional explanations. First, differences in philosophies, language, and procedures across disciplines may cause professionals to hesitate in developing relationships with others. Second, biases against other disciplines or in favor of one’s own profession can suppress collaboration. Third, our observations suggest many transition professionals have limited collaboration skills. Few opportunities exist in preservice or inservice education to develop collaboration knowledge and skills. Explanation of low rates of collaboration probably depends on factors operating in particular contexts, but clearly,

increasing collaboration requires adoption of an open attitude and certain skill sets. Existing research, including a qualitative analysis of 80 articles examining collaboration (Foster-Fishman, Berkowitz, Lounsbury, Jacobson, & Allen, 2001) found that working together across disciplines required effective communication, knowledge about norms and perspectives of other members, positive attitudes, conflict resolution, and information sharing.

Although studies have investigated variables responsible for increased or decreased collaboration between SE and VR in transition, we found no research examining collaborative practice and the feasibility of implementation. Specifically, practices with evidence of improved collaboration (Agran, et al., 2002; Noonan, Erickson, & Morningstar, 2012; Noonan, Morningstar, & Erickson, 2008; Plotner et al., 2012; Trach, 2012) have not been presented to transition teachers and VR counselors to identify perceived importance or likelihood of implementation (i.e., feasibility).

This study had three purposes. First, we wanted to identify transition roles, frequency of involvement, and satisfaction with VR counselor participation in transition as reported by both transition teachers and VR counselors. As such, this study was a systematic replication of Agran et al. (2002). Second, we sought to determine the importance and feasibility of collaboration practices identified in the research literature (e.g., Noonan et al., 2008). Third, we inquired about respondents’ recommendations for improving interagency collaboration in transition.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

This study included two groups of respondents: VR counselors and transition teachers. Convenience samples of both groups were identified from Florida, Maryland, Oregon and Utah. We selected states from which we could obtain lists of both VR counselors and transition teachers. Many states posted online contacts for schools, districts, and agencies, but only the four states named above published lists for both sample groups. Inclusion criteria, numbers of participants, and response rates are described below.

2.1.1. VR counselors

Participants from selected states needed certifications, degrees, or other credentials that qualified them

to manage caseloads of transition clients. Participants were asked whether they managed caseloads including transition-aged students. If not, they were asked to discontinue the survey. Only VR counselors with partial or full transition caseloads were asked to respond. Lists of personnel and email addresses were obtained from supervisors and from lists of staff on agency websites.

The initial VR counselor sample included 292 potential participants (77 from Florida, 41 from Maryland, 148 from Oregon, and 26 from Utah). Two states (Oregon and Utah) required the survey be sent from within the agency by supervisors and not from external researchers. Across states, a total of 96 VR counselors responded (response rate = 33.6%), but 18 VR counselors completed only part of the survey. The VR counselor response rate for complete surveys was 78 out of 292 potential participants, or 26.7%. In a meta-analysis, Shih and Fan (2009) reported that Internet survey response rates were, on average, 33%. Our completed survey response rate for VR counselors was slightly lower than Shih and Fan's findings.

2.1.2. *Transition teachers*

Participants were included if they held certifications or degrees that qualified them for working with transition-age students. Not all respondents were transition teachers; additional titles included *transition coordinator*, *transition specialist*, and *transition administrator*. We will use the term *transition teacher* to identify all such respondents because, in most cases, the respondent had a SE teaching credential. Lists of personnel and email addresses were obtained from state-level coordinators and school and district websites. The collective list included 987 potential participants (39 from Florida, 336 from Maryland, 301 from Oregon, and 311 from Utah). A total of 318 transition teachers responded (response rate = 32.2%) but 98 teachers completed only part of the survey. The transition teacher response rate for complete surveys was 220 out of 987 potential participants, or 22.3%. Again, response rates were lower than mean rates found by Shih and Fan (2009).

2.2. *Instruments*

We developed two electronic questionnaires consisting of (a) demographic information, (b) VR involvement, and (c) collaboration practices. Questionnaires for VR counselors and transition teachers were nearly identical, varying only in word-

ing of questions to address respondents from different groups (e.g., VR counselor questionnaire: Do you feel like *you* are an integral part of transition planning? Transition teacher questionnaire: Do you feel like *VR counselors* are an integral part of transition planning?).

2.2.1. *Demographic information*

Eleven questions for VR counselors addressed similar demographic characteristics. Twelve demographic questions for transition teachers addressed SE credentials, years of experience, size of caseload, primary disability categories served, settings in which services were delivered, and so forth.

2.2.2. *VR involvement*

Seven questions on both questionnaires addressed VR involvement (e.g., how often collaboration took place, how often VR counselors were invited, overall satisfaction, etc.). Respondents selected one of several alternatives for each question. Table 1 presents transition teacher questions on VR involvement. The wording of questions for the VR counselor was similar but addressed queries from the counselor's perspective.

2.2.3. *Collaboration practices: Ratings of importance and feasibility*

We asked participants to rate the importance and feasibility of 14 interagency collaboration practices. Statements of practice were specific to interagency collaboration in transition, and were generated by the researchers based on a review of the collaboration literature (e.g., Agran et al., 2002; Benz, Johnson, Mikkelsen, & Lindstrom, 1995; Noonan et al., 2008). The literature sometimes referred to these practices as *key strategies* or *indicators*. First, respondents rated the importance of these practices on a 4-point scale ranging from *Very important* to *Not important*. Second, they rated the feasibility of implementation on a 4-point scale from *Highly likely* to *Not likely*. Third, respondents selected the top two practices they felt would improve collaboration between VR and SE. Finally, an open-ended question asked respondents to describe ways to improve collaboration between VR and SE as it related to transition of students with disabilities.

2.2.4. *Instrument content and development*

The Internet-based questionnaires consisted of forced-choice, multiple-response options with open blanks for *Other* answer choices and questions with

Table 1
Transition teacher questions on VR counselor involvement

Do you feel like VR counselors are an integral part of transition planning? *Y/N Please explain your answer.*
Please indicate how often you provide student specific transition information to VR counselors.
At Least Weekly, At Least Monthly, At Least Every 6 Months, At Least Annually, Never, Unsure, Other (describe)

Please indicate how often you actively collaborate (meet in person, conference via telephone) to plan student specific transition-related activities.
At Least Weekly, At Least Monthly, At Least Every 6 Months, At Least Annually, Never, Unsure, Other (describe)

Please indicate how often VR counselors are involved in activities other than individualized education program (IEP) meetings (e.g. parent teacher conference; parent education nights, etc.).
At Least Weekly, At Least Monthly, At Least Every 6 Months, At Least Annually, Never, Unsure, Other (describe)

How often are VR counselors invited to individualized education program (IEP) meetings?
At Least Weekly, At Least Monthly, At Least Every 6 Months, At Least Annually, Never, Unsure, Other (describe)

Who typically invites VR counselors to participate in individualized education program (IEP) meetings?
Teacher, Administrator, Parent, Unsure, Other (describe)

Please indicate your overall satisfaction with VR counselors' level of involvement in transition related planning and activities.
Very Satisfied, Satisfied, Dissatisfied, Very Dissatisfied

ranking and rating scales. Additionally, open-ended questions sought narrative responses on recommendations to improve transition practice.

2.2.4.1. Field testing and dissemination. Researchers conducted a small pilot study of the questionnaires to ensure the clarity and relevance of items. We sent links to the questionnaires to four transition teachers and four VR counselors requesting feedback. We revised the questionnaires based on feedback regarding confusing wording, omitted subject material and other issues. Final questionnaire versions were prepared for dissemination.

Participants received an email with a link to the survey. Each participant was randomly assigned a code generated by the survey software allowing for follow-up with participants who did not respond. All responses remained anonymous.

2.2.5. Follow-up

We sent follow-up emails each week for 3 weeks to prompt participants who had not responded to the questionnaire. During the final week of the response period, a trained adult volunteer called non-respondents to ask for completed questionnaires.

2.3. Data analysis

We calculated response frequencies and percentages, along with means and standard deviations for the rating scale items. Additionally, we conducted Mann-Whitney U non-parametric tests of statistical significance with a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons to determine if differences in response ratings between groups for the importance and feasibility of transition practices were statisti-

cally significant. Qualitative data were analyzed to determine categories of responses and trends.

2.3.1. Statements identifying barriers and recommendations for improved collaboration

The first researcher developed a file with statements regarding recommendations for improving collaboration including (a) whether the statement was made by a VR counselor or SE teacher, and (b) the state from which the respondent resided. The researcher examined statements for common themes among recommendations.

2.3.2. Participant satisfaction

VR counselors ranked their overall satisfaction with SE teachers using a 4-point scale ranging from very satisfied (1) to not satisfied at all (4). Transition teachers ranked their overall satisfaction with VR counselors using the same scale. We calculated response means and standard deviations.

3. Results

3.1. Demographic information

3.1.1. VR counselors

Demographic data are shown in Table 2. VR counselor certification varied according to state. Many respondents held multiple certifications. Average size of caseload was computed using a median instead of a mean because of outliers. The majority of respondents (82%) served individuals between 18–22 years of age.

Table 2
Demographic information for VR counselors (N = 77-78)

Variable	Value	Number of Responses	% of Responses
State	Florida	11	14%
	Maryland	31	40%
	Oregon	26	33%
	Utah	10	13%
Location	Urban	28	36%
	Rural	25	32%
	Suburban	24	31%
Position	VR Counselor	69	88%
	VR Supervisor	5	6%
	Other	4	5%
Years Experience	0 years (I don't work in transition)	0	0%
	1-5 years	28	36%
	5-10 years	26	33%
	10-15 years	16	21%
	15+ years	8	10%
Age Range	14-18	3	4%
	16-18	35	46%
	18-22	62	82%
Case Load	Median: Total Caseload 130		
	Median: Transition Clients 100		

3.1.2. Transition teachers

Demographic data are shown in Table 3. Most transition teachers worked in suburban locations with varying amounts of experience. Teacher certification varied according to state. Respondents from all states reported the SE classroom as the predominant setting for delivery of transition services and curriculum. Respondents who reported *Other* provided explanations such as “during IEP meetings,” “working one-on-one with students,” “within agencies or special schools/programs,” and “within general education classes.” Average caseload size was also calculated using a median because of outliers. The majority of respondents (58%) served students between 14–18 years of age.

3.1.3. Disability categories served

The percentage of respondents who primarily served students with mild/moderate (e.g., mild intellectual disability, specific learning disabilities) or significant disabilities (e.g., autism, severe intellectual disability, traumatic brain injury, visual impairment, etc.) was nearly identical for transition teachers and VR counselors. Students with mild disabilities were served by 69% of transition teachers and 68% of VR counselors. Students with significant disabilities were served by 31% and 32%, respectively.

3.2. Participation of VR counselors

3.2.1. Transition teachers

When asked if VR counselors were viewed as integral to transition planning, 130 (60%) transition

teachers responded “yes.” Florida had the highest percentage (67%) of “yes” answers while Oregon had the lowest (57%). Representative comments shown in Table 4 illustrate that although VR was seen by many respondents as integral to transition planning, there were perceived barriers preventing collaboration and planning, such as lack of sufficient personnel, high turnover rate of VR counselors, lack of follow through, limited availability, and lack of services for some disability categories.

3.2.2. VR counselors

When asked if VR counselors viewed themselves as integral to transition, 73 out of 78 (94%) responded “yes.” Utah VR counselors had the highest percentage of “yes” responses (100%) while Oregon had the lowest (88%). Representative comments were similar to those of transition teachers, as shown in Table 4.

3.3. Involvement of VR counselors in transition process

Figure 1 presents data on VR counselor involvement from both transition teachers' and VR counselors' perspectives. Some transition teachers (29%) indicated that, on an annual basis, they provided student-specific transition information to VR counselors and asked them to collaborate in planning IEPs (25%). However, the majority of VR counselors reported they received information about students at least weekly (32%) and were invited to IEP meetings at least weekly (32%).

Table 3
Demographic information for transition teachers (N = 218–220)

Variable	Value	Number of Responses	% of Responses
State	Florida	9	4%
	Maryland	32	15%
	Oregon	44	20%
	Utah	135	61%
Location	Urban	41	19%
	Rural	49	22%
	Suburban	130	59%
Position	Transition Teacher	112	51%
	Transition Facilitator/Coordinator	28	13%
	SE Director/Coordinator	21	10%
	None of the Above	59	27%
Years Experience	1–5 years	77	35%
	5–10 years	54	25%
	10–15 years	36	17%
	15+ years	51	23%
Setting	SE classroom	185	84%
	Community-based setting	50	23%
	Not applicable given my current position	12	5%
	Other	34	15%
Age Range	14–18	126	58%
	16–18	93	43%
	18–22	63	29%
Case Load	Median: Total Caseload 25 Median: Transition Students 15.5		

A majority of transition teachers (37%) indicated that VR counselors never participated in activities other than the IEP meetings while only 13% of VR counselors reported *never* and 43% reported *at least monthly*. Overall, 32% of transition teachers indicated VR counselors were invited to IEP meetings *at least annually*, but 32% of VR counselors reported *at least weekly*. VR counselor and SE teacher responses were statistically different (Mann-Whitney U with Bonferroni correction, $p < 0.01$). Differences in reported involvement may be explicable because VR counselors have caseloads that require them to interact with multiple transition teachers across several schools. The median caseload of VR counselors was 100 students while transition teachers had a median caseload of less than 16 students.

3.4. Satisfaction

As shown in Fig. 2, VR counselors rated their overall satisfaction in being involved in transition higher than transition teachers' satisfaction (statistically significant Mann-Whitney U with Bonferroni correction, $p < 0.01$). However, both groups indicated they were more satisfied than not, with 77% of VR counselors reporting they were satisfied or very satisfied with their involvement, compared to 53% of transition teachers.

3.5. Collaboration practices: Ratings of importance and feasibility

3.5.1. Importance

For each of 14 collaboration practices listed in Fig. 3, black bars (VR counselors) and white bars (transition teachers) indicate mean ratings of importance based on a 4-point scale from low to high. Statements are displayed in rank order according to ratings of importance by VR counselors. Both transition teachers and VR counselors rated almost identically the most important practice (*Providing Training for SE Teachers on the Transition Process, Including Specific Information about Access to VR*) and the second most important practice (*Providing Training to Transition Teachers on Preparing Students with Key Knowledge and Skills, e.g., Self-Determination, Student Involvement, Family Involvement, Agency Involvement, etc.*). Most ratings of importance showed close correspondence between transition teachers and VR counselors, even for practices rated as less important. One exception was *Creating Interagency Collaboration Teams to Place Students in Post-School Placements (Post-Secondary Education, Employment, or Other)* which was rated relatively high in importance by transition teachers but relatively low by VR counselors. All practices were rated by both groups as generally

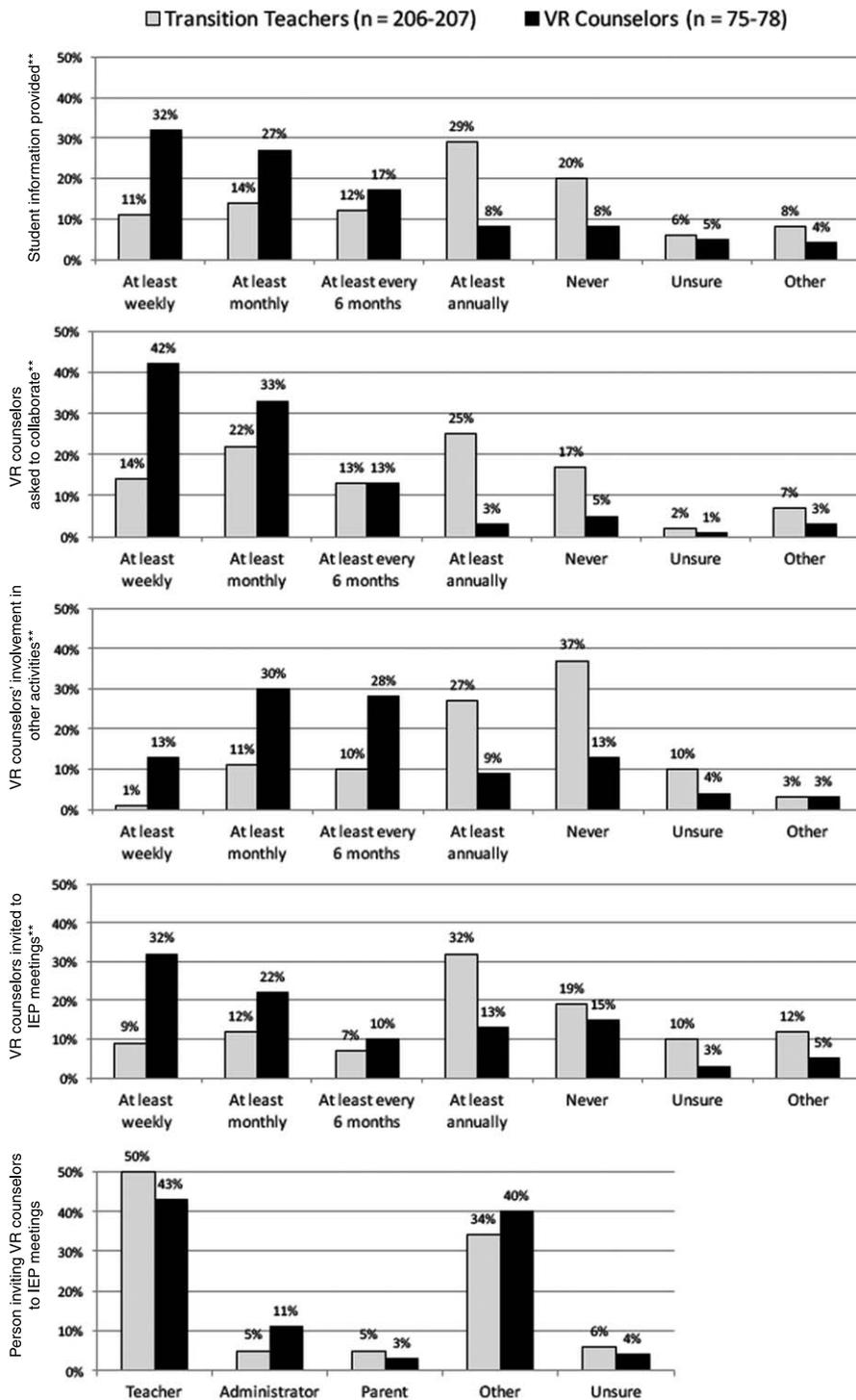


Fig. 1. Involvement of VR counselors in the transition process. **Denotes the Mann-Whitney U with Bonferroni correction was statistically significant at $p < 0.01$.

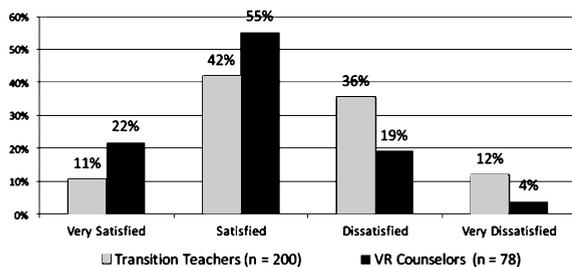


Fig. 2. Percentage of respondents' level of satisfaction with VR involvement. The Mann-Whitney U was statistically significant at $p < 0.01$.

important (i.e., above average on the 4-point scale), though two practices (*Sharing Funding between the School Districts and Vocational Rehabilitation* and *Using Social Media to Connect People at a Distance for Collaboration Purposes*) were rated lowest in terms of importance. Mann-Whitney U non-parametric tests of significance indicated transition teachers' and VR counselors' ratings of importance were not statistically significantly different for most items. Additionally, when the items are rank ordered according to mean ratings of importance, the items are nearly identically ordered (non-significant Mann-Whitney U) indicating SE and VR groups, on average, agree on the magnitude of importance of practices.

3.5.2. Feasibility

For each of 14 collaboration practices listed in Fig. 3, bars with diagonal crosshatching (VR counselors) and vertical crosshatching (transition teachers) represent mean ratings for feasibility of implementation. Feasibility ratings ranged on a 4-point scale from highly feasible to unlikely. For both transition teachers and VR counselors, most mean ratings of feasibility were moderate to low. Ratings of transition teachers were lower than VR counselor ratings on 13 of 14 items. However, two items (*Providing Training for SE Teachers on the Transition Process, Including Specific Information about Access to VR* and *Providing Training to Transition Teachers on Preparing Students with Key Knowledge and Skills*) were rated highest in importance by both groups and also rated as most feasible. Mean ratings resulted in rank orders that were similar between transition teachers and VR counselors in terms of importance. However, rankings of feasibility differed between transition teachers and VR counselors (Mann-Whitney U with Bonferroni correction $p < 0.01$). For example, VR counselors rated *Providing Training for VR Counselors on the Tran-*

sition Process Including Specific Information about SE Eligibility and Planning highest in feasibility, but transition teachers rated it relatively low. Both groups rated *Administrators Providing Opportunities for Collaboration* (e.g., *Flexible Scheduling, Compensation Time, Paid Summer Training, Substitutes*) so *Teachers Can Work Alongside VR Counselors* among the least feasible. Transition teachers rated feasibility lowest on *Sharing Funding between the School Districts and Vocational Rehabilitation*. Mann-Whitney U non-parametric tests of significance with a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons indicated transition teachers' and VR counselors' responses were statistically significantly different on many items as indicated in Fig. 3 ($p < 0.05$ or $p < 0.01$). These differences in ratings of feasibility suggest dissimilar levels of optimism for implementing collaborative practices between transition teachers and VR counselors or may reflect the disparity in caseloads resulting in the perceived difference between the two groups on current involvement in transition by VR counselors.

3.5.3. Improvement of collaboration

Respondents were asked to choose the top two items that would improve collaboration. The most frequently selected practices for both transition teachers and VR counselors were *Offering Joint Training Attended by Transition Teachers and VR Counselors Working Together* (transition teachers = 27%; VR counselors = 36%). The next most-frequently selected practice among both groups was *Providing Training for Transition Teachers on the Transition Process, Including Specific Information about Access to VR* (transition teachers = 24%; VR counselors = 26%).

Respondents were asked to describe critical steps to improve collaboration. Analysis of open-ended responses by VR counselors identified four broad categories: (a) more time for developing relationships to improve collaboration (39%), (b) administrative support (21%), (c) funding/policy (15%), and (d) training for all stakeholders (16%). Regarding more time for improving collaboration, one VR counselor noted "I think the biggest step is to just get everyone together at the same time to have the training as scheduling this sometimes is difficult." Additional representative comments from respondents are shown in Table 4.

Analysis of open-ended responses by transition teachers revealed six broad categories: (a) more time for developing relationships (29%); (b) funding (26%); (c) training for all stakeholders (21%);

Statistically Significant Mann-Whitney U with Bonferonni Correction:

* $p < .05$
 ** $p < .01$

- Providing training for special education teachers on the transition process, including specific information about access to vocational rehabilitation.
- Providing training to transition teachers on preparing students with key knowledge and skills (self-determination, student involvement, family involvement, agency involvement, etc.).
- Coordinated referral and planning including coordination of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) with vocational rehabilitation employment plans.
- Providing training for vocational rehabilitation counselors on the transition process including specific information about special education eligibility and planning.
- Placing a transition specialist in each high school or building.
- Offering joint training attended by special education teachers and vocational rehabilitation counselors working together.
- Using transition personnel to facilitate meetings between adult agencies and students/families.
- Holding regular meetings between agency staff and transition personnel from a school district.
- Disseminating information to a broad audience, such as information on adult services provided by agencies to parents and students through mailings, presentations, websites, etc.
- Creating inter-agency collaboration teams to place students in post-school placements (postsecondary education, employment, or other).
- Administrators providing opportunities for collaboration (e.g., flexible scheduling, compensation time, paid summer training, substitutes) so that teachers can work alongside VR counselors.
- Implementing a community transition committee in a school district.
- Sharing funding between the school districts and vocational rehabilitation.
- Using social media to connect people at a distance for collaboration purposes.

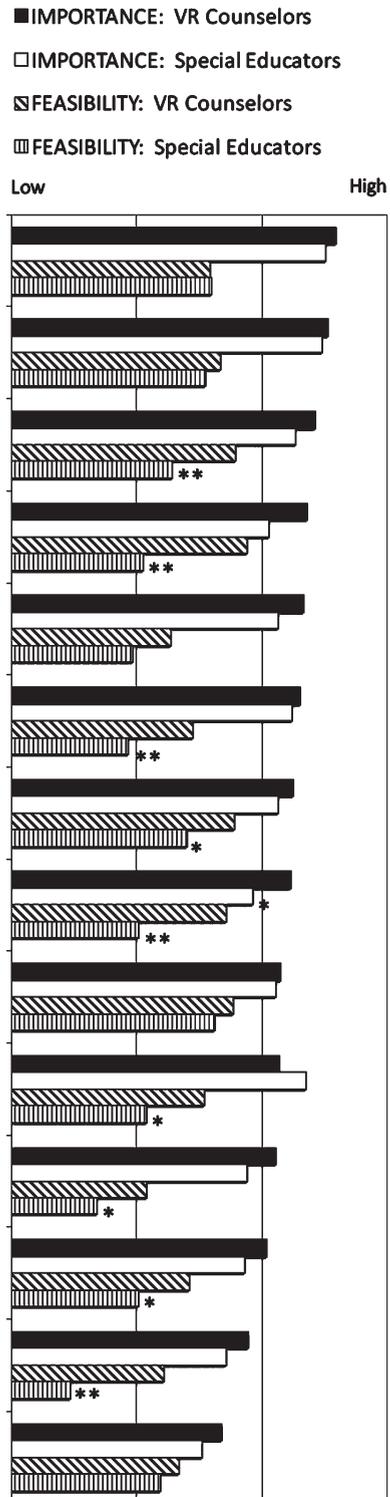


Fig. 3. VR counselors' and SE teachers' mean ratings of importance and feasibility regarding collaboration practices.

(d) administrative support (6%); (e) recruiting, hiring, and maintaining additional and better-qualified personnel (6%); and (f) clear expectations of roles and responsibilities (6%). Regarding time to improve collaboration, one teacher noted

[We need to coordinate] with our school's [VR] representative as well as our LEA [local education agency] to come up with a plan of action. We need to meet quarterly and create goals that can be completed throughout the year.

Regarding clear expectations, another transition teacher commented

While we know somewhat about each other's roles and responsibilities, we don't know them well enough to help the students in the most effective way possible. I am only marginally aware of what [VR] does....the next step might be for the district to invite [VR] to a [department] meeting.

4. Discussion

We examined VR counselor involvement in the transition process from the perspectives of both transition teachers and VR counselors. Additionally, we studied teachers' and VR counselors' perspectives of the importance and feasibility of collaboration practices. Although VR counselors reported themselves to be integral to the transition process, special educators were more divided with regard to the involvement of VR counselors. The frequency with which VR counselors were reported to be involved in transition activities ran the gamut from *weekly to never*. Transition teachers were likely to have only one VR counselor assigned to them and may have only contacted the counselor once a year to attend meetings. On the other hand, VR counselors may have collaborated with several transition teachers across schools or districts, and they reported being in contact with schools as often as weekly.

Mean ratings of transition teachers and VR counselors on importance of collaboration practices were nearly identical. In contrast, mean ratings of feasibility were much lower on the same list of practices, but this may have been an artifact of different descriptors on the rating scale (e.g., *from highly important to not important* for importance; *from highly likely to not likely* for feasibility). Nonetheless, low feasibility ratings may suggest that these transition teachers and VR counselors were not optimistic about whether

collaborative efforts can be improved. If so, ratings of the importance and feasibility warrant further discussion and investigation. The pervasively low feasibility ratings might be interpreted as pessimism among transition teachers and VR counselors on prospects of improving collaboration. It seems likely, based on suggestions from participants, that resources needed for implementation of important practices require administrative approval and funding, neither of which is perceived as likely. If this is the case, efforts should be made to involve key decision-makers, including policy makers, in the process of improving collaboration.

Our findings were similar to those reported from by Agran et al. (2002). For example, both transition teachers and VR counselors were interested in additional training, including joint training. Also, teachers and counselors indicated they had limited knowledge of each other's responsibilities and the values that drive the other profession. These findings seem to suggest SE and VR remain substantially separate systems, and remind us of Trach's (2012) statement, "For collaboration to occur, all participants must believe that benefits are shared or mutual, that a relationship with responsibilities is understood or well-defined, and that the resulting outcomes would be similar or achieve common goals" (p. 42). For collaboration to gain a foothold, teachers and counselors must first get together, share their desires for students in transition to adulthood, and realize their similar belief systems.

4.1. Limitations

Several limitations in this research should be taken into account. First, the four states were selected because we had access to lists of both transition teachers and VR counselors. As such, the sample may not accurately represent practitioners in all states. Second, the sample size for transition teachers in one state (Florida) was much lower than anticipated and for VR counselors was much lower than anticipated in two states (Florida, Utah). Therefore, low sample sizes may not accurately represent practitioners in these states. Third, the response rates for both groups were low as less than one-third of questionnaires were complete, raising questions about the representativeness. Fourth, the homogeneity of individuals comprising each group must be questioned. Although respondents generally worked in roles related to transition, they identified several titles and were not equally experienced, skilled, or familiar with the

questionnaire content. These limitations compromise the representativeness of the results.

4.2. Implications

Despite limitations, findings from this study may suggest interagency collaboration is viewed by both transition teachers and VR counselors as important, but in many cases, not feasible. If collaboration is a necessary ingredient to improving transition practice as suggested by existing research (Noonan et al., 2008; Noonan et al., 2012), our findings should remind administrators and policy makers that there is work to be done. In order to collaborate effectively, transition teachers and VR counselors need increased understanding of each other's roles, joint training opportunities, and information sharing, all of which requires administrative endorsement and action. Research should further explore how to improve interagency collaboration. Perhaps the use of focus groups would provide the necessary intensity to analyze recommended practices. But more important, future research must extend previous intervention study to evaluate whether interagency collaboration increases successful post-school outcomes for students with disabilities.

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