

VRA
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vocational rehabilitation association

“Working Together to Get People Working”

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Introduction

The Standards Task Group has developed this document to respond to members' and stakeholders' questions. This is not a static document. As new questions or issues are raised, we will add our response and publish the updated FAQ on-line.

How to reach us

Your input is valuable to us. Only through your active involvement can we continue our efforts to encourage high quality service delivery and to protect our clients and customers. Should you wish to contribute, please contact our Administrator, Ian Martin, at im@vocationalrehabilitationassociation.org.uk

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why did the VRA develop Standards of Practice?

The VRA tackled this assignment for numerous reasons: In 2000-2002 the then NVRA participated in Government-sponsored research by HOST Policy Research into the job definitions and qualifications of those with responsibility in providing employment support, information, advice and guidance for disabled people.

A key finding of this research was that further standards and qualification development work was going to be needed if a suitable range of accredited qualifications is to be made available for the field, and as a pre cursor these findings provided the incentive for the VRA to start work on the development of Vocational Rehabilitation Standards of Occupational Practice.

In addition the development of Standards occurred so:

- Vocational Rehabilitation could be consistently defined and understood
- The VRA could meet its goal of client and consumer protection.
- Agreed VR Standards of Practice would exist for the field as a whole.
- VR would develop as a profession. It needed benchmarks for professional service delivery.
- We would have completed a first step towards accreditation. The VRA determined that there would be value in producing a professional self monitoring tool.

2. Who are these Standards for?

These Standards apply to anyone working within Vocational Rehabilitation's defined Scope of Practice (see Standards document). The Scope of Practice reflects most activities with which someone working within Vocational Rehabilitation could engage.

The VRA Standards have been developed with due consideration for any overlaps with Regulated Health Practitioners standards and the standards developed by CMSUK and BABICM, and they are not intended to replace existing professional standards. So, if a VR activity falls also within the Scope of Practice of a Regulated Health Practitioner or a CMSUK or BABICM case manager, then they should apply the standards associated with these professions. For example, an Occupational Therapist completing a Functional Capacities Evaluation may use the OT standards to determine the appropriate standard for their activity. If, however, the VR activity is not listed under their profession's Scope of Practice then the professional will apply the VRA's Standards. An example here might be a clinical nurse conducting career counselling.

Anyone working within the VRA Scope of Practice, who cannot rely on another professional standard, must meet the VRA Standards.

3. What value do the Standards bring to the professional?

The Standards:

- Provide a baseline measure of service delivery and expectations.
- Advise and guide the professional during daily task completion.
- Help the professional and their supervisor to monitor performance.
- Confirm a professional's level of knowledge and skill within the field.
- Give the professional confidence in their ability to do the job.
- Give others confidence in the professional's ability to do the job.
- If applied appropriately, help to protect the professional from negative consequences such as complaints, disciplinary action and lawsuits.

4. What does the professional have to do to comply?

At this stage, the professional just has to adhere to the Standards to comply. Professionally and ethically it is in their best interest to do so. Membership in the VRA will help with this process as it will give the professional access to information, updates, training, and input relative to the Standards. It is intended in the future that these Standards will form the foundation of an accreditation process.

Over the next 2 years, the VRA will be developing a formal process for demonstrating compliance and for addressing those who do not comply. Once this is in place, we foresee the professional being able to publicly state "I work in accordance with the VR Standards of Practice". We will keep you posted on our progress.

5. Do these Standards apply to V R organisations?

No, these Standards are for the individual professional. Other agencies offer services for accrediting facilities and programmes. One such international organisation is the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). However, VR organisations and other stakeholders should be aware of the VRA Standards and should encourage professionals to practice to these Standards.

6. What can Vocational Rehabilitation organisations and other Stakeholders do to encourage professional compliance?

VR organisations / companies and other stakeholders can help by:

- Using the Standards as a reference when determining appropriate practice as a VR practitioner.
- Using the Standards as a reference when determining performance expectations of VR providers.
- Recruiting professionals who work to Standards and are members of the VRA or related associations.
- Deploying the Standards to existing staff.
- Contracting with service providers who work to the Standards and are members of the VRA or related associations.
- Signing up to the Standards of Practice by becoming a Corporate Member of the VRA.

Once the VRA has developed an accreditation process, we foresee organisations who recruit VR professionals that meet Standards to be able to publicly state "our staff work in accordance with the VR Standards". We will keep you posted.

7. How do these Standards differ from the CMSUK Standards?

Case Management is an important part of Vocational Rehabilitation. While the two professions have considerable overlap, there are several unique aspects to VR service delivery which warranted the development of VR standards.

The VRA Standards Task Group referred extensively to the CMSUK Standards and to its predecessor the College of Occupational Therapy standards during the development phase. We referred to the standards of practice published by a number of other agencies, bodies and associations as well.

8. What key issues were addressed during the development of the Standards?

During the past two years we had to consider:

- The breadth of the Scope of Practice for Vocational Rehabilitation. Service delivery often starts at point of injury / onset of impairment and carries on well after someone has secured employment, paid or otherwise. Some even consider prevention as a form of Vocational Rehabilitation.
- The overlaps with Regulated Health Practitioners and other established professionals working in the field.
- The lack of or inconsistencies of definition of Vocational Rehabilitation.
- The lack of a Scope of Practice.
- How to get buy in from all interested and invested parties.
- How to best communicate our reasons for introducing Standards.
- How to best launch the Standards.
- How a practitioner might validate their practice against these Standards: what specific items would serve as validation, in other words, what can go in the right hand column?
- How to put teeth into the Standards. How do we monitor and enforce professional practice? What are the disciplinary processes? What are the consequences to not meeting Standards?
- What educational / training processes need to be in place to assist our members to meet Standards?

Much of this we were successful at addressing during the time frame. The last two bullets form the basis of our work in the future.

9. Will there be changes to the Standards over time?

As per the Standards document, the VRA will be soliciting suggestions for improvement and enhancements to the Standards over the next 2 years and will publish a revised Standards document at the end of this period.

10. Will training on the Standards be available?

Yes. The VRA would like to hear from individuals or organisations who are interested in providing training to help professionals and/or organisations meet standards. How this is structured and funded is still under investigation. Expressions of interest can be lodged with Ian Martin at im@vocationalrehabilitationassociation.org.uk

11. What should purchasers of service or funders do if they believe that a professional is not meeting Standards?

Until accreditation is in place, the VRA suggests that:

- The purchasers address the issue directly with the professional by referring to the Standards document and seek mutual resolution.
- The purchasers ensure that all Service Level Agreements make reference to the VRA Standards of Practice as a minimal service level requirement.
- The purchasers write to the VRA outlining the details while maintaining client confidentiality. Although the VRA has no regulatory power at present, the Association needs to be aware of the issues for accreditation planning purposes. Clients should likewise voice any concerns to the VRA.



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