



Vocational Rehabilitation Best Practices Check List

Vocational rehabilitation (VR) can be defined as the process of facilitating an individual in the choice of, or return to, a suitable vocation. When necessary, assisting the patient to obtain training for such a vocation. Vocational rehabilitation can also mean preparing an individual regardless of age, or physical condition to cope emotionally, psychologically, and physically with changing circumstances in life, including remaining at school, work, or a work equivalent (homemaker).

Pursuit of personal rehabilitation goals can help ESRD patients to stay healthier and feel better. Research shows that people on dialysis who keep working feel better. They are more physically able, have less pain, and have better general health and energy. Talk with your patients about the benefits of maintaining an active lifestyle **before** they make the decision to go on disability. Social work efforts to promote vocational rehabilitation are important interventions in trying to improve the social functioning of patients. These include providing patients with job retention strategies, or making referrals to job training, re-training, and employment counseling and placement services.

Your intervention can have an impact on the social functioning of your patients!

Facility Operations

- Develop a comprehensive plan to promote vocational rehabilitation (see *Building Quality of Life: A Practical Guide to Renal Rehabilitation—Employment module*).
- Review your facility's practices to determine if they are work friendly:
 - Do you prioritize schedules for people who work or attend school?
 - Do you and your staff encourage and support home dialysis options?
 - Does your facility offer evening and weekend dialysis treatments?
 - Does your facility allow patients to use laptops/phones during dialysis?
 - Do doctors consult with the social worker before signing disability forms?
- Include rehabilitation themes in newsletters and educational materials.
- Keep brochures and other materials on rehabilitation in public areas.
- Distribute information on rehabilitation to all patients.
- Encourage staff to attend rehabilitation seminars.
- Use the data from the Network Annual Facility Survey to set facility vocational goals and assess activities.
- Collaborate with rehabilitation and vocational personnel in the community and educate them on the vocational needs of dialysis patients.
- Educate employers and advocate for patients' jobs as requested/needed.
- Include rehabilitation in assessment and care plan forms.
- Access health-related quality of life and use results for care planning.

Patient Care

Upon admission meet with the patient and:

- Discuss personal rehabilitation goals, including but not limited to:
 - Employment
 - Hobbies
 - School

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- Increased physical activity
 - Increased social activity
 - Benefits of volunteering
- Encourage working patients to continue to work.
From Day 1 team members need to believe and share with patients that they can work while on dialysis. If a patient has doubts, encourage them to not make any quick decisions.
- Educate patients about the benefits of employment. Patients need to hear the facts (see *Keeping Your Job When You Need Dialysis*):
- Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) pays about 35% of what patients earn at work.
 - People on dialysis who work are more physically able, have less pain, and have better general health and energy.
 - People who work have fewer and shorter hospital stays – and live longer.
 - People who work are more likely to get and keep transplants.
- Educate patients about Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) and Social Security Income (SSI) work incentives:
- Ticket to Work Program and Employment Networks
 - Impairment-Related Work Expenses (IRWE)
 - Continued Payment under Vocational Rehabilitation
 - Trial Work Period (TWP)
 - Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS)
 - Continuation of Medicare
 - SSI Payments for People Who Work – Section 1619(a)
 - Medicaid While Working – Section 1619(b) for SSI recipients
 - Medicaid buy-in for SSDI recipients in some states
 - Earned Income Exclusions
 - Student Earned Income Exclusions
 - Special Rules for the Blind (See the Social Security Administration *Red Book* for explanations)
 - Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) Organizations (866) 426-1132
 - Maximus (866) 968-7842 (Ticket to Work manager)
 - Local VR offices
 - Social Security Administration (SSA) Working While Disabled information
- Communicate to every patient that the care team believes they can work and will do what they can to support patients' efforts.

Prior to Each Care Plan meeting, ask patients:

- How satisfied are you with your current level of activity?
- How has your job or work status changed since the last time we talked?
- If you went back to school, what would you like to study and where?
- What are your personal rehabilitation goals?
- What can our facility do better to support your rehabilitation goals?
- Have you considered home dialysis or transplant that may work better with your rehabilitation goals?

Annually, per Network Criteria & Standards

- Evaluate each patient age 18 through 54 for VR referral and make available to patients the VR resources obtainable in the area (Network year-end survey)
- Document VR status in the patient's medical record.