

VOCATIONAL EVALUATION AND WORK ADJUSTMENT BULLETIN

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Summary and Index of the Vocational Evaluation Project Final Report

VOCATIONAL EVALUATION SERVICES AND THE HUMAN SERVICES DELIVERY SYSTEM (Task Force 1)

In this keystone section, the task force has described vocational evaluation as an alternative assessment service which is a specialized form of clinical assessment. They propose that vocational evaluation is, rightly so, an assessment of last resorts. Proposed is a three phase vocational evaluation model in which an individual would participate in the assessment process—at the first level, through an interview type screening; at the second level, the client would participate in in-depth vocational counseling; and finally, only where necessary, a client would receive vocational evaluation. The report then deals with barriers of agency fiscal structure, personnel, philosophy, communication, and referral barriers.

THE TOOLS OF VOCATIONAL EVALUATION (Task Force 2)

Beginning with the premise that all vocational evaluation is based upon the observation of individuals in work or work related situations, the task force has set about describing the tools of vocational evaluation as situations which are used as tools for vocational evaluation, the resource tools available to evaluation personnel, and the applied tools, i.e., interviewing, observing, and reporting procedures. Situations which might be used as tools are job sites, production work, trial training, simulated job stations, actual job samples, simulated job samples, single trait samples, cluster trait samples, and psychometric tests.

This task force is proposing a series of projects which put emphasis upon the development of more reliable criteria upon which to base observational judgments.

THE VOCATIONAL EVALUATOR (Task Force 3)

The title "vocational evaluator" is impossible to define. Individuals who are called vocational evaluators do many different types of things in many different types of agencies and facilities. The role of the vocational evaluator is determined by the setting in which he works, his individual training, his background, the type of clients served, the presence or lack of presence of another agency which pays for the services, and the philosophy of the organization providing the vocational evaluation services. Task Force 3 looks at the desire of practicing vocational evaluators, to be recognized as "professional clinicians", as opposed to "skilled technicians". At issue are the different types of roles required of the professional evaluator, the necessary knowledge and skills, and training which might be required to fulfill them. The task force proposes a series of studies which might culminate in a definitive career ladder for the field of vocational evaluation.

THE TEAM APPROACH TO VOCATIONAL EVALUATION (Task Force 4)

Task Force 4 struggled with the present dilemma in which many vocational evaluators find themselves—trying to communicate with other professionals, and

at the same time being limited in this communication through policy barriers, professional image, limited knowledge of other professions, and lack of a common language. They propose to reinstitute (and in the process redesign) the team approach to vocational evaluation through a nine point model which describes the multiple roles an evaluator or an evaluator team must play in the process of providing a vocational evaluation.

The team suggests approaches which might be taken in order to develop the acceptance of the evaluator team, and ways in which evaluator teams could be trained.

STANDARDS FOR VOCATIONAL EVALUATION

(Task Force 5)

Toward the beginning of the Vocational Evaluation Project, there were conversations between VEWA and the Commission on the Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). During those talks, it was discovered that CARF was open to suggestions from the field regarding acceptable standards upon which vocational evaluation programs in rehabilitation facilities might be judged.

In addition, it is obvious that vocational evaluation programs are developing in places other than vocational rehabilitation facilities, and it has become clear to the VEWA executive council and the Project task force that a set of self standing standards is also needed for non-rehabilitation facility programs.

This report contains final recommendations to CARF as well as a major portion of the draft of the free-standing document. A committee within the association will continue to work to finish, and then continually upgrade, these national standards which will be applicable to rehabilitation facilities as well as the myriad of new organizational programs which are employing vocational evaluation methods to evaluate their harder to assess clients or students.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF VOCATIONAL EVALUATION TO ORGANIZATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

(Task Force 6)

Task Force 6 has examined the depth and breadth of recognition of the field of vocational evaluation by national organizations and federal agencies which might benefit from the inclusion or provision of vocational evaluation services, and the training organizations which could potentially train the number of qualified masters degree graduate vocational evaluators which would appear necessary to upgrade the field. Included in their report is a summary of the National Organizations Forum on Basic Questions Relevant to Vocational Evaluation and a survey of the willingness of graduate programs in vocational rehabilitation counseling to consider the addition of courses in vocational evaluation.

GLOSSARY

(Task Force 7)

During the second year of the project, task force members who had been working in each of the other 6 task forces were pulled aside to create a special task force on a vocational evaluation glossary. Basing their work upon the work of the other task forces, they have collected a series of 73 definitions used throughout the vocational evaluation project. They have called for an ongoing national committee to continue to examine and expand this present glossary.

The EVALUATOR TEAM APPROACH to Vocational Evaluation Prepared by Task Force #4

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The Evaluator Team Approach to Vocational Evaluation

The Team Concept

Communication

The Client

The Professional Evaluator

The Roles of the Evaluator Team

Developing an Acceptance of the Evaluator Team Approach

Training the Evaluator Team

Dealing with Barriers to the Effective Implementation of the Evaluator Team

Proposals

References

Vocational evaluation—the systematic process of obtaining and synthesizing information pertinent to persons with vocational problems to assist them with identifying and planning for appropriate vocations—has been a function of a number of professions for several years. Rehabilitation counselors, counselors in other agencies, probation officers, and vocational instructors must of necessity develop skills in this important area.

Initially, vocational rehabilitation counselors assessed their clients' vocational potential. For the most part, this was done through the process of synthesizing data received from doctors, social workers, former employers, and the clients themselves. From that data the counselors planned the clients' vocational future. At that time, this appeared to be adequate. Since many of the clients already knew the type of training and/or job placement they wanted, it simply fell to the counselors to see that the clients received the training and/or employment.

As vocational rehabilitation expanded its programs and services, it began to serve more difficult cases. Many of these clients had less vocational experience, and less obvious assets. A large number were victims to their physical, mental, or emotional disability—unable to see their own potential. Unlike those who had gone before them, many of these people had little idea as to what they wanted to do, or were unrealistic about either their abilities or the availability of their ideal job.

Credit must be given to vocational rehabilitation counselors as they began an earnest search for ways in which they might help bring these clients to a point where a vocational rehabilitation plan could be developed for them. Many counselors turned toward sheltered workshops and, with the workshop staff, developed programs which were given the title pre-vocational evaluation.

Those early programs took many forms. A frequent pattern found the facility hiring a part-time or consulting psychologist, and utilizing a number of existing staff members as the "evaluation team." In staff conferences regarding the clients, all team members (e.g., the production supervisor, personnel manager, doctor, and occupational therapist) shared their observations with each other, and thus a comprehensive picture of the client, his abilities, and his limitations was developed.

As the years progressed, most facilities which have continued vocational evaluation programs have developed or acquired techniques designed to allow fewer and fewer people to conduct the evaluation program. Techniques have become specialized and the field has taken on a "shaman" quality.

THE TEAM CONCEPT

Many may disagree, but it is our belief that vocational evaluation is a function, not a profession. In the final outcome, it is unimportant who does the evaluation, or precisely how it is done, but rather that it is accomplished in such a way as to enable the client to make concrete positive decisions relative to his vocational goals.

Evaluation might be seen as a process in which a client receives training to help him understand his vocational assets and limitations, which will permit him to compare his assets with the requirements for potential employment. This function can best be performed by a team of workers even though one of them may play the primary or pivotal role.

A basic presupposition of the team evaluation is that different people have different perspectives, background, expertise, and concerns, which they bring to the evaluation process. The team should be flexible, and allow different individuals to play the pivotal role in the vocational evaluation program; the one who interacts most directly with the client, and is receptive to the client's wishes and desires, should provide the feedback.

Of primary importance to the whole vocational evaluation process is the understanding by all team members that the client needs the benefit of the cumulative wisdom of the entire team. The team must be willing to exert creative effort, and to work *for* the client. Creative interaction of the team is one of its primary benefits, as contrasted to the lone evaluator system.

A prime purpose of evaluation is to create an atmosphere of respect and interest for the client so that he can make personal evaluations and adjustments, proceed into training, and be employed. It takes team work to build that atmosphere. A good team will recognize its interdependence and will develop a mutual respect for the other team members' professional focus.

For optimal effectiveness, the evaluation team must venture beyond the staff of any given facility. The team should encompass such participants as the referring counselor, the facility staff, and the client's parents and/or other important family members, teachers, and minister.

Forum members in this project identified two emerging trends which seem to be contra-indicative. Several groups stated that the evaluator now had tools to do the entire job alone. Other groups pointed to the trend which showed greater emphasis upon the entire staff participation in the evaluation process. We would agree that both are trends but sense that the more positive trend is the return to the team evaluation, which depends on the unique contributions made by each staff member.

COMMUNICATION

Rehabilitation can be thought of as a system of inter- and intra- agency communication. Effective communication, then, emerges as the key tool which all vocational evaluation workers must develop in order to function properly. It is vital that individual staff members be able to communicate clearly and easily with each other, with other agencies, and—above all—with their clients.

Attitudes and perceptions often block communication; e.g., "I cannot hear you because of what I expect you to say." It is essential that staff members be adequately informed as to the goals, objectives, and programs of other organizations as well as the goals, objectives, and programs of their own group. It is equally important that staff members be acutely conscious of the problems and desires of the clients whom they serve. The staff's willingness to share viewpoints on vocational evaluation, methods, etc. with co-workers, and with professional workers outside of their facility, can be enhanced through the creation of both formal and informal group sessions. Many facilities have discovered that a staff coffee hour before or after the regular working day can go a long way toward creating trust. Regular routine invitations to referring counselors (which make it clear that they are welcome and encouraged to attend staffings, as well as informal get-togethers) can also ease tensions.

The most crucial form of communication in rehabilitation is feedback. Its absence can be noted in any area and, unhappily, has always been a primary contradiction in vocational rehabilitation. Problems develop in the evaluation program whenever counselors fail to get feedback from the evaluators, when clients are denied feedback from the evaluators, or when the evaluators do not obtain feedback from the counselor, from the employer, or from the other staff members.

Sometimes a facility fails to inform the counselor until the evaluation is completed, only to find the counselor disturbed over the results and unwilling to take any action on them. A client will frequently drop out of a rehabilitation program because he does not understand why certain things are "being done" to him, and no one bothers to explain. An evaluator may continue to use unsuccessful techniques because he receives no feedback from the client, the counselor, or the employer.

It is only through providing feedback to the client that the pivotal member of the evaluation team can develop a rapport with the client, and is permitted to assist the client in the development of a vocational goal.

Before effective communication can be achieved, however, it is mandatory that the communicating parties use a commonly understood terminology. Unfortunately, with the establishment of professions frequently comes professional jargon. This may facilitate the profession in terms of intraprofessional communication, but is usually counter productive in helping other professions to understand what the new profession is doing. Professional jargon is even more confusing to the client; it is absolutely essential that the client understand everything the evaluators feel he should know, and in most cases this is made possible only by the use of simple, clear, non-jargoned English.

One of the more positive trends in the field of evaluation today would appear to be a greater emphasis upon use of behavioral terms; if one considers vocational evaluation to be related to the behavioral sciences, then this would appear to be most appropriate. Rehabilitation itself, being comprised of many different professional entities, is probably one of the keys to this developing trend; not only is the use of behavioral terms a viable option for the basis of a common language, but also through the process of observing and describing specific behaviors, team members can get a realistic view of a client's attitude. A natural outgrowth of behavioral terms in observations appears to be the setting of behavioral goals. This is particularly appropriate in situational assessment, and carries over into work and personal adjustment training.

Written communication is as important as verbal communication, and should reflect the same care and sensitivity.

If the staff of any facility is considered to be the evaluation team, it is important that all staff members be trained to do behavioral observation and to state their observations in commonly understood behavioral terms. One task force within this project has suggested that there should be a standard for observation and recording of behaviors in the CARE standards. This would require that behavioral observation and reporting be a part of the inservice training program in all facilities. One immediately sees the implications of this move; probably what is really required is that such training be emphasized throughout all rehabilitation service agencies.

Dunn (1973) in his discussion, "Situational Assessment: Models for the Future," deals most directly with the issues involved. He makes clear that the behavior analysis approach is not merely the use of behavioral terms, but more specifically the use of behavioral observation techniques. He points out that for the most part vocational evaluation has not yet reached the sophistication needed to use systematic behavioral observation. Instead, the field has substituted "behavior rating scales," which at best are based upon intuition and haphazard observation, and at worst are executed in relation to specific and usually less than favorable single occasions or incidents. One situation may tend to color a rater's entire opinion of a particular client.

Dunn's paper indicates that these rating forms can serve a useful purpose in vocational evaluation by enabling a team to identify possible problem behaviors in the evaluatee. These then can be followed up by the evaluator who makes detailed observations of the actual behaviors of the individual in the work situation, using more sophisticated techniques.

As the report of Task Force #2 ("The Tools of Vocational Evaluation") points out, evaluation is done in many situations. It would appear that what is called for is specific attention to the development of/and training in universally usable observation techniques.

THE CLIENT

Although we have dealt thus far with the evaluator team, we must stop here to rehearse our central concern—the client. The team construct

would not appear to be complete unless the client sees himself as an integral part of that team. This is not always easy to accomplish. Professional status and the dichotomous image of the helper vs. helpee frequently paralyzes both staff and client. However, it is clear from the forums which worked in this area that the first priority of the evaluator is his responsibility to the client. Therefore it would appear that the same would be true when that role is fulfilled by an "evaluator team."

The common expression, "The client lacks the knowledge of the professional or he wouldn't need his expertise," is an all too subtle trap for all too many professionals. The client is indeed dependent, and therefore vulnerable to the methodologies of all members of the evaluator team. The client should feel that vocational evaluation is a means of meeting his needs. The team will no doubt struggle to develop ways in which the client can perceive that his needs are being met through the services of the facility. Frequently, though, while the team is conscious that it is working for the client's benefit, the client himself may become disgusted and leave the evaluation program before he catches sight of the direction of the program.

Therefore, as the Baton Rouge forum suggests, it is important that the need for success and greater personal independence be fulfilled to at least some degree during vocational evaluation. "Vocational evaluation," the forum noted, "should be the first of a series of successful experiences."

The way in which a client participates in the evaluation team is most important. Many bring to the evaluation rather low estimates of their own personal worth. Differences due to cultural status, severity of handicaps, and economic background are automatically operant when the relationship begins, and care is needed in dealing with these differences. Team members must not talk down to, rather than with, the client. The Albany, Georgia, forum stated: "The more adequate the client feels in evaluation, the broader and more meaningful the evaluation report. Teaching for achieving this effect is acceptable." It is possible that the initial phases of evaluation must of necessity include more than the usual information on the goals of the program. There must be a program for teaching individuals to participate as members of the evaluator team.

Vocational evaluation might be viewed as having only one objective, selection of the best vocational alternatives. However, some of the best evaluations have produced the least results, because the clients did not buy the decisions as their own.

The Atlanta synthesizing conference points out that client inputs are a major observable trend in vocational evaluation. Giving the client equal status in the vocational evaluation process, or making him a "partner in the firm" as it were, is becoming more popular among evaluators. All possibilities should be considered no matter how unimportant or trivial they may seem to the person offering them. Desires, values, and gut level feelings, as well as the more objective data, enter into the decisions made on the most desirable plan for vocational activity.

The Fargo, North Dakota, forum noted that "evaluation and learning are inseparable." One of the old rationales for objective evaluation with

no feedback was that the evaluator did not wish to confuse the two. He wanted to take an accurate reading of the client's current condition, not complicating it by trying to evaluate improvement. Yet, most experienced evaluators and evaluator teams would be quick to point out that it is impossible to do effective "spyglass" evaluation. Like it or not, the client is almost always evaluating his own performance, and is anticipating feedback. How he reacts to what he perceives will affect his behavior. In order to enhance the evaluation period as a positive learning experience, the Fargo forum suggests that "the client should be informed as to. . . his vocational assets and limitations. . . his vocational needs. . . job satisfaction, personality characteristics and social adjustment. . . Interpretations of work samples and psychometric testing must be communicated to the client in an effective and realistic manner."

Olshansky (1967) variously amused, excited, or offended various segments of the evaluator community by stating emphatically that the client should be a major decision maker in the evaluation process. The offense of course is even greater than that of the professional evaluator relinquishing some of his power to other professionals, for it requires that the evaluator team recognize the possibility (as the Columbus, Georgia, forum pointed out) that "the client is becoming independent and capable of handling his own affairs."

THE PROFESSIONAL EVALUATOR

The ad hoc committee to form VEWA struggled for several hours in its deliberations as to what to call the association. Whether it should be called the Vocational Evaluator and Work Adjustor Association was one of the major issues with which it grappled. The final consensus of the committee was that this association was being created for the purpose of promoting and developing techniques, knowledge, and skills in the area of vocational evaluation and work adjustment; the committee was not out to create a new profession.

Nonetheless, attempts have been made. It would appear that there has been too much emphasis given to specific professional titles, each of which (following a medical model) tries to carve out its own unique piece of the action. Despite attempts by a number of authors and even contributors to this project to differentiate among evaluators, counselors, and other professionals, it would appear that many of the functions performed by these professionals are the same or similar, and the only distinction may be the different settings in which they perform or the agencies by which they are employed.

The evaluator task force (#3) has called for a task analysis of vocational evaluators and facility counselors. Perhaps this would be most revealing; however, it is rather easy to identify the functions that are performed by the evaluators, or evaluator teams, and it is also not difficult to observe that many of these functions are performed in a complex array of job titles and staffing patterns which usually have evolved in most facilities as an effective way of utilizing the collective abilities of the individual staff members.