



REHABILITATION

Vocational Rehabilitation is a very specialized field of employment counselling. Not only are you utilizing all the counselling skills you have acquired through courses, degrees, and personal experiences, you are also incorporating specific information in relation to many severe injuries, complex medical conditions, acquired occupational diseases, physically and mentally disabling conditions, and severe to mild traumatic brain injuries. The specialized training usually begins with university level courses leading to a degree most commonly in psychology or social work, however, our field is so diverse, that we have experts with backgrounds in a variety of educational fields. A university degree is usually required in addition to specialized courses, training in ethics, knowledge of physical and mental disabilities, and ongoing courses and educational upgrading through colleges, universities, specialized training through CARP, community agencies, and related conferences.

The work is very challenging and can be obtained typically in insurance type companies. One of the large employers in this field is WorkSafeBC. However, Vocational Rehabilitation Consultants also work at ICBC, and long term disability insurers in many fields including teaching and nursing. Generally you would be required to have at least a university degree in a related field, several years of experience typically in the employment counselling field, and be registered with CARP in order to obtain your RRP (Registered Rehabilitation Professional) status or your CCRC (Canadian Certification in Rehabilitation Counselling). Both the RRP and CCRC certifications require specialized courses and ongoing education to remain current. It is imperative that you submit your updated courses on a regular basis in order to maintain your designation.

Newcomers to the field usually start in employment agencies after they have acquired their training at university or colleges specializing in career development practitioner certification or counselling courses. After several years of experience in the field, it helps to work with client groups that have disabilities. Taking ongoing professional development in this field is to your advantage. Working under supervision of a manager that has his/her CCRC or RRP designation is also very helpful.

The workload is typically high volume, with very complex cases. Case conferencing with skilled colleagues is good way to quickly learn the ropes. Ethical issues are dealt with on a daily basis, so having the ethics courses as well as adhering to a professional code of ethics is required. You are required to meet and collaborate with workers, employers, union representatives, occasionally the client's doctor, and on a regular basis with the staff medical advisor, case manager, and any other players such as the client's family may also be included. Meetings

with the client are for the initial vocational assessment and may be followed up with vocational testing, a return to work plan, or a vocational plan that may include upgrading of the client's skills or may be for a period of job search, work assessment, and/or training on the job. You would be required to independently plan, prioritize, and manage a high-volume, complex, and diverse caseload under time constraints and within a multi-disciplinary environment.

The ability to clearly communicate detailed and complex information both orally and in writing is required. You need to maintain objective professional and collaborative relationships in situations which may be adversarial, sensitive, and potentially hostile.