

Rehabilitation counseling in the 21st century

As the field of rehabilitation counseling looks ahead to the future, the one constant we can count on is change. In the past two decades, we have seen the American economy shift from one of manufacturing, first to one of service and more recently to one of information. Couple these developments with the technological explosion we have witnessed in recent years, and it should be clear that the labor market and world of work "ain't what they used to be" for people with and without disabilities all across the globe. These economic and technological changes have been joined by dramatic new advances in legislation, medical science, health care, and societal attitudes toward people with disabilities – all of which have had a major impact on the policies and practices of rehabilitation counseling.

The turn of the century has provided all responsible professions and sectors of society with a challenging opportunity – to take inventory of their history, current status, and possible future directions in our highly diversified global marketplace. For the field of rehabilitation counseling to remain viable in the New Millennium, it must reach forward to embrace new opportunities while at the same time looking back to honor the time-tested foundations that distinguish it from other helping professions. Only by remembering where we have been can we hope to set a true compass to guide where we go as the years pass and our consumers' expectations continue to change.

In that spirit, my purpose in putting together this issue was to highlight some of the current developments

in rehabilitation counseling that are likely to remain as important issues in the years to come. Themes such as privatization, specialization, credentialing, and the changing needs of people with disabilities run through the articles presented herein, and the perspectives offered by contributing authors provide a broad-based glimpse of what the future might hold for rehabilitation counseling as well as for the employment of people with disabilities.

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