
AN OVERVIEW OF PRE-SERVICE
AND IN-SERVICE REHABILITATION
EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE EFFORTS
IN THE UNITED STATES:
SUMMARY REPORT

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Table of Contents

Background and Purpose of the Report	1
1. Overview of the University of Massachusetts (UMass) Boston, the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI), and the School for Global Inclusion and Social Development (SGISD)	1
2. Rehabilitation Counseling Education (Pre-Service) and Related Organizations	2
2.1. Rehabilitation Counseling Programs Nationally	2
2.2. Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE)	3
2.3. Master's Degree Program in Rehabilitation Counseling Education (RCE) at the SGISD	4
2.4. Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC)	6
3. Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance & Continuing Education Model (In-Service)	7
3.1. National Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Structure	7
3.2. New England TACE Center at the ICI (RSA Region 1)	9
4. Competency-Based Training for Employment Support Staff	10
4.1. Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) Training Competencies and Certification	10
4.2. Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) Professional Competencies and Certification	11
4.3. ICI's College of Employment Services (CES)	13
Conclusion	14
Appendices	15
Appendix A: Guest Lecture PowerPoint Slides	
Appendix B: Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) Poster (in Japanese)	
Appendix C: Rehabilitation Counseling Student Handbook	
Appendix D: Rehabilitation Counseling Field Placement Handbook	
Appendix E: Rehabilitation Counseling Capstone Experience	
Appendix F: Certified Employment Support Professional-Certification Handbook	
Appendix G: College of Employment Services (CES) Flyer	
References	16

List of Abbreviations

ACRE	Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators
APSE	Association of People Supporting Employment First
CE	Continuing Education
CES	College of Employment Services
CESP	Certified Employment Support Professional
CoP	Community of Practice
CORE	Council on Rehabilitation Education
CRC	Certification of Rehabilitation Counselors
CRCC	Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification
CRP	Community Rehabilitation Provider
CSPD	Comprehensive System of Personnel Development
ESP	Employment Support Professional
ESPCC	Employment Support Professional Certification Council
ICI	Institute for Community Inclusion
MA	Master of Arts degree / program
MEd	Master of Education degree / program
MS	Master of Science degree / program
NE	New England
NIVR	National Institute of Vocational Rehabilitation (Japan)
NIDRR	National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (USA)
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
RCE	Rehabilitation Counseling Education
RSA	Rehabilitation Services Administration
SE	Supported Employment
SGISD	School for Global Inclusion and Social Development
TA	Technical Assistance
TACE Center	Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Center
UMass Boston	University of Massachusetts Boston
VR	Vocational Rehabilitation

An Overview of Pre-Service and In-Service Rehabilitation Education, Training, and Technical Assistance Efforts in the United States: Summary Report

Background and Purpose of the Report

The National Institute of Vocational Rehabilitation (NIVR) in Japan contracted the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI), School for Global Inclusion and Social Development (SGISD) at the University of Massachusetts Boston to provide an overview of pre-service and in-service rehabilitation education, training, and technical assistance in the United States in the form of a guest lecture and a report. NIVR requested that the guest lecture and the report include a specific focus on the master's degree program in rehabilitation counseling education at the SGISD.

The purpose of this report is to serve as a descriptive summary of the information presented in the guest lecture on September 3, 2013 at NIVR. (See Appendix A: Guest Lecture PowerPoint Slides). Both the ICI guest lecture and the report are part of a NIVR research project that broadly focuses on competencies of vocational rehabilitation (VR) professionals. Specifically, the NIVR project investigates changing job functions and requirements of vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors and other employment support professionals in Japan, in the United States, and in other countries, and implications for VR competencies and rehabilitation education, training, and technical assistance in Japan.

1. Overview of the University of Massachusetts (UMass) Boston, the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI), and the School for Global Inclusion and Social Development (SGISD)

UMass Boston is the only public university in metropolitan Boston, offering more than 170 academic programs through its 10 colleges including the School for Global Inclusion and Social Development. In addition, the university houses more than 30 research institutes and centers including the Institute for Community Inclusion. UMass Boston serves a highly diverse student population that includes many recent immigrants, people from lower-income families, and people from urban communities.¹ More than half of the students are the first in their families to attend university. For more information about UMass Boston, visit: <http://www.umb.edu>

Established in 1967, the ICI has been promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of society for over 40 years through research (systems change, policy and practice), service (evaluation and model demonstration), training (pre-service and in-service), technical assistance, and dissemination of information, research, and best practices (see Appendix B: ICI Poster). The institute is a joint program of UMass Boston and [Boston Children's Hospital](#), and is part of a national network of 67 [University Centers for Excellence in Disabilities](#). Within UMass Boston, the ICI is part of the School for Global Inclusion and Social Development that addresses the needs of persons with disabilities and others excluded from society through teaching, research, training, and other activities (explained later).

The institute's work has a cross-disability orientation across the life span of individuals with disabilities, addressing issues of education, employment, health care, and community life—the ICI's key focal areas. Across these focal areas, the institute hosts 13 national centers and five regional or state-level centers. Additionally, ICI staff have served as experts on international research projects and have provided training and technical assistance internationally (for example, in the Czech and Slovak Republics, Turkey, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Taiwan, and Japan), addressing disability issues in education, employment, health care, and community life. Overall, ICI projects increase disability inclusion throughout the New England region, across the United States, and internationally.

¹ Source: UMass Boston Website: http://www.umb.edu/the_university/facts

Headed by Dr. William Kiernan, the ICI Director and Dean of the School for Global Inclusion and Social Development, the institute has about 240 staff including researchers and graduate assistants. About one half of ICI staff have identified as being a person with a disability or as having an immediate family member with a disability. For more information about the ICI, visit: <http://www.communityinclusion.org>

Established in 2012, the SGISD seeks to develop future leaders able to address issues of equality of opportunity (inclusion) and enhanced wellbeing and quality of life for all (social development). The school's emphasis is on groups of people who are excluded from society due to disability or other conditions. It is the first graduate school in the world to focus on health, wellness, and social and economic development from an international and cross-disciplinary perspective. The school specifically responds to an unmet national and international need for expertise in the development of community capacity. This need is addressed through teaching, research, training, and other activities. The school houses five graduate programs:

- A Master of Arts (MA) program and a doctoral (PhD) program in global inclusion and social development (starting in Fall 2014),
- A Master of Arts (MA) program in transition leadership (starting in Fall 2014) (The school currently offers a [graduate certificate in transition leadership](#)),
- A Master of Science (MS) program in rehabilitation counseling education (explained later), and
- A [Master of Education \(MEd\) program in vision studies](#) with three specializations including Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments, Orientation and Mobility, and Vision Rehabilitation Therapy.

Twelve global leadership competencies guide the school's programming efforts:

1. Knowledge Base in Inclusion, Social Development, and Globalization
2. Self-Reflection and Leadership
3. Ethics and Professionalism
4. Critical and Creative Thinking and Translation into Practice
5. Communication
6. Negotiation and Conflict / Dispute Resolution
7. Cultural Competency
8. Developing Others Through Teaching, Training, and Mentoring
9. Transdisciplinary Practice and Team Building
10. Working with Communities, Organizations, and Systems
11. Policy and Advocacy
12. Research, Evaluation, and Policy Analysis

For more information about the SGISD, visit: <http://www.umb.edu/academics/sgisd>

2. Rehabilitation Counseling Education (Pre-Service) and Related Organizations

2.1 Rehabilitation Counseling Programs Nationally

As of 2013, there are 96 master's degree programs in rehabilitation counseling education (RCE) based at universities or colleges throughout the United States that have been accredited by the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE).² CORE is a national organization that accredits graduate programs in RCE and other rehabilitation disciplines and is explained in the next section. The master's program in RCE offered by the School for Global Inclusion and Social Development, UMass Boston is one of the 96 CORE accredited programs and is explained later in more detail.

A recent survey conducted by CORE shows that the 96 RCE master's programs graduated a total of 1,510 students between summer 2010 and spring 2011, including 296 students (20%) who reported a disability (CORE, n.d.). This represents a slight increase from the previous year (total of 1,473 graduates including 286 individuals with disabilities). The top three places of

² Source: CORE website: <http://www.core-rehab.org/WhatIsCORE>

graduate employment in 2010–2011 were (in order): state VR agencies (36%), community rehabilitation providers (23%), and rehabilitation related agencies and organizations (17%). Graduates of most programs (84) pursued Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) certification (as reported by the programs in the survey). (CRC certification is explained later in more detail.) Existing research indicates that the number of graduates of CORE accredited RCE programs—the primary source for qualified VR counselor candidates for the public VR program—is insufficient to meet both current and future VR program workforce needs (Dew, Alan, & Tomlinson, 2008). This is an issue that urgently needs addressing.

2.2 Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE)

CORE accredits approximately 96 university and college-based RCE programs at the master's level as well as programs in rehabilitation services and disability studies at the undergraduate level. According to CORE, “Accreditation serves to promote the effective delivery of rehabilitation services to people with disabilities by stimulating and fostering continual review and improvement of master's degree rehabilitation counselor education programs.”³ For the purpose of accreditation, CORE developed standards for RCE programs (CORE, 2011a). These standards are used to review RCE programs—both new programs and previously accredited programs. New programs that meet these standards are accredited for a maximum period of three years. After three years, programs have to apply for re-accreditation. Previously accredited programs that successfully go through the review can be accredited for a maximum period of eight years. CORE only accredits programs in the United States. However, CORE is currently in the process of developing a directory of existing international university and college-based rehabilitation and disability education programs with the goal of identifying educational standards that can be measured across cultures, communities, and countries.⁴ For more information about CORE, visit: <http://www.core-rehab.org>.

Although CORE accreditation is not mandatory, most RCE master's programs seek or have sought accreditation. The CORE standards that serve as the basis for accreditation and guide the review process have been grouped into six domains: 1) Mission and Objectives, 2) Program Evaluation, 3) General Curriculum Requirements, Knowledge Domains, and Student Learning Outcomes, 4) Clinical Experience (consisting of a practicum with at least 100 hours and an internship of at least 600 hours of supervised rehabilitation counseling), 5) Administration and Faculty, and 6) Support and Resources. In terms of General Curriculum Requirements, CORE requires RCE master's programs to incorporate an emphasis on ethical behavior, diversity or individual differences, and critical thinking in their core curricula. Specifically, CORE identified 10 core curriculum areas:

1. Professional Identity and Ethical Behavior
2. Psychosocial Aspects of Disability and Cultural Diversity
3. Human Growth and Development
4. Employment and Career Development
5. Counseling Approaches and Principles
6. Group Work and Family Dynamics
7. Assessment
8. Research and Program Evaluation
9. Medical, Functional, and Environmental Aspects of Disability
10. Rehabilitation Services, Case Management, and Related Services

Each area is broken down further into knowledge domains and related, measurable student learning outcomes. See CORE (2011a) for a detailed description of the standards. The CORE review process consists of a self-study by the program applicant; stakeholder surveys (students, graduates, and practicum / internship supervisors) conducted by the program applicant; and a site visit conducted by CORE. The site visit includes interviews with the RCE Program Coordinator, university administrators, faculty / staff, students, graduates, as well as practicum / internship supervisors. Accredited programs have to submit annual progress reports to CORE.

³ Source: CORE website: <http://www.core-rehab.org/WhatIsCORE>

⁴ Source: Gladnet email entitled “CORE Global Survey of Rehabilitation & Disability Education programs” dated October 15, 2013.

For more detailed information about the CORE review and accreditation process, see CORE (2011b) and (2012), or visit the CORE website at: <http://www.core-rehab.org>

2.3 Master's Degree Program in Rehabilitation Counseling Education (RCE) at the SGISD

The master's program in RCE offered by the School for Global Inclusion and Social Development, UMass Boston is one of 96 CORE accredited programs in the United States. Funded in part by a long-term training grant from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), U.S. Department of Education, the program prepares graduates for jobs in a variety of settings (such as rehabilitation agencies, schools, career planning agencies, hospitals, clinics, residential treatment facilities, mental health agencies, etc.). However, 95% of our graduates obtain employment in the field of rehabilitation counseling.⁵ The program also prepares graduates to pursue doctoral level studies if they desire to do so. It is a 60-credit master's program that is available on campus as well as online. Program graduates are eligible to take the national examination as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) without additional coursework or experiences. CRC certification is a national voluntary certification for VR professionals and is explained later in more detail. Graduates also meet the educational requirements for [Massachusetts licensure as a Licensed Rehabilitation Counselor \(LRC\)](#). This licensure also requires passing the CRC examination and a minimum of two years of full-time post master's degree supervised clinical experience or equivalent experience.

Program Design and Curriculum: The RCE master's program has three major components: academic coursework, field experiences, and a capstone project.

Academic coursework: Students must complete series of general counseling courses and courses specific to rehabilitation counseling (listed below). Online students must attend two clinically based courses during a two-week session at the beginning of the program (COU 614 and COU 616). These are the only two courses that students are required to attend in person (i.e. that are not offered online).

General Counselor Education Core Courses (Total of 30 credits)

- COU 601 Research and Evaluation in Psychology
- COU 605 Vocational, Educational & Psychological Assessment
- COU 606 Ethical Standards and Professional Issues in Counseling
- COU 608 Abnormal Psychology
- COU 614 Counseling Theory and Practice I
- COU 615 Counseling Theory and Practice II
- COU 616 Group Counseling and Group Dynamics
- COU 620 Clinical Application of Human Development
- COU 622 Family Therapy Theories
- COU 653 Perspectives in Cross Cultural Counseling

Rehabilitation Counselor Education Core Courses (Total of 30 credits)

- COU 602 Medical, Psychosocial, & Educational Aspects of Disabilities
- COU 603 Foundations of Rehabilitation
- COU 610 Case Management & Planning in Rehabilitation
- COU 612 Vocational Rehabilitation and Placement
- COU 613 Vocational Development and Career Information
- COU 688 Practicum in Rehabilitation Counseling
- COU 698 Internship in Rehabilitation Counseling (12 credits total)

Total credits required: 60

See Appendix C: Rehabilitation Counseling Student Handbook, pages 16–19 for course descriptions.

⁵ Source: SGISD, RCE program website: http://www.umb.edu/academics/sgisd/grad/rehabilitation_counseling_ms

Field experiences: In addition to coursework, students must engage in field experiences in rehabilitation counseling in the form of a practicum and an internship. The purpose of the practicum is to introduce students to clinical practice as a VR counselor. Therefore, students mostly observe certified rehabilitation professionals in the field during their practicum. The purpose of the internship is for students to begin to see clients and to provide counseling and guidance to those clients under supervision.

The practicum (3 credits) consists of 100 hours of field experience in an approved placement site such as a clinic, a day treatment program, a residential program, or a school. Forty out of the 100 hours have to involve direct contact with clients, meaning that a student would participate in activities such as conduct an intake interview or facilitate a group workshop. Students complete the one-semester practicum prior to the internship. During the practicum, students receive at least one hour of individual supervision weekly by the site supervisor and one hour and a half of group supervision weekly by program faculty.

The internship consists of 600 hours of supervised field experience and is completed in a VR setting over the course of two semesters (300 hours per semester, 6 credits per semester, totaling 12 credits). Examples of internship sites include: state VR agencies, veterans' affairs hospitals and rehabilitation facilities, community rehabilitation providers, schools, and private rehabilitation facilities. During the internship, students begin to see clients and to carry out rehabilitation counseling activities under supervision. They receive at least one hour of individual supervision weekly by the site supervisor and one hour of group supervision weekly by program faculty. Note that site supervisors can get continuing education credits towards their Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) status. (CRCs must re-certify every five years by re-examination or by earning 100 hours of continuing education credits including 10 credits in ethics.)

See Appendix D: Rehabilitation Counseling Field Placement Handbook for more information about the practicum and internship, including site selection, site supervisors, student trainee responsibilities, practicum / internship evaluation and student feedback on practicum / internship experiences, as well as sample forms and questionnaires. See also Appendix C: Rehabilitation Counseling Student Handbook, pages 20–23.

Capstone project: Students must also complete a final project in the form of a **research project** or a **clinical case analysis**. The purpose of the **research project** is “to prepare students to be practitioner-scientists [...] by demonstrate[ing] skills of systematic interpretation of research information presented in journals and other scientific sources along with clinical experience in the practice of rehabilitation counseling” (Source: Appendix C: Rehabilitation Counseling Student Handbook, page 24). Students are expected to identify a problem or an issue in the field (usually during the early part of their internship) and develop a plan for addressing this problem or issue through policy or research activities. An emphasis is being placed on how the problem relates to practice as a VR counselor. Students develop and implement a small research project. They are expected to share the results of their study via a formal report and a formal presentation in front of their peers and program faculty.

The purpose of the **clinical case analysis** is “to engage students in an experience which, in its comprehensiveness, brings together their entire learning experience throughout their enrollment in the Program, and reinforces their own self-efficacy and feelings of competence as a rehabilitation counselor” (Source: Appendix C: Rehabilitation Counseling Student Handbook, page 24). Students are expected to identify (usually during the early part of their internship) a clinical case, that is, an individual they are working with in a counseling relationship. They will audio / video record a counseling session of the case and also complete a comprehensive analysis of the case. Students are required to submit documentation of their activities (listed on page 2 of Appendix E: Rehabilitation Counseling Capstone Experience) and also produce a final report.

See Appendix E: Rehabilitation Counseling Capstone Experience for more information about the capstone project. See also Appendix C: Rehabilitation Counseling Student Handbook, page 24.

Program Tracks and Tuition: The RCE program can be completed on a full-time or part-time basis. Full-time study takes two years; part-time study takes four years. Students take on average 3.5 years to complete the program (most students work part-time while pursuing this program.) See Appendix C: Rehabilitation Counseling Student Handbook, page 13 for a typical plan for full-time study and pages 14–15 for a typical plan for part-time study. There is also an option to complete the program online. Tuition for the campus-based program (both full-time and part-time) is approximately US\$ 31,200 (exact tuition

depends on the number of in person versus online courses students take).⁶ Tuition for the online program is approximately US\$ 28,500. Scholarships are available for eligible students, which cover tuition and fees, and also provide a small stipend. Scholarship students who complete the program are required to work in the field for two years for each year of tuition support.

Program Enrollment and Graduation: The program admits 8–10 students annually for the graduate cohort. This covers both the campus-based program and the online program. Students for the campus-based program are admitted in fall; students for the online program are admitted in the summer. As of October 2013, there are 29 students enrolled in the program.⁷ Of those, 11 are full-time students and 18 are part-time students. Of the 29 students, 19 are pursuing the campus-based program and 10 are in the online program. A total of six students graduated from the program in 2012–2013.

For more information about the master’s program in RCE at the SGISD, visit:

http://www.umb.edu/academics/sgisd/grad/rehabilitation_counseling_ms

2.4 Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC)

CRCC is the world’s largest rehabilitation counseling organization, having certified more than 35,000 rehabilitation counselors since 1974.⁸ The Commission sets quality standards for rehabilitation counseling services in the United States and Canada and promotes these standards through certification of rehabilitation counselors. This certification is voluntary. To be eligible to sit for the CRC exam, individuals must have a master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling or in a closely related field.⁹ Individuals who pass the examination become Certified Rehabilitation Counselors, or CRCs. CRCs must re-certify every five years by re-examination or by earning 100 hours of continuing education credits including 10 credits in ethics.

CRC Certification and State VR Agencies: Federal regulations (34CFR361)¹⁰ require state VR agencies to establish personnel standards—also called Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) standards that are “consistent with any national- or state-approved or recognized certification, licensing, or registration requirements.” Most state VR agencies use the CRC certification to determine if their counselors meet CSPD standards (Dew, Alan, & Tomlinson, 2008). As a result, the minimum academic standard for VR counselors in most state VR agencies is a master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling.

CRC Examination: The examination consists of 175 multiple-choice questions that are administered online.¹¹ Individuals are given three-and-a-half hours over an 8-day period to complete the test. The examination questions address 10 knowledge domains:

1. Assessment, Appraisal, and Vocational Evaluation
2. Job Development, Job Placement, and Career and Lifestyle Development
3. Vocational Consultation and Services for Employers
4. Case Management, Professional Roles and Practices, and Utilization of Community Resources
5. Foundations of Counseling, Professional Orientation and Ethical Practice, Theories, Social and Cultural Issues, and Human Growth and Development
6. Group and Family Counseling
7. Mental Health Counseling
8. Medical, Functional, and Psychosocial Aspects of Disability
9. Disability Management
10. Research, Program Evaluation, and Evidence-Based Practice

⁶ Source: RCE program website: http://www.umb.edu/academics/sgisd/grad/rehabilitation_counseling_ms

⁷ Source: RCE program website: http://www.umb.edu/academics/sgisd/grad/rehabilitation_counseling_ms

⁸ Source: CRCC website: http://www.crccertification.com/pages/about_crcc/112.php

⁹ Source: CRCC website: https://www.crccertification.com/pages/eligibility_requirements_july_2014_crc_exam/289.php

¹⁰ Source: Code of Federal Regulations 34CFR361: http://www.doleta.gov/disability/htmldocs/rehab_regs.cfm

¹¹ Source: CRCC website: http://www.crccertification.com/pages/crc_exam_overview/120.php

CRCC provides a range of resources to help candidates prepare for the examination. This includes a detailed list of examination topics (by knowledge domain), examination sample questions, as well as an examination reading list.¹² Additionally, there is a CRC interactive preparation test (a 50-item practice test) available for purchase.¹³ The application / examination fee for first time applicants and CRCs who wish to re-certify through re-examination is US\$ 385.¹⁴

CRC Re-Certification: CRCs must re-certify every five years by re-examination or by earning 100 hours of continuing education credits including 10 credits in ethics. Various organizations offer these continuing education credits to CRCs. The fee for certification renewal is US\$ 295.¹⁵ Organizations that offer continuing education programs in rehabilitation counseling must seek approval from CRCC in order to offer their programs to CRCs. CRCC program approval is valid for 12 months.¹⁶ A range of organizations and programs give CRC continuing education credits. This includes the New England Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Center and the College of Employment Services (CES) program at the ICI (both are explained later in more detail).¹⁷ The U.S. Department of Education, [National Institute of Disability and Rehabilitation Research \(NIDRR\)](https://www.nidrr.gov/) also funds research centers that offer ad hoc training related to the scope of the research and often offer continuing education credits to training participants. NIDRR funds multiple research centers across the country and has been investing heavily in research related to state VR agencies. One of the requirements for funding is that these research centers offer training and technical assistance. The ICI hosts several NIDRR-funded centers that focus on employment and vocational rehabilitation. These centers provide training and TA in addition to research. See Appendix B: ICI Poster for more information about these centers.

For more information about the CRCC including CRC examination, certification, and re-certification, visit:

<http://www.crccertification.com>

3. Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance & Continuing Education Model (In-Service)

3.1 National Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Structure

Established in 2008 and funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), U.S. Department of Education, the purpose of the Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) centers is “to improve the quantity and quality of employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities **through enhanced technical assistance (TA) and continuing education (CE)** for state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies and agency partners that cooperate with state VR agencies in providing VR and other rehabilitation services (e.g., Centers for Independent Living, Client Assistance Programs, and Community Rehabilitation Programs” (emphasis added).¹⁸ RSA funded a total of [10 TACE centers](#), one center per RSA region (see Figure 1), for a period of five years. One of the 10 centers the New England TACE center (RSA Region 1) is housed at the ICI, UMass Boston and is explained later in more detail. Together the 10 TACE centers form the national TACE collaborative.

TACE centers conduct annual and ongoing needs assessments of state VR agencies in their region and then tailor the training and TA to local and regional needs. They frequently assist state VR agencies with the comprehensive statewide needs assessment that RSA requires agencies to do every three years. TACE centers also assist state VR agencies prepare for the RSA monitoring process (RSA monitors state VR agencies every five years). TACE centers not only support state VR agencies but also their partners including community rehabilitation providers. Needs assessment of VR partners is conducted by state VR agencies and then shared with the TACE centers so that training and TA can be tailored to the specific needs and issues of these partner agencies.

The **TACE model** has several advantages (National TACE Collaborative, 2012): First, the regional location of the centers allows them to gain intimate knowledge of the unique needs of each state VR agency as well as of their respective TACE region, and to be **culturally and regionally responsive** while maintaining individualized relationships with each VR agency and its leadership.

¹² Source: CRCC website: http://www.crccertification.com/pages/crc_exam_preparation/72.php

¹³ Source: CRCC website: http://www.crccertification.com/pages/crc_exam_preparation/72.php

¹⁴ Source: CRCC website: http://www.crccertification.com/pages/application_fees/70.php

¹⁵ Source: CRCC website: <http://www.crccertification.com/filebin/pdf/CRCCCertificationGuide.pdf>

¹⁶ Source: CRCC website: http://www.crccertification.com/pages/program_pre_approval_for_ce_providers/115.php

¹⁷ For a list of training providers / CRCC approved programs see: <http://www.crccertification.com/pages/certificants/111.php>

¹⁸ Source: Federal Register, Proposed Rule 03/15/2013: <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/03/15/2013-06077/rehabilitation-continuing-education-program-rcep-for-the-technical-assistance-and-continuing>

Each TACE center has an advisory committee that represents the various VR stakeholders in its region. Many TACE centers have several levels of advisory committees. For example, in New England (RSA Region 1) the state VR agency directors are part of the TACE advisory committee. VR directors meet quarterly and provide valuable input on VR trends in the state, the region, and nationally. They inform the TACE center about TA needs and possible training needs. The state VR agency training coordinators are also part of the TACE formal advisory committee. They provide input on the training needs and overall initiatives of the state VR agencies. They also discuss regional opportunities for collaboration with the support of the TACE center.

Second, because TACE centers are embedded regionally, they can respond more promptly and effectively to local and regional issues as they emerge (than would perhaps be possible with only one large national TACE center) through in-person and online training and TA. TACE centers are approved by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) to give continuing education credits for TACE trainings. Third, the approach used to staff the TACE centers is another advantage of the model. TACE centers employ knowledgeable and expert staff who represent former state VR agency and partner staff but also include university staff (academicians and researchers).

The national TACE collaborative is a powerful network of resources available to each TACE center. Collaboration and partnership among centers is encouraged and facilitated in various ways. For example, TACE centers share training content and best / effective practices, jointly develop and conduct training and TA, and conduct training and TA for other regions as needed. Nationally, TACE centers have shared training resources in areas such as ethics and motivational interviewing. There is ongoing communication about what are emerging issues and how these need to be addressed, affording TACE centers an opportunity for enhanced collaboration. For more information about the national TACE collaborative, visit: <http://interwork.sdsu.edu/sp/ntc/>

Figure 1: 10 TACE Centers in the United States Form the National TACE Collaborative



Source: National TACE Collaborative website: http://interwork.sdsu.edu/sp/ntc/tace_regions/

3.2 New England TACE Center at the ICI (RSA Region 1)

The New England TACE center is a joint project of the ICI, UMass Boston and [Assumption College](#) (subcontractor). It serves state VR agencies and their partners in the RSA Region 1. Region 1 is made up of the six New England states and includes 10 state VR agencies and two tribal VR programs.¹⁹ The center provides training (in person and online) and TA on a wide-range of VR related topics and issues to those state VR agencies and their partners. The center also offers ACRE (Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators, explained later) training providing an ACRE certification to trainees who complete it.

¹⁹ For a list of these agencies and programs see: <http://www.tacene.org/region-1-vr-agencies>

This training is specifically for employment support professionals who work for community rehabilitation providers (that often contract with state VR agencies) and focuses on job development and supports.

Needs Assessment to Plan TACE Training and TA: The New England TACE center conducts annual and ongoing needs assessments with state VR agencies for them to identify where the agency needs training or TA. RSA also provides input on where training and TA are needed through the state VR agency monitoring reports (RSA monitors agencies every five years). Needs assessment mostly takes the form of semi-structured interviews with VR agency directors and senior staff, as well as VR agency training coordinators. The interviews are conducted by TACE staff who tailor the questions to the individual agency and its needs and issues. Regional needs and issues often emerge when TACE staff facilitate meetings of VR agency directors and / or VR agency training coordinators. Following are some examples of the kinds of regional issues and needs that were identified over the past 18 months or from 2012–2013.

- Develop / share approaches to new VR counselor training
- Improve services and outcomes for clients with dual diagnosis (substance abuse disorders / mental illness)
- Working with and improving outcomes for clients with criminal histories
- How to utilize motivational interviewing techniques in counseling
- Improve the quality of caseload documentation
- Improve caseload management skills
- Help staff maintain ethical practices in their roles in VR
- Develop skills in supervisors and aspiring supervisors

TACE Training and TA: The identified issues and needs drive TACE training and TA. Training is provided both in person and online. A list of New England TACE center training events (in-person workshops, conferences, and online training), both past and future, is available at: <http://www.tacene.org/calendar> Continuing education credits are offered for TACE trainings. The online training courses are geared to people with a broad range of computer experience. Courses are led by an instructor who remains involved throughout the training. They are about one month long and have a clear start and end date. Courses include a range of activities (such as fieldwork activities, practice exercises, or scheduled phone or web conferences) and use a variety of formats to deliver training content (such as readings, presentations, discussion forums, phone or web conferences, videos, professional development activities, and assignments).

In terms of TA, the New England TACE center offers two types of TA: Peer TA and Individualized TA. **Peer TA** is based on the concept of “community of practice” (CoP) where people in similar positions (peers) come together to support each other. This concept was found to be well suited to state VR agencies and their partners. It allows for regular and ongoing interaction (in person, via phone or online) and for networking, resource sharing, and problem solving. The goal is to transfer “practicable” knowledge. The New England TACE center established **11 active Peer TA groups:**²⁰

1. VR Directors
2. VR Training Coordinators
3. VR Fiscal Administrators
4. VR Marketing & Employment Services Team (MA only)
5. VR Statewide Employment Coordinators
6. VR Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) Coordinators
7. VR Business Enterprise Program (Randolph-Sheppard) staff
8. VR Assistive Technology Staff
9. Ticket-To-Work Specialists (return to work)
10. State Coordinators for the Deaf
11. Transition Staff

²⁰ For a description of each Peer TA group see: <http://www.tacene.org/vr-peer-ta>

The New England TACE center also provides **Individualized TA**—TA that addresses a particular problem, need or concern of an individual state VR agency. TACE staff will discuss this problem, issue or concern with the VR agency and then develop a customized plan to provide TA. TA may include consultation with specific staff or groups, facilitation, resource sharing, outreach / exploration of agencies with successful models, coordination or Peer TA meetings. For more information about the New England TACE center and its training and TA efforts, visit: <http://www.tacene.org>

4. Competency-Based Training for Employment Support Staff

4.1 Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) Training Competencies and Certification

ACRE is a national membership organization representing trainers and educators who work in the disability field. ACRE's mission is to raise the standards of disability employment services and to improve disability employment outcomes through competency-based training and training certification. ACRE evaluates training curricula in community-based employment services against a set of standards and approves those curricula that meet ACRE standards. Curricula are approved for a period of five years and then have to be submitted to ACRE for review and re-certification. Upon completion of ACRE-approved trainings, participants receive a national certificate. For more information about ACRE, visit: <http://www.acreducators.org>

ACRE Standards and National Certification for Training Providers: ACRE standards consist of 38 competencies grouped into four domains (ACRE, 2013):

- Application of core values and principles to practice
- Individualized assessment and employment / career planning
- Community research and job development
- Workplace and related supports

These competencies are based on the supported employment competencies developed by the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE, explained later). ACRE refined and expanded the APSE competencies to extend beyond supported employment and to include multiple other approaches to disability employment, such as competitive employment, customized employment, supported employment, and transitional employment.²¹ Moreover, ACRE competencies allow for two levels of training and certification in community-based employment services:

1. Basic Employment Services Training / Certificate
2. Professional Employment Services Training / Certificate

Training leading to the **Basic Employment Services Certificate** must be 40 hours long and sufficiently address the ACRE competencies.²² Training leading to the **Professional Employment Services Certificate** must also be 40 hours long. This training addresses the ACRE competencies at a more advanced knowledge and skill level than the Basic Employment Services Training.²³ ACRE began offering competency-based training and training certification in 2005. Since then, more than 3,100 professionals have completed an ACRE-approved training program and obtained a certificate in Basic or Professional Employment Services. ACRE maintains a registry of professionals who completed ACRE training. This registry takes the form of an online database that is publicly accessible and that can be searched by name, RSA region / international, type of certificate, year of certificate award, and / or state.²⁴ As of November 2013, there are 513 professionals with a Basic Employment Services Certificate and 20 professionals with a Professional Employment Services Certificate in New England (RSA Region 1).

ACRE Curriculum Review and Certified Programs: ACRE has a structured curriculum review process.²⁵ Training providers must become ACRE organizational members before they can submit a training curriculum for review. The curriculum review

and renewal processes are free to organizational members as of 2013. However, this could change in the future. As part of the application process, training providers must conduct an assessment of their training curriculum to see that it meets all of the

21 Source: ACRE website: <http://www.acreducators.org/content/acre-2013-competencies>

22 Source: ACRE website: <http://www.acreducators.org/certificates/basic-employment-certificate>

23 Source: ACRE website: <http://www.acreducators.org/certificates/professional-employment-certificate>

24 ACRE registry of professionals / certifiants: <http://www.acreducators.org/certificate-registry>

25 Source: ACRE website: <http://www.acreducators.org/training-providers/training-provider-requirements>

ACRE competencies. In addition to the assessment results and other curriculum materials, training providers / applicants must also submit evidence of the quality of their training and trainers, their capacity to provide training, and their commitment to individualized community-based employment. An ACRE Curriculum Review Committee comprised of 5–8 professionals who represent ACRE's diverse membership base reviews all applications and makes a final determination. Once a curriculum has been approved, the training provider can start offering the training and award the national certificate.

ACRE maintains a registry of ACRE training providers. This registry takes the form of an online database that is publicly accessible and that can be searched by provider name, RSA region, international (Yes/No), state, and / or training format (in person, online, or both).²⁶ As of November 2013, there are four ACRE-approved training providers in New England (RSA Region 1) including the ICI.

ICI as An ACRE Approved Training Provider: The ICI offers an ACRE-approved **Innovative Employment Training** leading to a Basic Employment Services Certificate. It is a seven-day in person training that includes instructor-led workshops, group work, and fieldwork. Some parts of the training are offered online as well. Fieldwork provides participants an opportunity to practice what they have learned in the training and to strengthen their skills. Participants must complete the 40 hours of training and the six fieldwork assignments in order to be awarded a certificate. Below is the training schedule for the seven-day period:

- Day 1: Foundations of Community Employments (6 hours)
- Day 2: Getting to Know Your Job Seeker & Planning for Success (6 hours)
- Day 3: Partnerships to Promote Employment & Understanding Social Security Work Incentives (6 hours)
- Days 4–5: Exploring Employer Needs & Developing Quality Matches (12 hours)
- Days 6–7: Training & Support Strategies (12 hours)

The training curriculum and information about training fees are available upon request from the ICI. The ICI has been offering this training since 2005, awarding more than 500 Basic Level Employment Services Certificates and over 20 Professional Level Employment Certificates. Note that the ICI has been approved by ACRE to provide Innovative Employment Training for both the Basic level and the Professional level. However, we currently only offer training for the Basic level.

4.2 Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) Professional Competencies and Certification

APSE is a national membership organization dedicated to integrated employment. APSE's mission is to advance employment and self-sufficiency for all people with disabilities through advocacy and training. As the name suggests, APSE supports Employment First-employment in the general labor market as a desirable and achievable employment outcome for all people with disabilities, including those with significant disabilities.²⁷ APSE has chapters in 35 states and the District of Columbia and is currently in the process of establishing international chapters. Members include individuals with disabilities and their families, disability service providers and professionals, businesses and employers. For more information about APSE, visit: <http://www.apse.org>

APSE Training, Competencies, and National Certification for Professionals: APSE offers a variety of training opportunities to both members and non-members.²⁸ This includes an annual conference that brings together business and community leaders with the goal to share best practices in employment services and supports for people with disabilities. Other training opportunities include webinars on topics such as job development, self-employment, transition, public policy, organizational change, and autism. There are also online courses on topics such as supported employment or employment for individuals with mental illness, as well as chapter events.

In addition to training, APSE offers employment support professionals (ESP) an opportunity to become a Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP) by passing the CESP examination. ESPs include job coaches, job developers, transition employment specialists, job placement personnel, and employment specialists / consultants. The CESP certification program is based on a set of nine competencies for supported employment that APSE developed with input from a national expert group (APSE, 2010):

²⁶ ACRE registry of training providers: <http://www.acreducators.org/find-training-providers>

²⁷ For more information about APSE's position on Employment First, visit: <http://www.apse.org/employmentfirst/>

²⁸ Source: APSE website: <http://www.apse.org/training/>

1. Introduction to Supported Employment
2. Assessment and Career Planning
3. Marketing and Job Development
4. On-the-Job Training and Supports
5. Ongoing Supports
6. Managing Benefits
7. Organizational Change
8. Special Populations
9. Self-Employment

APSE's certification program is the first national competency-based certification program for ESPs.

CESP Examination, Certification, and Re-Certification: APSE established an Employment Support Professional Certification Council (ESPCC) to oversee CESP examination, certification, and re-certification. To be eligible for the CESP examination, individuals must meet the minimum education and work experience requirements.²⁹ They must have a high school diploma or equivalent. In terms of work experience, individuals must have one year of ESP work experience (which may include up to three months of internship or practicum time) or nine months of ESP work experience with a training component. Additionally, individuals must adhere to and sign the ESPCC Code of Conduct. Individuals submit their application to the ESPCC, and the ESPCC will then determine the applicant's eligibility. Once applicants have received confirmation of their eligibility, they can register to take the examination at one of the examination locations. The examination fee is US\$ 159. The CESP examination consists of multiple-choice questions that are administered in person over a three-and-a-half hour period. Questions address five content areas based on the APSE supported employment competencies:

1. Application of Core Values and Principles to Practice
2. Individualized Assessment and Employment / Career Planning
3. Community Research and Job Development
4. Workplace and Related Supports
5. Ongoing Supports

Examination questions are based on scenarios, asking test takers to find the most appropriate course of action for each situation. APSE is currently working on a study guide that will be available for test takers in the future. To develop the examination, APSE formed a national group of subject matter experts and charged them with defining the role of the ESP and determining the knowledge and skills needed for this job.³⁰ The expert group developed a set of questions which were vetted by a number of work groups who analyzed each question for content, relevance, accuracy, and so on. The questions were then narrowed down to create the first version of the CESP examination. The examination is updated regularly. As part of the examination, test takers receive feedback forms, where they are asked to report questions they feel are confusing or inaccurate. These questions are then reviewed by the expert group that is creating the next version of the examination. In addition to adjusting current questions, new questions are written as well. Subsequent versions of the examination are subject to the same intense review as the first version. APSE began offering the CESP certification in 2011. Version 1 of the CESP examination had 503 test takers and 82.4% passed the test. Version 2 has had 62 test takers so far with a pass rate of 82.7%.³¹

CESPs must re-certify every three years by accumulating 36 continuing education credits directly related to ESP or by re-examination. Individuals pay a re-certification fee of US\$ 125. APSE maintains a list of acceptable activities to obtain continuing education credits.³² For more information about the CESP examination, certification, and re-certification, see CESP (2011–2012) or visit the APSE website: <http://www.apse.org/certification/>

29 Source: APSE website: <http://www.apse.org/certification/>

30 Source: Personal communication with Jennifer Polkes, APSE CES Coordinator, November 6, 2013.

31 Source: Personal communication with Jennifer Polkes, APSE CES Coordinator, September 3, 2013.

32 For a list of acceptable activities for CE credit see <http://www.apse.org/docs/Activities%20Accepted%20for%20CE%20Credits.pdf>

4.3 ICI's College of Employment Services (CES)

Housed at the ICI, CES is an online training program targeted at employment support professionals. It aims to provide these professionals with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to effectively support people with disabilities and other challenges in finding employment. CES is a joint partnership of the ICI, [Elsevier](#), [the Institute on Community Integration at University of Minnesota](#), and APSE. The mission of CES is threefold:

- Educate. CES delivers curricula that are aligned with proven best practices in the field and meet national competencies and standards. Each course establishes clear professional measures for skills, performance, and advancement. [...]
- Enrich. CES gives employment professionals a strong foundation of practical skills and core values in their field [and] a sense of purpose and confidence [...]
- Inspire. [...] Professionals will find a new sense of pride in their jobs [...] they're likely to keep these jobs longer, and to see their work as a fulfilling career [...]³³

Program Design and Curriculum: The curriculum was designed using self-paced modules and a practical problem-based learning structure, providing maximum flexibility to students (they can access course content any time) and supporting them as they work towards achieving the program's learning objectives. The curriculum addresses all of the competencies covered in the APSE examination for certification as a Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP). This means that CES program graduates are well-prepared to take the APSE examination to become a CESP. Additionally, all CES courses have been approved by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) for continuing education credits. The curriculum consists of 11 core courses:

1. Strategies for Job Development: Part 1 and 2
2. Principles of Career Development
3. Foundations of Employment Services
4. Business Perspectives
5. Performance Coaching and Support: Part 1 and 2
6. Using Work Incentives Towards Self-Sufficiency
7. Funding
8. Ticket to Work
9. Networking

See Appendix G: CES Flyer for a list of course descriptions. An Editorial Board, comprised of experts in the field, reviews all courses, making sure that the curriculum represents the best practices in the field. The existing curriculum is being updated regularly and whenever there is a change in policy and / or practice. New courses are also being added. For example, four new courses are scheduled to be released in fall / winter 2013: Employment Services for People with Mental Health Disabilities, Employment for People with Disabilities and Criminal Histories, Networking, and Job Creation. CES program staff are also in the process of adding a component that would supplement the online training where students have to demonstrate skill development. The curriculum can be purchased as a training package (prices are available upon request from the ICI). Course content can be modified to other contexts and to meet more specific training needs. For more information about CES, visit: <http://directcourseonline.com/employmentservices/>

33 Source: CES program website: <http://directcourseonline.com/employmentservices/about-ces/>

Conclusion

Rehabilitation counseling is an academic subject taught at the graduate level at universities and colleges in the United States. Pre-service training combines a focus on academic coursework, fieldwork experiences, research and clinical skills. These focus areas are reinforced by the CORE standards for master's level rehabilitation counseling programs. The 96 CORE approved rehabilitation counseling programs are a major source of qualified counselor candidates for state VR agencies; many of these agencies require counselors to be Certified Rehabilitation Counselors. Similar trends toward national standards, competency-based training, and professional certification can be seen in the field of disability employment services with ACRE establishing standards for providers of training in community-based employment services and APSE offering a national certification for community employment service provider staff. Finally, the Rehabilitation Services Administration is heavily investing in the TACE model to support state VR agencies and their partners through in-service training and TA.

Appendices

Appendix A: Guest Lecture PowerPoint Slides

[Web link: http://www.communityinclusion.org/nivr_a/](http://www.communityinclusion.org/nivr_a/)

Appendix B: Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) Poster (in Japanese)

[Web link: http://www.communityinclusion.org/nivr_b/](http://www.communityinclusion.org/nivr_b/)

Appendix C: Rehabilitation Counseling Student Handbook

[Web link: http://www.communityinclusion.org/nivr_c/](http://www.communityinclusion.org/nivr_c/)

Appendix D: Rehabilitation Counseling Field Placement Handbook

[Web link: http://www.communityinclusion.org/nivr_d/](http://www.communityinclusion.org/nivr_d/)

Appendix E: Rehabilitation Counseling Capstone Experience

[Web link: http://www.communityinclusion.org/nivr_e/](http://www.communityinclusion.org/nivr_e/)

Appendix F: Certified Employment Support Professional-Certification Handbook

[Web link: http://www.apse.org/docs/CESP%20Candidate%20Handbook.1.12.pdf](http://www.apse.org/docs/CESP%20Candidate%20Handbook.1.12.pdf)

Appendix G: College of Employment Services (CES) Flyer

[Web link: http://www.communityinclusion.org/nivr_g/](http://www.communityinclusion.org/nivr_g/)

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