

# VOCATIONAL EVALUATION AND CAREER ASSESSMENT PROFESSIONALS JOURNAL

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## VECAP

## VECAP

Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals





**PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL OF VOCATIONAL EVALUATION  
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## **VECAP Mission**

The Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals (VECAP) is a nonprofit organization originally founded in 1967 to promote the professions and services of vocational evaluation and work adjustment. Formerly known as the Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association (VEWAA), the name was changed in 2003 to better reflect the focus of the organization as well as emphasize the independent status of the organization. This group has no affiliation with the National Rehabilitation Association (NRA) or the NRA/VEWAA.

The VECAP organization is committed to advance and improve the fields of vocational evaluation and career assessment and represents the needs of the professionals who provide those services. Its scope of services will encompass individuals who need assistance with vocational development and/or career decision-making.

VECAP is comprised of membership of professionals who provide vocational evaluation, assessment, and career services and others interested in these services.

VECAP members identify, guide, and support the efforts of persons served to develop and realize training, education, and employment plans as they work to attain their career goals.

For membership information visit [VECAP.org](http://VECAP.org).

# VECAP JOURNAL GUIDELINES FOR PUBLICATION

## Editorial Guidelines

The Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals Journal (Journal) is an official publication of VECAP. The purpose of the Journal is to advance knowledge and practices in the fields of vocational evaluation, career assessment, and work adjustment. The Journal has three target audiences: practitioners and other professionals, educators, and consumers. The Journal provides readers with critical information to inform their practice in assessment or evaluation and therapeutic adjustment services; all with a vocational perspective. Practitioners, educators, researchers and consumers may submit a manuscript for review. You do not have to be a member of VECAP to submit.

The Journal seeks the following types of manuscripts: research; theory building; perspectives on vocational evaluation or career assessment; reviews of books, tests, work samples; or other related topics of interest.

## Manuscript Submission

1. Use the Manuscript Review Form (see VECAP.org) to determine if the manuscript is ready for submission.
2. Submit the manuscript as an email attachment to Journal@VECAP.org.
3. Receive a confirmation email (within 1-2 days) with manuscript review number.
4. Manuscript is blind reviewed by the Editorial Board or invited reviewers who have expertise in a specific topic (typically requires 3-4 weeks).
5. Receive status email with one of the following conditions: accepted, accepted with revisions, or rejected.

## Submission Guidelines

Each manuscript must be prepared according to the current edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. All manuscripts except book reviews and brief reports require a 150-250 word abstract with 3 keywords. An additional Journal requirement is to include author bio(s), which is a single page that contains the author's name(s), credentials, and short (100 words) biographical information that will appear in the Journal if the article is published.

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## EDITORIAL

The purpose of a journal is to serve as the repository of knowledge for a profession. We have added three articles that will inform you and improve our practice. First, Jack Musgrave provides a “best practices” description of LearnToWork, which is a service developed by a community rehabilitation program to meet CARF standards for employment exploration. In the Fall 2009 VECAP Journal Amanda McCarthy and Randy McCarthy published their research on *Assessing Vocational Evaluator Knowledge and Use of Assistive Technology*. They have continued their research in a report of how vocational evaluators use online assistive technology resources. In addition to the survey results you will find a list of useful websites. If you practice forensic evaluations, have considered this area of practice, or been subpoenaed, then Craig Johnston’s article on standards of admissibility provides you with information you need. Using case examples, he describes the qualifications you need to be considered an expert and the methodological rigors of testimony. This issue also contains a bonus report of the *VECAP Journal Readership Survey*, in which you told us what you wanted, suggested specific topics and asked for changes in the editorial process.

Looking ahead to future issues of the Journal, we welcome your submissions. In the survey you requested (in order) test reviews, work sample reviews, original research, brief reports and theory based articles. Most of you are practitioners—thoroughly involved in the delivery of services to help consumers/clients/customers/ students/patients (depending on your setting) choose a career, select a training program, or get a job. All of the identified topics fall within the scope of the practitioner-scholar. You can review tests and work samples that you use every day. Which ones help you? Which ones are good in certain situations or with specific groups? You have a wealth of information in your old case files. Those who use work samples have probably administered them at least 50 times. You can suggest a restandardization of a work sample with an N=50 (more is merrier and better too) of those who completed the work sample and were successful on the job. If your agency is CARF accredited, then you have follow-up information about the outcomes of your services. Both of these are examples of original research you can publish. Have you conducted a survey of referral sources and their satisfaction with services? Or developed a technique for on-the-job evaluations? Either of these can be brief reports. Finally, have you been at a meeting with fellow professionals and discussed what evaluation or assessment should be? Dialoged about the ethical dilemma of individualization of services versus the demands of payers? Answer yes to these or similar questions and you have a theory-based manuscript topic already selected.

In response to your requests: we have made the process for submission clearer and more transparent. We have added a managing editor to make sure you know what is happening with your manuscript. We have added new reviewers and provided them with clearer guidelines for review. We have a collaborative and inclusive approach to the editing process, which means that we will work with you from submission to publication. Finally, we have made it easier to contact us with a single email address: [Journal@vecap.org](mailto:Journal@vecap.org).

We look forward to dialoging with you and, of course, receiving your manuscripts.

Cari Schmidt and Steven Sligar, Co-editors  
Min Kim, Managing Editor

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# LearnToWork: A Model for Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation Employment Exploration

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## Abstract

A rehabilitation facility seeking continued accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) for Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation was required to meet a new standard related to Employment Exploration. The facility chose to use simulated work stations to meet this standard, and a program entitled LearnToWork was developed and implemented using Valpar Component Work Samples as the primary medium for simulated employment. The LearnToWork program was considered successful due to helping the facility gain accreditation, and a pilot study suggested that participants gained additional knowledge about their abilities, interests, and employee expectations. The LearnToWork program is offered as a model to other Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation programs seeking CARF accreditation.

## Introduction

The 2008 Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) Manual Section 3.D Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation Standard 8 states in part that “Employment Exploration sites that are used for evaluations are assessed as to their appropriateness for the person seeking employment” (CARF Manual, 2008, p. 183). Examples for meeting that standard are suggested by the CARF Manual (2008, p. 183) as follows:

“Situational assessment can be accomplished using simulated job stations or on-the-job evaluation. Simulated job sites are located within the organization. On-the-job evaluations are located outside the organization. Both do not have to be used unless the needs of a person served are unmet with only one.”

Furthermore, the 2008 CARF manual stated that Standard 8 had changed from the 2007 CARF Manual. More specifically, Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation Services would utilize a variety of evaluation techniques as appropriate to the individual served. Prior to 2008, Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation Services *could choose* to meet Standard 8 whereas they are *now required* to meet the standard to receive CARF accreditation.

The Standard 8 example clearly suggests this standard can be met through a situational assessment. Clear definitions of situational assessments vary, but are probably best represented by the following definition (Anthony & Jansen, 1984, p. 537):

“Situational assessment is the longitudinal observation and rating of job behaviors and attitudes in actual or simulated work environments by a trained evaluator. Typical scales rate clients on aspects

such as work quality (e.g., error rate), and quantity (e.g., % or industrial production rate), the ability to perform specific work tasks (e.g., alphabetizing), work attitudes (e.g., work motivation), and interpersonal relations (e.g., interaction with supervisor and coworkers).”

### **Vocational/Career Exploration**

Vocational exploration is a necessary part of comprehensive vocational evaluation and can be defined as “the process by which an individual learns about the world of work as it relates to interests and prior knowledge” (Dowd, 1993, p. 30). Career exploration can be defined as “the identification of vocational interests, awareness and exploration of the world of work” (McFarlane, 1988, p. 15). Based on these definitions, both vocational and career exploration share very similar definitions and are generally used interchangeably.

A situational assessment is included with job site evaluation, work samples, and psychometric testing as one of four vocational evaluation methods (Siefker, 1996). Further evidence for using actual or simulated work environments for evaluation purposes is provided by the Rehabilitation Consultant Handbook Revised Edition 2001 that states “on-the-job evaluation is more commonly used with those persons who have little or no vocational experience” (Weed & Field, 2001, p. 97). A work sample is a well-defined work activity used to assess a person’s vocational aptitude(s), work characteristics, and/or vocational interests (Fry & Botterbusch, 1988). This literature review suggests that vocational/career exploration can be accomplished using a situational assessment, on-the job evaluation and/or work samples and are reasonable methods of employment

exploration for individuals with disabilities who have little or no work experience.

### **Background**

A rural, Midwest, Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation Service (CVES) seeking 2009 CARF accreditation determined the best approach to comply with Standard 8 was to establish a model using simulated job stations, LearnToWork. Factors influencing this decision included the high number of referrals, current staffing levels, and limited sustainable resources to provide on-the-job evaluations in the community.

LearnToWork was established and implemented in time for the April 2009 CARF Survey. The survey report stated “the vocational evaluation services consists of an *exemplary* physical facility, state-of-the-art testing products and technologies, and highly qualified and competent staff members who go above and beyond in the provision of this comprehensive service component” (italics added for emphasis). A rating of exemplary is defined as “unique, innovative, creative, above and beyond conformance to the standard” (D. Redfield, personal communication, June 10, 2009). The LearnToWork Program was a contributing reason for this rating. Therefore, the author felt the LearnToWork Program deserved consideration as a model to assist other professionals to comply with CARF standards.

### **LearnToWork Overview**

The LearnToWork Program was developed by a Certified Vocational Evaluation Specialist (CVE) with several years of vocational evaluation and management experience. Rehabilitation graduate students completing internship

requirements implemented the program under the supervision of the CVE.

Individuals with developmental disabilities and specific learning disabilities were targeted for inclusion in the LearnToWork program because psychometric testing did not provide useful information. Initial referral was for a comprehensive vocational evaluation and a thorough review of referral information was conducted to determine program appropriateness. Also reviewed were any medical or other conditions that would prevent participation or pose safety concerns. Upon identification, individuals went through a job application and interview process, pre-test, work orientation, and post-test.

The pre-test consisted of 10 multiple choice questions, and 15 true/false questions related to employee and employer expectations, minimum wage levels, and other employment terminology (See Appendix A for pre-test). The post-test was identical to the pre-test with three additional specific post-test questions. The three additional 'yes or no' post-test questions were; "1) The Employment Exploration Assessment helped me learn more about My Work Abilities, 2) The Employment Exploration Assessment helped me learn more about My Work Interests, and 3) The Employment Exploration Assessment helped me learn more about "What is Expected of an Employee".

The Employment Exploration was one-day a week over a three to four week period to allow individuals participating in other transitional programming to participate. Prior to completion, a client feedback session was held to discuss both positive and negative work behaviors and provide an overview of work speed and quality. Finally, a monthly status report that discussed the results was sent to the referring vocational rehabilitation counselor.

## **Description of Simulated Work Setting and Materials**

The LearnToWork Program was housed in a room approximately 16' x 24'. The goal was to replicate a work setting, which included a private entrance and restroom facility. Employment posters required in work settings were displayed along with signage related to safety and reporting injuries. The name LearnToWork was displayed on a whiteboard, as well as, supervisor and employee names, and general hours of business. A time clock was utilized and a table was available for all breaks and lunches.

The five Valpar Component Work Samples (VCWS) used in LearnToWork were developed by Brandon, Button, Rastatter, & Ross. These included: VCWS #1 Small Tools Mechanical (1974a), VCWS #5 Clerical Comprehension and Aptitude (1974b), VCWS #8 Simulated Assembly (1974c), VCWS #10 Tri-Level Measurement (1974d), and VCWS #14 Integrated Peer Performance (1977).

In addition, behavioral observations were conducted and recorded on forms that were developed for situational assessments and other rehabilitation related activities. The Revised Materials Development Center (MDC) Behavior Identification Form (Botterbusch, 1984) was the observation form used for Employment Exploration. This form contains 30 separate categories and is intended to be a complete and comprehensive listing of relevant vocational behaviors.

Finally, CARF Standard 8 states that Employment Exploration sites that are used for evaluations are assessed as to their appropriateness for the person seeking employment with regard to: adequacy of supervision, safety, specific work-site requirements, potential job accommodations, accessibility, expectations of quality and

quantity of work, job/task analysis, and potential employment opportunity (CARF Manual, 2008). The facility had previously developed a form used for on-the-job evaluations that met Standard 8 criteria. This form was modified for use in the LearnToWork Program and continued to meet Standard 8 Criteria.

### **Conversion of Valpar Work Samples Dictionary of Occupational Titles to O\*NET Occupational Titles**

The Valpar Work Samples are valid test instruments that yield time and work quality scores. These can indicate an individual's ability to perform certain Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT) occupations found in the manuals' normative table. The listed occupations generally represent unskilled to semiskilled jobs typically found in the community that may be learned through on-the-job training by persons with developmental and learning disabilities. However, since the DOT 4th edition (DOL, 1991) is still in use, another occupational system, the Occupational Information Network (O\*NET) is also concurrently used for vocational rehabilitation purposes (O\*NET, 2002). In fact, O\*NET may be preferred because unlike the DOT 4th edition, it is current and crosswalks with other up-to-date occupational resources such as the "*Occupational Outlook Handbook*" (JIST, 2008), "*Enhanced Occupational Outlook Handbook*" (JIST, 2007b), and the "*New Guide to Occupational Exploration*" (JIST, 2006).

Therefore, for the LearnToWork simulated work stations to represent up-to-date occupations that could be used with previously described occupational resources, it was necessary for the Valpar Work samples to represent O\*NET occupations rather than DOT occupations. This was

accomplished using the OASYS Job Match Version 2.40 as follows. A DOT job found in a Valpar Work Sample manual was entered into the OASYS. The OASYS system was then able to produce the similar O\*NET occupation name and number. Next, the O\*NET Dictionary of Occupational Titles, 4th Edition (JIST, 2007c) was used to identify a training level necessary for that O\*NET occupation, and one of six Holland Code interest areas defined in the Career Interest Inventory (JIST, 2007a) as:

“Realistic: Like work activities that include practical, hands-on problems and solutions. Enjoy dealing with plants, animals, and real-world materials, such as wood, tools, and machinery. Enjoy outside work, and do not like occupations that mainly involve paperwork or working closely with others.

Investigative: Like work activities that have to do with ideas and thinking more than with physical activity. Like to search for facts and figure out problems mentally rather than persuade and lead people.

Artistic: Like work activities that have to do with the artistic side of things, such as forms, designs, and patterns. They like self-expression in their work. They prefer settings where work can be done without following a clear set of rules.

Social: Like work activities that assist others and promote learning and personal development. They prefer to communicate more, than work with objects, machines, or data. They like to teach, to give advice, to help, or to otherwise be of service to people. Enterprising: Like work activities that have to do with starting up and carrying out projects, especially business ventures. They

like persuading and leading people and making decisions. They like taking risks for profit. These people prefer action rather than thought.

Conventional: Like work activities that follow set procedures and routines. They prefer working with data and detail more than with ideas. They prefer work in which there are precise standards rather than work in which you have to judge things by yourself. These people like working where the lines of authority are clear.”

As an example, a client showing aptitude and interest for Valpar Work Sample 5 Clerical Comprehension and Aptitude could reference the converted O\*NET occupational titles and crosswalk with other up-to-date occupational resources for further employment exploration (See Appendix B as an example used for each of five Valpar Work Samples).

### **Employment Exploration Evaluator Instructions**

A set of specific instructions for administering Employment Exploration was developed and since the instructions were written for a student evaluator or assistant, the instructions can also be used by a vocational evaluator. In addition an Employment Exploration explanation and orientation for clients/employees was developed that explains many of the additional expected procedures throughout (See Appendix C for Evaluator Instructions and Orientation).

### **Pilot Study Results**

A pilot study was completed to determine the usefulness of the program and possible areas of improvement. Archival

data was used and approved through the appropriate university human subjects committee. A total of 12 individuals were selected for and participated in the pilot study. They were customers of the state vocational rehabilitation agency, referred to the facility for a comprehensive vocational evaluation, and presented with developmental and learning disabilities. Demographics included 8 males and 4 females, ages 18-21, and all were high school graduates. Participant diagnoses included Asperger's Disorder (5), specific learning disorders (4), mental retardation (2), and developmental disability (1).

An analysis of the results show the mean pre-test score was 81.5% correct (SD 9.54), and the mean post-test score was 90% correct (SD 12.60). The post-test Employment Exploration Assessment questions #1) *My Work Abilities*, and #3) *What is Expected of an Employee* were endorsed as yes by 100% of the participants. The second question, *The Employment Exploration Assessment helped me learn more about My Work Interests* was endorsed as yes by all of the participants, with the exception of one participant who answered both yes and no to the question. The study did not include a control group and so it is not possible to know if the pre-post-test difference was due to practice effects or due to the intervention.

### **Discussion**

In summary, the overall results of the CARF endorsement suggest that the LearnToWork Program or similar-type program is sufficient to meet the expectations of the 2008 CARF Manual Section 3.D Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation Standard 8. The small pilot study sample while insufficient to suggest statistical significance, does provide indicators that the LearnToWork or similar

programs could aid individuals with developmental and learning disabilities to acquire employment-related information. The intent of Standard 8 is to provide employment exploration for all individuals with disabilities, including those who are better served through simulated job stations rather than typical vocational evaluation psychometric testing. For those programs unable to provide on-the-job evaluations located outside the organization, the LearnToWork model provides an economical alternative.

The LearnToWork Program was also considered successful because subjective participant verbal feedback indicated enjoying the program with several wanting to participate for a longer time. The LearnToWork program evolved as improvements were ongoing during program

implementation and included adding more computerized data entry work samples. Furthermore, the LearnToWork Program gave evidence for a TransitionToWork Program, in development, as the next step in the Employment Exploration process. The TransitionToWork Program helps individual transition into community employment through on-the-job evaluation and/or volunteer experiences. Overall, the LearnToWork program provides a framework for using often unused work samples and/or other tests to help a Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation program meet a CARF standard when the program may have limited available resources and/or as a supplement to on-the-job evaluations.

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## Appendix A: Employment Exploration Assessment

Pre-Test

Name:

Date:

Multiple Choice (circle the correct letter)

1. A time card:
  - a Keeps track of an employee's hours
  - b Is used with a time clock
  - c Is the responsibility of the employee
  - d All of the above
2. Full-time jobs usually require:
  - a 20 Hours a week
  - b 30 Hours a week
  - c 40 Hours a week
  - d the employee decides what is full-time
3. If a job interviewer asks a question and you do not know the answer:
  - a Be honest and answer the best you can
  - b Make something up
  - c Ask to skip the question
  - d Not say anything
4. Health insurance and paid vacation and sick time are examples of:
  - a An employee's salary
  - b An employee's benefits
  - c An employer's profits
  - d None of the above
5. If an employee has a question or problem on the job, they should:
  - a Ask their supervisor for help
  - b Stop what they are doing
  - c Try to figure it out on their own, and then ask their supervisor for help
  - d None of the above
6. It is important for an employee to be on time:
  - a Only on days when it is busy
  - b Only when returning from breaks
  - c Only if the supervisor is watching
  - d Always
7. An interview helps a person find out:
  - a What are the job duties
  - b The salary and benefits
  - c What the employer expects
  - d All of the above
8. Many persons lose their job because of:
  - a Being late to work
  - b Too many missed work days
  - c Not being able to do the job
  - d All of the above

9. A coworker is someone who:
- a Works for the same business or company
  - b Works with me
  - c Works near me but not next to me
  - d All of the above
10. If a coworker is not doing their job:
- a I should not say anything
  - b Tell the supervisor
  - c Tell the coworker to do their job
  - d Not say anything unless it affects my job

True or False

- \_\_\_\_\_ An employee is someone who owns the company
- \_\_\_\_\_ An employee should work at a steady pace
- \_\_\_\_\_ Job applications should be neat and complete
- \_\_\_\_\_ Job applications show a person's work history and education
- \_\_\_\_\_ It is okay to not answer certain questions on a job application
- \_\_\_\_\_ A job interview is to explain why a person is qualified for a job
- \_\_\_\_\_ Grooming and dress are not important for a job interview
- \_\_\_\_\_ A supervisor makes work difficult for the employee
- \_\_\_\_\_ A good worker is on time and stays at their work task
- \_\_\_\_\_ It is legal for an employer to pay less than minimum wage
- \_\_\_\_\_ All jobs come with benefits, such as health insurance and vacation
- \_\_\_\_\_ An employee should not bother a supervisor with questions
- \_\_\_\_\_ Some jobs require you to perform many work tasks
- \_\_\_\_\_ You can find jobs through the newspaper, Internet, or friends
- \_\_\_\_\_ If an assessment is not real work, I don't need to try my best

## Appendix B: O\*NET Occupational Titles and Descriptive Information

The Valpar Work Sample 5 Clerical Comprehension and Aptitude measures a person's ability to perform a variety of basic clerical tasks and a person's aptitude to learn these basic clerical tasks. It is also designed to screen clients for many entry-level jobs requiring general clerical ability. Aptitude is measured in the following areas: telephone answering, mail sorting, alphabetical filing, bookkeeping, and typing (see Table 1).

Table 1

### *Valpar Work Sample 5 O\*Net Descriptive Information*

O*Net Occupational Number	Occupational Title	Training	Interests
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support Occupations		
43-4000	Information and Records Clerk		
43-4071.00	File Clerk	Short-term OJT	Conventional
43-4171.00	Receptionist/Information Clerk	Short-term OJT	Conventional
43-4199.99	Information/Record Clerk	Short-term OJT	Conventional
	All Other	Short-term OJT	Conventional

## **Appendix C: Employment Exploration Evaluator Instructions and Employee Orientation**

The Employment Exploration explanation and orientation to clients explains many of the expected procedures throughout, but a more formalized set of instructions and intent is needed. The importance of the program is to replicate as much as possible a real work setting that includes application, interviewing, orientation, and work expectations. This means that the evaluator or supervisor must set the example. It is imperative to treat the setting, work expectations, and employee interactions as related to real work and the supervisor is responsible for ensuring that employees complete their assigned work tasks. Having multiple employees is desired, with three as the preferred number, but two or even one employee is acceptable although less than two employees will not allow for coworker interactions that can be observed using Valpar Component Work Sample 14 Integrated Peer Performance.

Prior to beginning the actual workday, the vocational evaluator is responsible for completing a LearnToWork Employee Schedule that will list the test instruments to be administered. This schedule should be followed as closely as possible, and any major deviations should be noted. Preparation also includes ensuring that all test materials are ready for use. The evaluator will use a dry erase whiteboard to list employee names and tasks that they have been assigned for that day.

The evaluator will be unable to start everyone at once, but try to get everyone working as quickly as possible. To help alleviate this problem, one or more specific 'fall back' tasks may be completed by the employees until they are assigned their specific task. Currently, they may use the bottle capping as a 'fall back' task. After clocking in, employees can sit at a specific table and work on bottle capping until they are instructed as to their specific job. The bottle capping requires placing three different size lids on three different size bottles and placing the completed lid/bottle in a box. The bottle capping is not a standardized test instrument and work speed and quality are not measured, but rather the purpose is to help individuals understand that once they clock in at work they will perform some work-related activity and not be unproductive. Whereas the LearnToWork activities have negligible physical demands, safety is of the utmost concern. Therefore, if any client shows signs of pain, fatigue, or other safety issues, stop the activity immediately and document the reason.

Sometime during the day, there will be simulated work interruption that results in all employees being assigned to another work task. This helps assess how the employees deal with change and also work as team members. This is necessary to provide observation for Reactions to Change in Work Assignment and Social Skills Relations with Co-workers, two categories necessary to complete the MDC Behavior Identification Form. The Valpar Component Work Sample 14 Integrated Peer Performance will be used for this task when there are multiple employees, and switching to another work sample will suffice for a single employee. Immediately after completion of the work interruption, all employees will be reassigned to their previous work task. The evaluator is responsible for the following: (a) provide a safe work environment, (b) explanation and overview, (c) job application and job interview, (d) work orientation, (e) completion of Participation Agreement and Physical Demand Questionnaire, (f) help determine an Employee Work Schedule, (g) follow the interruption schedule as designated, (h) complete the MDC Behavior Rating Form on a daily and final basis, (i) administer and score all work samples, (j) make and keep forms in client test file, (k) administer Pre and Post Tests, (l) provide feedback session to client, and (m) complete monthly or as needed status reports.

### ***Part 1. Employment Exploration Explanation (read to evaluatees)***

We are going to spend some time doing Employment Exploration. The purpose of Employment Exploration is to help determine your interest and work abilities for different occupations found in the local economy. Through this assessment, we can better help determine what types of jobs you would like to do and be capable of performing, those you cannot do, and those that you might be able to perform with some types of reasonable accommodation. You will likely also be completing a vocational evaluation that will utilize the results of the Employment Exploration as well as additional testing to help you learn more about yourself so you and your vocational rehabilitation counselor can help set attainable vocational goals.

The Employment Exploration will attempt to replicate a ‘real work setting’ and you will be asked to carry out the tasks performed by a new employee. You will be given a general orientation about your basic job duties and then also be given specific instructions about certain work tasks. Throughout the Employment Exploration your work behaviors will be observed so we can identify both positive and negative work habits and behaviors.

The Employment Exploration could prove to be physically difficult, as it will help to measure your ability to perform work-related physical tasks over the course of a workday. You will have a 5-minute break approximately every hour and a 1-hour lunch break. It is important that you use your break for both rest and restroom needs because at a real job you usually use your breaks for such purposes.

The person who is responsible for the Employment Exploration is either a Vocational Evaluator who meets the qualifications of our accrediting agency, or a rehabilitation graduate assistant or intern working under the direction of the Vocational Evaluator. For the purposes of the Employment Exploration, this person will also serve as a ‘supervisor’, similar to what you would have at a real work setting.

We have reviewed both medical and other referral information that indicates you do not have any physical or other limitations that would prevent you from completing Employment Exploration. However we still want to ask you a series of questions to be certain that you can complete and agree to the assessment. (The evaluator will then give Physical Demands definitions to evaluatees and/or read to him/her while the evaluator records the answers to the Physical Demands Questionnaire, and have evaluatee sign Agreement to Complete an Employment Exploration Assessment).

Now I will explain to you what we are going to do. We are not a “real employer” so we cannot really hire you for a paid job, but the Employment Exploration will help you to understand what it is like to be hired for a job, and then do the work that is required at a job. The main reason is to help you learn from this experience so when you are hired for a ‘real job’ you will better know what to do and not be as nervous. I also need to tell you that because this is a sample of ‘real work’ and not ‘real work’, that you will not be paid any salary or earn a paycheck. This is because we are not a ‘real employer’ and cannot make a profit to pay the employee. Before we begin please complete the Employment Exploration assessment to help determine your current employment knowledge. (Administer pre-test).

### ***Part 2. Job Application and Job Interview***

Now I am going to give you a list of jobs that are available at the LearnToWork Center. The LearnToWork Center is the name of the company where you will try to find a job. The jobs available are sorter, assembler, inspector, and clerical worker. The jobs may not be exactly the kind of job that you want to do in the future, but they should represent the types of jobs that are

available in the community. So please pick the top three that you would like to do rating them as 1, 2, or 3. We will try to give you your top choice, but many times persons have to take whatever job is available and try to do it the best that they can. I will now look over your choices and tell you what job is available. The job that is available is 'name of specific job. (The job offered was already predetermined after a file review and considered consistent with client abilities). I will now give you a job application and tell you how to complete it. After the job application is completed, I will conduct a job interview to see if you will be hired for the job. (Complete the job application and job interview and provide assistance as needed).

### ***Part 3. Work Orientation***

Welcome to the LearnToWork Center. You are now considered hired as an employee of the LearnToWork Center. My name is (insert name), and I am your work supervisor. My job is to help you understand the requirements of your new job and help you learn specific work tasks. My job is also to help keep track of how fast you work, how well you complete your work, and also observe any problems that happen while you are working. I can help if you are having problems or don't understand something, so please remember my name. Sometimes I will be around the LearnToWork Center and sometimes I may be gone but, if so, it will not be longer than 15 minutes. Do you have any questions?

Now we are going to spend a few minutes as I explain what is expected of you during the Employment Exploration, or what is called a 'work orientation' and would be given before beginning a "real work job." You will also be given specific instructions prior to beginning any "sample work job."

Now I will spend some time explaining to you what we call "work terms or terminology", or words that we use at a work site. I will also give you a copy of "work terms" so you can look at them if you have any questions. I do not expect you to remember all of these "work terms" but they help you understand how and why employees are hired, what the employer expects from the employee, and what the employee expects from the employer.

I have reviewed work terms with you and I will now explain the working conditions. We start work every day at 9 am. That means you should be ready to start work at that time. You indicate that you are ready to start work by "clocking in" using the time clock. As you can see, I have already completed a "time card" that has your name on it. I will now show you where we keep the time cards and how to use the time clock. You are required to clock out when you go on breaks and lunch, and clock back in when you return. You will also clock out at the end of the work day.

As a reminder, even though employees have what is called a job, the job may have different tasks. A task is part of the work you need to do to complete your job. Most employees have more than one task that is needed to complete the job. Sometimes an employee only has to do one task to complete the job. An employee needs to be able to do whatever task the supervisor asks him/her to do, even if it is a task that s/he does not like. So when we start work, just do what your supervisor asks you to do but also ask questions if you do not understand what to do.

A supervisor usually has more than one employee to supervise, so sometimes you will have to wait for help as the supervisor may be helping others. If you need help say the supervisor's name (insert name), can you help me please? If you know what to do and just need some future help, keep working. If you don't know what to do, just stop and wait for help.

I will now show you your work area and how to do the work you have been hired to do. (The supervisor should then give a brief overview of each work sample).

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# Vocational Evaluators' Use of Online Assistive Technology Resources

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## Abstract

Previous research has shown that vocational evaluators use online resources to answer their assistive technology (AT) questions (McCarthy & McCarthy, 2009). The current study is intended to gain information on how vocational evaluators use online AT resources. Members of vocational evaluation professional organizations were invited to complete an electronic survey regarding their use of online assistive technology resources. Online resources were most often used by evaluators a few times a week to a few times a month. The most often reason cited for accessing online resources was to identify types of AT available. Computer access was cited most often by participants as the type of AT device investigated. Finally, 35 unique AT websites provided by participants are listed. Future research is also discussed.

## Introduction

Vocational evaluation is a process in which an evaluator works with a client in order to assess his or her knowledge, skills, and abilities (Pruitt, 1986). This process varies on a client-per-client basis wherein the evaluator uses various instruments, work samples, behavioral observations, etc. to capture an individual's attributes. The results would then inform the client and his or her rehabilitation counselor of the client's vocational potential.

A potential source of error within assessment, perhaps especially so for persons with disability, is bias (Nadolsky, 1983). For example, a work sample that measures a client's ability to perform clerical work may involve sorting a stack of papers into alphabetical order. In this example, fast sorting and few errors may be indicative of a high ability for clerical work. However, someone with limited dexterity in one hand may be slow at this task. How should an evaluator accurately interpret the results from this task? Moreover, is the task essentially measuring a client's disability

and not ability? Questions like these often arise when practicing career assessment with people with disabilities and have prompted literature on the use of assistive technology in vocational evaluation (Langton, 1993). Assistive technology (AT) attempts to remove bias within the evaluation process by increasing, maintaining, or improving the functional capacities of individuals with disabilities (Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals, 1997). Thus, in the example above an evaluator may arrange for the client to use a piece of equipment that holds the paper upright so as to allow him or her to sort the papers with only one hand. Once the client learns to use this piece of equipment, he or she may be able to perform better than without the piece of equipment.

Despite the potential benefits of using AT during a vocational evaluation, AT may not be adequately considered (Langton, 1993). Without AT, persons with severe disabilities may not meet job requirements. Additionally, skills and abilities for future jobs or trainings are difficult to determine. Without consideration of AT during the

evaluation process, vocational evaluators may allow the individuals' current functional limitations to dictate vocational options. Failure to consider AT in the assessment process may equal limited vocational options and choices. Some of these same issues arose with traditional assessment measures. Using AT during the VE process may produce more valid, less discriminatory vocational profiles for individuals with severe disabilities (Langton, 1991). Assistive technology then seems like a simple and fair solution. However, before evaluators can effectively use AT, they likely need to consider AT options. Thus, evaluators may need to seek information for the purposes of considering AT. For example, what assistive technology is available? Is a certain piece of assistive technology appropriate for a particular client? In one study, vocational evaluators reported online resources as the most common source of information used to answer their AT questions. In this study, 49 out of 67 evaluation professionals (73%) reported consulting online resources to answer their AT questions (McCarthy & McCarthy, 2009).

Given the large percent of evaluators that report using online AT resources, the current study attempted to measure descriptively how vocational evaluators use online resources to answer their assistive technology questions. To answer further the question of which online AT resources evaluators use, a list of online resources provided by respondents was compiled.

### **Methods**

The aim of the study was to explore vocational evaluators' relative (i.e., compared to number of evaluations) and absolute (i.e., not considering number of evaluations) frequencies of online AT resources use. Specifically, absolute

frequency refers to how often evaluators use online AT resources, regardless of how many evaluations they complete; whereas, relative frequency is compared to the number of evaluations completed. Therefore, an evaluator that completes one evaluation a month and uses online resources once a month would have a lower absolute frequency and an equal relative frequency to an evaluator that completes one evaluation a week and uses online AT resources once a week. Additionally, the study investigated types of AT information sought from online resources, types of AT devices investigated using online resources, and types of online resources used to investigate AT resources.

A survey (see Appendix A) was created to explore vocational evaluators' use of online AT resources. The ten-item survey consisted of four sections: (1) demographics, (2) frequency of online AT resource usage, (3) type of AT information investigated, and (4) types of online resources used. The purpose of the items was to clarify past research on evaluators' use of online assistive technology resources. Specifically, McCarthy and McCarthy (2009) showed that nearly three-fourth of evaluators used online assistive technology resources; however, this result is based on one dichotomous (i.e., yes or no) item. Therefore, baseline information related to frequency of usage, types of AT information investigated, and types of online resources used were needed. Additionally, the survey was reviewed by a Certified Vocational Evaluation Specialist (CVE) for face validity prior to distribution.

The survey was approved by officials from three professional vocational evaluation organizations: Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals (VECAP), Canadian Association for Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment (CAVEWA), and Vocational Evaluation and Work

Adjustment Association (VEWAA). Each organization then distributed the survey to their members in July 2009 via an e-mail that contained a cover letter, consent form, and link to an electronic survey in SurveyMonkey.com. Membership in the three organizations is not mutually exclusive; therefore, members may have received more than one e-mail to complete the survey. Members were asked to complete the survey only once, even if they belonged to more than one of the three organizations. Further, members were asked to participate in the survey only if they had vocational evaluation experience. We closed the survey after no responses were collected for five days.

A total of 68 persons with evaluation experience completed the survey. Forty-seven percent (32 out of 68) reported Certified Vocational Evaluation Specialists (CVE) status. Seventy-nine percent indicated having at least a master's degree. Finally, the majority (46 out of 68) reported being a vocational evaluation practitioner. It should be noted that respondents not currently conducting vocational evaluations were instructed to respond to the items using previous experience. In the analysis there were five participants who did not respond to each question, therefore the results include percents for all (N=68) and a valid percent for those responding (N=63). In addition participants were able to select more than one item in questions 7-9, therefore the percentages are based on each item.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Frequency of Usage**

We asked participants to respond to multiple items related to frequency of use of online AT resources. These items were intended to give insights to both the absolute and relative frequency of use (see methods

for description of absolute and relative frequencies).

In terms of absolute frequency, participants reported using online AT resources a few times a week to a few times a month (see Table 1). We considered this to be a moderate amount because few respondents chose the extreme options (i.e., more than once a day, never). Although the responses are distributed among the total range of possibilities, most participants (48.5%) reported using online resources between a few times a week and a few times a month. The absolute frequency is likely related to the amount of evaluations practitioners' conduct, so we asked two items related to relative frequency of online AT resources use. The first item asked, *of the client evaluations that you conduct, how often do you utilize online resources to answer your AT questions?* A 7-point scale ranging from 1 = *Never* to 7 = *Always* was used. Participants' responses are shown in Table 2. The second item related to absolute frequency of use asked participants to approximate the percentage of client evaluations in which the evaluators use online resources to answer their AT questions. Participants reported a moderate frequency of use; however, answers varied from 0 to 100 percent ( $n = 54$ ,  $M = 32.47$ ,  $SD = 31.02$ ). Overall, the responses for both items had large variability.

### **Types of Assistive Technology Information Sought**

We asked participants to differentiate between the type(s) of AT information sought (see Table 3) and the types of AT devices investigated (see Table 4) using online resources. A visual inspection of the frequencies for both items indicates respondents used online AT resources to investigate a variety of information and devices. Specifically, type of available AT

**Table 1*****Absolute Frequency of Online AT Resources Use***

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
More than once a day	3	4.4	4.8
Once a week	1	1.5	1.6
A few times a week, less than once a day	16	23.5	25.4
Once a week	4	5.9	6.3
A few times a month and less than once a week	13	19.1	20.6
Once a month	10	14.7	15.9
Less than once a month	15	22.1	23.8
Never	1	1.5	1.6
Total	63	92.6	100.0
Missing	5	7.4	
Total	68	100.0	

**Table 2*****Relative Frequency of Online AT Resources Use***

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	2	2.9	3.2
Very rarely	11	16.2	17.5
Rarely	9	13.2	14.3
Sometimes	16	23.5	25.4
Often	11	16.2	17.5
Very often	10	14.7	15.9
Always	4	5.9	6.3
Total	63	92.6	100.0
Missing	5	7.4	
Total	68	100.0	

**Table 3*****Types of AT Information Sought Online***

	Frequency	Percent
Types of AT available	50	73.5
Cost	38	55.9
Manufacturer information	37	54.4
Appropriateness of a piece of AT for a specific client	36	52.9
Contact information for an AT professional	24	35.3
Updates on current equipment	16	23.5
Available for trial or demonstration	15	22.1
Other	1	1.5

**Table 4**

*AT Devices Investigated Online*

	Frequency	Percent
Computer access	51	75.0
Communication devices	43	63.2
Manual/manipulation aids	34	50.0
Visual aids	33	48.5
Independent living aids	28	41.2
Memory or cognition aids	28	41.2
Mobility aids	26	38.8
Seating and positioning aids	23	33.8
Environmental controls	20	29.4
Other	1	1.5

was the most often sought by evaluators. Also, multiple AT devices were investigated using online resources with the most frequent being computer access and communication devices.

**Types of Online Resources Utilized**

One item listed eight types of online resources and websites and asked participants to indicate which type(s) they utilize to answer their AT questions (see Table 5). Search engines were reported as the most commonly used online resource. Wiki and “other” online resources were rarely used among this sample. Additionally, the final item asked participants to provide specific Uniform Resource Locators (URL) to online resources they have utilized in their work as a vocational evaluator.

**Compiled List of Websites**

The goal of collecting websites used by respondents was to provide a list of web resources used by practitioners. Some of the websites were omitted because they were provided by multiple participants, had invalid URLs, or were search engines (e.g., google.com). This resulted in 35 unique websites (Appendix B). If the website contained a brief description or subtitle it is included in the right-hand column. Overall, the sites cited by evaluators included governmental, organizational, educational and vender websites among others. Many of the sites also provide links to different types of AT information and resources in addition to the information listed on the website itself.

**Table 5**

***Types of Online Resources Utilized***

	Frequency	Percent
Search engines	51	75.0
Manufacturer	34	50.0
Professional organization	26	38.2
Not-for-profit	21	30.9
Governmental	20	29.4
University	16	23.5
Wiki	4	5.9
Other	1	1.5

**Conclusions and Future Directions**

Given the exploratory nature of this study, the primary purpose was to provide a baseline of how vocational evaluators use online AT resources in their practice. However, there are several noteworthy results. First, in terms of AT information sought, evaluators reported looking most often for types of AT available for clients. This finding may be important for resource developers to consider. Knowing that evaluators seek this information may encourage AT resource developers to make such information available and easier to locate.

Second, when asked to indicate the types of online resources used to find AT information, wiki (one type of online social networking) was reported as rarely used. However, several of the organizations that employ respondents have Facebook pages or another online social networking site. This information may be helpful for operators of wikis or other social networking sites to determine resource investment for the purpose of distributing AT information to vocational evaluators. Future research could examine the role social networking plays in the dissemination of AT in the VE process.

Third, the list of AT websites provides insight into the resources

evaluators are using to answer their questions about AT in the VE process. Future research could investigate the quality of these resources and their actual usefulness.

This study provided a baseline of how vocational evaluators use online AT resources. Considering this information, many directions for future research are possible. Broadly, what is the relationship between online AT resource use and client rehabilitation outcomes? Future directions of research should include moving studies from descriptive to prescription (e.g., what works best). It would be helpful for practitioners to have empirical evidence to guide how to use AT resources most effectively in their practice.

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## Appendix A: Survey

1. Please list any professional licensures and/or certifications that you hold
2. What best describes your current job title?
  - a. Evaluation/Assessment Practitioner
  - b. Rehabilitation Administrator
  - c. Rehabilitation Educator
  - d. Transition Coordinator
  - e. Other (please specify)
3. What is your highest educational degree obtained?
  - a. High School
  - b. Associate's Degree
  - c. Bachelor's Degree
  - d. Master's Degree
  - e. Ed.S.
  - f. Doctoral Degree
  - g. Other
4. As a vocational evaluator, how often do you utilize online resources to answer your assistive technology questions?
  - a. More than once a day
  - b. Once a day
  - c. A few times a week and less than once a day
  - d. Once a week
  - e. A few times a month and less than once a day
  - f. Once a month
  - g. Less than once a month
  - h. Never
5. Of the client evaluations that you conduct, approximately what percentage of the evaluations do you use online resources to answer your assistive technology questions? (Type in percentage)
6. Of the client evaluation that you conduct, how often do you utilize online resources to answer assistive technology questions?
  - a. Always
  - b. Very often
  - c. Often
  - d. Sometimes
  - e. Rarely
  - f. Very Rarely
  - g. Never

7. What type of assistive technology information have you sought using online resources?  
(please check all that apply)
  - a. Types of assistive technology available
  - b. Appropriateness of a piece of assistive technology for a specific client
  - c. Manufacturer information (e.g. who makes a piece of AT, where can it be purchased, etc.)
  - d. Cost
  - e. Available for trial/demonstration
  - f. Updates on current equipment
  - g. Contact information for an assistive technology professional
  - h. Other (please specify)
  
8. Please indicate what types of assistive technology you have used online resources to answer questions about. Check all that apply.
  - a. Communication devices
  - b. Computer access
  - c. Environmental controls
  - d. Independent living aids
  - e. Manual/manipulation aids (e.g., writing aids)
  - f. Memory or cognition aids
  - g. Mobility aids
  - h. Seating and positioning aids
  - i. Visual aids
  - j. Other (please specify)
  
9. Please indicate the types of online resources utilized to answer your assistive technology questions. Please check all that apply.
  - a. Search engines
  - b. Manufacturer websites
  - c. Governmental websites
  - d. Professional organization websites
  - e. University websites
  - f. Not-for-profit organization websites
  - g. Wiki
  - h. Other (please specify)
  
10. Please provide the address for a few online resources that you have used in the past to answer your assistive technology questions.

## Appendix B: Compiled List of AT Websites

URL	Organization or Company Name	Subtitle (if any)
<a href="http://ise-ergonomics.com/">http://ise-ergonomics.com/</a>	ISE	Adjusting Your Workplace
<a href="http://solutions.neilsquire.ca/">http://solutions.neilsquire.ca/</a>	Neil Squire Solutions	Ergonomic and Assistive Technology Specialists
<a href="http://www.abilitations.com">www.abilitations.com</a>	Abilitations	Solutions that improve the lives of children with special needs
<a href="http://www.abledata.com">www.abledata.com</a>	Abledata	Your source for Assistive Technology Information
<a href="http://www.assistivetech.com">www.assistivetech.com</a>	Tobii ATI	World Leader in Eye Tracking and Eye Control
<a href="http://www.assistivetechologycenter.org">www.assistivetechologycenter.org</a>	Assistive Technology Center	A program of advancing opportunities
<a href="http://www.atto.buffalo.edu">www.atto.buffalo.edu</a>	Assistive Technology Training Online Products	
<a href="http://www.comforthouse.com">www.comforthouse.com</a>	Comfort House	The source for products that make your life easier
<a href="http://www.cpfnj.org">www.cpfnj.org</a>	Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey	
<a href="http://www.cprf.org">www.cprf.org</a>	Cerebral Palsy Research Foundation	
<a href="http://www.dol.gov">www.dol.gov</a>	United States Department of Labor	
<a href="http://www.dors.state.md.us">www.dors.state.md.us</a>	Maryland state department of education, division of rehabilitation services	
<a href="http://www.dynamic-living.com">www.dynamic-living.com</a>	Dynamic-Living	Making living at home a little easier
<a href="http://www.ergocanada.com">www.ergocanada.com</a>	ErgoCanada	Ergonomic Input Devices and Accessories for Canadians
<a href="http://www.faast.org">www.faast.org</a>	Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology	
<a href="http://www.hitec.com">www.hitec.com</a>	HITEC	Amplified Phones/Vision Impaired Products/ Telecommunications Products for the Hearing Impaired
<a href="http://www.humanware.com">www.humanware.com</a>	Humanware	The power is in your hands
<a href="http://www.independentforlife.com">www.independentforlife.com</a>	Independent for Life Inc.	
<a href="http://www.independentliving.com">www.independentliving.com</a>	Independent Living Aids	
<a href="http://www.jan.wvu.edu">www.jan.wvu.edu</a>	Job Accommodations Network	
<a href="http://www.maltron.com">www.maltron.com</a>	Maltron Ergonomics and Special Needs Keyboards	
<a href="http://www.maxiaids.com">www.maxiaids.com</a>	Maxi Aids	Products for Independent Living
<a href="http://www.naturalreaders.com">www.naturalreaders.com</a>	NaturalSoft	Text to speech software
<a href="http://www.nish.org">www.nish.org</a>	NISH	Creating employment opportunities for people with severe disabilities
<a href="http://www.readandwritegold.com">www.readandwritegold.com</a>	Read and Write Gold	
<a href="http://www.readingpen.com">www.readingpen.com</a>	Reading Pen	The Personal Reading

		Assistant
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# The Vocational Evaluator in the Forensic Arena: Standards of Admissibility

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## ABSTRACT

Vocational evaluators with advanced knowledge of the impact of disabling conditions on employability may be qualified to serve as expert witnesses in a court of law. For the vocational evaluator seeking to enter the world of forensic testimony, or for the professional who is involuntarily subpoenaed to testify in matters related to vocational evaluation, understanding the standards of admissibility - namely the qualifications required of the expert - as well as the methodological rigors of testimony, are keys to successful entry into the courtroom. Beginning with *Frye*, and continuing through the *Daubert*, *Kumho*, and *Joiner* trilogy of Supreme Court rulings, courts have sought to bar unqualified consultants from posing as vocational experts. This article reviews the legal evolution influencing the admissibility of vocational expert testimony, and the impact on vocational evaluators called as experts in terms of qualifications and methodology. Specific case law is cited reviewing challenges to expert testimony, in turn providing the opportunity to make specific recommendations for the aspiring vocational expert.

## Introduction

Rehabilitation professionals with advanced skills and expertise in understanding the impact of disability on individuals in the workplace may desire to expand their practice to include forensic testimony. Considered to be Vocational Experts (VE), these professionals, by virtue of their advanced scholarship and expertise specifically related to the assessment of employability of individuals with disabilities, are capable of testifying as witnesses in a court of law (*Duncan v. WMATA*, 2000).

Vocational Experts are persons with advanced training and knowledge in vocational assessment and job placement of individuals with disabilities, and who serve in a variety of courtroom settings. Within the forensic context, the VE seeks to determine a plaintiff's (or claimant, as they may be called) residual employability following an injury resulting in physical or emotional functional limitations (Feldbaum, 1993). These specialists may testify on an individual's ability to engage in

employment and earn income in light of injury, illness, discrimination, or some other factor that is alleged to have caused harm. To serve as a VE however, the professional must demonstrate how s/he qualifies to be considered an expert and to what extent s/he employs methodology that is generally accepted and which is considered valid in the field of rehabilitation.

Whether requested to provide an opinion in disability determination (e.g., Social Security Administration, Workers' Compensation, Veterans' Administration), or to extend that opinion to loss of earnings capacity (e.g., medical malpractice, personal injury, employment discrimination), consultants may not serve as experts unless they can first demonstrate they are, indeed, "experts." Recent legal developments have caused experts in all fields to reconsider their ability to provide admissible testimony. Stringent scholarly and scientific methodology is now mandated with the acceptance of the *Daubert* standard by the United States Supreme Court and a majority of states. This standard requires that a witness be

qualified to provide testimony, and that his/her opinion be based on principles, methods, and techniques that are proven reliable and valid (Weed, 2000). With vocational/employment issues considered to be a 'soft science' (Field, 2002b), vocational experts are challenged to understand how these legal standards affect professional standards of practice. More pointedly, the vocational personnel will be tested to demonstrate that they are qualified to be called experts and taxed to show reliable and relevant methodology in asserting their opinions (Johnston, 2003).

### **The Law and Standards of Admissibility**

One of the first arenas for use of VE's is found in disability determination in the SSA. Initially, Hearing Examiners (today known as Administrative Law Judges) cited published labor market information to demonstrate the claimant's ability to locate employment. This was found to be inadequate, and the SSA began to utilize rehabilitation consultants to determine whether there were in fact jobs for the individual (Harper, 1985). Today, the use of VEs for disability determination has expanded to Workers' Compensation and Veterans' Administration arenas (Growick, 2002). These types of cases involve some alleged physical and/or mental impairment resulting in a diminished capacity to engage in work. The VE identifies whether the "claimant" is capable of returning to past work, engaging in any other sustained remunerative employment, or whether they are totally precluded from all work as a result of their medical condition.

In addition to disability determination, the use of VEs has further spread to cases involving personal injury, employment discrimination, wrongful death, and divorce proceedings (Growick, 2002; Murphy, 1996; Smith & Growick, 1999). In these instances, the VE not only opines whether an individual is capable of employment, but to what extent s/he can access his/her labor market, and to what

degree s/he has lost the ability to earn income (known as loss of earnings capacity).

With self-proclaimed experts flooding the courts to provide testimony in a wide range of cases, courts have responded by establishing qualifications and standards of methodology to be deemed a true "expert" in the field. Beginning with *Frye* in 1923 and continuing with the *Daubert* standards of today, courts have established standards of expert admissibility. Although challenges to VE testimony have been relatively rare when compared to other sciences, information gleaned from these cases can guide the forensic rehabilitation community in evaluation of individuals and preparation for trial (Field, 2000). While *Daubert* is the standard required of all federal courtrooms, individual states are free to choose whether to adhere to this standard, or maintain the original *Frye* ruling.

### **The Frye States**

The *Frye* test stipulates that scientific evidence is admissible when there is a general acceptance of the methodologies and principles associated with the opinions of scientists within a particular field (Matson, 1999). This standard served to eliminate 'junk' science (although it has also been criticized for prohibiting novel methods which may otherwise be an improvement in science). States utilizing the *Frye* standard rely on cross-examination to assess the level of general acceptance of methodology. In this way, judges do not have to serve the gatekeeper role, but instead the scientific community theoretically polices itself.

The *Frye* standard has found widespread acceptance over the years, with many states continuing to employ the *Frye* standard. To these states, the idea that scientific evidence should be generally accepted within its field of practice to be admissible is logical (Feldbaum, 1999). Some states go beyond *Frye* and adhere to what can be termed as *Frye Plus*. These states have pre-trial hearings which allow judges to test the soundness of an expert's

methodology even when the underlying science is accepted. These states have been reluctant to adapt *Daubert* for fear that courtrooms may become flooded with novel yet unsound testimony. Where applied appropriately, the *Frye* test may be as effective in keeping out ‘faux’ evidence as *Daubert* (Sorett, 2000).

### ***Daubert* and Beyond**

In select states, and at the federal level, experts are beholden to the *Daubert* standard. The standards of admissibility identified in *Daubert v. Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals, Inc.* (1993) require that expert testimony be both reliable and relevant. Evidence presented at testimony must be based on a sound methodology which is generally accepted by the field (as in *Frye*), while also assisting the trier of fact in understanding truth. The Court identified a four-pronged test to determine the admissibility of scientific evidence: (1) whether or not the theory or technique can or has been tested; (2) whether or not the theory or technique has been subjected to peer review and publication; (3) whether or not there is a known or potential rate of error in the theory or technique; and (4) the level of acceptance of the theory or technique in the scientific community (Field, 2002b).

In addition to gauging relevance, reliability, and utility, *Daubert* requires the expert to be qualified by demonstrating specialized skills and training. With these criteria now vital to the admittance of the expert, post-*Daubert* saw judges closely scrutinizing reliability and applying stricter standards in deciding whether to admit expert evidence (Dixon & Gill, 2001).

The Courts’ role as gatekeeper was affirmed and extended by two subsequent Supreme Court decisions. In *Joiner*, the Supreme Court concluded that appellate courts should not overturn the admissibility decision of a trial court unless the trial court has abused its discretion (Berger, 2000). Next, it established that the conclusions of the expert must match

the findings of the data upon which he or she relied, known as the ‘abuse of discretion standard’ (Hoffman & Gralen, 2000). Finally, it evaluated scientific evidence based on the *Daubert* standard, lending further support to *Daubert*.

In 1999, the Supreme Court decided in *Kumho Tire Co. v. Carmichael* that trial judges would have considerable leeway in determining the relevance and reliability of testimony of the expert, whether scientific, technical, or specialized (Field, 2000). The Court also indicated that the *Daubert* factors should be considered by judges in evaluating reliability but are neither mandatory nor exhaustive (Berger, 2000). In December 2000, an amendment to the *Federal Rules of Evidence* went into effect mandating that for expert testimony to be admissible, it must be ‘based on sufficient facts or data,’ it must be ‘the product of reliable principles and methods’ and it must involve reliable application of the principles and methods to the facts of the case (Dixon & Gill, 2001).

The trilogy of *Daubert*, *Kumho*, and *Joiner* established the federal courts as substantive ‘gatekeepers’ in determining whether evidence is admissible (Miller, Rein, & McDonald, 2000). As a gatekeeper, the judge does not have to determine whether the expert is right or wrong, only that the expert has used reliable and relevant methods (Oldknow, 2002). No longer could judges rely on the expert community to weed out ‘junk’ science, or leave the jury to determine these factors (Dixon & Gill, 2001). The Supreme Court, in rendering the *Daubert* decision, affirmed that trial court judges have not only the ‘power but the obligation to act as a gatekeeper’ (Berger, 2000).

### **The Expert under *Daubert***

Under *Daubert*, only those witnesses who are “*qualified as an expert by knowledge, skill, experience, training, or education*” may provide opinions in the courts. The value of

utilizing an expert specific to vocational testimony was made clear in *Duncan v. WMATA* (2000). With qualification and methodological standards now required, opposing counsel or the judge could seek to strike a witness by discrediting his/her expertise or challenging the ability to meet methodology standards (*Waldorf v. Shuta, 1998; French v. Wal-Mart, 1999*). Therefore, individuals desiring to serve as expert witnesses will need to understand how to qualify as an expert, how to employ reliable and valid methodology, and how to survive a *Daubert* challenge (Johnston, 2003).

### Qualifications

The 'Voire dire' process involves a pre-trial examination of the witness to establish the extent and limit of his/her expertise. There are five primary goals for the attorney and VE to achieve during this process (Deutsch, 1990):

1. Establish the basic credentials of the expert.
2. Establish the general knowledge base held by the expert.
3. Set the parameters of the witness' expertise in a manner which can be understood by both judge and jury.
4. Communicate to the judge and jury the nature of the experts' profession.
5. Clarify any miscellaneous issues, such as payment, percentage of referrals from plaintiff vs. defense, and frequency of the expert's participation in testimony.

The *Daubert* ruling did not lay out any specific factors required to qualify a witness as an expert, but only the broad requirement that a witness be "*qualified...by knowledge, skill, experience, training, or education.*" The responsibility of whether the witness was indeed qualified fell to the judges, affirming their status as gatekeepers. Understanding the criteria that goes into establishing an individual is qualified becomes critical to the consultant considering serving as an expert on any particular case (Johnston & Growick, 2003).

While no specific criteria are required, there appears to be a general consensus among the rehabilitation community on what constitutes a "qualified" VE. An individual practicing as a VE should have some combination of the following criteria: education, credentials, work experience, membership in professional organizations, adherence to an ethical code, teaching experience, and relevant publications (Choppa & Shafer, 1992; Deutsch, 1990; Field, 1994, 2000; Janikowski & Riggan, 1999; Johnston & Klein, 2001; MacHovec, 1987).

A graduate degree in a vocational rehabilitation related field, preferably from a Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) accredited program, is typical of the VE. Maintenance of professional licensure in a rehabilitation or related field, continuing education credits available through attendance at professional conferences such as those hosted by the International Association of Rehabilitation Professionals (IARP), and even certification through the recently formed forensic program at Minnesota State University, Mankato demonstrate pursuit of education and knowledge that is up-to-date (Johnston, 2006). Indication that the witness is highly regarded within his/her field is evidenced via teaching appointments, lectures at professional conferences, publications in peer reviewed journals, and associations with professional organizations. Certainly, previous experience in vocational evaluation and job placement lends credibility to the expert (Blackwell, 1992; MacHovec, 1987; Williams & Reavy, 1993). Familiarity with current literature, knowledge of vocational tests, references and resources, and skills allowing one to convey accurately information in depositions, hearings, and trials are imperative (Blackwell, 1992). Additionally, an understanding of and adherence to an ethical code is important in projecting an image of fairness and moral fortitude (Johnston & Klein, 2001). A closer examination of selected cases reflecting qualifications follows.

In *Waldrof v. Shuta* (1998), the expert lacked formal training in vocational rehabilitation, but did possess a range of work experience including case manager in a disability setting, and was found to have been “familiar with the relevant literature in the field.” The court admitted the expert, finding him to have more knowledge than the average person.

Demonstrating that an expert can be “partially” qualified, in *Smith & Smith v. Wood Construction Co., Inc* (2003), the expert was found qualified by training and experience to assess the plaintiff’s vocational abilities, but not qualified to provide testimony on future loss of earnings, household services, and medical expenses as they were ruled not to have the “requisite skill, training, knowledge or experience to ensure that an opinion rendered is reliable” in these areas of testimony.

In *Elliott & Elliott v. USA* (1992), the qualifications of the expert were highlighted when the plaintiff’s expert’s life care plan was accepted over the defenses’. The difference in experience was notable. The plaintiff’s VE had completed hundreds of life care plans and implemented numerous of these, while the defense VE had completed just five and implemented none. The Court found the plaintiff VE “more credible” based on their more extensive experience.

The aspiring expert may question how s/he can be found to have the necessary qualifications to be admitted as an expert. It is not the number of times one has testified however, but background experience and knowledge on the subject matter that will determine whether s/he is sat as a VE. Once admitted, the expert will be challenged to utilize reliable and relevant testimony.

### **Reliable and Relevant Testimony**

Once accepted as qualified, attention turns to methodology, and specifically, the relevance and reliability of testimony to be presented. To evaluate this, courts implement their four pronged test to determine acceptance

among the scientific community for the methodology.

To survive a *Daubert* challenge, the expert must demonstrate that s/he is presenting testimony based on ‘scientific knowledge’, and have opinions that will assist the jury. Under the *Federal Rules of Evidence*, expert testimony may also include technical and specialized knowledge, thus bringing vocational testimony into the fold. Additionally, the four-pronged test is not rigid, allowing the judge, as gatekeeper, to apply any combination of the four tests to determine admissibility. For many judges, distinguishing between these three categories is a burden (Feldbaum, 1997). Perhaps because of this, *Daubert* hearings for admissibility of testimony remain infrequent (Brodsky, 1999). However, an examination of select cases will help to alert the VE as to how methodology is viewed in the courts.

In *Paulus v. Kaiser Permanente Medical Group, Inc.* (1999), the expert was found to have relied on outdated resources, failing to provide a basis for his overall analysis, failing to relate the plaintiff’s medical restrictions to the demands of the cited jobs, and overall failing to provide any explanation of the methodology employed. The court found this unreliable and thus, ruled the testimony to be inadmissible.

Many experts cite the laws of probability in establishing their opinion. This law often is predicated on the “average” individual. However, in *Saia & Saia v. Sears Roebuck & Co.* (1999), testimony was disallowed based on the experts’ use of the “statistically average person” in assessing value. The court rejected this, seeking instead for consideration the plaintiff’s individual factors and outlook, and concluding that the expert’s method “will not assist the jury in understanding the evidence or determining any fact in issue.”

Sometimes, even when reliable methodologies are used, expert testimony can be disallowed. In *Elcock v. K-Mart Corp.*

(1998), the expert utilized two reliable methodologies, but unfortunately did so in combination with each other. The expert testified that one analysis was used as a starting point, and then changed to another method for a conclusion. Defense did not argue the validity of each separate method, but contended that by combining the two a third hybrid and novel methodology had been created. The court agreed, disallowing testimony.

Three cases highlight egregious methodological flaws. In *Huey v. United Parcel Service, Inc.* (1999), the VE's method was limited to one conversation each with the plaintiff and plaintiff's attorney. The expert was unable to provide a basis for his ultimate opinion beyond explaining that the plaintiff "knows best." The court found the VE's testimony to lack preparation and substance, and therefore, not surprisingly, disallowed testimony.

In *EEOC v. Rockwell International* (1999), the experts' testimony was deemed inadmissible for a variety of reasons. These included a failure to review the plaintiff's deposition and medical history, use of Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT) rather than citing local labor information, and, most alarmingly, found to have been influenced by the retaining attorney in developing his testimony.

Perhaps the hallmark of flawed methodology is found in *Fashauer v. New Jersey Transit Rail Operations, Inc.* (1995). The Court's response to testimony was succinct, opining the VE's testimony to be "so ludicrous that it's just inconceivable to me that the jury got anything out of it...that (VE's testimony) is so laughably ludicrous that I don't think you need – that it requires rebuttal". The VE opined that the plaintiff could work as a car salesman, providing a classified advertisement pulled from a newspaper dated the day before trial. Further, the VE modified the report in the days before the trial, leading to the judge to comment "I am

shocked that (this) witness would be put on the stand".

Finally, not only does the VE need to utilize reliable and valid methodology, but it is imperative that the expert understand the basis for its acceptance. In *Elcock v. Kmart Corp.*, previously cited, the VE was not only guilty of creating a hybrid methodology, the VE was principally unable to explain the rationale behind the methodology. The court found this subjective and therefore unreliable based on its inability to be tested or reproduced. Because the expert was unable to explain the rationalization of this hybrid approach, the court excluded his testimony.

These cases, along with those attesting to the need for qualifications, are useful in preparing the aspiring VE for entry into the courtroom.

## Discussion

Evolving from the field of rehabilitation counseling, VEs provide testimony in courtroom settings to determine employability and earnings potential. To prevent unqualified rehabilitation consultants from providing testimony, courts have established standards of admissibility. Beginning with *Frye*, and continuing with *Daubert*, vocational witnesses have faced increased pressure to identify their qualifications, defend their methodologies, and provide relevant and reliable testimony. Although cases involving the dismissal of VEs from providing testimony are few when compared to other fields which delve in more pure science, there exists pertinent case law to guide the aspiring expert. Overall, the introduction of the *Frye*, and more prevalent, the *Daubert* standards have resulted in tougher standards for determining admissibility of evidence, resulting in increased challenges to expert witnesses. For this reason, the vocational evaluator seeking to serve as an expert witness should adhere to the following recommendations:

1. Understand the law governing admissibility of testimony in the State you serve. While all federal courts adhere to the *Daubert* standard, individual states vary between *Daubert*, *Frye*, and what can be termed “*Frye Plus*”. Knowing what rules govern expert testimony will allow the expert to meet the court’s requirements for both qualifications and methodology. Under *Daubert*, the expert needs to utilize methodology that is reliable and valid, while *Frye* requires only that the methodology is generally accepted in the field in which one practices. While standards of admissibility vary, it is recommended that the VE have some combination of formal training, continuing education, membership in professional organizations, adherence to an ethical code, and experience in vocational evaluation and job placement prior to serving as a witness in a court of law.
2. Upgrade qualifications to meet the relevant standards. With the above cited qualifications acknowledged, the aspiring VE must strive to both meet, as well as maintain, these standards. There are a variety of professional organizations that can serve the aspiring VE well. These include the Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association and the Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals, both of which provide the member training in the foundations of test administration and interpretation as well as an understanding of the factors influencing an individual’s ability to obtain employment. The IARP, specifically their forensic division, offers advanced training in vocational legal issues through conference attendance and webinars. The newly offered forensic certificate available through the rehabilitation counseling program at Minnesota State University, Mankato, provides intensive coursework in VE testimony. Each of these organizations and institutions serves to increase the knowledge base of the expert. Engaging in original research and authoring scholarly articles pertinent to the field also aid in augmenting understanding of forensic issues while simultaneously serving to establish credibility of the expert. Actively providing job placement services and/or conducting vocational evaluation in non-forensic cases help the expert remain current on vocational trends. While there is no “magic number” or “magic combination” of qualifications that establishes a witness as an expert, Johnston (2005) found that the VE community generally agreed that a combination of training, work experience, and continuing education are the foundations for vocational expertise.
3. Know more than the methodology behind your opinion, know how to explain it. The ability to educate the judge and jury serves to make not only a connection with those who will decide the merits of the case, but establishes the expert as a true master of the subject matter. Elcock (2000) highlights the need to employ not only a chosen methodology, but to be able to explain it as well. The court requires an understanding of the methodology in order to determine whether it is replicable. It is up to the witness to educate and ultimately convince the trier of the fact that this is indeed possible. Further, because each case is unique, and may require variables not utilized in a typical case, the expert has the opportunity to explain how his/her technique deviates from general acceptable methods but remains

consistent with the overall process of evaluating employability. The ability to explain how the methodology adapted these variables can be persuasive to a court in establishing reliability and validity. Despite this, in a survey of VEs (Johnston, 2005) just 55% claimed to understand how transferable skills software programs – a fundamental tool of employment analysis – actually worked. Oddly, 93% of respondents felt they were qualified to provide expert testimony, despite approximately half of these respondents acknowledging they could not explain a critical tool of vocational analysis.

4. Know the limits of your expertise. Testify to what you know, and what you are trained to know, and nothing more. Experts find themselves in a *Daubert* challenge when they venture into areas better left to other, properly trained individuals. This often happens when the VE is asked to opine to the pain behaviors and physical tolerances of the plaintiff during the vocational interview. Often, the expert is tempted to extrapolate this observation to an opinion of functional capacity, which is outside the VEs area of expertise and better left to the medical doctors. Other problems arise when multiple medical opinions are offered, and the VE chooses one over the other. Testifying on economic principles, including work-life expectancy and inflation rates also may lead to problems in cross-examination. *Frye* and *Daubert* are designed to identify specific areas of expertise. *Smith & Smith v. Wood Construction Co., Inc* (2003) is a cautionary tale for experts in expanding their testimony beyond their knowledge area.
5. Refer to the ethical codes governing VE testimony. Responding to the unique

role of the VE, the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) updated its Code of Ethics in June 2009 to include a section specific to the forensic field. It is crucial for the VE to understand how this section governs their ability to be seated as an expert. The Code makes mention of qualifications without specifically outlining what these need be. It does however provide the general guideline that an expert is qualified by “knowledge, skill, experience, training and education”. The International Association of Rehabilitation Professionals offers more thorough direction for the expert, providing extensive discussion on the competence of an expert. This code specifically acknowledges the experts “obligation to maintain current knowledge of scientific, professional, and legal developments within their area of claimed competence” as well as the obligation to present the boundaries of their competence to the Court in which they serve. Although the ethical code of the VE is pervasive across multiple areas of practice, it is the extent to which one is qualified and accurately presents qualifications that will influence their admissibility. Fully understanding the guidelines set by CRCC and IARP will better prepare the expert for questions pertaining to ethics on cross-examination, which is a key component to expert admissibility.

Experienced vocational evaluators may desire to expand their practice into the field of forensic testimony. To do so, they must be prepared to demonstrate they are indeed qualified to provide testimony in their field of practice. Further, once sat in court, the VE must utilize methodology that meets the standards set forth by his/her respective state and/or federal court. Reviewing relevant case studies serves as

a cautionary tale regarding the seriousness of standards of admissibility. Increasing qualifications through advanced training, original research, presentations at conferences, providing job placement and vocational evaluation services, joining professional forensic organizations, and adhering to an ethical code, all serve to increase the potential to serve as an expert and enhance one's standing in the vocational community. Employing sound, reliable, and acceptable methodologies – and becoming versed in how to explain these methods to judge and jury, all combine to qualify the advanced vocational evaluator for service in a forensic setting.

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### **Biographical Sketch**

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# Results of the VECAP Journal Readership Survey

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## Introduction

It is common practice for journal articles to undergo a stringent peer review process before publication (Jefferson, Wager, & Davidoff, 2002). However, peer review is rarely applied to overall journal process or content. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to assess peer perceptions of the Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals Journal (VECAP).

## Methods

A brief, internet-based survey was developed to identify the current needs of VECAP Journal subscribers in order to upgrade the journal to provide important vocational evaluation and career assessment information in a timely and professional manner. The survey was sent to 228 VECAP members and journal subscribers. Of these, three addresses were identified as “non-deliverable” and one person “opted out” of the survey. Of the remaining 224 potential respondents, 95 completed the survey (42%). This response rate is reasonable for a single-mode, on-line survey (Cobanoglu, Warde, & Moreno, 2001; Cook, Heath, & Thompson, 2000; Schaefer & Dillman, 1998).

## Results

### RESPONDENTS

The majority of respondents were white (88.4%) and female (74.2%). Many (33.7%) had been working in the field for over 25 years, with 21.3% having worked in the field from 1 to 5 years. The majority of

respondents (88.8%) read the journal in print, however 9% used a screen reader, and 1% used a magnifier.

### JOURNAL CONTENT

When asked to identify the types of articles in which they were most interested, the majority of respondents identified test reviews (84.2%), work sample reviews (82.1%), and original research (72.6%), followed by brief reports (53.7%), and theoretically based articles (47.4%). Other comments included an interest in innovative programs, reports from the frontlines, evidence-based research and practitioner insights, case studies, transition and functional vocational evaluation at the high school and college levels and editorials. One respondent stated “I'm looking for everyday suggestions and resources that will help me do my job better, which is to provide vocational assessment and guidance to adults with disabilities. I currently run into issues with people who do not have a GED or high school diploma and may not ever be able to get one.”

Seventy-five respondents identified at least one suggestion for topics of interest to include in the VECAP journal. The most common were:

- Community based assessments and evaluations
- Book reviews and critiques
- Literature reviews regarding tests that are utilized by vocational evaluators, the functions and steps of vocational evaluation
- Vocational evaluation techniques for special populations, such as blind,

deaf, mental illness, autism, chronic pain, CP, MD, traumatic brain injury, addictions, prison/offenders, at risk youth

- More articles about the uses of vocational evaluation in settings other than rehabilitation: schools, industry, workforce development/one stops, community colleges, colleges, youth or adult literacy programs, after-school or "out-of-school" programs, etc
- How assessment contributes to better outcomes, including research demonstrating effectiveness
- Emerging tools/instruments/products and their usefulness
- Career planning with those with disabilities

#### *CONTRIBUTING AS AN AUTHOR*

More than 78% of respondents had never submitted an article, 20.7% had submitted 1 or 2 articles and only 1% had submitted 3 or more. Barriers to submitting an article for publication included lack of time to develop manuscripts (65.5%), not being currently engaged in publishable activities (32.2%), and not being interested in publishing (24.1%). Several respondents cited issues with the journal itself, including unclear author instructions, bad previous experience, poor publication rate (some years with few or no publications) and time to publication (>10 months); while others reported a lack of confidence as a writer, fear of the peer review process and lack of knowledge/experience.

Respondents suggested that if there were more options for non-research based articles (74.2%) it would increase the likelihood respondents would submit an article for publication. Additional suggestions included an on-line submission process (32.3%) and more collaborative process with editors (25.8%).

#### *VOLUNTEERING AS A REVIEWER*

The majority of respondents (86.8%) were not reviewers for the VECAP Journal. Barriers to volunteering as a reviewer included feeling unqualified professionally (46.6%), takes too much time (37.9%), unclear of expectations of reviewers (29.3%), no incentives for reviewing (20.7%) and unclear review process (12.7%). Training for new reviewers (85.9%) was the top change that would make it more likely for the respondent to act as a reviewer. On-line review process (53.1%), clearer guidelines (23.4%) and more time allowed for reviews (18.8%) were also suggested.

One respondent stated, "I have long thought that we need standard guidelines for selecting reviewers, maintaining reviewers, having time-limited terms for reviewers, and more written guidelines for new editors, co-editors, and managing editors--so that people taking over these roles do not have to 'figure things out' on their own."

#### **Conclusions**

The majority of respondents were not actively participating in the creation of the VECAP Journal, as less than 25% had published in and less than 15% were reviewing for the Journal. Some Journal changes that might improve contribution of articles include actively soliciting topic-specific and/or non-research articles, offering clear guidelines for authors and considering an on-line submission process. Both clear guidelines and an on-line review processes may attract additional reviewers for the journal, as well.

The VECAP board and Journal editors are currently addressing some of these needs by offering a session at the National Issues Forum entitled "Writing for Professional Publication 101". This presentation was intended to help potential contributors (1) develop an awareness of the

various types of articles that can be written for professional publications; (2) identify how to come up with an idea for a professional publication, (3) identify the steps involved in developing and submitting a professional manuscript to the VECAP Journal or other professional journals, and (4) develop an awareness of how manuscripts are reviewed by professional journals.

The current editors are also working to revise the author instructions, submission process, review process and timeliness of feedback. Additional consideration needs to be made into making the publication process more collaborative and offering on-line submission and review.

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### Biographical Sketches

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**Professional Membership in VECAP**

Definition according to Bylaws:

Professional members shall be those individuals actively engaged in the practice of some aspect of vocational evaluation or work adjustment training. This shall include those individuals who are immediate supervisors, teachers, or researchers in the fields of vocational evaluation or work adjustment.

Benefits to Members:

Newsletters, Journals, discounted registration at Forum and other training events, one member/one vote voting privileges, eligible to hold office in VECAP

**Associate Membership in VECAP**

Definition according to Bylaws:

Associate members shall be those individuals interested in vocational evaluation or work adjustment, but who are not actively engaged in the practice thereof.

Benefits to Members:

Newsletters, Journals, discounted registration at Forum and other training events, one member/one vote voting privileges, eligible to hold office in VECAP

**Student Membership in VECAP (Effective 1/1/2008)**

Definition according to Bylaws:

Student members shall be those individuals enrolled full-time (9 hours per semester or equivalent for undergraduate study, 6 hours or equivalent per semester for graduate study) in recognized educational programs preparing them for practice in the fields of vocational evaluation or work adjustment.

Benefits to Members:

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