Evaluation in the Older Blind Independent Living Program:

Advantages of a Structural Equation Modeling Approach

J. Martin Giesen

Brenda S. Cavenaugh

Abstract

Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) requires that independent living programs annually report demographic information on consumers receiving services and the numbers receiving specific types of services. Although some states collect information on consumer outcomes (for example, improvement in daily living skills), RSA does not request such data. After being vacant for the last three years, the RSA independent living program manager position has been filled as of July 2006. It is expected that a major priority of the new manager will be the development of **program** goals and performance measures that can be used to demonstrate program effectiveness. In the current political climate, where disability-specific programs continue to be at risk, survival of programs serving blind and visually impaired consumers may depend on the initiative and rigor of administrators in demonstrating that their programs are effective. Thus, the present study focuses on improvement of measurement quality and consideration of additional methodological approaches to evaluation of national services to persons who are blind or visually impaired. A secondary purpose of this study is to demonstrate how CSA can contribute substantively to the examination of relationships among measured constructs, specifically program effectiveness: how improvements in blindness and low-vision rehabilitation skills can positively affect other activities of daily living (ADL) related to functioning and satisfaction, and implied by general rehabilitation theory.