



## CAVEWAS Corner

# Vocational Evaluation:

## Critical for those with critical injuries

By Heather Potter RN, RRP, CVP

Dear fellow colleagues and readers, here is our most recent contribution to 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 professional rehab personnel specializing in work adjustment of injured workers and the like. 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 continue to find the content in this section stimulating, motivating, and informative and we encourage your ongoing participation and contributions.

Enjoy!

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If you are a CAVEWAS member and have any ideas, opinions or thoughts relevant to this section and you would like to share, discuss, and communicate them in the next issue, please contact: Jeff Cohen at [jcohen@vocationalalternatives.com](mailto:jcohen@vocationalalternatives.com). We also encourage you to join our group on LinkedIn.

You may not think that your services as a vocational evaluator would be required for someone with critical injuries, but as a case manager I definitely have you in mind!

While I know that thinking about a return to work is not the first thing on the mind of a client who is lying in a hospital bed after sustaining physical and/or cognitive critical injuries, but as a good case manager it should be on yours. A case manager must think about all the vocational elements that a client does not. A critical piece of that overall plan best includes the involvement of an experienced vocational evaluator as early in the file as possible.

While the acute stage of recovery may not be the best time for such an assessment, as the client's long-term physical and/or cognitive restrictions and limitations may yet be unknown, it is an excellent time for the case manager to start talking to the client about the eventual goal of returning to work. A case manager should also be gathering as much information as possible regarding the client's job demands to consider whether a return to work might actually be viable. Treatment providers should be given information regarding the client's occupation and specific job demands. Ultimately, the severity of a critical injury may present long term implications that will preclude the injured person from returning to his/her pre-accident job (e.g., if a

roofer loses a leg, he's not going back to roofing!). Obtaining the necessary information is most valuable to consider the long-term parameters of the rehab plan.

*"Treatment providers should be given information regarding the client's occupation and specific job demands."*

As soon as the time is right and sufficient recovery has occurred, such that the patient can actively engage, that's when the case manager should involve the services of a vocational evaluator; ideally as early in the recovery phase as possible. Waiting until the client is almost work-ready is not necessarily the most optimal time to engage the services of a vocational evaluator; as in many cases the client could have already taken steps to expedite his/her transition to alternate work.

Completion of a vocational or psycho-vocational evaluation will provide critical information with respect to identifying the most appropriate vocational goals to support the client. The case manager should work collaboratively with a vocational evaluator and clearly identify what they expect from

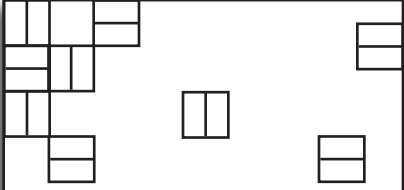
the evaluation. As a case manager, a vocational evaluation report is only valuable if the information provided within it can actually be used. The report should have a rehab focus offering specific direction for employment planning. Recommendations should be specific, but more importantly realistic. The evaluator must have a good understanding of the client's injuries, restrictions, and limitations so that the jobs options identified are viable and attainable. If more information is required, contact the case manager and work together. It might also be useful for the evaluator to discuss findings with the case manager prior to submitting the report, especially if it is a complex file.

Overall, a vocational evaluation is a timely piece in the rehabilitation process, especially for those suffering from a critical and life altering injury. Case managers should be educated on the positive effects a

vocational evaluator can have on a client. Recommendations can assist the injured person to expedite his/her recovery to gainful employment. Case managers and vocational evaluators must work together as they both have the same goal to assist the client's return to employment in a job that is best suited for them. ☺

## Thank You!

*CAVEWAS would like to inform you that our recent course "Vocational Principles, Theories and Techniques" was an enormous success. Feedback from those who attended was exceptional as they gained a wealth of knowledge from instructor Cameron Adams-Weber. We encourage our membership to stay-tuned for future courses and seminars. A big thanks to all attendees!*



Heather Potter, RN, RRP, CVP, is the proprietor of Hapcon Health, Disability & Rehabilitation Consulting Services. She has over 18 years' experience in case management and vocational rehabilitation with both auto and life companies. She also has three years' experience as a Claims Consultant in the Accident Benefit Unit for a major auto insurance company.

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