

NC DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND POLICIES AND PROCEDURES VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Section:	R
Title:	Rehabilitation Counselor II Policy
Current Effective Date:	02/08
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In recognition and support of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counseling as a profession, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor as a professional, and the commitment to the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development, the Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) expects Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to develop the capacity to function with considerable independence in the areas of casework, service delivery, and decision-making. The role of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is of utmost importance in assuring that individuals with disabilities receive the services necessary to achieve independence and vocational outcomes. The Agency delegates the responsibility for caseload management and service delivery from the Division Director to the Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation Field Services and the Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II classification has been adopted by the Agency for qualified personnel who successfully complete the requirements as described in this policy. Promotion to Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II is based on recommendations of the Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor and the successful completion of an oral and written evaluation, a comprehensive casework review, and an individual satisfaction review.

PREREQUISITES

Individuals being considered for promotion to Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II will have demonstrated exceptional proficiency in the areas of service delivery, caseload management, timely decisions, individual advocacy, community and vendor relations, and resource management. A Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or Counseling is required. The Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor and Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation Field Services are responsible for evaluating a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor's performance through regularly conducted case record reviews and performance evaluations. Training and performance prerequisites are:

1. Successful completion of training supervised by the Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor in the professional use of the VR Program Policy Manual, VR Program Procedures Manual, and Electronic Services System User Manual. The Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor must certify in writing to the Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation Field Services that the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor has satisfactorily completed a study of these documents;
2. At least twelve months of employment with the Agency as a caseload-carrying Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor;
3. Successful completion of "Adjustment to Blindness Training" sponsored by the Agency;
4. Successful completion of "Best Practices for New DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors" sponsored by the Agency; and
5. An overall performance rating of "GOOD" or better on the most recent Work Plan.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Application for VR Counselor II review process will not be initiated until all prerequisites are met. Once initiated, the VR Counselor II review process must be completed within twelve months.

1. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor shall apply in writing to the Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor requesting initiation of the VR Counselor II evaluation process.
2. The Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor will conduct an overall performance evaluation. Based on the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II Evaluation (On-Line DSB-4049), the Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor will recommend or deny the initiation of the VR Counselor II process.
3. If recommended, the Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor will provide written notification to the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and will grant temporary Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II status. Temporary Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II status allows the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to function independently during the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II testing process. Temporary Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II status will be withdrawn if the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor does not successfully complete any part of the VR Counselor II examination within the allowed time frames.

Written notification of the approval will also be sent to the Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation Field Services, who will send the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor the VR Counselor II Developmental Guide. This Guide will assist in preparing for the written and oral examinations. The Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor will provide assistance as needed in the completion of the Guide, and will verify that the Guide is completed correctly. When ready, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will notify the Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation Field Services, who will administer the oral and written examination. **The oral and written examination must be administered within 90 days of the Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor's written notification of approval in order to maintain temporary Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II status.**

4. If denied, the Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor and the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will prepare a written developmental plan outlining learning objectives, time frames, and evaluation criteria designed to improve the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor's proficiency. Upon successful completion, the Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor may reconsider the individual's application for initiation of the VR Counselor II process.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR II EXAMINATION

The VR Counselor II Examination is designed to evaluate the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in areas of casework policy and practices, service delivery, decision-making, and eligible individual satisfaction. The examination consists of a written and oral test, a case record review, and an eligible individual satisfaction review. These are individually scored, and each part must be successfully completed before continuing with the exam. Should the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor fail any part of the examination, the Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor, Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation Field Services, and the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will prepare a written developmental plan outlining objectives, time frames, evaluation criteria designed to improve the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor's proficiency, and a retest date.

VE Counselor II Examinations will be given in the following sequence:

WRITTEN AND ORAL EXAMINATION - This part of the exam is designed to evaluate the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor's knowledge of Agency policy and procedures and how to apply this knowledge to actual case histories. An average score of 80% correct responses is required to successfully complete the examination and proceed to the next step.

CASEWORK REVIEW - A valid random sampling of case service records on the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor's caseload will be reviewed by the Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation Field Services.

ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUAL SATISFACTION REVIEWS - Six randomly selected individuals will be personally contacted by the Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation Field Services. The purpose of this review is to evaluate the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor's approachability, timeliness of service, follow-through with services, eligible individual satisfaction, and issues related to the individual's involvement in service planning and choices. A report of the findings is sent to the Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor and the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor.

A report based on the written and oral examinations, the findings of the casework review and the outcome of the eligible individual satisfaction review will be prepared by the Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation Field Services, who will make the final decision regarding promotion to Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II. Notification of the decision to grant or to deny the promotion will be given in writing to the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor, Assistant Director, Programs and Facilities, and Human Resources Site Manager. Any salary increases will be contingent upon the availability of funds.

REINSTATEMENT OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR II STATUS

When a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II leaves the Agency for twelve months or longer, reinstatement will occur as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor I. The individual may apply for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II after six months, and must successfully complete the VR Counselor II Examination. The Personnel Manager must approve exceptions.

TRANSFER OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR II STATUS BETWEEN DSB PROGRAMS

A DSB Independent Living Vocational Rehabilitation (ILR) Counselor II will maintain Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II status when transferring to the DSB VR Program. However, Area or District Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisory approval is required for eligibility decisions, plans, authorizations and closures until the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor completes program-specific training and demonstrates adequate knowledge of specific skills and casework.

To achieve independent authority as a DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II who moves from a DSB ILR Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II position, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor must:

1. Successfully complete training supervised by the Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor in the professional use of the VR Program Policy Manual, the VR Program Procedures Manual, and the Electronic Services System User Manual;
2. Successfully complete Adjustment to Blindness Training;
3. Successfully complete “Best Practices for New DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors,” that includes specialized training unique to VR; and
4. Achieve a rating on his/her Work Plan of “good” or above.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will then submit a request in writing to the Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor to be allowed to fully function as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II. The Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor will conduct an overall performance evaluation of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor’s casework, caseload management, and individual involvement. Based on this evaluation, the Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor can support or deny the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor’s request. If recommended, the Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor will notify the Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation Field Services and the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor of the decision in writing. The process will continue according to the procedure located in the section “VR Counselor II Examination.”

If, at any point, a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II is denied, the Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor and the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will prepare a written developmental plan outlining learning objectives, timeframes, and evaluation criteria designed to improve the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor’s proficiency. Upon successful completion, the Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor may reconsider the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor’s request.

**TRANSFER OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR II OR INDEPENDENT
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR FROM ANOTHER VOCATIONAL
REHABILITATION OR INDEPENDENT LIVING REHABILITATION AGENCY**

A qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor who transfers to DSB from another VR or ILS program, and who held a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II or similar status per the qualifications stated within this policy or the ILR Counselor II Policy must meet DSB requirements to function independently.

The Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor and the Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation Field Services will determine if the individual’s credentials meet those identified as DSB’s Rehabilitation Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II. If so, the procedures as described in the policy under “Transfer of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II Status between DSB Programs” must be met before a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II can make eligibility determinations, sign plans, sign authorizations, sign amendments, or sign closure statements.

If it is determined that the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor who transferred from another agency does not meet DSB description of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor must begin as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor I and proceed to Rehabilitation Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II.

SUSPENSION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR II

The Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor may suspend Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II privileges at any time based on the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor's performance or conduct. Inadequate casework reviews, poor caseload management, and failure to maintain harmonious relationships with individuals are examples of factors that may cause suspension. The Agency's disciplinary process may also be invoked.

DEMOTION FROM VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR II

A decision to demote an individual to Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor I is made by the Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation Field Services and Human Resources Site Manager upon the recommendation of the Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor. Appropriate warnings must be given to the individual prior to the demotion. Disciplinary demotion may be accompanied by a reduction in pay.

If demoted, reinstatement to Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II requires the same process as defined under APPLICATION PROCEDURE and VR COUNSELOR II EXAMINATION.