

STAFFING

1. **REASON FOR ISSUE:** To revise the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) qualification standard that covers the appointment of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, GS-0101, in Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) in accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 3118(c).
2. **SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This revision covers three changes to the qualification standard for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, GS-0101-09/11/12. The pages in this change replace corresponding page numbers in part II, appendix F2. These changes will be incorporated into the electronic version of VA Handbook 5005, Staffing, that is maintained on the [Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer website](#) and [VA Publications website](#). Significant changes are:
 - a. Formally separates the VBA qualification standard from the Veterans Health Administration Rehabilitation Counselor qualification standard in Appendix G62.
 - b. Adds a provision that one-year post-master's degree experience in direct delivery of professional vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities, may be substituted for the required supervised internship.
 - c. Provides guidance in crediting education and experience for grade determinations of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors at the GS-11 grade level.
3. **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Office of Human Resources and Administration/ Operation, Security and Preparedness (HRA/OSP) (006), Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) (05), Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059).
4. **RELATED DIRECTIVES:** VA Directive 5005, Staffing, dated April 15, 2002.
5. **RESCISSIONS:** Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, GS-0101, occupation in Appendix F2.

CERTIFIED BY:

**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

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NOTE: This transmittal page accompanied the former VA Handbook 5005, Staffing publication. It is provided for reference to highlight revisions made to this qualification standard.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR
QUALIFICATION STANDARD
GS-0101-09/11/12
Veterans Benefits Administration

[AUTHORITY: 38 U.S.C § 3118(c) for Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)]

- 1. COVERAGE.** The following are requirements for appointment as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) in the VBA. These requirements apply to all VBA VRCs in the General Schedule (GS) 0101 series, including those assigned to VBA Regional Offices, out based and satellite locations. This standard covers the GS-09 through GS-12 grade levels of this occupation.
- 2. DUTIES.** VRCs provide a wide range of rehabilitation and personal adjustment counseling and case management services, including coordination of rehabilitation, training, and employment services to disabled Veterans. VRCs assess data received from medical, psychological and vocational evaluations and develop individualized rehabilitation plans. In VBA, the Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) VRCs also make eligibility and entitlement determinations. Knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) are based on the job analysis and position description, but some general knowledge required by VRCs includes:
 - a. Knowledge of psychological, rehabilitation and counseling theory and principles is required. This includes special knowledge in rehabilitation counseling skills, techniques, and resources needed to work with Veterans with multiple serious disabilities, homebound Veterans, Veterans with serious acute or chronic mental disabilities, and those with problems adjusting to social and occupational requirements. VRCs need to understand and be able to use therapeutic counseling techniques.
 - b. Knowledge of the principles and procedures of psychological and vocational testing and knowledge of testing and research statistics is required. This includes mean, standard deviation, percentile and standard error of measurement as used in the assessment of a Veteran's interests, aptitude, abilities and personality characteristics. Understanding the instruments frequently used in the assessment, including the strengths and limitations of the measurements and appropriate uses to provide cultural sensitivity if needed.
 - c. Working knowledge of the requirements for independent living including resources and services will be necessary. Also, an understanding of the limitations and service requirements of individuals with severe disabilities is required.

- d. Knowledge of career development process, career development theory, and job placement; current knowledge of labor market conditions and occupational trends is needed. The incumbent must know how to use the information obtained from a transferable work skills analysis to improve the Veteran's employability.

3. BASIC REQUIREMENTS. To qualify for the VRC position, candidates must meet the following basic requirements:

- a. **Education.** Successful completion of a master's degree (or higher) in rehabilitation counseling, rehabilitation services, clinical rehabilitation counseling, counseling psychology, mental health counseling, career counseling or social work from an accredited college or university.
- b. **Internship or Experience Requirement.** The required (1) supervised internship or (2) post-master's degree experience is described as follows:
 - (1) **Supervised Internship:** The education in paragraph 3a must have included a supervised internship in rehabilitation counseling or case management specialization. The internship must have been supervised by a professional in vocational rehabilitation or a closely related professional field that typically has oversight for vocational rehabilitation programs.

OR

- (2) **Experience:** One-year post-master's degree experience in direct delivery of professional vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities.
- c. **Grandfathering Provision.** VRCs employed in VBA on the effective date of this qualification standard are considered to have met all qualification requirements for the title, series and grade held, including certifications that are part of the basic requirements of the occupation. For employees who do not meet all the basic requirements in this standard but met the qualifications applicable to the position at the time they were appointed, the following provisions apply:
 - (1) VRCs who are grandfathered into the GS-0101 occupational series may be reassigned, promoted up to and including the full performance level of a career ladder or changed to a lower grade within the occupation or placed in a supervisory or managerial position.
 - (2) VRCs who are appointed on a temporary basis prior to the effective date of this qualification standard may not be extended or reappointed on a temporary or permanent basis until they fully meet the basic requirements of this standard.

- (3) If VRCs who are grandfathered under this provision leave the occupation, they lose protected status and must meet the full qualification standard requirements in effect at the time of re-entry to the occupation.

4. CREDITING EXPERIENCE.

- a. **Creditable Experience.** Creditable experience must have required the use of KSAs associated with current professional vocational rehabilitation counseling practices. Creditable experience can be obtained through employment as a VRC. This may be demonstrated by providing direct rehabilitation counseling services to individuals with disabilities in the context of a professional counseling relationship, which may include vocational rehabilitation and personal adjustment counseling, case management, assessment, or rehabilitation, training and employment services coordination.
- b. **Quality of Experience.** Creditable experience must have been obtained post-graduate and be directly related to the duties to be performed to qualify to work as a professional VRC. Qualifying experience must also be equivalent to professional vocational rehabilitation counseling experience at the next lower level. **NOTE:** If work experience is credited for the basic requirement, that experience cannot also be used for qualifying at the GS-11 or GS-12 levels.

5. GRADE REQUIREMENTS.

In addition to the basic requirements for employment, the following criteria must be met when determining the grade of candidates:

- a. **Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, GS-09.**

- (1) **Education or Experience.** None above the basic requirements.

- b. **Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, GS-11.**

- (1) **Education or Experience.**

- (a) **Education.** In addition to meeting the basic requirements, successful completion of 3 full years of progressively higher-level graduate education or a Ph.D. or equivalent doctoral degree in an area described in paragraph 3a.

OR

- (b) **Experience.** Completion of one year of specialized experience equivalent to at least the GS-09 grade level. Specialized experience reflects the management of vocational rehabilitation counseling or case management workload involving persons with a wide variety of disability conditions (e.g., mental health, physical, cognitive, visual/auditory, substance abuse).

b. **Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, GS-12.**

(1) **Experience.** One year of specialized vocational rehabilitation experience in a federal, state and/or private vocational rehabilitation setting equivalent to at least the GS-11 grade level. Professional experience reflects the management of vocational rehabilitation counseling or case management workload involving persons with a wide variety of disability conditions (e.g., mental health, physical, cognitive, visual/auditory, substance abuse).

(2) This is the journey (or full performance) level for this occupation.

6. MODIFICATIONS OR WAIVERS. Management officials who are delegated the authority may modify or waive the specific requirements of this standard in accordance with chapter 2, section D, paragraphs 8-12 of this part.]

RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: Human Resources and Administration/Operations, Security and Preparedness (HRA/OSP) (006), Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) (05), Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059)