



Increasing Job Retention Through the Promoting Retention In Meaningful Employment (PRIME) Project

Disability Innovation Fund 84.421F



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WIOA and Retention

- The Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act requires vocational rehabilitation agencies to report following common performance measures:
 - **Employment Rate - 2nd Quarter After Exit**
 - **Employment Rate - 4th Quarter After Exit**
 - **Median Earnings - 2nd Quarter After Exit**
 - Credential Attainment
 - Measurable Skill Gains
 - **Effectiveness in Serving Employers**
- Performance measures in bold are dependent on individuals who exit in competitive integrated employment after receiving services under an Individualized Plan for Employment



Why Retention Matters

- Retention = True Success
 - Job placement \neq long-term stability
 - Sustained employment drives economic independence & social inclusion
- Benefits of Retention
 - **Individuals:** Higher lifetime earnings, improved well-being
 - **Employers:** Lower turnover costs, increased productivity
 - **Society:** Reduced reliance on public benefits, stronger economy
- ROI on VR Programs
- ROI for businesses

Retention Overview

Courtesy of CoPilot



- Why It Matters
 - Replacing an employee can cost 1.5 to 2 times their annual salary.
 - High retention improves productivity, morale, client trust, and institutional knowledge.
- Why Employees with Disabilities Leave- The top reasons for voluntary turnover are:
 - Work environments
 - Poor leadership
 - Insufficient accommodations
 - Limited career advancement
 - Unhappy relationships with managers



Current Retention Outcomes

- VR program research
 - 78 state agencies > 1m individuals served annually
 - FY2024 budget : \$4B
- Retention Data (RSA-911)
 - 6 months post-exit: 60-65% retain employment
 - 12 months post-exit –
- Special Populations:
 - Psychiatric disabilities: 68% at 6 months, only 19.7% at 12 months
 - Intellectual/developmental disabilities: Similar drop off at 12 months

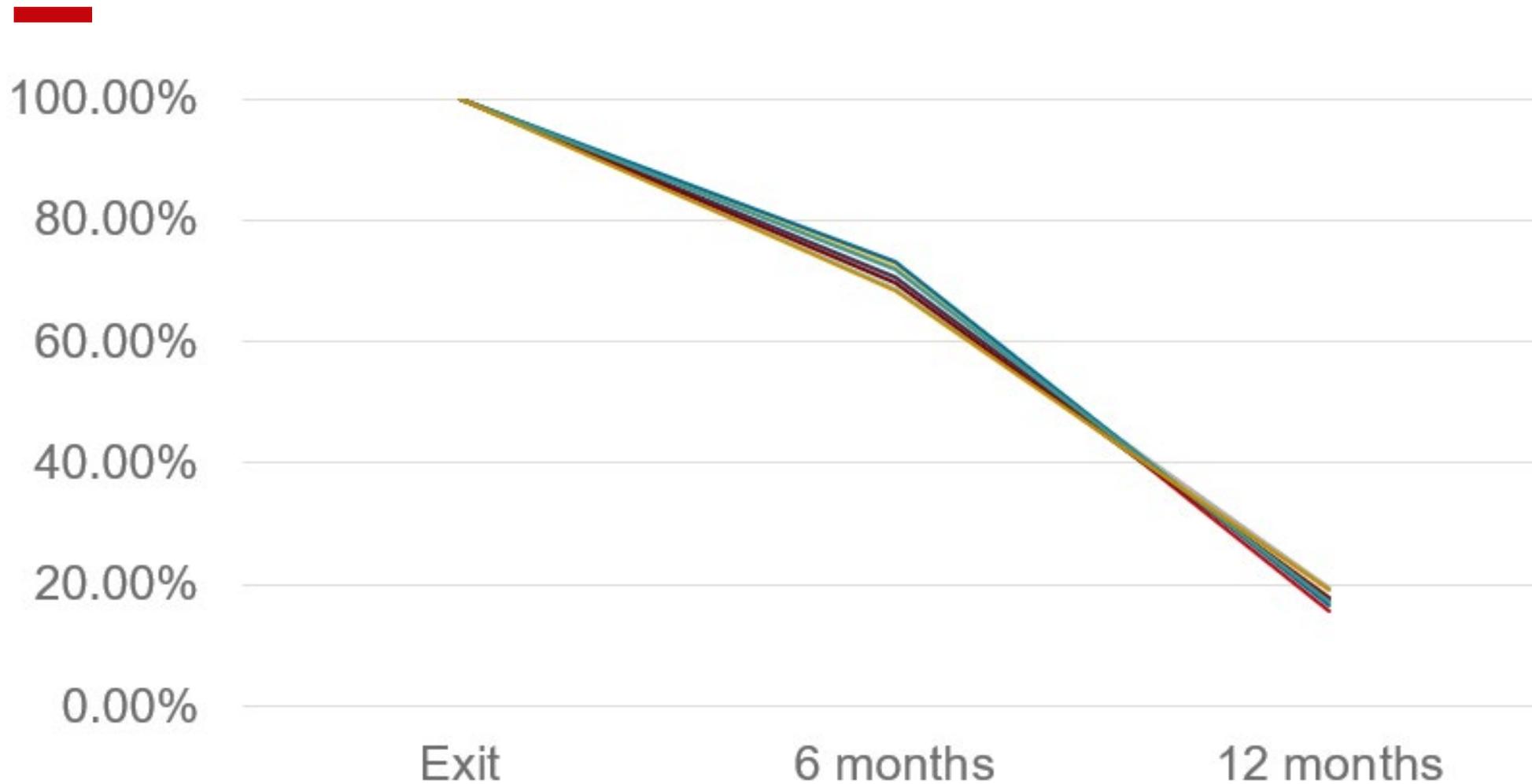


Table- Source of impairment and outcomes at 6 and 12 months

Source of Impairment	Exit	6 months	12 months
Specific Learning Disabilities	45291	68.0%	20.5%
Depressive and Other Mood Disorders	40804	64.0%	23.0%
Intellectual Disabilities	34634	70.3%	17.0%
Cause Unknown	32811	71.0%	17.6%
Autism	28675	69.7%	19.1%
Physical Disorders/Conditions (Not listed elsewhere)	27011	72.5%	18.0%
Congenital Condition or Birth Injury	23090	66.0%	21.2%
Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	19259	72.1%	17.6%
Anxiety Disorders	15133	65.0%	21.0%



Figure- Comparison of Exit, 6 months, and 12-month job retention





What Drives Retention?

- Top Services Increasing Retention
 - Supported Employment (OR up to 2.47)
 - Short-Term Job Supports (OR 2.25)
 - Rehabilitation Technology (OR 2.14)
 - Job Placement Assistance (OR 1.66)
- Barriers Reducing Retention
 - Long-Term Unemployment (OR 0.84)
 - SSI/SSDI (OR 0.82)
 - Ex-offender Status (OR 0.66)
- Workplace Factors
 - Inclusive culture, accommodations, flexibility = higher retention



Special Issue on Retention

— RCEJ Spring 2026

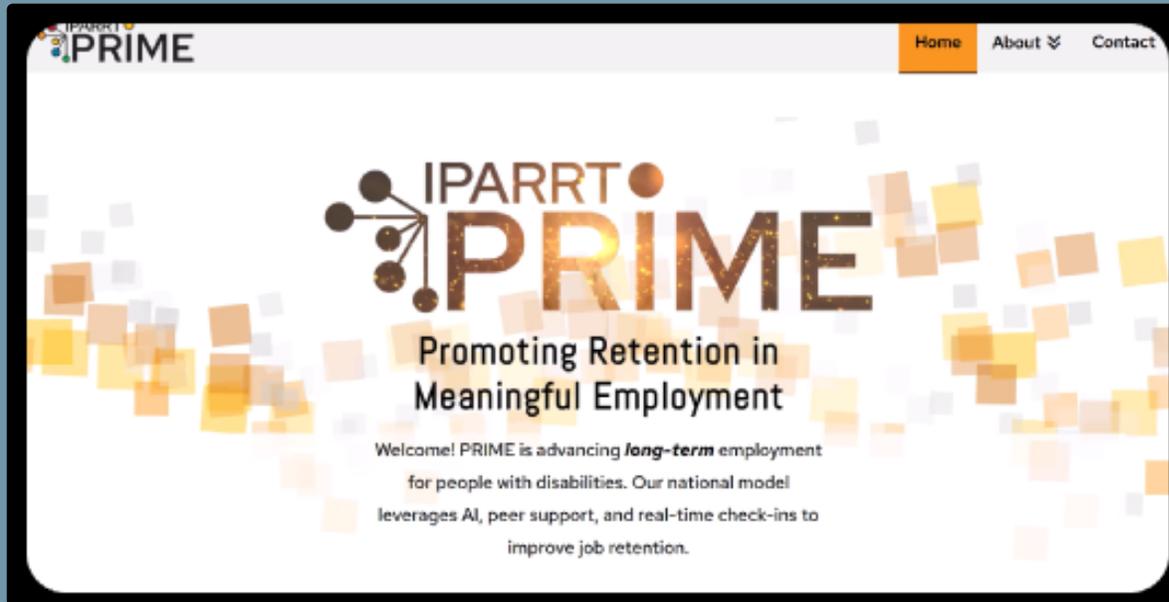
- Introduction to the Special Issue: The Critical Role of Employment Retention in Vocational Rehabilitation
- Reframing Success: The Importance of Employment Retention in the Public Vocational Rehabilitation Program
- Ethical Considerations of Retention Transparency in State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies
- Exploring the Influence of Demographics on Retention Outcomes for Individuals with Disabilities at 6 and 12-Months Post Hire
- Job Retention Barriers and Supports: A study of Vocational Rehabilitation Services at 6 and 12-Months Post-Exit
- Employment Retention for Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities at 6 and 12-Month Following Exit from Vocational Rehabilitation
- Understanding Retention for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: Factors Influencing 6 and 12 months Competitive Integrated Employment Outcomes Post Exit
- Employment Retention Disparities: Outcomes of Rural vs. Urban VR Participants



**We're on a mission to help people
with disabilities not just find jobs-
but keep them!**



DIF- PRIME (H421F240111) University of Wisconsin-IPARRT



Visit the PRIME website: <https://promotingretention.org/>

The PRIME Model

- **PRIME** is a five-year project focused on helping people with disabilities to stay employed and build meaningful, lasting careers as emphasized in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).



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PRIME Components

- Personalized pre-employment training to help people plan for job success.
- An AI-powered support tool that checks in, offers resources, and alerts staff when someone might need help.
- A peer support portal so participants can connect with others navigating the same journey.
- One-on-one support from retention specialists for up to a year after job placement.



Who is PRIME Designed For?

We focus on people with disabilities who:

- Are in the final stages of their vocational rehabilitation (VR) plan
- May be re-entering the workforce
- Have been involved with the justice system
- Come from low-income or underrepresented backgrounds

We also work closely with VR staff to increase their confidence and capacity to support long-term employment



How is PRIME Different?

Most job programs focus on getting people hired. PRIME focuses on what happens **after** the hire.

We're here for the long haul, using:

- AI tools for real-time, personalized support
- Peer communities to reduce isolation and build confidence
- Ongoing mentorship from trained retention specialists

PRIME is designed to complement VR services.

Our Impact Goals

We're aiming for:

- 75% of participants still employed at 6 months
- 65% still employed at 12 months
- 55% still with the same employer at 12 months
- 500+ participants enrolled across multiple states



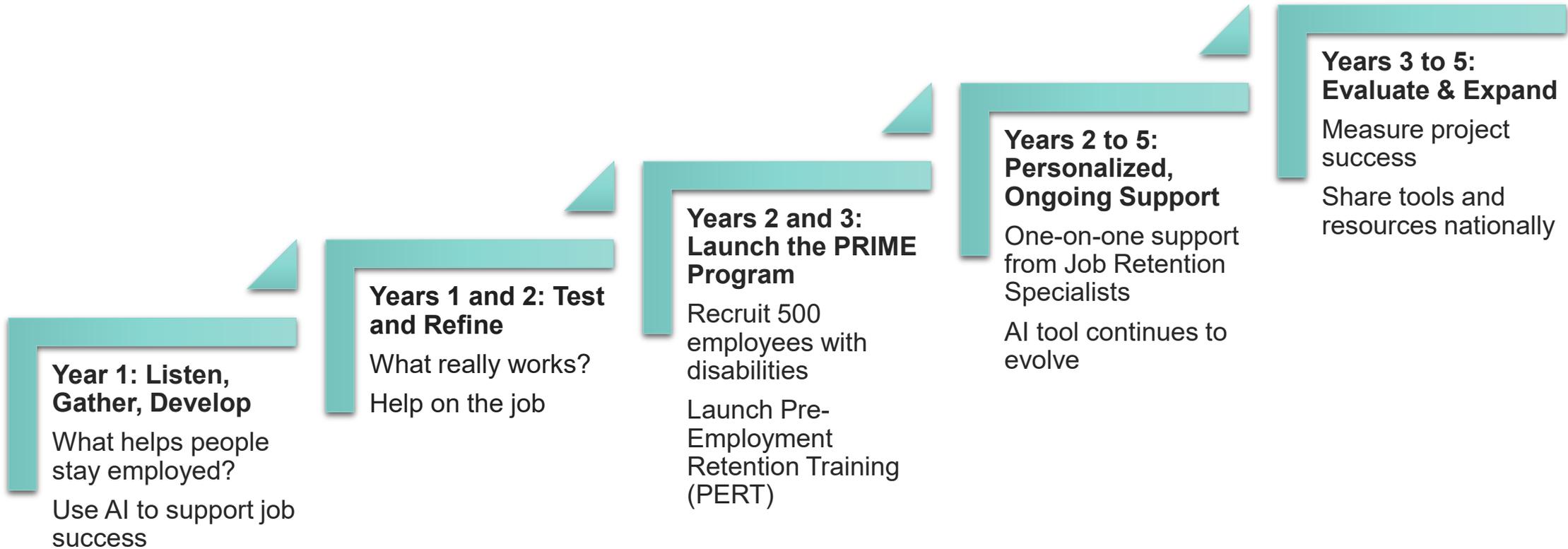
PRIME is Built on Evidence & Heart

We use social science frameworks like:

- ***Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)***-boosting confidence, motivation, and goal-setting
- ***Stages of Change***-meeting people where they are and supporting growth over time
- ***Motivational Interviewing***-to tackle ambivalence and increase goal persistence



Timeline





PRIME Website:
<https://promotingretention.org>





IPARRT

Innovative Partnership for Advancing
Rehabilitation Research and Training
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON