

Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) Disability Elements:

Focus on Data Quality

Transcript

03/04/24

Amanda Brown:

And at this time, I would like to introduce today's moderator for the WIOA PIRL Disability Elements Focus on Data Quality webinar.

Christina Eckenroth is a workforce analyst at the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, Office of Policy Development and Research. Please join me in welcoming Christina.

Christina Eckenroth:

Thanks, Amanda, and welcome everyone to today's webinar. OPTA's pleased to be co-presenting this webinar with our partners from U.S. DOL's Office of Disability Employment Policy known as ODEP, providing guidance and support around performance reporting to our state partners is a key function for OPTA, and we, along with our partners at ODEP, have been reviewing the rates of reporting on the PIRL elements related to disability. And we hope that today's webinar provides some actionable information for states and partners who are interested in looking more closely at how disability information collected by WIOA programs is tracked, analyzed, and reported.

So now I'll hand things over to my colleague Rose Warner from the Office of Disability Employment Policy to get things started. Rose.

Rose Warner:

Hi everyone, I'm Rose Warner and on behalf of ODEP, thank you for being here today. I also want to thank Christina and her team at OPTA for hosting this webinar. We couldn't have made this happen without you.

ODEP's mission is to develop and influence policies and practices that increase the number and quality of employment opportunities for people with disabilities. To that end, we've been closely tracking, through WIOA Title 1 reporting, how the American Job Center system is serving people with disabilities.

As will be discussed today, data about how the AJC system is serving people with disabilities is currently lacking in detail in depth. That means that states and local areas are likely missing out on key partnership opportunities. It also means that local job centers and workforce areas may be missing an opportunity to provide the most complete and most accessible services to their clientele, especially disabled clients.

Today, we'd like to encourage you to consider how improving messaging around WIOA performance reporting can improve knowledge about how the workforce system services, sorry, serves customers with disabilities. This also includes systems and processes for reporting data. Improved knowledge can result in more robust partnerships. And most importantly, better services for all users of the public workforce system. Next slide please.

I'd now like to welcome our team of presenters. Jessie Oettinger, Marian Negoita, and Laura Thomas work for Social Policy Research Associates, or SPR, and are here today in their capacity with their work on ODEP's LEAD Center. I have the privilege of being the

federal project officer for the LEAD Center. And the LEAD Center is led by National Disability Institute and SPR. The LEAD Center delivers policy, research and recommendations, technical assistance and demonstration projects to demonstrate inclusion and equity.

Specifically, the LEAD Center has three areas of focus. First, increasing career pathways for people with disabilities. Second, increasing financial empowerment of people with disabilities. And third, enhancing disability, employment data and data collection processes.

Today we're focusing on the data piece, but really as I've already stressed, if the data collection process focuses on disability aspects, then the services can be improved, which ultimately means that more people with disabilities will find career pathways that will lead them to be financially empowered.

Jessie, Marian and Laura all work closely with WIOA performance data and with the systems and policies that govern the collection and reporting of data for WIOA core programs as well as discretionary grants. Thank you again for being here today. We are so grateful for your time, attention, and passion.

Now, I'll hand things over to Jessie to review our agenda for the day and get us started.

Jessie Oettinger:

Thank you so much, Rose. I'm looking at the chat. Is my audio coming through okay, everybody? You've been very good at giving feedback.

Rose Warner:

You sound great, Jessie.

Jessie Oettinger:

All right, wonderful. Thank you so much. Okay, thank you Rose. And oh my gosh, thank you to everybody who logged in today. I'm Jessie Oettinger. And frankly I am just delighted and humbled and somewhat intimidated by how many people logged in today and are interested in this topic, which is very near and dear to my heart, both as a big workforce data wonk and as a very enthusiastic member of the LEAD Center team, which is just such a cool project.

So what we're doing today, we're going to start by reviewing the disability elements. The WIOA Adult Dislocated Worker and Youth programs track 10 data elements related to disability and disability services. And at the moment when we look at that WIOA data, we see two important things.

One, is that disability is being reported at a lower rate in WIOA Adult Dislocated Worker and Youth programs and disability is reported nationally in the census. So either folks with disabilities are not using our public workforce system, or if they are, they're not disclosing at a rate that they disclose when comes time to the census.

The other thing that we see when we look closely at this data is that when an individual with a disability is reported in the WIOA data, then the follow-up questions about the kind of disability they have and the services that they're receiving in the community are often left blank. So we want to start off by looking at what data is missing, mostly to understand what information may not be in the feedback loop between customer and case manager, between local workforce partnerships, between state and local workforce authorities, all the way up the chain. If we don't have the data, then is it part of the conversations we're having around partnership services, accessibility, that sort of thing? So in the next few slides I'll be talking about each of the elements and describing what they mean. Because even as I identify as a workforce person, a workforce wonk, I

spent a lot of time in the PIRL, but the first time I dove into these elements to get ready for a local training, I didn't know what a lot of them meant. There were acronyms and terms that were not familiar to me. And so I want to make sure we're all on the same page about the data that's in there. And I feel like if you don't know what you're not getting, you don't know what you're missing. That's another way of saying, just sort of elucidating what we don't have.

All right, so today we'll be telling you about what WIOA reporting set this up to learn about customers with disabilities, but that we're currently missing. So after I review all the PIRL data-related elements, my colleague Laura is going to do a tour of the LEAD Center's WIOA Data Visualization tool. And that way you can look at all of the data I just talked about and you can see how you can access that same information for your region, state or local area. We have cool maps, you can download the WIOA data and get under the hood with us.

The final part of our presentation is just some thoughts on what it would take to improve the quality of the disability elements data. And I just want to make sure that that we know that it is a big deal. It's not like a small thing to just do better collecting these 10 data elements that a lot of investment might need to go into that.

And so to end, we hope that this discussion on the next step is really just the beginning of a conversation. I'll say this again at the end and I'll share my contact information, but the LEAD Center team would like to extend the offer of follow up technical assistance to states and or MIS vendors who are interested in talking more about this from a data collection systems point of view. So if you work for a state workforce agency or if you work for a company that supports WIOA reporting by designing and

maintaining reporting software and systems, we'd love to follow up with you if this is something that you want to explore a little bit more.

We'll end the day or the meeting with some Q&A. And as Amanda said, we're taking questions in the Q&A chat, so feel free to enter those as we're talking so you don't forget. And by the time we get to the end, we'll see what we have time to answer. So that's what we're doing today. And now we actually have a poll for you because I am so curious who's here today to learn about disability data quality. So Amanda, I think is going to launch that poll and I'll turn the slide here. So we want to know who's here. Are you with the Federal Department of Labor? Are you a state workforce agency person, local workforce, maybe a partner to the workforce system, not sort of directly in that DOL vertical. If there are reporting vendors here. Or just general fans of quality data and or data about people with disabilities. So just looking for who's here with us today. And Amanda, when we have a good forum, maybe you can post results because I can't see them either. I'm curious.

Amanda Brown:

They're still rolling in strong, so we'll give them maybe a couple more seconds.

Jessie Oettinger:

Thank you.

All right, so lots of state workforce agency staff, terrific. We've got some vendors here today as well. We know you guys are key partners in building intuitive software that helps us gather this information at the local level. All right, so thanks for responding to that poll. One more poll just to get us ready, make me more conscious of when I'm using jargon and acronyms, but tell me a little bit more about what already about the WIOA disability data element. Can you name all 10 of them? And I was just thinking

this morning, if you could name seven of them, I would give you credit for number one, but very familiar, somewhat familiar, but you might have to look them up to learn more and maybe not even aware that there's 10 disability elements in the for all. So just sort of your level of familiarity with what we're set up to collect now.

Okay, Amanda. Okay, good. So some people are very familiar, a lot of people in the, I kind of know it's there. And 20% who didn't know they were there at all. So this is great. We will not be wasting time by spending 30 minutes talking about all of the elements.

All right, excellent. Okay. So as a reminder, the focus here is these 10 elements and what they are so you can understand what we're missing and start to consider how this data might improve services and partnerships in your state and in your local areas. I'm going to try to steer away from technical jargon as much as possible, but I'm going to review a couple key terms and concepts just for ease. There are a couple key acronyms. The first acronym I want to cover is, PIRL, I feel like I might've said this already. I'll definitely continue to drop this acronym. You'll see it in the slides.

PIRL is P-I-R-L, it stands for Participant Individual Record Layout. It's a document that outlines the data the different DOL and WIO programs need to capture on their participants and how that data should be reported. It's a giant specifications document. There are approximately 500 data elements in the PIRL, but not every program captures data on every element. And most participants won't necessarily have data to answer for every element in their program. So lots of data elements. And to keep them straight and make it easy to understand and find information on them and figure out where they go, each data element has a number. So we're going to refer to the data elements by their numbers in the PIRL or the data element number. The PIRL lays out

the number for each element and it also describes what it is and what the possible answers could be. So the code values that are available.

So for instance, if you're reporting what type of disability somebody has, it's not a write-in answer, there are seven options. And so we'll talk about all the options for reporting. All right. And let's see. So for this review of the data elements, I'll talk about each of their elements and their number and then we'll talk about what each of the answers mean. So I also want to say off the bat, don't worry about remembering all these elements or taking copious notes, we actually have a bunch of friendly tip sheets on the LEAD Center's website and we will link to those later in the presentation. So we have some shortcuts for all of this.

Something else that I want to mention before we get started is that not all DOL programs collect all of the disability data. Today, our focus is primarily on WIOA Adult Dislocated Worker and Youth programs. All 10 disability elements are part of their reporting schema, and they also make up the core of many, if not most local American job centers or one-stop networks. And I think what we want to do here is try to tie the concept of the AJC or the place in the community where folks are getting services to the lofty goals that we have for the American Job Center system. Mostly that they're accessible. And by accessible don't just mean ADA-compliant, which is important. So it's not just about having a wheelchair ramp, it's about being a place that you can go in your community that offers programming and services that are truly accessible to the broadest range of participants and job seekers, and that specifically people with disabilities are going to be able to benefit from the programs and the services that you offer.

And without going too far off on a tangent, which I have been known to do, SPR does a lot of evaluation work for DOL and for other funders and [inaudible 00:15:24]. And I think one truism is you get what you measure. And so when we see low rates of people with disabilities utilizing the public workforce system, and when we see a significant drop-off in the reporting of partnerships or the use of local disability-related services, it makes me wonder what would happen if we did focus some of our reporting energy on these elements and whether we would both get better data but also maybe increase the utilization, increase the attention on those areas. So that's just something to keep in mind. Another key term to keep in mind as we move forward just to make sure we're being inclusive here is the term management information system or MIS. In this case, when we're dropping that term, we're talking about the WIOA data collection system that states maintain and that local partners often input information about participants into.

The last thing I want to say before we dive into the elements is that asking people to disclose their disability status and provide more detailed information on the services that they're receiving, it's not a necessarily straightforward process, it's always voluntary to disclose information. And intake processes and the process at your local job center, it may or may not facilitate the kind of deeper sharing or trust that might be required to learn more about the whole person who's being served. And to that end, just a reminder that in many systems it's possible to go back and update participants files as case managers build more of a relationship with participants and that it is possible to go back and collect this data at other points in time. And also to underscore that we put a lot on our frontline workers and that we recognize that a lot of the burden of figuring out some of these reporting pieces is going to fall to them. So we're

very conscious of that as we move forward as well. So I just want to make sure that we're all on the same page and now we'll dive into the elements.

So the first one, data element or PIRL element 202 is individual with a disability. So this element is actually collected I think across all the programs that use PIRL to report is a category a participant characteristic that is captured universally and the of having a disability comes from the ADA of 1990. And the definition of a disability is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of a person's major life activities. In this case, the option for reporting whether an individual has a disability are one which indicates that they definitively said they had a disability, zero, that they indicated they do not have a disability, and nine, would be did not disclose or did not self-identify, which could mean a lot of things. It could mean they weren't asked, it could mean they were asked and they chose not to identify. And so that nine is interesting.

All right, so then if you answer that you have a disability, and I think this again is something that happens across multiple programs, there is a follow-up question, well what kind of disability? So the individual can indicate that yes, they have a disability, or no, they do not. And what's really important here is that case managers are not making that assessment. So somebody came into the job center and they were using a cane, it would still incumbent on that customer to identify that they have a disability and it would not be the role of the case manager to see the cane and be like, yep, they have a disability. So it's still up to the individual to identify as having a disability. And then more importantly, for them to disclose what kind of disability it is. So again, it's not the case manager seeing the cane and choosing physical mobility impairment. It's the individual self-disclosing what their disability is. And so here are the seven types of

disabilities that you can select from in the PIRL. And then the other options are nine that they didn't disclose what kind of disability they have and zero indicates that they have no disability.

All right. So now we start getting into the category of what I call the new acronym. So SDDA, our first acronym, IT stands for State Developmental Disabilities Agency. And so it's asking if this participant who has a disability has received services through the SDDA. Developmental disabilities are a group of conditions due to an impairment in physical learning language or behavior areas that began during the developmental period and may impact day-to-day functioning. Most developmental disabilities begin before birth and last throughout a person's lifetime. Examples include attention deficit, hyperactivity disorder, autism, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, and many others. Most states have an intellectual or adult developmental disabilities agency that provides the SDDA services. In every state, it's called something different. And depending on the service model, there might be further local contractors involved.

So this often requires a bit of digging at the local level. And if you're working with frontline staff and customers, it's probably not helpful to say, "Hey, have you received any services from the SDDA?" They might not recognize that term. The case manager might not know what to do with that. The customer might not know what to do that. But if you're able to name local contractors or a specific state agency or an office within an agency that offers benefits, that might resonate more. And so this is why it's really important to get under the hood with a lot of these acronyms and figure out what that means for local service provision. That's one of the biggest takeaways that I had when I was developing this local training.

All right. So the options here are pretty straightforward. As we move through these disability follow-on elements, what I want to call out is that once somebody has identified as having a disability, the options for a lot of these follow-on elements are binary saying like you have a disability and you said I have not received that service, or I haven't been engaged in that kind of activity, or I have, it's like yes or no. There's no non-disclosure element. If you leave the element blank, what it's supposed to mean is that it's not relevant because the person doesn't have a disability. What we see in the data is that we are getting a lot of blanks and so we don't really know what to do with that information. Is that because no one asked or they didn't know what the service was? So again, this should be a binary option zero or one, but we end up getting a lot of blanks when we start looking at this data.

The next acronym, the next fun acronym here is LSMHA, which is a very hard acronym to say I was practicing this morning and I kept tripping over that one. This stands for local or state mental health agency. All states receive support for mental health via mental health block grant. And then there's also partial funding for services that would come through Medicaid and through CHIP. So there are these various federal funding streams that are coming into support mental health services, but it's up to each state to design its own mental health system and figure out how to provide services in the community. So again, this is something that's really going to vary in the community in terms of what organizations are offering services, what kinds of services there are, and so really providing training that's very tailored to the local area and saying, "Oh, that's Goodwill here," or some other service provider that can be really helpful for both AJC staff and for customers in identifying themselves.

So again, this one is binary. If somebody has a disability, we should be saying that definitively they have received services from the LSMHA, or no, they have not. And if it was left blank, we would assume person does not have. Oops, I went too far.

All right, this brings us to the end of the complicated acronyms. This next one, Medicaid HCBS Services. So this is about determining whether or not an individual with a disability has received services funded via state Medicaid, home and community-based services waivers. So these home and community-based services waivers provide opportunities to Medicaid beneficiaries to receive services in their own home or community rather than in an isolated setting. So I think this assumes that the default is that somebody might be in an institution, but that they could apply for this waiver and instead receive services in their own home through the Medicaid program.

Generally, states offer HCBS waivers to elderly people who are 65 and older, physically disabled people, adults and children with developmental disabilities and medically fragile people. So that's what the HCBS acronym is all about.

And again, this looks really different in every community. Sometimes they're administered through insurance programs, sometimes they're administered through local agencies or local partners. So becoming knowledgeable about how these services are administered at the state and local level is a really important part of connecting it to the work happening at the job center. Binary, again, like the other ones. So we're looking for a definitive answer, yes or no, and that's the goal with this piece of data.

All right, so I'm going to pause and check in with folks here. So again, when I came to this as a self-identified workforce wonk, I was really humbled by all these programs I didn't know about. And so I'm curious how familiar you are with the partners and services that I just described over those last four elements. So the SDDA, the LSHMA,

and the Medicaid HCBS. And so just curious whether those are things that you're really familiar with, you know what state partners are doing that work and how it looks on the ground, or if you're less familiar or if it's totally new to you.

Amanda Brown:

We're getting a lot of engagement with your polls Jessie. So would you like to leave it up for a few more seconds?

Jessie Oettinger:

Give it a more seconds. I'm definitely curious. And I'm seeing that the Q&A is blowing up. To keep myself on track, I'm just going to power through my slides, but I think we'll have a good amount of time at the end of today to go through some of these questions and see where we have to [inaudible 00:27:03]. All right, so good. This is excellent. So again, we're seeing that a few people are really familiar with these services and agencies, but the bulk of our respondents here, these are new acronyms, these are new terms. And WIOA has really grown the number of partners we have here at the table. So it's really exciting that the PIRL was designed to collect this information. And yeah, thank you guys for responding to the poll.

Okay, next slide. All right, so we're moving into, by far, I think of the first three as new acronyms, and these next ones are maybe some new terms or concepts. So for us workforce people, if we hear the term on the job training, we know that to the layperson, that could mean a lot of things, but it can mean something very specific in WIOA. And similarly, there are some terms in the workforce and disability space that mean really specific things. So we're going to talk about different work settings and we're going to talk about customized employment services over the next few slides.

So PIRL element -207 asks about work setting and so it's asking what kinds of work experience the person with a disability might have currently or have had in the past. And in this case, there are four work scenarios or terms mentioned that mean really specific things. We'll describe each of them and we'll go from the most integrated situation, to the least. And so then when we see the options for reporting, it'll make more sense.

So the work setting options starts with competitive integrated employment. WIOA defines competitive integrated employment as either part or full-time work, including self-employment, in which an individual with a disability is paid at or above minimum wage and is located in an environment where the individual regularly interacts with people both with and without disabilities. So the competitive angle here means that the individual with a disability earns the same wages and salary as a similarly situated individual without a disability. And the integrated aspect of the employment means that the individual with a disability uses the same entrances, bathrooms, work spaces as the other individuals on their team without disabilities, and that the individual is not prohibited from engaging with the public due to their disability status. So they're fully integrated into their work situation and they're being paid competitive comparable wages. So that's what competitive integrated employment means.

The next option [inaudible 00:29:48] down the spectrum of integration options is a supported work environment. So supported employment is again a specific term, it's when people with or without disabilities work together in a workplace. So it's still maybe an integrated workplace, but where the individual with a significant disability is receiving ongoing support services such as job coaching or other services that are intended to help them obtain and maintain employment. So they might be in an

integrated setting, but they are receiving support above and beyond what other colleagues might be receiving.

And this term supported employment is really worth looking into locally and at the state level as well. Some states have branded programs for supported employment and very specific local partners who are charged with assisting in the implementation of supported employment. So again, it is a specific term and it might even carry further specifications in your state. So worth looking into.

The next two work setting environments are descriptions of scenarios where people with disabilities are mostly working with other people with disabilities and they have a lot of support on site. So there's group supported employment and that's supervised employment for small groups of workers with disabilities, people with and without disabilities acquire skills, may conduct simple or more complex tasks and gain an overall understanding of different work cultures. And then the last option is a sheltered workshop or a work center. These are center-based programs that provide segregated employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. And oftentimes they are working for less than minimum wage, with the trade-off that it's a supportive environment. A lot of times it's an option that families utilize for adults with disabilities to get them into social situations to earn some money, but it's definitely, they're by themselves, is not competitive and it's not integrated, but it is employment and it does provide other benefits. So that's what a sheltered workshop means. And I don't remember the exact specifications around this, but sheltered workshops are sort of being phased out across the country. So you might still encounter that depending on where you're living, but those are increasingly less popular ways of supporting adults with disabilities in the workplace.

All right, so then when you get to the point where you get to enter the data, your options are selecting from, now you know what competitive integrated employment is, supported employment, group supported employment, the sheltered workshop, or there's the option to select more than one of these. Zero means they're not employed. And again, a blank answer should imply that the individual doesn't have a disability because if somebody does have a disability, they're definitively answering these questions here. All right.

All right, so our next term that we're going to gain familiarity with is the term customized employment services. And so this is a suite of services and it's a progression of services. So I'm going to describe customized employment, and then talk about the different levels or the progress that an individual would make if they were engaged in this process because it can be quite lengthy. So customized employment uses an approach called discovery to identify the strengths of an individual in community settings.

The role of the service provider in customized employment is to facilitate customizing a job for the individual that matches their strengths to a business's needs. Customized employment is an option maybe when typical supported employment strategies haven't been successful or when the customized employment is going to more adequately meet both the business and the customer's needs. So again, what we're looking for here is more information about the participants' customized employment experience. So the first level of participating in customized experience or stage one would be the discovery process. So the discovery assessment is a process to find out who a person is, to determine the elements that are crucial to their employment success. And this assessment is actually pretty significant. So it will often involve doing interviews with

friends, family, support workers, observing the individual in different situation, maybe conducting some other assessments. So really getting a very clear picture of that individual's work strengths and places where they might need support on the job. So after the discovery assessment, oftentimes this leads to a customized employment search plan. This is a plan that's developed using that information that was learned during the assessment. And you develop a plan towards meaningful employment, determine a list of potential employers, figure out exactly what this individual is looking for and where there might be a good fit. So after the plan, the next level or the next piece of this progression would then be reaching out to employers and trying to negotiate a customized employment placement. And so when the job developer or the employment coach negotiates accommodations, maybe negotiates a specific scope of work that is really tailored to that individual's strengths. And then the last step on this journey would be that the individual cures unsubsidized employment as a result of that customized employment plan. So we go all the way from the assessment, to the plan, to the negotiation. The negotiation is successful and the person is placed in that job that has been customized just for them. So that's what customized employment services are.

And then when you get to the opportunity to put information in your WIOA data about that, again, starting at one, that means that you made it through the discovery process, all the way to four. Zero means that you were not engaged in customized employment, and blank would be just for individuals who don't have it.

All right, you guys, we're getting close to the end. We have I think three more elements after this one, but I want to pause and take a break. And again, these are some really interesting concepts and programs. And so just curious how familiar you are with these

different work settings that I talked about and their definitions, as well as the customized employment process. So just taking a break to see what your level of familiarity is with some of these terms.

I'll let you call it Amanda, when you think things are slowing down.

All right, so this is tracking with our other results. Generally we're getting between 10 and 15% of our audience I think is very familiar with these terms and these programs. About half of our audience is familiar but not super clear. And then we're getting between 30 and 40% of participants for whom all of this is new information. So I love this breakdown and again, thank you guys for being such good respondents to the poll.

All right, so here we are, coming into the homestretch with our disability elements. PIRL element 209 is financial capability. And it asks that the participant has received benefits planning services or financial capability services or both. So benefit planning services, I'll start with that one because this one is very specific. These are services that help individuals who receive public benefits such as supplemental social security income or SSI, or SSDI, understand how their benefits may change if they obtain part or full-time work.

So it's also referred to as a benefits cliff, and this is a very specific form of counseling where folks who might be receiving various safety net funding that's income-based, they need to know, well, if I start working, how is this going to affect a suite of services that I count on to support me, whether it's health insurance or accommodation or any of these things, other supplemental income. And so this is a really important service. The other thing that this is asking about is more general financial capability or asset development services. And these are a broader services that might be familiar to a lot of us who operate in the AJC world. So this is more services around financial

management, checking and savings accounts, credit scores, understanding debt and interest rates, managing a personal budget. And just making an informed financial decision.

And so, this financial services category is much broader, but it's something that you can also ask about. And what I learned when I was preparing again for this local training on the disability elements is that especially when it comes to benefits training, there are many venues through which a person would receive benefits counseling. And in some of those cases, it really is a state-by-state, again case, as to how counseling services are administered and reimbursed.

We were in Wisconsin and the wonderful people at the state of Wisconsin and in Milwaukee were elucidating the many ways in which you could receive benefits counseling. And so I'd only bring this up because it is more complicated. It's another one of those things where it's complicated. And again, having that sort of local vernacular or local reference points when you're engaging with customers and training your frontline staff, that's going to be really important.

And I also feel like this is a really cool one because the more local AJC staff are empowered with information about benefits counseling, that's just such a great referral to offer to customers who need it too. So I am really excited about the potential to increase information here.

All right, so with PIRL element 209 or the financial capability element, your options are that you received benefits planning services. And again, that's the very specific counseling around your benefits, the broader financial capability service, both or not [inaudible 00:41:30]. All right.

Okay, so now we're moving into a couple of elements that are education and honestly youth focused. So these come up a lot in the WIOA Youth Program. I also see them, I think maybe YouthBuild and Job Corps might track these as well. And the RIO program. So these are more youth focused elements. And this is asking if the individual with a disability has or formerly had an individual education program or IEP or special education services while they were attending secondary school.

An IEP is used to ensure that students with disabilities are eligible to receive special education and related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA. And so, making sure they're eligible to receive services that are tailored to meet their unique needs in the least restrictive environment to prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. To be eligible, a student generally might be between the ages of three and 21, have a qualifying disability in one of the 13 categories that is covered by IDEA. And they have to have a disability that impacts their educational performance and they must be in need of special education or related services.

So again, this three to 21 category is primarily going to capture youth, but I suppose it's possible that you could have an adult or dislocated worker who is on the older end of the spectrum who this might be applicable to, but it's mostly a youth element.

So the options here are they have an IEP and they're currently in secondary school. So that would be youth that are still enrolled in high school. That they formerly had an IEP but they're no longer in high school. Or that neither condition applies, which means they did not have an IEP.

The next [inaudible 00:43:48]. Section 504 plan, which is quite related to an IEP. I just got a little note that my internet connection is unstable, so I'm going to turn off my

video just in case it affects my audio and hopefully we won't have a disruption there. So section 504 refers to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. It's a federal law that protects students with disabilities.

A Section 504 plan can be used to get reasonable accommodations for an individual with a disability that falls outside of the 13 qualifying disabilities that you would need to get an IEP. So 504 plans are to get accommodations for folks that can't get an IEP or who don't need special education and related services, but that still might need accommodation. A 504 plan outlines how the individual's specific needs will be met through accommodations, modifications and other services. And so again, binary answer, yes, they have a 504 plan, no, they do not meet this condition, blank would indicate that they don't have a disability.

All right, so that takes us to the end of the 10 disability elements. I just want to thank everybody for hanging in there. I know that was a lot of talking. And so now I want you to think about this data and as Marian will discuss later on, there's a cost to collecting data, a financial cost, a time cost. And then there's also the fact that states and communities, we have so many priorities around workforce and we have to pick sometimes.

So just being honest with yourself and thinking about these disability elements. I guess I'm curious if you think that having better data about these data elements will have short and longer term impacts on services and partnerships that your state, local level. Or whether you're still trying to figure out realistically what your community could do with that data. So anyway, these are our options here. Pick the one that feels truest to how you feel. And again, we're just very curious about how this ranks in terms of

priority among our stakeholders here. So, I'll let Amanda let us know and we think we've assessed how folks are feeling

All right. So for the most part I'm seeing that folks do feel like having better data would make a difference in their community and might improve services, might improve partnership. So thank you guys again. This concludes the part where I talk to you about the data elements. And so now we're going to do something really fun. My colleague Laura is going to share her screen. She's going to navigate the LEAD Center, which is a great website and a terrific resource for those of you who haven't been there. And specifically she's going to show you some of the resources that we have around WIOA data and we have this cool data visualization map and she's going to show you how to download the data and look at it.

So Laura, I don't want to give away your presentation. I'm going to mute myself. And let you go.

Laura Thomas:

Thanks so much Jessie, thank you for having me today. I'm happy to be here and show you this cool visualization that summarizes and visualizes all those PIRL elements that Jessie took you through. So like Jessie mentioned, this visualization is on the LEAD Center's website. So I thought I'd just help start by showing how to navigate from the main LEAD Center page, which is at LEAD Center.org. To get to the visualization, under workforce development, you're going to see WIOA Data Visualization Tool. You're going to click that and down here is the visualization. So to give you some context and history about this tool, the team at SPR programmed this tool four years ago. It is built with a programming language called R, and that's like a single letter R, and specifically a

package, a visualization package called Shiny. And that makes it interactive. So R is a data science language and this is the data visualization feature of that language. So you can see here it starts you on data by map. We also have this data in table form. And the data guide, which I'll hop to quick because this will connect what Jessie just shared with the data we're going to talk about here. So it's basically like a handy cheat sheet of all the elements Jessie just went through. And you can even link to that wonderful PIRL file that is very long, but you can see the whole link there. But you can see here both the friendly name and the technical number of each of these data elements and it walks through the description of them. And so just a handy reference for folks to have right on this data visualization tool. And really this tool answers the question, how comprehensive is your reporting? It is accessible, that has always been from day one, that was a required part of the tool and will continue to be. So it can be accessed the screen reader or a keyboard.

It is updated quarterly. And I will note that while it does say March 2023, the date of this is actually undergoing a little bit of a version two or three. I forget which version we're on now. And so when that facelift renovation of the data visualization is published, it will have the most recent data updates. So we do note that it is a couple of quarters behind.

Also, the welcome has a video that can give you an orientation, or if you want to share with folks if they weren't able to attend today, it can provide a one-on-one for this tool. Going back to data by map. You can see here we have all the data for the U.S. and you can drill down into U.S. states for some county-level reporting and U.S. territories, assuming that data was in the WIOA data and it was reported out on. If there's only

some reporting that only has a few responses, that gets into a data privacy management thing. So it has to be suppressed.

So up here in these sub tabs to again connect the dots between what Jessie talked through and this tool, that first PIRL element for folks to indicate whether someone has a disability, that is covered by these two tabs. So disability status, you can see here the state breakdown. We can also see it by region. And then for disability status unknown, so that would be, like Jessie said, if somebody did not disclose this could mean a lot of things. But again, this gets at both questions of how many people using the American Job Centers are indicating that they have a disability as well as how many people are not disclosing or are not reporting or that missing data element that Jessie was speaking to.

To give you an example of how the drilling down by state works, you can either type in the full state name and you'll see the map shows up below with data by county. Again, it has a summary text up here at the top. You can see an example of that data suppression issue I talked about. In this case, it's data suppression for a county. And then it also provides some information about the highest percentage. In this case, of disability status is unknown versus the lowest percentage. You can also use the two-state or two-digit state definition and that will work as well as a shortcut.

We can also look at this information by program. All right, here we go. So you can see here this looks at those two questions or the two questions we're looking at, what percent of people are indicating that they have a disability, and what percent are not indicating that they have a disability by these maps. So here, you can see it, the four maps by program. In this case the yellow shading indicates a higher rate of reporting,

and purple shading indicates lower percentage. We can switch that to disability unknown. So you can see that.

Or if you only want to look at a certain program and want to get rid of the others, that's possible as well. Now disability elements goes into the reporting the results of the elements after that initial PIRL element 202, so this starts at 203, and all the subsequent ones Jessie spoke about. So you can see here any category of disability indicated and just to orient that would be equivalent to that 203. And then it drills down into each of those fun acronyms that Jessie went through. And as you click those, you can see how the state data changes. And as we click down, we do kind of notice this fall-off effect. As you can see, more states are showing data suppressed, that's telling us there's very low reporting, which means less people are answering those questions. Again, we can see this data by state as well. And even greater suppression with even lower numbers.

Oops, sorry.

And you'll note here that the PIRL numbers are not included in this menu. It's more user-friendly. We wanted this data visualization to be approachable and not everyone is familiar with those numbers. So this just gives that description.

Last look at comparison. So at the beginning of the presentation, Jessie noted that we were seeing less reporting of disability indicated than as shown in the census data. And this is what this visualization is describing. So here, it's broken down by gender and race, if they indicated those things. And you can see the blue dot is the program rate. And I'll try to zoom in because I know this is pretty small. But the orange dot is the rate indicated on the census. And specifically, I will get into the weeds that this is census reporting through the American community survey data. So that's the ACS data. And we

are pulling this data through what's called the Public Use or PUMS data. And so that lets us really kind of drill down and make sure we're getting And 16 to 64, and just make sure we're grabbing the right data in that census and for these genders and race indicated as well. We can also see this data by program again. And actually, there are some cases where the program rate is greater than the rate reported on the census. And then, so that was by program. But if they did not indicate their gender, if they did not indicate their disability status, that this is to catch the remainder of those participants.

Again, you can see this data by table as well. Zoom back out a bit. And so I want to take some time to highlight a few things because this is a very large table and there's lots of options over here. So the default settings are always like they receive it's percent that received the service or indicated they have the disability. But you can drill down a little bit further. So you can see here, these four are all about whether they have a disability indicated or whether they account is unknown. And so just by unchecking one and flipping to one of these other ones, you can change this table to drill down on what you'd like to see. So if we wanted to keep it really simple, we can uncheck some of all these other PIRL options to just focus on a few columns that we can use as an example. All right.

So here we have the states, the abbreviations and these counts. We can also go down to state. So you can see here, and maybe if you only want to look at California data, you can filter it down using the search feature to just those California counties. If you'd like, you can also look at this data by region. And I'm sure you already saw up here, you can look at this data by program as well as comparisons to the census as well.

So like I mentioned, Jessie mentioned, this allows you to really kind of look into the fall off of the reporting. And so as we add columns for the disability elements that are further down, those elements you can see here, they're going to get smaller because they might be answering 202, maybe 203, and then they tend to have more blanks for one reason or another, which Marian is going to get into very shortly. And this data can be shared, can be downloaded, can be screenshot and used in reporting or just to get to know more information or have those conversations at your local level. I also want to note that this tool is one of several that SPR has developed to visualize WIOA data. And there are even options. We have a proof of concept for a state level visualization to have this WIOA data. And so if this is something that you think your state or region would be interested in, again, that would be where some of that limited TA that Jessie talked about might be a good option to look into that.

So that wraps up everything for the data visualization tool. I will be checking the Q&A if there's any technical questions about the technology or anything. But with that, I'm going to hand it over to my colleague Marian.

Marian Negoita:

Hi everyone. As the other two [inaudible 01:01:33]. And I'll sure to get off video. But hearing none, I'm just going to jump right into it.

The connection is unstable, so I'm going to get off video. Sorry about that. So data quality that I am personally very passionate about because in my work I deal with a lot of quantitative data and I do a lot of quantitative data. And [inaudible 01:02:11] very easy for my job when data quality is high. And so data quality is term and we can spend a long time [inaudible 01:02:25]. It can be improved using lots of different controls, guidelines, tests, and iterative processes. But one in data quality is something

that's called a management information system or MIS. And what that does is computers can help with data quality by catching entry errors, setting parameters or on the kinds of answers that can be entered and requiring that certain fields are filled out to completion.

Other tools are more human kinds of tools and they include guidance, regular audits, just basically visually checking and inspecting. And we think a primary reason that we have sparse disability data in some of the items that Jessie and Laura talked about is that many MIS systems at the state level do not force the user to answer questions beyond elements 202 and 203, even if a participant has volunteered that they have a disability. So we're getting a lot of blank data with that, with those kinds of elements. So to just give you a little bit of vision inside how the system works. So when WIPS, which is the Workforce Integrated Performance System, which is the platform into which states upload their WIOA of Participant data. When WIPS is checking those files for complete information, it runs several tests. And so specifically when testing the disability-related fields, WIPS requires that if you enter one for element 202, meaning if you identify a participant as having a disability, element 203 cannot be blank, meaning you must select from the list of disability types that Jessie showed or selected did not disclose.

However, for the rest of the follow-on disability elements, elements 204 to 209, 939, 940 reporting is not required and respondents can leave the fields blank. And because WIPS does not force the answer, many vendors who develop MIS for states also don't make it mandatory. However, some states already have opted to update their internal logic tests to require more thorough reporting.

So the system isn't requiring these kinds of things to be completed, does not force an answer or a value in those fields. So we're left to wonder whether these questions are on the radar of local frontline staff doing intake and or providing services and if they're really trying to collect this information. So requiring them to fill out those fields is part of the response, but it's not the complete answer. Because MIS can help prompt frontline staff or managers to collect this information, but without support or understanding what these elements are, how to ask about them, how to understand if a participant has engaged with some of the partners or some of these services, the data still won't be that good.

For all these elements, we can think about the high number of missing values in those items in a few ways. First, would assume that participants are being asked in a sensitive, knowledgeable, professional way about partner services or employment activities and chose not to disclose, or not to answer. Another scenario is that they were never asked and didn't say anything. So technically, that is a legitimate blank. Although in that case that should be a zero, not really a blank. Or maybe they were asked but they didn't understand the question because possibly their case manager didn't really understand a complicated acronym like LSMHA, what does that mean? And so that's why these other supports are so important training, guidance, more training again, these are very sophisticated concepts to understand and it's about providing support, not just requiring people to do something.

So what's not on here, but it's also a really important in communicating about, why do you want to collect the data? What do you hope to learn? And then as things move along, whether the data is getting better. So there's an element of analyzing the

disability data, tracking it over time, and communicating to your stakeholders if it's

getting better and how to improve the services. Next slide please.

So now that we've just discussed what might go into improving the quality of the PIRL disability data, we want to acknowledge that there are real costs to making this happen.

First, the financial costs of making updates to the MIS, and that would be big in some cases. There's also the cost of developing training and guidance for staff at the state and local level to report on the disability elements, that has a cost. And of course, perhaps most importantly, it's time. At the state level, the time it takes to figure out cohesive, strategic messaging on why you're collecting the data and what you want to do with it.

The time it takes to develop training and guidance, the time incurred by state to attend trainings and get up to speed. The time that we're going into figuring out how often the state will measure progress and respond to missing data. At the local level, more time, perhaps even more, because there is time that needs to go into training staff on the elements definition and reporting processes, the time that goes into training staff about professional, secure, and sensitive ways to collect data on disability, the time that will then have to go into updating local intake processes and forms, and of course, the additional time to staff to actually collect the data and report it. These are big asks.

Especially considering the workload and reporting burden that frontline AJSC staff already face. So all of this is to say we do understand why we're seeing some underreporting, and yet we want to encourage everyone to think of the reasons to do it anyway. Next slide, please.

Oh yes, that's the right one.

So going back to the elements themselves, information about whether someone has a disability, the kind of disability, the services they are receiving in the community and their experience with work and education interventions, all of this is information that if provided to a case management or employment navigator, should allow them to provide better services to their customers. As we all know, better services should result in stronger outcomes for these workforce development participants.

Another benefit of having better data about workforce system customer and the other providers they work with is that they might need to better connections between state and local agencies. So all in all, we view this as an opportunity for improvement that might result in really big improvements in the way these customers receive services and their outcomes. Next slide please.

So this is just a recap slide, basically reinforcing the main points I've been making. We're thinking changes to the MIS might prove beneficial, but they will require several costs in terms of time and even money. Continuous measuring and reporting back will help improvement in these issues. And training and support is absolutely essential to provide better services.

And with that, I am turning it over to Jessie back.

Jessie Oettinger:

Thank you, Marian. Thank you Laura too. So we have tons of questions in the Q&A.

Thank you. Keep them coming. We should have about 10 minutes or so.

As I transition into some of our resources that we have and we start going through the Q&A. Just to note that I think Amanda's going to pop a poll up at some point. It's about Zoom accessibility. So we love accessibility at the LEAD Center. It's something we care about a lot too. And so anyway, go ahead. Hope it's not too distracting. But please

answer questions about accessibility. It has so many implications across the board.

Thank you for doing that advance.

So I wanted to just let you know we have some resources here. Obviously the LEAD Center, Laura navigated how to go to our data visualization tool that's under our workforce resources on the LEAD Center page. In that same area, there's also some reporting tip sheets. So that's where we go over the specific data elements, their possible answers and their definitions. We also have some webinars, briefing papers and other tools. This is not the first webinar we've done on this topic and so please check out the LEAD Center's website. If you go for the workforce and stay for other amazing resources that are posted there as well, and I want to make sure we're giving a very specific shout out. The staff on this LEAD Center webinar are from Social Policy Research Associates. We are partnered with National Disability Institute on the LEAD Center and they are also a font of knowledge and just the most terrific partners. So check out the LEAD Center. And Amanda's putting some links in the chat for everybody. So thank you so much Amanda.

And then here is my contact information. Again, my name is Jessie Oettinger and on behalf of the LEAD Center, if you are interested in follow-up technical assistance on this topic and you're from a state or from an MIS vendor, we would love to engage with you and hear about what you're interested in doing and see how we can support you, how the LEAD Center can support that. And so that [inaudible 01:14:13].

So I'm going to go back to the Q&A slide and we got a lot of questions in the Q&A. I was trying to listen to my colleagues and also read them at the same time. So I tried to pull out a few that I thought we could answer today and also comment on a couple of these questions. And I just want to say thank you because as we were discussing in our

internal chat, what a savvy group of people to have on a webinar, really detailed great questions. And so I just really appreciate your participation today, it feels really good as a presenter on a Zoom webinar sitting in my home office. I feel connected to all of you, so I really appreciate that. And I haven't talked to the LEAD Center staff about this yet, but I already have so many ideas about what our next resources on this topic could look like.

Okay. So let's see. There were some questions around the data validation or the documentation and specific element definitions. We try not to comment too deeply on whether or not something counts or not, because we're not DOL staff, but Christina put a resource in the inside chat, so OPTA mentioned that Tegel 2319 had some good information about documenting disability status and different types of these data elements. So I wanted to put that out there and also just sort of let you guys know that that is a different dimension of this. And so something we can work on perhaps internally is going back and tying associated Tegels to our fact sheets. I think that could improve them. So I'm going to put that on our to-do list.

The next thing that I wanted to address, there are a lot of questions about, I sort of mentioned sheltered employment, I did mention sheltered employment when I was talking about the different work settings and got some very specific comments about 14-C. I was trying to be as broad as possible, but I just wanted to let all of who are commenting very knowledgeably about sheltered workshops and 14-C wage certificates that this is actually something that the LEAD Center is working on currently. And so another great reason to stay attached to the LEAD Center is in the next six or so months, we might have some interesting information or resources coming out around what that transition looks like.

And so stay tuned for that. So I'm just using really that question to do a little internal promotion for the LEAD Center. Here's a technical one for Laura just because I know people get me to, I've talked a lot today.

Laura, somebody asked about the margin of error on the ACS numbers and asked if it was possible that ACS is being over-reported. And so I know that Laura is a big census wonk, so I don't know if you want to dive into how you think about that data.

Laura Thomas:

Yeah, that's a great question and I love the fact that somebody asked that because it does get into the weeds of census data. And I will highlight that somebody had asked a question about the public use micro-data that I had referenced in the presentation and I did post an answer and link to where that data was exported. So take a look in the answered Q&A questions to see that.

So while ACS is a broader summary data because of lower counts, you don't have as many data points in the ACS data sets as opposed to the decennial census. And so when you look at this ACS data at a state level or county level especially, there is a margin of error that is always good to take into account. So exactly whether you're under reporting or over reporting. The data that we pulled for this is at the national level. And since it is at that national level and the sample size is much, much greater, there is significantly less of a concern with that margin of error when we're pulling it at that level. And so I don't think there is a degree... While I have to say because I'm a data researcher scientist person, that yes, I'm sure there is still a margin of error, it would be very, very small at the national level.

Jessie Oettinger:

Great, thank you. Thank you Laura for handling that one. So there are also some questions here that there seem to be a lot of questions around process. And so this is where again at the state level, you co-designed your MIS with a vendor, already written a bunch of guidance that guide us then goes out to the local areas. In a lot of cases, local areas have their own intake forms or processes. And because that process can really vary so widely across local areas, I just want to call out that that's oftentimes a great place to engage in more design thinking, more flexibility. Again, everything we're talking about today is more work free. So I just want to be very clear that that is what we're asking.

But I do think that a lot of these questions about process that I'm seeing pop up in the chart. First of all, you all have a ton of great frontline experiences. So bringing corner cases to that design scenario, engaging with customers who have disabilities, we're big proponents of universal design for learning and human-centered design at SPR and generally in the workforce system. And so this is a great opportunity just looking at these process questions for me to get on a little soapbox and remind you that if this is something you care about and this is some design work that you're thinking about doing and making sure you're engaging with your one-stop customers to figure out the best way to collect some of the data and with partners as well.

There were some questions about the JVSG program, and you're right, I completely skipped over this when we were describing the data. So the JVSG data or the job, and I apologize to everybody for just jumping to acronyms and jargons, but JVSG is Jobs for Veterans State Grants. And so those are grants that go out to states to provide support for disabled veteran employment specialists and other very specific support services to veterans utilizing the one-stop system. And so, actually Laura or Marian, can one of you

explain the use of JVSG in these tables, I don't want to say it wrong. So maybe we could be a little more accurate about the way we talked about the data that's available.

Laura Thomas:

I'll defer to Marian.

Marian Negoita:

Sorry, what was about the JVSG data that the question was about?

Jessie Oettinger:

Well, I think somebody just noted that in the data visualization, there's also a reference to JVSG data and I think that's because those data elements are also collected for that program. And so we actually do have a small amount of data pertaining to the JVSG program.

So just to be succinct maybe and not kick it around too much unless you have something to add to this Marian. When we're reviewing the WIOA data, we sort of looked wherever we could find for reporting data. So we do have some JVSG data in there as well. And then I just tend to default to very core program centric. It's a real problem. But we just defaulted to really thinking of this really more as the AJC. So hopefully that answers that question. But then again, I'm seeing a lot of very detailed policy questions, which I don't think we have time to answer on air right now, but I have recorded all of them. We have them here. And I just again, want to thank everybody for that level of detail because I think there are ways that we can improve our PIRL tip sheets and look for further resources for you all. So stay tuned for some updates there.

And then I just want to flip through here. Again, this is my contact information. Shoot me an email if you are interested in talking more about improving the data quality of

these disability elements and know that if you call us, we're probably just going to give you lots of ideas of how to spend money and how to use time. But definitely an exciting topic. And again, just so delighted by how many folks turned out today and how engaged our audience was. Just want to thank you all again and you should visit the LEAD Center, sign up for our mailing list. We have webinars all the time and they're terrific, lots of great technical assistance available through LEAD Center. So just another a plug to visit that. And a big, big thank you to OPTA who set up this webinar for us and are such great partners and sharing WIOA data and being a good discussant in thinking about this.

So thank you to everybody. What a great Monday. And really appreciated being here today with you.