

Careers in Vocational Rehabilitation

REHABILITATION-RELATED
PROFESSIONS
AN OVERVIEW

*"What lies behind us and what lies
before us are tiny matters compared
with what lies within us."*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson



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Vocational rehabilitation


is emerging as the career of choice for high-energy people who want to be creative and independent while they make a very real difference in the lives of others.

Newcomers can expect to find a diverse range of opportunities offering competitive salaries and benefits.

People in this field will tell you right up front that vocational rehabilitation is not about disabilities, it's about possibilities. The objective of the rehabilitation sciences is to facilitate the ability of people with disabilities to gain empowerment, employment, and full access to society.

Empowering





People who have acquired one or more disabilities due to disease, injury or congenital causes were traditionally left with few choices. Today this is not the case.

Vocational rehabilitation empowers people to make informed choices, build viable careers, and live more independently in the community.

The best rehabilitation professionals are those who are educated to work behind the scenes assisting people with disabilities to build skills, confidence, and the expectation of success in helping themselves. In this way, individuals with disabilities are empowered to take full control of their lives and take their rightful

place as valued, contributing citizens.

Knowledge and practice of these principles, combined with a solid foundation of specialized education in the vocational rehabilitation field, enable dedicated rehabilitation professionals to help individuals with physical or mental disabilities who are pursuing meaningful careers to obtain gainful employment and live more independently. This is achieved through the provision of such supports as counseling, medical and psychological services, local job searches, job training and other individualized services.

The demand for qualified vocational rehabilitation professionals is expected to increase steadily during the next several years. The impact of vocational rehabilitation steadily gained momentum after Congress passed the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and subsequent groundbreaking legislation, including the 1990 American With Disabilities Act. Many of the professionals who have contributed to this field since the 1970s are preparing to retire after enjoying long, rewarding careers.

This booklet has been prepared for those of you who want to know more about building a satisfying career in vocational rehabilitation. Inside is an overview of 17 career choices and the specific educational information you'll need to prepare for the exciting career of your choice in vocational rehabilitation.

By becoming a professional in the field of vocational rehabilitation, you will have many exciting opportunities:

- *Work* in a creative, compelling, professional environment infused with passion, idealism, and realism;
- *Achieve* your potential while empowering others to reach theirs;
- *Enjoy* long-term career growth potential with increasingly competitive salaries and benefits;
- *Know* that the goal is empowerment and the bottom line is meaningful employment; and
- *Experience* the deep satisfaction of making a significant impact on the quality of many lives, including your own.

Believing

The rehabilitation field offers a broad range of career opportunities. The following list of positions indicates the diversity of this exciting and growing field.

- Rehabilitation Counselor**
- Rehabilitation Teacher for Blind Individuals**
- Orientation and Mobility Specialist**
- Vocational Evaluator**
- Work Adjustment Specialist**
- Job Development and Placement Specialist**
- Deafness Rehabilitation Professional**
- Interpreter for Deaf Individuals**
- Administrator**
- Rehabilitation Practitioner**
- Rehabilitation Psychologist**
- Physiatrist**
- Rehabilitation Nurse**
- Prosthetist-Orthotist**
- Speech-Language Pathologist**
- Audiologist**
- Rehabilitation Technologist**



Preparing for a Career in Vocational Rehabilitation

Graduate and undergraduate degree programs are available at universities across the country. Some offer distance education programs. Generous federal financial assistance is often available for those preparing for vocational rehabilitation careers. Recipients are usually required to repay this stipend by two years of paid employment in the public rehabilitation program for every year of receiving the stipend.

The primary focus of preparing for a career in vocational rehabilitation is on learning about theories, techniques, counseling, and their application; becoming an expert on disability and employment; and gaining awareness and sensitivity regarding people with disabilities. An important component of career preparation for any well-rounded professional in vocational rehabilitation is gaining knowledge about employment law. This includes the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, Social Security Work Incentives Improvement Act, and the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, among others.



Achieving



Questions

Q: What is vocational rehabilitation?

A: Vocational rehabilitation is a field that encompasses a broad range of careers with one thing in common—the goal of empowering people with disabilities to access the resources and knowledge to live successfully, be meaningfully employed, and enjoy being productive members of the community.

Q: Why is there such a great need for vocational rehabilitation professionals?

A: Some 20 percent of the American population has one or more disabilities, and 70 percent of people with disabilities are unemployed. This creates a great demand for rehabilitation counselors, educators, therapists and other professionals who can help children and adults reach their goals.

Q: What other factors are causing the shortage of vocational rehabilitation professionals?

A: This is an exciting time in the vocational rehabilitation field. Many of the social and physical barriers that once restricted people with disabilities have been overcome. Technology has provided a wealth of new options. More and more professional leadership and guidance is needed—often on a one-to-one basis—so that people with disabilities can take advantage of these new opportunities. In addition, career professionals predict that the demand for professionals in this field will continue to rise as the demand for its services grows and many of today's vocational rehabilitation professionals retire.

Q: How do I find out more?

A: Contact your local or state vocational rehabilitation office or the Rehabilitation Services Administration for more information about careers in vocational rehabilitation. You can access a list of state vocational rehabilitation offices at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/RSA/Resources/State/index.html>. For additional information from the Rehabilitation Services Administration, visit its website at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/RSA> or write to them at the following address:

US Department of Education
Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
Rehabilitation Services Administration
Room 3329-MES
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20202-2551

www.rehabjobs.org

"All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence."

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

Rehabilitation Counseling

First and foremost is the Rehabilitation Counselor. **Rehabilitation Counselors** work one-on-one to help people of all ages with physical, emotional or learning disabilities discover their potential as independent, self-sufficient citizens. It is a challenging job that often requires creativity and vision to see possibilities where others see only problems. It's a good choice for someone with high energy who wants to make a very real and measurable difference in the lives of others.

The foundation of rehabilitation counseling is one of empowerment in which individuals exercise control over their own lives. The goal of the Rehabilitation Counselor is to assist people with disabilities in achieving maximum psychological, social, vocational and economic independence, which empowers them to enhance the quality of their lives to their fullest capacity. Rehabilitation counseling focuses on the whole person, including family, work and social relationships as well as physical and psychological aspects.



It is the Rehabilitation Counselor who pulls all of the other available services and resources together. The Rehabilitation Counselor's role includes personal counseling and guidance, individual assessment, evaluation of medical and psychological reports, vocational guidance, job placement, and working with individuals and organizations to eliminate environmental and social barriers for people with disabilities.

Rehabilitation Counselors may work for state vocational rehabilitation agencies, social service organizations, independent living centers, alcohol and drug programs, mental health centers, or community or private non-profit rehabilitation programs. Many go on to teach in universities, preparing undergraduate and graduate students for successful careers in vocational rehabilitation.

Preparation

Rehabilitation Counselors are required to hold a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling. Most educational programs require 18 months to two years of academic course work and 600 hours of supervised clinical experience. Many master's programs offer a student stipend plus support for payment of student fees and tuition.

Many doctoral programs offer student stipend support as well. A doctorate in rehabilitation counseling is a necessary qualification for those who intend to remain in teaching or administration of rehabilitation training programs in higher education.

Certification

Upon completion of an approved internship and satisfactory performance on the certification exam, graduates of accredited master's degree programs in rehabilitation counseling are eligible for certification by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC), obtaining the credential of Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC). This certification is standard for employment in the rehabilitation field. Many states also offer certification as a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC).

Opportunities

Rehabilitation Counselors are in high demand nationwide. Many recognized experts in the field predict that this demand will increase during the next several years. In addition to positions that are available in the federal, state and local government programs, a growing number of rehabilitation programs in the private sector hire Rehabilitation Counselors.



*Randy Anderson
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor*

Randy's assignment as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is to work in local high schools to help students with disabilities graduate prepared for further education or ready to join the work force.

The bell rings. Turbulent waves of students flood the hallways, surfing from one class to another. It is chaotic and intimidating to an outsider, but Randy sails along. He calls students by name and is quick to laugh and share a joke. He seems to know everybody in the school. Not only his clients and their supervising teachers, but lots of students, all the teachers, and everybody else—the librarian, the janitor, the nurse, and the principal.

"I make it my business to know everybody. It's my job to help these kids successfully transition from high school to the work force," he said. Randy begins working with students in 9th and 10th grade to find out what they want to do after high school. He tries to get them into employment during their junior and senior years. Students earn their credits while gaining valuable on-the-job experience. Randy serves as a liaison between employers and students.

"In their first job experiences, I want to keep them on the job and help them be successful there. In the long run, I want to see them in an occupation that they really enjoy and that meets their future financial needs and goals," Randy said.

"If you are thinking of going into this field, I'd say you have to be the kind of person who isn't rigid in their ideas and thinking. You have to be willing to take the time to develop a rapport and trust," Randy said. "But the payoff is there. You really can have an impact on people's lives."



“Only those who risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.” —T.S. Eliot

Rehabilitation of Individuals Who Are Blind or Have Vision Impairments

Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Specialists and Rehabilitation Teachers provide essential services that are designed to empower blind and visually impaired people to live and travel independently. Successful practitioners are personable, creative, and insightful to the viewpoints of others.

Orientation and Mobility Specialists work closely with people who are blind or visually impaired to help them develop the skills necessary for independent and safe travel. The use of the sighted guide technique, the long cane, and electronic travel aids are some of the systematic techniques by which blind or visually impaired people orient themselves to their surroundings and move about safely and efficiently. Orientation and Mobility Specialists also monitor and support the development of the basic concepts, sensory skills and protective techniques for safe travel.

Daily professional activities of Orientation and Mobility Specialists may include interviewing and making assessments and referrals as well as providing direct, one-on-one orientation and mobility services. Some opportunities are available in low-vision clinics for assessing vision and determining training needs.

Rehabilitation Teachers perform a broad variety of activities to teach independent living skills, activities of daily living, homemaking skills, and personal management. They are the ones who teach blind and visually impaired people how to read and write Braille, use assistive technology to communicate, and perhaps hire and manage personal care assistants. Activities of daily living are the simple, daily acts we perform every day to look after ourselves to be productive and enjoy life—telling time, preparing meals, eating, dressing, grooming and personal hygiene. Rehabilitation Teachers coach blind and visually impaired individuals in those areas and in the use of technology such as computers, telephones, and Braillewriters.

Rehabilitation Teachers often work with vocational rehabilitation counselors to evaluate and plan teaching activities to meet a client’s needs, and with home health workers to make individual assessments. They sometimes work with blind and visually impaired individuals in their homes and places of work to set up their physical environments and adaptive equipment.

It takes a team of professionals from several fields to meet the needs of people who are blind or have vision impairments. Orientation and Mobility Specialists and Rehabilitation Teachers often work with allied health professionals such as ophthalmologists, opticians, rehabilitation counselors, special education teachers, low vision practitioners, or deaf-blind specialists. It is important that these professionals understand each others’ roles and functions and the complementary nature of the rehabilitation team.

Preparation

The positions of Orientation and Mobility Specialist and Rehabilitation Teacher typically require a bachelor’s degree in rehabilitation or related fields, with specialized training related to serving people who are blind or visually impaired. A master’s degree is usually preferred. Orientation and Mobility Specialists hold a degree in rehabilitation or education with an emphasis or major in Orientation and Mobility. The Association of Educators and Rehabilitators of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) must have approved the degree program.

Certification

Graduates of approved university programs are eligible for certification in Rehabilitation Teaching or in Orientation and Mobility from the Academy for the Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals.

Opportunities

Orientation and Mobility Specialists and Rehabilitation Teachers work in public and private rehabilitation agencies, including state vocational rehabilitation agencies for the blind and visually impaired, low vision clinics, and educational institutions. Many professionals provide services under contractual arrangements with agencies.

Immobility

Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment

"The worst job I ever had was no job."

—Rehabilitation Client

Successful Vocational Evaluators and Work Adjustment Specialists must be imaginative and practical, able to think outside the box to create unique solutions for the accommodation of individuals with disabilities in the workplace.

Vocational evaluation is a comprehensive process of vocational exploration and assessment designed to assist individuals in identifying their vocational options. **Vocational Evaluators** must have an understanding of a variety of physical and mental disabilities and above-average communication skills. They are responsible for selecting, administering and interpreting a broad assortment of evaluation instruments including psychometric tests, commercial work sample systems, and situational assessments. They often modify standard instruments or develop new instruments in order to effectively respond to local labor markets or accommodate individual needs.



Work Adjustment Specialists provide services focusing on pre-employment skill development and the implementation of systematic, individualized treatment and training programs for people with disabilities. These specialists must have skills in behavior change techniques, individual and group counseling, instructional techniques, job development, job placement and community integration.

Preparation

Minimum requirements for individuals seeking employment as a Vocational Evaluator or Work Adjustment Specialist are a bachelor's degree in rehabilitation or closely related field with extensive approved work experience and specialized training. Individuals with a master's degree in their respective rehabilitation specialty areas are preferred for work in either position.

Certification

Graduates of vocational evaluation specialization programs may apply to the Commission on Certification of Work Adjustment and Vocational Evaluation Specialists (CCWAVES) for national certification as a Certified Vocational Evaluator (CVE). The CVE is awarded to individuals having competence in essential performance areas as demonstrated by education, training, professional experience, and successful completion of a national certification examination administered by CCWAVES. CCWAVES also administers certification for the Certified Work Adjustment (CWA) specialty.

While most states do not have licensure or other specific credentials for Vocational Evaluators or Work Adjustment Specialists, they may rely on the CVE and CWA as a standard for professional qualifications. The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) requires the CVE credential when certifying programs in vocational evaluation.

Opportunities

Vocational Evaluators and Work Adjustment Specialists may be employed in any setting that concentrates on facilitating the integration of people with disabilities into the community workplace. Employment settings may include state vocational rehabilitation agencies, private non-profit rehabilitation agencies or facilities, independent living centers, psychiatric and addiction treatment centers, head injury treatment centers, hospitals, public schools, mental health and developmental disability programs, correctional facilities, and university-based programs.



Stephanie Monroe

Rehabilitation Specialist/Vocational Evaluator

"We help people with their goals for employment. We test, score and let them discover their interests, abilities, and work values. This identifies what they want to do and what they are able to do with their particular disabilities," said Stephanie, a rehabilitation specialist in the area of vocational evaluation.

"Often the people who come here are surprised when an interest they hadn't considered before surfaces. Maybe they'll discover a flair for nursing or science. Or they realize capabilities they had previously dismissed," she said.

"We're able to help them realize how much potential and how many different options they have."

Her working environment is a career planning center that features three labs—a room full of well-equipped clerical work areas, a working kitchen, and another lab with some twenty "work samples." The work samples simulate the activities of different occupations ranging from telecommunications testing to small engine repair to soil testing to cosmetology. Adults from high school age to senior citizens visit the career planning center for one to two days of exploration of employment options.

As they watch videos about each job and complete related tasks, Stephanie is there with encouragement and support. She will combine her own observations and assessment results to formulate recommendations that may launch each individual in positive directions toward training and successful employment.

"I think this is a great field for people who love working with people," Stephanie said. "I love helping people get on the road to getting a productive job that they care about."



“When we accept tough jobs as a challenge and wade into them with joy and enthusiasm, miracles can happen.”

—Harry S. Truman



Job Development and Placement Specialists

Individuals who enjoy working closely with the business community can have a stimulating career as a **Job Development and Placement Specialist**. These professionals help corporate, business and service organizations identify individuals with disabilities who have the desired skills and qualifications for employment. At the same time, they are helping individuals with disabilities link up with the employers and secure suitable employment.

Job Development and Placement Specialists are usually called upon at the final stage of the rehabilitation process to work with vocational rehabilitation counselors and other personnel at agencies that serve persons with disabilities. Their specialized skills must include researching data about industries, companies, labor market statistics, and employment trends by using the Internet and other resources. They must also translate these research findings into meaningful information that can facilitate the employment of specific individuals who are ready for job placement.

Direct, one-on-one services provided by Job Development and Placement Specialists to persons with disabilities are based upon individual needs and may include instruction in searching, applying, and interviewing for a job; resume development; and post-employment follow-up. The focus of this position is often placed entirely on job development activities, which include locating employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities and facilitating their success. On any given day, Job Development and Placement Specialists may work with individual employers or groups of employers to identify job vacancies or to arrange for special accommodation needs to be met.

Job Development and Placement Specialists often provide services to employers such as teaching them about the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities; performing a job analysis to determine job requirements; identifying possible accommodation needs; demonstrating accessibility technology; consulting with the personnel or human resource department about hiring practices; and working with supervisors to educate them about the accommodation needs of an individual with disabilities. They must be knowledgeable about the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Preparation

The position of Job Development and Placement Specialist usually requires a bachelor's degree in rehabilitation or a related field. It is desirable to have experience working in the business sector or in a position that provides practical skills in job development and placement.

Certification

Presently, there are no certification or licensure requirements for Job Development and Placement Specialists.

Opportunities

Job Development and Placement Specialists work in public and private community rehabilitation programs and agencies, including state vocational rehabilitation agencies, community mental health programs, Projects with Industry, and other agencies and programs that provide services to individuals with disabilities.

Communicating

“Work is love made visible.” —Kahlil Gibran

Rehabilitation of Individuals Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

An important personal quality of effective Deafness Rehabilitation Professionals and Interpreters for Deaf Individuals is an appreciation for the value of communication and its impact on people’s lives. An essential professional quality is to be aware of the varied needs of deaf individuals and familiar with the unique characteristics of the Deaf culture and community.

Services provided by **Deafness Rehabilitation Professionals** include assessment, vocational and adjustment counseling, interpreter referral, advocacy, job placement, and independent living skills training. **Interpreters for Deaf Individuals** help meet the needs of individuals who are deaf or deaf-blind through manual, tactile, oral, and cued speech interpretation. Both often assist consumers in legal, medical, and other settings in the community.

A critical factor for success is the ability to communicate with each individual in his or her preferred mode of communication. These professionals are skilled in using several methods of communication such as American Sign Language (ASL) and Pidgin Signed English (PSE). Familiarity with the use of various assistive listening devices is helpful.

Preparation

Many states require a master’s degree for employment as a Deafness Rehabilitation Professional. While many agencies may hire graduates from general rehabilitation counselor training programs, employment opportunities are greater for those who have graduated from programs offering master’s degree specialization related to deafness or services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Some colleges and universities offer stipends or scholarships to

students interested in pursuing careers in providing specialized rehabilitation to people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Interpreters for Deaf Individuals can receive training in public and private agencies, schools, and other institutions. A college degree is not always required, but is often preferred by employers.

Certification

Deafness Rehabilitation Professionals are eligible for the same types of certifications as vocational rehabilitation counselors. These include Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC), Nationally Certified Counselor (NCC) and others. Many states and programs are implementing sign language proficiency evaluations to assist professionals in developing and improving their American Sign Language skills. While certification in sign language proficiency is not currently required, national certification or state screening levels for sign language proficiency are often stated as a hiring preference.

To work as an Interpreter for the Deaf, state or national certification is required. National certification is through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID). States use a variety of screening instruments.

Opportunities

Deafness Rehabilitation Professionals and Interpreters for Deaf Individuals may be employed in a variety of settings including vocational rehabilitation agencies, universities, community rehabilitation programs, mental health settings, independent living agencies and community service centers.



Connecting



Karla Wheeler
Rehabilitation Technician

As a rehabilitation technician, Karla plays a key role on a team of professionals who assist clients in achieving their goals. She works with rehabilitation counselors, rehabilitation teachers, job placement specialists, and orientation and mobility specialists.

"I've gotten to know more about each of these specialties and have learned first hand how they all work together to help the clients," Karla said.

"I'm totally involved in each case and have a lot of interaction with individual clients. It's exciting to be part of their progress from their first interview all the way to getting a job."

Karla describes her work as taking care of the "business side" of each case. Her responsibilities require her to be a self-starter and to be extremely well organized. She sets up necessary appointments and makes sure aids and appliances are on hand and that teachers have been scheduled. As she monitors these details, she remains ready to switch gears to respond to incoming calls from new clients.

"Since the rehabilitation technician is often the first person in the system a new client talks to, I concentrate on listening to make sure I understand all I can about their situations," she said. Karla added that many people, when they contact her, are experiencing a period of transition and wondering what the future holds for them.

"When we get off the phone I want them to be more at ease and to be reassured that as a team we have many options for helping them," she said.

After eight years as a rehabilitation technician, Karla is now working on her master's degree. Her goal is to become a vocational rehabilitation counselor.

"I tell people who are interested in rehabilitation that if you have a genuine desire to help people you'll love this field. Real problems are being solved here."

Undergraduate Education in the Rehabilitation Services

Graduates of four-year university programs with an emphasis on rehabilitation may qualify as **Rehabilitation Practitioners**, who assist people with disabilities in achieving the greatest physical, mental, social, educational and vocational potential of which they are capable. This can be a satisfying entry-level career choice for people who are interested in helping individuals with disabilities and enthusiastic about beginning a career in rehabilitation.

Common job titles for this position include rehabilitation specialist, case manager, vocational caseworker, rehabilitation aide or technician, vocational evaluation technician, alcohol and drug counselor, personal adjustment trainer, work adjustment trainer, job placement specialist, and employee assistance counselor.

Rehabilitation Practitioners perform a broad range of services and often work within teams of professionals and specialists in the vocational rehabilitation field. A typical work day might include coordinating the diagnostics and evaluation; interviewing; individual planning; arranging various rehabilitation services; assisting in selecting a vocational goal; job placement activities; providing supported employment or job coaching services; or providing personal and social adjustment services. They provide follow-up services to individuals with disabilities after other services are completed.

Preparation

Individuals seeking employment as Rehabilitation Practitioners should complete a four-year university training program that results in a bachelor's degree in rehabilitation or a bachelor's degree with special emphasis on rehabilitation. Frequently, students enter an undergraduate rehabilitation training program with the intention of eventually obtaining a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling, psychology or related areas. Many gain valuable experience as a Rehabilitation Practitioner before obtaining their graduate degree.

There are approximately 50 undergraduate rehabilitation programs in colleges in the United States. In some instances, these programs offer student stipend support plus the payment of student fees and tuition.

Certification

There are currently no certification requirements for the bachelor's degree level Rehabilitation Practitioner.

Opportunities

Rehabilitation Practitioners may work in public and private rehabilitation agencies such as state vocational rehabilitation agencies, community rehabilitation programs, mental health and developmental disability units, evaluation and treatment centers, correctional institutions and agencies (including probation departments), voluntary organizations, client assistance programs, and centers for independent living. Many work in private industry, including personnel departments of corporations and insurance companies. In public vocational rehabilitation agencies, assistance is available for further education.



"Your work is to discover your work, and then with all your heart to give yourself to it."

—Buddha



Ray Hopkins
Vocational Rehabilitation Administrator

"In vocational rehabilitation, we help people who have had their dreams dashed or who don't have dreams. We have the ability to give them back hope for enjoying their lives and their families, and for making a contribution to the community," Ray, an administrator at a state vocational rehabilitation agency and a former rehabilitation educator, said.

"My greatest rewards as a rehabilitation educator came from working with clients one-to-one. I enjoyed seeing people surprise themselves by doing something they never expected to do again," Ray said.

"Now as an administrator, I focus on affecting policies and practices that will have a positive effect on many people. My greatest satisfaction is in helping others in the profession, especially those new to the field."

He said that his past experiences, as a recipient of vocational rehabilitation services (he has vision impairment) and in a variety of jobs in the field, give him an understanding of the needs of vocational rehabilitation professionals and their very diverse clients.

"If you're going to be an administrator, you can't be afraid of challenges. Some of the greatest successes start out as the biggest challenges," Ray said. "There is no cookbook for rehabilitation and there is no recipe for success."

"In rehabilitation administration, we need people who can think beyond the status quo to help those with disabilities gain access. We need rehabilitation professionals who are ready to step forward and focus on the bigger picture."

Rehabilitation Administration

The demand for professional administrators in the Vocational Rehabilitation field is rising quickly and will continue to increase during the first decades of the twenty-first century.

Rehabilitation Administrators manage and direct a wide variety of rehabilitation service programs in the public and private sectors. They often come from the ranks of experienced business administrators and rehabilitation professionals who have leadership qualities, can build cooperative relationships, and can marshal the resources necessary to lead and manage growing agencies.

The mission of Rehabilitation Administrators is to ensure that rehabilitation programs serve people with disabilities in the most efficient and effective ways possible. They apply the principles of business and public administration along with program-specific knowledge on the practical and societal implications of disability. Their responsibilities typically involve planning, programming, budgeting, operations and management, supervision and human resource development, information management, reporting, program evaluation, research, and public relations.

Rehabilitation Administrators must be sensitive to the needs of people with disabilities and have knowledge of rehabilitation and labor law. Successful administrators understand government and how it works, make effective use of public and private financial resources, and have the knowledge and commitment necessary to provide quality clinical counseling services and supervision.

Preparation

Rehabilitation Administrators are hired from many kinds of private businesses and nonprofit organizations as well as from professional staff in such disciplines as rehabilitation counseling, psychology and education. Most obtain a bachelor's degree, and often a master's degree, in a rehabilitation-related field before entering management. To qualify for first-level, middle, and top management positions, individuals are advised to obtain additional education such as a master's degree in rehabilitation, business, or public administration. Individuals interested in pursuing Rehabilitation Administration may increase their knowledge and skills through in-service and continuing education venues.

Certification

There are no mandatory certification requirements for Rehabilitation Administrators, but they are generally expected to have met the certification requirements that are mandatory for the professionals they supervise. The Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) offers an adjunct designation for specialized practice within rehabilitation counseling, the CRC-Clinical Supervisor (CRC-CS) for first-level supervisors of vocational rehabilitation counselors.

Opportunities

Rehabilitation Administrators work in state and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, medical rehabilitation facilities, and private rehabilitation businesses. Many serve in managerial positions such as supervisor, unit director, planner, human resource development director, district administrator, or grants manager.



"Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

—Margaret Mead



Rehabilitation Medicine

Physicians who specialize in rehabilitation medicine are called **Physiatrists** (fizz-ee-at'-trists). Physiatrists provide rehabilitation medical care to persons whose physical function capacity is limited by the consequences of injury, disease, or congenital disorder. Physiatrists team with other physicians and rehabilitation professionals such as nurses, physical therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists, prosthetists and orthotists to provide the interdisciplinary care needed to increase the functional abilities of persons with disabilities.

Some physiatrists provide services to customers of the public rehabilitation programs, while others serve as faculty in rehabilitation medicine and conduct research to improve rehabilitation processes and outcomes.

Rehabilitation Nurses have an important role in interdisciplinary teams, working cooperatively with rehabilitation counselors, social workers, occupational and physical therapists and physiatrists. Rehabilitation Nurses begin to work with individuals and their families soon after a disabling injury or chronic illness strikes, and they are still there after the individuals go home, back to school, or to work. During that time, rehabilitation nurses help individuals function as independently as possible and minimize complications of injury or illness. They accomplish this goal by educating, motivating, and working with individuals and their families, friends, and employers.

Rehabilitation Nurses can practice in rehabilitation centers, hospitals, long-term care facilities, nursing homes, clinics, community and governmental agencies, sub-acute facilities, insurance corporations, and private companies.

Prosthetics & Orthotics

A **Prosthetist-Orthotist** provides care to people who need to be fitted with an artificial limb (prosthesis) to replace a missing extremity, or need a custom-made orthopedic brace (orthosis) fitted to a disabled spine or extremity. Professional practice includes assessment of patient needs, recommendation of prescriptions, and the fabrication, fitting and evaluation of the prosthesis or orthosis. In addition to functioning in the clinical setting as an active member of the professional health

care team, the Prosthetist-Orthotist is responsible for educating patients, their families, other health care professionals and the public about prosthetic and orthotic care and services.

Students with a degree in prosthetics-orthotics are employed nationwide and generally have residency program employment offers prior to graduation. They typically work in research facilities, hospitals, and private and non-profit agencies.

Discovering

Rehabilitation Technologists

Rehabilitation technology is an emerging field involved with the design, development and application of assistive technology devices to assist people with disabilities in achieving greater independence. **Rehabilitation Technologists** assess the needs of individuals with disabilities and the requirements of the environment or setting, then they design and develop solutions, often customizing commercially available products and assistive devices to suit the need of the individual. The devices may be mechanical, electronic or digital (computerized). Once the modifications have been made, they evaluate the success of their solutions.

Rehabilitation Technologists work closely with the client within teams of rehabilitation professionals that include doctors, physical therapists, occupational therapists, rehabilitation counselors or others. They may address problems related to wheelchairs and mobility, corrective postural positioning, independent living, workplace modification, adaptive driving and augmentative communication.

Rehabilitation Technologists work in universities, community rehabilitation settings, hospital settings attached to acute rehabilitation units, municipal mass transportation authorities, and school districts providing special education services.

Rehabilitation Psychologists

Rehabilitation Psychologists perform psychological, neuropsychological, vocational and/or clinical evaluation of people with mental illness or other disabilities to determine strengths and weaknesses that may affect long-term personal, social, and vocational adjustment and adaptation to disability. Such information may also contribute to treatment, interdisciplinary planning or disability determination. Rehabilitation Psychologists may provide counseling and psychotherapy to help individuals cope with

mental illness or another disability, and with daily living issues. In the academic area, they may perform independent clinical work and research or join the faculty of a university.

Rehabilitation Psychologists work in a wide variety of settings, including public and private rehabilitation centers, hospitals, psychiatric or head injury treatment centers, state institutions, community mental health centers and academic institutions.

Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists

Speech-Language Pathologists work with people of all ages to address a variety of speech, language, voice, swallowing, and cognitive problems that may result from such conditions as stroke, brain injury, degenerative disease, learning disability, and attention deficit disorder. Speech-Language Pathologists are responsible for evaluation, goal setting, treatment implementation, patient and family education and reintegration of patients. The goal is to improve patient skills so they may function in their environment to the best of their ability.

Audiologists work closely with otolaryngologists or ear, nose and throat specialists. The goal is to obtain a clear determination of hearing status and make recommendations for hearing aids or follow-up medical treatment.

Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists work in hospitals, private and public clinics, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, home health agencies, contract agencies, private practices and public/private schools and universities.

More information about careers in vocational rehabilitation is available at the National Clearinghouse for Rehabilitation Training Materials on the Web at www.rehabjobs.org

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