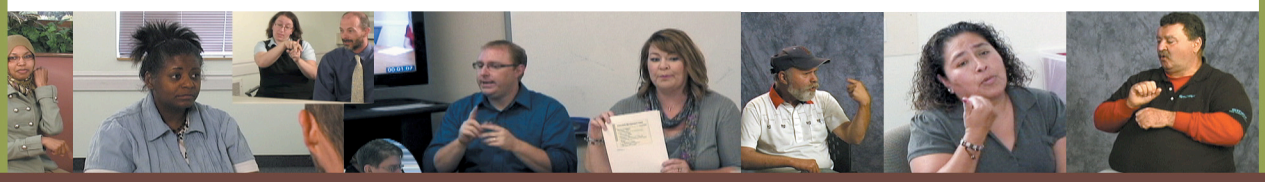
Interpreting in VR Settings: Domains and Competencies

NCIEC

National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers



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Introduction

Since the passage of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, interpreting within Vocational Rehabilitation settings has become increasingly complex. The communication needs of deaf consumers have increased in complexity. The systems within VR have changed over time, shifting to serve more complex consumer needs, as well as, the needs of deaf professionals working within VR. Even the dynamics within the field of interpreting have changed, increasing the expectations for better educated, more highly skilled practitioners. (Cokely, D., Winston, E., 2009) As a result, the need for interpreters who possess specialist knowledge and skills in the area of VR interpreting has risen dramatically.

According to Kasher, "*Specialization is the intentional narrowing of practice requiring didactic and experiential preparation that provides the basis for competent service delivery with respect to patterns of practice in essential domains" (*Witter-Merithew, 2010). Since 2005, various workgroups within the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC) have engaged in efforts to identify and define competencies of specialist practitioners in various domains within the field of interpreting. (Witter-Merithew, 2010) These efforts have included and examination of interpreting within VR settings and have resulted in a number of studies and focus groups exploring and documenting past and current practices in VR interpreting. With that work as a foundation, this document is the culmination of effort from numerous experts, practitioners and stakeholders who have contributed to and assisted in the development of specialist competencies in Vocational Rehabilitation interpreting as outlined in this document.[1]

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to establish industry-recognized standards of competence for specialist interpreters practicing within Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and other employment-related settings. The establishment of these competencies will also provide a foundation upon which to create or influence curriculum design and development, in an effort to foster educational opportunities for practicing generalist interpreters who wish or need to develop specialist competence in interpreting with VR settings.

[1] The NCIEC has conducted need assessments, focus groups, final report, literature review and annotated bibliography which provide insight into the specific needs of VR consumers and interpreter practitioners. Those documents can be found at http://www.interpretereducation.org/ under the *Specialization* and *Resources* tabs.

Entry-To-Practice Generalist Competence as Foundational to Specialist Competence

In many professions, entry-to-practice competencies establish a foundational standard of practice for entry-level and progressing practitioners. A generalist interpreter has been defined as a, *"…practitioner who has more than superficial knowledge and competence to accurately and reliably interpret a wide range of low-risk communication interactions."* (Witter-Merithew, A., Johnson, L. & Taylor, M., 2004) Within the field of interpreting, generalist competencies are described in *Entry-To-Practice Competencies for ASL-English Interpreters* (Witter-Merithew, A., Johnson, L., 2005) The competencies are grouped within five (5) domains:

Theory and Knowledge: *Embodies the academic foundation and world knowledge essential to effective interpreting.*

Human Relations: *Fosters effective communication and productive collaboration with colleagues, consumers, and employers.*

Language Skills: *Relates to the use of American Sign Language and English*

Interpreting Skills: *Technical competencies related to effective ASL – English interpretation of a range of subject matter in a variety of settings*

Professionalism: *Associated with professional standards and practices*

The specialist VR competencies outlined in this document assume that interpreting practitioners have acquired a foundation as a generalist interpreter first, and possess the competencies that have been determined necessary for effective generalist practice. Therefore, a review of these competencies should be considered in addition to the ETP competencies. A link to the Entry-To-Practice Competencies document can be found at: http://www.unco.edu/doit/Competencies_brochure_handout.pdf

Document Organization

The competencies identified within this document are organized into six (6) domains:

VR Systems Knowledge: Demonstrate broad understanding of VR systems and systems external but relevant to VR

VR General Knowledge:	Demonstrates broad understanding of general knowledge related to VR
Language and Multiculturalism:	Demonstrates ability to effectively work with the diverse range of individuals encountered within VR
Communication:	Demonstrates ability to effectively communicate with the diverse range of individuals encountered within VR
Interpreting Knowledge/Skills:	Demonstrates knowledge and skills critical to effective decision-making and interpreting within VR
Professionalism:	Demonstrates competencies critical to on-going professional development within the VR setting

Each domain encompasses a set of competencies deemed essential for interpreters specializing in VR. Some domains have competencies which include examples of the types of knowledge and/or skills intended for that domain. For example, the first and fifth domains are comprised of the sections, *VR Systems Knowledge* and *On-going professional Development within the VR setting.* Each of these sections are accompanied by examples of the types of VR knowledge that experts in the field have deemed necessary for specialist VR practitioners to attain.

These examples originate from interpreting practitioners and experts in the field who participated in an expert think-tank summit, responded to needs assessment surveys and took part in focus groups conducted as part of this endeavor. These examples are not intended to represent a complete and finite list of all knowledge and skill sets within those domains. They will, however, assist in further defining the parameters of those competencies, as well as, guiding curriculum and professional development opportunities designed for attaining specialist recognition.

Specialty Area Competencies of the Interpreter Working in Vocational Rehabilitation Settings

Vocational Rehabilitation Knowledge Competencies

VR Systems Knowledge:

The specialist interpreter working within the Vocational Rehabilitation and employment settings:

1. Demonstrates understanding of the broad, yet, complex VR system functioning at the federal and state levels, including but not limited to the following examples:

    a. *The Vocational Rehabilitation Mission, general employee roles and organizational structure.*

    b. *Differences between public and private vocational rehabilitation services*

    c. *The various VR processes for serving consumers including referral and application, evaluation, testing, comprehensive assessments, intakes, eligibility and status levels, rights and responsibilities, services, case closure, as well as, the complaint and appeal process.*

    d. *Various employment-related services such as, employment training, supported employment, job coaching, job placement, trial work experience, Individual Plan for Employment (IPE), career advancement, and post-employment services.*

    e. *The VR Vendor System utilized for paying for interpreting services.*

2. Demonstrates understanding of the complex systems external to VR, that can have an effect on the implementation of VR services for deaf and hard of hearing consumers, such as:

    a. *The various VR partners and systems in which they operate in collaboration with VR, such as the Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Center (TACE), Veterans Affairs VR programs, the Helen Keller Institute, Independent Living Centers, Transition to Employment programs, Client Assistant Program (CAP), Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association (VEWAA), State Rehabilitation Councils (SRC), Advisory Councils for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, State Independent Living Councils (SLIP), Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP), Tribal Rehabilitation and One-Stop-Centers.*

b. *The Social Welfare Services systems, such as Medicare, Medicaid, SSI, SSDI, Food Stamps, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Women, Infant and Children (WIC), and other state, city or county services.*

c. *Mental health services systems, including psychological, psychiatric, and neuropsychological testing.*

d. *Local and regional Disability Legal Services systems, which include information and services regarding one's rights, grievance procedures and client assistance programs and services.*

e. *Audiological testing and evaluation systems and services.*

f. *The Worker's Compensation system, including the Injured Workers Program.*

g. *The Federal Immigration System and its effects on VR policies at the federal and state level.*

h. *Basic knowledge of the legal system such as, laws related to disabilities, employment, mandated reporting obligations, immigration, fair hearing and tort claims processes, and laws impacting the Client Assistance Programs (CAPS).*

General VR-Related Knowledge:

1. Demonstrates an in-depth understanding of and ability to employ specialized terminology and jargon associated with VR and VR-related systems.
2. Demonstrates a general understanding of current policies and procedures associated with VR service delivery.
3. Demonstrates a general understanding of Best Practices in VR service delivery.
4. Demonstrates a general understanding of Evidence-based Practice Model for supported employment.
5. Recognizes and demonstrates knowledge of various technology used by deaf, hard-of-hearing and hearing VR professionals, as well as, deaf, hard-of-hearing and hearing VR consumers, such as assistive listening technology, on-line services, etc.
6. Demonstrates ability to differentiate between a broad range of disabilities, symptoms and the affects various disabilities have on individuals.

Language and Multiculturalism Competencies

The interpreter working within the specialty area of Vocational Rehabilitation demonstrates the following competencies critical to effectively working with the diverse range of individuals encountered within the VR setting:

1. Exhibits respect and sensitivity toward diverse individuals who possess a broad range of disabilities.
2. Exhibits respect and flexibility toward individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP).
3. Demonstrates cultural literacy and sensitivity toward deaf immigrants and their families.

Communication Competencies

The interpreter working within the specialty area of Vocational Rehabilitation demonstrates the following competencies critical to effectively communicating with and interpreting for the diverse range of individuals encountered within the VR setting:

1. Recognizes the affects various disabilities can have on language and communication.
2. Identifies strategies to accurately assess and determine the unique communication needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals engaged in the VR system.
3. Demonstrates an ability to recognize, understand and accurately utilize specialized terminology, acronyms and jargon common to VR and VR-related settings in both ASL and English.

Interpreting Knowledge and Skills Competencies

The specialist interpreter working within the area of Vocational Rehabilitation demonstrates the following knowledge and skills competencies critical to effective decision-making and interpreting for the diverse range of consumers, as well as situations, encountered within the VR setting:

1. Exhibits a clear understanding of the role of the interpreter working within diverse VR and employment-related settings, and when working with deaf consumers and/or deaf VR professionals.
2. Demonstrates effective application of RID Code of Conduct to complex ethical dilemmas encountered within the VR setting.
3. Recognizes and respects that Deaf Interpreters enhance the effectiveness of an interpretation when working with some deaf consumers.
4. Demonstrates superior skills in applying VR and employment-related systems and general knowledge effectively during consecutive or simultaneous interpretation using cultural adjustments while managing internal and external factors and processes in a manner that results in accurate and reliable interpretations in both ASL and English.
5. Demonstrates the ability to work effectively with Deaf Interpreters.
6. Exhibits the ability to vary register appropriately when interpreting for deaf consumers, as well as, deaf VR professionals.
7. Demonstrates ability to effectively produce accurate sight translations of VR and employment-related forms, as well as, other printed materials.

Professional Development Competencies

The specialist interpreter working within the area of Vocational Rehabilitation demonstrates the following competencies critical to on-going professional development within the VR setting:

1. Exhibits a strong commitment to on-going, advanced knowledge and interpreting skill development to enhance the interpreter's effectiveness when interpreting within the VR Setting.
2. Demonstrates an awareness of VR-related research, resources and publications and actively pursues specializes professional development in the VR setting.
    a. *Professional organizations and associations that function in collaboration with VR, such as Post-secondary education Program's Network (PEPNet), Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association (VEWAA), state Disability Resource Centers (DRC), state Rehabilitation Councils (SRC), Goodwill Industries, Advisory Councils for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, state Independent Living Councils (SLIP), Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP), American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association (ADARA) and Tribal Rehabilitation programs.*

b. *Various professional journals and publications from within the field of VR, such as Journal for Professionals Networking for Excellence in Service Delivery with Individuals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing (JADARA), Foundations of Vocational Rehabilitation (5th edition), Encyclopedia of Counseling, Model State Plan for Rehabilitation of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind (2008).*

c. *Various VR Publication Resources, such as the Institute of Rehabilitation Issues http://www.iriforum.org/ (IRI), Goodwill Industries, Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Center (TACE), National Clearinghouse on Rehabilitation Training Materials (USU), PEPNet I-Transition Information www.pepnet.org/itransition.asp, State Rehabilitation Council Monitoring Reports, etc.).*

3. Exhibits a strong commitment to networking with interpreters and other professionals working within VR settings.

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