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President's Column

Roselyn Blair, MS, CRC

CORE/CACREP Merger and the Effect on the Profession of Rehabilitation Counseling

Written by: Roselyn Blair, MS, CRC, CEAS, IARP WA Chapter President

Just when we thought we had a handle on our identity crisis as Rehabilitation Counselors, the counseling profession's two major accrediting organizations – the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) and the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) – signed a Plan of Merger Agreement (July 20, 2015). The Merger will become effective on July 1, 2017. While the effects of the merger may be most largely noticed initially by current students in CORE accredited rehabilitation counseling programs as they decipher how and to what degree the merger will affect their job prospects, for established Rehabilitation Counseling professionals, broader issues of professional identity, portability standards for licensure and access to practice in 'protected' Federal venues come into play. It goes without saying that dissecting every pocket of our notably diverse practice as Rehabilitation Counselors and outlining the potential ripple effect the merger may have on each area is beyond the scope of this article. However, educating ourselves on the potential effects of this monumental decision is unarguably key to understanding the importance of the continued promotion of the profession of Rehabilitation Counseling.

Here are some noteworthy facts related to this topic:

1. At Present CORE is responsible for the voluntary accreditation of 97 master's level and 11 undergraduate level Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor education programs in the US., Puerto Rico and District of Columbia;
2. Recent studies show that rehabilitation counselor education programs are not graduating sufficient numbers of qualified students to meet current and anticipated marketplace needs;
3. State licensure requirements for the Counseling profession (including Rehabilitation Counselors) include a variety of (inconsistent) qualifying educational, experiential and exam requirements. Similar inconsistencies and variation exist throughout the US and territories in establishing requirements for portability of licensure;
4. Beginning January 1, 2022, the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) will require graduation from a CACREP accredited Master's program or higher to sit for a state licensure/counselor certification exams. Fifty states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia administer NBCC exams as part of their counselor credentialing requirements;
5. The American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA), the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), and the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) have jointly endorsed a plan for counselor licensure portability which will promote acceptance of a license from another state when the individual holds a degree from a clinically focused counselor preparation program accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP), holds certification as a National Certified Counselor, or meets standards adopted by the state board of counseling; and
6. At present, 14 states and territories (27% of the qualifying venues) recognize the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor Examination (CRCE) in lieu of the National Counselor Examination (NCE) to meet licensing requirements.

CORE has announced that part of the merger agreement stipulates the inclusion of a Rehabilitation Counseling professional on the CACREP Board and a commitment to incorporate disability focused education into the (CACREP) curriculum standards for accreditation. Here is the question which begs to be answered; Is this enough? Will the disabled population who are in need of highly qualified and skilled Rehabilitation Counselors to meet their unique needs be compromised as a result of this merger? What can we do about this? Here is what the Rehabilitation Counseling Coalition (RCC), made up of several representatives from professional organizations throughout the US in the field of Rehabilitation Counseling (including IARP), has to say about the CORE/CACREP merger:

In their August 14, 2015 'Statement Regarding CORE/CACREP Merger,' the RCC urged CORE, "*to continue to promote the profession of Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling and protect the careers of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors through the following actions:*

- *Introduce and legitimize the RCC to CACREP*
- *Publicly and in writing by both CORE and CACREP, recognize CRC as the premier credential for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors*
- *Through review and revision of CORE standards, reinforce the CRC as the premier credential for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors*
- *Facilitate the ongoing appointment of a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Representative to the CACREP Board, post July 1, 2017*
- *Promote the Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling profession as a distinct and valued specialty of counseling*
- *CORE is asked to influence CACREP and NBCC on grandfathering language so as to not disenfranchise current practitioners*
- *CORE will assist in addressing the lack of pathways for VRCs in reciprocity proposals set forth by ACES, NBCC and AMHCA as well as the lack of congruence with ACA's reciprocity language.*

Among many other notions in light of this news, a renewed push to educate the public, our clients, our legislators and our affiliate professional organizations about the specific education, skills and abilities needed to provide the best services to our clients in the ever-changing landscape of Rehabilitation Counseling seems paramount. One of the best ways I know to accomplish this goal is through the mission and goals of IARP, which are to. "*enhance the competency of private rehabilitation professionals, advance the professional field, improve the effectiveness of state level affiliates, and lead in the resolution of public policy issues that affect private sector rehabilitation.*"

For information about the many benefits of IARP Membership, please visit: <http://www.rehabpro.org/membership>

For a list of FAQs related to the CORE/CACREP Merger, please visit: <http://www.cacrep.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Merger-FAQ-on-Joint-Letterhead.pdf>

For a list of State Professional Counselor Licensure Boards: <https://www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/licensure-requirements/state-professional-counselor-licensure-boards>

IARP Washington Spring Conference! ***May 19th & 20th 2016***

Amy Williams, WA IARP President Elect

Hello! I wanted to take a moment and plug our upcoming spring conference, which will take place at the beautiful Hotel Murano in Tacoma and feature yummy hot breakfasts, lunches and dinner for those of you who attend our Thursday evening event. Because of the number of topics we felt were important to cover this year, we decided to make the conference a two-day event which will provide attendees with up to 15.6 CDMS, CRC, ABVE or CCM continuing education credits, including 2 in ethics, as follows:

1. Thursday, May 19 (up to 8.45 CEUs): The majority of the day will comprise the first in a series of conferences to educate the vocational community about the exciting legislative changes that will help injured workers heal and return to work. Ryan Guppy, Chief of Return to Work Services at L & I, other select individuals from L & I, and IARP's Kari D'Aboy will cover enhancements to the Preferred Worker Program, Option 2, Functional Capacities Evaluations (FCEs) and more. The second training in this series will take place at the L&I spring conference; the trainings are being designed to complement each other and VRCs are strongly encouraged to attend both the IARP and the L & I conferences. Dr. Timothy Fields will cap off the day with a presentation on *Ethical Issues and Considerations in Forensic Rehabilitation Consulting – Part A*; Part B will be presented on Friday, May 20.

Finally, in conjunction with Professionals in Workers' Compensation (PWC), we are excited to present *Dinner with Jason Parker*. Mr. Parker, of CentriX Disability Management Services, has been instrumental in training L & I staff and others to use his RTW Toolkit. If you have missed him at other events, we hope you will join us for this evening event, which includes a delicious dinner and is free to members of IARP or PWC; \$45.00 to non-members.

2. Friday, May 20 (up to 7.15 CEUs): Dr. Fields will present *Ethical Issues and Considerations in Forensic Rehabilitation Consulting – Part B*. Scott Bailey will reveal *Emerging New Occupations and Economic Trends in the State of Washington*, giving us fresh ideas for employability and retraining. Lauren Gubbe of AGC Group Retro will provide *Tips for Working with Employers and Workers in Retro Workers' Comp World*. Kathy Weber of L & I will help us promote RTW with the EOR with her presentation, *Claim Costs – How to Explain them to Employers to Promote RTW*. John Shervey and Cloie Johnson will share with us *What Self Insured Employers are looking for and How to Find It*; they say that if you work every referral as though it was a self-insured one, your caseload will grow. Dana Brickham and Brett Kuwada will teach us *How to Recognize and Address Microaggressions to Promote Successful Outcomes*. Finally, John Berg and Scott Whitmer will address *Vocational Experts' Use of Psychometric Testing and Credentials Considerations*.

New Project Will Improve L&I Vocational Audit Program

Richard Wilson, CRC

Private sector VRCs and L&I staff are working together to improve L&I's vocational audit program. This collaborative effort, begun last November, is designed to "re-imagine vocational audit". The vision is to create an audit program that:

- 1) Supports vocational providers in doing the right thing and effectively addresses those who cannot or will not, and
- 2) Is easily understood by the vocational community, stakeholders and claim staff.

Audit is one method of improving vocational services for workers and employers. However we've come to realize:

- The old audit program has not been very effective in changing provider behavior and practices.
- Auditing practices may be emphasizing process activities and may not always focus on the services that matter most.
- Punitive measures and unclear processes can get in the way of collaboration, learning and improved performance.
- People generally want to do the right thing but the process for doing that may not be clear.

We want to build an audit program that will support the important changes happening in our system and maximize opportunities for injured workers to heal and return to work. Therefore, our project goals include:

- Identify ways to contribute to consistent quality and effectiveness for those vocational services that matter most.
- Communicate clear expectations through education, consultation and outreach.
- Design processes that will use data to identify non-compliance and trends.
- Develop an escalation strategy approach.
- Develop effective enforcement options.

The advisory committee has already created some “quick wins”:

- Communication – We now begin a complaint investigation with a telephone call. This helps us better understand the issue and work with the VRC toward resolution of the complaint. Soon we’ll also send the firm manager an e-mail notifying them of the complaint. Since using the new “phone call” process, five of eight recent complaints did not require the VRC to submit case notes!
- Electronic submittal of case notes: We identified a secure e-mail platform and are making plans for adopting it. This will make it easier for VRCs and firms to submit case notes when they are requested for audit.
- Education and program transparency: We’re developing FAQs based on feedback from the voc community to make it easier for VRCs to understand the audit process.

We see these as initial steps toward reducing waste and frustration and improving vocational services.

Next steps

We’re working with the advisory committee to build a list of “what services matters most”. We’re also getting input from our VSS and claim staff and plan to get input from our business and labor stakeholders. As we identify the services that matter most, we’ll work with the advisory committee to define “quality and effectiveness”, communicate clear expectations through education, consultation and outreach, and design processes to support providers in doing the right thing.

How can you be involved?

We welcome your input!

- Watch for periodic updates on the vocational web site.
- Contact your IARP representatives on the advisory committee, Kari D’Aboy.
- Share your ideas by emailing us at VocRehabProgram@LNI.WA.GOV
- If you’re a firm manager, please update your contact information when L&I reaches out to you in the near future. This will support the new complaint process and also provide an important avenue of communication between L&I and firm managers about project developments.

Thank you for your dedication to helping injured workers heal and return to work.

Your WA IARP Board of Directors

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Guidelines for Advertising through WA IARP

The WA – IARP Newsletter is distributed electronically to approximately 200 members quarterly. If you are interested in advertising in this newsletter, the following are guidelines:

We accept ads from vendors who provide ancillary services to injured workers in an effort to reduce the physical, mental, social and financial impact of disability. We do not accept ads for job postings. Job postings may be placed through the National IARP Website. (www.Rehabpro.org)

WA – IARP publishes four newsletters per year; Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter,

Email the ad as an attachment to Kari D'Aboy at Kari@ CareerHorizon.net. Please provide the phone number and email address of a contact person(s) who can make decisions regarding the ad. Please be sure the ads look exactly as you wish them to appear. WA – IARP is not able to provide ad development or editing services.

Ads should be submitted in one of the following formats: MS Word (DOC or DOCX), or as a TIF, GIF, JPG or other universal graphics file. **Please do NOT submit ads in PDF format.** Ads may be in color, grey tones or black and white.

Ads may appear in the following sizes: Cost:

Full Page: 9 inches high by 5 7/8 inches wide. \$200
Half Page: 4 ½ inches high by 5 7/8 inches wide \$125
Quarter Page: 4 ½ inches high by 3 3/8 inches wide \$75

Prior to submission, please “preview” your ad with the final print size in mind, to make sure that fonts are large enough to be read.

Please proof-read ad for accurate spelling, phone numbers, and other important information as WA-IARP is not responsible for proof reading.

(The following is an unedited version of topics published on the L&I website. It is included in the IARP newsletter as a way to memorialize this information, as there is no known archive for it.)

Vocational Profile Performance Report Suspended for April 2016

March 30, 2016

Data for the vocational performance report will not be updated April 1, 2016. This means vocational performance scores during April will continue using data from the January 1 report.

We're suspending the performance report because technical issues in the last few months continue to make it difficult for VRCs to submit progress reports. In some cases the system displays links for progress reports that have already been submitted or it generates links for referrals that have been closed.

Our IT staff continues to work on correcting the technical issues and we are also currently conducting manual verification to give credit for timely progress reports.

What you can do:

- Call Janice Orcutt at **360-902-4854** or email at Janice.Orcutt@Lni.wa.gov if you faxed a progress report or if the link does not go away after a report was submitted.
- Ignore progress report links that say a report is due after a referral was closed by L&I and/or you sent your recommendation using VocLink. We will ensure these are not included in your performance score.
- Double-click your recommendations via VocLink to make sure it gets pushed to LINIIS and will be recorded in our system.

We are fully committed to ensuring the Vocational Profile accurately reflects VRC performance and will refresh the report when we are confident the underlying data is accurate.

We appreciate your patience, perseverance and dedication in sending monthly reports. Your diligence helps claim managers and others stay apprised of the progress we're making to help workers heal and return to work.

If you have any questions or have trouble submitting PRs, please contact Janice Orcutt at **360-902-4854** or Janice.Orcutt@Lni.wa.gov.

Secure Messages

March 29, 2016

The department has recently enhanced our Secure Message function so medical providers can attach relevant documents for claims staff review. This enhanced Secure Message function is only to be used by medical providers. These messages and documents are imaged as medical (MED) information in ORION.

Please do not submit vocational information using this function as it will be imaged incorrectly. Continue to use the EVOC function and fax the vocational information to the claim file. This will avoid any confusion and delays that may be caused by the vocational messages and documents being imaged incorrectly.

Status of L&I's publications with updated Option 2 information

March 16, 2016

The following publications are updated with current Option 2 information:

- *Option 2: What You Need to Know*
 - English ([F280-036-000](#)) available online and can be ordered from L&I's [Warehouse](#)
 - Spanish ([F280-036-999](#)) available online
- *Plan Development: What Are My Rights and Responsibilities?**
 - English ([F280-018-000](#)) available online and can be ordered from L&I's [Warehouse](#)
 - Spanish ([F280-018-999](#)) available online

*Note: To eliminate an unnecessary step, we removed the worker's signature page from *Plan Development: What Are My Rights and Responsibilities?*

- *Carrying Out Your Vocational Plan: Your Rights and Responsibilities during Plan Implementation*
 - English ([F280-019-000](#)) available online and can be ordered from L&I's [Warehouse](#)
 - Spanish ([F280-019-999](#)) available online

When to use the Option 1 Plan Modification Accountability Agreement

March 15, 2016

If modifying a plan, remember to use the [Option 1 Plan Modification Accountability Agreement \(F280-056-000\)](#). This form is only needed when modifying a plan previously agreed to by the worker, such as changing duration, courses, or schools. However, if the modification doesn't affect what the worker previously agreed to do, a new Accountability Agreement is not needed. For example, it's not needed when requesting additional funding or reallocation of previously approved funding. This information has been added to the For Vocational Providers webpages. Click on Referral Types and choose [Plan Implementation / Monitoring](#) to view the update.

AWA referrals nearing fee cap – pilot process

March 2, 2016

The department is making new AWA referrals to VRCs much earlier in claims and asking the VRCs to keep the AWA referrals open while the worker is still in medical treatment to keep the worker and employer focused on return to work.

There are also a number of older, complex, and extended duration AWA in the system that are nearing the fee cap.

To provide continuity of services for the workers and employers, reduce unnecessary delays, and mitigate long term disability, the claims unit VSS will collaborate with the VRC in a pilot to keep these referrals moving toward resolution. View the [pilot process](#)(203 KB PDF).

Spring Vocational Conference

March 1, 2016

Please save the date June 8, 2016, for our Spring Vocational Conference. The focus will be on reducing long term disability through understanding the psycho-social issues that workers may face when they are in our system and encouraging employers to access the many return to work incentive programs L&I has available. We hope to see you there.

Career opportunity: A chance to make a difference

March 1, 2016

There are big things happening at L&I! We are launching new return to work initiatives and shaping enhanced services to achieve our agency goals of helping injured workers heal and return to work while making it easier to do business with L&I. As a Vocational Service Specialist (VSS) on the claims floor, you will be part of a multi-disciplinary team assisting employers and injured workers in returning to work. Your team will include claim managers, field representatives, occupational nurse consultants, and account managers. You will contribute to innovative approaches to return to work that ensure timely and effective decisions through collaborative partnerships with injured workers, employers, private vocational providers, and medical providers.

L&I's culture focuses on achieving return to work outcomes and we need vocational professionals to contribute their skills and ideas to our success. We are expanding our team and invite you to learn more about Vocational Service Specialist (VSS) openings at our Tumwater headquarters.

Please [contact us](#) if you would like to have an informal conversation about this exciting opportunity, or [apply directly](#).

Option 2: End of academic quarter or three months' training

March 1, 2016

For plans approved on or after July 31, 2015, workers can elect Option 2 through completion of the first academic quarter or three months' training.

- In a vocational program with an academic quarter system, the completion of the quarter is the last day of finals.
- In a vocational program without an academic quarter system, the completion of three months' training is 90 days after training started.

This information has been added to the For Vocational Providers webpages. Click on Referral Types, choose Plan Development, [Plan Development Questions & Answers](#) and [Plan Implementation / Monitoring](#) to view the Option 2 updates.

Updated Job Analysis form

January 22, 2016

IARP's standard Job Analysis (F252-072-000) was recently updated on our [Forms / Publications](#) webpage. You can access the current version [here](#).