

July 21, 2013

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee

The Honorable Lamar Alexander, Ranking Member
Health Education, Labor and Pensions Committee

Re: Request by the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) to remove section 101(a)(7)(B)(I)(aa) outlining the appropriate and adequate training of rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals in the Bipartisan Discussion Draft of Title V to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Alexander:

The Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) is the accreditation organization for master's level rehabilitation counseling programs recognized by the Council on higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). CORE accredits roughly 98 graduate programs in the United States and Puerto Rico with approximately 5,200 students and 1,600 entering the workforce each year. The evidence-based graduate standards used to evaluate these programs and ensure their graduates are prepared to work with individuals with disabilities are based on a wealth of research conducted over the past 40 years.

We are writing on behalf of the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) in response to your memorandum dated July 19, 2013 wherein you outline proposed changes to the *Vocational Rehabilitation Act*. I reference section 101(a)(7) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (B) regarding policies and procedures to the establishment and maintenance of standards to ensure that personnel...are appropriately and adequately trained. Your committee proposed the addition of the following wording on page 43 of the draft copy:

(I)(aa) attainment of a baccalaureate degree in a field of study reasonably related to vocational rehabilitation, to indicate a level of competency and skill demonstrating basic preparation in a field of study such as vocational rehabilitation counseling, social work, psychology, disability studies, business administration, human resources, special education, supported employment, customized employment, job placement, economics, or any other field that reasonably prepares individuals to work with consumers and employers

The problem with the addition of this wording is that it also applies to the training and preparation of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in section 100(a)(3)(E). There is simply no basis for recognizing individuals with a baccalaureate degree or a master's degree in a "reasonably related" field in the professional literature. Research suggests that individuals holding a degree other than masters degree and educated in a field other than Rehabilitation Counseling will likely result in individuals with disabilities achieving an employment outcome less often, earning less money and costing taxpayers more money for their rehabilitation.

Dr. Michael Frain and his colleagues published in 2006 the results of a Meta analysis of research studies they conducted in the Journal of Rehabilitation. It showed that an average client with a disability who is working with a Rehabilitation Counselor with a master's degree is more successful than 58% of the clients working with a counselor with a degree in "related" field.

Dr. Elizabeth Van Houtte presented her doctoral dissertation research in 2010; an analysis of successful versus unsuccessful case closures in New Jersey from 1996-2004. Dr. Van Houtte showed that when a master's trained Rehabilitation Counselor serves an individual with a disability, it results in a decrease in overall expenditures, an increase in client earnings, and a significant decrease in the total amount of service time. When served by a Rehabilitation Counselor with a masters degree compared to personnel with a bachelor's or master's degree from a

“reasonably related” field of study, the average service time was reduced from 22 months to an average of 9 months; individuals with disabilities earned an average of \$104 more per week and the average cost of rehabilitation was \$1,385.00 less. The competitive closure rates for clients served by a Rehabilitation Counselor with a master’s degree were 20% higher on average for clients with severe disabilities and 23% higher for individuals with non-severe disabilities.

Based on the results of the research provided here, we submit that the only appropriately and adequately prepared and trained Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is a Rehabilitation Counselor who holds a master’s degree, preferably from a CORE accredited program. In section 101(a)(7)(B)(I)(aa) we ask that you include the following:

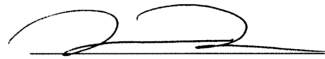
attainment of a master’s degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, preferably from a CORE accredited program, as the appropriate professional requirement for a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor.

Feel free to contact Dr. Frank Lane who serves as spokesperson for the CORE. He can be reached by phone at 773.250.4983 or via email at lane@iit.edu

Sincerely,



Frank J. Lane, Ph.D., CRC
Executive Director
Council on Rehabilitation Education



Patricia Nunez, M.A., CRC
President
Council on Rehabilitation Education



David T. Beach, Ph.D., CRC
CORE board member & Executive Director
Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

Cc. File