

# The Relation of Vocational Evaluation To Organizations and Educational Institutions

Prepared by Task Force #6

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# **The Relation of Vocational Evaluation to Organizations and Educational Institutions**

The Task Force Charges  
Vocational Evaluators' Training Levels  
The National Organization Forum  
Education for Vocational Evaluators  
Proposals  
Areas for Future Consideration

Vocational evaluation practitioners possess very few unique tools. They have borrowed observational techniques and terminology from the field of psychology, counseling techniques from vocational rehabilitation counseling, and tests and testing techniques from psychology and the State-Federal Employment Services. Task Forces #1 and 2 have identified and described the special types of settings in which vocational evaluation practitioners work with their clients and the specialized nature of the clientele.

Many vocational rehabilitation clients have not been successfully served by other vocational assessment techniques and need an extended period of close observation and counseling with a rehabilitation professional. By rehabilitation professional, we mean someone who has the training and ability to help individuals identify the physical, mental, and attitudinal factors which limit their functional ability and to create plans of action which will improve their functional outcomes.

As Task Force #1 has pointed out, these outcomes need not be solely remunerative, but could fall anywhere along the continuum from a self-employed entrepreneur to a homebound individual, with increased self-care ability. It would appear that if effective evaluation services are to be provided, they must be provided by individuals who have had broad experience and in-depth training. These individuals must have both the ability and the inclination to serve as an advocate for the client's cause, as they develop the support data upon which rehabilitation services are to be based.

## **THE CHARGES**

This committee had two basic charges. The first was to evaluate and to make recommendations regarding vocational evaluation training; the second was to evaluate the relationship of the Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association (VEWAA) to universities which might provide a portion of this training, to other professional and legal organizations, and to other professional associations.

### **Methodology**

This task force used three major activities to gain information from which to draw its conclusions. The first was a series of letters of inquiry mailed to the presidents of 11 colleges and universities which the task

force understood to have training programs in evaluation or were in the process of planning such programs. Those universities were:

University of Wisconsin-Stout—Menomonie, WI

University of Tennessee—Knoxville, TN

San Diego State University—San Diego, CA

Auburn University—Auburn, AL

University of Arizona—Tucson, AZ

North Texas State University—Denton, TX

University of South Florida—Tampa, FL

University of Hawaii—Honolulu, HI

University of Maryland—College Park, MD

University of Missouri—Columbia, MO

University of Georgia—Athens, GA

Second and third follow-up letters were sent to each institution when no reply was received. Copies of those letters were also mailed to appropriate individuals on each campus requesting that they inform their respective university presidents of the purpose of the survey. Initial responses from the survey were limited; in fact only three degree granting institutions responded to the initial letter: University of Arizona, University of Wisconsin-Stout, and Auburn University.

Individual follow-up letters, phone calls, and personal conversations with training program personnel at national meetings were effective in eliciting responses from San Diego State University, University of Tennessee, North Texas State University, University of Maryland, and University of Hawaii. All universities eventually responded either through the office of the president or through their staff member in charge of the vocational evaluation program or its development.

The second source of information was a two-day forum which was held in Washington, D.C.—site of the headquarters of most of the organizations invited to participate. From a list of 50 organizations and associations which the steering committee felt were appropriate for this forum; sixteen representative groups were invited to participate. Of that number twelve sent representatives, and one answered through a position paper by mail; only three did not participate. The thirteen who responded were grouped into four broad areas: 1) rehabilitation umbrella agencies; 2) government regulatory agencies; 3) national associations of professionals who work with vocational evaluators at the grass roots level; and 4) organizations representing education and vocational education. (Appendix 6-1 contains summaries of the presentations of these participants. Transcripts are available on a loan basis through the Materials Development Center, University of Wisconsin-Stout.)

A third method of gathering data came through a survey done of institutions of higher education belonging to the Council of Rehabilitation Counselor Educators. The survey, done for course credit at San Diego State University, is appended to this document (Appendix 6-2).

### **VOCATIONAL EVALUATORS' TRAINING LEVELS**

The 1973 survey of vocational evaluators discussed by project Task Force #3 revealed, to no one's surprise, that most evaluators with mas-

ter's degrees do not have their degrees in vocational evaluation (Table 1); in fact only 27.4% of evaluators have any formal training in vocational evaluation (Table #2).

A high percentage of evaluators are individuals with bachelor's degrees in psychology and sociology. This would indicate that individuals from those fields view vocational evaluation as an entry level job. The bachelor's degree in psychology or sociology is typically intended to serve only as a basis for further education in those fields. It is not a terminal degree and provides little or nothing in the way of specialized training in vocational evaluation. The fact that 58% of the responding evaluators have less than two years experience in the field of evaluation underscores the point. Program administrators limited by the amount they can pay for entry level jobs in vocational evaluation tend to take the best they can get under the circumstances. Frequently these are young people with little or no formal training in vocational evaluation or rehabilitation who are willing to work for the low salaries.

Depending upon the sophistication of the facility, the individual, and the available community resources, many new vocational evaluators spend at least the first year learning about their job, the role and function of their agency, and the community resources available to them and their clients. Evaluators for the most part are not familiar with governmental agencies, funding sources, and national organizations. Responsibility for knowledge of those intricacies usually falls to the administrator or supervisor of the vocational evaluation department.

### THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FORUM

If evaluators know little about governmental agencies and national organizations, how much knowledge do those organizations have about vocational evaluation? The VEWAA Project steering committee decided to look into this area of concern by conducting the National Organization Forum on Issues Relevant to Vocational Evaluation. The forum was held in Washington in October 1973.

The organizations were grouped into time blocks of three hours so that they could hear other presentations in the same area as their own, and react to each other during discussion periods. In reviewing and pondering the proceedings, the task force has drawn the following conclusions:

Table 1. Graduate degrees of evaluators participating in project forums.  
(N = 104 - 73 male, 31 female)

Graduate degree	Male %	Female %	Total %
Psychology	31.5	25.8	29.8
Rehabilitation Counseling	15.1	29.1	19.2
Vocational Evaluation	17.8	3.2	13.5
School Counseling	8.3	9.7	8.7
Sociology	5.4	0	3.8
Social Work	2.7	3.2	2.9
Other*	19.2	29	22.1

\* while not always specific, respondents indicated such degrees as vocational education, political science, business administration and physical education.

**Table 2—Areas in which participating evaluators had formal training**

		(N= 302)
Area of Training	%	
Psychology	51.32	
Sociology	30.4	
Vocational Evaluation	27.4	
Teaching (Technical Trade)	26.8	
Rehabilitation Counseling	18.9	

% add to more than 100 as most evaluators have taken formal training in several areas. Base group includes all evaluators answering the questionnaire (Not simply those with graduate degrees as in table 1).

- Vocational evaluation is identified primarily with the state-federal vocational rehabilitation program. With the exception of the National Rehabilitation Association, the International Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, and Rehabilitation Services Administration, the national organizations were only vaguely familiar with vocational evaluation. Most of them had an outdated understanding of vocational evaluation as it was practiced five to ten years ago. It is important that the VEWA establish formal liaison and perhaps even joint programming with a number of these testifying organizations in order to increase their knowledge of vocational evaluation.
- The leadership of the two organizations with the greatest vested interest in the future of vocational evaluation—NRA and IARF—appeared to regard the VEWA National Forum as having little consequence. Neither of the speakers from those organizations brought prepared statements to the meeting. Their extemporaneous remarks did not provide adequate answers to the questions posed to them. Because the leadership of both organizations is now in a transitional period, it is important that the Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association participate actively in the shaping of programs for these two national associations.
- The greatest disappointment of the forum was the complete absence of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). Although an invitation and a follow-up letter were extended to CSAVR, the council neither presented a paper at the forum, nor responded to a request for a written post-conference statement.
- Representatives of federal government agencies, with the exception of Rehabilitation Services Administration, are out of touch with developments in the field of vocational evaluation and are primarily thinking of vocational evaluation in a bygone era.
- Assessment techniques are being developed in a number of areas including occupational therapy, special education, and vocational education for the handicapped. All of these would appear to be “inventing similar wheels.” An exchange of information has not occurred until now, but must clearly be developed in the near future.

## EDUCATION FOR VOCATIONAL EVALUATORS

It would appear that vocational evaluation appeared on the scene too late to receive the type of federal dollar support which vocational rehabilitation counselors had enjoyed a decade before. Initially a few universities received seed money and training grants for vocational evaluators at a master's degree level, but this has not expanded beyond the original three schools.

The results of our survey indicate that there are three programs currently graduating students with degrees in vocational evaluation—Auburn University, the University of Arizona, and the University of Wisconsin-Stout. San Diego State University and the University of Tennessee are developing courses in vocational evaluation for students majoring in rehabilitation. At Tennessee, students enrolled in vocational evaluation programs are preparing to be disability adjudication counselors in state rehabilitation agencies. At San Diego State University, the proposed courses will be part of an elective sequence for second year master students in rehabilitation. There appears to be a real effort in these schools to develop vocational evaluation courses for the rehabilitation major, but not to train vocational evaluators per se. University of Tennessee, North Texas State University, University of Maryland, Auburn University, and University of Wisconsin-Stout are engaged in short-term training in their own regions. These regional training courses are intended to assist practicing vocational evaluators to gain an overview or a particular skill which will be immediately useful upon their return to their home situation. University of South Florida also offers courses in vocational evaluation, although no degree is presently available; the evaluation courses are offered in the vocational education department instead of the rehabilitation counseling program. The University of South Florida hopes to offer a vocational evaluation degree in the future.

Universities in the past have been responsive to the demands of the labor market and have done a remarkable job developing new career training programs in response to those needs; a good example of this kind of responsiveness is the recent growth in allied health training programs. There was a similar response to the need for trained rehabilitation counselors some 20 years ago, with master's, doctoral, and even baccalaureate degrees being developed in universities in every region of this country.

In contrast, strategies for the development of vocational evaluation training programs do not appear to have been developed either by the federal government, state agencies, or professional organizations. There is no apparent evidence of ordering insofar as the development of VE programs in this country up until the time of the present survey. Throughout the three years of the VEWAA Project, the members of this task force have sought to identify leadership forces, but with little success.

The fact that so few universities have developed degree programs in vocational evaluation is an important fact to consider. This task force has knowledge of only seven universities in this country that have faculty approved vocational evaluation courses appearing in the university catalogs. We wonder how much university support would be available for

continuance of the training programs if federal dollars were to be withdrawn.

Strong financial support was reported by only two schools—Auburn and Wisconsin-Stout—with many faculty salaries being paid from university budgeted funds. University of Arizona depends solely upon federal money for its vocational evaluation training program; there is no prospect of state funds for faculty. All schools surveyed, except Maryland and Arizona, seemed to be making some limited progress toward obtaining faculty support from sources other than federal dollars.

North Texas State, which offers short-term training, was paying 30% of total committed salaries at the time of the inquiry and planned to increase this amount in the future. There is a heavy dependence upon federal support for financing the short-term training programs.

The survey of universities and colleges offering vocational rehabilitation counseling degrees (Appendix 6-2) revealed that while only 31% offered a specific course in vocational evaluation, 85% felt that vocational evaluation should be a component of the educational program for rehabilitation counseling, and 72% stated that they would be willing to participate in a joint program on rehabilitation counseling and vocational evaluation.

In order to develop trained specialized staff necessary to do consistently effective vocational evaluation, there are several barriers which must be removed. Salary is one key barrier. While the average salary is \$8,600, 68% of those surveyed began at salaries below that level. Fifty-nine percent of the females surveyed reported salaries below that level, and 27% reported salaries below \$6,500. Of the first year male evaluators, 60% reported a salary below \$8,600; however only 4% were below \$6,500. Although there are no concrete data on the subject, the three universities awarding master's degrees in vocational evaluation report that many of their trained master's degree evaluators are being hired as administrators, directors of sheltered workshops, etc., even though their training is not in that area.

One way, of course, to encourage master's degree evaluators to stay in the field is to do as some states have done, i.e., require that vocational evaluation services which are purchased with state monies be provided under the guidance of an individual who has a master's degree in vocational evaluation or at least vocational rehabilitation with some training in vocational evaluation. These states, interestingly enough, are not the states in which universities with master's degrees in vocational evaluation exist. Therefore, the states which require master's degree are encouraging the hiring of well trained evaluators but are not playing an active part in assuring that the supply meets the demand they have created. This situation does tend to inflate evaluator salaries, since the number of vocational evaluators with master's degrees is very limited.

This task force is concerned that there has been no active encouragement of vocational evaluation training. Unlike the allied health fields which have encouraged junior and community colleges to offer training for entry level positions, vocational evaluation training has lagged far behind.

One of the major contradictions in this area is spelled out by Task Force #3. In order to create an effective curriculum recommended on a national basis, it will be necessary to define a career ladder for vocational evaluation, which can only be done on the other side of an exhaustive task analysis of the field. This project has done limited task analysis, and has developed a tentative format for the work of the CODAP (Consolidated Occupational Data Analysis Program) which we feel will be necessary in order to develop the training models necessary to serve the students in the field.

## PROPOSALS

This task force recommends that the Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association:

- Secure the funds to complete the broad based occupational analysis as proposed by Task Force #3 as the preliminary step towards the creation of curriculum and training models for the field of vocational evaluation.
- Appoint a task force to create a theoretical career ladder design, utilizing the data from the occupational analysis, and field test its applicability through the utilization of VEWAA units around the country.
- Form a separate task force working along with the career ladder task force to develop guidelines for professional training in vocational evaluation.

Action on these VEWAA sanctioned guidelines and models is needed now, not at a more distant time. If VEWAA avoids taking these steps, the question of professionalization of vocational evaluation may be rendered moot. Unless vocational evaluation moves decisively towards professional status, there is the clear and distinct danger that the field will be amalgamated into rehabilitation counseling, and lost as an identifiable entity. Another possibility is that evaluators may be relegated to technical status and be compelled to protect themselves by unionizing. In any event, the future of vocational evaluation as a recognizable profession is in serious jeopardy.

In addition, we propose that VEWAA:

- Create a paid staff position in the national office with the aid of The National Rehabilitation Association, to deal with curriculum development. This position could be staffed utilizing successful educators, preferably those who would take sabbatical leave for that purpose. That staff person should have primary responsibility for mobilizing support and exercising leadership in fostering vocational evaluation in universities, both in terms of supporting existing programs and establishing new ones.
- Establish a working task force composed of vocational evaluators, program administrators, a university administrator, and other appropriate members which would be charged with the responsibilities of (1) keeping abreast of the present state of professional training and



projecting its probable future; (2) providing expert technical assistance to training programs seeking to expand their vocational evaluation training; and (3) making recommendations to VEWA for the implementation of new programs which might strengthen professional vocational evaluation training. This task force would work closely with the curriculum staff development person recommended above.

- Take a strong lobbying position for the support of vocational evaluation training. In order to do this, we would recommend that VEWA provide catalytic leadership which would mobilize the forces and resources of the Rehabilitation Services Administration, National Rehabilitation Association, the International Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Association of Educators of Rehabilitation Facility Personnel. These organizations should make a concerted effort to encourage universities which have training programs in vocational rehabilitation, social and rehabilitation services, or vocational rehabilitation counseling to develop additional graduate training programs in vocational evaluation. The responses from the universities surveyed indicate that there is some interest in developing additional curricula in the field of vocational evaluation.
- Encourage the Rehabilitation Services Administration to apply its persuasive powers to schools which have vocational evaluation training programs to increase their university support for faculty salaries. The prospect of continued heavy financial support from the federal government allows the universities the luxury of postponing or denying monetary responsibility for professional training of evaluators. If vocational evaluation training has not been recognized as being worthy of university support by now, it is doubtful that such recognition will ever occur without strong encouragement.
- Appoint a committee with the responsibility to make developed curriculum models available to colleges and junior colleges for the establishment of undergraduate and associate degrees in vocational evaluation. The committee should encourage local VEWA units to effectively motivate local community colleges, universities, and colleges to offer training programs and continuing education for vocational evaluation.

It is obvious that this task force believes that the strengthening of the Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association is necessary. While the Association has been unusually effective for a volunteer organization with transient leadership, it is not, and will not be able to provide sustained leadership to the field until it has developed a professional staff which can provide continuity of leadership to the field as well as develop strong professional services.

It is our recommendation that VEWA establish an ad hoc committee to investigate the feasibility of either: (1) separating VEWA from the National Rehabilitation Association and associating it with another association such as the American Personnel and Guidance Association or

American Vocational Association; or (2) becoming an autonomous professional association with close ties to several organizations whose members might belong to one of several parent organizations.

It is clear that the Association must find a way to move beyond the limiting restraints of the present image of the National Rehabilitation Association, and serve vocational evaluators who work in the fields of vocational education, special education, corrections, and others.

### **AREAS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION**

We are convinced that in order for the field of vocational evaluation to develop, it is necessary that continuing education be made available for all vocational evaluators, to allow them to upgrade their skills and to keep them abreast of the latest techniques in vocational evaluation. It is our feeling that VEWAA must deal with the whole issue of competency-based certification, and we recommend the establishment of an ad hoc committee charged with long-term work toward such certification. We would further suggest that certification renewal be based upon evidence of continuing education to be provided by colleges and universities through their continuing education programs as well as through short-term training programs sponsored by VEWAA.