

Counselor Responsibility

Your state agency has agreed to participate in a research study about health and employment. Your role in this project is to solicit consumer participation in the project. Specifically, we ask that counselors in this local office (1) recruit a total of 15 consumers to participate in the study; (2) assist them with completing the informed consent and release of information form; (3) request that they complete the first health survey at the VR office, and (4) mail project materials in a pre-stamped envelope to RTC:Rural. Consumer participants will be asked to complete an additional four surveys (over the next two years). These later surveys will not require your participation. We know you are busy and have tried to minimize the counselor role in this process. The following steps should be followed during the recruitment process.

Step 1: Identify new clients that meet the study's inclusion requirements:

- The client has a physical disability (see Appendix A for this definition).
- The client is between the ages of 21-65.
- The client has been accepted to receive vocational rehabilitation services.

Step 2: Provide a brief explanation of the research project to eligible clients of VR services (see Appendix B for Talking Points):

- The primary aim of the study and its importance.
- The confidentiality of client answers to survey questions.
 - That the decision to participate in the study will not affect the services the client is receiving (or will receive) at your agency.
 - That the client will be asked to fill out the current health survey and an additional four surveys, mailed at six month intervals over the next two years.
- That small stipends will be provided to compensate client time to participate in the study (\$5 for the initial request and \$5 for each additional re-contact over the next two years).

Step 3: Ask the client if he/she is willing to participate in the study.

- If the client agrees to participate, get a Study Participant Folder.

Step 4: . Ask the eligible client to complete all the items in the Study Participant Folder at the VR office.

- Assist the client with completion of the Informed Consent Form, which includes release of Vocational Rehabilitation records concerning VR services provided to the client, costs of services, and the clients employment outcome.
- Make two copies of the signed Informed Consent Form; one for the client and one for your records.
- Give the client the \$5.00 stipend and the contact information card contained in the stipend envelope.

Step 5: Provide a private place for the client to complete the baseline health survey.

- At the client's request, assist with any questions related to survey content.

Step 6: Request that the client place all materials (the original Informed Consent Form and

baseline Health Survey) in the stamped envelope addressed to RTC: Rural.

Step 7: Recover the sealed envelope and place it in the outgoing mail.

- Include your name and address on the return envelope for future contact.

After 15 clients have been recruited to participate from your local office, counselor responsibilities are minimal. RTC: Rural, however, may ask for your assistance with study participant re-contact information and extraction of the VR data records needed to complete the longitudinal study.



Appendix A

Definition of Physical Disability

For the purposes of this research study, the following definition of physical disability will apply:

A physical condition, including an anatomical loss; a musculoskeletal or neurological condition such as multiple sclerosis; or a respiratory or cardiovascular impairment, which results from injury, disease or congenital disorder and that significantly interferes with or significantly limits at least one major life activity of a person.

Where “major life activity” is defined as:

Self-care, performance of manual tasks unrelated to gainful employment, walking, receptive and expressive language, breathing, working, participating in educational programs, mobility other than walking, and capacity for independent living.

Adapted from: Wisconsin Statute - Section 15.197 (4) (a) (2).

Appendix B

Talking Points: Discussing the Project with Eligible Clients

- RTC:Rural is interested in learning about the relationship among VR clients':
 - health behaviors (e.g. exercise, smoking, nutrition, etc.)
 - secondary health conditions (e.g. pressure sores, infections, depression, pain, sleep problems, etc.) and
 - employment outcomes (e.g. months of sustained employment or training, dollars spent on VR services, etc.)

- Past research has shown that after controlling for specific disabilities, secondary health conditions or health complications compromise or prevent participation in many activities, including employment.

- RTC: Rural would like to explore this relationship more thoroughly and this requires people who are willing to provide health and employment data over time.

- RTC:Rural ensures that all collected health and employment data will be kept confidential. This means that:
 - your *individual answers* will be aggregated or joined with other study participants prior to publication of any results; and
 - all identifying information (e.g. your name, address, location) will be separated from your answers or data that is collected.

- Your decision to participate in this study will have no bearing on the services you receive at this VR agency. Participation is strictly voluntary and optional.

- If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete five health surveys over the next two years (at six month intervals). You will receive a small stipend or payment to thank you for your time to participate in the study.

- You will also be asked to sign a participant consent form to participate in the study. This form will also include a VR records release statement so that we can provide RTC:Rural with information about the services you receive from Vocational Rehabilitation.

- You can withdraw at any time from this study. Even if you agree to participate today, you are not required to continue in the study.

- This research is very important and may lead to better vocational services in the future. One possible outcome of this study is the development of a health promotion program designed specifically for people with disabilities who desire employment.

→ Would you be willing to participate in this study? (If no, thank the client for his or her time discussing this project. If yes, take out a Study Participant Folder).

Counselor Checklist

Please complete this checklist for each participant you recruit into the study. It is important that all elements are completed to assure consistent recruitment protocol and complete paperwork to proceed.

The consumer meets the inclusion criteria of the study.

- Physical disability
- Between the ages of 21-65
- Receiving VR services

The consumer has been informed about the project.

- Confidentiality
- The decision to participate will not affect VR services received
- Five surveys over two years
- Release of VR records to the RTC:Rural
- Ability to withdraw from the study

The consumer has signed the required documentation.

- Informed Consent Form
- Release of Information Statement

The signed Informed Consent Form and Release of Information Statement is copied for both the participant and VR records.

- A copy of the signed form has been provided to the study participant.
- A copy of the signed form has been placed in the participant's file at the VR office.

The consumer has received the stipend and contact information for RTC: Rural.

- \$5.00 stipend
- Contact Card

The client returns study materials to the counselor in a sealed envelope provided by RTC: Rural. The envelope should contain:

- Signed *original* Informed Consent and Release of Information Form
- Health Survey

The counselor mails the pre-stamped addressed envelope to RTC: Rural after providing counselor contact information.

- Counselor contact information completed (on outside of the envelope as the return address).
- Materials are mailed to RTC: Rural