

Guest Editors' note

Despite the ready availability of services designed specifically to address occupational concerns, people with disabilities continue to confront numerous obstacles to securing and maintaining employment and to advancing in their careers. Rehabilitation professionals play a vital role in facilitating the process whereby service providers and individuals with disabilities work collaboratively to remove or minimize such barriers. This process, of course, is vocational rehabilitation, and its abiding basis is comprehensive, individualized assessment and planning.

Comprehensive, individualized assessment and planning constitute an extremely challenging task in today's dynamic rehabilitation scene. Rehabilitation professionals must provide services to diverse client populations and, in many cases, are expected to prioritize services to individuals with the most severe disabilities. Practitioners are faced with a barrage of 'state-of-the-art' vocational interventions from which to select, and they collaborate with a wide array of professionals in the delivery of these interventions. Their case loads are larger than ever before, and they are expected to achieve successful outcomes at lower costs and in shorter periods of time.

As a result of these challenges, rehabilitation professionals are required to access a broad range of assessment and planning interventions. Interventions have to be tailored to the unique concerns of the individual, and clients must be actively engaged in the selection and implementation of interventions if rehabilitation services are to have a positive effect. Assessment and planning strategies must also address environmental considerations (e.g. labor market trends, worksite barriers, employer expectations) in conjunction with individual characteristics (e.g. functional limitations, transferable skills, client expectations) if successful outcomes are to occur.

More than ever, service providers must stay abreast of current issues and trends in assessment and planning if they are to adequately address the ever-changing employment concerns of people with disabilities. The purpose of this issue is to present up-to-date information concerning (a) client expectations in assessment and planning, (b) transitional employment programs for workers with psychiatric disabilities, (c) vocational assessment in substance abuse treatment, (d) job readiness training programs, (e) career maintenance concerns for women with breast cancer, and (f) disability management programs. We conclude the edition with an in-depth examination of the present status and future directions of assessment and planning in vocational rehabilitation.

We would like to thank Dr. Karen Jacobs of Boston University, Managing Editor of *Work*, for the opportunity to undertake this project. Special

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thanks go to Mr. Jeff Hamsley, Mr. Robert Harvey, Ms. Edwina Harris, Ms. Melissa Hennessey, Dr. Ann Hickin, Dr. William Jenkins, Dr. Mary Ann Merz, Ms. Denise Nutter, Dr. Michael Millington, Dr. David Strauser, Dr. Gary Szirony, Ms. Drenna Waldrop, Ms. Megen Ware, and Ms.

Chantile Williams for sharing their expertise with us and *Work's* subscribers in this forum.

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