

CAVEWAS Corner

Canadian assessment,
vocational evaluation and
work adjustment society

Phillip W. Boswell President - CAVEWAS,
MA, B.Ed, HBOR, BA, RRP



Dear Fellow Colleagues and Readers,
We would like to introduce to you
Rehab Matters' newest section:
CAVEWAS CORNER.

As many of you know, CAVEWAS (Canadian Assessment, Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Society) is a member society of VRA Canada serving in large part to represent and support the professional and developmental needs of vocational evaluators as well as all professional rehab personnel specializing in work adjustment of injured workers and the like. In our continued efforts to stay connected with all of our members and colleagues—and in partnership with *Rehab Matters* our quarterly publication, we have endeavored to create this new section whose intent it is to keep you informed of matters germane not only to CAVEWAS members, but to related professionals working within the field of vocational rehabilitation.

In this section you will find current and candid articles authored by CAVEWAS members, non-members (and future members alike) that will share, discuss, and communicate with you developments and changes affecting our membership; amongst them issues of best practice, professional development and designation, as well as industry trends. We hope you will find the content in this section stimulating, motivating, and informative and we encourage your ongoing participation and contributions.

Enjoy!

CAVEWAS NATIONAL BOARD
of DIRECTORS

If you are a CAVEWAS member, and have any ideas, opinions, or thoughts relevant to this section and you would like share, discuss, and communicate them in the next issue, please contact: Jeff Cohen at jeffcohen@vocationalalternatives.com.

A Question of Certification and Designation

The raison d'être of CAVEWAS is to promote and advance the field of Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment as a professional discipline. A profession is defined as "a calling, vocation or employment requiring specialized knowledge and often intensive academic preparation." To qualify as a profession, the following characteristics are expected to be present:

- A common body of knowledge
- Benchmarked performance standards
- A representative professional organization
- An external perception as a profession
- A code of ethics with enforcement
- Required training credentials for entry and career mobility
- An ongoing need for skill development
- A need to ensure professional competence is maintained and put to socially responsible uses

One of the biggest challenges facing Vocational Evaluators in Canada is not having certification available that would identify certificants as being minimally competent. Some people may argue that the Registered Vocational Professional (RVP) certification might fit the bill. However, the RVP is meant to be an entry level credential that requires a two year college diploma in conjunction with experience. It is often seen as a precursor to the Registered Rehabilitation Professional (RRP) designation which requires an under-graduate degree in conjunction with experience. The gold standard certification for vocational evaluators in Canada and the United States was the CVE (Certified Vocational Evaluator) designation which was developed by the Commission on the Certification of Work Adjustment and Vocational Evaluation Specialists (CCWAVES).

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CCWAVES was formed in 1983, following a certification model predicated on a master's level degree in vocational

evaluation and successful completion of a standardized examination. Other professionals were required to demonstrate candidacy for certification through specific courses and years of experience in lieu of a master's degree in vocational evaluation.

In September 2008, the commissioners of CCWAVES dissolved the organization. The Commission sought a reputable organization to assume responsibility for the renewal and maintenance of the Certified Vocational Evaluation (CVE) credential. In April 2009, CCWAVES negotiated with the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) to provide oversight and administration of the future renewal and maintenance processes for the CVE designation. Currently there are 49 CVE's in Canada and that number is declining

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and will continue to decline as certificants retire or transition out of the industry. New evaluators are entering the profession and searching for a credential that will identify them as being competent and ethical professionals. The CAVEWAS Board has been exploring options towards re-establishing benchmarks and advancing the vocational evaluation and work adjustment profession.

The Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals (VECAP) invited CAVEWAS to participate in the 14th National Forum on Issues in Vocational Assessment in Oklahoma City, OK in April. Specifically, CAVEWAS was invited to sit on a panel session titled "The Way Forward" to discuss the next steps and future of certification for Vocational Evaluators after the dissolution of CCWAVES. Representatives from the VECAP and Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association (VEWAA) and CAVEWAS were invited to sit on the panel. Past-president Helga Guthrie represented CAVEWAS at this event and sat on the panel. It should be pointed out that VECAP, VEWAA and CAVEWAS were members of the CCWAVES consortium who were responsible for the CVE designation. Helga was invited to participate in the task force committee

struck by VECAP as they continue moving forward to explore alternative professional credentialing. The focus is to look at the initial results of the survey which some of you had taken part in and to gather additional information and ideas and to plan for next steps.

The other avenue CAVEWAS is investigating is the ABVE (American Board Vocational Expert) certification. The American Board of Vocational Experts is a professional credentialing body established as a not-for-profit organization. There are two levels of certification. Fellow status requires three years of documented experience in assessment of vocational capacity and vocational expert forensics in addition to educational and exam requirements. Diplomate status requires seven years of documented experience in the area of assessment of vocational capacity and vocational expert opinion and demonstration of distinguished performance or recognition as a vocational expert in addition to the aforementioned requirements.

To be an ABVE Fellow or Diplomate in the U.S. requires a master's degree or higher. The ABVE board made a concession in attempt to attract Canadian Evaluators by

reducing the educational standard to the Bachelor level given that there are so few Vocational Rehabilitation graduate degree programs in Canada. This is consistent with one of the findings from the Joint Task Force on Alternative Certification which was that the CVE was "too elite a credential". Not that the standard was too high, but coursework was not available to most. (i.e. two of the foundational courses towards the CVE designation, Introduction to Vocational Evaluation and Occupational Analysis, were dropped by many master's level programs). As you can see, we have some big challenges ahead.



About the Author

Phil Boswell is a vocational evaluator with

a practice located in the beautiful Comox Valley on Vancouver Island. Currently, Phil is the President of CAVEWAS and sits on the National Board of VRA Canada.

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2020 - 650 West Georgia Street
Box 11547, Vancouver Centre
Vancouver, BC V6B 4N7
www.murphybattista.com
Email: murphy@murphybattista.com