

# Rehabilitation Counseling Curriculum Academic Survey (RCCAS)

## Introduction

The U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration federally funded Innovative Rehabilitative Training Program (CFDA Number 84.263C) in the topical area of Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling supports the preparation of vocational rehabilitation professionals. A five-year grant under this program was awarded to the George Washington University where the Center for Innovative Training in Vocational Rehabilitation (CIT-VR) was developed and facilitated on October 1, 2019. This Innovative Rehabilitation Training Program has three main goals:

- Facilitate more effective delivery of rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities through training programs for rehabilitation personnel in providing rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities
- Demonstrate the effectiveness of new types of training programs for rehabilitation personnel
- Develop novel innovative training modules to supplement existing University rehabilitation counseling programs and In-Service training programs

*The objective was to develop new types of training program for rehabilitation personnel through the development and dissemination of the State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (SVRA) Training Needs Survey (SVRATNS). The SVRATNS would be administered to key staff in VR agencies.* The SVRATNS also included questions related to learning styles and training delivery preferences for content and delivery.

The CIT-VR Advisory Council, consisting of SVRA training coordinators and representatives from national agencies addressing vocational rehabilitation practice, service, and training, was created to gather ongoing direct input from the VR field about training needs to help drive content development. The advisory council also serves as a mechanism for ongoing and continuous improvement related content development and delivery methods.

The CIT-VR advisory board membership includes representatives from State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies who serve in the role of Training Coordinator (i.e., Florida (FL-G), Idaho (ID-G), Indiana (IN-C), Minnesota (MN-G), Virginia (VA-G), Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB), National Council on Rehabilitation Education (NCRE), and National Council of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC).

## The CIT-VR RCCAS

### Development of the Survey

The Center for Innovative Training in Vocational Rehabilitation (CIT-VR) invited students, staff, faculty, and administrators at university programs offering degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling to complete the Rehabilitation Counseling Curriculum Academic Survey (RCCAS).

This survey was based on the findings from the 2020 national CIT-VR training needs survey of state vocational rehabilitation agencies that 369 respondents, of which 54.6% had been in their role less than 5 years, stated training needs identified as the content areas stated in the RCCAS. The RCCAS content areas align with the Rehabilitation Counseling program curriculum of the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP) Rehabilitation Counseling program and the Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling program areas of Foundations, Contextual Dimensions, and Practice. The purpose of the RCCAS was to obtain baseline information and gain further understanding of the extent to which of the stated content areas are addressed in Rehabilitation Counseling curricula from which to prepare, as appropriate, novel, innovative modules that universities can include to update curricula and that can be used by a variety of trainers to provide short-term or other training to VR professionals and paraprofessionals providing service to individuals with disabilities.

### Dissemination

The survey was released on November 23, 2020 being sent to large membership organizations that included NCRE, ARCA, and RCEA whose core constituents are educators in Rehabilitation Counseling academic programs, as well as students in those programs. The survey was then distributed via their membership listservs. In addition, the survey was promoted with members of the Community of Practice of Training Coordinators/Directors of State VR agencies facilitated by staff of CIT-VR, and the project's Advisory Council to disseminate to target audiences. The survey remained open until February 5, 2021.

### Results

The content of the survey included respondent current role within the Rehabilitation Counseling program at their university, length of time in that role, assessed the extent (i.e., Extensive, Adequate,

Minimal, Not addressed; weighted as 3,2,1, 0 for responses and ranges as 2.25-3.00, 1.50-2.24, 0.75-1.49, and 0.00-0.74 respectively) to which 34 content topics are covered in the rehabilitation counseling program curriculum, and if there are additional curriculum content topics. Respondents were also asked about rehabilitation counseling program graduates in regard to Rehabilitation Services Administration Scholarship recipient status, settings in which graduates were employed, and employment trends.

## Participants

Of the total participants (N=66), 83.4% (n=55) provided their current role. Of these 61.8% (n=34) identified as Faculty (i.e., Department Chair, Center Director, Program Coordinator, Program Director, Program faculty fulltime, Program faculty part-time), 23.6% (n=13) identified as graduate students (i.e., master’s, doctoral), and 14.6%(n=8) reported as other (i.e., VR manager/supervisor, VR counselor, VR staff). For all, respondents reported being in their roles for a mean of 8.7 years. Faculty reported being in their roles a mean of 11.1 years; whereas students reported a mean of 1.8 years.

## Extent to which of the stated content areas are addressed in Rehabilitation Counseling curricula

Of the 34 content areas assessed collectively by participant groups as addressed in the Rehabilitation Counseling curricula, a total of 9 (26.5%) were rated as Extensive, 21 (58.8%) were rated as Adequate, 5 (14.7%) were rated as Minimal, and none were rated as Not addressed.

Table 1:

<b>Extensive (n=9)</b>
➤ Accommodations for persons with disabilities in the workplace
➤ Caseload management/case management
➤ Client empowerment
➤ Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion integrated throughout the curriculum
➤ Ethics
➤ Evidence-based practices
➤ Implicit bias
➤ Overview of Public VR program
➤ Person-centered practices

## **Adequate (n=20)**

- Analysis of transferable skills
- Braiding and leveraging resources
- Career Pathways
- Community partnership development including but not limited to core partners in the Workforce Development System, Community-Based Organizations, Workforce Development Boards, and Business & Industry Associations
- Customized employment strategies
- Eligibility criteria for VR services
- Financial empowerment
- Informed choice to individuals with disabilities receiving VR services
- Intersection of disability and poverty
- IPE development and implementation for adults
- Labor market research and analysis in developing VR goals
- Making data-informed decisions
- Preparing consumers for a changing workforce
- Providing Pre-employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)
- Providing services under Section 511
- Serving dual customers: individuals with disabilities and employers
- SSA benefits and work incentives
- Supported Employment Strategies
- Understanding the evolving workforce and preparing consumers for a changing workforce
- Using evidence-based information and data in the VR process

## **Minimal (n=5)**

- Integrated Resource Team model
- IPE development and implementation for youth
- Roles of core partners in the Workforce Development System
- Vocational counseling and guidance for specific significant disability
- WIOA Common Performance Measures

## **Not addressed (n=0)**

**Recommendation:** Respondents evaluated 85.3% of the 34 rehabilitation counseling curricula content areas as Extensive or Adequate; suggesting that the identified areas of training needs are addressed in the rehabilitation counseling curriculum. A total of five curricula topics aligned with Pre-ETS and WIOA were evaluated as minimal (e.g., Integrated Resource Team model, IPE development and implementation for youth, Roles of core partners in the Workforce Development System, Vocational counseling and guidance for specific significant disability, WIOA Common Performance Measures). These five topics could be further assessed (e.g., survey, structured interviews, focus groups) with students and faculty the understand the extent to which this is presented in the curriculum of both 48 credit and 60 credit programs, and identify existing training resources.

### **Additional Rehabilitation Counseling Curriculum Topics**

The Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP) accredits the master's programs in entry-level counseling specialty areas of which two address rehabilitation counseling. These include a 48-credit hour Rehabilitation Counseling specialty and 60-credit hour Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling specialty. For both specialties, the CACREP 2016 Standards Section 5 state the professional knowledge and skills necessary to demonstrate within the two rehabilitation contexts within the areas of Foundations, Contextual Dimensions, and Practice. Respondents reported a total of 91 Rehabilitation Counseling curriculum topics were reported. Of these, all would be inclusive of the CACREP 60 credit Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling specialty area. However, 8.9% (n=8) content topics may not be included, or adequately addressed, in a 48 credit Rehabilitation Counseling specialty area.

**Recommendation:** Respondents reported eight rehabilitation counseling curriculum topics that deserve further exploration. These topics include family therapy (e.g., working with persons with disabilities [PWD] and their families), diagnosis and mental health, trauma informed care, co-occurring disabilities (e.g., substance use and mental disorders), psychopathology (e.g., origins, developments, treatments), suicide prevention, telehealth, and human development across the lifespan. Although human development is a requirement of the CACREP rehabilitation counseling specialty areas, the respondents suggest that the topic should be more adequately addressed in the curriculum. Of the eight curriculum topics, several collectively addressed mental health foundations; aligning with the curriculum topic Vocational Counseling and guidance for specific significant disability that RCCAS respondents rated as Minimal in the rehabilitation counseling curricula. These eight topics could be further explored to understand the extent to which these are addressed in the CACREP 48-credit rehabilitation counseling specialty area standards and in a non-accredited 48 credit rehabilitation counseling program curriculum. Because the number of credit hours in CACREP accredited 48-credit rehabilitation counseling specialty area program will increase to 60-credits by July 1, 2023, the addition of 12 credits to the 48-credit curriculum provides opportunity to create new courses or key performance indicators in courses, inclusive of the eight identified curriculum topics.

## Rehabilitation Services Administration Scholarship Recipient Status

The number of graduates receiving RSA scholarship was reported by respondents as 252. The total number of graduates was reported as 358; suggesting that 70.4% (n=252) received RSA scholarship.

## Occupational/Organizational Settings in Which Graduates are Employed

Respondents were asked to identify the occupational/organizational settings (i.e., rehabilitation counselor, not working as a rehabilitation counselor) in which rehabilitation counseling master's program students, who graduated by the end of the 2019-2020 academic year, were employed. A total of 1,434 Rehabilitation Counseling master's program graduates were reported. Among these, 62.6% (n=898) were employed as rehabilitation counselors of which 73.2% (657) were employed as rehabilitation counselors in State Federal settings and 26.8% (n=241) were employed as rehabilitation counselors in private settings.

Table 2:

<b>State Federal organizational settings</b>
➤ State VR agencies (35.6%)
➤ Other VR agency (17.7%)
➤ Veterans Administration (13.6%)
➤ Other Federal agency (6.3%)
<b>Private settings</b>
➤ Private practice LPC (11.8%)
➤ Private, For-profit company (9.0%)
➤ Private. Non-profit company (6.0%)

Of the reported Rehabilitation Counseling master's program graduates, 36.8% (n=536) were not employed as rehabilitation counselors. Employment settings were identified as public agencies (n=150), private settings (n=150), school settings (n=148), and other settings (n=88).

<b>Public agencies</b>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Federal agency (16.8%)</li> <li>➤ State agency (11.2%)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Private settings</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Private Non-profit company (15.5%)</li> <li>➤ Private For-profit company (12.5%)</li> </ul>
<p><b>School settings</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ K-12 School General Education (15.1%)</li> <li>➤ K-12 School Special Education (12.5%)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other settings</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Other (16.4%; unknown/not sure, none, medical, academic/higher education, unemployed, licensed professional counselor, addictions)</li> </ul>

**Recommendation:** Respondents reported that the majority (63.2%) of rehabilitation counseling students who graduated by the end of the 2019-2020 academic year, were employed in positions identified as rehabilitation counselors and 36.8% were not employed as rehabilitation counselors. This suggests more than 1/3 of rehabilitation counseling graduates are not employed in their graduate degree specialty area. This could be further explored with rehabilitation counseling program graduates. Information gathered could include professional identity (e.g., CRC, NCC, LGPC, LPC, membership in professional organizations, etc.), recipient status of RSA scholarship (e.g., met obligations) and the impact of COVID-19 upon employment opportunities and graduate program enrollment status. Based on the results of the RCCAS assessment of the 34 content areas in the rehabilitation counseling curricula, five content areas were reported as “Minimal” in the rehabilitation counseling curricula and deserve further exploration. For example, all respondents, faculty, and students reported the content area of Vocational counseling and guidance for specific significant disability as minimal in the rehabilitation counseling curriculum. Because states may provide service based on an order of selection serving individuals with the most significant disabilities (MSD) and significant disabilities (SD), the graduate’s level of preparedness to serve individuals with MSD or SD could be explored.

**Employment Trends for Rehabilitation Counseling Program Graduates**

Of respondents, 44.8% (n=30) collectively provided 62 comments specifying employment trends. These were grouped in three themes identified as Rehabilitation counseling State/Federal (n=28), Rehabilitation counseling non-State/Federal (n=19), and Mental health services (n=15).

<p><b>Rehabilitation counseling State/Federal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ State VR agency (37.1%)</li> <li>➤ Federal/VA agency (8.1%)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Rehabilitation counseling non-State/Federal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Non-profit VR-related services (9.6%)</li> <li>➤ Substance treatment services (6.5%)</li> <li>➤ Private VR agency (6.5%)</li> <li>➤ Higher education disability services (6.5%)</li> <li>➤ K-12 transition services (1.5%)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mental health services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Private agency (24.2%)</li> </ul>

**Recommendation:** Responses collectively were grouped into three employment trends. Of these, employment as a rehabilitation counselor in State/Federal/VR agencies (45.2%), compared to the RCCAS reported employment of 2019-2020 academic year rehabilitation program graduates in State/Federal/VA agencies (73.2%), present as a decreasing trend. Employment as a rehabilitation counseling in non-State/Federal agencies (30.6%), compared to the reported employment of 2019-2020 academic year rehabilitation program graduates (26.8%) suggests a continued trend. Employment in mental health services (24.2%) presents as baseline within the RCASS and could be monitored. These trends could be further explored. The data suggest a decrease for employment in State/Federal/VA agencies and an increase for employment in mental health services for rehabilitation counseling program graduates. Based on the 2021 CIT-VR Training Needs of State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies (SVRAs) survey, retention in VR agencies was reported as 5 years or less by 54.6%; of which 50.7% leave the within 2 years of hire date. Within VR, agency communication, employee training, and case management were identified as areas of need. Employment data of program graduates could be obtained and analyzed. Because of the CACREP accredited 100-hour practicum and a 600-hour internship requirement for both rehabilitation counseling specialty areas, with priority placement in state VR agencies for students receiving RSA scholarship, rehabilitation counseling practicum and

internship students could be assessed to learn of the influence of the practicum and internship experiences upon their career goals and also review the mean longevity of RSA scholars within VR agencies after their payback obligation in years of employment has been met.

## About CIT-VR

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WASHINGTON, DC

The Center for Innovative Training in Vocational Rehabilitation (CIT-VR) is managed by the George Washington University Center for Rehabilitation Counseling Research and Education, in partnership with San Diego State University and the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation.

### Contact information:

Dr. Maureen McGuire-Kuletz, Principal Investigator: [mkuletz@gwu.edu](mailto:mkuletz@gwu.edu)

John C. Walsh, Project Director: [jcwalsh@gwu.edu](mailto:jcwalsh@gwu.edu)

**The GW Center for Rehabilitation Counseling Research and Education (GRCRE) aims to enhance research and provide opportunities for growth and development to a diverse population including persons with disabilities.**

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