

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA, 2014) is a legislative mandate focused on improving the employment outcomes of secondary students with disabilities. WIOA requires that funding from the State/Federal Vocational Rehabilitation System be used to ensure that state vocational rehabilitation agencies (e.g., Illinois Department of Human Services) in collaboration with schools provide pre-employment transition services (pre-ETS) to all students with disabilities who qualify, or could potentially qualify, for vocational rehabilitation services. Under WIOA, vocational rehabilitation counselors and teachers are required to engage students in the following five required pre-ETS: (a) job exploration counseling, (b) work-based learning experiences, (c) counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs, (d) workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living, and (e) instruction in self-advocacy. This research brief will focus on *job exploration counseling*.

What is Job Exploration Counseling?

Job exploration counseling is foundational to the career decision making process. During this exploratory phase students participate in activities to help generate vocational interests, identify personal work values, and explore careers (Flum & Bluestien, 2000). This process is often conducted by administering a series of assessments and interviews with the student, and by providing feedback on previous or current work experiences. Job exploration counseling can be formal or informal and completed individually or as a group. Job exploration activities not only improve self-awareness but also help students develop an understanding of the labor market and potential careers pathways.

What the Research Says

Job exploration counseling was ranked by vocational rehabilitation counselors as the most important practice they use to achieve student postsecondary success (Neubert, et al., 2018). It also is one of the more frequently utilized pre-ETS implemented by vocational rehabilitation personnel (Miller et al., 2018). Researchers attribute this finding to the ability of rehabilitation counselors to conduct job exploration counseling activities in group setting without an employer present. That same research also notes that there is great variation in how state vocational rehabilitation agencies implement job exploration counseling with some states utilizing job exploration counseling more frequently than others.

Guidelines for Practice

Given the dynamic nature of individual career development, it is important for students to engage in job exploration counseling activities frequently to ensure they receive appropriate and effective career guidance. Job exploration counseling is also an opportunity for collaboration with vocational rehabilitation counselors, Community Rehabilitation Partners (CRP), and school personnel.

It is important to note that job exploration counseling is a highly adaptable process. There is no “right way” to do job exploration counseling. Figure 1 provides a sample sequence of job exploration counseling activities that could be arranged for a student.

Figure 1*Sample Sequence of Activities*

The first box demonstrates an example of career exploration in a group setting (i.e., numerous students attend the Career Speaker Day to learn about careers). This activity also highlights how job exploration counseling can involve people who are not on a student's transition team. The second box centers on a collaborative effort between the school and vocational rehabilitation to conduct an individualized interest assessment. This may naturally lead to a third activity where the results of the interest inventory inform what work environment would be best for a student. The final box describes an informal "check-in" with a student at the WBLE to see how they are enjoying their job. As seen in this example, job exploration counseling can include a variety of group and individual activities, be implemented in a variety of settings, involve collaboration with school and vocational rehabilitation, and be flexible and dynamic based on what is learned from each activity.

References

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- Miller, R., Sevak, P., & Honeycutt, T. (2018). *State vocational rehabilitation agencies' early implementation experiences with pre-employment transition services*. Retrieved from Mathematica Policy Research: www.mathematica.org%2F-%2Fmedia%2Fpublications%2Fpdfs%2Fdisability%2F2018%2Fearly-experiences-preets.pdf;h=repec:mpr:mprres:b158ab08ac3241fdb57cbfd13ccc03e5
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Additional Resources

www.careeronestop.org/GetMyFuture/default.aspx

www.mynextmove.org

www.onetcenter.org/tools.html

