

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES  
REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
WASHINGTON, DC 20202

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM  
RSA-IM-03-12  
DATE: June 19, 2003

ADDRESSEES: STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES (GENERAL)  
STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES (BLIND)  
STATE REHABILITATION COUNCILS  
REGIONAL REHABILITATION CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS  
CONSUMER ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS  
CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS  
PROTECTION & ADVOCACY OF INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS PROGRAMS  
AMERICAN INDIAN VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAMS  
RSA SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

SUBJECT: Request for Nominations for the Thirtieth Institute on Rehabilitation Issues  
Primary Study Groups

CONTENT: The purpose of this Information Memorandum (IM) is to request nominations for persons to serve as chairpersons and members on the following two Thirtieth Institute on Rehabilitation Issues (IRI) primary study groups (PSG):

1. Innovative Methods for Providing Vocational Rehabilitation Services to Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities

The university coordinator for this study group is Dr. Donald Dew, the director of Regional Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program (RRCEP) III at The George Washington University.

2. A New Paradigm for Vocational Evaluation: Empowering the VR Consumer through Vocational Information

The university coordinator for this study group is Ms. Jeanne Miller, the director of RRCEP VI at the University of Arkansas.

**The deadline for receipt of the nominations is July 18, 2003. Descriptions of the two IRI topics are attached to this memorandum.** Nominees for chairpersons for the PSGs must be current State VR agency directors, or designees, who have demonstrated leadership qualities, an ability to facilitate group discussions, good writing and editorial skills, and who have served on previous IRI PSGs. Both the chairpersons and the PSG members make a commitment to attend three meetings for two to three days each, during which the topical issues are discussed and debated in great detail.

The PSG will be primarily made up of representatives from State VR agencies and will include a total of approximately 10-12 persons, including individuals who are recognized authorities on the issue under study and/or represent important consumer perspectives. The PSG members define the issues in their topical area and write drafts of assigned chapters or sections. Their only compensation is reimbursement of travel and per diem expenses at the host university rate.

In submitting nominations, we encourage you to review the attached "IRI Primary Study Groups - Roles and Responsibilities" with each nominee before submitting his/her name. In order to receive consideration, each Nomination Form must be fully completed, including a brief justification. We also suggest that you ensure that each nominee requests his/her supervisor's approval prior to submitting a Nomination Form. Self-nomination is also encouraged. Our goal is to select a representative sample of persons knowledgeable of the topics from both inside and outside the State-Federal VR program, and to ensure participation of persons from minority backgrounds and persons with disabilities.

During the 30<sup>th</sup> IRI Forum to be held in Washington, DC from May 3-4, 2004, the PSG chairpersons and members present their draft publications to a larger study group for review and comment, and are honored for their contribution to the field of rehabilitation literature.

We appreciate your continued support of the IRI. Please provide the completed Nomination Forms for chairpersons and members of the IRI PSGs to:

Mr. Charles Sadler  
RSA IRI Coordinator  
Rehabilitation Services Administration  
330 C Street, SW, Room 3216  
Washington, DC 20202-2735

E-MAIL: [charles.sadler@ed.gov](mailto:charles.sadler@ed.gov)  
TELEPHONE: (202) 205-9286  
FAX: (202) 205-9340  
TTY: (202) 205-9295

---

Joanne Wilson  
Commissioner

Attachments: IRI Primary Study Groups – Roles and Responsibilities  
Nomination Form  
Descriptions of the 30<sup>th</sup> IRI Topics

cc: Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation  
National Organization of Rehabilitation Partners

## **IRI PRIMARY STUDY GROUPS - ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The following information is provided to persons who are either interested in nominating an individual to serve as a member or chairperson of an IRI PSG, or who are considering whether or not they are willing and able to be nominated to serve on an IRI PSG.

Persons nominating individuals to participate in the IRI should ensure that the nominees are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities. In order to avoid misunderstandings, please review the information contained herein with each nominee before submitting the Nomination Form.

**PURPOSE:** To research, write and publish an IRI publication that provides a foundation for quality state-of-the-art training on a specific topic. RSA annually funds two grantees at the University of Arkansas and The George Washington University to serve as university coordinators for two IRI PSGs, and to convene the National IRI Forum in Washington. The IRI is not original research; the document is comprised of existent research applied to contemporary issues and challenges in the field of VR. Approximately 2500 to 3500 copies of each IRI publication are disseminated nationally to an audience of VR counselors, consumers, advocates, administrators, educators, researchers, and trainers. The publications are also placed on the two university coordinators' web sites with numerous links to other rehabilitation partners.

### **SKILLS NEEDED BY ALL PSG MEMBERS:**

- 1) Knowledge of the topic.
- 2) Writing skills. This includes the ability to discuss the issue and then create and write (outlining, developing and drafting) a section or chapter of the document.
- 3) The ability to work as part of a team.

## **ROLES OF PARTICIPANTS ON THE IRI STUDY GROUPS**

### **UNIVERSITY COORDINATOR -**

Arranges all facets of the PSG meetings, such as: communicating meeting times and hotel arrangements to group members; providing travel and per diem; arranging teleconferences, if necessary; duplicating and editing the draft IRI documents; publishing and disseminating the final IRI document; and, any other logistical support necessary during the course of the IRI cycle.

- CHAIRPERSON -** Facilitates the PSG meetings and maintains group focus on the topical issues. Assigns writing assignments and membership to the editorial committee that is responsible for editing the document after the national IRI Forum. Works closely with the university coordinator, and the PSG members to ensure that the IRI publication is published in a timely manner.
- RSA REPRESENTATIVE -** Ensures that the group fulfills the charge presented by the RSA Commissioner and that the final publication complies with Federal law, regulations and policy. Reviews the final draft of the IRI document and provides a written review to the RSA IRI Coordinator.

### **WHAT KIND OF TIME COMMITMENT IS REQUIRED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE IRI?**

The IRI requires an approximately one-year time commitment that includes three meetings of approximately two and a half days. **THE FIRST TWO MEETINGS MAY ENTAIL WEEKEND TRAVEL.** The first meeting is devoted to a discussion of the topic and all the issues surrounding it. The group members are then assigned chapters to be written.

The second meeting focuses on a review and critique of the draft. Between the second and third meetings the members of the PSG rewrite and refine their respective chapters into the final draft. The third meeting occurs during the National IRI Forum in Washington, DC, during which time an expanded group of individuals reviews the final draft publication and provides feedback for further improving the document. These recommendations are considered by the PSG editorial committee, who may meet in Washington, DC immediately following the Forum. The editorial committee is usually composed of 3-7 members of the PSG, including the chairperson and the university coordinator.

IRI PSG membership is an honor. IRI PSG chairpersons and members are accorded the title of “IRI Scholars” and receive certificates of appreciation signed by the RSA Commissioner. The IRI is an opportunity to work collaboratively with consumers and professionals with knowledge and expertise on a given topic, and to develop a publication useful in training VR professionals.

## Nomination Form

### THIRTIETH INSTITUTE ON REHABILITATION ISSUES

#### 1. Nominee Information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone/TDD: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

The nominee is an individual with a disability.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_\_\_ No

The following question is to assist us in assembling an IRI PSG that includes individuals from diverse backgrounds. **Answering this question is optional.**

Race/Ethnic Status (Please check the most accurate answer)

\_\_\_\_\_ White

\_\_\_\_\_ Black/African American

\_\_\_\_\_ American Indian

\_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic

\_\_\_\_\_ Asian/Pacific Islander

\_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_



Nominator Information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone/TDD: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Nominator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF THE NOMINATION FORMS IS JULY 18, 2003.**



## Descriptions of the 30<sup>th</sup> IRI Topics

### **Topic 1: Innovation in Vocational Rehabilitation: Trends in Service Provision to Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities**

1. Issues to be addressed in publication:
  - A. According to RSA-911 data, individuals with psychiatric disabilities continue to have lower placement rates than other disability groups.
  - B. The unique and often cyclical barriers to employment faced by this population present unique challenges to the rehabilitation counselor and require flexibility and innovation on the part of an entire VR agency.
  - C. Describe the best practices currently being utilized to improve consumer compliance with taking medications, a problem often related to job loss.
  - D. There are strategies that address these barriers. These include transitional employment, clubhouse, and other service delivery and VR administration strategies.
  - E. Improving the skills of the VR counselors in working effectively with employers is an important part of improving job acquisition and retention for individuals with psychiatric disabilities.
  - F. What is the responsibility of the VR program in working with transition age students with disabilities, since the psychiatric diagnosis is now often made at a younger age, when compared to past experience.
  - G. More training and/or technical assistance could provide counselors with the support they need to address the needs of individuals with psychiatric disabilities.
  - H. Describe the state-of-the-art in assisting individuals with psychiatric disabilities to achieve and maintain employment. What are the ongoing supports that must be in place? What other issues need to be included in this document to ensure that it is a useful training and technical assistance resource for practicing VR counselors?

2. Intended audience:

VR counselors, managers, and administrators; rehabilitation counselor educators; mental health, psychosocial and community-based provider program personnel; VR consumers and their families; and, consumer advocates.

3. Potential effects on improving services to individuals with disabilities:

- A. Increase the knowledge of individuals who provide rehabilitation services to people with psychiatric disabilities.
- B. Increase the employment rate for individuals with psychiatric disabilities.
- C. Decrease the return rate of individuals with psychiatric disabilities to the VR system.
- D. Improve the experience of individuals with psychiatric disabilities as they move through the VR process into competitive employment.

**Topic 2: A New Paradigm for Vocational Evaluation:  
Empowering the VR Consumer through Vocational  
Information**

1. Issues to be addressed in publication:

- A. Review longitudinal studies and summarize findings that indicate one of the best predictors of positive VR outcome is effective vocational evaluation services.
- B. Define effective vocational evaluation services.
- C. Review the current status of vocational evaluation in the VR system across a variety of settings, including back to work, transition from school to work, and career planning.
- D. Identify effective strategies for self-advocacy.
- E. Describe how the VR consumer is empowered through the provision of in-depth vocational information and their

involvement in vocational planning.

- F. How can the use of assistive technology be effectively integrated into vocational evaluation services?
- G. Describe how the vocational evaluation report can be revamped to link the VR consumer, VR counselor, and vocational evaluator in the career planning process.

2. Intended audience:

VR counselors, managers, and administrators; vocational evaluators; transition school system personnel; rehabilitation counselor educators; VR consumers and their families; and, consumer advocates.

3. Potential effects on improving services to individuals with disabilities:

- A. Identifying effective vocational evaluation practices may enhance informed choice for career planning, and enhance services resulting in positive VR outcomes.
- B. Revamping vocational evaluation to provide good vocational information may empower VR consumers and enhance consumer self-concept.
- C. Career planning enhancements may be identified through the communication between VR counselors, VR consumers, and vocational evaluators.
- D. The identification of strategies to include assistive technology assessments within the evaluation process will increase access to needed assistive technology by VR consumers.