



# **Description of Standards of Practice of Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists**

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# **Description of Standards of Practice of Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists**

## **Background**

This work has been produced by the Travors Partnership as part of its project 'Training for Vocational Rehabilitation Services'. That project recognised that there are countries in Europe which do not yet have Standards of Practice, and there are other European Countries which have Standards, but which as yet have only the force of voluntary or self-regulating agreements.

The project team therefore felt that a simple statement of what should be contained in national standards would be helpful to partners, to partner countries, and to others in the field. The current work has been prepared by the partnership for widespread distribution and discussion.

Readers are free to cite the document in their own work, and should always include a reference to the full work, to the Travors website [www.travors.eu](http://www.travors.eu), and to Travors partners, who will be able to provide additional information and materials.

The text was drafted by David Imber of VRC Ltd, in consultation with the project team. The final version represents the product of the Project as a whole, and does not represent the views or standards of any one organisation or country.

## Purpose

This statement of Standards of Practice for Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists is intended to provide a framework which, in the absence of a national Standard or recognised National Accreditation in a country, will help

- individuals to ensure that their practice is professionally sound
- organisations delivering services to develop Standards for their staff and for their services
- associations of professionals to adopt principles upon which they can construct their own Standards applicable in their own country.

The statement is not intended to replace any existing Standards which are established in any country, but will, we hope, contribute usefully to their development.

The statement has been developed under the TRAVORS project, with the support of funding from the Leonardo da Vinci Programme of the Lifelong Learning Programme.<sup>1</sup>

## Overview

Standards of Practice for Vocational Rehabilitation should include statements covering:

- A Definition of Vocational Rehabilitation
- The Goal and Purpose of Vocational Rehabilitation
- The Vocational Rehabilitation process and the management of employment progression
- Interpersonal relationships
- Evidence-based practice and the skills and knowledge of practitioners
- Conventions and legislation

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<sup>1</sup> The Standards do not represent EU or LLP or LdV programme policy.

## **Definition of Vocational Rehabilitation**

Standards of Practice of a rehabilitation specialist should include and be founded on an appropriate definition of Vocational Rehabilitation, pertinent to the practice in their own country or jurisdiction.

A definition of Vocational Rehabilitation that contributes to the setting of Standards of Practice will include:

- active concern for and belief in the dignity and worth of all people
- reference to the VR process as being of facilitation for the individual
- the goal of assisting people with impairments or health conditions to secure employment
- related goals to assist them to integrate into the community and to achieve the greatest possible functioning and coping capabilities, independence and participation in society.

The definition may usefully refer to Vocational Rehabilitation as being a well planned and well resourced process

- with well defined goals
- with time limited and ends-determined interventions
- in which various actors co-operate to assist users in their own efforts.

The definition of Vocational Rehabilitation should also include a statement defining and limiting the Scope of Practice of Vocational Rehabilitation Practitioners, that is consistent with the skills and knowledge required of them.

## **Goal and Purpose of Vocational Rehabilitation**

Standards of vocational rehabilitation should incorporate goals aiming to maximise employment potential and aiming to build a meaningful and satisfying life (defined by the person themselves), within a clear timeframe.

The standards should contain items that ensure that the Vocational Rehabilitation practitioner must have the goal of assisting the client and employer to achieve suitable employment in the open economy as their primary objective.

Where Vocational Rehabilitation does not lead to open employment the Vocational Rehabilitation practitioner must have the goal of enabling clients to progress toward open employment through assisting them to develop, and assisting employers to recruit and support clients.

Where Vocational Rehabilitation will require longer term employment progression, the Vocational Rehabilitation practitioner must have the goal of enabling clients to progress toward open employment through longer term development programmes, and there must be a clear record of the rationale for this, with regular reviews and the informed consent of the client.

## **The Vocational Rehabilitation process and the management of employment progression**

The standards should ensure that in the conduct of the Vocational Rehabilitation process the practitioner must:

- recognise the primacy of individual action and self-management
- support and facilitate individual choice and informed consent
- achieve clarity with clients, employers and all participants as to the Vocational Rehabilitation objectives, which should include the attainment of suitable employment
- work within the Scope of Practice, and within their own knowledge and skill base
- work to a Code of Ethics and related guidance on ethical procedures
- use techniques that have known effectiveness (evidence-based practice)
- evaluate their interventions
- apply these principles to their professional relationships, including forming and disengagement, and the management of the risks related to any imbalance of power (including those related to language skills).

The standards should contain items that ensure that with regard to the management of employment progression the Vocational Rehabilitation practitioner must:

- have the goal of assisting the client and employer to achieve suitable employment
- avoid unnecessary assessment or interventions
- provide a helping relationship that provides the individual client and employer and significant people in the situation with appropriate support
- provides support to enable individual action and self-management, including information and practical guidance only as resources that the client may choose to employ, and not as replacements for their own decision making
- assist the client by means of interventions that work towards time bound goals
- attend to the principle of "suitable employment" where "suitable employment is defined by:
  - the client, who must take into account their ability to do the tasks of the job, or their confidence in their ability to do the tasks of the job, without or with work adjustment, and who must be comfortable with the work environment. 'Tasks' are interpreted widely, and include interpersonal, health and disability management and supervision issues
  - the employer, who must judge the evidence of the individual's ability to do the tasks of the job, without or with work solutions
  - the VR practitioner, who must enable the individual to gather the evidence of ability to do the tasks of the job, and enable the employer to consider the work environment evidence.
- act as an advisor or consultant and problem solver, including by anticipating potential issues and identifying work adjustment.

Business Practices will usually be contained in Standards applying to organisations that provide Vocational Rehabilitation Services. They may also be referred to in Standards of Practice for individuals, and may cover:

- compliance with standards for corporate governance
- confidentiality and information-sharing procedures
- provision of secure and reliable services.

The standards should contain items that ensure that in the conduct of the Vocational Rehabilitation process the service or practitioner manager must:

- provide professional supervision to the practitioner
- provide guidance about a Code of Ethics and related ethical procedures
- provide opportunity for Continuing Professional Development that is consistent with these standards
- provide practitioners, managers and others responsible for the service with access to the Vocational Rehabilitation evidence on successful

practice and interventions, and on the core skills, theoretical and knowledge base of the rehabilitation profession

- provide the opportunity to access and to consult the professions, academics, theoreticians and researchers, and the evidence base on issues of ethics, new approaches, problems or limitations.

## **Interpersonal Relationships**

The standards should contain items that ensure that the Vocational Rehabilitation practitioner manages interpersonal relationships that:

- respect the individual's human rights and freedom of choice
- recognise the primacy of individual action and self-management
- provide for clients to participate with understanding, respecting their individual choice and acting only with their informed consent
- aim to help clients to realise their potential to the greatest possible extent
- aim to help them build a meaningful and satisfying life, as defined by the person themselves
- recognise the interpersonal nature of the client, employer and practitioner relationship, including forming and disengaging from the relationship, and managing the ongoing relationship through goal setting, expectation and outcome control.
- employ appropriate skills to enable each party to make their own decisions
- enable each party to have access to second opinion
- manage the risks related to any imbalance of power in client – practitioner relationship (including those related to language skills)
- incorporate the concept of hope and the importance of belief and agency, basing the client's programme on what the individual can do.

## **Evidence based practice, skills and knowledge**

The practitioner should be skilled in the application of approaches or methods that are supported by sound evidence and lie within their personal scope of practice.

To support evidence based practice the individual practitioner should be aware of the core theoretical and knowledge base of the rehabilitation profession and should have access to, and be prepared to consult the professions, academics, theoreticians, researchers and the evidence base on issues of ethics, new problems or limitations.

The methods and approaches adopted should

- incorporate the concept self-development
- enhance the development of skills, theoretical and practical knowledge
- use professional supervision

The standards of practice should also include statements on the requirement for

- knowledge and experience (or qualified supervision in acquiring experience) concerning aspects of Disability and the Labour Market and the social impacts of employment and disability upon individuals and employers
- skills in communication, empowerment and advice-giving, interpersonal relationships, professional self-management and application of the principles set out in these Standards to supporting individuals towards open employment.

## **Conventions and legislation**

Standards of practice should clearly require

- the recognition of and adherence to international conventions (UN, EU)
- adherence to national legislation, policy and professional codes (mandatory and voluntary)
- awareness and application of related industry standards
- respect for the professional codes of conduct (mandatory and voluntary) of others engaged in related work
- respect the guidance of service users' organisations, considering the evidence base and rights of the individual to self-determination.

TRAVORS Project Partnership  
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## Appendix: Members of the Travors Partnership

Contact us for more information or to join in our work. We are able to share expertise and develop Travors products for wider use.

For more details on TRAVORS please see our web page: <http://www.travors.eu>

The Project partners are

- RNL Ltd, Project Co-ordinator: [travors@rehabilitationnetwork.com](mailto:travors@rehabilitationnetwork.com)
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