

**EMERGING ISSUES IN  
REHABILITATION COUNSELING**



# EMERGING ISSUES IN REHABILITATION COUNSELING

Perspectives on the New Millennium

*By*

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## PREFACE

This book was developed as a text for introductory and field-based courses in graduate-level rehabilitation counselor education programs. It also offers practicing rehabilitation counselors, administrators, and educators in-depth discussions of contemporary issues affecting the profession of rehabilitation counseling and its consumers. In developing the structure and organization for this book, we identified topics in our field that have been the subject of considerable change and/or controversy over the past ten to fifteen years. We then invited authors to examine the current status of each topic, framed around the most likely directions that the rehabilitation process will take in the New Millennium.

The book is divided into seven chapters, each of which includes its own list of references. The first chapter addresses new developments in graduate-level rehabilitation education, presented within the context of society's growing and varying demand for qualified rehabilitation practitioners. Chapter 2 presents an in-depth analysis of the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program's changing consumer population, centered on the order of selection mandate in the Rehabilitation Act which requires VR agencies to prioritize services for people with the most significant disabilities. In Chapter 3, life care planning is described as an emerging rehabilitation intervention for people with catastrophic disabilities.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6, respectively, deal with client assessment strategies in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) era, job development and placement strategies for a changing American labor market, and the need for improved postemployment services to help people with disabilities advance in their careers. The final chapter examines the history, current status, and future directions of private-sector rehabilitation, a fast-growing segment of the health care and rehabilitation industries.

Taken in aggregate, these chapters are intended to illuminate important contemporary issues that have broad implications for the future of rehabilitation counseling. The authors' perspectives are meant to serve as the basis for discussion and dialogue concerning those topic areas, as well as to provide an overview of what is being researched and written about in the current rehabilitation literature. Rehabilitation counseling is a dynamic, high-growth profession whose leaders and consumers have worked closely together to maintain a reputation steeped in responsiveness, responsibility, client advocacy, and empowerment of people with disabilities. It is our hope that this book will represent a meaningful reference vis-a-vis the policies that govern our field and the practices that underlie it.

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**EMERGING ISSUES IN  
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## Chapter 1

# REHABILITATION COUNSELING AND EDUCATION: CAREER COUNSELING SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

BRIAN T. MCMAHON, CAROLYN E. HAWLEY, CHRISTINE A. REID,  
AND LINDA R. SHAW

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to describe how students can best prepare for careers in rehabilitation counseling, and discuss occupations that hold promise for rehabilitation counselors in the twenty-first century. Career opportunities for rehabilitation counselors in non-traditional settings are rapidly expanding, and students must be able to activate the same career counseling principles they teach clients if they are to take full advantage of those opportunities. We begin this chapter with an overview of the current status of the counseling profession. Then, we identify counseling specialties in which there is a growth in employment opportunities. We follow this section with suggestions regarding how rehabilitation counselors can use their unique skills and specialized knowledge to access these opportunities. Our chapter concludes with a discussion regarding how Rehabilitation Counselor Education Programs can go about preparing students for diversified professional experiences in nontraditional settings.

### CURRENT STATUS OF THE COUNSELING PROFESSION

According to the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (JIST Works, 1998), there are about 250,000 counselors in the United States. Counselors are employed in health care facilities; job training, career develop-

ment, and vocational rehabilitation (VR) centers; social agencies; correctional institutions; residential care facilities; community organizations; drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs; health maintenance organizations; insurance companies; group and private practices; and federal, state, and local government agencies. Job growth for counselors through 2006 is expected to be average, but above average for specialists in mental health, employment, and rehabilitation counseling. Job opportunities for school counselors are on the decline. However, in the wake of the Littleton catastrophe, school counselors are expected to rebound strongly from their projected decline.

The demand for counselors is difficult to estimate. Currently, average utilization within mental health organizations suggests that the nation needs only 70 behavioral-health practitioners per 100,000 United States citizens. There are currently 113 practitioners per 100,000 citizens, suggesting an oversupply. Epidemiological norms, however, suggest that the nation actually needs 250 practitioners per 100,000 citizens. Counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers are addressing this need with the latter group currently providing more than 50 percent of all services (American Psychology Association, 1998).

Although the counseling profession's credentialing bodies have steadfastly advocated for a master's degree as the minimally acceptable academic criterion to practice, only six in ten counselors have graduate degrees (JIST Works, 1998). As a group, counselors do not tend to identify themselves as a single, united profession. Only one in five belongs to the American Counseling Association. Many others hold memberships in organizations representing their own counseling specialties.

Students enrolled in graduate counseling programs typically come from undergraduate degree programs in psychology, sociology, rehabilitation services, social work, or related fields. Approximately 133 universities have graduate counseling programs accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). These programs collectively graduate an unknown number of counselors in the following specialty areas: career, community, gerontological, mental health, school, student affairs, and marriage and family counseling. In comparison, the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) accredits approximately 85 graduate programs. These programs graduate approximately 700 rehabilitation counselors per year (JIST Works, 1998).

Following the completion of the Master of Science (MS) or Master of Arts (MA) degree, about 5 percent of graduates will pursue doctoral studies to become psychologists, counselor educators, researchers, or administrators. Forty-seven states have some form of counselor licensing credential. The National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) and the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) provide national certifications to approximately 24,000 and 15,000 individuals, respectively. Median salaries are just under \$40,000 per year; fewer than 10 percent of all counselors earn over \$60,000 per year (JIST Works, 1998).

The questions we are addressing in this chapter are: 1) How will we prepare rehabilitation counselors in the century ahead? and, of even greater importance, 2) What exactly should they be prepared to do?

### **THE OBVIOUS: COUNSELING SPECIALTIES OF PROMISE**

The *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (JIST Works, 1998) identifies professions that are obviously related to rehabilitation counseling such as student affair workers, teachers, personnel workers and managers, human services workers, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses, clergy, occupational therapists, training and development specialists, and equal employment opportunity coordinators. Might it be wise for rehabilitation counseling graduates to include consideration of such related areas when developing their own career paths? Are there additional areas of emphasis that might further expand, or even explode, the range of opportunities for our graduates?

### **The New Addictions**

The term addiction is most readily associated with alcohol and drug abuse. Clearly these issues have been and will continue to be a major concern for many counselors. However, several addictions are receiving wider recognition and are beginning to command both the attention and energy of practicing counselors. Examples include addictions involving excessive work (Robinson, 1998), sexual behavior (Carnes, 1989), and the Internet (Young, 1998). One exciting area of research involves the simultaneous study of multiple addictions and compulsive

disorders as manifestations of a common impairment, known as *reward deficiency syndrome* (Blum, Cull, Braverman, & Comings, 1996).

Compulsive gambling is expected to emerge as a major individual and societal problem in the twenty-first century. The broad expansion of gambling across the United States and Canada prompted a comprehensive meta-analysis of gambling prevalence rates by the Harvard Medical School Division on Addictions (Shaffer, Hall, & Bilt, 1997). Composite estimates are that 1.60 percent of adults, 3.88 percent of youth, and 4.67 percent of college students meet the diagnostic criteria for compulsive gambling (level 3 gamblers). Problem gambling exists among an additional 3.85 percent of adults, 9.45 percent of youth, and 15.01 percent of college students. Gambling disorders are increasing in prevalence among adults, and are significantly more prevalent among males and persons with concurrent psychiatric problems. In 1999, a two year, \$5 million study was completed by the National Gambling Impact Study Commission. The report of that study describes potential economic benefits of the gambling explosion, while acknowledging social costs such as pathological gambling, crime, and other maladies. The commission called for an explicit moratorium on gambling expansion while further research is conducted.

### **Incarceration as a Growth Industry**

As sad as it may appear, corrections is the largest growing segment of government in nearly every state, far outspending the higher education system in most. Almost two million people will sleep in prison tonight, and the inmate population is growing at 8 percent per year. Two new 1,000-bed facilities must be built each week just to keep up with the demand. The privatization of prisons is operational in 15 states, and 35 states have provisions that permit privatization. The private prison business alone (now housing 5% of all inmates) is a \$600 million dollar per year business and is growing at an annual rate of 30 percent (Grugal, 1996). Prison counselor and psychologist jobs will flourish, as will managers of prison industries. Some have quipped that due to managed care, prison is the only place one can receive treatment for substance abuse today. It may be a bad joke, but nonetheless, it does reflect a source of employment opportunity for substance abuse counselors.