

Strategic Vocational Counseling

Effectively utilizing the tools in our toolbox

Objectives of this session

- Discuss the purpose of vocational counseling in Vocational Rehabilitation
- Identify the impact of functional limitations related to the vocational counseling process
- Be better able to use communication skills and discovery profile in our vocational counseling practice
- Become more familiar with the benefits and limitations of other assessment tools
- In meeting these objectives, we will be using real-world examples to demonstrate principles outlined.

What is vocational counseling?

- Vocational Counseling *assists* people with disabilities in assessing their strengths and weaknesses in selecting jobs or careers that maximize the potential in the work force.
- * Millier-Keane encyclopedia and dictionary of medicine, nursing and allied health, 7th edition, 2003

Vocational Counseling in Vocational Rehabilitation

- Vocational counseling in a VR setting is designed to accomplish two primary goals:
 - 1. Identify a vocational goal that is consistent with an individual's interests and abilities
 - 2. Adequately address disability related functional limitations

Question ??

- Which is more important to vocational goal development?
- A) a customer's vocational interest
- B) a customer's vocational abilities
- C) understanding a customer's functional limitations

Your thoughts?

- Support your answer
- Why did I pose this question

Characteristics of vocational counseling

- Strong vocational counseling in Vocational Rehabilitation will concentrate on all three areas
- Interests
- Aptitude/skills/talents
- Potential disability related impediments

Good Vocational Counseling

- **Vocational Guidance and Counseling is the Driving Force of ALL of the services that VR provides.**
- How can we assist clients to gain a better understanding of their talents, interest and abilities?

What is Vocational Counseling and Guidance?

- We often think of Career Counseling as different from other types of counseling.
- Vocational Counseling is dependent on developing and effective working alliance between the counselor and the client.
- Studies have shown that career counseling participants identify that identify counselor support and self exploration as the most important aspect of the counseling process. In other words it is not radically different from other counseling relationships.

Unfortunately.....

- Unfortunately we often think of Vocational Counseling as a linear process.
- Step One – The client comes for vocational counseling.
- Step Two – The counselor administers tests, assessments and gathers client information.
- Step Three – The counselor interprets and identifies appropriate options.

- BUT.....

Unfortunately (Cont'd)

- This approach is very directive and authoritative, leaving the counselor in charge AND
- It causes the client to be a passive recipient rather than an active PARTICIPANT in the process.

- Does Informed Choice Fit into this model?

Informed Choice

- Kosciulek believed that
- “informed choice is a process during which a person sets goals, gathers information , considers a range of options, and then takes responsibility for selecting the option that best meets his or her criteria. Informed choice refers to a person’s ability to understand and use programs successfully”
- *A Guide to Vocational Assessment Fourth Edition
- **Informed choice encourages self determination!**

So Now What?

- Now that we have a better understand of what Vocational Counseling and Guidance is, how do we get started?
- How do we get people to talk about AND think about their strengths, their desires, what they want to become or what they want to do?

Elements of an Effective Vocational Counseling Session

- Asking appropriate and engaging questions
- Demonstrate effective listening
- Discussion of readily available assessments and information
- Prepare client with an understanding of discovery services
- Give client assignment with a time frame to complete

Let's talk!

Ask questions that allow people to talk about why and what interests them with employment and other their lives...

- Tell me someone that knows you really well?
- How would that person describe you? What would that person say that you are good at?
- What is about (This job, hobby, interest) that keep you interested?
- What is important to you about working?
- What does your day look like?
- What is your favorite thing to do?

Let's talk!

- Tell me what you do in your free time when you don't have pressing issues?
- What would you do with a day or a week if you could do anything you wanted to do?
- Tell me about last job, favorite job, least favorite job.
- Tell me about your favorite subject in school, least favorite.
- What does success look like to you?
- The goal of asking these questions is to help clients understand things about themselves that maybe they didn't already know or recognize.

Case study #1

- Frank is a 50-year-old man who recently had to quit his job as an assembly-line worker. He had worked in an assembly-line setting since he was 18 years old. He had to leave his job due to degenerative disc disease and significant arthritis. He has consistent pain in his back, neck, and legs. He could no longer stand for traditional eight hour shift.
- Out of the previous questions, which do you think would be most effective? Why?
- The least effective? why?

Questions or not one-size-fits-all

- Conditions acquired during the course of vocational pursuits such as decreased physical abilities (Frank's case), traumatic brain injuries, or onset of mental illness often present the following consequences
- Change in aptitude, but interests remain unchanged.
- Transferable skills may be very different or even nonexistent when compared to prior experience and/or education
- Level of insight into current skills may be very low.

These factors may make prior experience and interest irrelevant.

Talking with Frank

- Ask questions that fit the circumstances
- Possible appropriate questions:
 - What would you find most challenging if you were to get a job today?
 - What would be harder than before your injury?
 - Tell me about your everyday activities since your injury?
 - If you could change difficulty, what would it be?

Listening and Responding to Answers

- How can we show that we are really listening?
- Restate what has been said, but take it to the next step? Reflect feelings, not just words
- Asking a follow up question to answers.
- Try to have an open mind with clients
- Think creatively
- How would I want someone to treat me if I was on that side of the desk
- When you are with the client, be with the client.

Type of Assessment

- Psychological Assessment – Why would we do a psychological evaluation if it wasn't required for eligibility determination? (Can give us clues into abilities, or mental health impairment that has been undiagnosed, untreated)
- Medical Records and Evaluation
- Career Assessments – on line career assessments, O*net, personality assessments that give people ideas
- Benefits Analysis (BIN Counseling)

Discovery

- Discovery Services – Why use Discovery Profile and Discovery Services?
- Designed to provide a snapshot of abilities, limitations, interests and propose job markets within vocational themes
- Job Shadow – exposes people to jobs that they didn't know about.
- Situational Assessment- gives people a chance to try out different job tasks in different environments.
- Work Experiences – give people a chance to try out a job for a few weeks in a real work setting.
- Why do we provide Discovery services?
- It is important that the client understands why we are doing discovery services.

Discovery

- Benefit of Discovery Services – It gives people who may not be as comfortable talking to have a “hands on” assessment and learn about their talents, strengths and abilities
- Discovery Services are also beneficial to people of all skills and abilities if they are need of exposure to new and different careers.
- Discovery services are meant to be flexible and creative to address a variety of questions and concerns.

Research – Online Tools

- <http://www.onetonline.org/> - O*Net On Line created for the Department of Labor
- <http://whatcanidowiththismajor.com/major/> - by the University of Tennessee, but not limited to use by people going to school there. No sales.
- www.stats.indiana.edu – learn about jobs in the state of Indiana, what employers are out there and how many do different types of jobs.
- www.hoosierdata.in.gov/ - *another website about jobs in Indiana, and specifically Hot Jobs (jobs in high demand, their wages and training required).*
- <http://www.thecareerindex.com/> Learn about jobs, training requirements etc.
- <http://www.mynextmove.org/> Tools to help evaluate careers and skills. Can also assist with deciding on a vocational goal if it is unknown.
- <http://10fastfingers.com/> Typing test to see how many words per minute you can type

Other important considerations

- There is no such thing as a perfect goal.
- Everyone is capable of applying their skills in multiple ways
- The key is to identify options that match interests, skills, and address functional limitations
- How does the individual look at work?
- Immediate need vs long term goal
- Career paths loop most often, not linear

Putting these principles together: case study 2

- Your customer is a 19-year-old young man with autism. He spent a lot of time playing video games and has expressed interest in working with video games in some capacity. He is high school graduate.
- How might his likely functional limitations affect vocational counseling? What questions might you ask? How would you propose conducting discovery?

In Summary

- Our Vocational Counseling and Guidance is key to fulfilling our mission which can be summed up in the statement found on our IPE
- “The individualized Plan for Employment is designed to achieve my planned employment outcome, which is consistent with my unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities and interests”
- We are not asking that you do more, we are encouraging to improve your skills

Contact :

- Shannon Polmateer
 - Shannon.polmateer@fssa.in.gov