

The Benefits of Early RTW in the Vocational Rehabilitation Process

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Background in Vocational Rehabilitation



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- In practice since 1994
- Vocational Case Management in WC
- RTW Manager at UMass Memorial Healthcare
- Career Counseling-Adults & Young Adults
- Outplacement
- Expert Witness/Litigation



Vocational Rehabilitation: Milestones in Development

“Vocational rehabilitation is the systematic process by which services are planned and provided in response to the special need and abilities of eligible persons for the purpose of rendering them employable. The primary purpose of VR is the suitable employment of people with disabilities”.

[Rehabilitation Counseling: Basics and Beyond. Parker & Szymanski; pro-ed]





Vocational Rehabilitation: Milestones in Development (CONTINUED)

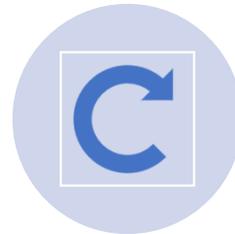


- 1917 PL 64-347 Smith-Hughes Act-established the Federal Board of Vocational Education for retraining dislocated industrial workers
- 1928 PL 65-178 The Soldiers' Rehabilitation Act-authorized VR services for WWI veterans
- 1920 PL 66-236 The Smith-Fess Act-authorized vocational guidance, occupational adjustment and placement services for civilians with physical disabilities
- 1973 PL 93-112 The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 introduced the IWRP and postemployment services; establishing a priority of services to persons meeting the federal definition of severe handicaps

STATISTICS



Most IW's who had not RTW at their pre-injury wages one year after reporting the injury also did not RTW to jobs that offered their pre-injury wages after 3 yrs. [U.S. DOL OWCP-Mathematica Policy Research]



Positive RTW outcomes associated with higher education & socioeconomic status, higher self-efficacy and optimistic expectations for recovery & RTW, lower severity of injury/illness, RTW co-ordination, and multidisciplinary interventions which include the workplace and stakeholders [Cancelliere et.al. Chiropractic & Manual Therapies (2016) 24:32]



2022-Rate of injury cases was 2.3 cases per 100 FTE (same as 2021). Illness rate increased 45.2 cases per 10,000 FTE compared to 37.7 in 2021 (rise in respiratory illness rate) [BLS 11/08/23 News Release]



Overexertion & bodily reaction had the most cases at >1M followed by contact with objects & equipment with approx. 781K. Highest in material moving & transportation industry and #2 in production and healthcare workers. Healthcare & social support workers had highest incidence of days OOW. [BLS 11/08/23 News Release]

Vocational Rehabilitation: Goals and Hierarchy

RTW as close to Pre-Injury Wage

RTW HIERARCHY

- RTW same employer, same job
- RTW same employer, different job
- RTW different employer, same job
- RTW different employer, different job
- OJT
- Skill Enhancement (short-term)
- Retraining

Time OOW and cost increases with each step





THE TEAM

- *Client (+ attorney)*-Need "buy in" from both in the process
- *Insurance Adjuster*-Early Identification will need VR
- *Employer-HR/Mgrs./Sup.*-ID same job w/accommodations or alternative work within employer/job descriptions for MD
- *Treatment Providers*-quantify restrictions-job analysis if needed
- *Family*-supportive of RTW process or enable disability identity
- *VR Specialist*-often the conduit, mediator, facilitator, central "hub" to bring the parties together



WHEN TO REFER

- As soon as known IW will be unable to return FDNR or as soon as know will need accommodations to perform job. When in doubt reach out to a VR specialist
- Consider Ergo Assessment. Open communication with supervisor/department manager
- Is there a RTW/Light Duty Program in place?
- IW does NOT need to be at MMI to refer for (private) VR

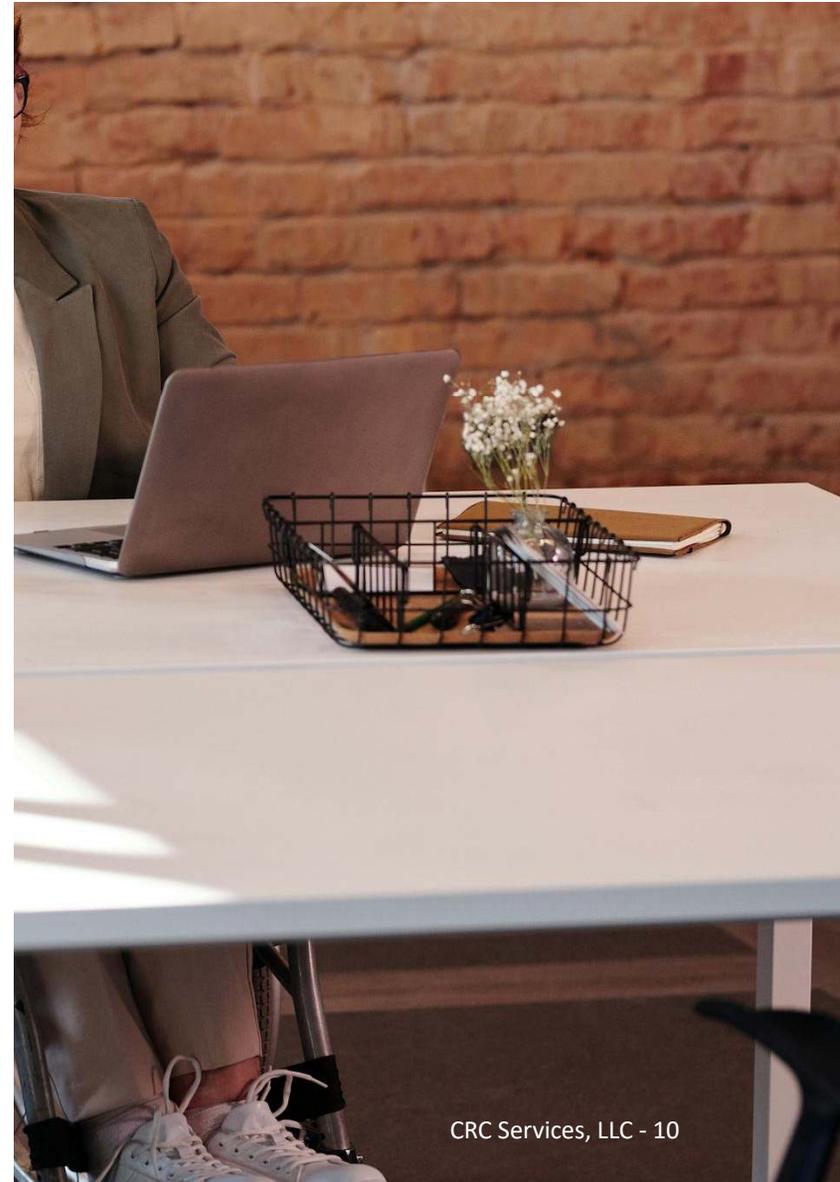


WHEN TO REFER

(CONTINUED)

Early RTW Benefits

- ✓ Costs less-some stats show 70% less
- ✓ Less likely to have legal representation
- ✓ Optimism higher
- ✓ IW feels “wanted” and employer cares about their wellbeing
- ✓ Less secondary mental health-depression & anxiety
- ✓ Family support v. discord or enabling
- ✓ Less chance of worsening of physical health-pain management, more medications, more providers
- ✓ SPIRIT-MIND-BODY





Name _____

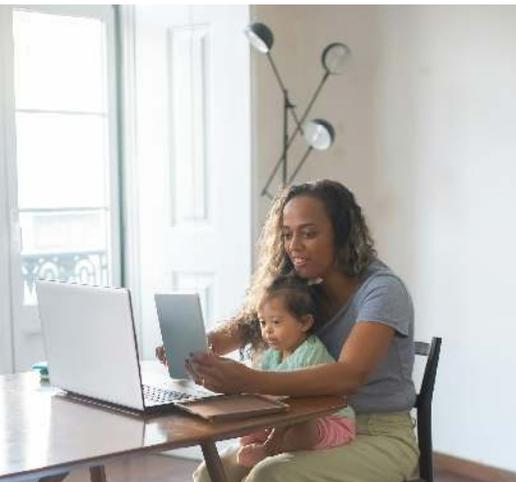
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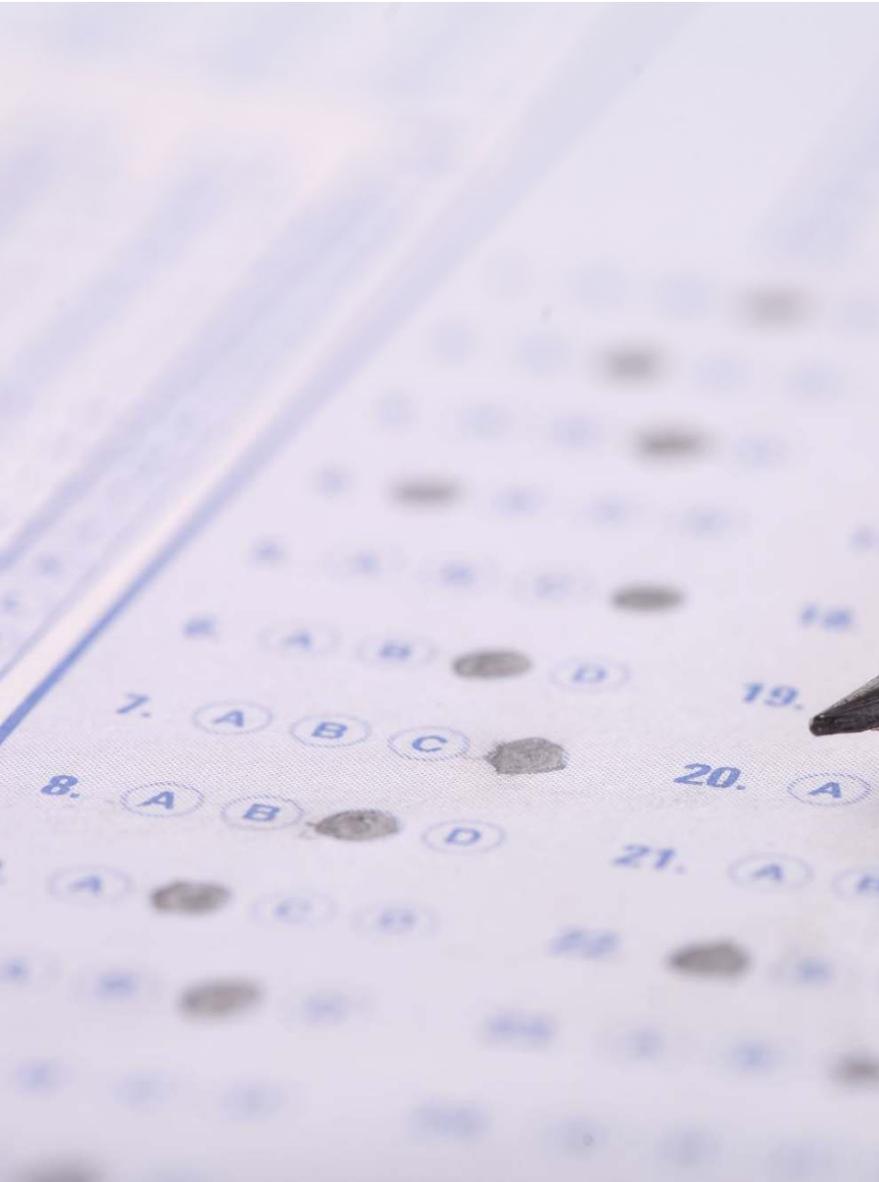
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VR PROCESS

- Referral-Adjuster, Atty., Self-Include Job Title, job description, recent medical records, AWW
- Intake
 - In-person
 - Hx & current treatment
 - Self-reported limitations
 - DIL
 - Family
 - Education & Training History
 - Avocational Activities
 - PRW
 - ID potential barriers to employment (childcare, transportation, elder care)
 - Self-identify with RTW
 - Job goal
 - What has the IW thought about-Self perception of RTW
 - Work readiness





VR PROCESS (CONTINUED)

TESTING

Achievement

Functional Literacy

Intelligence

Memory, Concentration & Learning Ability

Interest & Personality

Typing

Clerical

VR PROCESS (CONTINUED)

Contact with referral source after initial intake

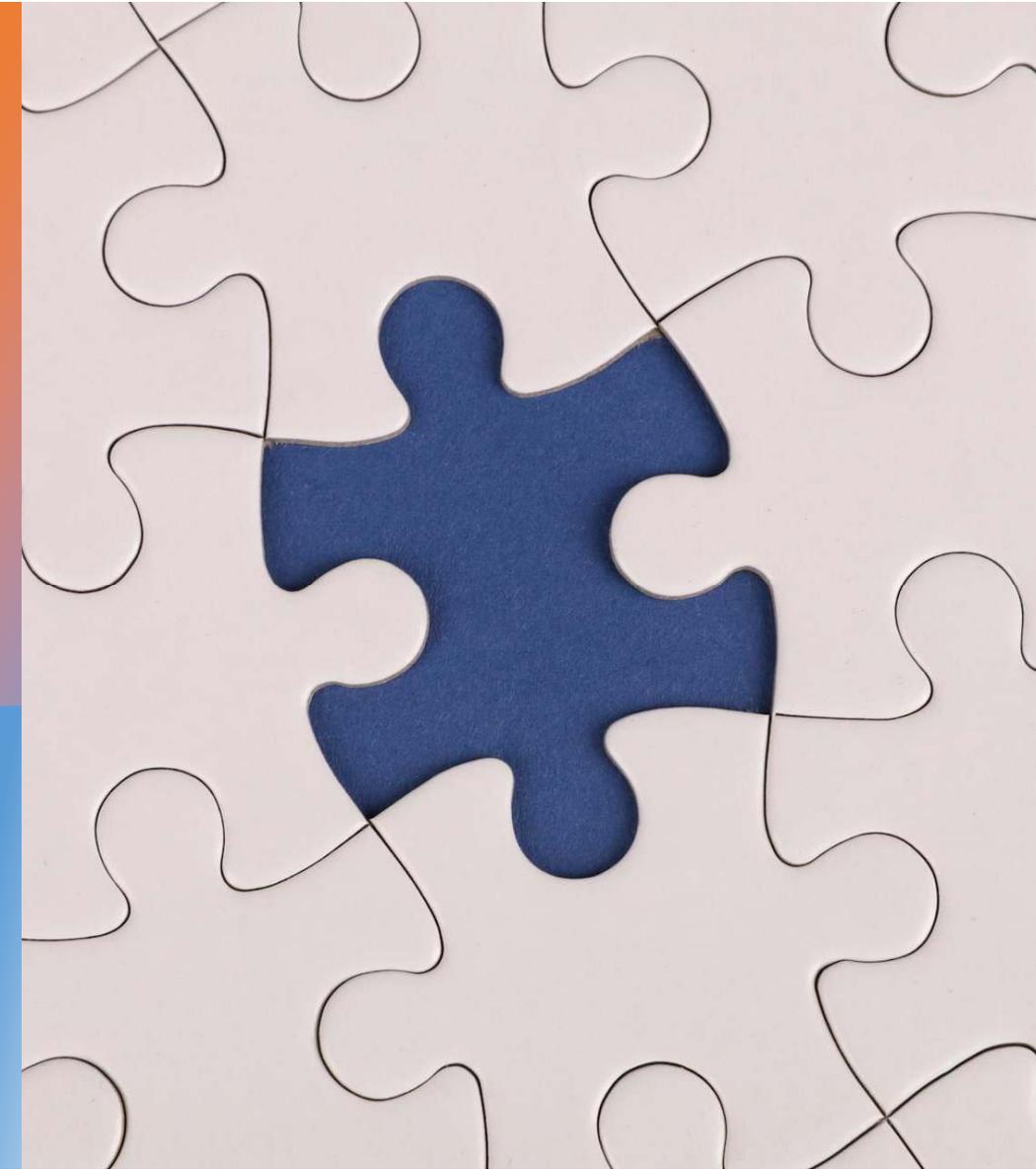
- Discuss interview & testing. Discuss potential for success & barriers with potential solutions
- Potential RTW same employer
- Determine VR Consultant to s/w Employer
 - ID possible worksite accommodations for RTW same job
 - ID potential alternative work within same employer



****Be open and allow the VR Specialist to help BEFORE told there are no employment options available at the same employer.**

It will SAVE LOTS OF MONEY AND HELP THE IW WITH RECOVERY knowing there is a job at a familiar place

RTW V. "REINVENTION" V. RETRAINING



VR PROCESS (CONTINUED)

- VR Specialist-may need to contact and coordinate with other team members: NCM, physicians, physical therapists, mental health therapists. Learn of current and potential future limitations and how to help the recovery
 - Every member of the Team learns something about the IW
 - Pull the information together to help determine how best to work with the INDIVIDUAL IW to facilitate a RTW in the least amount of time





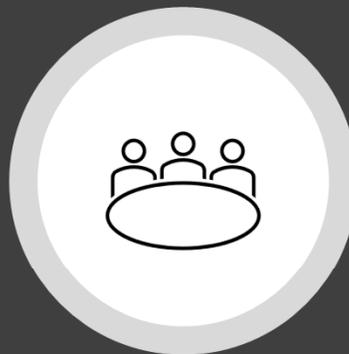
VR CONSULTANT AS A COUNSELOR

- IW's Pre-Injury mental health status and coping skills a predictor of recovery and RTW
 - Intake Interview-learning about the past to help the present
 - How has the IW dealt with adversity in the past?
 - Support system(s) in place
 - Hx of anxiety, depression, PTSD et.al. signal the VR Specialist the IW will require more support
 - Treat the IW as a whole person. If not, the whole person cannot achieve a successful RTW. We can't just take a bad back and restrictions and place in a job
 - VR Specialist as a chameleon: Direct, Empathetic, Supportive & Accountable
 - VR Specialist is a Counselor-Vocational Guidance, supportive but goal directed counseling-similar to CBT

RTW NEW JOB

- Working with IW to identify suitable job goal
- RFC
- Education, training, PRW, transferable skills
- Interest & Personality
- External Barriers resolved or work around?
- Vocational Guidance & Counseling
 - Identify Job Goal(s)
 - Work readiness assessment

MUST HAVE IW (& ATTORNEY) BUY-IN OR WILL NOT SUCCEED







WORK READINESS & JOB SEEKING SKILLS

IW's level of independence with job search and fill in the gaps

- Job searching in a computer world: Indeed Profiles
- Resumes & cover letters
- Connection with local Career OneStops-additional resource-Free job search, workshops
- Adult Education & Similar-computer training, GED
- Organizing a job search campaign with follow up
- Interviewing skills-*Proper Disability Disclosure
- Determine need for short-term skills training: typing, MS Office, etc.

JOB DEVELOPMENT & PLACEMENT

- VR Specialist more involved in beginning and fades away for IW to be fully independent within 60-90 days
- VR Specialist can identify, screen and provide job leads and ensure IW is following through (accountability)
- This phase is where we fully see whether the IW is self-directed and sees themselves RTW or not
 - External barriers may become more apparent and may need other team members to assist
 - Prep & Debrief Interviews
 - Assist with potential employer if needed
 - Follow for 30-60 days after placement to ensure will stick-intervene as needed



JOB SEARCH STATISTICS

Early Intervention & RTW Same Employer is Key

On average, it takes approximately 5 months to secure a job [BLS 2023]

Approximately (up to) 80 applications are needed to secure employment. 20% of job seekers will submit 81 applications or > before job offer [BLS 2023]

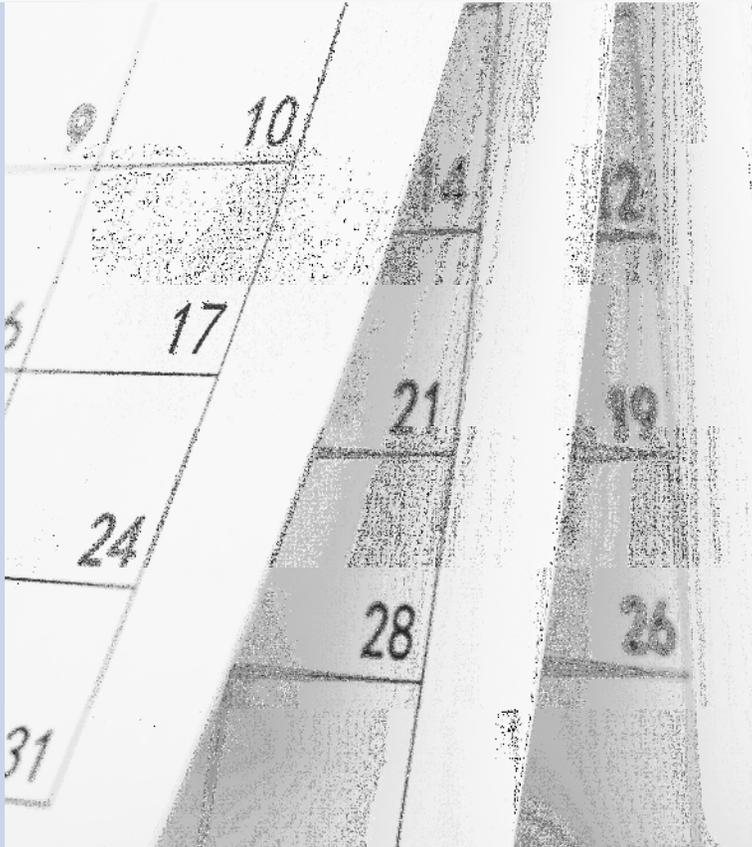
Average corporate job openings receives approximately 250 applications for 1 job opening [zipppia]

Approximately 62% job seekers with receive 1 interview for every 10 applications [zipppia]

Drop in call backs from employers with a work gap of 2 years or more (9.8% call back v 11.3% with no gap) [Resumego]

A 3-5 yr. gap in work results in only a 4.6% chance of interviews or call backs [Resumego]

Bottom Line: *IWs are at a competitive disadvantage with employment gaps. Early Identification/Intervention and RTW Same Employer will save time and money and aid in the IW's recovery*



JOB PLACEMENT TIME SUMMARY

- RTW Same Employer-Same Job 1-3 months
- RTW Same Employer-Different Job 2-4 months
- RTW Different Employer-Same Job 5-7 months
- RTW Different Employer-Different Job 6-8 months
 - Add Short-term Skills training +1-6 months
- RETRAINING 6 mos.-2yrs training + 6-8 months= 1yr-2 ½ + yrs

QUESTIONS??



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Available for:

- Case consultations
- Presentation and/or Roundtables with your team
- Consultations with HR-ADA Job Descriptions, RTW Programs, etc.

THANK YOU!

"It's not how much money we make that ultimately makes us happy between 9 and 5. It's whether or not our work fulfills us."
--Malcolm Gladwell (author)