

NH Vocational Rehabilitation Rehabilitation Counselor Competencies

Management:

- Rehabilitation Delivery System
- Community Awareness
- Information
- Ethics
- Fiscal
- Goals
- Program Evaluation

Service Delivery

- Caseload Management
- Knowledge of the Rehabilitation Process
- Issues Faced by Persons with Disability
- Employment Goal Development
- Placement
- Knowledge of Benefits
- In the Field Experience

Counseling/ Interpersonal

- Counseling skills
- Customer involvement and self-management
- Collaboration

Characteristic duties

- Provides counseling and guidance to persons with disabilities or injuries in order to maximize employment potential and personal independence.
- Develops individual functional profiles of persons with disabilities or injuries by recommending medical, psychological and vocational evaluations and analyzing information obtained to make eligibility decisions and determine rehabilitation needs.
- Plans, approves and monitors the expenditure of state and federal funds to secure prescribed essential services and commodities as part of the individual's employment plan.
- Manages a client caseload to ensure timely services and follow rehabilitation plans for employment and personal independence.
- Makes detailed investigations and final recommendations on difficult or unusual cases in the determination of eligibility for services and handles reconsideration or appeal cases.
- Establishes and maintains contacts with area employers, employment services, and other rehabilitation agencies in order to assist clients in employment opportunities

The Rehabilitation Delivery System

“Demonstrates an understanding of the State-Federal VR program, and how that relates to other public agencies.”

- Understands the state-federal vocational rehabilitation program and its service delivery to individuals with disabilities
- Understands relevant legislation to the rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities; Review trends, societal issues and federal laws which affect rehabilitation service delivery
- Understands the role of IL and CAP in the rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities
- Demonstrates the ability to use community resources and the importance of personal behavior as it relates to the public and community relations
- Understands the myriad of human service agencies serving individuals with vocational limitations

Self check on competency achievement:

Have you...

- attended training on the Rehabilitation Delivery System?
- Read the NH Vocational Rehabilitation Policy manual?
- developed a working knowledge of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and how it effects our relationship with the our one-stop partners.

Do you feel comfortable with....

- Explaining the Client Assistance Program (CAP) to customers and their representatives
- Giving a presentation about the agency to customers and other publics that includes an overview of the Bureau including history, programs, legislation, regulations, funding, mission, vision, etc.

Do you know.....

- The mission of NH Vocational Rehabilitation
- The role and function of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)
- The Agency's confidentiality policy and how to apply confidentiality when responding to case inquiries?
- When to check with Regional Leader or central office consultants regarding inquiries from the media, police, lawmakers, court proceedings, attorneys, etc.
- An overview of program funding (state/federal match), innovation and expansion, and the Bureau's grant programs
- The agency's structure (DSS, central office roles, and agency organizational chart).
- The agency vision and mission.
- The scope of services of NHVR as well as basic limitations on some services (small businesses, purchase of vehicles, similar benefits etc).

Counselor Version

- Understand of the relationship among NHVR and other state agencies (HHS, AA, MHC, WIA partners, DOL, DOE), as well as school systems.
- How the federal legislation enables and directs parts of the VR program, including the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and its subsequent amendments, 60-day eligibility, informed choice, Order of Selection, ADA, funding, etc.
- The essence and relevance of state regulations to VR.

Resources:

- Website for the rehabilitation act; website for current regulations
- NHVR website
- CAP guide to VR
- Observe meetings with other agencies.
- Shadow seasoned counselors as they meet with school systems.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS

“Demonstrates an understanding of the community as a source for referrals and a resource for services.”

- Demonstrates the ability to use community resources
- Understands the importance of personal behavior as it relates to the public and community relations
- Understands professional and customer groups, organizations and associations
- Understands the role and function of CRPs
- Understands the One-Stop delivery system
- Demonstrate ability to engage employers in hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities
- Demonstrates the ability to find and utilize Comparable benefits

Self check on competency achievement:

Have you...

- Attended training on utilizing community resources

Do you feel comfortable with....

- Researching resources for facilitating customers' plans for employment
- Working with a variety of employers and agencies to assist customers get employment

Do you know.....

- The location and resources available at the one-stop center(s) in your region**
- Where to get information about agencies and resources in your area
- The referral process to CRPs in your area
- Where to find employers and employment resources in your area

Training and Support activities and resources:

- Review information sources (Help Line, Yellow Pages, Materials in office resource room, colleges and tech colleges, help wanted ads, colleagues, etc.).
- Observe and participate in presentations to various groups and individuals.
- Job and resource fairs (Business after Hours, Chamber of Commerce or other activities).

QUANTITATIVE GOALS

“Understands that the number of cases closed “rehabilitated” is the fundamental measure of success of the public rehabilitation program at the federal, state, district and individual caseload level, and achieves individual goals as set by management.”

- Understands numerical goals
- Understands and uses the CMS to monitor and make decisions
- Demonstrates ability to move individuals through the VR process to attain goals

Self check on competency achievement:

Have you...

- attended training on goal setting and achievement?
- Set numerical goals for your caseload

Do you feel comfortable with....

- Monitoring your progress in achieving assigned goals
- Monthly and annual reports

Do you know.....

- Numerical goals for your caseload, your office, the state
- Factors that help achieve those employment goals
- How to get reports on your caseload (e.g., monthly report of 26's, 22 list, 60 day eligibility, etc)

Resources:

QUALITATIVE GOALS

- Wages
- Hours
- Self support

Self check on competency achievement:

Have you...

Do you feel comfortable with....

Do you know.....

Resources:

Management

ETHICS and PROFESSIONALISM

“Understands and utilizes ethical principles and standards affecting the delivery of rehabilitation services”.

- Understand the principles of ethical behavior in working with individuals with disabilities and the code of ethics for rehabilitation counselors
- Demonstrate and ability to utilize ethical principles in the provision of services (e.g., integrity, confidentiality, scope of practice, etc.)
- Understands principles of counseling ethics in working with people with disabilities and code of ethics for rehabilitation counselors
- DOE Staff manual confidentiality, sexual harassment, etc

Self check on competency achievement:

Have you...

- Attended training on Ethics
- Gotten a copy of the DOE staff manual

Do you feel comfortable with....

- Applying ethical principles to providing services to individuals with disabilities
- Applying ethical principles in a variety of situations and activities, e.g., client advocacy, professional relationships, confidentiality, assessment, etc
- Seeking assistance when you need it

Do you know.....

- The Code of Ethics
- The Department policy on

Resources:

Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification

Code of Ethics

A rehabilitation counselor has a commitment to the effective functioning of all human beings; his emphasis is on facilitating the functioning or refunctioning of those persons who are at some disadvantage in the struggle to achieve viable goals. While fulfilling this commitment he interacts with many people, programs, institutions, demands, and concepts, and in many different types of relationships. In his endeavors he seeks to enhance the welfare of his clients and of all others whose welfare his professional roles and activities will affect. He recognizes that both action and inaction can be facilitating or debilitating and he accepts the responsibility for his action and inaction.

- The primary obligation of the rehabilitation counselor is to his client. In all his relationships he will protect the client's welfare and will diligently seek to assist the client towards his goals.
- The rehabilitation counselor recognizes that the client's family is typically a very important factor in the client's rehabilitation. He will strive to enlist the understanding and involvement of the family as a positive resource in promoting the client's rehabilitation plan and in enhancing his continued effective functioning.
- The rehabilitation counselor is obligated to protect the client-employer relationship by adequately apprising the latter of the client's capabilities and limitations. He will not participate in placing a client in a position that will result in damaging the interests and welfare of either or both the employer and the client.
- The rehabilitation counselor will relate to his colleagues in the profession so as to facilitate their ongoing technical effectiveness as professional persons.
- Typically, the implementation of a rehabilitation plan for a client is a multi-disciplinary effort. The rehabilitation counselor will conduct himself in his interdisciplinary relationship in such a way as to facilitate the contribution of all the specialists involved for maximum benefit of the client and to bring credit to his own profession.
- The rehabilitation counselor will regard his professional status as imposing on him the obligation to relate to the community (the public) at levels of responsibility and morality that are higher than are required for persons not classified as "professional." He will use his specialized knowledge, his special abilities, and his leadership position to promote understanding and the general welfare of handicapped persons in the community, and to promote acceptance of the viable concepts of rehabilitation and of rehabilitation counseling.
- In his relationships with other programs, agencies and institutions that will participate in the rehabilitation plan of the client, the rehabilitation counselor will follow procedures and insist on arrangements that will foster maximum mutual facilitation and effectiveness of services for the benefit of the client.
- The rehabilitation counselor is obligated to keep his technical competency at such a level that his clients receive the benefit of the highest quality of services the profession is capable of offering.
- The rehabilitation counselor is obligated to assist in the efforts to expand the knowledge needed to serve handicapped persons with increasing effectiveness.

Program Evaluation

- Understanding of program evaluation, performance goals and benchmarks and the relationship to the organization
- Understanding the basic application of research principles to rehabilitation, such as evaluation of personal practice, utilization of customer satisfaction surveys, conducting needs analysis

Self check on competency achievement:

Have you...

- Attended training on program evaluation

Do you feel comfortable with....

- Using program data to make decisions regarding provision of services

Do you know.....

- Where to obtain information regarding program evaluation

Resources:

- federal regulations on the "Standards and Indicators".
- Customer satisfaction survey

Management

INFORMATION

“Demonstrates ability to find and utilize information and resources as needed for casework.”

- Demonstrates research
- Understands internet
-

Self check on competency achievement:

Have you...

Do you feel comfortable with....

- Knows “when to ask” questions and seek supervision.

Pays attention to e-mail, voice-mail, memos and other pertinent information

Do you know.....

- Knows the roles of Bureau consultants and seeks assistance as needed
- Is aware of, and can access related programs in the bureau such as:
 - Assistive Technology and Tech Loan Program
 - Connect to Work Center
 - NHVR / DMHAS Systems Change Grant
 - Other programs as they are developed
- Utilizes the internet appropriately.
- Networks within the district, bureau, and community.

Resources:

- .
- .

Development Activities

- Review role of individual bureau consultants and meet them.
- Familiarize self with “on-line” resources.

FISCAL PROCEDURES

“To have solid knowledge of basic fiscal procedures as well as general knowledge of more complex fiscal procedures.”

- IPE
- Authorizations
- Bills
- Office budget
- Comparable benefits
- Financial need

Self check on competency achievement:

Have you...

- Attended training on fiscal procedures

Do you feel comfortable with....

- Using the CMS to develop IPE, line items, authorization,
- VR5, FPO, PO

Do you know.....

- Fiscal authority
- How to authorize services
- Seek comparable benefits
- Signature authority limits
- Services that need additional processes (van mods, home mods, self employment)
- Financial needs

Resources:

- CMS manual
- Policy manual

- **Service Delivery**

Caseload management

“Demonstrates efficient and effective caseload management, organizing and time”

- Understands the role of the rehabilitation counselor in the rehabilitation process
- Understands the values of customer involvement in their rehabilitation process
- Demonstrates the ability to monitor vocational rehabilitation and to organize the caseload of a rehab counselor
- Understands the principles of caseload management

Self check on competency achievement:

Have you...

- Completed training on caseload management

Do you feel comfortable with....

- Setting boundaries with customers on actions and responsibilities.
- Prioritizing your work.
- Maintaining complete, orderly case files with up to date case recording.
- Managing time in order to meet the needs of the customer while tending to bureau and federal standards for case movement and documentation.
- Closing cases on time with rational and documentation.
- Maintaining a reasonably neat work area.

Do you know.....

- How to generate and track cases using a master list
- Identify and obtain essential information to expedite eligibility decision.
- Eligibility decisions need to be made within 60 days or waiver letter if extension is needed.
- How to writes IPEs in a timely manner or explain delays
- Review employment plans at least annually.
- Provide timely personal contact with customers
- Effectively manage the flow of communications:
 - maintain an effective filing system;
 - process information received from e-mail, mail, meetings, etc.; and
 - manage telephone calls and returns them in a timely manner (within 24 hours when possible).

Resources:

- Review MIS tools (CMS reports, Outlook email system; Microsoft Word, ETC.).
- Obtain and use necessary electronic or hard copy tools for time management (rolodex, directories, phone log, calendar, journal, etc.).

KNOWLEDGE OF THE REHABILITATION PROCESS

“Demonstrates a working knowledge of the rehabilitation process through the statuses.”

- Understands statuses, Assessment, Eligibility, IPE, Services, Closed
- Understands assistive technology and modification (van, home, worksite) in the rehabilitation of individuals
- Understanding of policies and practices related to supported employment
- Understanding issues and practices related to specific disabilities, e.g., Addictions, Mental Health, Brain Injury, Learning Disability, Transition from School to Work/Training, etc.
- Understanding tools and resources available
- Understanding and demonstrating Internet supports to working with individuals with disabilities

Self check on competency achievement:

Do you

- explain the rehab process to both individuals and groups.
- Independently conduct initial interviews and determines whether the application should be completed or deferred.
- Know what information is needed to make eligibility decisions and write certificates of eligibility.
- Know how to efficiently obtain the information needed.
- Know the appropriate time for plan development, and demonstrates reasoning behind the goal development.
- Include in written plan reasonable time frames for service delivery and amendments to reflect major changes and yearly review of plan.
- Record through case notes timely, accurate and appropriate information in the case record, addresses the issue of long term supports where appropriate, and shares information effectively with customers and families.
- Understand the finite nature of VR services and communicate it to customers.
- Discuss case closure in advance of this action, and describes why closure is appropriate.
- Understand and use post-employment services appropriately.
- Complete required fields in the CMS (911) appropriately.
- Monitor rehabilitation and vocational progress, and be able to address issues such as rehabilitation crisis, relapse and other challenges encountered by the customer.

Resources

- Initial reading and regular reviewing of Counselor Manual.
- Shadow more experienced counselors as they proceed through the process with specific customers.

Issues faced by persons experiencing disability

“Understands the factors influencing customers view of self and the world as well as the environmental factors influencing the development of personality and the adjustment to disability.”

- Develop sensitivity, appreciation and understanding of what it means to have a disability, i.e., its medical and psychological aspects and what can be done to ameliorate resulting problems
- Identify the primary rehabilitation techniques employed to evaluate, train and identify employment options for persons with disabilities
- Identify physical and environmental adaptations which will enable customers to work or acquire training

Self check on competency achievement:

Do you

- Understand the basic principles of functional assessment.
- Distinguish between behaviors that are adaptive and maladaptive.
- Understand basic principles of recovery for persons with addiction and mental illness.
- Gather pertinent information in order to obtain a clear understanding of the customer's adjustment:
 - work history, family history, educational background, etc.;
 - self-assessment, interest and aptitude measures;
 - clinical data, medical history, disability specific information.
- Identify the barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities.
- Have an awareness of the stigma and biases that persist concerning the integration of persons with disabilities into the work and community.
- Understand the variables impacting persons with lifelong disability, acquired disability and hidden disability..
- Employ empowering strategies to address dependent behaviors and dependency upon benefits.

Resources:

- Read disability handbook
- Attend and participate in disability awareness programs
- Review resources in resource library (DSM-IV, Merck Manual, etc.)
- Visit local independent living center.
- Training in functional assessment
- Coursework in disability awareness
- Coursework in developmental psychology

Service Delivery

EMPLOYMENT GOAL DEVELOPMENT

“To be able to demonstrate the skills necessary to empower customers to develop a job goal that is appropriate given the specific life circumstances of that individual.”

- Determine the nature and needs of the various types of individual with disabilities
- Utilize community resources during and after rehabilitation services to assure persons with disabilities attain a satisfactory vocational adjustment
- Compile and utilize assessment information such as prior records, test results, and other pertinent evaluation results
- Coordinate services on behalf of customers with collaborating agencies (e.g., one stop partners, social, educational, financial, vocational, legal, transportation, and housing)
- To understand an individual rehabilitation plan and demonstrate ability to develop a plan with a customer focusing on informed choice
- Develop an awareness of changing demographics within the workforce (e.g., cultural diversity, gender ratios, age distributions)
- Knowledge of CRPs and their service delivery systems for individual with disabilities
- Understanding marketing techniques in placement and job development with employers
- Able to demonstrate the ability to conduct job analysis, environmental assessments

Self check on competency achievement:

Do you

- Consistently demonstrate in the case record clear documentation of what the individual is looking for in terms of employment, as well as the customer's expectations of the counselor and the agency.
- Consistently demonstrate an understanding of the functional limitations of the individual as it relates to the career choice and employment possibilities.
- Consistently demonstrate active client participation and accountability for goal development, progress, and goal achievement.
- Demonstrate a variety of techniques to assist the client in moving toward, and developing an employment goal, i.e. interest, aptitude inventories, work experience, family expectation, situational assessments, career exploration, job shadowing, networking, etc.
- Show knowledge of labor market tools such as OOH, ONET, DOT and labor trend reports.
- Demonstrate on eligibility certificate an analysis and understanding of functional limitations.

Resources

- Spend time using ONET, OOH, Disability Handbook, etc., to gather information about various occupations.
- List functional limitations of various disabilities as per the eligibility certificate and link those to vocational issues on the IPE.
- Coursework or in-service regarding employment plan development.

PLACEMENT

“Able to actively take the lead in all phases of placement when appropriate and necessary.”

- Knowledge of employers
- LMI
- Job seeking
- Job analysis
- Job modification

Self check on competency achievement:

Do you

- Demonstrate the necessary skills to collaborate with others to facilitate appropriate placement for customers.
- Utilize the placement counselor for advice regarding marketability of occupational choice.
- Demonstrate, in each case record, that placement has been a major focus since the beginning of the VR process.
- Demonstrate knowledge about when and how to use vendors and Situational Assessments.
- Demonstrate knowledge and techniques for job searching Labor Department information and the Internet.
- Show knowledge regarding the use of the One-Stop Centers (Work Force System) and the adjunct services offered to common clients.
- Demonstrate the ability to do a job analysis.
- Can give examples of directly approaching potential employers, to market the agency, and to facilitate job placement for clients.
- Demonstrate an awareness of incentives for employers such as tax credits, OJT, Job Accommodation Network, situational assessments, etc.

Development Activities

- Visit area One Stop offices.
- Shadow the NHVR placement specialist when presenting a client for placement or when doing “cold-calling”.

Service Delivery

KNOWLEDGE OF BENEFITS

“Has a basic working knowledge of customer benefits including SSDI, SSI, General Assistance, and others, and knows how earned income affects the receipt of benefits.”

Self check on competency achievement:

- Can you explain application process, eligibility and general provisions of SSDI and SSI.
- Can explain, in general, the work incentives under SSDI:
 - Trial Work Period
 - Extended Period of Eligibility (EPE)
 - Impairment related Work Expense (IRWE)
 - Subsidies
 - Continued Medicare coverage
 - Continued eligibility for customers in VR plans
 - Continues Medicaid under SSDI and State Supplement (1905q)
 - Plan for Achieving Self Support (PASS)
- Can explain, in general, the work incentives under SSI:
 - Continued SSI cash payments while working
 - Calculation of SSI payment relative to countable income
 - Continuation of Medicaid coverage after cash benefits end (1619b)
 - Impairment Related Work Expense (IRWE)
 - Continued eligibility for customers in VR plans
 - Plan for Achieving Self Support (PASS)
- Are you familiar with, but not necessarily an expert regarding, Connecticut’s welfare system program eligibility, and is familiar with:
 - SAGA, TFA, ConnPace and other terms
 - Welfare to work – time limits, exemptions
 - Food Stamps, childcare programs and others
 - Working Person’s Title XIX
- Do you know when to call a benefits specialist or when to refer a customer for services.
- Do you know where to find information when needed.

Resources

- Read guidebooks and brochures provided by these agencies.
- Attend customer workshops

Service Delivery

In-the-Field Experience

Provide opportunity to assess the Counselor's ability to integrate principles and training into real-life work

- Demonstrates the ability to work constructively with other professionals as a member of a team
- Demonstrates application of rehabilitation skills through supervised practical and independent experience
- Demonstrates ability to move customers through the VR process

Self check on competency achievement:

Have you...

Do you feel comfortable with....

Do you know.....

Resources:

Counseling and Interpersonal

COUNSELING SKILLS

“Demonstrates counseling techniques needed to develop partnership relationships and move customers through the rehabilitation process.”

- Understanding the psychology of disability
- Demonstration the ability to understand the vocational implications for individuals with disabilities
- Understanding human social behavior and the cultural influences
- Apply interpersonal skills in interviewing and communicating satisfactorily with persons who have disabilities, their families, related professionals and the general public
- Understand individual and group behavioral change interventions which will improve the employment potential of persons with disabilities
- Develop effective, sensitive communication skills to build rapport and channels of communication (e.g., active listening, giving and receiving feedback and conflict resolution)
- Incorporate cultural sensitivity into daily practices and interactions with customers

Self check on competency achievement:

Have you...

- Attended training on counseling skills

Do you feel comfortable with....

- Explaining the program clearly
- Showing respect for customers from various cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Identifying action plans (steps) and setting limits.
- Focusing counseling on employment
- Seeking assistance, as needed, to work with difficult and complex customer situations.
- Demonstrating appropriate boundaries in counseling relationship.
- Conveying a positive outlook
- Using good listening skills to develop counseling relationship

Do you know.....

- Understand the role of the rehabilitation counselor and how it differs from other helping professions.
- Casework should describe counseling activities: how agreements are reached, how barriers are addressed, how decisions are made.
- Contact notes should reflect career planning and decision making.

Resources

- Take advantage of opportunities to observe colleagues demonstrating good skills
- Read materials such as “Getting to Yes”, “Disability Handbook”, etc.

Customer involvement and self management

“Demonstrates an understanding of the methods used in rehabilitation to solve customer problems, and how to utilize available resources to improve customer access, quality of services and decision making”

- Use problem solving skills to assist persons with disabilities in attaining individualized goals suited to their abilities and needs
- Use writing skills or clear, concise and accurate case reporting
- Engage in customer advocacy on behalf of people with disabilities and facilitate customer input in making informed choices
- Apply case-management skills to disability benefit programs, while working to reduce disincentives to employment
- Utilize rehabilitation technology and adapted computer application service delivery
- Facilitate awareness of the world of work and the role of environmental factors in job analysis, job placement activities and vocational adjustment
- Consult with and include the customer as a service/system designer
- Provide customers with information and assistance about human, legal and civil rights so that they will be empowered to speak on their own behalf and obtain assistance when necessary
- Identify and prioritize goals with customers (or with their representatives as appropriate)
- Demonstrates the integration of informed choice in the rehabilitation counseling process.”

Self check on competency achievement:

Have you...

- Completed training on Informed Choice

Do you feel comfortable with....

- The concept of informed choice
- Informing customers of their options in developing “partnership” relationships and the models and mechanisms available for employment plan development.
- Using disseminating agency literature explaining program parameters and options.

Do you know.....

- How to demonstrate in the case record the data considered in making decisions regarding services, goals, providers, similar benefits etc.,
- How to record in the Case record issues of agreement and differences.
- How to demonstrate verbally and in the case record the parameters for agency participation and the alternatives the customer may pursue independently.
- The client’s rights and responsibilities and recourse (such as mediation, informal review and administrative hearing), and can explain this verbally and in writing utilizing language that can be understood by the customer.

Resources

- Review customer handbook.

Counselor Version

- Observe group orientations.
- Review state regulations.
- Review counselor manual on customer choice.

COLLABORATION

“Is able to work cooperatively with others, be a team member, and accept supervision and coaching.”

- Demonstrates ability to collaborate and cooperate with others
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Self check on competency achievement:

Have you...

- Presented case(s) where you sought assistance from a colleague, regional leader, or provided assistance/information to a colleague.

Do you feel comfortable with....

- Collaborating with colleagues.
- Accepting constructive feedback and improves.
- Implementing suggestions made by supervisor.
- Volunteering to take on a task for a group, an office, District or the Bureau.
- Making suggestions for improving office efficiency

Do you know.....

- How to connect customers to other resources as needed.
- Collaborate with other supports around customer as needed.
- Assume responsibility for agreed upon actions.

Resources:

- Readings on teamwork
- Participate in group activity (Group Orientation, workshops or job clubs etc.)