


Introduction

The literature indicates that African Americans are underserved at all stages of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) process (e.g., Wilson, Jackson, & Doughty, 1999). The present study was conducted to examine a group of African American (Black) Deaf consumers and Caucasian (White) Deaf consumers as they proceeded through the VR process in Kentucky. Information was extracted from the Rehabilitation Services Administration RSA-911 database from 1996 to 2001. Data was also collected from individual consumer case files, one-on-one interviews with both Black and White consumers, and a Black consumer Focus Group.

Wilson, K. B., Jackson, R. L., & Doughty, J. D. (1999). What a difference a race makes: Reasons for ineligibility within the vocational rehabilitation system. *American Rehabilitation*, 25 (2), 16-24.



Method

- **Planned Method:**
 - Data was collected from both the RSA-911 database, individual case files, and interviews with Black consumers served by Kentucky VR

- **Method Used:**
 - Black consumers were resistant to doing interviews so two focus groups were added to the procedure

Method

Sample

Participants in this study consisted of 27 Black and 177 White consumers served and closed from Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services in Kentucky. Participants were selected using random selection procedures.

Procedures

Data was collected from Rehabilitation Services Administration RSA- 911 data, individual case file review, one-on-one interviews with Black and White consumers, and focus groups. The original planned method of data collection did not involve focus groups. This procedure was added after the interview procedure produced 10 White consumers and only two Black participants. Many Black consumers were not willing to be interviewed for this study. This led to the addition of two focus groups to the investigation to get the information needed to conduct a substantive examination of Black/ White differences in service delivery in Kentucky VR.

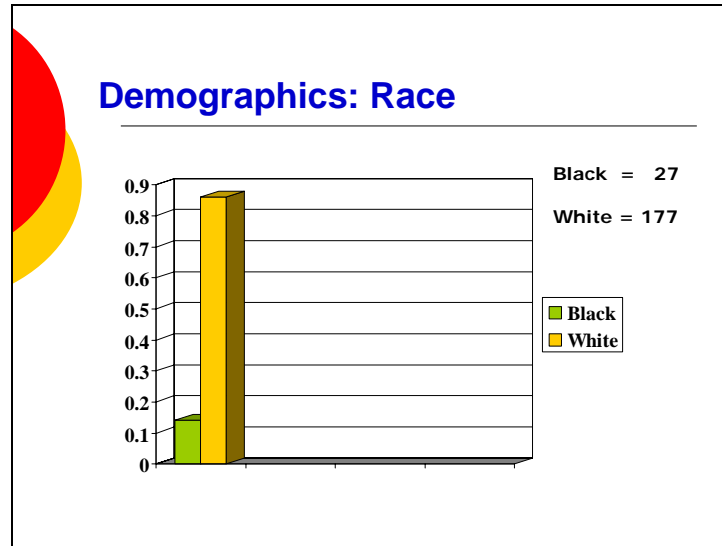
One focus group was comprised of Black consumers only and was facilitated by a Black researcher. The second group consisted of Community

leaders in Kentucky; both Black and White leaders participated in this group. The findings from both these groups are included in this summary report to complement the findings from the original planned study.

Analyses

Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive, cross tabulation, and ANOVA procedures. Qualitative data from the interviews and Focus Groups was examined for patterns and trends.

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The total sample selected for examination in the initial part of the study included 204 consumers. All participants were randomly selected from a group of closed cases.

14% of the consumers were Black
86% of the consumers were White

This percentage of White / Black consumers is consistent with the demographics of the population in Kentucky according to the 2000 census bureau report:

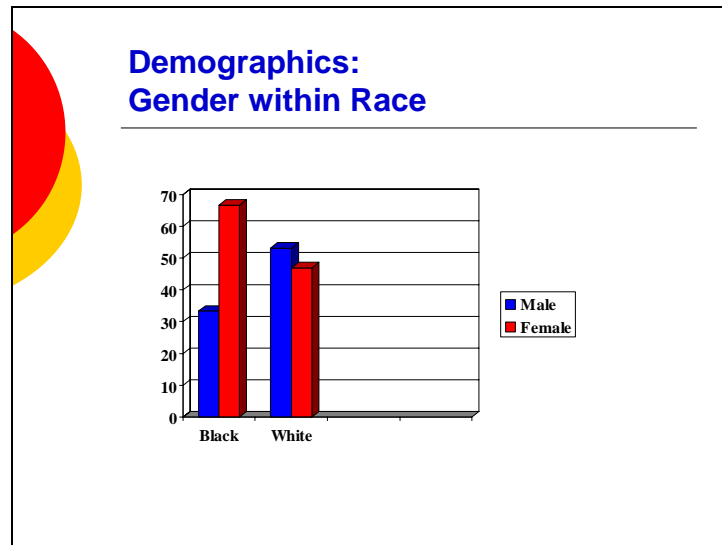
Black persons = 7.3%
White persons = 90.1%

[Kentucky QuickFacts from the US Census Bureau.

Available at:

<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/21000.html>]

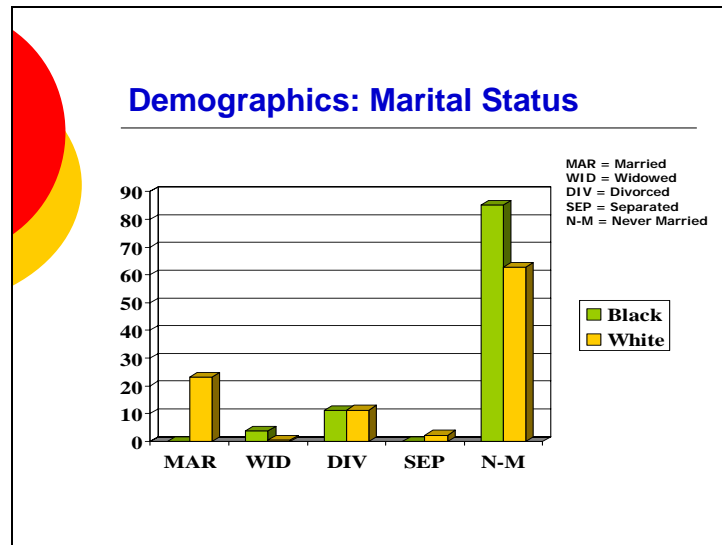
[Note: There were 7 other minority consumers in the sample. One was Asian and the other six were Hispanic. These consumers were taken out of the sample.]



Gender within race was examined:

33.3% of the Black consumer sample was male while 66.7% was female

The opposite pattern held with the females in the sample. The White consumer sample had more male consumers (53.1%) than female (46.9%) consumers



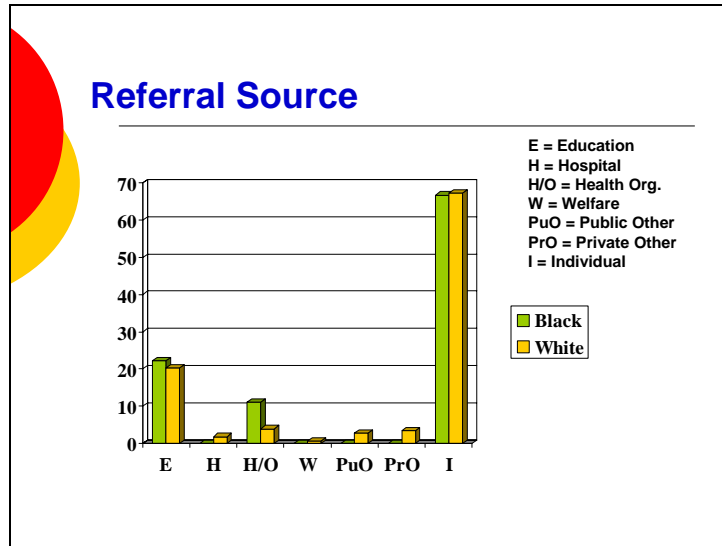
There were no married Black consumers

The majority in both samples were never married:

85.2% of the Black consumer group were never married

62.7% of the White consumer group were never married

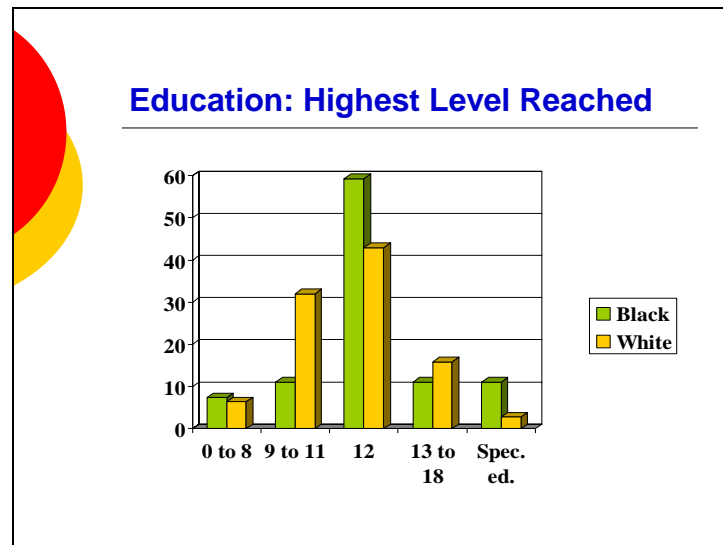
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Referral Source was mainly individual

66.7% Black vs. 67.2% White

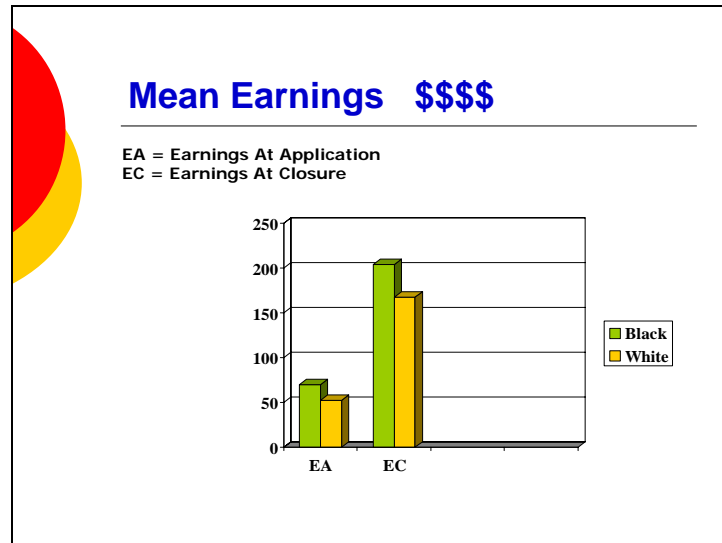
There was actually little difference between Black or White consumers in terms of referral source



Educational Level reached was significantly different for Black Deaf vs. White Deaf:

1. More Black Deaf than White Deaf peaked at 12 years of education (59.3% vs. 42.9%) but this does not necessarily mean graduation
2. More White Deaf went on to College
3. More Black Deaf received special education

In fact, this difference in educational level was consistently the major difference and issue between the Black and White Deaf populations studied throughout this investigation (further information: Qualitative Data and Focus Group).




Mean earnings were compared at application and at closure.

Black consumers, on the average, came into the system making more money than White consumers.

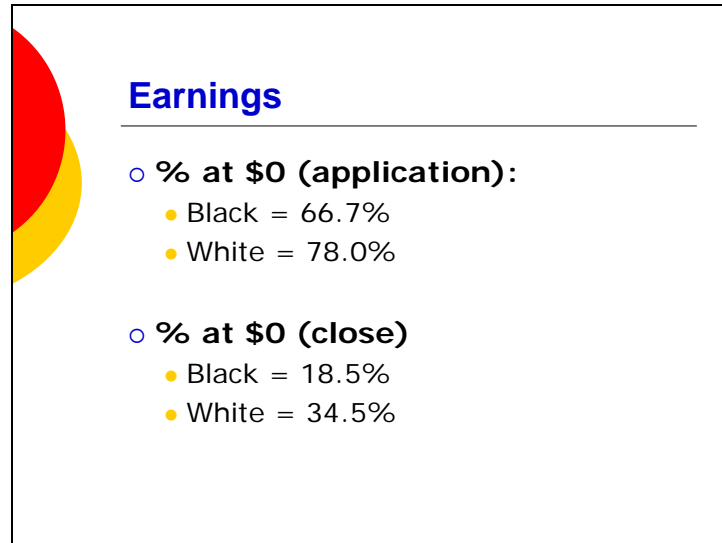
Both Black and White deaf consumers demonstrated increased earnings after receiving VR services.

The pattern held at closure. However, the average dollars earned were still not very high.



Earnings: Means

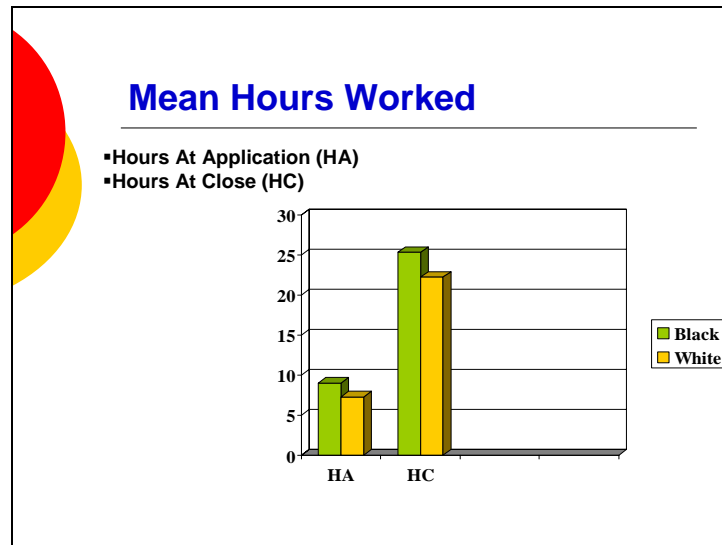
	Mean Earnings at Application \$	Mean Earnings at Closure \$
Black	69.81 (SD = 128.28)	203.85 (SD = 162.33)
White	52.49 (SD = 114.77)	167.44 (SD = 171.71)



The earnings of Black consumers at application and at close were shown to be consistently higher than those of the White consumers in this sample.

66.7% of Black consumers had no income at application and 18.5% of Black consumers reported no income at close.

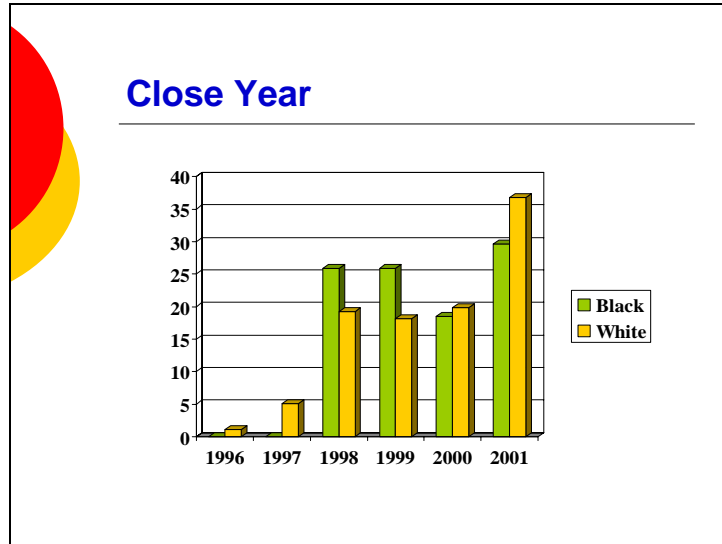
However, there was very little change in range for Black consumers: the ceiling went from an average of \$550.00 per week to \$560.00 per week.



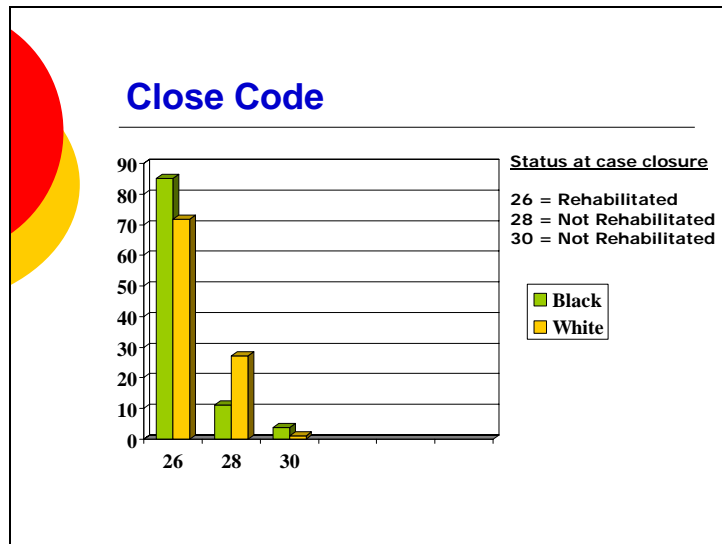
Mean hours worked were consistently higher for Black consumers than for White consumers at both application and at closure.


The average hours worked were still part-time.

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Previous Closures

	One Previous Closure	Two Previous Closures	Three (+) Previous Closures
Black	74.1	22.2	3.7
White	63.3	23.2	13.6

The majority of consumers in both categories examined had at least one previous case closure

13.6% of White consumers in the sample had three or more closures compared to 3.7% of the Black consumers.


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Communication

	Unintelligible Speech %	Communication Training %	Sign Language %
Black	51.9	14.8	33.3
White	43.5	18.6	44.6

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Communication: Other

Black:
EX: gestures / pantomime; low English skills

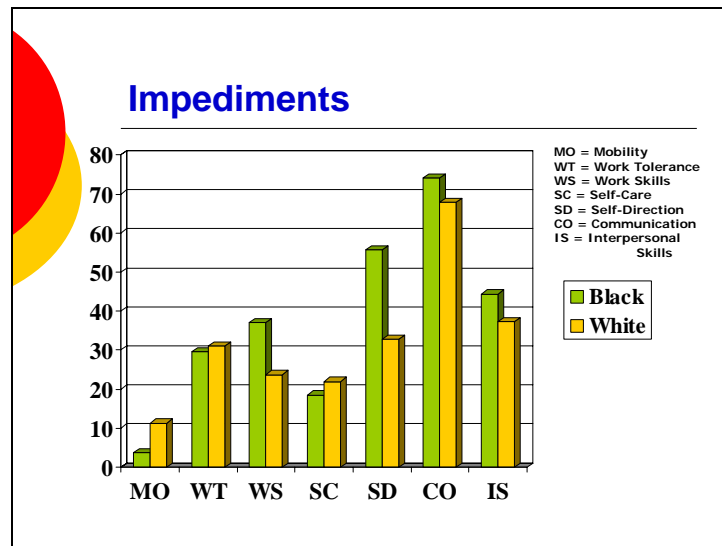
White:
EX: Difficulty understanding co-workers, supervisor; limited reading / comprehension

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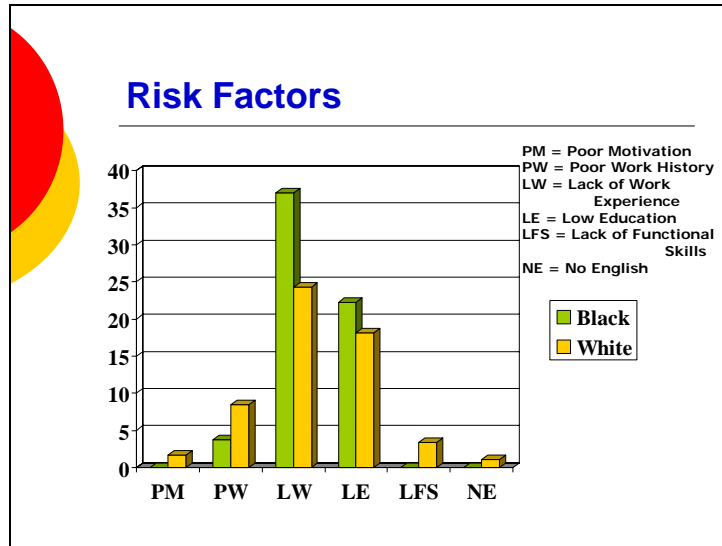
Interaction Issues

	Difficulty with Interactions	Social Isolation	Difficulty with Social Cues	Inappropriate Behavior
	%	%	%	%
Black	0.0	25.9	25.9	0.0
White	6.8	20.3	19.2	5.6

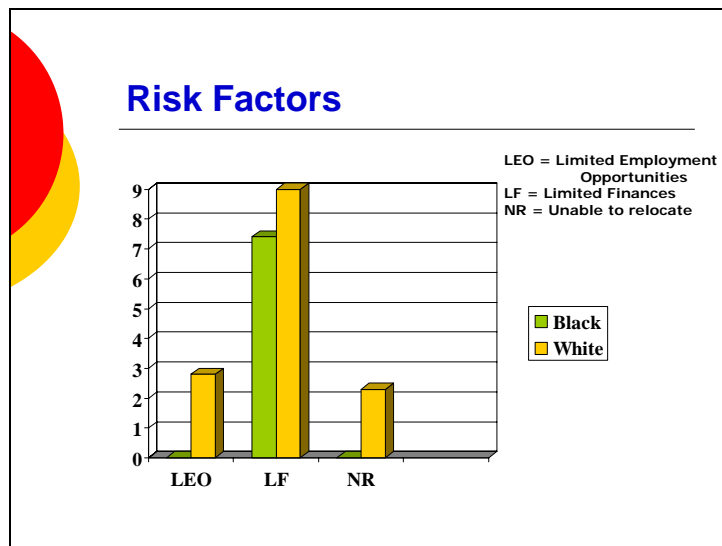
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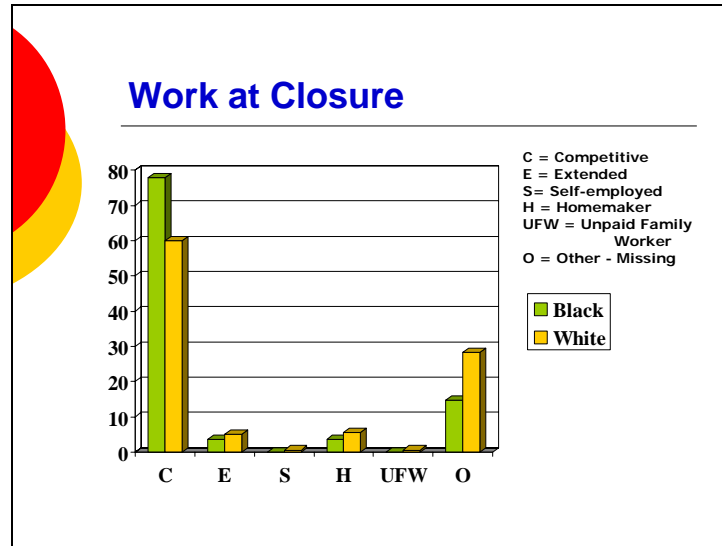


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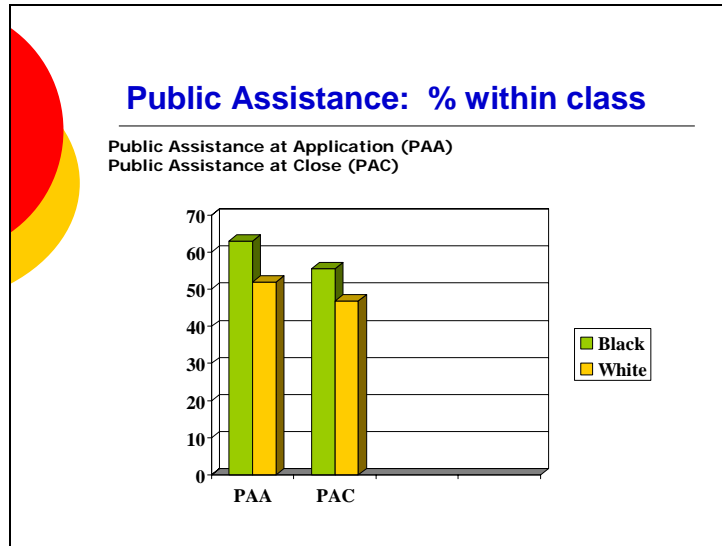
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More Black consumers were closed in competitive employment
77.8% vs. 59.9%


More White consumers were closed in Other Missing. (This is
contrary to the literature)



63% of Black consumers were on Public Assistance at application with a drop to 55.6% at closure

52% of White Deaf consumers were on Public Assistance at application with a drop to 46.9% at closure


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Public Assistance

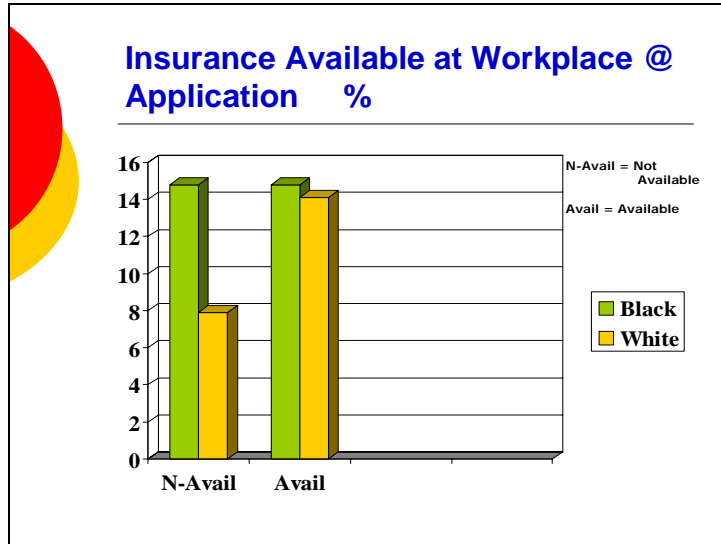
	Mean Public Assistance at Application \$	Mean Public Assistance at Closure \$
Black	217.44	209.11
White	196.65	181.56

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Insurance Available at Workplace

	Insurance Available at Application %	Insurance Available at Closure %
Black	29.6	70.4
White	39.0	61.0



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Major Disability

Majority: 231 – Hearing Impairment – Congenital Condition

Black: 70.4%

White: 59.9%


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Major Disability: Deafness

	Pre-lingual %	Pre-vocational %	Post-vocational %
Black	14.8	7.4	0.0
White	24.2	2.3	0.0


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Major Disability: Hard of Hearing


	Pre-lingual %	Pre-vocational %	Post-vocational %
Black	3.7	0.0	0.0
White	1.8	0.6	0.0

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Major Disability: 500 / 600

	Mental and Emotional Conditions %	Other Conditions resulting from Neoplasms %
Black	0.0	3.7
White	2.9	0.6



Qualitative Data

Categories

1. Education
2. Communication
3. Employment
4. Limitations
5. Special Challenges faced by counselor
6. Services
7. Risk Factors

The qualitative data included detailed quotes taken from consumer files.


These data were examined for differences, patterns, or trends between Black deaf consumers and White Deaf consumers

Three areas/categories demonstrated uniqueness:

Education


Services

Risk Factors




Qualitative Data: Services

The major differentiation between Black and White Deaf Consumers in this sample was in the area of education – specifically, college education



Risk Factors: LFD

- Risk factors were examined for black / white differences.
- None of the identified risk factors for LFD consumers were noted for Black LFD Consumers



Black Consumer Focus Group

- **Several issues were identified:**
 - Rarely had VR counselors who were Black and fluent in sign language
 - Lack of help in getting work
 - Negative response to requests for more education
 - Few accommodations or follow-up on the job
 - Lack of understanding of employers and consumers of key issues


There was some dissatisfaction expressed regarding the current approaches used by VR to facilitate job seeking and job development. According to the consumers, the current approach in Kentucky focuses more on doing computer job searches and making contacts via phone ("job labs"). The "old" approach was a more personalized approach where by the counselor made direct contacts and engaged in more employer development related activities (e.g., resolve questions related to deafness, accommodations). Then the client was placed on the job. The group expressed a preference for greater use of the "old" approach. They saw it as a more helpful and effective approach.

There was concern expressed that some Black deaf people were not benefiting as much from VR services as White deaf persons. Specific reasons for this apparent discrepancy were not provided. However, some Black consumers did mention a need for counselors to possess multicultural training and skills to work with a more culturally diverse population of clients. The kind of counselor the group liked was someone who was responsive to helping them.

The implication from the Black consumers was that VR seemed more likely to sponsor White deaf persons for college training than Black deaf persons. This could imply that education and training many black deaf persons may be receiving at the K-12 levels are not adequately preparing them for post high school training.

Some in the group recommended that VR host information sharing forums to help more Black deaf people and their families learn more about VR and its services.

Although this suggestion may be beyond the role and responsibility of VR, the group suggested that more attention be given to increasing the pool of qualified interpreters who are Black.



Deaf Leaders Group: Key Points

- **Deaf leaders responded with many of the same issues as the Black consumers in focus group and the one-on-one interviews:**
 - More need for interpreters
 - More help with jobs
 - More education
 - More Black Deaf counselors & interpreters
 - More time with counselors
 - Communication problems

Like the consumers, the Black Deaf leaders were very strongly concerned with these issues.


While they are certainly valid as an issue of discussion, it should be noted that some of the items (e.g., need for more interpreters) are often outside of the current definition of VR services.

Interpreter services better in eastern and central KY than in western KY.

Some VR counselors appear to be "too busy" and not have time or be readily available to meet and talk with clients. (Many do have large caseloads these days.)

The group suggested VR host information sharing forums with deaf community

The group suggested that number of RCDs be increased. Apparently some clients are required to wait as long as 5 to 6 weeks before they can get an appointment to see a counselor.



Implications for Black Consumers

- **Black Deaf Consumers feel that they are being left behind, especially in terms of jobs and education.**
- **Black Deaf consumers often feel that they are not being heard and that they are not getting the services that they want.**

Implications

Regardless of the current definition of VR Services, these are issues that are problematic for Black Deaf consumers

If this is the way that these consumers feel, then these needs must be addressed.

If not in VR, then where?