

IDVR Counselor Training Series

Comprehensive Assessment of Vocational Needs Part 2

Welcome

Welcome to the Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Training. This training is provided by New Hampshire Department of Education, Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation, and Interwork Institute of San Diego State University. It is part of the Agency's effort to provide readily available training support to vocational rehabilitation counselors. For further information contact: shannon.wilcox@vr.idaho.gov.

Determination of Vocational Goals and VR Services

Before VR can provide funding toward a particular goal, the individual and counselor must agree to both the goal and services needed to reach the goal. These must be included on an IPE that is signed by the counselor and the participant and/or the participant's representative.

Let's take a closer look at the primary decisions that need to be made during the assessment of vocational needs: the determination of the vocational goal and the services needed to reach that goal.

Determination of Vocational Goal

A well-chosen vocational goal must be consistent with the participant's primary employment factors which include unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, and capabilities, interests, and informed choice. In addition, any vocational goal that is supported by a state vocational rehabilitation program must meet the federal definition of competitive integrated employment (CIE).

Vocational exploration is assessed during the comprehensive assessment process and documented in the customer's case record.

As the counselor, you are responsible for providing the core service of vocational guidance and counseling to assist the participant in choosing an appropriate goal. If relevant vocational factors are not addressed, there is greater likelihood that the participant will not achieve their vocational goal. This may result in an unsuccessful closure, or the need to develop a new IPE. In keeping with the principles of informed choice, it is helpful to discuss with the participant what information is needed to determine a vocational goal and explore various options on how this information can be obtained.

Gathering and Assessing Information:

Whether or not the participant already has an employment objective in mind, the counselor should explore the following with them, and when applicable, their support system.

1. Why is the participant interested in this goal?
2. What does the participant already know how to do and able to do well?
3. Is the goal realistic?
4. Does the participant have the physical and/or emotional stamina for this type of position?
5. Does the participant have the coping and problem-solving abilities needed for this type of work?
6. Is the employment goal in an in-demand occupation that will likely result in employment?
7. Does it meet the participant's income needs?
8. Is there anything in the participant's background information that would prevent the participant from getting hired into the position?
9. Does the participant have the family or other support needed to succeed in this goal?
10. Is this goal compatible with the participant's values?
11. Is the participant able to complete the training or other activities required to reach this vocational goal?

Assessments of Abilities, Skills, Interests, and Resources

The records that were used to determine eligibility may also contain information about the client's abilities, skills, strengths, interests, and accommodations that may be required to be successful in the proposed vocational goal.

If this existing information is not adequate, or does not appropriately address the customers' current needs, abilities, and interests, there are a variety of assessment resources available to help determine the feasibility and appropriateness of a vocational goal. When using formal assessments, it is important to explain to the participant the nature and purpose of these assessments and how the results will be used. Use of any assessment should be individualized according to the participant's unique needs.

Examples of assessments include:

- A medical evaluation including diagnosis, prognosis, and functional limitations,
- A psychological assessment including information on the individual's psychological ability to perform the job or recommendations for treatments or accommodations that would allow the individual to perform the job,
- An assessment of an individual's cognitive abilities and recommendations for accommodating any noted limitation,
- A functional capacity evaluation,

- A work assessment or skills assessment outlining performance-based information,
- Vocational and/or academic testing,
- A rehabilitation technology assessment and/or trial to determine if the individual can perform the job duties with the use of technology,
- An assessment of family members or other support systems that are in place to assist the individual in meeting a goal, or
- An assessment of the need for supported employment.
- Vocational interest assessments

Determining Feasibility of a Vocational Goal: Job Requirements, Labor Market, and Potential Wages

Sometimes what seems like an unrealistic goal may become realistic with appropriate supports, accommodations, a selective placement, assistive technology, or other services.

If a participant chooses a goal that is not compatible with his or her primary employment factors, the counselor should help the participant explore accommodations or other services that will make the goal feasible and/or help the participant to explore other vocational options.

A counselor should document the exploration of various options before determining a requested vocational goal is not compatible with a participant's disabilities, skills, and employment barriers. If the participant needs assistance determining a vocational goal or choosing an alternative goal, both formal and informal methods can be used. In addition to the assessments mentioned above, this process can include:

- Job shadowing to help the individual develop a realistic view of the position requirements
- A job analysis to provide more detail about the profession,
- Formal work-based evaluation,
- Informal input from friends, family, educators, etc.
- Informational interviews with employers

Labor Market Information Systems

The use of a comprehensive labor market information (LMI) system in the career exploration process is an evidence-based practice that has been demonstrated to positively impact successful employment and job retention.. The use of a good LMI system can assist with the identification of a suitable vocational goal and can connect individuals to available jobs in their geographic area. Use of labor market information

prior to the development of the IPE is also an important way to ensure that informed choice occurs in the planning process. There are many labor market information systems available to rehabilitation counselors and their consumers, including:

- O*NET Online
- CareerOne Stop at careeronestop.org
- Career Index Plus (TCI+) at thecareerindex.com

Counselors should be comfortable with at least one formal LMI resource; however, best practice is to be able to use the LMI tool that provides the most accurate information for the participant.

Documenting the Rationale

Documenting vocational exploration, informed choice, and the vocational goal occurs when counselors correctly record case notes in the customer's case record. Once a customer and counselor agree on a vocational goal, the counselor completes a comprehensive assessment with the following information:

- Informed choice
- Transferable skills
- Physical, mental, and environmental demands of the occupation
- Occupational Outlook
- Wage expectations
- Required formal or on-the-job training
- Barriers due to disabilities
- Strategies to address disability-related barriers
- Other barriers
- Strategies to address other barriers
- Counselor rationale for supporting the vocational goal

Case notes documenting the career exploration process and comprehensive assessment ensures rationale to support the vocational goal is documented appropriately. When a counselor correctly completes the comprehensive assessment process, they now have important information regarding the type, amount, and level of VR services needed to assist a customer achieve their vocational goal and write the IPE.

Determination of VR Services

Part of the comprehensive assessment process is understanding what core and support services VR will provide for the individual to become successfully employed in this area. Core VR services are always a required component of IPE services. Support services may or may not be needed. Identifying required services is necessary prior to writing the IPE.

1. As part of the assessment of rehabilitation needs, consider: Does the individual need to maintain a certain level of emotional or physical stability in order to be successfully employed? If so how can he/she maintain stability?
2. Does the individual require medical or psychological intervention or treatment?
3. Will assistive devices be required, such as a prosthesis, hearing aids, or low vision devices?
4. Will the individual need life skills or social skills training to successfully obtain or maintain employment?

If the proposed goal requires training consider:

5. What type of training is required? What is reasonably available to the participant? Is there more than one way to receive training? What job-related services may be needed? Does the individual need accommodations to learn or perform the job duties? If so, what type of accommodations will the person require?
 6. Will job readiness, interviewing, resume and/or job placement assistance be needed?
 7. Will short-term support from a job coach be required?
8. Does the individual require long-term employment supports? Finally, consider any supportive services needed in order for the person to participate in training or employment, such as transportation, childcare, or clothing.

Case Study – Jerri

Let's look at an example of how a participant, Jerri, and her counselor identified services needed to address her functional limitations and the rationale for services included on the IPE.

Jerri's Background

Jerri was determined eligible based on limitations in reading and writing that affect her ability to independently complete job applications, read employer manuals and instructions, and fill out employee paperwork. She is physically strong and able to handle the physical demands of her chosen occupation.

Upon exploring her vocational needs, the counselor and Jerri determined that job search assistance and short term job supports would increase Jerri's access to employment and increase her self-advocacy skills. In addition, the counselor and Jerry researched assistive technology option and determined that a reader pen would increase her independence in an employment setting. Jerri will also need assistance purchasing appropriate interview clothing and work clothing.

Jerri and her counselor addressed rehabilitation needs through the comprehensive assessment process and are now ready to write Jerri's IPE.

Lesson Completed

You have completed the lesson for this module. Click this [link](#) to access the end of module quiz.

Conclusion

Once a vocational goal, services to reach that goal, service providers, procurement methods and service costs have been determined and an exploration of comparable benefits completed, the counselor and participant will move onto finalizing and signing the Individual Plan for Employment and begin provision of IPE services.