

Vocational Rehabilitation MONTHLY



May 2, 2006 v. 1.

Improving Vocational Rehabilitation Outcomes with Proper Administration of Vocational Testing: Identifying Discrepancies, Measuring Consistency and Reliability

Assessing a person's academic achievement level and aptitude is fundamental in developing and recommending vocational rehabilitation goals, but to what extent is testing useful for counselors in exploring return to work opportunities for injured workers is less understood.

Each worker's educational and work experience is independently diverse and unique. This knowledge and experience, in addition to self-rated and tested interests, is typically incorporated into vocational rehabilitation plans provided that it remains in line with the individual's work restrictions. Wide range achievement tests can be administered to help assess a person's present academic proficiency in areas such as reading, spelling, and arithmetic. There is also a whole host of career ability placement tests that can help the worker and counselor identify additional vocational aptitudes that can be directly applied to exploring employment.

Additionally, career assessment inventories may be administered in order to assist workers identify additional occupational areas of interest, some of which may have never been explored. These inventories allow the worker to self-rate their level of interest as it applies to numerous examples of activities. Whether administered independently, or in conjunction with other assessments, tested results should always be scored by experienced test administrators and thoroughly examined by qualified vocational counselors or consultants.

Discrepancy, Consistency and Reliability Concerns

It is not uncommon for counselors to find discrepancies after examining vocational testing results. This occurs when a test taker's academic achievement level is not supported by their test scores. This can be a common occurrence in cases where an extensive amount of time has passed since the academic date of completion. The largest discrepancy is typically confined to arithmetic, rather than reading or spelling, since the majority of adults don't

continue to apply mathematics in their day to day activities.

In cases where unexplained or unanticipated discrepancies occur, counselors should attempt to measure consistency by continued test administration. This can be accomplished by post-testing the individual with a similar and sometimes identical test at later time.

All academic, aptitude, and interest tests should be validated and meet general reliability criteria as set forth by national statistical and testing agencies. This information is located within the instructional information enclosed within the testing materials. If no validation or test construction information is available, it would be beneficial to contact the publisher of the materials to review the validity data before administering the test.

In summary, vocational testing is typically administered to workers who are unable to return to their previous occupation in order to help identify additional aptitudes and interests that can be applied directly towards an employment search. It also is commonly used to ascertain academic functioning levels for persons interested in vocational retraining or have voiced strong interest in returning to school.

Getting reliable results from vocational testing is an important component of conducting a thorough vocational assessment. At minimum, career interest testing should be administered as a component of a thorough evaluation. Administration of academic assessment tests can be determined on a case by case basis where the counselor is able to first ascertain the person's previous academic achievement levels. And although vocational testing is an everyday, common component of vocational rehabilitation practice, it is important to ensure proper test administration in order to yield the most accurate and reliable results.

The information contained above is not intended for legal advice and serves merely as general information. If you have questions regarding any of the discussed material above, please feel free to contact a representative at 800-801-4778.