

Rehabilitation Counseling

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Rehabilitation Counseling is focused on helping people who have disabilities achieve their personal, career, and independent living goals through a counseling process. Rehabilitation Counselors can be found in private practice, in rehabilitation facilities, universities, schools, government agencies, insurance companies and other organizations where people are being treated for congenital or acquired disabilities with the goal of going to or returning to work.

History

United States

Initially, rehabilitation professionals were recruited from a variety of human service disciplines, including public health nursing, social work, and school counseling. Although educational programs began to appear in the 1940s, it was not until the availability of federal funding for rehabilitation counseling programs in 1954 that the profession began to grow and establish its own identity.

Historically, rehabilitation counselors primarily served working-age adults with disabilities. Today, the need for rehabilitation counseling services extends to persons of all age groups who have disabilities. Rehabilitation counselors also may provide general and specialized counseling to people with disabilities in public human service programs and private practice settings.

Education, Training & Certification

Rehabilitation counselors are primarily trained at the graduate level. Entry level positions at this current time primarily require a Masters degree. The Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) accredits qualifying institutions, however not all programs are CORE accredited. Rehabilitation counselors are trained in the following core areas:

Counseling theory, skills, and techniques;
Individual, group, and environmental assessment;
Psychosocial and medical aspects of disability, including human Growth and development;
Principles of psychiatric rehabilitation;
Case management and rehabilitation planning;
Issues and ethics in rehabilitation service delivery;
Technological adaptation;
Vocational evaluation and work adjustment;
Career counseling;
Job development and placement

Rehabilitation counselor education programs typically provide 48 to 60 credit hours of academic and field-based clinical training. Clinical training consists of a practicum and a minimum of 600

hours of supervised internship experience. Clinical field experiences are available in a variety of community, state, federal, and private rehabilitation-related programs.

Although no formal requirements exist, most rehabilitation counseling graduate students have undergraduate degrees in rehabilitation services, psychology, sociology, or other human services-related fields.

The Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) grants certification to counselors who meet educational requirements and have passed an examination indicating that they possess the competency and skill to become a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, (CRC in the United States; CCRC in Canada). A Masters degree is required to obtain certification. Certification as a rehabilitation counselor is not mandated by any state or federal laws, however eligibility to sit for the certification exam is mandated by federal law for those wishing to work for state/federal vocational rehabilitation systems. Certification is highly desirable to many employers.

Rehabilitation Counseling Careers

Job Location

In the United States, many rehabilitation counselors work in a variety of arenas. The predominant placement of rehabilitation counselors are state rehabilitation programs as Vocational Counselors, social service agencies as Clinicians, and at the collegiate level as Disability Counselors/Specialists.

State Rehabilitation Programs: The predominant need for rehabilitation counselors is within federal/state funded vocational rehabilitation programs. The Veteran's Administration has its own vocational rehabilitation program. Federal/State Vocational Rehabilitation Programs are funded and regulated by Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), a division of the U.S Department of Education. Although policies vary from state to state, rehabilitation counselors who work in the federal/state systems typically must hold a masters degree in rehabilitation counseling, special education or a related field. Counselors in the federal/state Vocational Rehabilitation programs are required to be certified or be eligible to sit for the certification examination. People accepting employment in the federal/state Vocational Rehabilitation programs do so with the agreement they will meet these qualifications by a specified date to maintain employment.

College Disability Counselors/Specialists: By law all community colleges, colleges and universities are required to make reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. To satisfy this requirement most collegial settings have a Disability Resources Center, a Special Needs Coordinator or a similar office. Staff are responsible for coordinating services that may include but are not limited to: Advocacy/liaison, Computer access, Counseling (academic, personal, vocational), Equipment loan, Information/referral services, In-service awareness programs,

Notetakers, On campus orientation and mobility training for visually impaired students, Priority registration assistance, Readers, Scribes, Shuttle (on-campus), Sign language interpreters, Test proctoring/testing Accommodations, and Tutors.

Some adaptive technological accommodations may include but are not limited to: Adaptive computer technology (including voice activated and speech output), Assistive listening devices, Films/videotapes about disabilities, Kurzweil personal reader, Large print software, Print enlargers (CCTV), Raised-line drawing kit, Tactile map of campus, Talking calculators, Tape recorders/APH Talking Book Machine, TDD for hearing impaired, Wheelchair, Wheelchair access maps.

Students who have documentation proving their disability status and the staff are trained to access or have knowledge of the necessary services according to the students' unique need. As the college level is different from the primary school system, the same services that a student may have received within a special education program in high school may not be required at the collegiate level. A wide variety of students with disabilities can be served, some examples are individuals with: learning disabilities, sensorial disabilities (hearing loss, vision loss, etc.), physical disabilities (cerebral palsy, etc.) and psychological disabilities.

Job Outlook and Professional Growth

Job Outlook

As of 2008 there were 129,500 working in the field. Jobs for rehabilitation counselors are expected to grow by 19 percent, which is much faster than the average for all occupations.

There are several professional organizations Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and other rehabilitation professionals belong to, including National Rehabilitation Association (NRA), National Rehabilitation Counseling Association, American Rehabilitation Counseling Association and American Rehabilitation Action Network.