

**An Extension of the Rehabilitation Profession: Analyzing the Qualifications and Preparation of Disability Service Directors**

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Northern Virginia Community College  
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
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**DSS Director:  
Example Position Descriptions**

- The Director of Academic Support and Disability Services (classified title: Disability Services Administrator) reports to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Academic Affairs and supervises three staff members. Working directly as the principal staff member for disability services, s/he works closely with the central Disability Officer who officially approves at a broad level, any disability services required for a student. This position is also responsible for ensuring compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the ADA Amendments Act, and related federal and state regulations as they pertain to students. S/he will lead, implement, and support efforts to develop policies and programs, and to coordinate and provide accommodations, for disabled, full-time undergraduates and graduate students in the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences and the Writing School of Engineering, and for part-time students in summer school, outreach and enrichment programs offered by those schools.
- The Director oversees university-wide disability services; ensures compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, and related federal and state regulations; develops and implements short- and long-term goals in support of the university mission and strategic plan; provides leadership and administrative management to the Office of Disability Services; manages the office budget; and works collaboratively with the university community to ensure access for individuals with disabilities. The Director is responsible for the review, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all accommodations processes and plans for students with disabilities; consultation/outreach with faculty, staff and students regarding the needs of students with disabilities; and provision of individual academic counseling, referrals and support for students with disabilities. Key responsibilities include reviewing student requests and required documentation to make determinations regarding student disability accommodations in accordance with the ADA and Section 504; administratively coordinating all accommodations for students with disabilities, including maintenance of confidential student files and a DSS database; serving as a liaison between students with disabilities and faculty and staff; consulting with faculty, staff and students about the needs of students with disabilities; providing individual academic counseling, referrals and support for students with disabilities; implementing assessment of the Disability Services program.

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**DSS Director:  
Example of Preferred Qualifications**

- Master's degree in rehabilitation counseling, psychology, special education or a related field is required; 5 years of progressively responsible experience and leadership in disabilities services, counseling or a related field.
- Master's degree or Ph.D. in education, educational psychology, curriculum and teaching, special education, disability services or related field. At least six years of experience in a learning center and/or disability services office in a higher education setting, with increasing supervisory and management responsibilities.
- The successful candidate must possess a master's degree in a field related to disability, teaching/education, curricular design, student affairs or human services. The position requires seven years of progressive supervisory experience, preferably in a higher education setting. Master's deg in learning disabilities, counseling, psychology, special edu or related field of study. 3 yrs exp working w/people w/disabilities in higher edu setting or equiv exp. Exp supervising, budgeting & working w/technology applications relevant to this area preferred.

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
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## Rehabilitation Counseling Profession

- Rehabilitation counselors work with individuals who have mental, emotional, or physical handicaps, helping them to lead self-sufficient lives both at home and on the job. The counselors determine the training and support their clients need to deal with the personal, social, and vocational effects of their conditions. Rehabilitation counselors are employed by publicly funded agencies, schools, and medical facilities.
- After evaluating their clients' strengths and limitations, counselors arrange for rehabilitation programs that may include medical care, occupational therapy, and job placement. To find suitable programs for their clients, counselors study medical records, documentation, assessments, and job histories and confer with doctors and therapists. They also talk to the clients and their families.
- The Council on Rehabilitation Education accredits graduate programs that include at least two years of study and six hundred hours of experience in supervised clinical internships. An increasing number of employers require that rehabilitation counselors be certified, which requires examinations. Standards were established by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification.

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
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## Rationale of the Study

- Rehabilitation counseling professionals and disability service providers have similar goals and objectives while rendering service for clients and students.
  - Evaluate and plan services
  - Counsel clients/students
  - Set academic and vocational goals
  - Educate their counterparts and community to advocate for their clients
- Training and preparation of disability service directors is needed; however no curriculum has been developed to adequately train these aspiring professionals.

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
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## Main Goals of the Study

- Identify the training preferences of DSS directors for aspiring professionals.
- Exploratory study – lay foundation for future research.

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
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### Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of disability service directors concerning the importance of specialty area courses for the preparation of aspiring directors?
2. To what extent are selected demographic variables of DSS directors related to their order of course importance perceptions?
3. What is the relationship between the type of institution (2 yr vs. 4 yr college/university) and level of training of training of DSS directors?

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
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### Participants

- 270 completed survey
- 49 states represented
- 210 (77.8%) – Female
- 58 (21.5%) – Male
- 126(47.3%): > 5yrs in current position
- 132 (48.9%): no prior work experience
- 174 (64.4%): master's level degree
- 120 (44.4%): hold certificate/license

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
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### Characteristics of Institution

- 198 (73.3%): 4 yr institutions
- Over 90% reported student population < 1000
- 80% had no committee focused on disability issues.

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
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### Research Question One

- **Cluster 4:** Psychosocial Aspects of Disability, Learning Theories, Learning Disabilities, Practicum and Internship in Disability Support Services office
- **Cluster 1:** Counseling Theories and Techniques, Program Evaluation, Developmental Psychology, Medical Aspects of Disabilities, Social Service Legislation
- **Cluster2:** Higher Education Administration, Student Development, Budget Management, College Student Personnel, Practicum and Internship in Student Affairs

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
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### Research Question Two: Years in Current Position

<p><b>Participants with less than 1 year</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Counseling Theories and Techniques</li> <li>■ Program Evaluation</li> <li>■ Career Development Theories</li> </ul> <p><i>Ranked Higher than respondents w/ 1-5yrs</i></p>	<p><b>Participants with more than 10 years</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Grant Writing and Development</li> </ul> <p><i>Ranked higher than directors w/ &lt;10 yrs</i></p>
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
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### Prior Work Experience

<p><b>Participants with more than 5 years</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Group Counseling</li> <li>■ Budget and Finance</li> <li>■ Program Evaluation</li> <li>■ Marketing Principles</li> </ul> <p><i>Ranked higher than respondents w/ (&lt;5 yrs)</i></p>	<p><b>Participants with one to five years</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Foundations in Rehabilitation</li> <li>■ Practicum and Internship of health/medical site</li> </ul> <p><i>Ranked higher than respondents w (&gt;5yrs)</i></p>
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
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 **Rehabilitation vs. Non-Rehabilitation Degree Holders**

- Participants w/ a rehabilitation background
  - Marketing Principles
  - Foundation in Rehabilitation
  - Practicum and Internship at a Rehabilitation site

*Ranked higher than non-rehabilitation degree holders*

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 **Competencies in Higher Education and Rehabilitation**

- Program Management
- Consultation
- Disability Knowledge
- Student Development
- Service Delivery
- Disability Legislation

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 **Specialty Program in Rehabilitation Counseling**

■ Psychosocial Aspects of Disability	■ Social Service Legislation
■ Learning Theories	■ Higher Education Administration
■ Counseling Theories and Techniques	■ College Student Development
■ Program Evaluation	■ Practicum at a Rehabilitation site
■ Developmental Psychology	■ Internship at a Rehabilitation site
■ Medical Aspects of Disability	

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### Implications of Specialty Program

- Collaboration between disability services and rehabilitation counseling
- Expand knowledge domain to academic settings
- Effective service delivery
  - Transition from high school to higher education
  - Collaborate with local institutions to promote community outreach
  - Enhance best practices
    - Possible credentialing standards

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
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### Discussion Questions

- How does educational background of a disability service professional impacts the quality of services for students with disabilities?
- Do you think having a specialty program would decrease the turn over rate in Disability Services positions?
- What are some future trends in establishing a professional credential for disability services in higher education settings? If not, what do you suggest?
- What would be the next step to implement a specialty program?

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
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