

Abstract

Rehabilitation Counselor Training Program with Specialization in Psychiatric Rehabilitation of Diverse Populations (RC-PR)

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There is a critical shortage of qualified Rehabilitation Counselors of diverse backgrounds to provide services to clients of the state-federal vocational rehabilitation (VR) system. The need for training in psychiatric rehabilitation is even more pronounced as more than 35% of VR clients report at least one diagnosis of psychiatric disability (PD). Also, a large proportion of graduate rehabilitation counseling programs (RCPs) do not offer courses on PR (Davis, Delman, & Duperoy, 2013; Farkas & Anthony, 2001). According to Hayward and Schmidt-Davis (2005) (the most recent study available), about 20% of state-federal VR counselors has a CRC, 57% possesses a master's degree, and 42% has a bachelor's degree (though 43% perceive formal education as an important determinant of effective job performance). Literature is devoid of demographic information of VR counselors who specialize in PR.

In 2012, Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) employed 109 rehabilitation counselors. However in order to adequately serve consumers, the agency is projecting to hire 41 rehabilitation counselors in the next five years. The number of vacancies may increase as a result of promotions to higher positions. E.g., projected vacancies until 2018 for field managers are eight, district supervisors are 14, and administrators are 13. In its FY 2014 State Plan, LRS has explicitly identified the need for training of its current and future rehabilitation counselors and the crucial role the two CORE accredited graduate programs in Louisiana play in addressing that exigency.

In order to address this state, regional, and national exigency, the Rehabilitation Counseling Program (RCP) in the Department of Rehabilitation and Disability Studies (DRDS) at Southern University (SU), Baton Rouge, LA (Congressional District six), is requesting for five-year (2014-2019) funding (CFDA Number: 84.129B) of the **Rehabilitation Counselor Training Program with Specialization in Psychiatric**

Rehabilitation of Diverse Populations (RC-PR) at the master's degree level (Dr. Alo Dutta, Project Director, 0.50 FTE devoted to RC-PR). The **goal of Project RC-PR** is to provide master's level training in areas of personnel shortage to assist in increasing the numbers of qualified personnel trained in serving to individuals with disabilities under the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, as amended. This goal will be accomplished via four objectives:

Objective 1: To increase the number of qualified rehabilitation counselors of diverse origins through innovative/dynamic recruitment, retention, mentoring, training, and career counseling efforts by awarding RSA Scholarships to the most qualified 5 first year and 5 second year master's students every year. **Objective 2:** To modify and implement an 18 hour technologically enhanced specialty curriculum in RC-PR leading to an M.S. degree and further infuse supported employment, assistive technology, ethics, evidence-based practice, advocacy, and placement techniques, in the existing CORE accredited master's degree program in rehabilitation counseling.

Objective 3: To graduate 5 students every year, 25 during the project period, and place them in LRS and other state-federal VR agencies to improve employment outcome for clients. **Objective 4:** To organize a yearly symposium (synchronous web-telecast via GoToMeeting) on cutting edge topics, identified by LRS and CRPs, to prepare Project RC-PR trainees, practicing professionals, and faculty of varied backgrounds for improving quality of service delivery to persons with PD in the areas of job placement, AT, universal design, VEWA, IL, and SE/IPS (at no cost to the project). The **final outcome of Project RC-PR will be two-fold:** (1) an increase in the number of person-years of service provided to state-federal VR by 25 graduates of this project during their tenure of at least four years required to complete payback, i.e., a total of 100 person years of VR service; and (2) an increase in the number of successful VR case closures by 600 (e.g., LRS quota of 24 per year for entry level position of 25 program graduates employed as rehabilitation counselors) each year and a total of 2,400 cases during a minimum of four years' service these 25 graduates will provide to VR.

The goal and objectives will be accomplished via a Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) accredited 48 hour master's degree curriculum that focuses on preparing a diverse body of students and professionals in evidence based approaches in psychiatric rehabilitation, independent living, assistive technology, group and family counseling, advocacy, vocational evaluation and assessment, career counseling and job placement, supported employment, mental health counseling, case management, and benefits counseling. Project RC-PR, a collaboration of RCP and LRS, will provide culturally sensitive recruitment, orientation, retention,

training (didactic and practical), career counseling, mentoring, and post-graduation placement services. A total of 75% percent of the budget has been allocated to student support. The Graduate School has committed to fund 4 quarter time graduate assistants to augment the monthly stipend of RSA Trainees. Formative and summative evaluations will be conducted via the collection and analysis of qualitative and qualitative data to assess the quality of student learning outcome and project performance. The highly qualified and multidisciplinary project personnel (Total of 2.34 FTE devoted to RC-PR) possesses a total of 95 years of experience in rehabilitation education, research, and service delivery. The graduate program has been in existence since 1984 as a vital part of SUBR and its future is secured beyond the project period.

The applicant understands that outreach activities to increase the pool of eligible minority candidates may be outlined but admission or scholarship to students solely on the basis of race, ethnicity, or disability will not be granted. Additionally, RSA may disqualify and not consider for funding any applicant that indicates that it will hire or train a certain number or percentage of minority candidates.